

TAKING THE LEAD



Since its founding in 2001, *AIDS Foundation East-West (AFEW)* has worked closely with many of the region's leaders, whose efforts in curbing the HIV epidemic on various levels act as a source of tremendous inspiration and motivation. Whether in high-level institutions or on the streets engaging individuals in discussions about lifestyle, choice and personal health, leadership is demonstrated in many different ways. However, despite these tireless efforts, the region's unabated battle with the epidemic points to the need for an increased commitment and continued and new forms of leadership at all levels. As such, *AFEW* takes its position as a regional authority seriously and continues to assist those with their efforts in Eastern Europe and Central Asia motivating them to take a leading role in their communities, while highlighting the need for continued support and commitments from those in the West.



How AFEW works

With an experienced team of domestic and international staff (approx. 115) and an increasingly expanding network of international consultants, AFEW bases its operations from three regional offices in EECA (in Kyiv, Ukraine; Moscow, Russian Federation; and Almaty, Kazakhstan), and its headquarters in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. In all countries in which AFEW works, activities are carried out in close co-operation with national governmental and non-governmental agencies.

AFEW develops and implements its activities designed around a mixed balance of three inter-related components. First, AFEW seeks to foster sound policy in the region, to raise awareness and

advocate for appropriate action among all levels of society. Secondly, given the need for long-term action, AFEW works to build the capacity and skills amongst professionals through training sessions, education, institutional support and the development of national partners. Finally, AFEW's activities focus on the delivery of direct services and support for vulnerable groups. These components form the pillars of AFEW's programmes.

As such, AFEW has developed a system of replication, which adapts successful international HIV/AIDS programmes based on best practices to the local conditions in other countries across the region. Currently, AFEW carries out projects in Belarus, Kazakhstan,

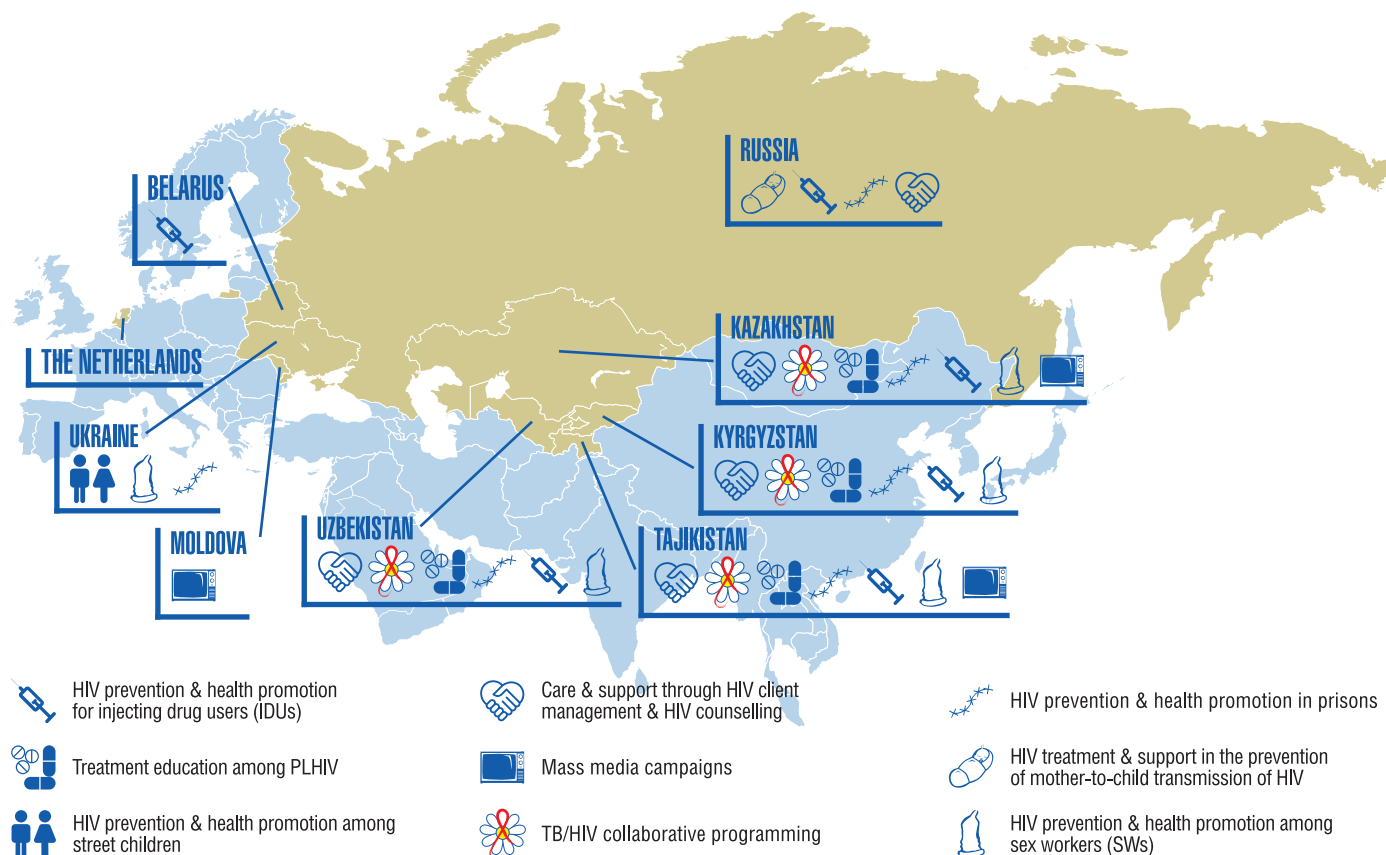
Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Simultaneously, AFEW develops additional activities that address issues specific to the region related to HIV/AIDS in the fields of prevention, treatment, care and support to PLHIV as they arise.

