



# REPORT

On the Project « On Preventing of Drugs Spread  
and Reducing of their Harm in Uzbekistan»

On the order of the Switzerland Federal Department of  
Health Care (SFOPH). Order №01.001043

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## 1 Preamble

The Agreement on the implementation of the Project “On Preventing Drugs Spread and Reducing their Harm in Uzbekistan” was signed within the framework of realization of Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Federal Council of Switzerland on technical and financial cooperation and humanitarian assistance in February, 2003. The Agreement on the implementation of the project between Switzerland and Uzbekistan was signed by the Foreign Ministers of both countries. This agreement is a strategic and technical foundation of the Project «Reducing the Harm of Drugs Abuse».

## 2 Swiss Policy in the Field of Drugs – Experience Being Implemented<sup>1</sup>

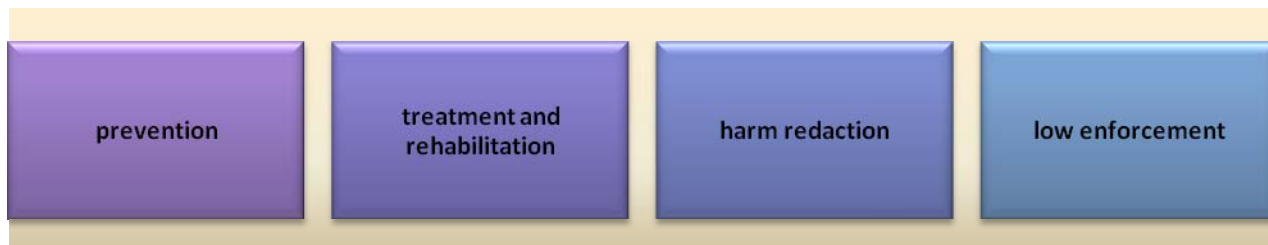
Switzerland<sup>1</sup> as well as any other country cannot state that she «has solved» or has «eliminated» the drugs abuse problem and that is why she has no right to teach others. However, as we are convinced that the exchange of experience may help all those interested sides to reach progress in this difficult fight, we would like to use this opportunity to explain our policy to a more wide audience.

Switzerland was concerned about the condition of citizens who had become drug abusers. Rapid spread of AIDS among drug abusers made us reconsider the sprung up situation on the whole. One of the main factors that required attention was the scale of the organized criminality connected with drugs. Decision makers in our cities and ordinary citizens were the first to become aware of the urgent necessity to develop a new policy reflecting a real situation in the sphere of drugs abuse. They developed a strategy of outreach work, i.e. work with people who are dependent of drugs.

In 1991

The Swiss Federal Government supported the strategy based on “ the model of four pillars”: prophylactics, treatment and rehabilitation, reducing the harm of the non-medical drugs use and enhancing law enforcement measures.

Picture 1 Swiss policy in the field of drugs abuse based on the four pillars



### Prophylactics

Prophylactics should be carried out daily. So, the work must be conducted in places of people’s residence, work and studies, such as families, schools, communities or town districts. The main purpose of the prophylactics is not to allow new members of the society to get involved in drugs abuse.

### 2.1 Treatment and Rehabilitation

There is a great variety of options here including in-patient and out- patient treatment of drug abuse.

### 2.2 Reducing the harm

Reducing the harm means rendering a medical aid for preventing the spread of AIDS and hepatitis including the replace therapy and centers where drugs can be given to the patient in hygienic conditions. Prophylactic services also include assistance in finding jobs and accommodation for drug abusers and organizing their life and leisure.

<sup>1</sup>Extract from the report of the Swiss Federal Department of Health Care (SFOPH) (2000), «Swiss Policy in the Field of Drags», SFHOPH, Bern.

### **2.2.1 Maintaining and Strengthening of Health**

The main purpose of work with drug abusers is their re-integration into the society. This means maintenance and improvement of their physical state, assistance in finding a job, accommodation and education.

The direct effect of drugs on the body of drug abusers is a serious threat to their health: overdosing, toxic effect of drugs on the body often turn into complications of infusion drug abuse.

