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PRESS RELEASE

USAID HELPS JOURNALISTS JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST TUBERCULOSIS

Dushanbe. March 17, 2009. U.S. Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson and Deputy Minister of Health Sohbnazar Rakhmonov held a press conference on the prevention and control of tuberculosis (TB) and the joint steps that have been taken by the Government of Tajikistan and the U. S. Government to protect people from this infectious disease. The press conference followed a two-day workshop for journalists to help them understand the facts about TB and their role in ensuring public safety with accurate reporting. . The workshop was organized by the Ministry of Health and the Independent School of Journalism "Tajikistan-XXI century" with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), its partner Project HOPE, and financial support from the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (GFATM).

Ambassador Jacobson highlighted the ongoing U.S. assistance to Tajikistan in the area of tuberculosis prevention and control. Beginning in 2004, this assistance is valued at \$2,866,362, and has achieved measurable results. USAID currently supports the Ministry of Health with tuberculosis control in 13 districts with a combined population of over 1.8 million. Through the adoption of international best practices and methods, these districts have maintained high tuberculosis cure rates. Sadullo Saidaliev, Head of Republican TB Center, Saleban Omar, Manager of Project Implementation Unit for GFATM grants and Alexei Korobitcyn, Country Manager of the U.S. non-governmental organization Project HOPE also answered questions during the event.

The two-day workshop was devoted to the role of the journalists in educating the public on tuberculosis prevention and facilitating their better understanding of the issues related to this potentially dangerous disease. The media play an important role in tuberculosis control, by helping educate the public on the dangers of TB, how to prevent it from spreading, and the success of properly administered and followed treatment in curing the disease.

At the press conference Deputy Minister of Health Sohbnazar Rakhmonov explained that the Ministry's ability to detect cases of tuberculosis has significantly increased since Tajikistan adopted internationally accepted procedures. As a result, the accepted rate of tuberculosis infection in Tajikistan is 85.6 cases per 100,000 people in 2008. The mortality rate has so far remained stable at 5.7 deaths per 100,000 of population per year. The workshop also discussed issues of ethics regarding reporting on tuberculosis related issues.

The TB Control Program implemented by Project Hope is one of the many development projects implemented in Tajikistan by the United States Agency for International Development.

Since 1993 the American people through USAID have provided more than \$300 million in assistance programs that support economic growth, democratic institutions, health care, and the education system of Tajikistan.

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