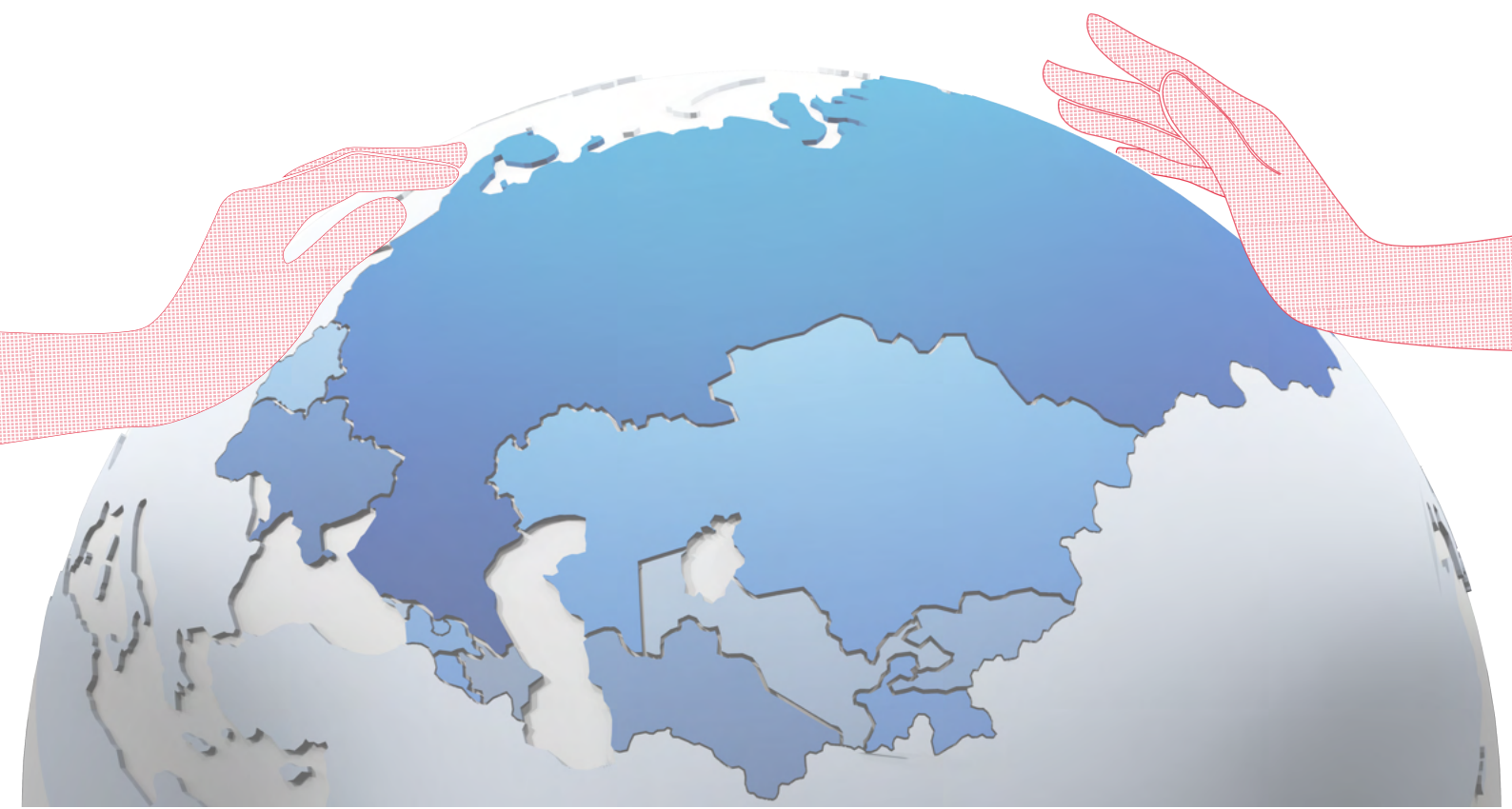




# SOLIDARITY IN THE TIME OF THREE PANDEMICS

**ANNUAL REPORT 2020**  
**AFEW INTERNATIONAL**



# CONTENTS



<b>WELCOME NOTE</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION: What do we do?</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>COVID-19 RESPONSE</b> .....	<b>4</b>
COVID Corner on our website .....	<b>5</b>
COVID-19 and Prison Health .....	<b>5</b>
A Series of Publications “EECA’s Response to COVID-19” .....	<b>5</b>
COVID-19 report “Interruption and Innovation” .....	<b>6</b>
Report “The impact of COVID-19 on civil society organisations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia” .....	<b>6</b>
EU COVID-19 SOLIDARITY PROGRAMME IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES .....	<b>7</b>
<b>OUR PROGRAMMES IN 2020</b> .....	<b>8</b>
EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUND FOR KEY POPULATIONS .....	<b>9</b>
BRIDGING THE GAPS: HEALTH AND RIGHTS FOR KEY POPULATIONS .....	<b>11</b>
“YOUNG, WILD...AND FREE” - THE FLEXIBLE FUND .....	<b>16</b>
PITCH - The Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV response .....	<b>17</b>
<b>THEMATIC AREAS</b> .....	<b>20</b>
LABOUR MIGRATION .....	<b>21</b>
HARM REDUCTION .....	<b>22</b>
PRISON HEALTH .....	<b>23</b>
COMMUNITY BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH .....	<b>23</b>
<b>ADVOCACY</b> .....	<b>24</b>
VOICES FROM THE EAST PARTNERSHIP .....	<b>25</b>
THE HIV OUTCOMES INITIATIVE .....	<b>25</b>
CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ON DRUGS PROJECT (CSFD) .....	<b>26</b>
<b>EVENTS</b> .....	<b>27</b>
Study tour on Alternative fundraising .....	<b>28</b>
EECA INTERACT .....	<b>28</b>
Dutch Drugs Stories’ Expo - Kostya Proletarsky documentary film screening .....	<b>29</b>
<b>20th ANNIVERSARY OF AFEW INTERNATIONAL</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>ON THE AGENDA 2021</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>AFEW TEAM</b> .....	<b>36</b>
AFEW INTERNATIONAL SUPERVISORY BOARD .....	<b>37</b>
AFEW PARTNERSHIP STEERING COMMITTEE .....	<b>37</b>
AFEW INTERNATIONAL STAFF IN 2020 AND 2021 .....	<b>38</b>
<b>FINANCIAL RESULTS</b> .....	<b>39</b>

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# WELCOME NOTE

Dear friends, colleagues, supporters and donors of *AFEW International*!

We opened the 2019 annual report in what we then believed was the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. As events evolved, we can now conclude that it was only the final stage of the beginning. 2020 was the year that will go down in history as the year in which a novel coronavirus brought the world to a standstill. COVID-19 has changed our lives and everyday reality on multiple levels, especially hitting those most vulnerable.

