



UNDP / Global Fund Project March Update: First Response to COVID-19 and TB Awareness Month

March 2020

Under the Global Fund grant, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) continues to support efforts to end tuberculosis and HIV in Kyrgyzstan. Our work consists in providing best quality and free drugs for all patients on treatment and in need, improving diagnosis, organizing education and prevention activities, supporting NGOs, communities and patients. Here's an update of our March activities.

UNDP and the Global Fund project allocate a total of almost **\$500,000 USD to help fight COVID-19**



Following the country's request, **the UNDP and the Global Fund project to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are allocating nearly \$500,000 USD to help the Kyrgyz Republic fight the COVID-19 pandemic.** The Global Fund has allowed countries in need to repurpose savings from the grant and planned activities in the field of HIV and TB in order to enable an **emergency response to the new coronavirus pandemic.**

The Global Fund project has already delivered **50000 masks and 2000 FFP2 respirators** to health care workers in the country. Additional re-allocated funds are being used to buy more lifesaving equipment: **10 ventilators for artificial breathing** and **6500 rapid diagnostic tests**, which allow to diagnose COVID-19 using the GeneXpert machines, previously brought to the Kyrgyz Republic via the Global Fund to diagnose TB and HIV. These tests will be used as a priority to diagnose patients with TB or HIV for Covid-19. The ventilators will be distributed to the National TB Center, the State Service for Execution of Punishment, the Republican Clinical Infectious Diseases Hospital, the Osh Oblast Hospital, and the Jalal Abad Oblast Hospital.

In total, the Global Fund has allocated more than \$400,000 USD to this cause, and with the UNDP funding the aid amounts to around \$500,000 USD total.

The UNDP / Global Fund project is also actively working with the Ministry of Health and partners to **continue protecting patients with HIV and TB** during this pandemic, **ensuring that they are able to safely continue their treatment** and that key populations group continue to receive prevention services.

The UNDP is also providing accurate up-to-date information on its website and social media pages, including stories of heroes fighting Covid-19.

The first cases of COVID-19 in the Kyrgyz Republic were announced on March 18th. Patients suffering from HIV and/or tuberculosis are at particular risk of developing severe, life-threatening forms of the disease, which is why it is crucial to set this group of the population as a key priority in our response to the pandemic.

Press release:

<https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/04/undp-steps-up-efforts-to-contribute-to-kyrgyzstans-response-to-t.html>

"We need to do everything we can to **protect patients with TB and HIV**", says Louise Chamberlain, UNDP RR



Bishkek, March 24

"This year's World TB Day is marked by an **ongoing global pandemic** that is placing a heavy burden on Kyrgyz hospitals and doctors and putting at risk the lives of the most vulnerable, especially the elderly and people with diseases such as TB," said Louise Chamberlain, UNDP Resident Representative in her statement on the occasion of World TB Day.

"It is now more important than ever to reinforce health care systems and protect vulnerable populations. Patients with TB are at higher risks of developing difficult forms of the new Corona virus. We need to do everything we can to protect them."

She added that now more than ever it was essential to **show solidarity** towards patients. "During this new pandemic, you may not be able to visit TB patients in hospitals, to protect them from being infected with COVID-19. But you can call and write and make them laugh and feel loved, every day. If you know a neighbor or a friend who has TB, offer to go shopping for them."

Read her full statement:

<https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/presscenter/speeches/2020/protect-the-most-vulnerable---stay-at-home-and-observe-hand-hygi.html>

World TB Day 2020: **It's time to end TB** and stand in solidarity with people affected by COVID-19



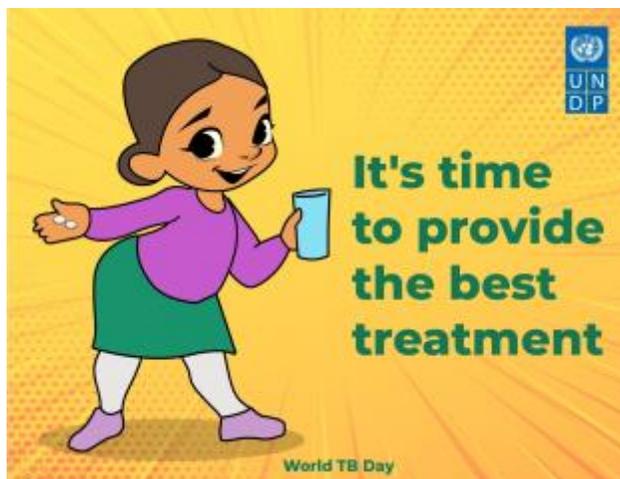
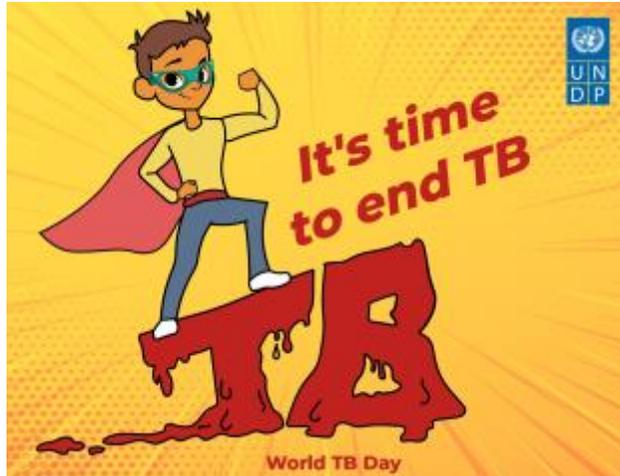
Bishkek, March 24

