

Strengthening of HIV/STI interventions in sex work in Ukraine and the Russian Federation

- Russia and Ukraine account together for almost 90% of all people living with HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
- Female, male and transgender sex workers are vulnerable to HIV infection because of structural and environmental factors.
- Criminalization of sex work, abusive law-enforcement practices, violence, stigma, discrimination, and human right violations against sex workers increase their vulnerability to HIV/STI and limits sex workers' ability to access vital health and support services, including medical care and harm reduction.



The project

CONNECTA aims to reduce vulnerability of sex workers to HIV/STI transmission, while developing comprehensive and rights-based services and approach to HIV/STI and sex workers.

Objectives

- Provide comprehensive and multifaceted services for sex workers in the region of Lviv and St. Petersburg, with the development of a good practices model and tools for national replications.
- Strengthen the capacity and skills of service providers, community based organisations (CBOs), and policy makers while developing a programmatic approach to HIV/STI in sex work settings in Ukraine and Russia.

Fundamental to reducing HIV risk and vulnerability is enhancing access to HIV prevention, treatment, and care for all, including sex workers.

Comprehensive rights- and evidence-based programmes on HIV and sex work are crucial to the success of HIV response. It has been proved that an efficient strategy to reach this success is to work in partnership with sex workers, in order to identify their needs and to advocate for policies and programmes that improve their health, safety and engagement in HIV/STI prevention.





Evidence-informed measures to address sex work constitutes an integral component of an effective and comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS in the field of sex work, as well as a cross-sectorial cooperative approach to tackle the epidemic in the region, which affects particularly sex workers (female, male, and transgender) and individuals who inject drugs.

Activities

To implement the CONECTA project, the **Tampep International Foundation** in Amsterdam, **Humanitarian Action** in the Russian Federation, and the **Salus Charitable Foundation** in Ukraine, along with regional networking, and making use of their long expertise and partnership, carries our activities in three main areas (work packages) in order to reach its goals.

WP1 ■

Build up capacity in information, dissemination and networking

To improve the capacity of NGOs and CBOs in the development of a comprehensive regional response to the extreme vulnerabilities of sex workers to HIV and STI, implement the following activities:

- Produce a Russian and a Ukrainian National Prostitution Mapping Report.
- Produce two Regional Prostitution Mapping Reports.
- Promote and improve the communication among NGOs that provide services for sex workers, by means of national training programmes, one regional seminar, and regional newsletters.

WP2 ■

Enhance the possibilities of services to respond to sex workers' needs

To strengthen the capacities of service providers and CBOs in developing comprehensive, accessible, acceptable, sustainable, high-quality, user-friendly HIV/STI prevention, treatment, care and support, implement the following activities:

- Promote and develop multi-faceted services carried out by implementing partners (local trainings, preparation of educational materials).
- Peer education program for sex workers and develop a good practices guideline (including reports, a manual, and campaign materials).



WP3 ■

Creating and enabling policy environment for increased access to HIV & AIDS services for sex workers

To promote human rights and equality regarding public health policies and accessibility to these services, and enable legal and policy changes for preventing and addressing violence against sex workers, implement the following activities:

- Develop human rights-based advocacy tools for national implementation, including policy papers, and the development of regional and national campaigns.
- Address violence against sex workers by producing a booklet with cases of gender-based violence against sex workers.

Beneficiaries

The project targets service providers and sex workers in the framework of building up comprehensive multifaceted services addressing sex worker's specific needs in Russia and the Ukraine.

The CONECTA partners

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Associated organisations

- ESVERO network | Russia
- Lviv AIDS CENTER | Ukraine
- Public organisation "Amikus" Union | Ukraine
- Charity Fund "Solidarity" | Ukraine
- The Charitable Fund "Unitus" | Ukraine
- Youth Centre for Women's Initiatives | Ukraine
- Charity Foundation "Hope and Salvation" | Ukraine