The COVID-19 pandemic is still far from under control and affecting our field, the broader global HIV response, as well as our organisation and the community-based partner organisations, scientists and service providers that we strive to support. The impact of COVID-19 – on our day-to-day routines, our physical and mental health and well-being, and the global economy – will be long lasting and deserves attention in the years to come.

For the EECA region, COVID-19 brought a third pandemic to the two major ones we were already dealing with – HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis. The *AFEW Partnership* and the *AFEW International* teams did a great job in re-organising activities planned for 2020 from live to virtual events; in setting up a structure to meet COVID-19 related needs; and in adapting to modus of working from home. We improved our skills in organising virtual meetings, trainings and webinars; learned how to stay in touch with each other virtually and tried to stay healthy. We never stopped working, we adjusted our programmes where we could, re-strategized and re-directed resources to the most urgent, emergency needs arising in connection with COVID-19 restrictions.

*AFEW International* produced two reports on the effects of COVID-19 in the EECA region. The report 'Interruption and innovation' describes the effects of COVID-19 on the activities and wellbeing of the key population groups. The report on the impact of COVID-19 on the work and sustainability of the EECA-based NGOs shows the financial consequences – less funding for civil society organisations.

2020 was also the year in which *AFEW* celebrated its 20th anniversary. There are many successes to celebrate, and we very much hope that we can soon again do so as we were used to, with face-to-face contact and direct human interaction, not just in online video calls. While celebrating, one cannot ignore the unfortunate reality that

Eastern Europe and Central Asia is the only region in the world where the annual rate of new HIV infections continues to rise rapidly, and where the HIV response is far from being inclusive of key populations – LGBT, men who have sex with men, transgender people, sex workers, people who use drugs, and people living with HIV.

*AFEW International* traditionally has been a linking pin between West and East, and a facilitator of dialogue at regional and country level. That has not changed and will not change. With the members of the *AFEW Partnership* in Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and our national partners, we continue to facilitate dialogue between governments, civil society, scientists, and health care providers.

The last year has seen the closure of our flagship projects with great successes, Bridging the Gaps and PITCH – the Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV response, and many other successes in the side-lines of them.

Our challenge for the next decade is to advocate with and for the region: to ensure that it gets the political and financial attention that it needs, and that all people in this region receive the healthcare that they deserve, with respect, dignity, and free from stigma and discrimination. Eastern Europe and Central Asia is a vibrant, promising, and beautiful region. It has a rich culture and breath-taking nature, and kind, strong and resilient people who deserve our continued support and solidarity.



**Yuri de Boer,**  
Director of *AFEW International*



**Michel Kazatchkine,**  
Chair of *AFEW International*  
Supervisory Board

# INTRODUCTION

WHAT  
WHAT DO WE DO



***AFEW International* works for all people in Eastern Europe and Central Asia who face barriers in access to health, justice, and social participation. Priority is with groups that are more at risk, more stigmatised, and are facing more severe barriers.**

This annual report reflects the activities of *AFEW International* in 2020.

From a non-governmental, humanitarian and rights-based perspective, *AFEW International* promotes health and advocates for increased access to prevention, treatment, and care for major public health concerns such as HIV, tuberculosis, COVID-19, viral hepatitis, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

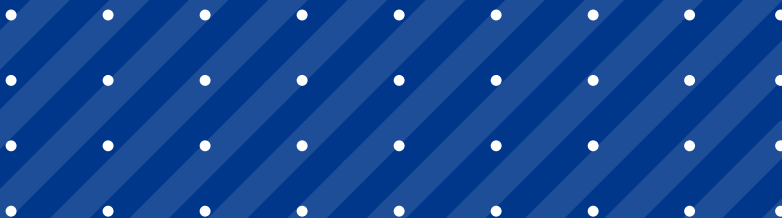
*AFEW International* is working with and for “key populations” - individuals and communities who have disproportionate burdens of HIV risk and disease and lack of access to essential HIV services (including, but not limited to LGBTIQ, men who have sex with men, people who use drugs, sex workers, people living with HIV, (ex) prisoners, (labour) migrants, vulnerable youth and adolescents).

By providing support and empowering communities and civil society organisations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA), we contribute to better access to good quality health services for all, including people whose access is denied due to stigma and discrimination.

As of 2019 *AFEW* has become a partnership of independent local organisations working in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. At the moment, the *AFEW Partnership* consists of five members operating in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Russia and Ukraine; with *AFEW International* in the Netherlands serving as the international secretariat of the partnership.



# COVID-19 RESPONSE



# ON MARCH 11, 2020 THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION DECLARED COVID-19 A PANDEMIC

Since the beginning of March 2020, AFEW International has been continuously collecting and sharing the latest information and guidelines on COVID-19 in English and Russian, both broadly and in relation to HIV, TB, and Hepatitis. While COVID-19 was spreading around the world, we have been strategizing and adjusting by creating fast-response materials and adapting our ongoing programmes. Throughout the year we have been receiving requests for support to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus and came up with several solutions and programmes in response to the needs.

## COVID-19 Corner on our website

[find more online!](#)

COVID Corner contains specific information for the key populations that are most at risk

## COVID-19 list of resources

[find more online!](#)

Helpful information and verified resources about COVID-19

## COVID-19 and Prison Health

[find more online!](#)

A list of verified sources: policies, informational materials, statements of international organisations, and guidelines.

Health protection in prisons is a serious public health issue, especially at the time of COVID-19. Persons deprived of their liberty might face higher vulnerabilities as the spread of the virus can expand rapidly due to the high concentration of prisoners in confined spaces and to the restricted access to hygiene and health care.

## A Series of Publications “EECA’s Response to COVID-19”

Heads of NGOs, activists from the EECA Region sharing about interesting practices, unusual solutions, and new opportunities in the COVID-19 reality.

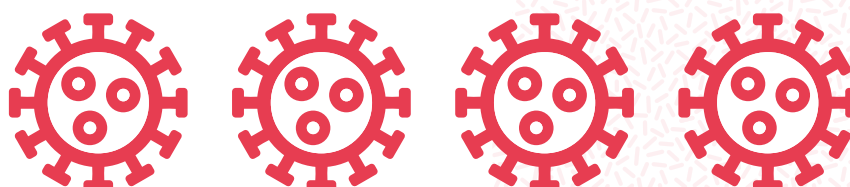
**April 15, 2020:** Alexander Ostapov, President of PF “Return to Life”, Project Coordinator, Ukraine, Kirovohrad oblast, about challenges and successes of moving trainings and meetings to online formats.

**April 30, 2020:** Evgeniy Yuldashev, Peer consultant and social worker, AFEW Kyrgyzstan, about work with (ex) prisoners.

**May 6, 2020:** Enji Shagieva, Secretary of the Russian Sex Workers’ Forum, about the Forum’s activities in COVID-19 time and safety measures for sex workers

**June 3, 2020** Anatoly Leshenok, Deputy Chairman of the Board of the Association People PLUS (Belarus), about activities of his organisation and increasing computer literacy in COVID-19 time.

