

Minutes
of
Policy and Advocacy Advisory Council Meeting: 14

The PAAC meeting was held at the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health on May 16, 2018 at 16:00.

Objectives:

- to discuss a draft HIV/AIDS National Strategic Plan for 2019-2022
- to discuss a draft TB National Strategic Plan for 2019-2022
- to discuss the G-CCM Transition Plan

Attendees:

<i>Maia Lagvilava</i>	Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, PAAC Chair
<i>Tamar Gabunia</i>	URC, CCM Vice Chair
<i>Ketevan Chkhatarashvili</i>	Consultant
<i>Irma Khonelidze</i>	National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC), Deputy Director
<i>Ketevan Stvilia</i>	NCDC, GF HIV Program Manager
<i>Nino Mamulashvili</i>	Programs coordinator, WHO
<i>Irine Javakhadze</i>	Ministry of Finance of Georgia, Budget department/State and consolidated Budget Formulation Division, Chief Specialist, PAAC member
<i>Natalia Zaqareishvili</i>	UNFPA, Program Analyst, PAAC Member
<i>Nino Lomtadze</i>	Head of Surveillance and Strategic Planning Department, Coordinator of the GF TB Program, National Center of Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases
<i>Mzia Tabatadze</i>	Consultant, “Alternativa Georgia”
<i>Nino Tsereteli</i>	Consultant, Center for Information and Counseling on Reproductive Health - Tanadgoma, executive director
<i>Lika Mamatsashvili</i>	Center for Information and Counseling on Reproductive Health - Tanadgoma
<i>Nino Gabunia</i>	Tbilisi City Hall
<i>Maia Tsereteli</i>	National Center for Disease Control and Public Health
<i>Konstantine Labartkava</i>	NGO, New Vector
<i>Tinatin Kotrikadze</i>	MSF
<i>Khatuna Todadze</i>	Center for Mental Health and Prevention of Addiction
<i>Giorgi Soselia</i>	MdM, Advocacy officer
<i>Natia Khonelidze</i>	CCM, Administrative Assistant
<i>Tamar Zurashvili</i>	PAAC, Policy and Advocacy Specialist

The meeting was opened by **Dr. Tamar Gabunia**, CCM Vice Chair, who welcomed the attendees and introduced the purpose of the meeting: To agree on the new nominee for the PAAC Chair; to discuss the current status and key issues of the development of national strategic plans for HIV/AIDS and TB, as well as the to discuss the Georgia CCM Transition Plan.

Dr. Gabunia nominated Dr. Maia Lagvilava, MoLHSA Deputy Minister, on the position of the PAAC Chair. PAAC members agreed with no objection. Dr. Gabunia gave floor to Dr. Maia Lagvilava.

Dr. Maia Lagvilava thanked the audience and expressed her readiness to actively participate in all discussions within the PAAC. She gave floor to Dr. Ketevan Chkhatarashvili, consultant working on the development of Georgia HIV/AIDS National Strategic document for the period 2019-2022.

Dr. Ketevan Chkhatarashvili presented the draft Georgia HIV/AIDS National Strategic Plan for 2019-2022. Firstly, she talked about the main achievements in the country within the implementation of the previous strategy and the remaining challenges that will serve as the bases for the activities envisioned in the new strategic plan. Dr. Chkhatarashvili emphasized the fact that the coverage with preventive services has sufficiently increased in various key populations, although timely detection and involvement in treatment remains a challenge; it is important to agree on realistic indicators while developing a new strategy. She also spoke about the progress on 90-90-90 targets, where the first 90 remains a challenge, only 48% of estimated PLHIV are diagnosed and noted that it will be the main focus of the new strategic plan. While talking about the main achievements Dr. Chkhatarashvili mentioned Hepatitis C state program and underlined the importance of strengthening integration of HIV testing within the program. Other achievements include provision of PrEP by CSO's, decreased cases of vertical transmission, takeover of funding OST program by state and removing co-financing, increased coverage with ART among diagnosed and increased achievements in viral suppression among those on treatment (81% and 89% respectively). The following challenges were mentioned: necessary legal changes to ensure access to services for KP's, early detection and timely inclusion in treatment programs, knowledge of KP's regarding risk behavior, patient care and preventive programs are largely reliant on donor financing and infrastructure of the AIDS center. These challenges define the main directions of the strategy: (1) Prevention, (2) Treatment and Care and (3) Governance and Policy Development. In addition, it was underlined that the main directions and activities of the strategy will be in line with the 3rd SDG of and 90-90-90 strategy. Dr. Chkhatarashvili briefly presented activities for these main directions. It was noted that the activities were in part agreed with a number of stakeholders and the consultation process is still underway. Since the strategic plan will be approved by the government, the TSP activities for all the above-mentioned directions will be incorporated in the strategy document.

Discussion was held on the following main issues:

- **Mr. Konstantine Labartkava** stated that there is a need to increase suboxone replacement programs in relation to increasing the availability of OST programs.
- In relation to safe blood section it was mentioned that the latter is widely discussed and presented in the National Strategic Plan for Hepatitis C and should be synchronized with it.
- The importance of timely approval of HIV preventive packages for KAPs was emphasized; this is an important issue for preparing the strategy budget. **Ms. Natalia Zakareishvili** noted that all

documents are ready and agreed with the Ministry of Health and will be submitted to the Council of Guidelines and Standards for approval in the nearest future.