The health of many drug abusers is in danger because of their way of life: poor food, absence of hygiene and accommodation, high risk of being infected with AIDS.

### **2.2.2 Granting of low - threshold services**

The first organizations in this field began to offer special asylums to drug abusers and they continue doing it now. These establishments offer drug abusers refuge from the stress of the street. Many centers render services in washing clothes, showers and also a chance to speak with someone who will turn his ear to the drug abuser and will treat him with sympathy.

The Swiss federal Department of Health Care (SFOPH) rendered assistance to a number of projects on reducing harm within the framework of the first national program on drugs. These projects included the following measures:

- ✓ Distribution of syringes among a great number of drug abusers
- ✓ Distribution of syringes in prisons
- ✓ Opening rooms for infusion of drugs
- ✓ Projects on employing and accommodating drug abusers
- ✓ Projects for women-drug abusers, prostitution being their business
- ✓ Consulting Center for children whose parents are drug abusers

Since 1991 services on reducing the harm have been rendered by cantons (districts), local governments and private organizations.

### **2.2.3 Medical services**

Fortunately, frequency of AIDS spread among drug abusers has decreased lately. One of the reasons explaining this decrease was a powerful educational campaign which led to a considerable reduction of cases of joint use of means for drugs infusion. During the past years the system of syringe distribution and possibility of their acquisition has also considerably improved.

### **2.2.4 Social measures**

In 1995 SFOPH organized central agency for institutions and services aimed at enhancing social stabilization. This agency is rendering support to "low threshold" institutions, in particular, to programs on employing and accommodating drug abusers and also drop-in-centers.

### **2.2.5 Legal situation**

Drug abusers often break law, get involved into illegal drug sales in order to get money for his ruinous habit. This makes their social position worse and increases the burden on the society. Though measures on reducing the harm are welcomed by the society on the whole they are regularly criticized by the population who directly come into contact with the problem. This may present a risk for the programs on reducing harm or at least may further their realization. So, it is very important to submit all the necessary information to the population who is any way under the influence of these factors. It is also necessary to assess the legal situation of each project. For example, legal expertise had been conducted before opening rooms for drugs infusion in order to avoid contradictions with the legislation of Switzerland.

### **2.3 Enhancing of Law Enforcement Steps**

The main purposes of activities connected with drugs is limiting their inflow to the country, fighting with illegal drug sales and corresponding financial deals and also fighting with organized criminal groups.

These four key elements are looked upon as an inseparable part of the strategy approved of by the Swiss Government and Parliament and also supported by the society judging by the results of several referendums. Switzerland is aware of the fact that it is necessary for the law enforcement steps to be combined with rendering help to drug abusers. Our aim consists in continuing to develop and adapt Swiss policy in the field of drugs to the changes of the situation using the experience of those who are on the «front edge» of this fight.

## 3 Project Information

### 3.1 General Information

<b>Project name</b>	«On Preventing Drugs Spread and Reducing their Harm in Uzbekistan»
<b>Donor</b>	Swiss Federal Department of Health Care
<b>Project Partners</b>	Ministry of Health Care, Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.
<b>Executive Agency</b>	«Contact Net» Bern, Switzerland and NPO in Uzbekistan («INTILISH» in Tashkent and Samarqand Affiliate UARZ in Samarqand)
<b>Project Duration</b>	February 2003 - июнь June 2009
<b>Target Group</b>	Infusion drug abusers
<b>Project Goal</b>	To increase the coverage of infusion drug abusers with low threshold prophylactic services on HIV/AIDS, prophylactic work with the direct involvement of drug abusers
<b>Project Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Realization of programs of syringe and needles exchange</li> <li>✓ Distribution of condoms</li> <li>✓ Raising the level of information for the target group representatives about the risk of catching infectious diseases</li> <li>✓ Consulting on the AIDS issues</li> <li>✓ Psychological consulting</li> <li>✓ System of re-directions and accompaniments (getting of medical and legal services)</li> <li>✓ Social work directly with IDA and work with risk groups</li> </ul>
<b>Project Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Number of distributed and returned syringes and needles</li> <li>✓ Number of distributed condoms</li> <li>✓ Number of IDA covered with prophylactic services</li> <li>✓ Number of prophylactic services rendered to the representatives of target group</li> <li>✓ Change of risky behavior of IDA</li> </ul>

