

## ANNUAL REPORT – 2007 JOINT UN HIV/AIDS ADVOCACY PROJECT

### Introduction

Officially it is accepted that Tajikistan now is in the early stage of HIV epidemic – 1049 HIV cases registered on the 1 January of 2008 including 339 new cases during the last year. At the same time, the number of new cases continually increased during the recent years. Moreover, the results of sentinel survey conducted by the MoH in 2005 and 2006 showed that HIV prevalence increased among IDUs from 16% to 24%, and significantly increased among SW from 0,7% to 3,7% accordingly, prevalence among labour migrants is about 2,2% and the total number of HIV cases among pregnant women is also increased.

The figures mentioned above showed that Tajikistan now is actually in the concentrated stage of HIV epidemic with reflection to the spreading of epidemic among general population. Driving force of the epidemic is injecting drugs, migration, sex-business. (Source: data of official registration and sentinel surveys, MoH, 2006, 2007). This alarming evidence indicates the epidemic concentrated in most at risk population and rapid spread of HIV infection among general population.

Government of Tajikistan has recognised the problem of HIV epidemic and its associated issues at high political level by taking a leadership and initiatives to address them.

Tajikistan is one of the first countries to develop a National Development Strategy to achieve the MDGs. HIV/AIDS NDS outlines priorities for health care in the poverty reduction strategy that include stabilizing HIV/AIDS epidemic by 2015. At national consultations in 2006 with the participation of all interested partners it was recognised that achievement of MDG in the field of HIV/AIDS cannot be made without providing universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support. The objective of universal access until 2010 as midterm review of MDG, main existing factors for their development were defined and steps were taken for their improvement.

With support by GFATM and other International donors (WB, DFID, USAID, UN, etc.) Government in close collaboration with CSO is implementing the activities aimed at expanding programmes on HIV prevention among most at risk groups and general population, and treatment and support.

There are several main obstacles for scaling up towards UA on prevention, treatment and support: deficit of the budget for the Programme is still high- about US16,4 mln, specially for the prevention programmes among most at risk groups of population; coverage of most at risk population by prevention programme is still low. Results of M&E is not using on regular base for revising and correction of the activities, high risk of duplication of the activities due to uncoordinated actions in financing and reporting among partners, the number of skilled service providers is limited both in governmental and CSO sector. All these issues are existing in the country in parallel with low level of knowledge on HIV, low social acceptance of condoms and high level of risk behaviour among population, high level of stigma and discrimination of PLWH.

At the same time, Tajikistan has a chance to decrease the spreading of HIV epidemic and to try to achieve UA' targets until 2010 due to high level political commitments to fight HIV, conducting immediately actions on policy development, resource mobilization, expanding HIV prevention programmes and integration of prevention and treatment in the Primary health Care system, using data of M&E for revising of the programme and correction of the activities on the regular base, pay more attention to reducing of stigma.



*Photo: UN Joint Team on AIDS in Tajikistan and the team work in preparing for World AIDS Day*

UN agencies has mandates, resources, advocacy tools and technical expertise to fight HIV at global and country levels and can consolidate the actions and resources and UN addressed HIV issue as a priority due to an increase in the prevalence in the recent years. To support the National Response on HIV in Tajikistan, UN Joint HIV Advocacy Project was established in 2005 and updated in 2006- 2007. In the Joint Project, UN adopted the strategies under the overall goal of scaling up towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care.

The project contained the main elements of UN Joint Programming on HIV according to UNDP and Global Task Team (GTT) relating on Joint UN Team on AIDS recommendations such as:

- Functioning of Joint UN Team on AIDS;
- Joint planning of the programme and one annual working plan (UN AWP)
- Joint structure of management
- Pooling resources
- One set of outcomes and outputs (UNDAF outcome 2)
- Implementation by different UN agencies and other partners (Government, NGOs and private sector)
- One M&E framework
- One report to UN RC

### **PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

The UN RC system is the lynchpin of field coordination and will continue to serve as the foundation of the UN system response to HIV/AIDS at the country level. The UN JAP is expected to be funded through a pooled fund mechanism, in which eight cosponsor agencies in Tajikistan should allocate available resources to the joint advocacy. The pooled fund will be coordinated by the UN Theme Group on HIV. In 2007 three UN organizations (UNAIDS, UNDP and UNICEF) have pooled resources to support the implementation of the Joint HIV Advocacy Project. Several agencies confirmed to provide funds to UN JAP activities directly from agencies. A total of USD 322,890 was mobilized for the implementation of the project in 2007.

