

THE CERVICAL CANCER WILL BE PREVENTED IN MOLDOVA THROUGH ORGANISED SCREENING PROGRAMMES



BACKGROUND

Cervical cancer is among the few type of cancers that can be easily prevented through organized screening programmes. Caused mainly by the infection with Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), the cervical cancer develops during up to ten years - a period enough for any woman to make a preventive cervical screening at least three times in order to detect and treat any precancerous lesions. Nonetheless, almost every day a woman is diagnosed with cervical cancer in Moldova, and one woman dies because of it every third day. This happens because women are not informed about cervical screening services and seek health care too late, while the health system is not enough prepared to respond to these challenges.

Practice shows that organized screening programmes, complemented with HPV vaccination, could prevent almost all cases of cervical cancer. The countries that have implemented such national programmes have a much lower cervical cancer rate. In United Kingdom, the organized cervical screening programme, launched in 1988, saved the lives of more than 4,500 women every year. Finland has currently one of the lowest rate of cervical cancer worldwide.

The organized cervical screening programme is only at the beginning in the Republic of Moldova. Most of the times the screening is done on an occasional basis, when women are screened at their own request or while attending a doctor for other reasons. This does not guarantee that all women aged 25-61 years are subject to screening every third year, as recommended. Hence, the cancer incidence is high. Statistics show in the past five years more than 1,500 women were diagnosed with cervical cancer and more than 1,000 women lost their lives. The majority of cases occur between 35 and 45 years of age. This is a time when most women are working, caring for their families, or doing both, so the social impact of cervical cancer is greatly increased because it removes mothers from their families and workers from the economy.

Project: Cervical Cancer Prevention in the Republic of Moldova

Duration: 2017-2020

Budget: 1, 200.000 USD

Beneficiaries: Women aged 25-61 years, adolescent girls

Territorial coverage: Republic of Moldova

Partners:

Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation/ Swiss Cooperation Office in Moldova (SDC), International Cervical Cancer Prevention Association (ICCPA), World Health Organization (WHO).

GOAL

Reduce the incidence and mortality of women in the Republic of Moldova attributable to cervical cancer.

On one hand, the public health system will be strengthened to offer quality health care services for cervical cancer prevention, and on the other hand, women will be timely informed and empowered to seek prevention services at the family doctor.

KEY FIGURES

**Almost every day a woman is diagnosed with cervical cancer in Moldova.
One woman dies because of cervical cancer every third day.**

OBJECTIVES

Increasing access of women and adolescent girls to quality cervical screening services and HPV vaccination:

- A quarter of primary healthcare professionals, from all districts of the Republic of Moldova, will be trained in cervical cancer prevention;
- Health professionals from six histopathology and cytology laboratories from the country (from the Mother and Child Institute, Oncological Institute, Republican Medical Diagnosis Center, AMT Centru, Municipal Hospital Balti and District Hospital Cahul) will be trained in cervical screening;
- Health professionals from 18 colposcopy offices from Chișinău and other districts of the country will be trained in cervical screening and be able to perform proper case management, by either treatment or referral to the next level of intervention;
- Three laboratories will be fitted with state-of-the-art equipment;
- The regulatory framework of cervical cancer screening will be reviewed and updated in line with the international standards;
- Curriculum on cervical cancer prevention will be aligned with the international standards and integrated into the medical educational curricula;
- An Electronic Cervical Cancer Registry will be set up as part of the Integrated Health Information System, in order to monitor and track the situation on cervical cancer;
- The Cervical Screening Coordination Unit that was established at the Mother and Child Institute, will be strengthened to improve the screening services;
- HPV vaccination of adolescent girls will be introduced to complement the screening programme and ensure more effective cervical cancer prevention.

Increasing awareness and knowledge of women and adolescent girls and improve their healthcare seeking behaviour and demand for cervical screening and HPV vaccination:

- A Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Study will be conducted to assess the barriers that prevent women from seeing a doctor for cervical screening;
- A communication strategy for behavioral change will be developed and implemented;
- National and local journalists will be trained to report correctly on cervical cancer prevention;
- Online platform targeting women eligible for screening and adolescent girls will be developed;
- Partnerships between medical professional associations, civil society, medical educational institutions and development partners will be established to enhance cervical cancer prevention.

IMPACT

- **Over 760, 000 women aged 25-61 will benefit from cervical screening services for cancer prevention;**
- **The cervical cancer incidence will decrease by 20% until 2025;**
- **The cervical cancer mortality will decrease by 5% until 2025;**