### 3.2 Project Management

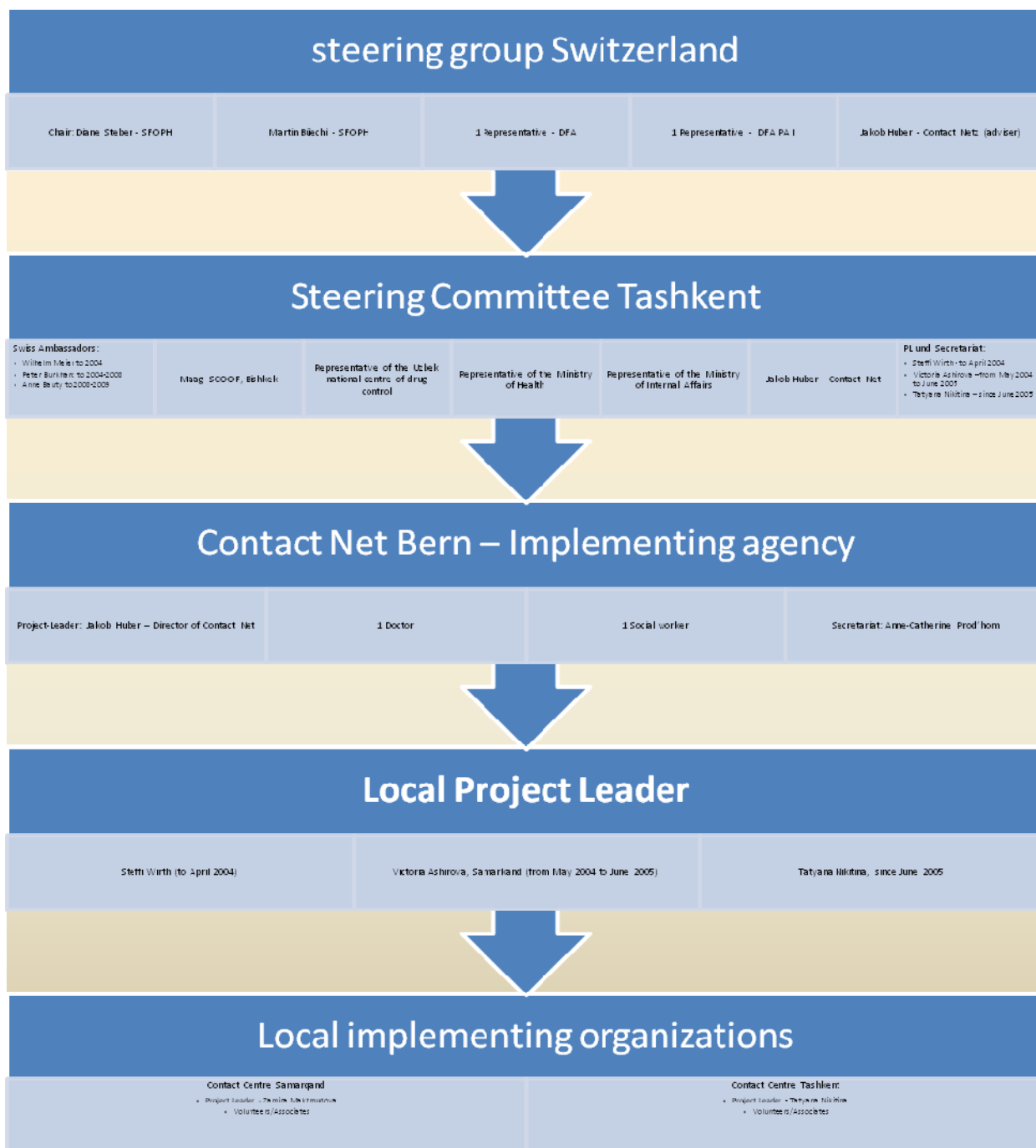
The Project Management consists of the Management Committee, including representatives of the Swiss Embassy in Tashkent [1], Swiss Agency on Development and Cooperation (SDC) [1], Ministry of Health Care of the Republic of Uzbekistan [1], Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan [1], National Center on Control of Drugs [1]. The Project was implemented by the non-governmental organization «Contact Net», Bern (NGO) under the supervision of the international project manager living in Bern.

