



Independent observer
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GEORGIA CCM ELECTS NEW CHAIRPERSON

Georgia's country coordination mechanism has voted in a new chairman to fill the vacant seat left by the departure of former first lady Sandra Roelofs. The choice of Health, Labor and Social Affairs Minister David Sergeenko has, however, prompted concerns about a conflict of interest from among the CCM's civil society representatives.

Sergeenko was only candidate nominated by a sub-committee of the CCM, which had been instructed to provide a slate of candidates for discussion by the full CCM, members of which were also invited to propose possible nominees from outside. But Sergeenko was unopposed, and thus continued in the role he had held in the interim following Roelofs' departure in April. He was elected by a majority vote by the CCM. Roelofs stepped down from her post after her husband, Mikheil Saakashvili, lost the presidential election in 2013.

This has not sat well with the civil society representatives on the CCM, particularly with those who represent the national HIV/STI prevention task force (PTF). PTF holds four of the 11 seats allotted to non-governmental organizations, each of which is up for re-election every two years. Within the Georgian CCM, only the civil society representatives hold regular elections; the other 14 seats are appointed, eight of which are held by government, three by international development partners and three by academic or research institutions.

Conflict of interest is a very real likelihood, they contend, because Georgia's new principal recipient, the NCDC (National Center for Disease Control and Public Health) is a legal public entity operating under the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs and thus under the oversight of the CCM's new chairman.

In a letter signed by the civil society delegation to the CCM and endorsed by the Global Fund's sub-recipients, concerns about the conflict of interest were made very clear.

“Civil society groups implementing the GF program understand how important it is when a CCM chairman is a person holding a high governmental position. However, we think that existing conflict of interests will limit his full-fledged participation in CCM decision-making,” said Lasha Zaalishvili, executive director of Georgian Harm Reduction Network.

The community-based organizations also emphasized the importance of ensuring that a participatory approach was taken during the country dialogue process and the development of the concept note for Georgia, which has been allocated some \$56 million for HIV and TB during the period 2014-2016.

The Global Fund has established new minimum requirements for CCMs (see article [here](#)) from 2015, including very clear guidance about potential conflicts of interest. All CCMs are required to develop a policy that “must state, and CCMs must document, that members will not take part in decisions where there is an obvious conflict of interest, including decisions related to oversight, and selection or financing PRs or SRs.”

WHO-Georgia director Rusudan Klimiashvili, one of the members of the selection sub-committee, told Aidspan that the committee was prepared, and eager, to consider other candidates — but that there were none. Sergeenko was nominated because of his high rank in government and his experience, both in the CCM and beyond, which inspired confidence that the CCM would be able to move smoothly through the transition in leadership and continue on its timeline to developing a robust concept note for the NFM.

The CCM is currently discussing whether to appoint a co-chair to round out the leadership and secretariat, drawing its candidates for the co-chair from civil society. Once the leadership team is in place, the CCM will then assume responsibility for the country dialogue and concept note development processes, both of which have already begun under the direction of the NCDC.

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