



**1ST (SUB) REGIONAL
CONSULTATION ON PREP**

among MSM and Trans* People
in Central Asia

COMMUNIQUÉ






ALMATY, 22 NOVEMBER 2023



On 21 and 22 November 2023 the first (Sub) Regional Consultation on PrEP among MSM and Trans* People in Central Asia successfully took place in Almaty with the participation of more than 100 delegates, representing national public health authorities, community-based organizations, international organizations, and donor agencies.

The Organizing Committee of the Consultation comprised ECOM — Eurasian Coalition for Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity (based in Tallinn, Estonia); WHO Regional Office for Europe (Copenhagen, Denmark); Alliance for Public Health (Kyiv, Ukraine); Human Health Institute (Astana, Kazakhstan); Kyrgyz Indigo (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan).

THE CONSULTATION WAS CONVENED WITH THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

-  Describe the current status of PrEP implementation in Central Asia.
-  Demonstrate the importance of community-based delivery models in Central Asia.
-  Highlight the challenges and present the best practices of PrEP implementation led by community-based organizations in Central Asia
-  Identify the country needs and potential solutions to overcome the barriers for PrEP access and scale-up.
-  Encourage all stakeholders to combine efforts, and facilitate information exchange among them.



During the Consultation multiple topics that are crucial for effective implementation and scale-up of PrEP in Central Asia have been discussed, with the support of national, regional and international experts. These include innovations in PrEP delivery models, integration between PrEP services and other health services, communication strategies for demand creation, community-led monitoring, effective involvement of the trans and gender diverse community and addressing Chemsex within PrEP services.

THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE,

- ✔ Based on the discussions and input of the 1st (Sub) Regional Consultation on PrEP among MSM and Trans* People in Central Asia;
- ✔ Concerned that HIV and AIDS continue to pose a major public health burden in Central Asia, especially among key populations;
- ✔ Concerned that stigmatization and discrimination still pose a major challenge to access HIV and sexual health services in the region;
- ✔ Recognizing the importance of committing to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights, including sexual and reproductive health rights;
- ✔ Recognizing the need for an integrated response to HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and sexually transmittable infections (STIs), with a focus on nationally defined, people-centred, differentiated, decentralized, adequately financed and sustainable service delivery;
- ✔ Recognizing that service delivery should be undertaken in a way that protects human rights, and also through a united action of healthcare systems, civil society, key populations, and public health institutions, as well as through universal access to health care;
- ✔ Considering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular Sustainable Development Goal target 3.3 of ending the epidemic of AIDS by 2030;
- ✔ Recalling the United Nations General Assembly's *Political declaration on HIV and AIDS: ending inequalities and getting on track to end AIDS by 2030*, adopted in 2021;
- ✔ Recalling UNAIDS *Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026*, adopted in 2021;
- ✔ Recalling World Health Assembly resolution WHA75.20, taking note of the *Global health sector strategies on, respectively, HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections, for the period 2022–2030*, adopted in 2022;
- ✔ Recalling WHO Regional Committee for Europe resolution EUR/RC72/R4, adopting *Regional action plans for ending AIDS and the epidemics of viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections 2022–2030* and their vision, goals, strategic directions, targets and priority actions, adopted in 2022;
- ✔ Recalling the *Roadmap for Health and Well-being in Central Asia (2022–2025)*, co-created by Central Asian countries with the facilitation of WHO Regional Office for Europe, and in particular its Initiative 5.1 to reduce the burden of tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and STIs, adopted in 2022;
- ✔ Commending the progress made in the region of Central Asia through implementation of the national action plans to respond to HIV/AIDS and towards the targets set to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030;

RECOMMENDS COUNTRIES IN THE REGION OF CENTRAL ASIA

-  to enhance political leadership and commitment, invest adequate resources and scale up PrEP as an evidence-based intervention to prevent new HIV infections;
-  to align national HIV/AIDS strategies, action plans and targets for PrEP with WHO [Regional action plans for ending AIDS and the epidemics of viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections 2022–2030](#) goals and targets (500'000 people receiving PrEP in 2025 and 1'100'000 in 2030 in the European Region);
-  to set up ambitious national PrEP targets ensuring that at least 20 % of the estimated members of key populations have access to PrEP by the end of 2026, to develop comprehensive strategies aimed at increasing the number of people receiving PrEP and remaining in care within PrEP programmes;
-  to ensure that PrEP programmes are sustainably financed at the national level, within the framework of achieving universal health coverage goals;
-  to align national and local guidelines and protocols for PrEP delivery to the current WHO PrEP implementation guidance, in order to provide simplified and differentiated service delivery models;
-  to ensure and maintain meaningful involvement of community organizations in the planning, implementation and monitoring of PrEP programs, and to strengthen linkages between community-based services and health care systems;
-  to create an enabling legal environment in order to ensure equitable access to PrEP and other sexual health services, especially for key populations, and create community and institutional environments, including in health care settings, that are free from stigma and discrimination;
-  to provide adequate training, supervision and support for community-based organizations and community health workers to deliver health services within differentiated service delivery of PrEP programmes;
-  to plan targeted training strategies reaching health care professionals, aiming to improve knowledge about PrEP and build capacity to deliver services in an inclusive, non-discriminatory and supportive environment;
-  to foster and increase demand for PrEP among key populations including through targeted communication strategies;
-  to ensure that the specific needs of members of various key populations are addressed through people-centred, decentralized and differentiated service delivery for PrEP that promotes human rights, through a partnership-based approach between representatives of key populations, community-based organizations, health care systems, and public health institutions;
-  to regularly monitor the the progress made towards the nationally-defined targets for PrEP, in partnership with representatives of key populations and community-based organizations;
-  to strengthen programmatic integration and linkages across PrEP services and other sexual and reproductive health services - including STIs testing, treatment and vaccination interventions, harm reduction and substance use services, mental health services, gender-affirming care for trans and gender diverse people;
-  to strengthen health information systems within PrEP programmes, promote implementation research, in order to generate and use high-quality data to drive action and address barriers in PrEP access and use;

-  to expand the use of digital health technologies and other innovative solutions in service delivery for PrEP, including AI, telemedicine, HIV self-tests and rapid diagnostic tests;
-  to strengthen subregional collaboration to scale-up access to PrEP, and to facilitate the peer-to-peer exchange of country experiences, with a focus on overcoming implementation barriers through locally tailored knowledge and evidence-informed approaches.