At the International Conference in the issues of health care the Minister of Health Care of the Republic of Uzbekistan expressed his wish to the Director of SFOPH that only an international expert should be appointed the Project Manager. It was decided in Bern that the project would be headed by an expert from Switzerland only during the first year of its implementation, and the transfer of leadership into the hands of the local specialists should be performed as soon as possible. The position of the local manager was taken only after necessary additional financing had been coordinated with SFOPH.

As it can be seen from the organization structure, the project is based on strategic and operational levels. In order to be a success, the project should be well integrated and supported by appropriate institutions and this was provided by the Management Committee in Switzerland through the representatives of SFOPH, SDC и DFA (PA I). The Management Committee is especially important on the strategic level in Uzbekistan. The joint participation of representatives of Swiss Embassy, SDC and the Ministry of Health Care, law enforcement bodies from the Uzbek side, proved its efficiency as a steady and uniting model and the basis for durable exchange of experience and transfer of knowledge.

Participation of experts in the Management Committee is of great importance. Success and difficulties of the project, its possibilities and shortcomings are revealed during regular discussions taking place both at the meetings of the Committee and the Ministries. These discussions cover issues on the tasks and value of the fight against drugs abuse and formation of skills of a sound way of life.

Picture 2 The organizational structure of the project



## 4 Project Implementation

### 4.1 Study Visit on Getting Acquainted with the Swiss Drugs Policy

A study visit to Switzerland took place in June 2003. The Uzbek delegation consisted of members of the Management Committee (representatives of the Ministry of health Care, Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Center of Control on Drugs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the republic of Uzbekistan), and also heads of two NGO. This visit enabled Uzbek participants to get acquainted with the theory and practice of the Swiss policy in the field of drugs abuse. The delegation paid a visit to the Federal

Department of Health Care of Switzerland, «Contact Net» organization, Bern group on the youth affairs «Berner Gruppe für Jugend-, Eltern- und Suchtarbeit» (help to the young people abusing drugs and their parents, region of Bern) and «Suchthilfe Region Basel» (program of assistance to the drug abusers of Basel region).

## 4.2 Selection of Partner Organizations and Creation of Contact Centers in Tashkent and Samarqand

The Head of the project started working on the selection of partner organizations. The readiness of organization to develop cooperation with the Swiss Management of the project in order to adapt the project with the view to national traditions and mentality were the criteria of selection. The final choice of partners was held after a 2 days seminar at which the participants got acquainted with the tasks of the project, Swiss experience and obtained the first vision of such kind of project implementation in conditions of Uzbekistan. Priorities of the project development were defined jointly with two partner organizations. Thus, two non-governmental and non-commercial organizations – «SABO» in Tashkent and «AYOL» in Samarqand were chosen as partners. The work of Contact Centers began in March 2003 under the head of «Contact Net». One of the criteria of the service availability for the target group is the location of places rendering prophylactic services. That is why the centers were located in areas convenient for IDA. The premises convenient for conducting prophylactic work with the representatives of target group were chosen. Contact centers also serve as meeting places for other interested sides including parents and groups supporting persons living with AIDS.

## 4.3 Formation of Personnel teams and Volunteers

Both teams in Tashkent and Samarqand consist of four employees, one local head of the project and volunteers. During the whole period of project implementation 2 training many-days seminars for the project employees and volunteers were held. The seminar topics covered the following:

- ✓ Model based on four pillars with the focus on reducing the harm
- ✓ Outreach - work
- ✓ Prophylactics of infusion drug abuse complications
- ✓ Development of communication abilities

These training seminars were conducted together with the local drug specialists.

## 4.4 Development of the Project Clients Net

### 4.4.1 System of “snow-ball”

Taking into account the prospect of further project development creation of the “snow-ball” system seemed to be the only way which could make it possible to cover maximum number of drug abusers in a short period of time. Picture 2 demonstrates that thanks to the joint efforts of the employees and volunteers of the project the “snow-ball” system was created.