[find more online!](#)



## COVID-19 report “Interruption and Innovation”

find more online!



An overview of the impact of policy measures, disruptions of and responses to prevention, treatment and care for key populations at risk for HIV, TB and viral hepatitis due to COVID-19 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

These key- and vulnerable populations are: people who inject drugs, sex workers, men who have sex with men, trans people, people living with HIV, people deprived of liberty like people in prison or pre-trial detention, tuberculosis patients and their contacts, labour migrants, refugees and internally displaced people.

The regional scope: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

findings

Important findings from this report show that the restrictions have impacted normal ways of communication and increased feelings of isolation. This has a severe impact on the prevalence of domestic violence and the access to health services, including access to sexual and reproductive health services. The pandemic has also highlighted existing problems that countries were facing in their healthcare systems.

In the report, *AFEW International* identified good practice examples from CSOs, governmental systems and donors. Many have shown flexibility in providing assistance to groups in need, switched to online ways of working and proven their ability to respond to emergency needs.

June, 2020

## Report “The impact of COVID-19 on civil society organisations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia”

Short overview  
of the report

Full report  
online

In August 2020 *AFEW International* conducted an online survey (in English and Russian) among civil society organisations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and received 103 responses. The majority of the respondents work in smaller organisations in the Russian Federation (21.4%), followed by respondents from Kyrgyzstan (20.4%), Ukraine (17.5%), Kazakhstan and Tajikistan (15.5%), Uzbekistan (13.6%), Georgia (8%), Belarus (4%), Armenia (3%), Azerbaijan (2%) and Turkmenistan (1%) and Moldova (1%). The results of the survey were published in this report.

The survey has revealed the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions related to the pandemic on CSOs, in terms of the health of their staff members, the way of working and sustainability. Almost half of the respondents confessed that staff of their organisations tested positive for COVID-19, which shows that it had a very personal impact on them. The majority of the respondents experienced a lot of changes in their work, including the introduction of new ways of working, a reduction in face-to-face meetings, and the need to work from home, which also corresponds with other reports about the impact of COVID-19.

findings

There were also two positive findings. Despite the insecurities caused by the pandemic, CSOs do feel that they will emerge stronger and more agile out of the COVID-19 pandemic; 66% of respondents see positive aspects in remote working. Many admit that their organisations have learned how to be strong as a team and flexible. Their experience in working with key populations has proved useful for dealing with a situation in which everyone is at risk. The survey revealed that CSOs have proved to be resilient and flexible in their way of working during the pandemic, with the majority of them (88%) adding new activities in response to COVID-19, and more than a third adding new target groups into their activities.

October, 2020

# EU COVID-19 SOLIDARITY PROGRAMME IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES

## Countries



Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine

## Duration



2020-2022

## Donor



European Commission



In September 2020 AFEW International has launched the regional "COVID-19 Solidarity Programme in the Eastern Partnership countries" with the financial support of the European Union and in partnership with People in Need (PIN) and the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC).

The consortium is built by three organisations with distinct experience and added value. PIN has a field presence in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine and capitalizes on its in-depth field-level knowledge to support CSOs that focus on community-level initiatives, develop watchdog initiatives and local independent journalists. AFEW International and NHC both are specialised in activities to improve human rights protection for responsible persons in closed institutions and 'key populations at risk for public health concerns like HIV, TB and viral hepatitis'. With a total EU support of EUR 4 million, these organisations provide grant support to NGOs working with these groups of people and accompany them in strengthened monitoring, reporting, advisory, agenda-setting and advocacy work. AFEW International, PIN and NHC recognise the critical role local CSOs play in service delivery, community mobilisation, awareness raising, policy engagement and advocacy for the protection of human rights and civic freedoms during and in the post-pandemic environment.

In the framework of this project, AFEW International supports organisations working with key populations, such as People who use Drugs, Sex workers, LGBTI, Men who have sex with men, Women vulnerable to HIV, Migrants, Adolescents and/or youth, People using drugs, People living with HIV.

Through small grants to community-based organisations (CBOs) working with key populations, with activities ranging from advocacy and prevention to treatment and care in terms of COVID-19 implications, AFEW International responds to arising and anticipated (post)pandemic challenges.

To reach the overall goal of the project, in the first round AFEW International supported 9 organisations with grants up to €5.000 to address the immediate COVID-19 related health and socio-economic needs of key populations and to be implemented in the period of November 2020 – September 2021.

The second round of grants is planned to be launched in the first half of 2021.

## ANKE VAN DAM, (FORMER) DIRECTOR, AFEW INTERNATIONAL

"This project is a unique opportunity to prepare and adjust local community-based organisations to do their work and offer their services in a COVID-19 context. The Corona-crisis has changed our way of working with local communities very much; the lockdown measures, the physical distancing, personal protection measures showed that outreach work and contact with the communities have to be done in a different way. This project offers technical assistance and financial means to continue the work with the communities in a 'COVID-19 proof' way. These skills will also be handy to be agile and prepared for other emergency situations in the future."

find more online!

## A few highlights from the supported projects:



### Georgia

Georgian community-based organisation of people using drugs is implementing a project to ensure access to social, legal and psychological services for members of high-risk groups such as sex workers, women vulnerable to HIV, people using drugs, people living with HIV. The goal is to reduce the negative effects of COVID-19. Over 500 project beneficiaries are receiving free legal, psychological and social services.



### Ukraine

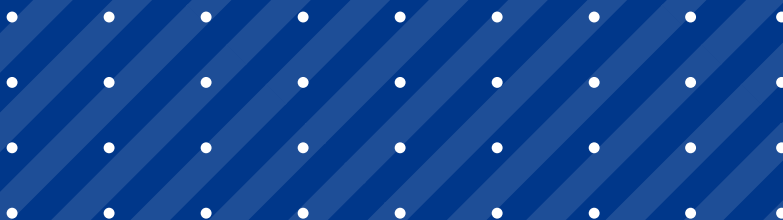
In 2020 people living with HIV have faced the threat of interruption of ARV therapy due to the inability to get to the points of issuing medicine under quarantine: closure of pick-up points, lack of transport, low financial capacity. One of our subgrantees is implementing the project "Prevention of ART interruptions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic" in Odessa region, Ukraine, the goal of which is providing continuous treatment of ARV-drugs to over 1000 HIV-positive patients, as well as reducing the risk of Coronavirus infection.

find more online!





# OUR PROGRAMMES IN 2020



# EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUND FOR KEY POPULATIONS



In 2020 AFEW International continued implementing Emergency Support Fund for Key Populations in the EECA Region (ESF), together with Aidsfonds, funded by the Elton John AIDS Foundation and Aidsfonds.

Organisations representing key populations at risk for HIV in emergency situations from 10 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan) can apply and receive small grants.