The UN Theme Group on HIV has responsibilities to provide collaborative oversight of the effective management and implementation of the pooled funds and to approve annual financial and programmatic reporting for UNRC. Agency funds received will be pooled with no individual agency inputs tied to specific outputs.

The Joint UN Team on AIDS has responsibilities for: approving and monitoring an annual resource allocation plan for activities funded by the pooled funds; approving and monitoring work programmes, and preparing annual financial and programmatic reporting for review by the UN Theme Group on HIV on for agencies contributing to the pooled advocacy fund. UNDP is a managing agent and provided administrative support to the project. Funding will be disbursed directly to implanting partners/agencies for approved proposals as part of the recourse allocation plan developed by UN Joint Team on AIDS and approved by UN TG on HIV.

UNAIDS CO provided technical support in the line with the common work plan, specifically for timely disbursement of funds, and supplies and for coordinating technical inputs by all participating UN organizations.

### **Goals and objectives:**

The purpose of the Joint UN Advocacy project in Tajikistan for 2007 is to support to the scaling up national response on HIV in Tajikistan through advocacy, increasing national capacity, strengthen the enabling environment for prevention and care of HIV/AIDS and increase HIV/AIDS awareness amongst the target groups.

The UN Joint Advocacy Project in 2007 aimed at the following intervention areas, identified by the UN Joint Team during UNDAF (UN Development Assistance Framework) review process:

- I. High level advocacy and implementation of the “Three Ones” principles at country level**
- II. Advocacy for and scaling up towards universal access to HIV prevention treatment, care and support and vulnerability reduction of targeted groups**
- III. Increasing HIV awareness among the general population, including targeted groups**
- IV. Greater involvement of PLWHA and breaking the barriers of stigma and discrimination**
- V. New partners involvement in the national response**

### **1. High level advocacy and Implementation of the “Three Ones” principles at country level**

With the support of UN HIV JAP National Programme to response HIV epidemic in Tajikistan for the period of 2007-2010 was developed with detailed budget, National Plan of Monitoring and Evaluation and approved by Government. Targets to achieve Universal access on HIV prevention, treatment and care until 2010 were established and included in the National Programme. Partnership Forum on HIV strengthened, five thematic TWG established under Partnership Forum and functioned on regular base. For the first time Annual Operational Plan for National programme was developed by TWGs and widely discussed among all interested partners. Due to continued advocacy, the importance of the preparation of National Report on UNGASS Declaration on HIV 2007 acknowledged at high political level and with support by UN JAP submitted in time. The multisectoral approach to fight HIV is acknowledged at the political level in Tajikistan. The “Three ones principals» are recognized in the country and used as a tool to improve coordination and National response

Due to advocacy and support provided by UN JAP, two representatives from high level Parliamentary of the Republic of Tajikistan , Vice-Speaker and Deputy, Member of Social Committee participated at first Inter Parliamentary Meeting on AIDS in Manila organized by

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Philippine Senate with support by UNDP and UNAIDS. Parliamentarians have a crucial role to play in fighting HIV/AIDS especially on stigma and discrimination. They can speak out against stigma and stand up for tolerance and non-discrimination. They can meet publicly with people living with HIV and support the development of a strong movement of people living with HIV. This meeting was aimed at discussing and approving the developed IPU Handbook **“Taking action against HIV”** and aimed at the Parliaments and Leadership in combating HIV/AIDS.

## **2. Advocacy and scaling up towards Universal Access (UA) to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.**

Due to conducted advocacy and technical support by UN HIV JAP and close collaboration with national partners the following activities were carried out: review of HIV testing policy conducted; new curriculum on HLSBE including HIV issues approved by M&E and introduction of the Programme started; strategy on HIV prevent from mother to child transmission agreed at country level and introduction started; new set of national indicators developed in accordance with National Programme and the results of M&E started to be used for planning and implementation process.