For example, Tashkent, with its population of 2,5 million people takes up a large territory. Four employees of then project granted services in those districts where they already had access to the target group. At the initial stage of the project there were enough volunteers for each employee to be able to work with 10-20 drugs abused persons. The main rule was that the employees and volunteers should have a direct contact with the target group - infusion drug abusers (heroin) – and that none of them should be afraid to get into contact with them. So, volunteers were chosen from those who had abused drugs before or those who still continued doing so, and also from parents, relatives and friends. These volunteers, in their turn, looked for other people ready to exchange syringes and to inform the target group about various services, offered by the Contact Center. At present 100-140 volunteers render prophylactic services to 2500 drug abusers (1250 – in Tashkent and 1250 – in Samarqand).

Regular meetings with volunteers and additional training on the problems arising in the process of work, for example, on prophylactics of AIDS, hepatitis B and C, what to do in case of over-dosage or on juridical questions, are the main components of the system.



the past 20 years on professional levels. Swiss experts involved in different aspects of assistance to drug abusers and also representatives of law enforcement bodies told the audience about their experience.

In the course of work in groups the participants had a chance to discuss in detail the following subjects:

- ✓ Swiss innovation and pragmatic policy in the field of drugs
- ✓ Project «Contact Net» on reducing the harm
- ✓ Cooperation between organizations involved in the social work among the vulnerable population
- ✓ Reducing the harm
- ✓ Substitution therapy
- ✓ Treatment and rehabilitation

#### **4.5.2 Trainings for Professionals**

Increasing the efficiency of realization of programs aimed at reducing the harm through teaching professionals the principles of reducing the harm because on non-medical use of drugs and health protection with the help of seminars, on-the-job training, transfer of experience and teaching methods of education (training of trainers).

#### **4.5.3 Formation of Interaction with Law Enforcement Bodies**

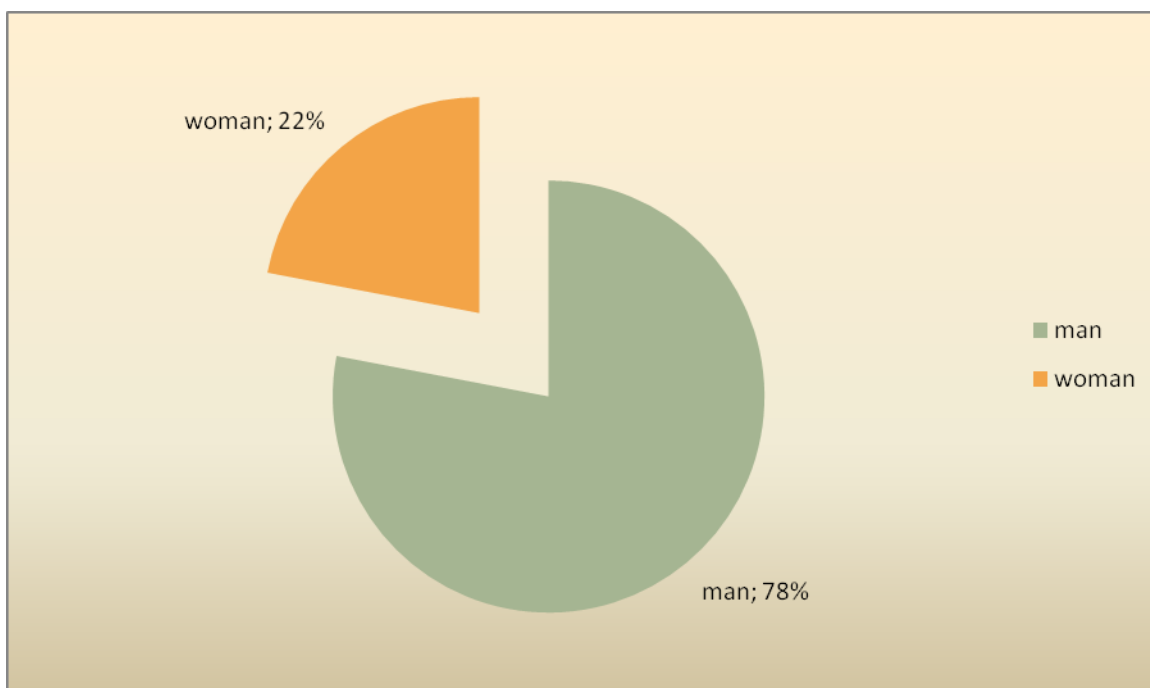
At the same time training seminars for internal affairs workers (15-20 people in Tashkent and in Samarqand) were held. Those seminars were included into the strategy of reducing the harm as part of project implementation. The aim of the seminars was to acquaint the participants with the opportunities of cooperation. Reaction of the representatives of law enforcement bodies to those seminars was positive. To some extent this was explained by the fact that they had to face the problem of drug abuse every day, and this is part of their work which takes up a lot of time. The great advantage was the fact that the seminar was conducted by an international expert, who had worked in law enforcement bodies before. Последующее сотрудничество с правоохранительными органами было хорошим. In most cases the problems arising as a result of syringe exchange, were solved with the help of the project contact persons working in law enforcement structures.