ESF strives for a comprehensive response to emergencies threatening HIV service provision for key populations in the EECA region and supports activities ranging from advocacy and prevention to treatment and care in terms of HIV and co-infections.

[find more online!](#)




## ACTIVITIES

### We prioritised activities that:

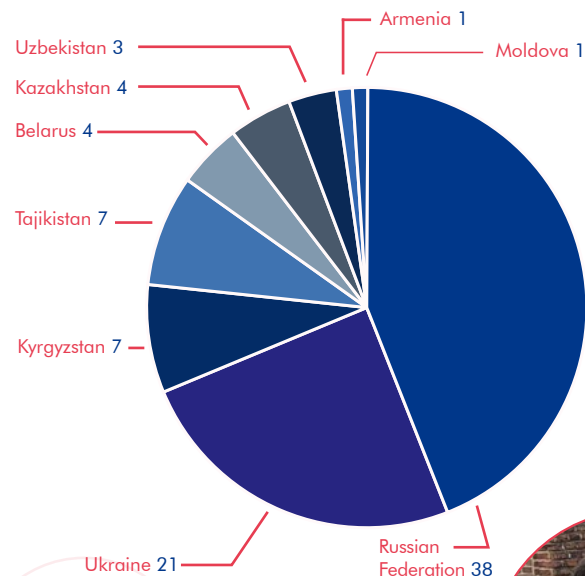
- are not (easily) funded through other means;
- that will also be used as a means for advocacy and/or publicity, addressing the causes of and striving to find more structural solutions for an emergency, and thus benefiting larger target groups;
- that include a good sustainability plan.

## OBJECTIVES

### The Emergency Support Fund aims to:

-  Decrease the annual number of new HIV infections in the EECA region
-  Ensure access to treatment for all people living with HIV in the EECA region
-  Offer better and more effective funding for the response to the HIV epidemics in EECA countries

In 2020, ESF received **217** applications and supported **86** projects from 9 countries: Russian Federation (38), Ukraine (21), Kyrgyzstan (7), Tajikistan (7), Kazakhstan (4), Belarus (4), Uzbekistan (3), Armenia (1), Moldova (1)



### VALERIA FULGA, PROJECT MANAGER

*In 2020 ESF specifically welcomed applications from first-time applicants and applications that introduced innovative approaches. We also adapted our criteria so that we could tackle COVID-19 pandemic impact towards key populations: added focus on ART postal delivery, online consultations, as well as PPE distribution, so that clients can enter medical institutions.*

Our centre first opened 3 years ago. Since then, we have succeeded in providing assistance to people from socially unprotected segments of the population, people who are often rejected even by those closest to them due to being diagnosed with HIV or tuberculosis; people who have lost all hope that the future could be brighter than the present. In 2020, our drop-in centre was under threat of closure due to inability to pay the rent. If it were closed, then 18 people living in the drop-in center would be on the street, and 422 people could lose their registration and, accordingly, access to ARV treatment and prevention, as well as other medical and social services. At the time of contacting the Fund, the centre had a 3-month lease debt of 600 thousand Kazakhstani tenge (approximately 1400 USD), and did not have the means to pay fees to team members.

The support of the fund was a kind of lifeline for us since our organisation was on the verge of collapse. In addition, the grant from the Fund became a launching pad for new opportunities and expanding partnerships. For example, from September 1, 2020, we are participating in the 4-year project "Radian" – "Creation and implementation of a sustainable, comprehensive, cost-effective urban program to control the HIV epidemic in the city of Almaty". This is aimed at increasing adherence to ARV treatment, as well as testing and prevention.

**In general, the Emergency Fund helped to strengthen the capacity of the organisation, the professional growth of employees, the development of policies and procedures of the organisation. Through a variety of gender-oriented services, it helped to solve acute psychological, legal and social problems of women from key populations, helped them gain counselling skills, communication skills, the ability to speak with employers, government officials, and enabled them to re-establish broken social ties with relatives.**

## Elena Bilokon, Head of the Revansh drop-in centre in Kazakhstan 2020 ESF grantee



### Client's story

Maria, 42 years old, a person living with HIV, a user of psychoactive substances, had been on the list of lost patients of the State AIDS Center since 2019. She was admitted to the Revansh Foundation from the Republican Center for Mental Health after undergoing treatment for addiction to psychoactive substances, with partial amnesia and suicidal inclinations. During the three months of her stay in the Project, she received all the necessary range of services: she was signed up to receive primary health care, she received access to ART, accommodation services, assistance in obtaining disability pension payments, she underwent an ultrasound of the heart, she received a grocery certificate. She now attends Counselling Groups and Legal Literacy Schools.

# BRIDGING THE GAPS: HEALTH AND RIGHTS FOR KEY POPULATIONS



“Bridging the Gaps: health and rights for key populations” was the biggest international programme of its kind that worked with and for the health and rights of key populations. After almost ten years, Bridging the Gaps concluded activities in December 2020.

From 2011 until 2020, collectively the alliance partners made significant contributions towards a world where people living with HIV, people who use drugs, sex workers, youth, women and LGBT people could enjoy their human rights and access quality HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.



**find more online!**

## ALLIANCE Implemented by an alliance



**5** Dutch-based  
organisations



**5** international  
organisations & networks



over **80** local and  
regional organisations



in **15** countries  
across 3 regions

The *AFEW Partnership* was one of the key partners and implemented activities in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine, as well as at the EECA regional level.

## EECA REGIONAL LEVEL ACHIEVED 2020 CHANGES

- ▶▶▶ Improved access to quality rehabilitation services for women and adolescents who use drugs and standards and guidelines in place for health care professionals in Eastern Europe and Central Asia;
- ▶▶▶ Mapped the health access and risk behaviour of Central Asian migrants in Russia and Tajikistan.

### We also:

- ▶▶▶ provided support to the European Chemsex Forum, to further include the EECA region in the chemsex response, and gear towards interventions in the Russian language;
- ▶▶▶ supported the national union of PLHIV in Uzbekistan and worked with them towards a post-BtG project on testing for key populations.



# Georgia

The project addressed barriers faced by the community of people who use drugs related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights. The work was targeted towards activists and community initiatives being able to influence the government through an established mechanism; a supportive policy environment with the political will to change legislation and to meaningfully involve civil society and people who use drugs; and service delivery by NGOs financed by the government and international donors.

