



Involving TB-affected communities in Ukraine

One of the most important activities foreseen within the project “**Creating a Favorable Sociopolitical Situation for Transfer to the Outpatient TB Treatment Model in Ukraine**”, implemented by the foundation “Ukrainians Against Tuberculosis” and funded by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, focused on a greater involvement of TB-affected communities in the response to TB epidemic in Ukraine.

Although TB epidemic in Ukraine was announced in 1995, there is still a lot of work to be done to successfully combat and eliminate the epidemics. One of the key tools to do so is to actively involve TB-affected communities in the decision-making processes when it comes to TB diagnostics and treatment.

The term “TB-affected communities” includes not only people sick with TB and those, who have already been cured, but also members of their families and all those who were in close contact with such people (co-workers, extended family, close friends, doctors, etc.). The knowledge of TB affected communities is indispensable. Those, who have treated and/or have suffered from TB, have an invaluable personal experience, in-depth understanding and know-how of the functioning of the TB care system in Ukraine - not only how it operates, but how effective, patient-oriented, convenient and accessible it is.

The inclusion and involvement of TB affected communities and TB survivors in public health policy remain a key for examining the subjective and social characteristics of the disease. They can provide an in-sight on variety of issues, including what constitutes barriers to receiving TB care, what are obstacles to treatment completion, how to overcome stigma and discrimination, and what activities could lead to the development of more effective and patient-friendly TB control programs in Ukraine.

Greater participation of affected communities in planning, monitoring and implementation of the National TB Program is vital to develop integrated approaches covering all participants and will lead to selection of the best treatment methods.

To successfully address the lack of the engagement of TB-affected communities in the decision-making process when it comes to public health policy, the foundation “Ukrainians Against



Tuberculosis” held a workshop on Outpatient TB treatment model for activists from the TB affected community in April this year, in Kyiv. During the workshop all fifteen representatives of the TB-affected communities from various regions of Ukraine decided to found a national network “All-Ukrainian Association of people who recover from tuberculosis”.



Later in the year, the members of new founded network took part in various round-tables and coordination meetings such as the round table discussion on

social inclusion and financial support mechanisms for TB survivors and their families to ensure adherence to the TB treatment in the framework of ambulatory care model, which was held in Zhytomyr in June, and the round table discussion on ways to provide TB diagnostics and treatment services to hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations whilst transfer the current hospital-bed based system to ambulatory treatment model, which was held in Kherson in July.

The benefits of such national network can already be seen. Following the roundtable discussions, the members of the All-Ukrainian Association of people, who recover from tuberculosis developed and published a Handbook for TB Sufferers, where they shared their experience in response to this disease.



Furthermore, the network is exploring ways how to fight TB, when working with hard-to-reach communities, and how to work closer with public activists, who initiate social mobilization campaigns and can win trust of communities and vulnerable populations in Ukraine.



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