## **5 Project Results**

### **5.1 Quantity Figures of the Project Realization**

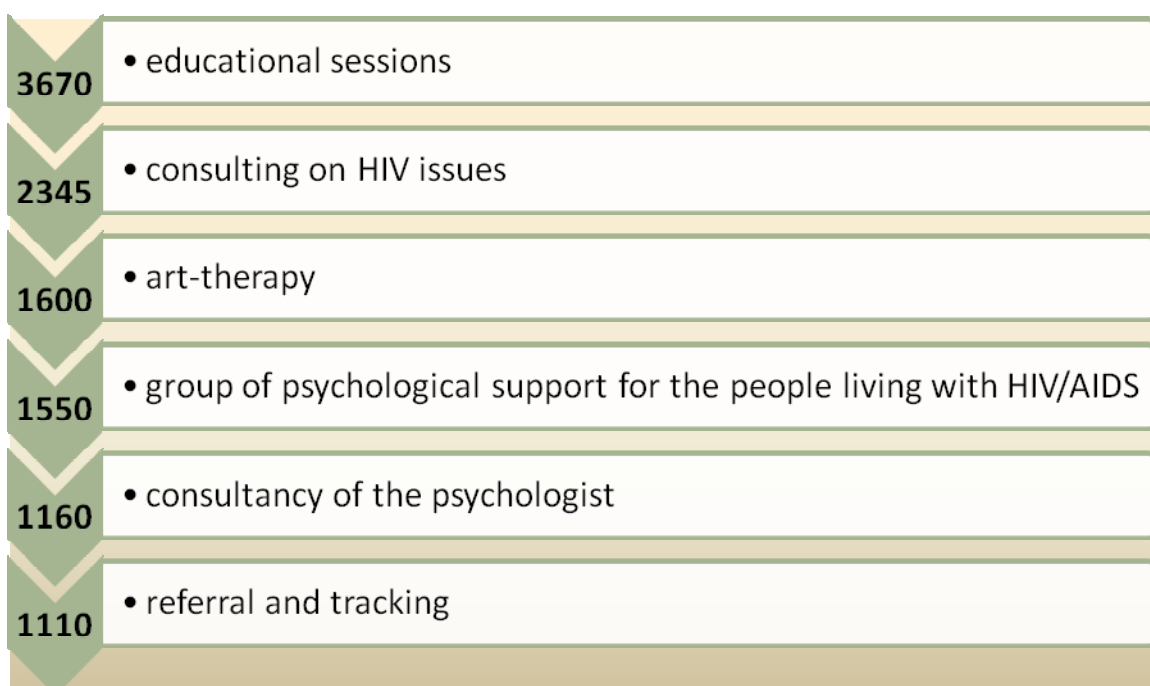
The net of IDA getting prophylactic services of the project makes up 2500 persons out of whom men constitute three fourths and women – one fourth.

Picture 4 Gender Ratio of Infusion Drug Abusers



The following services helping project clients change their risky behavior and raise their life quality were rendered in the project .

