

I want to live!

AFEW-Tajikistan facilitates scaling up coverage of drug users for their participation in peer-counseling and on-site support.

The story about Mavzuna, the client of the project "Bridging the Gaps: Health and Rights for Key Populations-2.0" is a story about a woman with long experience of heroin addiction, experience of changes, with a great desire to live and help other drug addicts.



Mavzuna, peer consultant, participant of OST program.

«In childhood me and my brother had to undergo a terrible ordeal. My father often consumed drugs and my mother worked as cleaner. Since our mother earned little, and we often lacked money, she went to Russia to work. After sometime of my mom's departure, my father was sent to prison. I was the oldest among 4 sisters and brothers and I had to take responsibility for their upbringing," says Mavzuna.

At that time, Mavzuna was a nine grade school student. They did not have money for food, my mother rarely sent money. Because of the need, Mavzun dropped school and decided to find a job to feed her brothers and sisters. May 3, 2018, Mavzun, a former client of the program, a peer consultant of the Khujand project at presently. Photo made by Z. Davlyatova.

"As I was only fifteen years old, no one took me to work. Failing to find a way out, I chose the easiest way - to sell heroin. It was hard for me to look after my brothers and sisters and at the same time earn for the living and clothes. I decided to try drugs as a way to forget about the difficulties and relax a little bit. So I got involved and became addicted. My addiction prevented me from selling drugs and I used them more and more. Since I did not give money for drugs to be sold, they did not give me any more for sale. Then I began to provide sex services for a fee to earn some money for a dose," continues her story Mavzuna.

From 2011, Mavzuna joined an opioid substitution program that has just opened in her hometown of Khujand. During the meeting with the doctor, she learned about "Amali nek" – an organization that helps drug addicts to solve social and legal issues.

"When I came to "Amali nek" for the first time in many years I met kind and understanding people. I felt care, support and concern for me. This has never happened to me before. I did not feel warmth and care even from my parents"- Mavzuna shares her impressions.

Here in "Amali nek", Mavzuna made an HIV test and learned about her HIV-positive status. She received necessary consultations from an infectiologist, passed medical examinations and started ART.

"Every day, without interruptions, I visit the OST site and continue to take ART. I know that I need this for my health," says Mavzuna.

At the beginning of 2018, "Amali nek" launched a new initiative of AFEW-Tajikistan to increase participation of drug users in provision of peer counseling and support services. Since Mavzuna is an active project participant, who demonstrates a strong commitment and has sufficient knowledge and skills, she was invited to try her hand as a peer consultant in "Amali nek".

Mavzuna takes part in regular training activities organized by AFEW-Tajikistan and partners to be able to provide professional peer support and not to be exposed to a burnout syndrome. On the photo: Mavzuna takes part in social support training in "Amali nek" in the city of Khujand, May 2, 2018. Photo made by Z. Davlyatova.

«Now I have 15 clients – active drug users, which I support by raising their awareness about HIV and how to live with HIV. I want to live! And I help others!»– Mavzuna concludes her story.

Note: Project: "Bridging the Gaps"- health and rights of the key population-2.0" implemented by AFEW-Tajikistan with financial support from the MoFA of the Netherlands. Public organization "Amali nek" is one of the recipients of the project sub-grants that provides social support and HIV prevention services for drug addicts in the administrative center of Sogd Region, in the city of Khujand.