

# PROJECT

2024



ЦЕНТР НАУЧНО-ПРАКТИЧЕСКИХ ИНИЦИАТИВ

## **RESEARCH**

**The Center for Scientific and Practical** Initiatives Public Foundation (CSPI PF) is a Kazakhstani non-governmental organization founded in 2018 by the leadership of the Center for Global Health in Central Asia at Columbia University and graduates of Columbia University's School of Social Work. The Center's projects are aimed at harm reduction, HIV prevention, and gender-based violence prevention, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations.

### **FOCUS: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

#### **Umay Project - "Improving Access to Essential Services for Women from Vulnerable Populations to Combat Gender-Based and Domestic Violence in Kazakhstan" (2022-2024)**

**Funding:** Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI).

The project aims to address gaps in services to combat gender-based and domestic violence among women from vulnerable groups in Kazakhstan.

**The goal of the project** is to adapt the internationally recognized evidence-based intervention WINGS (Women Initiating New Goals in Safety) to connect women from vulnerable groups at risk of violence to essential gender-based violence (GBV) services, and to promote effective coordinated community action to combat the epidemic of gender-based violence.

The project contributes to expanding access to services to combat gender-based violence and improving their quality, safety, and effectiveness for women in general and women from vulnerable groups in particular.

The project has established a Coordination Council for Responding to GBV with the participation of representatives of government, civil society, international organizations, the police, and women from at-risk groups.

As **a result of** the project, 874 women underwent screening tests, 507 women underwent training interventions, and 473 women completed a 6-month post-intervention survey.

Preliminary results indicate that the intervention significantly reduced the level of physical (-22.4%) and sexual (-17%) violence in the intervention group compared to the control group six months after the intervention.

The project was presented at the International Forum on Countering and Responding to Violence in Cape Town (South Africa) in October 2024.

#### **Publications:**

*Improving access of women from marginalized populations to mainstream gender-based violence services* [https://svri.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2022-03-31/P7\\_SVRI\\_POSTERS\\_05.pdf](https://svri.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2022-03-31/P7_SVRI_POSTERS_05.pdf)

WINGS: A journey from the US, Kyrgyzstan, India, and Ukraine to Kazakhstan – UMAI Study (<https://www.svri.org/wings-a-journey-from-the-us-kyrgyzstan-india-and-ukraine-to-kazakhstan-umai-study/>).

## **DIRECTION: PLWH/PLWHA**

### **ExMAT-CA Project "Technical Assistance to the State Program on Opioid Agonist Maintenance Therapy (PTAO) in Central Asia (2022–2027)"**

**Funding:** US National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Yale University School of Medicine (USA).

Principal investigators Frederick Altice, Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology, Yale University Lynn Madden, President of the APT Foundation, Professor, Yale School of Medicine.

The project aims to provide technical assistance for the implementation of the Republican Scientific and Practical Center for Mental Health's state program on opioid agonist therapy (OAT) through education, training, facilitation, and support for national addiction experts from all regions in the use of the Network for Improving Addiction Treatment (SUZ) and the creation of national joint training within the SUZ and educational cooperation in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

**Publications:** *Stalled scale-up of opioid agonist therapies for HIV prevention in Kazakhstan: history, policy, and recommendations for change. Journal of Illicit Economies and Development*, 5(2), pp.69-77.  
<https://jied.lse.ac.uk/articles/10.31389/jied.208>

**Impact of the COVID pandemic on PLHIV and stigma (2021-2023) Funding:** Fogarty International Center, National Institutes of Health, USA. **The project** aims to better understand the causes, prevalence, and impact of stigma at various levels of care for PLHIV, as well as to develop effective interventions to reduce HIV-associated stigma in healthcare and improve HIV prevention, diagnosis, and treatment in the country. As part of the project, 230 PLHIV in Almaty were surveyed on COVID-19 vaccination among PLHIV, stigma and discrimination against HIV among healthcare workers and PLHIV.

### **Project: "Aging, physical functioning, daily functioning, and stigma among people living with HIV over 40 years of age in Almaty, Kazakhstan" (2022-2025)**

**Funding:** Fogarty International Center, National Institutes of Health, USA.

**Project objective:** To assess age-related declines in physical

and daily functioning among people living with HIV (PLHIV) over the age of 40, whose lifestyle may accelerate and exacerbate the effects of aging, reducing quality of life and increasing stigma, in order to subsequently develop interventions that ensure quality of life in the context of aging.

