



Russian Harm Reduction Network "ESVERO"
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**Members of the Strategy,
Investment and Impact Committee,
Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS,
Tuberculosis and Malaria**

Geneva, Switzerland

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Moscow, 7 October, 2013

Dear Members of the Strategy, Investment and Impact Committee of the Board,

Russian NGOs and representatives of the communities affected by HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis are seriously concerned on further perspectives of the current Global Fund programmes in the country beyond 2014 in view of the recent re-classification of Russia as a high income country. As you know, this decision has formally made Russia ineligible to the Global Fund support under the New Funding Model, even under the NGO Rule, which has been effective so far. We consider it as a formal decision, which does not meet the actual needs of the current epidemic situation in the country and demands of the people living with HIV and most-at risk populations.

As you know, Russia is a determinant country of the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia still displaying the growth of concentrated HIV epidemic. According to the Federal AIDS Centre, Russia has 0.4% of HIV prevalence among general population, and shows around 10% increase of new cases annually, which are mostly attributable to injecting drug use (58.2% in 2012). Particular concern relates to HIV/TB co-infection, which increased more than eight times over the last six years (prevalence of 1.0 in 2005 to 8.3 in 2011 according to the Federal AIDS Centre).

At the same time, The Global Fund programmes, which are still supported in Russia under the pilot phase of the NFM (effective till the end of 2014), proved to be an effective tool to hamper the HIV epidemic. They displayed measurable results in preventing new HIV cases among IDUs and other most at-risk populations since 2005. For example, according to the data received under the evaluation of the Round 5 Programme, the growth of HIV prevalence among the population of the cities involved was 34% less than average indicator for the whole country. The HIV transmission rate in these cities reduced for 21.7% in 2006-2011, while the average decrease in Russia for the same period went down for only 15%. There is measurable decrease in HIV incidence among injecting drug users as well, which showed 12,08% in the 14 cities of the Programme, while the average decrease in Russia was only 7.9%. The Programme continues to be home for about 50-60 thousand IDUs, SWs and other vulnerable populations annually, providing essential harm reduction services.

Russia made significant progress over the last seven years in providing access to HIV treatment and care, prevention of mother-to-child transmission and other key elements of the national response to HIV epidemic. However, provision of evidence-based and recommended comprehensive package of the prevention services for IDUs and other most vulnerable populations is still politically denied. Since 2008, increased allocations for the national HIV

response have zero funding for the key interventions like needle/syringe programmes and condoms distribution. There is still legislative ban on opioid substitution therapy, which was further strengthened by the denying provision in the 2010 national Strategy for the State Anti-Drug Policy. In these conditions the Global Fund Programmes in Russia being implemented by NGOs and under the NGO Rule remain to be the only source of funding of the essential harm reduction services, which save lives and produce measurable impacts at the HIV epidemic.

We, the representatives of the communities affected by the epidemic and NGOs providing HIV prevention services for the most vulnerable populations in Russia, are calling you as the members of the Strategy, Investment and Impact Committee of the Global Fund Board to apply your decision making and advisory mandate to prevent the disruption of the essential HIV prevention services to the most vulnerable populations in Russia. We encourage you to consider strategic decisions on eligibility criteria helping us in continuation of essential services for the most vulnerable populations and in our advocacy efforts in transmitting the Global Fund achievements into the national HIV Strategy. We hope for your commitment to keep this meaningful issue at the agenda of the Committee.

It takes time, but it saves lives!

Sincerely,



Pavel Aksenov
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Non-Profit Partnership “ESVERO”

On behalf of Russian NGOs and activists:

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