**find more online!** 

## ACHIEVED 2020 CHANGE

- The Georgian community of people who use drugs can influence the quality of services, social and policy environment, initiate services tailored to their needs.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶▶▶ 9 workshops conducted to enhance skills for 11 KP community leaders from local partner organisations, as well as peer educators and key populations community workers - on SRHR, harm reduction, dealing with stigma, proposal writing, advocacy, project management and cooperation with government.
- ▶▶▶ Due to involvement of peer outreach workers, 308 new clients entered the project, with a tenfold increase in the number of women compared to previous years (from 24 in 2016 to 289 in 2020).
- ▶▶▶ Services were initiated by community leaders, such as creation of a female support group, consultations of friendly gynaecologist, as well as improvement of rehabilitation services.
- ▶▶▶ One of the local partners successfully requested opening of an additional window for methadone therapy in Telavi and changing regulations for providing methadone during quarantine.
- ▶▶▶ This local partner also developed a project on employment support services for vulnerable groups, submitted to the Telavi Municipality for inclusion in the 2021 budget.

### DAVID, A FORMER CLIENT OF THE REHABILITATION CENTRE

*I got all the rehabilitation services for free, and it was very important to me. At the Centre, I had the opportunity to reassess my life. Addiction is not only a physical, but also a psychological problem that cannot be solved by detoxication alone. Such centres are necessary*



# Kyrgyzstan

The project focused on attracting attention to the barriers related to sexual and reproductive health and rights faced by the community of people who use drugs. Driven by community leaders, we worked to achieve a more supportive drug policy; a strong community of people who use drugs that is respected by society and the government; and increased access to high-quality services for female and young people who use drugs.

## ACHIEVED 2020 CHANGE

- Increased capacity of empowered adolescents to talk about SRHR and HIV.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶▶▶ The Journey4Life programme involved almost 600 adolescents from 9 educational institutions from Bishkek, who received trainings on speaking about SRHR, emotions and gender norms. The project, which was based on country research conducted by UNICEF Kyrgyzstan and co-organised by UNAIDS, has brought a significant change to the way SRHR related information is educated to adolescents.
- ▶▶▶ The programme was also introduced in social adaptation centres for street children and adolescents who use drugs or who have a juvenile record. Due to Covid-19 activities moved to online mode, reaching 276 adolescents, also outside Bishkek.

### ADELE, 21, PEER TRAINER (CHAMPION)

“Once at university I started talking to friends about SRHR and found out that many people did not know anything about reproductive health. I started asking them leading questions to make it easier for them to understand what it was. Then I shared with them my knowledge about contraception, STIs, and I saw that they were interested in these topics. In the past, some classmates were negative about these discussions, but now they agree on what they need to know about their reproductive rights.”

find more online! 



### SERGEY, 19, PARTICIPANT

“This project gave each of us something special; it opened up new sides of our personalities and taught us all something... I was depressed for a long time... Now, not a trace of my depression remains, and I finally stopped putting pressure on myself. I’ve stopped stigmatising other people for having HIV and for their sexual preferences. I always felt like I was missing something in my life. This project became my breath of fresh air, which completely changed my worldview.”

find more online! 



# Tajikistan

The project addressed barriers faced by the community of people who use drugs related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Driven by community champions, we worked to realize integrated and structured systems of services for people who use drugs financed by the government; increased access to justice; humanisation of the Criminal Law; NGOs having access to prisons and increased access to services and treatment for people who use drugs (male, female, young, migrant and in prison).

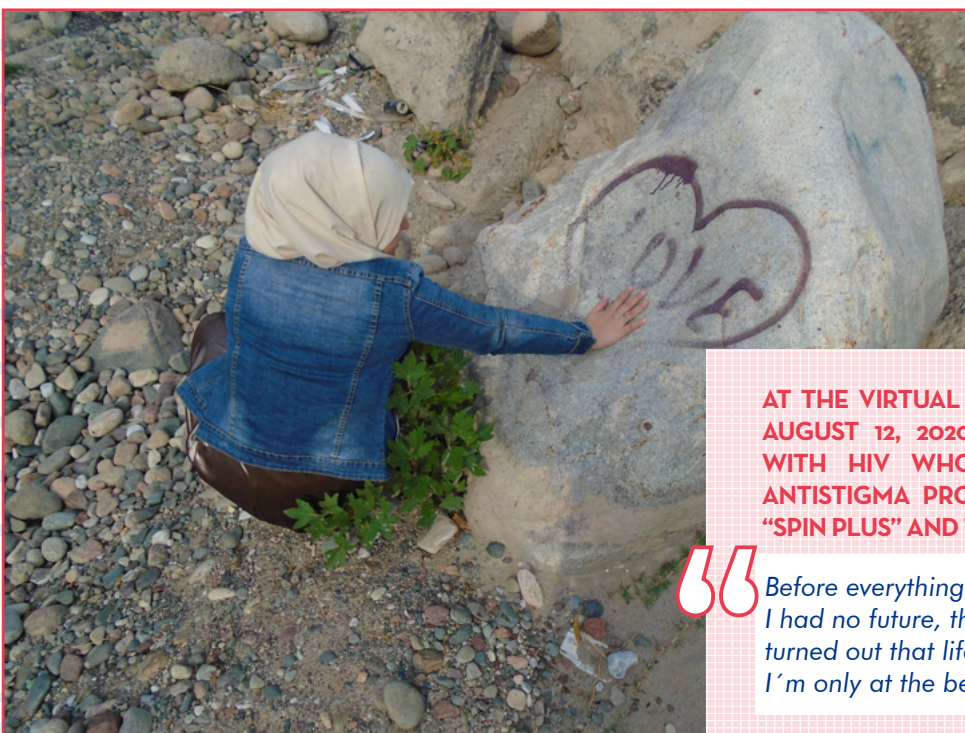
**find more online!**

## ACHIEVED 2020 CHANGES

- Increased capacity of local partner NGOs – Tajikistan Network of Women Living with HIV (TNW+) and SPIN Plus
- Reduced self-stigma of people who use drugs / people living with HIV

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶▶▶ TNW+ closely collaborated with the government in a working group that was drafting renewed legislation prohibiting stigma and discrimination related to HIV, to be adopted soon. The organisation also campaigned against imprisonment of people living with HIV
- ▶▶▶ SPIN Plus produced the “Stigma Index” among people living with HIV
- ▶▶▶ 13 local trainers were prepared to deliver the tools to overcome self-stigma and stigma from the society: “From the Inside Out”. They provided 6 sessions to community representatives. Due to COVID-19 all group meetings and consultations were held online, in addition to individual consultations
- ▶▶▶ 375 people (of which 300 women) received individual counselling, opportunity to join the self-support groups, psychological support, and information about resource centres, 20 women started to take antiretroviral therapy (ART)
- ▶▶▶ 75 people received harm reduction services and legal assistance



AT THE VIRTUAL ROUND TABLE HELD ON AUGUST 12, 2020 TAJIK WOMAN LIVING WITH HIV WHO TOOK PART IN THE ANTISTIGMA PROJECT IMPLEMENTED BY “SPIN PLUS” AND TNW+ SHARED:

“Before everything seemed dark, I felt like I had no future, that it was all over. But it turned out that life is so wonderful, and I’m only at the beginning of my journey!”

