

Georgia Country Coordinating Mechanism

Oversight Committee

Field visits to Gori

23 January 2017

Sites visited:

1. Centre for Mental Health and Prevention of Addiction - Gori Branch
2. TB Centre in Gori (Gorimed)
3. Step to the Future (harm reduction centre)

The purpose of the visits was to discuss the current status of the implementation of GFATM-funded GEO-H-NCDC programmes and to identify challenges that impede their operations. An additional goal was to meet the beneficiaries of those programmes to gain first-hand information about their satisfaction and needs in terms of service provision.

Objective of the visits:

1. Collect information from sub and sub-sub grantees about the implantation of GFATM-funded programmes, their performance and operations;
2. Review the challenges in the process of grant implementation;
3. Discuss ways of improving the operation of programmes.

Methodology:

- ✓ Discussion with the project implementation staff;
- ✓ Conducting interviews with beneficiaries of programmes.

Centre for Mental Health and Prevention of Addiction - Gori Branch

Participants:

Tamar Bortsvadze – CCM, OC Chair

Irina Grdzeldze – CCM, Executive Secretary

Natia Khonelidze – CCM, Administrative Assistant

Ekaterine Ruadze – NCDCPH, PIU, HIV M&E Officer

Khatuna Kolotashvili – Program Coordinator

Liana Fitskhelauri - Social Worker

Tamar Lomsadze – Physician Narcologist

Irma Gviniashvili - Physician Narcologist

Nadia Fsuturi – Psychologist

Dali Kereselidze – Nurse

Tsitsino Aduashvili – Senior Nurse

Overview -After a brief introduction about the mandate of the Oversight Committee (OC) and the purpose of the visit, the discussions touched upon the general management of the programme, the provision of financial resources in timely manner by the sub-recipient of the GFATM, the availability of the stock of medicines, and challenges faced during the implementation process.

The director of the branch, KhatunaKolotashvili, guided an observation of the working process of the OST centre. She highlighted that there are no delays in terms of the methadone delivery process and indicated that the centre has a stock of the medicines until April this year. Currently, the centre accommodates 67 beneficiaries who come to the centre on a regular basis to get treatment.

The staff of the centre indicated they are aware of the current developments in terms of the termination of the Global Fund's finances on the methadone programmes; however, they remain hopeful that the government will ensure continuous provision of the service at the current level without any impediments.

Observation -One of the impediments to beneficiaries receiving adequate consultations related to the limited space availability in the centre. The physiologist and the social worker share one room and are available simultaneously. This leads to frequent situations in which one of the specialists needs to leave the room during a consultation. This creates an inconvenient environment for a beneficiary to receive a convenient service or have consultations face-to-face.

A beneficiary's view - one of the beneficiaries who came to the methadone centre for the service expressed his satisfaction with the services and the friendly environment provided by the staff. However, he expressed a desire for the availability of take-home doses of the medicine. According to him, he travels from one of the villages to Gori on an everyday-basis to get the treatment – this is associated with a lot of financial resources spent on travel. The beneficiary was aware about the possible termination of finances for OST. He mentioned that given his daily travel expenses, in the event of the service becoming costly it would be impossible for him to get treatment.

TB Centre in Gori (Gorimed)

Participants:

Tamar Bortsvadze – CCM, OC Chair

Irina Grdzelidze – CCM, Executive Secretary

Natia Khonelidze – CCM, Administrative Assistant

Manana Gongadze – TB programme regional coordinator at Gori (Gorimed)

Ekaterine Ruadze – NCDCPH, PIU, HIV M&E Officer

Maka Danelia – NCDC, PIU, TB M&E officer

The meeting was dedicated to the discussion of the epidemiological situation of TB in the region, the current or potential challenges for the centre in ensuring quality service provision, and ways to address them. The following issues were underlined:

Supply of anti-TB drugs and their transfer from one site to another – According to the TB regional coordinator, Manana Gongadze, the supply of anti-TB medicines (procurement of TB drugs is currently carried out with financial support from the Global Fund) as well as their distribution to service delivery sites and their replenishment throughout the regions is conducted on time. However, challenges remain in terms of transferring left-over stock (where necessary) from one site to another. This could be related to some malfunctioning of financial procedures or the delivery mechanism, which would need to be studied and addressed accordingly. This would allow the TB sites to transfer unnecessary stock of TB medicines (the stock could be accumulated in a centre if a patient drops-out from treatment) to another site if required.

