



## UNDP / Global Fund Project April Update: Helping Kyrgyzstan fight Covid-19

*April 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 April activities.

## UNDP and the Global Fund project continue to **support Kyrgyzstan in the fight against Covid-19**



Following the country's request, **the UNDP Global Fund project to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria is allocating more than \$400,000 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.**

In addition to the **medical equipment** already delivered and the material ordered, the Global Fund project team and partners are also continuing to **support partners and clients** in these difficult times. The project and its partners are doing everything they can to **continue providing timely prevention, diagnosis and treatment of HIV and TB** throughout the country, regardless of the state of emergency and of the new pandemic. This includes printing and distributing information on Covid-19 to key groups, encouraging the use of digital solutions for program activities, leading discussions on re-organization of medical care, and considerable efforts to find solutions for each person affected with the situation.

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.

More information:

<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>

Continued efforts to **support HIV and TB programs** during the pandemic



In an interview, **Inga Babicheva**, HIV/TB coordinator for the UNDP Global Fund Project, explained how the project **continues to provide support to partners and clients** during this difficult time, and what society can do to help protect vulnerable people from Covid-19 infection.

"During these times of global pandemic, when we are advocating for self-isolation, when some regions of Kyrgyzstan are under an emergency state, the most important for us is to **ensure that patients with TB and HIV can continue taking their treatment.**"

She added that it was important to **continue seeking medical help and diagnostic if in doubt** : "For those who might have been infected with HIV or TB, those who have symptoms and who are doubting whether or not they should go to the doctor now, those who may think that doctors are currently busy only with the COVID19 pandemic, I want to say: no, you shouldn't wait, consult a doctor immediately. All doctors are ready to help you, and all services that were available before are still available now."

Read the full interview :

<https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/presscenter/articles/2020/04/how-self-isolation-and-solidarity-can-save-lives-during-the-covi.html>

Watch the video interviews :

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3427634067252039>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=280798949577667>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=523458995268383>



1 - Inga Babicheva

**Differentiating TB from Covid-19** is crucial to end both pandemics



Due to the similarity of first symptoms of TB and Covid-19, and to the general shift of attention towards Covid-19 throughout the world, scientists fear a **decrease in timely diagnosis and treatment of TB**. This could lead to a surge in new cases and complications, and to a setback to the many achievements made by TB programs in the past years.

UNDP / Global Fund Project TB specialist **Baktygul Almerkova** explained in an interview **how to differentiate both diseases** to avoid late diagnosis.

"First symptoms include **slight cough, slight fever, chills, weakness, malaise**. These symptoms are common for COVID-19 and TB, which is why currently people seeking medical help are diagnosed for COVID-19. Patients and medical workers pay less attention to tuberculosis. We already have cases registered of patients receiving a negative result for the COVID-19 test but being treated consequently, for a respiratory viral disease. But when these patients' medical condition worsens, doctors understand that they have tuberculosis," she said.

"This is why it's crucial to remember the main symptoms of TB: **a dry cough for more than two weeks, accompanying weakness, fatigue, moderate fever, loss of appetite, and possibly loss of weight.**"

It's important to reach out for medical help if you have these symptoms, and to let your doctor know **if you were in contact with someone with TB**. The National TB Center and Family Medical Centers continue to provide diagnosis for TB, and the earlier you receive diagnosis, the earlier you can start treatment and the easier the fight will be.

Read the full interview:

<https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/presscenter/articles/2020/04/how-to-differentiate-covid-19-and-tuberculosis--.html>

Watch the video : <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=254345982369557>



2 - Baktygul Almerkova

## Adapting TB & HIV programs in the times of Covid-19



Bishkek and other districts of the Kyrgyz Republic are under emergency state since the end of March 2020 due to the Covid19 pandemic. This means a strict **restriction of movement and self-isolation**, necessary to stop the spread of the new coronavirus. But for the UNDP/Global Fund Project and its partners, it's a real obstacle to continue helping their clients: patients with TB, people living with HIV, and key groups of the population. **Meerim Bolotbaeva** from the UNDP / Global Fund Project conducted a **survey among partners** to know how this situation impacted their work and shared the results in a blog:

"Due to the state of emergency, our **clients have difficulties going to the health facilities to receive consultations, diagnosis or their daily treatment**. They have even more difficult financial problems and do not know whom to turn to. This, and their chronic illness, make them so much more **vulnerable** than others to COVID-19.

We continue to do everything we can to help them, provide timely prevention, diagnosis and treatment. But of course this has become more difficult under the emergency state and the pandemic. **53% of our partners said that they had a decrease related to coverage** of their activities. Unfortunately, they are able to help less people than before. 34% said they could not go to their office, and 31% said they had problems with communication."

Read the full blog : <https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/blog/2020/-our-beneficiaries-dont-even-have-passports--how-undp-is-helping.html>



3 - Meerim Bolotbaeva

**Medical workers** work around the clock to fight Covid-19



The UNDP / Global Fund project works closely to support the country's health system to fight diseases such as TB, HIV, and now Covid-19. In an interview in the beginning of April, Nurdin Almerkov, deputy head of the intensive care unit at the Republican Infectious Diseases Hospital in Bishkek, told us how the hospital and staff were adapting to the situation:

*"We've been working around the clock in the hospital. We have a special ward where we, medical workers, live. We regularly check on the patients who have COVID-19. None of us can go home. We have been in quarantine, just like our patients, since the end of March,"* he said.

Nurdin Almerkov reminded that Covid-19 was a new, yet unknown virus, that could lead to grave complications like pneumonia. In the absence of treatment and vaccination, the best way to prevent its spread at the moment is self-isolation and sanitary precautions.

Read the full interview:

<https://www.kg.undp.org/content/kyrgyzstan/en/home/presscenter/articles/2020/04/doctors--nurses--cleaners--no-one-goes-home--we-are-working-arou.html>

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