## **3. Increasing HIV awareness raising among the general population, including target groups**

### **National wide survey on knowledge, attitude, behaviour and practice among 15-24 young people.**

Until 2007 there were no data on the level of knowledge and risk behaviour among youth aged 15-24, which is more important indicator to evaluate the efficient of the awareness raise campaign. With support by UN JAP a nationwide survey on HIV prevention knowledge, attitude, practice and behaviour was conducted by Center of Strategic Researches under President of RT among young people between the ages of 15-24 in Tajikistan. Purpose of this survey was to examine the level of awareness, behavioural practice and ways of the HIV/AIDS prevention among young people of 15-24 years old and their attitude towards the HIV/AIDS problem. The results of survey were presented at National Round table and showed that about 77 per cent of young people ages 15-24 years have heard about HIV, and only 11% of them have comprehensive knowledge for formation of safe behaviour. These figures are confirmed by data from other surveys presented in this round table and conducted among schoolchildren, street kids and on gender issues , and the level of comprehensive knowledge are very low: 3,7%, 1,0% and 9% accordingly. At the same time, analyses of programmes implementation plans showed considerable part of investments of international donors were directed at raising the awareness of population on HIV/AIDS. It is necessary to review approaches of providing information to population, to work out information-education-communication strategy for conducting regular effective information campaigns and programmes by using all forms of Mass Media and other accessible and effective methods and acceleration of introducing healthy lifestyle issues in educational programmes.

### **Community mobilization programme**



In remote villages of the country, residents frequently encounter problems in having access to mass media due to the lack of regular newspapers. The only ways to receive information would be TV and radio, but the experience has shown that particularly in winter season, regions experience electricity cut for about five months and this put the

residents' access to electronic media under question. Various surveys show that people are aware of the HIV/AIDS prevalence, but only a small number of them can name the correct routes of HIV/AIDS transmission and its prevention. Community mobilization campaign is valued as an effective tool to deliver messages to large number of people. Taking into account the significance of this way of communication, a project proposal submitted by National Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan, was approved by UN JAP to fill this gap by covering 12 districts.

Community mobilization actions were conducted among community leaders and people of Panj, Shahritus, Kolkhozobod, Kumsangir, Baljuvon, Hamadoni, Farkhor, Kulob districts of Khatlon Region and Isfara, Istaravshan, Kayrakkum and Chkalovsk of Sughd Region. A total of 12 actions and 12 ToT seminars were conducted. The main objective of this project was to mobilize community leaders and to raise the awareness of people in 12 districts and towns of the country. ToT and awareness raising campaigns were conducted in close collaboration with regional authorities, regional representations of health, education and culture ministries of the country. All activities were widely covered by regional TV, radio and newspapers. The implementation of this programme was directed at raising the awareness of rural population on HIV/AIDS, particularly young people's awareness are rather low in comparison with urban young people. One of the reasons of low awareness of rural population and young people remains lack access to communication and Mass Media in remote districts. In this connection, it is necessary to actively use other opportunities of conducting campaigns in villages: work with Community leaders, religious leaders, distributing adapted IEC materials, presenting performances, with are very popular among rural population.

## **SPORTS AGAINST HIV/AIDS**

The project was aimed at mobilizing sportsmen and youth who actively deal with sport and raising their awareness on the prevention of HIV/AIDS, drug addiction and promoting healthy lifestyle. For the first time, governmental sport structures of Committee on youth, sports and tourism implemented such projects. According to the project, ToT training and 12 seminars were conducted for 20 sport trainers, physical training teachers and sportsmen in Dushanbe, Districts of Republican Subordination, Sughd and Khatlon regions on HIV/AIDS prevention. In addition, 12 sport tournaments under the slogan "Sports Against HIV/AIDS" were organised in Sughd and Khatlon regions. The project activities were widely covered by national and regional media, particularly 1<sup>st</sup> Channel of Tajik TV, TV Safina, Sado-I Dushanbe, Asia-Plus and Vatan radio stations.



regularly.

Within the framework of this project, a scientific and practical conference entitled "Women and Sports" was conducted in Dushanbe with the participation of women sports trainers from various regions of the country. Participants received handouts on HIV/AIDS prevention and a special presentation on the role of sport trainers in preventing HIV/AIDS was delivered by UN Joint HIV Advocacy Project. All women participating in the conference listened to HIV/AIDS issues presentation with interest. At the end, participants suggested conduct such campaigns

On October 18, the Republican Sports Boarding School of Tajikistan opened Sport Days in Dushanbe entitled "Sports against AIDS" with the technical assistance of the United Nations Joint HIV Advocacy Project. The Sport Days lasted until 9 December 2007 was dedicated to the

World AIDS Day for 2007. The participants of these sport events checked their strength in various forms of sport such as: archery, boxing, judo, Greco-Roman wrestling and football.

The main objective of this event was to promote sport activity among the boarding school students and population of Tajikistan, to strengthen friendly ties among sportsmen, and to promote the healthy lifestyle among youth in Tajikistan.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has taken the lives of millions of people like never before in the history of mankind. It is recognized that confronting the HIV/AIDS pandemic will require a wide range of coordinated actions spanning all sectors, including governments and civil society.

