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KYRGYZSTAN

SUCCESS STORY

A Key Link in the Fight Against TB

USAID Supports Efforts to Improve the Continuity of Care Across Prison and Civilian TB Services



Photo: ZdravPlus

“Strengthening TB control and prevention in penitentiaries – especially focusing on the development of rehabilitation mechanisms for TB patients before release – is a key focus of the National Health Care Reform Strategy. There is a real need in Kyrgyzstan to improve collaboration between prison and civilian TB services through a comprehensive approach and the combined efforts of all stakeholders.

–Ainagul Isakova, Head of HIV/AIDS Coordination and Monitoring Unit and member of TB in Prisons Working Group

Tuberculosis is one of the most pressing public health challenges in Kyrgyzstan today. USAID supported the development of a new national program to help address this growing concern.

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The fight against tuberculosis (TB) in Kyrgyzstan is a complicated one, due in no small part to the challenge of effectively diagnosing and treating TB in the country’s penitentiary system. Prisons in Kyrgyzstan are hotspots for TB infection, posing health risks to prisoners and also the population at large when prisoners with infectious TB are released into civilian society. USAID’s ZdravPlus Project and partner Project HOPE are working to find solutions to this important public health challenge.

USAID is supporting a national-level working group and its efforts to address the need for improved collaboration between prison and civilian TB services. As a first step USAID contributed to an in-depth study of the barriers prisoners faced in accessing follow-up treatment after release from prison. An assessment of coordination between the Ministries of Health, Justice, and Internal Affairs found shortcomings in the working mechanisms that would allow these bodies to collaborate effectively within prisons before prisoners are released, and across prison and civilian systems after release. Stakeholders were confident, however, that much could be gained through improving legislation and policy, ensuring effective communication, and streamlining roles and responsibilities.

Following the initial study, USAID joined stakeholders in developing the program “TB Patients in Prison: Before and After Release,” which includes 1) detailed tasks to be performed by prison health staff to prepare prisoners with TB for release; 2) steps that prison and civilian health services must take in order to anticipate and coordinate follow-up care for released prisoners; 3) guidance for local police to help facilitate follow-up care; and 4) suggestions for organizations that wish to provide social support to patients.

The national program was officially adopted in the summer of 2008, forming the legal and structural basis necessary for stakeholders to join together in providing effective TB care for released prisoners and reducing the public health risk of TB infection in the general population.