As a result of the project, the frailty phenotype will be defined. Frailty syndrome characterizes geriatric populations with signs of reduced physiological reserve and function and increased vulnerability to adverse factors, leading to disability and affecting quality of life. These aspects of HIV aging are virtually unknown worldwide, especially in WECA countries, including Kazakhstan.

## **Project "Cardiovascular disease, mental health, and health behaviors among PLHIV in Almaty" (2022-2023)**

**Funding:** Fogarty International Center, National Institutes of Health, USA.

**The goal of the project** is to assess the state of the cardiovascular system/diseases

(CVD) and mental health among people living with HIV (PLHIV) aged 40 and older and to determine the presence of a link between HIV-associated factors and CVD risk indicators in order to improve care for people with HIV infection accompanied by CVD.

**Results.** This is the first innovative study in Kazakhstan and the EECA region among PLHIV aged 40 and older. The impact of concomitant infectious and non-infectious diseases, as well as lifestyle and behavioral factors, on the risk of developing CVD and cognitive decline was assessed. A detailed analysis of the data obtained is ongoing.

**Publications:** Nursultan Nurzhigitov, Deborah Gustafson, Alfiya Denebayeva, Aigerim Alimbekova, Gulnara Nugumanova, Gulmira Kalzhanbayeva, Ademi Sarsembiyeva, Jack DeHovitz, Zhamilya Nugmanova. "Cardiovascular Contributors to Cognitive Impairment Among People Living With HIV Age 40 Years and Older in Kazakhstan", *VasCog* 2023, Sweden, Gothenburg, September 2023;

## **DIRECTION: INCREASING THE POTENTIAL OF SPECIALISTS**

### **Training in research on the HIV epidemic caused by substance use in Kazakhstan (2021-2026)**

**Funding:** Fogarty International Center, National Institutes of Health, USA.

**Project objective:** To enhance the research capacity of KazNMU through certified training of KazNMU teachers and researchers in public health and epidemiology, leading to a Master of Science degree (epidemiology); in epidemiology and analytics for public health managers from the Republican Scientific and Practical Center for Mental Health and the Kazakh Scientific Center

Dermatology and Infectious Diseases; as well as expanding the educational programs of the KazNMU School of Public Health in epidemiology, biostatistics, research design, and substance use disorders.

Ten people were trained under the NYS-ITRP program in the United States (six of them work as teachers at KazNMU). KazNMU has launched new programs in epidemiology and biostatistics for undergraduate and graduate students. KazNMU has initiated a bachelor's degree program in public health with the opportunity for Kazakhstani students to complete their studies within a year at the University of Albany. Graduate interns have actively participated in research as lead authors or co-authors of more than 50 publications, focusing on HIV prevention strategies, adherence to antiretroviral therapy, comorbidities such as tuberculosis, and HIV services for people who use psychoactive substances.

### **Publications:**

- 1) Iskakova B, Nugmanova Z, Murat Yucel R, Gamarel KE, King EJ "Re-validation and cultural adaptation of the brief, standardized assessment tool for measuring HIV-related stigma in healthcare settings in Almaty, Kazakhstan." *PLoS ONE* 17(11): e0276770. (2022) <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0276770>
- 2) Seung Hyun Park, Sung Hwi, Kwanghyun Kim, .....Zhamilya Nugmanova (69th author out of 109) "Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions Reduce the Incidence, and Mortality of COVID-19: A Study based on the Survey from the International COVID-19 Research Network (ICRN)". January 2023 *Journal of Medical Virology* 95:e28354. DOI: 10.1002/jmv.28354
- 3) Iskakova B., King E., Nugmanova Zh. "Measuring HIV-related stigma in healthcare settings. Findings of mixed method study in Kazakhstan". Abstract booklet-EECAINTERACT, 2023. Esmagambetova A.S., Zekenova A.R., Smagul M.A., Nugmanova Zh.S., Kulbaeva Zh.A., Zharylkasynova A.E., Kasabekova L.K., Nukenova G.T. Methodological recommendations "Prevention of infections and infection control in medical organizations", 2023, 183 pages in Kazakh and Russian;

## **AREA: WOMEN OF THE REPUBLIC**

### **Project "Expansion of programs for the provision of social and legal assistance and HIV prevention among women from KGN"**

**(2023) Funding:** Almaty Public Health Department, Almaty AIDS Prevention and Control Center.

**The project aims** to create a sustainable response to the spread of HIV infection in Almaty by expanding access to HIV prevention and harm reduction services for women from key populations (KPs). The project provided social and legal assistance and HIV prevention among women from KPGs by disseminating information on HIV prevention, treatment, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and commitment to a healthy lifestyle.

