

## **Georgia Country Coordinating Mechanism**

### **Oversight Committee**

#### **Field visits to Batumi**

**31 January – 1 February, 2017**

#### **Sites visited:**

1. Infectious Diseases, AIDS and TB Regional Centre in Batumi
2. Georgian Harm Reduction Network (GHRN)/Imedi
3. Tanadgoma
4. HIV/AIDS Patients Support Foundation, Batumi branch

**The purpose of the visits** was to assess the current status of the implementation of GFATM-funded GEO-H-NCDC programmes and to identify challenges that impede their operations.

#### **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 challenges in the process of grant implementation.
3. Discuss ways of improving the operation of programmes.

#### **Methodology:**

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

All these organisations have direct communication with program beneficiaries (Female sex workers (FSWs), Men who have sex with men (MSMs), and injecting drug users (IDUs)).

## **1. Infectious Diseases, AIDS and TB Regional Centre in Batumi**

#### **Participants:**

Tamar Bortsvadze – CCM, OC Chair

Irina Grdzeldze – CCM, Executive Secretary

Natia Khonelidze – CCM, Administrative Assistant

Giorgi Soselia - M&E Specialist at NCDC/GFATM

Dr. Jemal Dumbadze – Infectious Diseases, AIDS and TB Regional Centre, Director/GF Program sub-manager

Marina Mgeladze - Infectious Diseases, AIDS and TB Regional Centre, nurse

Dr. Dimitri Tsetskhladze - Infectious Diseases, AIDS and TB Regional Centre, Head of TB department

## **HIV/AIDS**

The meeting at the Infectious Diseases, AIDS and TB Regional Centre in Batumi started with a meeting with Dr. Jemal Dumbadze, Infectious Diseases, AIDS and TB Regional Centre Director/GF Program sub-manager. After discussing the epidemiological situation in the region and current trends, the discussions touched upon the delivery of HIV medicines and sufficiency of stock. Dr. Dumbadze mentioned that there have not been any delays regarding supply of medicines and the last stock had been delivered a couple of weeks before the OC visit and are sufficient to last for another full month. However, according to him, heavy snow in Batumi and the Adjara Region has impeded on-site/in-house distribution of medicines by 4-5 days. Improvements in the weather will enable them to continue provision of medication by car.

Based on 2016 data, the number of HIV patients at the centre amounted to 346 people. One of the patients is currently in prison, but there have not been any problems in delivering the necessary care to him. Another patient is expecting a baby in January and the centre has already taken into account special treatment and care procedures required for the baby and the mother.

According to the administration of the centre, there were some complications caused by the new management of the hospital that was appointed on 3 January. Dissatisfaction was mainly expressed regarding the decision of the new management to cut the additional income received through the state funded HIV programme for those staff members who were employed in both the Global Fund-funded programme and the state-funded programme.

## **TB**

At the meeting with Dr. Dimitri Tsetskhladze the epidemiological situation in the region and programme implementation challenges were discussed. According to him, 37 patients are currently undergoing in-patient TB treatment, including one child. In total, 450 TB patients were covered in 2016.

**OST and TB treatment:** Some of the patients who are undergoing in-patient TB treatment are also receiving opioid substitution therapy (OST). They have continued to receive the treatment without any interruptions. The centre stores 10 day-long OST treatment medication at the hospital, which is delivered to patients according to the national protocols.

**A poor infrastructural environment** (mainly related to the building that requires renovations) was identified as one of the most acute problems for TB patients by Dr.

Tsetskhladze. Although with the help of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) International some renovations were started, these are not sufficient to guarantee a better treatment environment for patients.

Cars are expected to be delivered to the centre soon, which would better enable them to cover the mountainous regions of Adjara.

## 2. GHRN/Imedi

### Participants:

Tamar Bortsvadze – CCM, OC Chair

Irina Grdzolidze – CCM, Executive Secretary

Natia Khonelidze – CCM, Administrative Assistant

Giorgi Soselia - M&E Specialist at NCDC/GFATM

Zoria Tsurtsunia – Imedi, Chair of the Board

Galina Morozova – Imedi, GenPud

Miranda Jgenti – Imedi

Imedi, which provides HIV secondary prevention services to injected drug users, covers around 1,200 clients/beneficiaries annually.