Side-effect management – In terms of the availability of drugs necessary to manage the side-effects of TB treatment, the site can guarantee stock until the end of March. However, due to decreased finances, after that date the centre will not be able to ensure provision of drugs. This could create a burden for those patients who, due to their social and economic circumstances, do not have sufficient resources to purchase the necessary drugs and could lead to failures of health care providers to effectively manage these complications. Although monetary incentives are provided to patients to increase adherence to treatment (through the Global Fund's support and government contributions), this might not be sufficient to ensure the desired outcomes, especially in terms of those related to complex and costly DR-TB management.

Increasing adherence support – The centre has already hired two personnel (one of them a former TB patient) who will work on adherence support for patients. Special training/sessions concerning adherence issues are scheduled for March. The coordinator of the site is hopeful that the adherence of patients will be increased considerably through this approach. Currently, 37 patients with drug-susceptible TB and 15 with XDR TB are registered in Gori. The overall

number of patients with drug-susceptible TB is 73 and 31 with XDR TB region-wide. The increasing number of M/XDR patients represents one of the major concerns for the region.

The involuntary isolation and detection of M/XDR-TB patients has commenced from January 2017. However, according to the site's staff, in reality it is difficult to implement this in the region because of the lack of the mechanism.

There are some challenges in terms of **data collection** that are mainly related to old practices of filling out special sheets and not the online-based data, although sometimes there might be delays in terms of inserting all the data into the latter. Further capacity building activities are desirable in this direction.

Step to the Future

Participants:

Tamar Bortsvadze – CCM, OC Chair

Irina Grdzolidze – CCM, Executive Secretary

Natia Khonelidze – CCM, Administrative Assistant

Ekaterine Ruadze – NCDCPH, PIU, HIV M&E Officer

Maka Danelia – NCDCPH, PIU, TB M&E Officer

Matiam Baindurashvili – VCT Consultant

Bachana Khutsishvili – VCT Consultant

Ketevan Bidzinashvili – Board Chairperson

The meeting addressed the following issues:

Changes in registration – Recently, the organisation started the unification of beneficiary registration, moving from 7 digit-long identifiers to a 15 digit-long identification system. The transition process was smooth in the organisation as they have already used this system for testing.

Expanding outreach activities – Mobile ambulances have given the opportunity for the organisation to conduct outreach and PWID-community mobilisation activities beyond the Shida Kartli and Kakheti (the organisation has a branch in Telavi) regions. Recently, Step to the Future extended its involvement towards the Samtske-Javakheti area and that is proceeding well. The organisation is hopeful that the coverage of those people who require harm reduction services will be extended.

A more comprehensive approach – The GFATM has recently started a more comprehensive approach towards the prevention of HIV through addressing the needs of both PWIDs and their sexual partners. Improved access to other sexual health and need-based services are an integral component of the approach. Due to this, the monthly limit of consultations for the whole harm reduction centre has been increased from 15 to 25 per month and now also covers the partners of PWIDs. According to the centre, this is a step forward in achieving better outcomes in terms of HIV and STI prevention.

No issues regarding management, the transfer of financial resources or communication to the donor have been identified by the organisation; however, the desire for less frequent reporting (quarterly instead of monthly reporting) to the NCDC/GFATM was expressed and the development of a special and easy-to-fill reporting tool is considered desirable. In addition, desire was expressed towards having a special tool, a guideline that would enable a social worker to assess a beneficiary, to create a comprehensive social profile and identify needs for harm reduction interventions that would enable a social worker to address his/her needs adequately. According to the principal recipient, needle and syringe programme (NSP) guidelines and

standards are under development and the issue raised by the sub-sub recipient (SSR) will be addressed, capacity building will also be provided where necessary.

Transition plan – The organisation is actively involved in the development of guidelines and protocols for harm reduction services as a part of its transition planning. In addition, the organisation is actively working with the government to ensure that it continues collaboration and resource provision for the sustainability of harm reduction interventions in the region.

A beneficiary's view - one beneficiary expressed a desire for the distribution of plasters or special cotton that would enable them to stop further bleeding after injections.