Every year on March 24th, the world celebrates World Tuberculosis Day, an occasion to remind leaders and communities about the **urgency to fight this disease**. *“It’s an event that we at the UNDP observe with a lot of attention, because eliminating TB is one of our priorities”*, said Louise Chamberlain, UNDP Resident Representative, in her statement.

Tuberculosis is the world’s deadliest infectious disease. In Kyrgyzstan, around 8000 people are treated for TB each year. This year, the global slogan for World TB Day is “It’s time.” **It’s time to do more to end TB.** We need to accelerate our common fight against this disease, to save more lives, to prevent further infections and to build a world free of tuberculosis. This is one of the **Sustainable Development Goals** set by the United Nations.

Since 2011, the UNDP has been implementing the **Global Fund grant**, one of which’s priorities is to eliminate tuberculosis. Activities include improving diagnostic, providing quality treatment and supporting patients.

To learn more about the achievements of the Global Fund project, read the press release: <https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/03/its-time-to-end-tb-and-stand-in-solidarity-with-people-affected.html>





Story: The difficult task of **returning TB patients to treatment**



Kumarkul never puts down her phone for more than 5 minutes. But she's not addicted to her smartphone, she just cares about the TB patients who may call her at any time. "Kuma," as they like to call her, **works with non-adherent TB patients in Bishkek to return them to their treatment and make sure they are cured.** She spends her time chatting with them on the phone or texting them on WhatsApp, pulling out one argument after the other on why they should take their treatment and want to live.

Doctor by profession, Kumarkul Jumagulova has been working with the National Red Crescent Society (NRCS) since summer 2018 to help reduce the number of patients interrupting their TB treatment in Bishkek. The project, funded by the UNDP / Global Fund, has reached significant improvements: **the**

number of patients lost-to-follow up (ie, who have stopped treatment for two months or more) in Bishkek has dropped from around 23% to only 4%. This huge step in ending TB is for a large part Kumarkul's success.

Read the full story:

<https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/presscenter/articles/2020/03/the-difficult-task-of-returning-tb-patients-to-treatment-.html>



Story: Patients first: Combatting TB with comprehensive care



Gulnara Barakova works as a **case manager** for the National Red Crescent Society's (NRCS) TB project, funded by the UNDP / Global Fund. The four case managers of the project help non adherent and socially vulnerable patients in Bishkek city **complete their TB treatment**, as it's the only way to ensure they will be cured and prevent further TB infections.

When patients with tuberculosis are discharged from their hospital, they continue their treatment at home. They're required to go to a health facility every day to take their pills in front of a nurse: this is important to ensure that they don't skip a dose or a drug. And this for many months, up to two years for patients with drug-resistant TB. But for many, this becomes a real burden. Some patients don't have the possibility to go to the health facility every day, especially during its opening hours. Since summer 2018, case managers **bring pills to patients' homes directly** and every day if they are not able to go to the health facility themselves.

*"We work with patients who need to receive treatment at home. **These are patients with severe forms of TB, patients with co-infections (HIV, TB), patients with health problems like diabetes, patients with addictions, patients who have financial difficulties or small children, and non-adherent patients,**"* explains Viktoria Kanina, the TB project coordinator for the NRCS.

