



## SUCCESS STORY

### With USAID support, health and community leaders make a difference in the lives of people with tuberculosis

**Cure Tuberculosis educates health specialists and community leaders to raise awareness of TB and reduce related stigma.**



Dinara and Saadat at a local TB doctor's office, discussing their work. Photo: Cure Tuberculosis

*"I have come a long way since my diagnosis. I am now an advocate for TB awareness and prevention and am determined to make a difference in the lives of those around me," says Dinara Kydyralieva, chair of a village health committee.*

The high prevalence of drug-resistant TB in Kyrgyzstan has significant social and economic consequences, especially in small communities where stigma and discrimination of people who have TB are prevalent. Many people eschew treatment because they do not recognize TB symptoms, lack confidence in treatment, or avoid discussing it with other people and health care providers.

The USAID Cure Tuberculosis project educates and trains members of health promotion units and village health committees on TB. Since 2020, it trained more than 42,500 health promotion unit specialists, community and religious leaders, and village health committee and student volunteers to use social and behavior change (SBC) approaches in their work.

In northern Kyrgyzstan, 28-year-old Saadat Tamanbaeva and 44-year-old Dinara Kydyralieva are among those whom the project trained to raise awareness of TB and end associated stigma. Saadat, a mother of three, has worked for a health promotion unit for six years. When she met Eldiyar, a young man who had drug-resistant TB, she organized community meetings to dispel myths and misconceptions about TB and explain the importance of supporting people who have it to adhere to and complete treatment.

*"I like working with people and helping them," Saadat says. "Through advocacy and educational efforts, I inspire others to get involved and make a difference in their communities."*

Village health committee members also play an essential role in correcting TB misinformation and reducing stigma. When Dinara, who also has three children and is the chair of a village health committee, contracted TB 12 years ago, she was excluded from community gatherings, and even her husband treated her differently. Because she was a village health committee member, however, she knew that TB was curable and immediately started treatment. She also prioritized her physical health by taking walks and eating well. And when she was at the hospital, she inspired others who had TB to embrace treatment.

Dinara has been raising awareness and fighting stigma by telling her story and educating people about the disease ever since. She invites medical professionals to discuss TB at community meetings and participates in community health campaigns. When another villager contracted TB from her late husband, Dinara made sure that the woman took medication continuously, maintained hope, and fully recovered.

Village health committees and health promotion units work together to organize educational sessions and events to stop TB-related discrimination and stigma. They partner with local health facilities, government administrations, and civil society organizations to provide

support and resources for people living with TB and their families, which improves treatment adherence and outcomes. It also improves early diagnosis as more people get screened for TB and seek treatment without fear.

For example, the village health committee members made sure that Eldiyar had regular meals, fuel for heating, transportation to health facilities for monthly checkups, and emotional support, and helped him fill out documents for social allowance. And thanks to Saadat's advocacy people's attitudes about TB started to change, which helped Eldiyar find employment after recovery.

In 2023, Saadat participated in yearly training-of-trainers on SBC in TB for health promotion unit specialists nationwide. Since 2020, the trained health promotion unit specialists in turn promoted SBC approaches to 39,395 village health committee members, local government representatives, and community leaders so they could help the public understand the importance of early TB diagnosis, infection control, treatment completion, and supporting people with TB and their families. Thanks to this work, over 2 million Kyrgyz soms (over \$23,000) were mobilized for 1,267 TB patients in need through community advocacy.

The USAID Cure Tuberculosis project's training and educational efforts support community leaders like Saadat and Dinara. These women are a testament to the power of community involvement and advocacy in transforming attitudes toward TB and improving the lives of people affected by it.