# Ukraine

The project worked with the barriers faced by the community of people who use drugs related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights. We aimed at realizing strong collaboration with civil society; meaningful involvement in coordination council; transforming qualified specialists into activists; increased awareness, motivation and skills of people who use drugs to demand human rights; decriminalisation of drug use; and access to high quality health services and comprehensive packages of services for young and adolescent people who use drugs.

**find more online!**

## ACHIEVED 2020 CHANGE

- Adolescent drug users are able to influence the quality of services for people who use drugs, the social and policy environment, and initiate changes tailored to their needs, in the health committees in four cities of Ukraine (Chernivtsi, Kharkiv, Kropyvnytskyi, and Poltava).

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶▶▶ 384 potential young leaders participated in 59 trainings on leadership, SRHR, peer counselling, harm reduction, etc.
- ▶▶▶ 31 leaders attended the Leaders Summer Camps. In addition, 'Journey4Life', empowering youth and promote better access to SRHR/ harm reduction services, included training for young programme facilitators (Champions4Life).
- ▶▶▶ 9 leaders took an active role in helping to organise and facilitate an online Most-At-Risk Adolescents (MARA) 2020 Conference for and about teens: in total 569 teenagers participated in it.
- ▶▶▶ 4 teams of community leaders received small grants for projects focused on raising awareness of key populations on health and human rights, available services, on promoting healthy lifestyle and attracting new clients to the project's services. The leaders also helped to adjust services to COVID-19 restrictions.
- ▶▶▶ Representatives of the most-at-risk adolescents were invited to participate in Coordination Committees on drug and HIV prevention.



*The strong voice from communities of young people who belong to the key populations affected by HIV to demand changes in policies for care and support is one of our Key Results of Bridging the Gaps and will last. This strong voice will continue to shout.*





# “YOUNG, WILD...AND FREE” – THE FLEXIBLE FUND

**Countries**  
 Russian Federation, Ukraine

**Duration**  
 2019-2021

**Donor**  
 Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

AFEW International together with four other Alliance of the Bridging the Gaps partners (AFEW, MPACT Global, Mainline and Aidsfonds) implement this spin-off project aimed at sharing and scaling the best practices in reaching youth within the Bridging the Gaps and optimising HIV/SRHR related services for and engagement of young people in all elements of work.

**In the beginning of 2020**, 18 young researchers representing various key populations between the ages of 15-24 from Kenya, Russia, South Africa and Vietnam were selected to follow a learning trajectory on community based participatory research. This trajectory included an online webinar/e-learning course on CBPR organised by AFEW International, Mainline and Health(e)Foundation, a face-to-face workshop in **March 2020** in the Netherlands, followed by the implementation of the research in the four selected countries in 2020. The young researchers were equipped with research methodologies, interview skills and ethical considerations concerning youth research, which allowed them to better understand their peers’ barriers and specific needs for harm reduction, HIV and SRHR services. The research took place from **April to October 2020** and contributed to the body of knowledge on how to best reach and engage young key population members and to design culturally and age appropriate (SRHR and HIV) services. In 2021 the four researches will be summarised and published for wider distribution to young key population organisations and leaders as well as international organisations working with young key populations.

-  Working with adolescents who use drugs
-  Risk behaviour of juvenile drug users
-  Selecting and training leaders
-  Outreach in remote and rural areas
-  Practical tools and manuals

Within this project AFEW International’s local partners are Coalition of Harm Reduction NGOs “Outreach”, AFEW Ukraine, AFEW Russia and Public Health and Social Development Foundation “Focus-Media”. One of AFEW International’s roles in the project was to facilitate a learning visit for AFEW Russia and Focus-Media Foundation to Ukraine to learn from the best practices of AFEW-Ukraine in their work with young key populations, as well as a visit of Coalition Outreach to learn from the best practices of the youth led NGO Lighthouse in Vietnam, and support applying both experiences in Russia. Due to COVID-19 restrictions these study exchanges have been taking place virtually.

**On May 15, 2020 and June 6, 2020**, two webinars were held for participants from South Africa, Vietnam, Kenya and Russia, during which colleagues from AFEW-Ukraine shared their experience and best practices in organising work with young people who use drugs. The webinars created space to exchange information on working with adolescents who use drugs, risk behaviour of juvenile drug users and contributing factors like mental illness during adolescence. Other topics included outreach in remote and rural areas; and involving leaders, how to select and train leaders, their role, and the procedure for supporting leadership projects. Practical tools and materials were exchanged, including a tool for monitoring and addressing rights violations, a manual on working with teenagers and tools for family involvement - "Family Group Conferences".

Similarly, members of the Coalition Outreach were introduced to the experience of Lighthouse (Vietnam) via a series of webinars, as well as during the General Meeting of the Coalition, which was held in St. Petersburg on **August 20–21, 2020**. Based on the results of acquaintance with the best practices of Lighthouse, Outreach Coalition and its members identified multiple areas of work, among which were:

These areas were taken up by different Coalition Outreach members and started being implemented **in the end of 2020** through small grants projects.

-  Strengthening the LGBTIQ movement
-  Development of friendly to the LGBTIQ community and young KP health facilities
-  Online interventions and diversified delivery of services in the field of HIV prevention
-  Raising public awareness of gender and sexual diversity
-  Community Based Research (CBD)

# PITCH - THE PARTNERSHIP TO INSPIRE, TRANSFORM AND CONNECT THE HIV RESPONSE

## Countries



Russian Federation (St. Petersburg)  
Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek)

## Duration



2019-2020

## Donor



Aidsfonds under  
the PITCH

2020 was the last year of implementation of the PITCH project – the Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV response.

PITCH was a strategic partnership between Aidsfonds and the Frontline AIDS (former International HIV/AIDS Alliance) working with those most affected by HIV: adolescent girls and young women, LGBTI, people who use drugs, prisoners and sex workers. The programme aimed to enable these groups to transform (inter)national HIV responses by strengthening their advocacy skills and capacities and promoting the innovative evidence-informed practice.



[find more online!](#)

Within this project, in 2020 AFEW International and partners continued working with NGOs in St. Petersburg, Russia (Eva Association) and Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (AFEW Kyrgyzstan) and municipal level governments on HIV geographically focused responses.

*“Thanks to the PITCH project, civil society in general became more knowledgeable in how to work and to build dialogue with decision makers and other NGOs. There is an awareness that the mechanisms of talking with the government work, NGOs received wider experience in representing interests of key populations and the government has become more open to discuss topics such as HIV/AIDS.”*



[▶▶▶ Watch it on YouTube!](#)

On October 30-31, 2020 AFEW International organised a semi-virtual study tour Amsterdam-St. Petersburg-Bishkek for municipal authorities, health officials and key population representatives from Russia and Kyrgyzstan, who were interested to learn about the partnership between the national and municipal authorities, institutes, and NGOs.

