



## POSITION PAPER

### on the need to ensure sustainability of HIV services through social contracting mechanisms as part of the new funding cycle of the Global Fund

The position paper was prepared by the Charitable Foundation «Social Equation Hub» and is based on practical experience, expertise gained within the framework of the project “Sustainability of Services for Key Groups in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region” (SoS\_project), and consultations with the regional community during the Sustainability Summit response to the HIV epidemic in the EECA region 2022 “Resilience 3.0. Rethinking Strategies, Transforming Solutions”, which took place from September 26 to September 28, 2022 in Tbilisi, Georgia with the support of Doctors of the World (MdM), IFAC Alliance for Public Health (APH).

This document describes the importance of developing the practice of using social contracting in the EECA region, which is aimed at ensuring the sustainability of HIV services.

#### **Commitments of countries to transition from donor to government funding**

The Global Fund (hereinafter referred to as the GF) and other international donor organizations actively support countries in the transition from external to domestic financing of HIV programs. As part of its Sustainable Development, Transition and Cofinancing Policy, the Global Fund encourages countries to plan ahead and prepare for the transition away from Global Fund resources, with the ultimate goal of both maintaining and scaling up programs and systems to end HIV.

The development of the practice of using social contracting in the field of HIV in the countries of the EECA region is a key tool in implementing the transition from donor to budgetary financing of services for key groups.

Thus, the practice and experience of the countries of the EECA region has shown that increasing public funding for HIV services through social contracting mechanisms, which a few years ago was rare, has now become an important component of the systemic response to the HIV epidemic in many countries of the region. However, to further expand the use of social contracting practices, an appropriate legal framework, government support and strengthened community initiatives are needed. It is worth noting that each country has its own context. Therefore, it is important to continue activities in the countries of the EECA region, which are aimed at allocating sufficient funds from the state, ensuring the sustainability of services for key groups, and making the most comfortable transition to public financing through social contracting mechanisms.

#### **Brief overview of the concept of social contracting and mechanisms**

***Social contracting*** – this is the involvement of non-state actors in the provision of services to solve socially significant problems through the use of various budget financing mechanisms.

### ***Basic mechanisms of social contracting***

- Procurement of services
- Social order
- Project competition
- Subsidies, etc.

### ***Main levels of country funding***

- National
- Regional/regional
- Local

### ***Potential customers***

- Regional and local authorities
- Insurance companies
- Public health centers, AIDS centers, other healthcare institutions
- Agencies, departments, administrations in the field of social protection
- Funds to support civil society initiatives created under Parliaments or other legislative and executive authorities

## **Recommendations for countries to expand practices of using social contracting in the field of HIV**

To ensure the sustainability of HIV services through social contracting mechanisms in countries, it is recommended to include in the country application for the Global Fund activities aimed at:

- Prioritizing the sustainability of public funding for basic and expanded HIV services for key populations***  
By the concept of prioritization, we mean a continuous process of updating issues that relate to the role of the state in ensuring sustainable financing of services for key groups in the field of HIV. To do this, the actions of civil society should be aimed at forming priorities that are reflected in adopted strategies, programs, and other regulatory documents.
- Strengthening the capacity of civil society in the field of budget advocacy***  
Civil society organizations with expertise in planning, budgeting and management of public funds are able to influence the formation and implementation of public policies. Thus, civil society organizations with sufficient qualifications in the field of budget advocacy become effective partners in advocating for increased government funding for HIV services. Systematic support in the field of training and providing mentoring assistance to civil initiatives in the direction of budget advocacy and government accountability makes this process continuous and more effective.
- Advocacy for expanding the practice of social contracting in the field of HIV***

The best practices of the countries of the EECA region are initially based on the implementation of pilot initiatives to transition from donor to budgetary financing of HIV services. Piloting allows the state to rationally use resources in order to develop a model for contracting NGOs and determine their ability to work effectively and efficiently with budget funds. After the

implementation of pilot initiatives, the role of civil society in advocating for scaling up the practice of social contracting, expanding regions, target groups and increasing funding for HIV services is very important.

✓ ***Regulatory regulation of processes and documents in the field of social contracting***

At the basis of the successful implementation of state policy, a key role is played by approved regulatory documents, which reflect the actions of the state to solve a particular problem, regulating the work of processes and reflecting established norms and rules. The most effective form of work for the development and further advocacy for approval of draft documents are working groups that combine expertise from different sectors, created under government agencies or authorized bodies. Analyzing the experience of regulating processes and documents in the field of social contracting of HIV services in the countries of the EECA region, it is necessary to emphasize the key role of working groups and the work of involved experts in developing draft technical documentation for preparing the announcement of tenders for the purchase of services, specifications for announcing a competition for projects for the provision of preventive services in the field of HIV, development of draft standards and tariffs for services. Thus, as a result of the work of working groups to ensure the sustainability of services in countries, regulatory documents were approved that allow NGOs to be annually contracted to provide HIV preventive services for budget money.

✓ ***Improving social contracting mechanisms in the field of HIV (transparency, accountability, continuity)***

Systematic work of civil society to improve the mechanisms of social contracting in the field of HIV is necessary in order to ensure continuity, transparency and accountability of the processes of financing preventive services by the state. While ensuring the continuity of the operation of these services, it is important to create opportunities for other NGOs to openly and competitively participate in government tenders or project competitions for the provision of HIV services. When studying the work of social contracting mechanisms in the countries of the EECA region, it is important to note the readiness for further transformation and improvement of existing models and approaches in contracting NGOs.

✓ ***Increasing the amount of government funding allocated to HIV services using social contracting mechanisms***

State funding of HIV services using social contracting is an effective tool in responding to the HIV epidemic. It is possible to ensure long-term and sufficient funding for HIV services through state and local programs, where the implementers will be local NGOs that have established access to target groups. In addition, the experience of countries in the EECA region in the efficient use of funds in procurement makes it possible to identify savings that can be used to finance HIV services. Thus, using social contracting mechanisms, while applying other response measures to overcome the HIV epidemic, and annually increasing funding, we are achieving our main goals-zero new cases of HIV infection and zero deaths from AIDS.

✓ **Development of tools for assessing the quality of services provided for budget money.**

Today, in the countries of the EECA region, there are normatively established criteria for the quality of HIV services, which are defined in service standards adopted at the country level. The Customers' existing monitoring and evaluation system is aimed at collecting information on quantitative indicators on the basis of which it is not always possible to draw conclusions about the quality of the services provided and their effectiveness. At the moment, a number of community monitoring (CLM) programs are operating in the EECA region, as a result of which the data necessary for conducting a comprehensive analysis of the situation is collected. With appropriate financial support, community-based organizations and networks will have the opportunity to demonstrate the value and impact of their experiences by translating them into concrete achievements at the national level. Recognition of CLM in the legal and regulatory framework will encourage decision makers to ensure that these communities contribute more effectively to improving the quality of services and quality of life in general. Thus, based on existing experience and expertise, CLM, in partnership with authorities, will be able to improve the existing M&E system and develop tools for assessing the quality of services provided to key groups for budget money. This will allow us to identify weaknesses in the quality management system for HIV services, develop sound recommendations for continuous improvement, and make a significant contribution to the development of effective health care and social protection systems in the countries of the EECA region.

***Note! If you are interested in including this intervention in a country application, the Charitable Foundation «Social Equation Hub» is ready to provide you with additional detailed information and technical assistance in developing an intervention to expand the practice of using social contacting.***

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