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KAZAKHSTAN

CASE STUDY

The Province Focuses on TB Patients

USAID helps the East Kazakhstan Province to enhance support for TB patients and increase treatment success



A TB laboratory worker. Photo: USAID

“My main job is to fight with TB, but I am trying not only to provide clinical care to clients, but help them and their families to solve their social problems.”

- says doctor Gulshat Ikenova, of the Abay District Central TB hospital.

CHALLENGE: Tuberculosis (TB) mainly affects low-income and socially vulnerable population groups. In Kazakhstan, nine out of ten people with infectious form of TB need social support, yet until recently, only half of them received support. Such TB patients tend to abandon their treatment early, posing risk not only to themselves, but also to everyone around them. This problem is especially acute in the Eastern Kazakhstan Province, which houses a penitentiary TB facility. In 2008, one-third of new TB cases in the province were diagnosed as multi-drug resistant (MDR), a complicated TB form that requires lengthy, costly, and difficult treatment. Among the previously treated TB cases, two-thirds were multi-drug resistant.

INITIATIVE: In January 2009 USAID launched a two-year project to improve the management and social support of MDR-TB cases in the province. The project was implemented by the KNCV TB Foundation in cooperation with Kazakhstan’s National TB Center. Together with the province’s health, social, and prison system’s organizations, the project developed a model for psycho-social support of TB patients. Once the model was approved by the local authorities, USAID’s project helped to launch two psycho-social support groups for people with MDR TB in the towns of Oskemen and Semei. The support groups included psychologists, TB nurses, and social workers and focused their efforts on 65 MDR-TB patients in order to enhance their treatment success. To ensure that medical professionals have necessary skills, the project also trained 32 tuberculosis nurses and 10 social workers in interpersonal communication.

“My main job is to fight with TB but I am trying not only to provide clinical care to clients but help them and their families to solve their social problems,” says doctor Gulshat Ikenova, one of the trained specialists from the Abay District Central TB hospital, Semey Region. Doctor Ikenova regularly represents her support group at the Abay District Coordination Council under the district governor. Doctor Ikenova informs about the needs of the TB patients and their family members, and works with the council to identify ways to address them.

RESULT: Due to such efforts, the East Kazakhstan Province government increased funds for food supplements, transportation and other TB patients’ needs in 10 oblast’s regions. For example, the city of Semey increased funding for various support measures sevenfold from 2009 to 2010. The city now provides a 3,000 tenge (about \$20) monthly allowance for 100 TB patients (mainly MDR-TB) during the outpatient phase of their treatment. Additionally, hundreds of patients receive fuel and food supplements. “Together with my colleagues we provide TB patients with food parcels and in winter give them charcoal,” says doctor Ikenova. The support group also works together with the city government to find jobs for the unemployed family members of their TB patients. Within a year’s time, TB treatment adherence in the province has gone from 52 percent to 96 percent.