Mass media campaigns

Rooted in international experience and best practices, AFEW's mass media campaign messages address issues such as safer sex, solidarity with PLHIV and access to antiretroviral treatment. Nationwide television and radio public service advertisements are combined

Countries in which AFEW works



with the large-scale distribution of information materials, outdoor advertisements and public events. *AFEW* works closely with local partners and authorities when developing and communicating specific messages.

HIV prevention & health promotion in prisons

After the introduction of severe penalties for drug-related offences in the 1990s, the prison population in the region was flooded with injecting drug users, many of whom are living with HIV. Working in close partnership with prison authorities at all levels, international and local non-governmental organisations and prisoners themselves, *AFEW*'s programmes aim to ensure that those incarcerated are able to access the same services inside prison walls as the general public can on the outside.

HIV prevention & health promotion for IDUs, MSM and SWs

AFEW understands that making services equitable and accessible means getting services to vulnerable and hard-to-reach individuals who often need them most. This calls for creativity, flexibility, dedication and, most of all, care. To this end, *AFEW* strives to build partnerships that bridge sectors and institutions and engage public officials, health professionals, front-line staff, community leaders and other stakeholders in making the delivery of health and psycho-social services more appropriate, user-friendly, and responsive to individual needs. *AFEW*'s activities target injecting drug users (IDUs), sex workers (SWs) and men who have sex with men (MSM). Efforts are aimed at building capacity among service providers working in local governmental, non-governmental and community agencies through training, information materials and the fostering of professional networks. Technical assistance is provided to local partners in the development of new and expanded delivery models such as harm reduction services, drop-in centres, community outreach, support groups, peer counselling and peer education.

HIV prevention & health promotion among street children

One group that remains at the margins of the region's response to HIV is homeless or 'street' children. *AFEW*'s activities targeted at preventing HIV and promoting health among street children in the region are

Harm reduction methodologies

Whilst there is no universally accepted definition of harm reduction, it generally refers to policies, strategies and programmes that seek to limit the health risks of (injecting) drug use, wherever such risks may be eliminated. Harm reduction methods are recognised as successful strategies by international agencies such as the World Health Organisation and UNAIDS in combating HIV/AIDS. *AFEW*'s training activities, which rely upon harm reduction methodologies, focus on assisting local partners to expand their services to include needle and/or syringe exchanges, the distribution of condoms, specific health information and referral services for medical, drug and/or substitution treatment, and social support. Many of *AFEW*'s programmes rely upon and include harm reduction strategies as a component.

aimed at building the capacity of service providers in delivering user-friendly services to street children. Services include street-based outreach, psycho-social support and the distribution of informational and prevention materials, as well as the opening of drop-in centres for street children.