Read the full story:

<https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/presscenter/articles/2020/03/patients-first-combatting-tb-with-comprehensive-care-.html>





Story: **Nuraiym's fight and victory** against TB



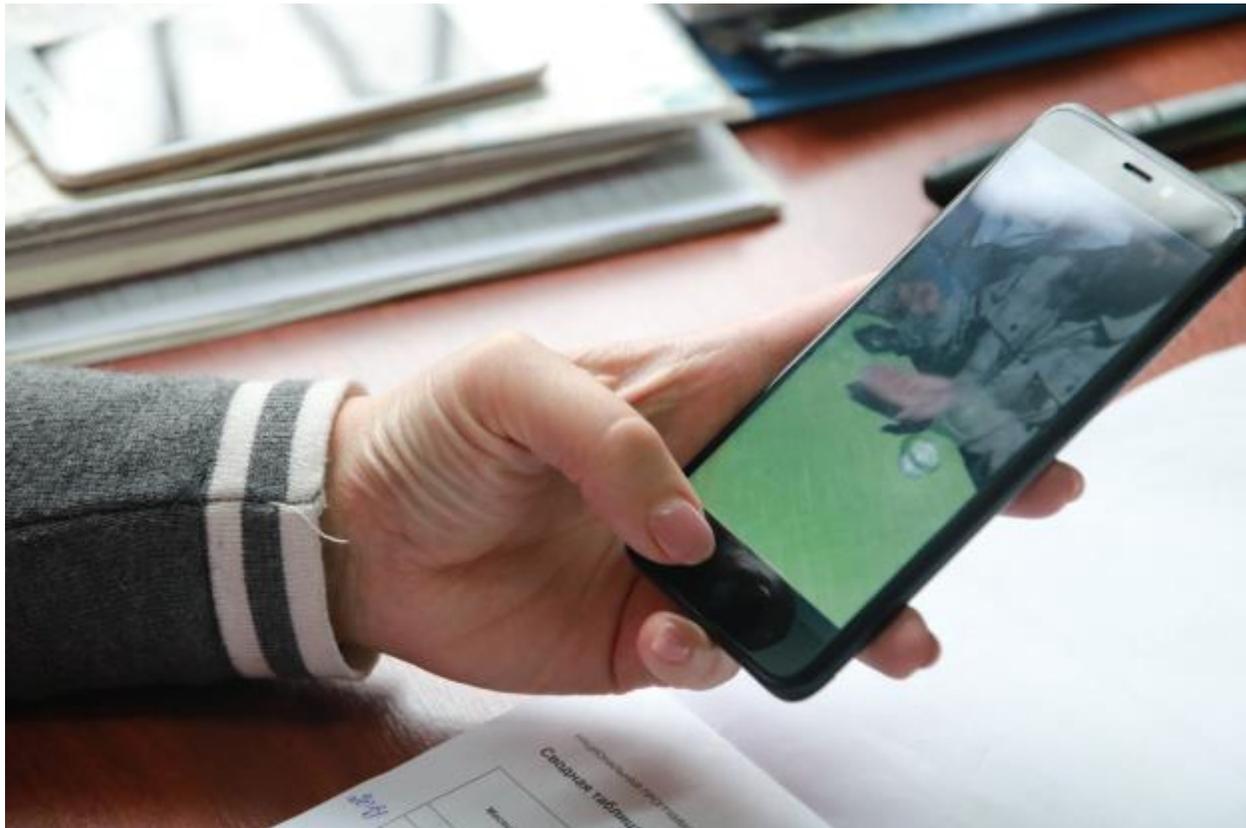
Five years ago, Nuraim thought she was on her death bed. TB had gotten so bad that she couldn't even stand up. Now, her large smile and sincere eyes don't even give a hint that she was once sick.

"I'm so grateful for the medication and the support I got. Now I want to help too. I wish I had more money to help patients in hospitals." Even if she herself struggles to make the ends meet and dresses with second-hand donation clothes, Nuraim gives everything she has to charity. If she has two skirts, for example, she gives one out. ***"TB taught me a lot: to live in hope, to be grateful every morning for waking up, and to help others."***

Read the full story:

<https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/presscenter/articles/2020/03/ tuberculosis-taught-me-how-to-live--nuraims-fight-and-victory-1.html>

More TB patients on **Video Observed Treatment**



The UNDP / Global Fund project is actively promoting the use of **Video Observed Treatment (VOT)** for patients on treatment for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis. This has especially increased since the start of the **global Covid-19 pandemic**. Patients who are released from the hospital are usually expected to go to a clinic every day to receive their TB treatment under a nurse's control. But in times of coronavirus pandemic, it's essential to **protect TB patients** as much as possible since they are at risk of developing a complicated form of the disease.

The National TB Program with the help of partners has allowed to give out treatment for 10 days, reducing the number of times TB patients have to go out to get treatment. Patients continue to be under observation thanks to the help of their UNDP case managers and treatment supporters, and VOT. The number of patients on VOT in regions (Bishkek excluded) increased from 130 in February to **351 in March**.

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