**Results:** 950 women from KPGs gained access to prevention services, which led to a decrease in new HIV infections; 765 women were tested for HIV using near-gum tests; individual protective equipment was distributed (190,000 condoms, 400 lubricants), psychosocial counseling was provided, and 4 women received CSP.

## **TARGET GROUP: MSM, TG**

### **Amanbol PrEP Project – "Engaging MSM and trans\*persons in HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in Kazakhstan" (2021 - 2023)**

**Funding:** Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (KAZ-H-RAC/1913 "Ensuring sustainability and continuity of services for key populations and people living with HIV in the Republic of Kazakhstan" for 2021-2023).

**The project aims** to ensure the sustainability and continuity of HIV prevention services for key populations.

As part of the project, technical assistance and information support were provided to develop the capacity of medical personnel and NGOs to implement prevention measures among MSM, SW, scientific and technical support for the introduction and implementation of PrEP, analysis of PrEP implementation, engagement in HIV counseling and testing, and introduction of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in seven regions of Kazakhstan.

As part of the project, HIV center staff were trained in 44 training sessions for 320 medical workers and 239 NGO staff on PrEP, skills for working with key populations, strengthening cooperation with NGOs, training on the provisions of the section on PrEP from the clinical protocol for HIV diagnosis and prevention, and motivational interviewing skills.

As part of the National Information Campaign to generate demand, raise awareness, redirect to DCP, and retain participants in the program, the website [vich.kz](http://vich.kz) and social media accounts were launched, a Telegram bot about DCP [https://t.me/prep\\_kz\\_bot](https://t.me/prep_kz_bot), [www.amanbol.kz](http://www.amanbol.kz), and, for the first time in Kazakhstan, a system for managing clients in the DCP program was developed. Number of clients included in the DCP program: 7,033. The infrastructure developed upon completion of the project was transferred to the KNCDI for continued client enrollment in the DCP program. The results of the scientific justification based on the project's findings served as the basis for amendments to the section on DCP in the Clinical Protocol for HIV Treatment.

## **Project "Conducting an information campaign on harm reduction in the context of HIV, conducting media research" (2021-2022)**

**Funding:** UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

The aim of this project was to conduct research to identify promising areas of interaction with the target audience of MSM in Kazakhstan in the creation of educational content, as well as their needs for knowledge and information.

Based on the results of the research, a communication strategy was developed for the creation and promotion of educational content in Russian and Kazakh, a step-by-step plan was developed for the creation, publication, and promotion of educational content on HIV, a series of educational materials (content blocks) in various formats, and the promotion of educational materials on various Internet and social media platforms (including through partner projects, search engine promotion, contextual and targeted advertising, etc.) was ensured in order to achieve the widest possible coverage of target audiences.

**Publications:** Report "Analysis of media consumption in matters of sexual education, STIs, and HIV among Russian- and Kazakh-speaking men, MSM, as well as transgender and non-binary persons in Kazakhstan"  
<https://cspisf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Amanbol-presentation.pdf>

## **FOCUS: ALL KEY POPULATION GROUPS**

### **AmanBol COVID Project – "National Navigation Service for Friendly Services for SW and PLHIV" (2021 - 2023)**

**Funding:** Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The project aimed to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on ongoing HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria programs and strengthen the national response to COVID-19. The project provided online consultations with web specialists, referrals for treatment, and support from psychotherapists and psychologists.

**Results:** Trained psychologists and psychotherapists conducted 9,489 consultations and referrals on various issues related to HIV and PLHIV; psychotherapists conducted 565 sessions; and psychologists consulted with 3,451 clients. Eleven employees were trained online to consult and refer clients to medical facilities for services; five psychologists and psychotherapists were trained to work with SW.

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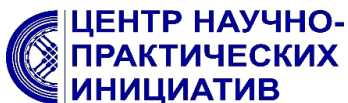
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