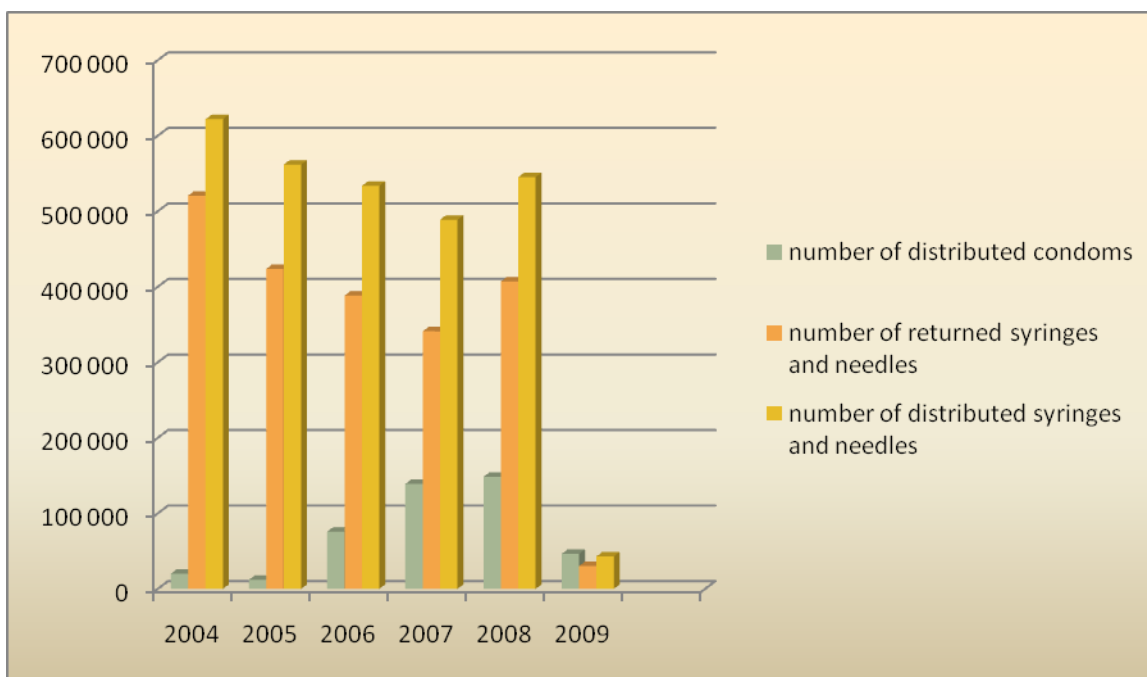
Picture 5 Project Services



The project also held culture-mass activities and a theatre studio was created. Active use of the project services considerably increased rehabilitation potential of its clients. Finally, 300 persons were redirected to narcological clinics in order to get services of treatment and rehabilitation.

