

Georgia Country Coordinating Mechanism

Oversight Committee

Site visit to New Vector

1 November, 2016

Participants:

Tamar Bortsvadze – Chair of the Oversight Committee, CCM member, Médecins du Monde (Mdm), Senior Advocacy Officer

Tamar Kashivadze – Member of the Oversight Committee, Ministry of Corrections of Georgia, Medical Department, Regulatory Division, Chief Specialist

Nino Mamulashvili - WHO Country Office, Georgia

Alexander Asatiani – NCDC, GFATM PIU

Konstantine Labartkava – Director at New Vector

Lasha Abesadze – Director of New Vector's Rustavi branch

Guram Shafatava – Social worker at New Vector

Paata Forchkhidze – New Vector

Irina Grdzeldze – CCM Executive Secretary

Natia Khonelidze – CCM Administrative Assistant

Purpose of the visit:

The purpose of the visit was to discuss the current status of the implementation of the programme funded by the the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria - GFATM (GEO-H-NCDC) and the interventions implemented by the community-based organisation New Vector for people who inject drugs (PWIDs) in Georgia. Additional topics of discussion included implementation issues with the programmes, challenges that serve as barriers to covering more PWIDs with HIV secondary prevention services, and ways and mechanisms for improving the implementation of programmes.

Objectives of the visit:

1. Review the activities implemented by New Vector;
2. Identify any challenges in the process of grant implementation.

Methodology:

- Discussion with New Vector staff regarding existing challenges in the process of grant implementation.

Issues addressed:

The director of New Vector, Konstantine Labartkava, briefly presented the organisation, its activities and projects that have been implemented since 2006 through its community-based drop-in centre for persons at risk for HIV and HCV. He mentioned that the organisation provides a comprehensive array of HIV/AIDS and HCV services and adopts a beneficiary-centred public health approach with the GFATM and Medecins du Monde to reduce drug related harm through addressing the specific needs of beneficiaries and providing adequate support to them. The programmes implemented at New Vector range from HIV education and prevention presentations to compassionate care and advocacy for PWIDs who are under risk of HIV and HCV. According to Labartkava, advocating a re-orientation of the country's drug policy towards a more liberal approach, together with services provision, is central to guarantee civil and health rights for all PWUDs.

Two mobile ambulances, outreach workers and field-testing are utilized to provide HIV, HCV and syphilis testing to underserved at risk populations. In addition to testing, New Vector's staff refers HCV positive people (rapid-test tested) into special medical services.

As representatives of New Vector noted, using mobile ambulances to reach more IDUs in the country has proved to be very effective, especially for those living in rural areas in Kvemo Kartli. Further improvements were underlined by the representative of the principle recipient (PR), Alexander Asatiani, in the direction of data collection. In order to improve monitoring and recording information on clients reached and serviced by community-based HIV prevention programmes, it was reported that NCDC is intending to adopt a database management open access software tool – SyrEx (which was developed by the Alliance for Public Health in Ukraine). This will further improve data collection and management.

Although New Vector provides a comprehensive approach towards HIV prevention, that also involves PWID's sexual partners, there still is considerable room for improvement in this direction. Provision of diversified services based on the needs of beneficiaries and their sexual partners both in house or through developing a referral mechanism to specialised medical services (e.g. gynaecologist consultations) could be enhanced further. In order to effectively target and meet the needs of beneficiaries, a more systematic approach is required. The PR, together with harm reduction (HR) centres, is currently working to strengthen this approach and institutionalise it within Georgian HR organisations.

During the implementation of the GF programmes the following challenges were identified during the meeting:

- In September, the organisation faced difficulties paying rent. This was caused by a bank delaying issue of advance payment guarantee to the GHRN. Therefore, the rent was payed a month late. However, this problem has not effected the implementation of the project in any way. In the upcoming period, there will not be disruptions similar to this because the current programme (started in September 2016) already provides grants up until the end of December 2017.
- Issues with the funding mechanism of NCDC (the principal recipient of the Global Fund) to purchase necessary services for the implementation of the project were also underlined by the representatives of New Vector. Participation in state tenders, which serves as a

guarantee that agreements will be implemented as intended, entails additional efforts from the organisation to secure resources and participate in the tender.

Although the beneficiaries of the organisation did not attend the meeting because of some unforeseen reasons, the director of New Vector, Konstantine Labartkava, proposed conducting a meeting with beneficiaries of all drop-in centres in Tbilisi to have more diverse feedback from them about the provision of services and any challenges they face.

Tamar Bortsvadze

Chair of the Oversight Committee