



Rights of women living with HIV: Building the leadership of Women living with HIV in Tajikistan

With the support of the NGO «Center on Mental Health and HIV/AIDS», the "Tajikistan Network of Women living with HIV" - TNW+ was born in 2010.

The Tajikistan Network of Women living with HIV (TNW+) is the first and only national network of women living with HIV in the country. It brings together women from many areas of the country, with already 48 registered members. The main goal of the TNW+ is to "Increase the quality of life of women living with HIV and their children in Tajikistan", already providing support for over 150 women on an ongoing basis. Members of TNW+ are active in hospitals, NGOs and other community spaces in Tajikistan. They provide social, psychological support, for example through social escorting, peer counseling, support groups, organizing information sessions for women living with HIV. They are also actively involved in international advocacy, as a member of WeCARE+ and the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA).

With the support of the GCWA, leaders of the Tajikistan Network of women living with HIV participated in the International Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Care and Support in Rome, from 17-20 July 2011. By engaging in this meeting, an opportunity was created for young women leaders from Tajikistan to take part in global advocacy and benefit from the great experience from other women living with HIV, who also participated. Through this, the leaders of TNW+ found a lot of answers to their questions and they became more empowered.

The main sphere of interest for the young women from TNW+ who participated were reproductive health and sexual rights of women living with HIV. Through engaging in the conference and with fellow participants, they realized that the level of activism in the world is quite strong, and were also able to familiarize themselves with scientific matters that directly affect women. **In this regard, Dilfuza Kuganova, Director of the Tajikistan Network of women living with HIV has said:** "This conference opened my eyes and I understood that I should be more active not only on the national level, but also in the international level. I was able to access a lot of information about ARV therapy and, most importantly to me, I was able to see clear paths for collaboration between doctor's and people living with HIV. I now know that I have the right to know what kind of medication I get and what kind of effects it could have on my body. I have learned this now thanks to the opportunity provided by the GCWA to participate in this meeting."

HIV AND AIDS ESTIMATES (2009) IN TAJIKISTAN

Number of people living with HIV: 9,100 [6,400 - 13,000]

Adults aged 15 to 49 prevalence rate: 0.2% [0.1% - 0.3%]

Adults aged 15 and up living with HIV: 8,900 [6,300 - 12,000]

Women aged 15 and up living with HIV: 2,700 [1,900 - 3,700]

Official number of people living with HIV in Tajikistan on 1 July, 2011 according National AIDS Center - 3395 people

Source: UNAIDS. <http://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/tajikistan/>





Madina Rakhmonova – member of TNW+, who was also supported by the GCWA to participate in the conference, notes that: "We know that our country has several donors who support programmes, but women do not have enough access to the funds. We are women living with HIV and want to know how the funds are spent in our country and why are not involved in the decision making processes. Before this conference, I thought that we as women living with HIV had no right to participate in these processes. But then I saw that women in Europe, Africa and North America are very active and involved at all levels. I realize that as women living with HIV we have a right to be meaningfully involved. "

Manizha Haitova, MD - Director of the Center on Mental Health and HIV/AIDS highlighted that: "The most important matter for our organization is to support and sustain the Tajikistan Network of Women with HIV. We come together and show our uniqueness and our tolerance, we fight against stigma and discrimination and this fighting will start from our personal attitude towards every woman, to her rights and individualism. Our organization throughout 4 years has worked with women living with HIV, through a variety of projects and programs. We must work together to ensure access to education and support for employment for women living with HIV. It is critically important to take forward income generating activities for women living with HIV. If women have access to education and employment, they will be better positioned to face social, psychological and health issues. At the IAS conference, together with young women leaders from around the globe, I learned a lot and also was able to acquire practical experience from their field of work. Also, we had an abstract which was the only presentation from our country. It was an important opportunity to share information about our study on the reproductive health of women living with HIV in Tajikistan."

On the 2nd of August, the Tajikistan network of women living with HIV had a meeting with members of the network in order to share information from the conference and discuss lessons learned. Many women asked about the quality of life of women living with HIV in other countries, while others asked about access to treatment and children rights. There was also discussion about stigma and discrimination and how women living with HIV in other countries face these challenges. The meeting provided a unique opportunity to discuss these key issues and collectively learn from the conference experiences.

Tajikistan Network of women living with HIV is the first and only biggest Network of women living with HIV in the Central Asia for now. It brings together women from many areas of the country, with already 55 registered members. The Tajikistan Network of women living with HIV is inspired to continue its work and looks forward to working in partnership moving forward!

Mission of Tajikistan Network of Women with HIV: Increase the quality of life of women living with HIV and

their children in Tajikistan. This Network based on the Center on Mental Health and HIV/AIDS which already providing support for over 150 women with HIV on an ongoing basis.



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Center on Mental Health and HIV/AIDS is the parent NGO for TNW+ which support established this Network and opened Medical Center with providing free Medical Services for people with HIV and their children in Tajikistan since 2008.

Many HIV positive/affected women and those who work in HIV/AIDS field were invited to Rome from different parts of the world. Women's participation in this conference was an opportunity to have their voices heard, build linkages between the scientific community and HIV and women's rights advocates, as well as a platform for strengthening the next generation of young women leaders. These women were supported and invited to Rome to build the foundation for ongoing collaborative work, and constituencies, including through contributing to the women's rights and HIV newsletter "Mujeres Adelante" toward AIDS 2012 in Washington, DC. It was supported by UNAIDS.



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