- **Dr. Irma Khonelidze** noted that it will be necessary to focus on specific gender needs in the strategy document.
- Dr. Maia Lagvilava focused on integrating HIV and Hep. C screening activities. She talked about Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti pilot project, where HIV, Hep. C and TB careening activities are carried out simultaneously and noted that in case of successful pilot it will be routinely implemented throughout the country. She also underlined the fact that all new events/activities planned within Hepatitis C program are already planned in line with HIV screening activities.

PAAC Chair gave floor to Dr. Tamar Gabunia, consultant working on the development of Georgia TB National Strategic document for the period 2019-2022.

Dr. Tamar Gabunia presented the draft Georgia TB National Strategic Plan for 2019-2022. She spoke about the basis of the preparation of the document and emphasized the fact that the strategy is in line with the global strategies and targets for TB prevention, management and control. It was noted that the process of developing the document is ongoing with active involvement of all stakeholders, consultation meeting were held with key partners such as National Center for TB and Lung Diseases, National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, TB Coalition, Principal Recipient and etc. Dr. Gabunia talked about the current progress in regard with the 2016-2020 targets. There is a significant decrease in TB mortality and TB incidence; however, the rates of successful treatment among MDR cases are still low. Dr. Gabunia talked about the existing model of TB service delivery, utilization of hospital services and data of hospital stays and emphasized the importance of remodeling to people-centered outpatient service, which will be properly reflected in the strategy document. She also talked about challenging issues related to human resources in TB field: personnel age, low motivation, and low salaries. Delays in implementation of TB Electronic Module developed with the support of USAID and the provision of TB services by private providers after the expiration of the term of the contract (2018) were also mentioned among the challenging issues. Dr. Gabunia talked about the objectives of the strategy: detection and diagnosis, treatment and patient support and supportive environment and systems and presented strategic interventions for each objective; and also talked about the financial resources needed for implementing the strategic plan. Similar to HIV/AIDS strategy, major TSP activities will be incorporated in the TB strategy document.

Discussion was held on the following main issues:

- While discussing on targets, it was agreed that the targets for TB mortality and TB incidence will be maintained the same by 2022; the targets for the proportion of MDR TB among new and relapse cases will be less than 12% and 35% respectively; the target for detection rate of MDR TB will be 100%.
- The need and importance of TB Electronic Module was stressed during the discussion; It was noted that it would be necessary to provide adequate technical support for its functioning. The Module is the property of the Social Service Agency (SSA) and the relevant regulations from SSA should be ensued.

- Discussion was held on the National TB Program central unit - TB Council; the importance of strengthening the operation of this unit was emphasized.
- While discussing the analysis of funding sources Dr. Irma Khonelidze noted that the GF financing for the second and third line drugs for 2019 budget is estimated to be 50% and 75% for 2020-2022; financing of adherence to treatment regimens (cash incentives) for MDR patients is almost fully transferred to state funding and for sensitive patients – it is funded through GF and it is expected to maintain the same pace. For Xpert MTB/RIF, MGIT and LPA lab investigations it was noted that the same pace should be maintained; the cost of cartridges with its warranties will be financed by the GF, and in the case of others the gradual transition to state funding should be ensued.

During the meeting, Dr. Irma Khonelidze once again encouraged the representatives of civil society and KAPs to actively engage in the process of NSPs development; she noted that for both strategies priorities, objectives and activities are identified and underlined the importance of disseminating these information and key issues to all civil society stakeholders in order to timely receive their feedback and make relevant reflections in NSP documents.

Dr. Maia Lagvilava gave floor to Ms. Tamar Zurashvili, PAAC Policy and Advocacy Specialist; she presented the last version of CCM Transition Plan. The development of the plan is supported by GIZ and EHG consultant are working on the elaboration of the plan.

Ms. Tamar Zurashvili briefly reminded the committee members about the development process of the CCM transition plan; she talked about the main focuses of the plan and activities envisioned. She proposed PAAC member to make agreement on the title of the future CCM: The Country Coordinating Mechanism for Communicable Diseases or the Country Coordinating Mechanism against HIV Infection/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis C, and Sexually Transmitted Infections, as well as to agree on the issue of considering the increase of the representation of civil society with the reduction of the quantity of the future CCM members. Ms. Zurashvili also mentioned that consultations are underway regarding some budget items in the plan.

According to Dr. Ketevan Chkhatarashvili, it would be better to avoid addition of extra functions to the CCM mandate during the transition period. Considering the experience of other countries, the more functions will have the CCM, the less attention will be paid to HIV/AIDS and TB issues. Depending on the political importance of hepatitis C, the latter may consume the most time of the CCM and might reduce the attention on AIDS and TB issues.

Dr. Irma Khonelidze noted that after the transition period, by 2020 hepatitis C will be eliminated in Georgia.

Dr. Maia Lagvilava noted that currently there are many crosscutting issues for HIV/AIDS, TB and hepatitis C programs and therefor the latter might be added to the mandate of the CCM.

Dr. Ketevan Chkhatarashvili noted that three days ago the Global Fund approved innovative approaches to the future functioning of the CCMs (CCM Evolution Strategy); In her opinion, the plan should be in compliance with the above-mentioned strategy.

Dr. Tamar Gabunia noted that it would be better to get familiar and review the CCM Evolution Strategy and to discuss the key issues of the plan together with the consultants in accordance with this strategy.

At the conclusion Dr. Maia Lagvilava summarized the meeting and thanked the participants.

Decision points:

- The draft HIV/AIDS and TB National Strategic Plans will be presented and discussed at the CCM meeting on May 18, 2018;
- Consultants will continue working on the documents in an active consultation mode.

Minutes prepared by Tamar Zurashvili

Policy and Advocacy Specialist, PAAC