Originally, the tour was planned to take place in person in Amsterdam, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic this was no longer possible. AFEW International managed to organise a semi-virtual event where participants from St. Petersburg and

Bishkek still could come together in their own cities and presentations from the Netherlands were followed online.

The topic of this study tour was “Municipal social contracting”, which is a system of municipal funding of HIV/AIDS services delivered by civil society organisations for the most vulnerable populations. Both cities – St. Petersburg and Bishkek – are trying to establish the system of municipal social contracting in the field of HIV prevention and harm reduction. The authorities would be contracting NGOs for delivering these essential services and partner in some areas like testing and monitoring.

Through 4 online sessions, participants visited the Dutch Ministry of Health, Netherlands Institute for Public Health and the Environment, two sex worker organisations, the Amsterdam Municipal Health Service (GGD) and an organisation working with drug users. With these visits AFEW International gave the participants an overview of the Dutch perspective on how the government works together with non-governmental (health) institutions in providing health care to vulnerable groups.

[find more online!](#)



# Russia



**EVGENIA PLETNEVA,  
PROJECT COORDINATOR AT EVA ASSOCIATION:**

“The first half of the year was challenging due to COVID-19. Many of the planned events were postponed. However, COVID-19 did not stop us from working and even gave some extra activities. For instance, EVA Association in the framework of PITCH organized ART delivery to those who could not go to the AIDS center to get treatment, for example, women living with HIV who have children, as they were not able to leave their children or traveling with them through the city. Additionally, EVA Association supported work of several NGOs that work in Saint-Petersburg in the area of HIV during COVID-19 pandemic by providing HIV express tests and condoms”

**find more online!** 

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶▶▶ Throughout the year EVA Association members actively participated in framing the National AIDS strategy. As a result of active advocacy work and support to other NGOs to join the discussion around the strategy, some of the recommendations were introduced into the strategy.
- ▶▶▶ Conducted an analysis identifying the budget allocations for HIV prevention for KPs in 22 cities, which adds to the 2019 comparative analysis EVA conducted of the Paris Declaration, City Program on Prevention of HIV among KPs and the national strategy on HIV. The data from this research has been used in discussions on the national strategy on HIV.
- ▶▶▶ Maria Godlevskaya, EVA member, who has been living with HIV for 20 years, took part in a famous video blog of the vlogger Dud', which in the course of 24 hours reached approximately 6 million views. Maria spoke about the risks of HIV transmission from sexual contact, the effectiveness of condoms, and the need to be tested. According to the Google Trend statistics, the search for "HIV test" increased by 14% and the number of people who went to test at testing units increased by 23% in one day. Additionally, the video attracted attention of policy makers on different levels, including some remarks of the President's administration.
- ▶▶▶ Designed an interactive online map based on 131 replies with positive information about doctors who treated patients equally without signs of stigma or discrimination. The map is available online and people living with HIV can check which doctors have positive reviews. We already received comments from the community that it is a very useful tool.
- ▶▶▶ Conducted the research on barriers to use condoms – one of the main research goals was to identify if the price influences the use of condoms among key populations. The results were presented at a conference in the beginning of October 2020. This information can be further used when discussing with government officials the importance of allocating more money for condoms as a prevention method.
- ▶▶▶ Conducted research among youth aged of 18-30 to identify the volume and structure of individual knowledge of young people about HIV infection, the most effective and psychologically comfortable formats/genres and channels of transmission of information about HIV and care for people living with HIV for young people, and to identify how often youth are exposed to risky behaviour. The results were published and presented at a conference dedicated to HIV/AIDS in December 2020 and will be used in further programme development and design.

# Kyrgyzstan

**DINA MASALIMOVA,  
PROJECT MANAGER AT AFEW KYRGYZSTAN**



The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted implementation of the project. As we work with the municipal healthcare authorities, some of the activities were on hold for a long period of time. The authorities simply did not have time to respond to our requests. However, we tried to be as adaptive as possible and switched some of our work to the online mode. For example, the draft municipal social ordering programme was developed online and is now pending the moment when we can approve it with authorities.

**find more online!**



## HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶▶▶ In summer 2020 AFEW Kyrgyzstan launched their second round of small grants programme within the PITCH Project. The priorities for the calls for proposals were selected together with the municipal authorities and in close consultations with the community-based organisations.
  - As a result, a wide range of activities within the project was implemented by local NGOs which in turn helped in building their capacity.
- ▶▶▶ One small grant recipient organised short sessions for the municipal authorities based on the preliminary approved City HIV Programme and reached over 500 municipal officials with information about HIV and their role in preventing it in the city.
  - For many officials it was the first time they were given reliable information about HIV presented by the doctors and peers. It was an important step to start engaging local authorities into the HIV prevention.
- ▶▶▶ Capacity building workshops were organised by another subgrantee for the emerging community leaders to get engaged in the budget advocacy on the city and national level. Upon completion of the trainings the NGO issued the guidelines on budget advocacy trainings for NGOs.
  - Such trainings are a key element to boost the bottom-up approach in the budget advocacy processes in the country in order to teach the community leaders to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the authorities, make their voices heard and more importantly include adequate funding to respond to their needs into the city and national budgets.
- ▶▶▶ The other subgrantee has designed a manual for all vulnerable people in Bishkek explaining in detail how to get support from the authorities including: free medical support, social support, state allowances, municipal benefits in Bishkek, free legal services, employment support.
  - The manual received very positive feedback from the community. It turns out people had no idea about some of the services they were entitled to receive. Several community leaders shared that this was now on the desk of every social worker in their organisations.
- ▶▶▶ A shelter for people living with HIV and key population groups who became economically vulnerable due to the COVID-19 pandemic was opened in June 2020. The need for such shelters in Bishkek is persistent and has dramatically increased with COVID-19, however there are no sustainable funding for such premises. Stories and evidence showing the vulnerability of KPs in the crisis period were collected and are being used as arguments in the advocacy towards the city mayor house, demanding to provide city shelters with sustainable support (e.g., free space).
  - AFEW-Kyrgyzstan designed a programme for municipal social contracting. Based on the rapid needs' assessment, a shelter is one of the most demanded services and therefore needs to be included in the programme. The piloted model will be properly documented and suggested to the City authorities as a priority area for social contracting.

# ***THEMATIC AREAS***



# LABOUR MIGRATION

The migration flow between Russia and Central Asia represents one of the world’s largest labour migration routes. Labour migrants from Central Asia significantly contribute to the economies of both Russia and their country of origin, however they do not have complete access to health services.

- In 2020 AFEW International continued implementing “Improving migrants’ access to HIV services in Tajikistan” project that was launched in 2019 together with IOM Tajikistan and AFEW Kyrgyzstan. The aim of the project was to raise awareness among outgoing migrants on safe migration and to promote health seeking behaviour related to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV through peer networks, particularly among key populations.



