



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SUCCESS STORY

INSPIRING JOURNALISTS TO BUILD PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT TB IN UZBEKISTAN

USAID supports Uzbekistan's TB control by training journalists to improve quality of TB reporting



USAID's Megan Gernes presents Iqboldjon Abdujabborov with a special recognition award for the best coverage of TB in the media, Tashkent, May 2017

“As a journalist and concerned citizen, I consider reporting about TB and raising public awareness as my civic duty. Even if my work can save one life from TB, it is worth it.”

Iqboldjon Abdujabborov

Photo Credit: USAID TB Control Program

“We are not going to publish your article. Tuberculosis (TB) is not a popular subject.” This is a response that Iqboldjon Abdujabborov, a journalist who covers public health subjects like HIV and TB, has heard many times from newspaper editors in his hometown of Fergana, Uzbekistan. Iqboldjon, however, is not one to give up easily. “There are still many myths and misconceptions about TB among the public and even among healthcare providers and journalists can play a key role in delivering important information about TB,” he reflects. Through his perseverance, several of Iqboldjon’s articles about TB were finally published last year in a periodical for medical professionals called *Farg’ona Shifokori (Fergana Doctor)*.

Building public awareness about TB is critical to ensuring an effective national TB response. The media can educate the public about the symptoms of TB and how to prevent it and help reduce stigma and discrimination against those affected by the disease, but journalists often don’t have the skills necessary to provide accurate and compelling reporting on TB and few have been as motivated as Iqboldjon to get the word out about TB.

To help improve media coverage of TB in Uzbekistan, since 2015, USAID has trained more than 140 journalists from across the country on best practices in TB reporting. In addition to seminars and workshops, USAID also works with national partners to hold regular round-table meetings and competitions for journalists who cover TB. In 2016, USAID formally recognized Iqboldjon and *Farg’ona Shifokori* with an award for outstanding reporting on TB.

At the USAID award ceremony in Tashkent, Iqboldjon met many journalists from across Uzbekistan who were as passionate as he was about reporting on TB. Through these friendships, Iqboldjon was inspired to develop a public platform for the dissemination of free and accessible information about this infectious but curable disease. In February 2017, he launched www.silning-davosi-bor.uz (TB is Curable) - the first Uzbek-language website exclusively dedicated to TB. Just three months after its launch, the ad-free portal received more than 15,000 visitors. Among many materials featured on the website are articles about TB symptoms and prevention; TB in children, which is known to be difficult to diagnose; and the importance of dispelling misconceptions and stigma surrounding the disease.

Iqboldjon's website also serves as an outstanding platform for the publication of TB materials written by other journalists from throughout Uzbekistan. Since its launch, the website has published over 60 articles and disseminated multiple video public service announcements focusing on TB prevention and care. Visitors to Iqboldjon's portal can also post questions and receive advice from TB doctors. A chat room will soon be added where current and former TB patients can share their experiences and success stories.

On May 3, 2017 - World Press Freedom Day - Iqboldjon Abdujabborov was again recognized for his contribution to TB coverage in the media. He received a special recognition award at Uzbekistan's preeminent international journalism competition, "Oltim Qalam" (Golden Pencil). The award was presented by USAID in partnership with the Creative Union of Uzbekistan's Journalists and the Retraining Center for Journalists. "As a journalist and concerned citizen, I consider reporting about TB and raising public awareness as my civic duty. Even if my work can save one life from TB, it is worth it," notes Iqboldjon.