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KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

SUCCESS STORY

USAID Builds Multiplicative Approach for Social and Behavior Change Communication

USAID Cure Tuberculosis Project disseminates targeted information to improve the lives of people affected by tuberculosis



Photo Credit: Cure Tuberculosis

Musa Imanaliev runs a shelter for people who are homeless and provides residence to TB patients until the successful completion of treatment

"My organization is firmly established," says Imanaliev about his social shelter. "Now I think about how else I can help others. There is no shelter in Sokuluk [rayon center]. If there were a shelter in the center, it would be possible to provide a person [in need] with a warm place to stay for a while and a hot meal, and then take them to the doctors. I went to see the Akim [head of the rayon] about this matter. He said, 'yes, it would be nice. Write a proposal, we will look for premises.'

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"Tuberculosis is a big problem in our society. It is good when reliable, correct, and complete information is given about it," commented user Chynarbek U. on a post on the National Tuberculosis Center's Facebook page. This post on the stigmatization of people with tuberculosis (TB) attracted much attention from social network users and received collective agreement that open, evidence-based information is important to reduce stigma and discrimination against people with TB.

The USAID Cure Tuberculosis Project works to increase people's awareness of TB and disseminate accurate information about TB prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. In early 2020, the Project conducted a formative research study on attitudes towards TB testing and treatment, stigma and discrimination, and channels of communication to reach vulnerable groups including migrants, former prisoners, and people who are homeless. The study identified many barriers to care and treatment, as well as myths and misconceptions about TB, for example that TB is incurable or can be inherited genetically, which fuel stigma. Based on these results, the Project developed tailored messages for key groups to encourage behavior change and reduce stigma and discrimination.

Using a behavioral journalism approach, the Project produces short films which model encouraged behaviors. These films are more effective than standard messaging because they highlight the stories of real people affected by TB, which people can relate to on an emotional level. The Project developed a multiplicative dissemination approach to distribute these films and share these messages as widely as possible.

The multiplicative effect happens when information—for example, a video, article, or key message—is replicated for a long period of time through as many avenues as possible to reach target audiences. The Project disseminates information through mass media—TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, e-newsletters—as well as the web and project sub-grantee and national partners' Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Odnoklassniki pages.

Correct and timely information on TB saves lives by encouraging people to get tested and start treatment early and by fighting the fear surrounding TB. Facebook user Farida T. commented on a post on stigma and discrimination that reached over 153 thousand views, writing "When I was a kid, people I knew died of tuberculosis and we were real scared and we shunned [people with TB]. Now it seems TB

Facebook user Kunduz B. writes, "I used to think that TB is inherited. Since I started working at the AVHC [Association of Village Health Committees], I have learned a lot, including the fact that TB is curable and can't be inherited. Now we are giving people the right information. We say, if you have a cough for more than 2 weeks, you need to see a doctor."

"I think, if the patients are treated on time, it will benefit both them and society. If everything's done right, we can reduce the incidence and solve many problems," writes Chynarbek U., a social media user.

is not that dangerous and can be fully cured. You just need to follow the doctor's recommendations and take treatment on time."

Through the multiplicative dissemination approach, these posts can reach hundreds of thousands of people. In March 2021, for instance, Cure Tuberculosis reached over 1.3 million people nationwide through a massive information campaign dedicated to World TB Day. This included social media posts about people's own involvement in the fight against TB. Many of the people reached chose to share or comment on these posts.

"I know what TB is from personal experience. It's important to eat well to fight it. I am planning to bring food products to the homeless shelter," user Bakyt A. commented on an Instagram video post about a homeless shelter. In the video, the head of the shelter, Musa Imanaliev, shared his own experience with TB and homelessness, and how he started the shelter to help people challenged by different life circumstances find their footing. Imanaliev, supported by his wife, has been running the shelter for 17 years and knows that his clients are among hard-to-reach groups of the population with limited access to health care services. This year, the shelter started to collaborate with the National Red Crescent Society, a Cure Tuberculosis Project sub-grantee working with people from high-risk groups, to ensure that all shelter residents are reached with information, screening, and treatment if a TB case is detected.

This story reached a wide audience (27.5 thousand views just on Instagram) and inspired people to reconsider commonly-held attitudes towards people affected by TB, especially those from disadvantaged groups, and spurred many to action. Internet users expressed their appreciation for people working with those who are homeless and a desire to help. "Exactly, TB patients must eat well. They have to take medicines daily. Let's help together," user Melis A. wrote on the post to show his support.

Imanaliev confirms that often people learn about the shelter's problems from the media. After a story on Mir TV (a TV and radio company broadcasting across CIS and other countries), people mobilized to build a dormitory building. Donations came from abroad when the information was released internationally. The shelter welcomes publicity and any help as its own resources are limited.