



SUCCESS STORY

Patients help each other complete TB treatment

USAID Quality Health Care Project is helping conduct patient support groups for TB patients to improve treatment adherence.



Photo USAID Quality Health Care Project

Participants of Patients Support Group at Bazar Korgon TB Clinic who successfully completed their treatment

"After being discharged from the hospital, I was not sure about continuing treatment as I felt healthy. I reluctantly came to take medicines at the ambulatory TB clinic and was introduced to the support group. I am so glad that I decided to join this group as I received timely information about the consequences of treatment interruption. I also received valuable advice and support from fellow patients and healthcare workers. As a former patient, I continue attending the support group where I share my experience with patients and participate in TB prevention activities in our village."

Jumabek, a former patient from the Bazar-Korgon rayon

The Kyrgyz Republic is among 27 countries in the world with a very high burden of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB). MDR-TB is a particularly dangerous type of tuberculosis that is often developed due to failure to complete the entire course of regular TB treatment. According to the national tuberculosis control program, MDR-TB is identified in 26% of all new cases of tuberculosis and in 55% of patients who previously received TB treatment. Tuberculosis requires a long and uncomfortable treatment regimen to be cured. The length of treatment and the unpleasant side effects of TB drugs make it a challenge for patients and healthcare workers to ensure successful completion.

Patient education and psychological and social support can improve adherence to difficult treatment regimens. The USAID Quality Health Care Project set up 12 Patient Support Groups (PSGs) for tuberculosis patients in different regions of the country to help them successfully complete treatment.

Local TB clinics staff facilitated PSGs once a month as a venue for patients to discuss TB-related issues and support one another through shared experience. Patients receive information about TB, psychological support, and discuss how to overcome challenges that arise during treatment. Cured patients help motivate adherence among new group members by sharing personal stories about treatment, overcoming stigma and reducing the risk of spreading the disease to other members of the household.

Of 924 TB patients who participated in PSGs in twelve health facilities, 498 patients successfully completed treatment, and 408 continue to attend support group meetings. Only 18 participants, or 3.5%, failed to complete the entire treatment course, a rate which is well below the national default average. The number of participants in PSGs is increasing as a result of positive feedback from both patients and healthcare workers. Further, the USAID Quality Health Care project plans to create 12 more support groups in 2015 and advocate with the national TB program to turn PSGs into a country-wide practice.