

## **AFEW-TAJIKISTAN DEVELOPS TEAMS OF PEER CONSULTANTS**

### **Help myself by helping others!**

In 2018, AFEW-Tajikistan provided financial and technical support to five local HIV related service organizations to establish and support teams of peer consultants out of IDUs and recovering drug addicts for provision of services to key populations with the purpose of scaling up participation of representatives of IDU community. This story tells about personal experience of Ossim, one of the

project peer-consultant of the "Bridging the Gaps: Health and Rights for Key Populations - 2.0".



*"I was born and raised in the city of Khujand. After completion of school, I entered university. In 2001 I took a study leave to earn money for the wedding and left to Russia for work. Having found a good job, I decided that until I earn a lot of money, I would not come back to Tajikistan,"- Ossim began his story.*

In 2003, Ossim returned to Khujand and got married. They left for Moscow together with his wife. They had two children. Ossim

began to earn a lot of money there. On one of the parties he was offered to taste heroin. First, he refused, but then for the sake of interest and not to look weak, he tried it. And then, like with all the "beginners", as they say "dashing trouble is the beginning". Ossim started to use drugs on a regular basis.

*"In 2013, I came to Khujand for holidays. His parents learned about my problems and decided to help me, but I refused their help at that time"- Ossim continues his story.*

Being under the effect of drugs, Ossim completely forgot that his holidays are over and he was dismissed from his position as he did not appear in the office in time. As a result, he found another job with lower salary, while continue using drugs. He was fired again once the employer learned that Ossim has drug addiction He came back to Khujand again. Six months later he was convicted for illegal drug possession. Meanwhile Ossim became a father for the third time.

*"I had enough time in prison to think about everything and make a decision on what I would do in the future. When I was in prison, I've got another child and I was looking for a moment when I can see him. I wanted to change everything in my life after release. I wanted to educate my children and become a good father and husband. I really want to have my kids raised as good and educated people".*

After release Ossim met one of his friends, who worked in PO “Amali nek” as peer consultant. Having learned about the services of this organization, Ossim started to visit this organization on a regular basis and became a participant of the “Bridging the Gaps” Project, while receiving the required services.

*«I passed through medical examination and learned about my health status (HIV, Hepatitis tests) with support of social workers. At the same and for the first time in many years I had opportunity to get an appointment with an urologist. After such support, I made a decision to stop using drugs, passed through several trainings, found two jobs and now, when possible spend all my time with my kids” – Ossim continues.*

After receiving a training, Ossim, with agreement from the management of the organization, started to work as peer consultant in a team of five other peers. Now he works to other drug users, seeking for support and help from “Amali nek”.

*“I am happy that I am with my family! Now, while working and helping other drug users, I do help myself” – Ossim says.*

Note: Public organization “Amali nek” is one of the partners of the national public organization “AFEW-Tajikistan”. “Amali nek” introduces peer consulting as part of the project “Bridging the Gaps: health and rights of the key populations -2.0.” funded by the Ministry of foreign affairs of Netherlands.