

TO: The members of the Developed Country
NGO Delegation to the Board of The Global Fund
to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

FROM: The Coordinating Committee For the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS in Russia

Ref # 70-d

Data: September-12-2018

RE: Key Affected Populations Response to HIV Epidemic in Russia - Case for Support

Dear colleagues,

For the last 13 years the Global Fund has invested considerable resources in building a sustainable response to HIV epidemic in Russia. By the end of implementation of its round-based model of grants' distribution, the Global Fund invested more than 250 million USD in Round 3, Round 4 and Round 5 for HIV and TB grants to ensure a sustainable response to the HIV and TB epidemics in Russia. In addition to that, during 2014-2017, the 12 million USD HIV Program in Russia supported within the so called "NGO-Rule" became a great example of how key affected populations (KAPs) can design, implement, and control the nationwide HIV prevention program in a highly challenging legal and political environment. By the end of its implementation, the grant had shown very good results against the targets set (102% average performance of all indicators) and was rated B1, with eight out of ten of its indicators rated A1¹. But more importantly, the 2014-2017 Program was, in our opinion, a true success story in how key populations can build nationwide monitoring mechanisms to provide for a community-driven and human rights-based meaningful dialogue with the government to improve and enhance WHO recommended services for KAPs. This "NGO-Rule" Program was an inexpensive tool to contribute to communities' systems strengthening, to support them to overcome the legal barriers and to retain KAPs as equal parties in the dialogue with the Russian government. As such, this groundwork should not be lost due to the lack of funding after July 2018. Please see attached to this letter a "Case for Support" for further details about the successes and challenges of the HIV Program supported by the Global Fund in Russia.

According to the UNAIDS 2018 Global AIDS Update *"the HIV epidemic in Eastern Europe and central Asia has grown by 30% since 2010, reflecting insufficient political commitment and domestic investment in national AIDS responses across much of the region. Regional trends depend a great deal on progress in the Russian Federation, which is home to 70% of people living with HIV in the region. Outside of the Russian Federation, the rate of new HIV infections is stable. Insufficient access to sterile injecting equipment and the unavailability of opioid substitution therapy are stymying efforts in the Russian Federation to prevent HIV infections among people who inject drugs"*.²

Recent IBBS research conducted in seven cities of Russia as part of the implementation of the "NGO rule" HIV Program demonstrates a 48/1 – 75.2% HIV prevalence among people who inject drugs (PWID), 7.1 – 22.8% among men who have sex with men (MSM), and 2.3-15.0% among sex workers (SW).³ At the same time, HIV treatment coverage in the country is just over 35.5%.⁴ According to

¹ The Global Fund, RUS-H-OHI-RP: 3-SI-762018. Performance Letter Progress Report covering the period 1 January, 2017-31 December, 2017 (on file with the author).

² UNAIDS 2018 Global AIDS Update. 2018. Online: http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/miles-to-go_en.pdf

³ Federal AIDS Center or Rospotrebnadzor. Information Note. HIV in Russia in 2017. (Справка ВИЧ-инфекция в Российской Федерации в 2017 г. подготовлена Федеральным научно-методическим центром по профилактике и

Professor Vadim Porkovsky, Russia must allocate 100 billion rubles annually, five times as much as the 17.5 billion rubles⁵ it allocates now.

Given these facts, as well as taking into consideration the geopolitical position of the Russian Federation, the migration flows in the region, etc., it is clear that when planning a response to the HIV epidemic in the EECA region it is impossible to neglect the HIV situation in Russia and to fail to support the HIV response in this country. A lack of assistance can ultimately annihilate all efforts to counteract the HIV epidemic in neighboring countries.

During the Thirty-Ninth Meeting of the Global Fund Board, a decision was made to preserve the OECD DAC ODA Requirement for HIV/AIDS in the Global Fund's Eligibility Policy as well as the exception to the OECD-DAC ODA Requirement to fund civil society for HIV/AIDS (formerly referred to as the "NGO Rule"). This means that there is a chance that Russia, as it is the only country in the world thus far which has proven itself eligible for Global Fund's HIV funding within the "NGO rule", will again be considered eligible and may receive an allocation within the next allocation period.

The implementation of the Global Fund's last HIV grant (the only one ever granted under the "NGO-rule") in Russia ended in July 2018. Russia did not receive any transition funding to sustain the achievements of the HIV project funded by the Global Fund. There is now a risk that most of the HIV prevention services that are being carried out by the NGOs within this program, as well as initiatives aimed at advocacy and protecting the rights of community members, may cease their work in the near future. BThis is in part because the funding allocated by the state is not enough to support them, or that such funding is not allocated at all. In 2016, state funds accounted for an average of merely 13.38% of the annual budget of non-profit organizations working in the field of HIV prevention. And the share of state procurements meant for work with high-risk groups in 2015 and 2016 was 10.8% and 9.4%, respectively. At the same time, the amount of funds allocated for work with these groups decreased in 2016 and amounted to only 5.24% of state procurements⁶.

In addition to the absence of transition funding, which could sustain the existing community-based activities and HIV prevention projects targeted towards KAPs in Russia until the new allocation may become available for Russia in 2019, the country lost about 650,000 USD due to internal regulations of the Global Fund Secretariat, according to which the difference from all currency conversions can not be spent on program activities but must be returned to the Global Fund. This money could be used for the continuation of key project activities until the beginning of the new allocation period.

Taking all this into account, we request your Delegation to the Global Fund Board support NGOs and communities in Russia in this situation. We ask you to put the Russian case on the agenda of the Global Fund's Strategy Committee as well as on that of the Global Fund's Board. We call on you to advocate to ensure the support of the community-based and human rights-oriented monitoring system created from 2014-2018 and for the continuation of the community-driven HIV prevention services in Russia until the new allocations for 2020 – 2022 are announced by the Global Fund Secretariat.

борьбе со СПИДом ФБУН Центрального НИИ эпидемиологии Роспотребнадзора). Online: http://aids-centr.perm.ru/images/4/hiv_in_russia/hiv_in_rf_31.12.2017.pdf

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Maetnaya E. "I shall die in a half a year". Radio Freedom. August 2017. Online: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/28676256.html>

⁶ <https://evanetwork.ru/ru/dostup-vich-servisnyx-nko-k-byudzhetnym-sredstvam/>

It is our opinion that there is no sense from an economic, management, programmatic, or any other stance to invest 12 million USD in supporting a 3-year program in a country and then to abandon all the structures which were enabled great results to be achieved just to start everything from scratch 1.5 years from now when country may be eligible for Global Fund HIV funding and receive an allocation again. This would simply be a waste of money, time, effort, and the lives of people affected by HIV. That is why the provision of some transition funding to support the still ongoing activities at least till the end of 2019 when the decision on the allocation for Russia and its eligibility will be clear is required and can solve the situation.

We are looking forward your response and are open to further communication on the matter.

Sincerely yours,

Aleksey Korolkov,
Chairman of the Coordinating Committee

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Korolkov', is positioned to the right of the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.