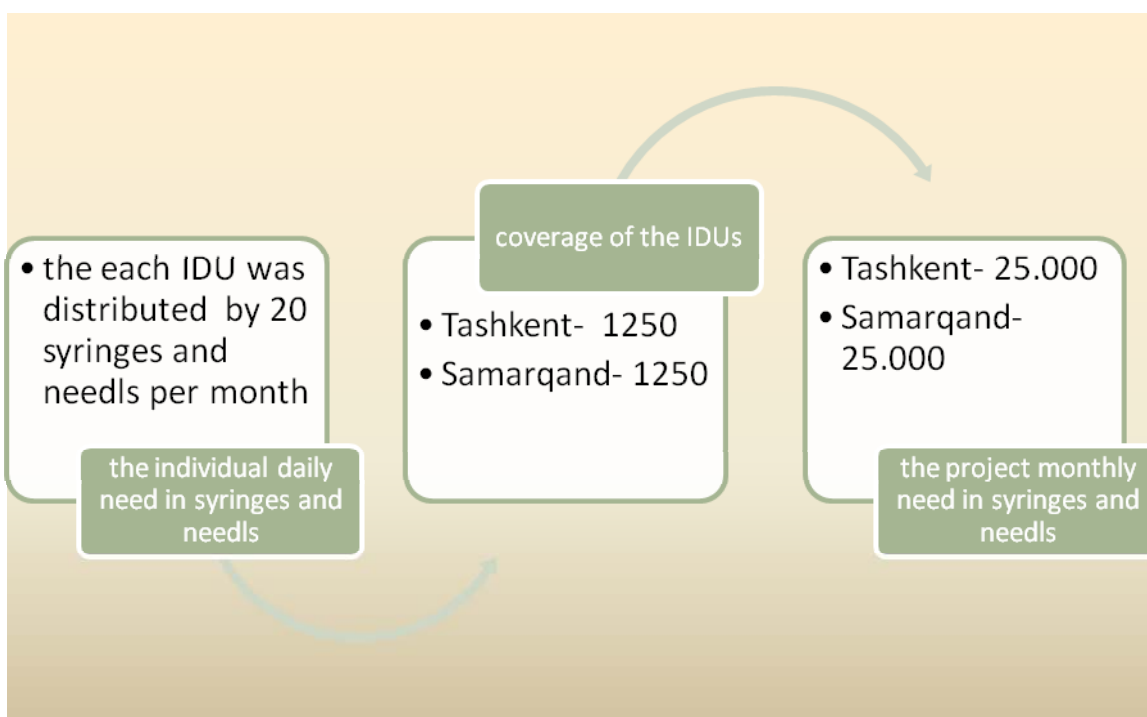
The total amount of distributed syringes in Tashkent and Samarqand comes up to about 3 million and condoms – to about 450 000 pieces during the period of 2004-2009.

Picture 6 Data on Realization of the Program of Syringe and Needles Exchange, Distribution of Condoms in Tashkent and Samarqand



Assuming that each drug abuser needs not less than 20 sterilized syringes and needles a month in order to ensure safety of infusion drug abuse and prevent the HIV spread.

Picture 7 Minimal Number of Syringes Necessary for Infusion Drug Abusers (IDA)



## 5.2 Quality Figures of the Project Implementation

When holding a questionnaire and focus groups among the project clients 70% of the respondents demonstrated lessening of risky behavior.

Strengthening of the potential of the program on reducing the harm from drug abuse in the Republic of Uzbekistan has become the result of the project implementation. The problem of drugs abuse is accepted as a social phenomenon, and drug abuse - as a disease.

## 6 Annex

### 6.1 Information Available in Internet

- ✓ Description of the Project on Reducing the Harm in Uzbekistan
- ✓ Agreement between Switzerland and Uzbekistan
- ✓ Contract between SFOPH / «Contact Net»
- ✓ Documents on Drugs Policy and Practice, Uzbekistan - Switzerland, July 10 -11, 2003.
- ✓ Information of Mass Media including the article in the newspaper « Der Bund», July, 2003.
- ✓ Report and Documents of the First Central-Asian Conference on Reducing Harm, October, 2004 .
- ✓ Interim Report, autumn, 2004.

### 6.2 Bibliography

Analysis of the International Group on Crises ICG – Central Asia: Drugs and Conflict or Report of the Swiss delegation «Eliminating Barriers» at the Meeting in Dublin, February 23-24, 2004. - «Partnership in the Fight against HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia.»

Swiss Federal Department of Health Care (SFOPH) (2000). Swiss Policy in the Field of Drugs. SFHOPH, Bern

### 6.3 Dictionary

<b>NGO «Ayol»</b>	Non-governmental, non-commercial organization, Samarkand
<b>NGO Samarkand Affiliate UARZ</b>	Non-governmental, non-commercial organization, Samarkand
<b>NGO «SABO»</b>	Non-governmental, non-commercial organization, Tashkent
<b>NGO «INTILISH»</b>	Non-governmental, non-commercial organization, Tashkent
<b>IDA</b>	Infusion Drug Abusers
<b>DFA- PA1</b>	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs – Political Department 1
<b>SCOOF</b>	Swiss Office of the Agency on Development and Cooperation, Bishkek (ShOC)
<b>SDC</b>	Swiss Agency on Development and Cooperation (DFA)
<b>SFOPH</b>	Swiss Federal Department of Health Care