- **Needs:** The organisation expressed the necessity to purchase new computers, a projector and stationary, as well as the accounting programme Oris that would enable them to improve organisational infrastructure and work performance.
- **Beneficiary registration system:** NCDC/GFATM's recent regulation changes regarding the 15-digit-long system for registering beneficiaries, seems to have been challenging for the staff to adopt. Further training and capacity building was requested by the attendees.
- **Responding to STI:** According to the Director of the organisation, one of main concerns are the high level of STIs among beneficiaries (around 18%). Negotiations are being conducting with the Batumi Maritime Hospital JSC to develop a mechanism for referrals under which beneficiaries will receive necessary treatment. This is expected to start from early March 2017.

### 3. Tanadgoma

#### Participants:

Tamar Bortsvadze – CCM, OC Chair

Irina Grdzeldze – CCM, Executive Secretary

Natia Khonelidze – CCM, Administrative Assistant

Giorgi Soselia - M&E Specialist at NCDC/GFATM

Natia Kharati – Tanadgoma, Director of Batumi Branch

Ilia Urushadze – Tanadgoma, Social worker

Avtandil Ghaghashvili – Tanadgoma, Social Worker

Rati Tsintsadze - Tanadgoma, Social Worker

Zaza Babunashvili – Tanadgoma, Consultant

Shota Makharadze - Tanadgoma, Social Worker

Keti Jibladze - Tanadgoma, Social Worker

Maia Kontselidze - Tanadgoma, Social Worker

Giorgi Bolkvadze - Tanadgoma, Social Worker

The meeting with Tanadgoma was unusually representative, with more than 10 members of staff in attendance, including all social workers and VCT consultants. The following topics were raised and discussed by Tanadgoma staff during the visit:

- **Reaching the target:** the target of covering 1,100 MSM beneficiaries (the target is generally set by the Tanadgoma head office in Tbilisi by considering the capacities of each of its regional centres and previous coverage) annually was considered to be very high in Batumi and the surrounding areas. Concerns were expressed that it would be very difficult to achieve this because of the high level of migration of MSMs between Batumi and Tbilisi.
- **View about the new registration system:** there are no complications in terms of using the 15-digit-long registration system for beneficiaries; however, concerns were expressed by two beneficiaries that the creation of the code requires a lot of sensitive information to be provided by a potential beneficiary. They were concerned that this was too intrusive and might lead to uncomfortable situations when collecting the information. Suggestions were made to exclude or redefine some of the personal information from the creation of the code. However, the beneficiary will be asked once about the essential information needed to reconstruct the 15-digit code and the special 4-

digit code will be given by Tanadgoma with which the identification of this beneficiary will be made in future.

- **Beneficiary needs:** according to the VCT consultant, there is demand for female condoms from sex workers, while some MSM beneficiaries expressed desire for the distribution of wet-wipes together with condoms and lubricants.
- **Specialised interventions:** the Director of the Tanadgoma Batumi branch expressed desire of having more specialised interventions for truck drivers passing through the Sarphi customs border, who frequently use sex worker services.
- **Beneficiaries' View:** The OC Chair had a meeting with two MSM project beneficiaries. Although they both expressed their gratitude for the services provided to them, they underlined their desire for MSM-specialised psychological counselling services.

#### **4. HIV/AIDS Patients Support Foundation, Batumi branch**

##### **Participants:**

Tamar Bortsvadze – CCM, OC Chair

Irina Grdzeldze – CCM, Executive Secretary

Natia Khonelidze – CCM, Administrative Assistant

Giorgi Soselia - M&E Specialist at NCDC/GFATM

Galina Kosunkova – HIV/AIDS Patients Support Foundation

Giorgi Dokhnadze - HIV/AIDS Patients Support Foundation

Ekaterine Natsvlshvili - HIV/AIDS Patients Support Foundation

Tea Makharadze – Consultant

The organisation provides support to 85 beneficiaries, including 10 children. The staff of the organisation emphasized that their needs had not changed much since the last visit of the OC in December 2016. However, the following issues were raised:

- Having condoms on site. They requested around 4,000 condoms from the NCDC, but have not yet received the stock. As it was clarified by the NCDC representative, upon request of the HAPSFund, a total of 4,000 condoms were provided by the principal recipient to the HAPSFund's central office. These would be soon distributed to their Batumi office.

- The organisation lacks technical equipment such as computers. Although two computers were provided by the NCDC (left over from a previous primary recipient of GFATM), the machines are outdated and have many technical issues that hinders smooth working processes.
- A desire was expressed for the financing of English language classes for their beneficiaries.