HIV treatment & support in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT)

Because little experience in providing prevention services for HIV-positive pregnant women exists in the region, *AFEW* initiated a large PMTCT project in the Russia Federation in 2004. 'Family oriented', *AFEW*'s activities link HIV-positive women, their children and their families to high-quality treatment, care and support services. *AFEW*'s PMTCT activities focuses on reducing the risk of HIV transmission among woman of childbearing age and empowering HIV-positive women to access timely care and to take an active role in shaping the HIV agenda.

Care & support through HIV client management & HIV counselling

Securing access to a wide spectrum of HIV-related health and social services for marginalised groups is central to *AFEW*'s programming. Client—or case—management is an approach that recognises that PLHIV (or those most at risk of becoming infected) often have multiple healthcare needs that require services from several sectors and providers. This collaborative process aims to ensure that individuals are able to access the social and health systems and receive quality care by linking the individual, a client manager and local service providers.

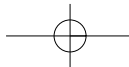
Likewise, *AFEW*'s underlying principle for its counselling projects is that individuals need accurate information in order to make informed decisions about their personal health and support to put those decisions into action. *AFEW* conducts capacity-building training sessions amongst local governmental, non-governmental and community partners on pre- and post-HIV test counselling, risk reduction, drug treatment counselling, street outreach counselling, HIV treatment adherence, and peer and group counselling.

Treatment education among PLHIV

As antiretroviral treatment becomes increasingly available across the region, a new challenge emerges, namely, increasing awareness amongst PLHIV about their right to treatment and their treatment options, its availability and adherence to prescribed treatment regimes. *AFEW*'s treatment education activities focus on peer-based initiatives that aim to mobilise HIV-positive individuals related to these issues, and carrying out information and support meetings which are guided by the needs and interests of the participants.

TB/HIV collaborative programming

Tuberculosis and HIV—both individually and co-infection rates—are expected to increase significantly in the region if adequate measures are not taken to halt their spread and to treat those already infected. Hence, *AFEW*'s HIV/TB collaborative programmes are designed to improve the quality, range and reach of HIV/AIDS and TB services available and to facilitate the co-ordination of TB/HIV activities between vertically separated and isolated healthcare structures.



AFEW mission statement

AIDS Foundation East-West (AFEW) is a Dutch, non-governmental, humanitarian, public health organisation working in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS using innovative and proactive approaches and by actively seeking international and regional exchanges. Together with and for people living with HIV and affected communities, as well as non-governmental and governmental partners, *AFEW* conducts and supports programmes aimed at the prevention of HIV; access to treatment, care and support; and advocacy on the most pressing issues to alleviate the burden of the epidemic in the EECA region.

Reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe & Central Asia

AIDS Foundation East-West (AFEW) is a Dutch, non-governmental, humanitarian, public health organisation working in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS among vulnerable populations.

The challenge

Despite the late appearance of HIV in the region, it is home to one of the fastest growing epidemics. Whilst the number of officially reported cases across the region reaches in the hundreds of thousands of people living with HIV (PLHIV), most experts agree that as many as 1.6 million HIV-positive individuals already exist in EECA.

HIV has disproportionately affected young people across EECA who are increasingly experimenting with injecting drug use, which has contributed to the rapid growth in the epidemic. However, an increasing percentage of newly registered cases have listed unprotected heterosexual contact as their cause.

A unique opportunity

Despite these grim figures and the bleak forecast for the future, we still have hope.

In 1987, the first case of HIV was registered in the USSR, marking the start of the epidemic in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The relatively late start of the HIV epidemic in this region offers a unique opportunity to develop and implement effective pro-

gramming to avoid the inevitable health, social and economic catastrophes witnessed in many other parts of the world.

Given the high level of literacy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the delayed start of the epidemic, we believe it is still possible to stop this time bomb by applying the lesson learnt elsewhere.

The need to seize this opportunity led to the creation of *AFEW*. Founded in the Netherlands and launched on 1 December 2001, *AFEW* is considered an international authority in the field of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for PLHIV in EECA, a part of the world that is still largely ignored by major international aid organisations. *AFEW* is the only non-governmental organisation operating in EECA that was specifically created to address HIV/AIDS in the region and advocates to make the HIV epidemic a priority in the social and political discourse and to stimulate prompt and appropriate action.

East–West engagement

Part of the *AFEW* mission is to strengthen the engagement between the East and the West in the fight against the HIV epidemic in EECA. *AFEW* strives to promote a better understanding—both in the East and in the West—of the magnitude of this looming human catastrophe and to stimulate a committed and sustained response.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

Please visit our website at
www.afew.org

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