Therefore, the fight against HIV/AIDS is one of that the Olympic Movement must of necessity address by joining international partnerships to boost up the global response to this catastrophe. The world of sport is not separate from the rest of the world. Sport teaches life skills, builds self-esteem and confidence, all of which can be used in tackling the spread of HIV.

Within the framework of these sport events, participants and students of the boarding school were also provided with lectures to raise their awareness on the danger of HIV/AIDS and ways to prevent this pandemic by National AIDS Prevention Centre.

## WORLD AIDS DAY CAMPAIGNS

In this year, UN JAP with close collaboration with NCC, Center on HIV and NGOs initiated conducting of expanded national wide WAD campaign, with development of Campaign' action plan, improving coordination, involving new partners and using innovated approaches to conducting campaigns.



The World AIDS campaigns started with installing five thematic billboards in various locations of Dushanbe. More concretely, five billboards were installed in Sadbagr, Turning to Dushanbe airport, Rudaki Avenue, Sultoni Kabir and Korvon markets, also the campaign was announced with billboards in the city by using “creeping line”.

**Mass media involvement.** The majority of activities carried out by the UN Joint HIV Advocacy Project during the campaign were covered by local and international print and electronic media. Special programmes on HIV/AIDS were prepared by Radio Tajikistan, Radio Sado-I Dushanbe, TV Safina, SMT – Independent TV of Tajikistan and 1<sup>st</sup> Channel of Tajik TV. Despite the efforts, the media awareness on HIV/AIDS issues remains low.

### **Thematic films demonstration on HIV/AIDS**



For the first time, the demonstration of thematic films on HIV/AIDS problems, particularly on stigma and discrimination was organized in Dushanbe. A three-day free movies demonstration was conducted in Dushanbe’s Kokhi Jomi Hall from November 29 to December 1. Free tickets were distributed among students of universities and secondary schools of Dushanbe. Two films, Philadelphia and City Without Sun were demonstrated. The majority of audience praised the film “Philadelphia” that tells about

stigma and discrimination. To be noted that this event was conducted in close collaboration with Tajik National AIDS Prevention Centre. The film days were continued within the framework of films week, dedicated to human rights protection.

### **“Music Against AIDS”. Symphonic Concert and Photo Exhibition.**

On December 1, a symphonic concert entitled “Music Against AIDS” and a photo exhibition were conducted at Lohuti Theatre of Dushanbe. The orchestra of the Tajik Opera and Ballet Theatre named after Sadriddin Ayni performed the concert. Also, local NGO Guli Surkh organized a photo exhibition on the issues related to stigma and discrimination of PLWH.



**Symphonic Concert “Music Against AIDS”**

### **Young people against HIV/AIDS**

A sport competition was conducted in Dushanbe among students from higher schools of Dushanbe on WAD with the assistance of UN JAP. This event was organized by Dushanbe branch of Committee on the affairs with youth, sports and tourism under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. Also an essay writing competition was conducted among secondary school students of Dushanbe as part of awareness campaign on WAD among schoolchildren.



## Mobile Phone Company INDIGO joined WAD Campaigns in Tajikistan

In 2007 first time the private sector was involved in the National Campaign on WAD. On December 1, Mobile Company INDIGO Tajikistan agreed to contribute to WAD campaigns and sent SMS to its subscribers with HIV prevention message and WAD highlight content. It also expressed its readiness to distribute information lists through its dealers. A special information list has been developed in close collaboration with the above-mentioned company and Center on HIV.

At the same time, series of events and information campaigns were conducted during national campaigns, dedicated to World AIDS Day in other towns and districts of the country. This year's campaign was conducted that was more organized, coordinated and implemented by a united centre. This campaign showed the successfulness of various events, directed at various target groups by using various methods and impacts. It also showed the necessity of conducting events for various target groups. It is important to use this experience, to conduct events for target groups and to broaden conducting such campaigns in rural areas.

## Strengthening Partnership. Partnership Forum



The Partnership Forum on HIV/AIDS was formed within the framework of National Coordination Committee to fight HIV, tuberculosis and malaria that unites representatives from governmental sectors, civil society and international organizations for discussing and preparing most important issues and decisions for the approval of NCC. Within the framework of TGW, this forum is conducted twice a year. The last Partnership Forum conducted in Kokhi Vahdat, Dushanbe on

November 30 on the eve of World AIDS Day was particularly significant. The second Partnership Forum coincided with awarding JMA. The forum was organised by National Committee to fight HIV, tuberculosis and malaria in Tajikistan with the technical assistance of UN JAP and UNAIDS Country office. Representatives from more than 70 key partners of national and regional governmental, UN, international organisations and SCOs, including PLWH took part in the forum.

