



DONORS PRINCIPALS IN TAJIKISTAN

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PRESS RELEASE¹

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Tajikistan tackling HIV/AIDS threat

Tajikistan has the lowest HIV infection rate per capita in the Central Asian region. However, evidence indicates that HIV is spreading rapidly. With 1% of the population infected by 2008 Tajikistan would be at the earliest stages of an HIV/AIDS epidemic. Therefore, there is cause for serious concern. Taking into account the factors conducive to the spread of HIV infection, experts have estimated that the number of HIV-infected people in the country may rise from an estimated 4,000 cases in 2004 to 10,000 by end 2006. At this rate the number of HIV infected cases may double every thirteen months.

HIV/AIDS in Tajikistan is driven largely by the strong increase of intravenous drug users, but returning migrant workers as well as prostitution, are also spreading the infection into the population at large.

Approximately 80% of reported cases are young people less than 30 years old. Many young people lack the information and means necessary to protect themselves from HIV infection, including access to condoms and other health care services such as voluntary counseling and testing. Clearly, the time to address this problem among youth in Tajikistan is now, if Tajikistan is to prevent the potential catastrophic impact of an epidemic.

The National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan places a priority on prevention and awareness. The Plan aims to set up youth awareness campaigns as well as harm reduction programmes for drug users. Specific programmes have been designed for migrant labourers. Additional programmes have been set up for prisoners and other vulnerable groups.

Tajikistan was the first country in the CIS that successfully mobilized large-scale resources to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic. A grant was provided by the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria for more than US \$10 million — for the period 2003 to 2010, delivered through the UN's Development Programme.

In the last couple of years, funding for HIV/AIDS prevention by the international donor community has sharply increased. Currently, more than US \$20m has been committed to the fight against HIV/AIDS by the international donor community in Central Asia and Tajikistan, including by the ADB, CIDA, DFID, the Dutch Government, the Global Fund, USAID, the World Bank,

¹ This press release is issued by the Ambassadors or Representatives of donor Embassies and Organisations which participate in regular donor coordination meetings called '*Principals Meetings*', with a rotating chairperson. Those represented by this joint press release include AKDN, ADB, Canada, EBRD, European Commission, France, Germany, IMF, OSCE, Switzerland, UK, UN and USA. The current chairman is Fernand Pillonel, EBRD

and other UN system organizations. This sudden availability of financial resources has scaled up the fight against HIV/AIDS in the country. However, one of the limiting factors for the rapid expansion of activities is the inadequate capacity at national and sub-national levels to implement the many programmes.

In the view of the Donor Principals, despite much good work done and more resources becoming available, there remains an urgent need to:

1. Scale up the national HIV/AIDS response, especially to the rural communities and develop sectoral strategies that facilitate the implementation of the national strategic plan in rural areas;
2. Strengthen national coordination and harmonize existing systems among the different partners;
3. Accelerate the introduction of school HIV/AIDS education programmes;
4. Develop a national communication strategy on HIV/AIDS, including better informing Tajik youth through the mass media on HIV/AIDS, the Government's efforts in tackling this problem, and how to prevent it;
5. Prevent stigmatization and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS and promote their human rights and participation in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The international donor community continues to provide technical assistance to the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan in its effort to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Providentially, unlike other nations in the region such as Russia and Ukraine where the HIV/AIDS epidemic became widespread in less than a decade, Tajikistan is in the fortunate position of still having the opportunity to halt this rapidly growing problem. With continued Government leadership, and international assistance, focusing available and incoming resources on prevention, care and treatment, Tajikistan could still become 'the country that stopped AIDS'!