The launch of National Programme to response HIV epidemic in the Republic of Tajikistan for the period of 2007-2010, National plan on monitoring and evaluation for the programme, set of targets on Universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support and the draft of the Operational plan for the National Programme was included into agenda. At the Partnership Forum, Chief of the Department of health, women and family affairs from the Tajik Presidential Office Ms. Zebo Unusova and UN Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan Mr. Michael P. Jones made speeches to welcome the forum participants. Representatives from ministries of health, education, defense, TV and Radio Broadcasting Committee at the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Secretariat of National Coordination Committee to fight HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, non-governmental organisations, including organisations defending the interests of



PLWH. During the forum, TWG on monitoring and evaluation with the technical assistance of UNAIDS widely presented information on preparation of national report on monitoring the implementation of Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS for 2007. Information about UNAIDS and WHO AIDS epidemic update and Joint press release on updated Global HIV prevalence were presented by WHO office. Also updated information on web-site of NCC was presented at the Forum.

During the Partnership Forum, the ceremony of awarding Jonathan Mann Award for 2007 was held. This year, three candidates were nominated into JMA. The nominees were local NGO “Guli Surkh”, Branch of the National AIDS Prevention Centre in Sughd Region and independent journalist Rustam Tursunov. The branch of National AIDS Prevention Centre of Sughd Region was chosen for this award.



#### **4. Greater involvement of PLWH and breaking the barriers of stigma and discrimination**

Within the framework of the project, regular supports are provided to NGOs working with vulnerable groups, particularly People living with HIV (PLWH). In 2007 assistance was provided to PLWH in organizing public event and photo exhibition on World AIDS Day and International AIDS Memorial Day conducted in May 2007. This campaign was directed at forming the society’s tolerance towards PLWH and fight stigma and discrimination.

Up to present, no concrete information was available in the country that could define the level of stigmatization in society against PLWH. For the first time, in 2007 with the support of UN JAP a survey on stigmatization and discrimination of all forms of discrimination against people living with HIV (PLWH) was conducted. The aim of the study is to analyze the stigmatization and forms of discrimination against PLWH, to identify the needs and problems of PLWH and to determine the attitude of others toward PLWH in Tajikistan. The attitude of society toward PLWH would be best observed if they have knowledge on HIV transmission routes. The study shows that more than 96% of the respondents interviewed said that they knew how HIV is transmitted, but only 67% of them correctly named three routes of HIV transmission. Moreover, comparing this study’s results with the results of study on young people’s behaviors between the ages of 15-24 in Tajikistan (2006), it is stressed that despite the high level of awareness on HIV/AIDS existence among population, concrete knowledge on transmissions routes and prevention measures remains rather low (12%). The level of knowledge about the fact that PLWH live in concrete cities and districts in Tajikistan, was also high 74%.

These figures remain serious concern because stigma and discrimination is the main factors of ways to universal access to HIV/AIDS services and requires undertaking urgent measures to reduce stigma.

#### **Plans for future:**

The experience of implementing this project showed its significant preference. Within the framework of actions of every UN agency, implementing tasks, directed at fighting HIV/AIDS is compulsory and is implemented by every UN organization in accordance with their mandate,

opportunities of providing resources and technical expertise. However, other aspects to fight HIV/AIDS are existed where UN agencies opportunities can be united, coordinated and concentrated on efforts to achieve universal goals. These achievements were resulted in forming UN Joint Advocacy Project on HIV in Tajikistan. The continuation of this project is planed for 2008 as well and it would be implemented in close collaboration with NCC, representatives from governmental sector, civil society and international partners for conducting joint actions in the following fields:

- **High level advocacy and Implementation of the “Three Ones” principles at country level**
- **Advocacy for and scaling up towards universal access to HIV prevention treatment, care and support and vulnerability reduction of targeted groups**
- **Greater involvement of PLWHA and breaking the barriers of stigma and discrimination**
- **Increasing HIV awareness among the general population, including targeted groups**
- **New partners involvement in the national response**
- **Addressing the growing feminization of the epidemic**
- **Strengthening of UN Joint programming on HIV and UN Joint Team on AIDS**