**BAKHODUR KHAI TOV,  
HEAD OF KULO B-BASED NGO NAKUKOR ABOUT ‘SAFE MIGRATION’**

Safe migration means that the migrants are protected from any risks related to their health, legal status or life at all the stages of the migration process (in the countries of origin, transit and destination). Creating conditions to enable safe migration, first of all, means advocating for the rights of migrants to have decent work and living conditions. It also means migrants have access to social and health services. Taking into account today’s global migration trend, a safe migration process is vital for migrants.

It is the task of the government to help create civilized and safe migration conditions and equip people with the required knowledge, so they can mitigate their risks of falling in the hands of human traffickers or finding themselves in other difficult situations.

**find more online!**

- We also continued managing two projects in Russian cities Rostov-on-Don and Yekaterinburg to improve healthcare for migrants living with HIV in the framework of the regional approach of the “Bridging the Gaps: health and right for key populations” programme (see above).

**VYACHESLAV TSUNIK, PRESIDENT OF ROSTOV-ON-DON REGIONAL NGO “KOVCHEG - ANTI AIDS” AND MANAGER OF THE PROJECT “HIV PREVENTION AND HIV SERVICES FOR MIGRANTS IN ROSTOV-ON-DON” SUPPORTED BY AFEW INTERNATIONAL**

The goal of our project is to slow down the transmission of HIV through raising the awareness of HIV among migrants and creating services aimed at HIV prevention in migrant populations. Firstly, we train peer consultants from among migrants. Secondly, we provide medical and social support to HIV-positive migrants, giving them access to health services. Thirdly, we have meetings and negotiations with the representatives of diasporas concerning implementation of the prevention tools among migrants in Rostov region and coordinate service provision with the NGOs in the countries of origin of those people who seek our help.

One of the activities was to appeal to the Public Monitoring Commission and ask it to help us access the migrants in pre-deportation detention centres. The Public Monitoring Commission sent an official request to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. We visited the detention centres, met with the migrants living with HIV who stayed there and agreed with the administration of such centres that we would have further access to such migrants living with HIV. We are planning to seek financial opportunities for people living with HIV to receive consultations from infectious disease doctors, get tested for their immune status and viral load and access ARVs for the period of their stay in such institutions. Besides, we are working on developing an appeal to the government officials about the need to provide this category of people with HIV treatment at the expense of the state.



**read more:**

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**find more online!**

# HARM REDUCTION

One of the core areas of expertise of *AFEW International* is harm reduction. Harm reduction covers the policies, programmes and practices aimed to reduce the harms that might come along with the use of psychoactive drugs. The focus is on the prevention of harm, rather than on the prevention of drug use itself. Besides, harm reduction is a movement for social justice that is built on a belief in the rights of people who use drugs. Harm reduction is an approach where the health and quality of life of people who use drugs is prioritised over the drug use itself, which is taken as a given circumstance. It became widely accepted as an evidence-based approach to prevent HIV transmission among injecting drug users.

On 31 August, International Overdose Awareness day, *AFEW International* published stories about overdose in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

**IRINA,  
EMPLOYEE OF THE SOURCE OF HOPE  
FOUNDATION,  
RUSSIA**

One day I went out for a walk with my dogs near the house and saw that people were rushing about and shouting in our yard. As I came closer, I realised that they were trying to save a person who had overdosed on drugs. They were doing Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), but it was useless – the person was already gray. I quickly ran to office for naloxone because we always have it on hand for our clients. Unfortunately, and to my surprise, nobody around me knew about naloxone and didn't know how to use it. Luckily, when I went back out to the street, an ambulance had already arrived and was resuscitating the person using naloxone. He didn't regain consciousness immediately, but he survived.

**ALEXEI LAKHOV,  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR,  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOUNDATION,  
RUSSIA**

In 2005 I left rehab. I took what had been my standard dose of drugs (opioids) with a friend who had also left rehab not long before. We used it in the nearest front porch, and, unsurprisingly, we overdosed. I regained consciousness, but my friend couldn't. I tried to wake him up but was unable to. Fortunately, at that moment two women came out of the elevator and I asked them to call an ambulance. That day everything ended well for us, but unfortunately, I have two friends who have died from an overdose. I remember them all the time, so that I don't forget why I came to work in this field, and why harm reduction programs are so important.

**VELTA PARKHOMENKO,  
DIRECTOR OF "HONEY CLUB",  
UKRAINE**

Once an employee at our organisation, Sergey, saved someone's life. A guy who lives in his house decided to "relax" by taking methadone with alcohol. As a result, he overdosed. When my colleague went down to his car, the guy was lying on the ground, his face blue, wheezing. Sergei is a national trainer for countering overdoses, so he immediately understood what had to be done. He called an ambulance and warned medics to expect an overdose. Sergey found some naloxone at home which he had received for free as part of a harm reduction project by the Public Health Alliance. 7 minutes after the naloxone injection, an ambulance arrived, doctors provided medical assistance and the person regained consciousness.

**ALEXEI,  
EMPLOYEE OF THE  
ISTOCHNIK NADEZHDA FOUNDATION,  
RUSSIA**

Why do so many people not call the ambulance or help their friends when they overdose? First of all, many people don't know how to provide first aid. They are afraid that if the person dies, they will have problems with the police, so often those who overdose are dragged away to the back stairs and left to die. Also, many people don't want to waste energy on saving person's life, because when you give someone CPR you usually get nervous and the effect of the drug you have just taken goes away. If people are aware of what they need to do when these things happen, if they have naloxone and are sure that the police will not punish them, then deaths can be avoided.

find more online! 

# PRISON HEALTH

**Health protection in prisons remains a serious public health issue.** Although in practice international law recognises the rights of everyone, including people deprived of their liberty, many prisoners receive healthcare of a lower standard to the one available outside of the prison if they receive treatment at all. AFEW International continues to use its expertise in prison health to expand its role in supporting HIV, TB and viral hepatitis prevention and care in prisons.

In 2020, AFEW and ICAP at Columbia University partnered to improve HIV services in prisons in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan under the project «Technical Assistance to Central Asian National HIV Programs to Achieve and Sustain HIV Epidemic Control under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)» in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, a project funded by PEPFAR through the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). AFEW International – together with AFEW Kyrgyzstan and AFEW Kazakhstan, which provided technical support to activities in Tajikistan – were aggregating lessons learned from ICAP's previous work in Kazakhstan and combining those lessons with the methodological approach gained through the past experience of working in prisons in Central Asia to produce practical guidelines and training modules.

Within Bridging the Gaps project interactive Journey4Life sessions on sexual and reproductive health and empowerment were organised for 20 inmates in a juvenile colony in Poltava.<sup>21</sup>



AFEW International is participating in the Health in Prison Project of WHO and has initiated a Working Group on Prison Health and Primary Care within the European Forum for Primary Care (EFPC). Members of this working group are primary care providers who work in prisons, next to researchers with a special interest in prison health, and members of AFEW Partnership. The aim of this working group is to advocate for improved prison health care provided by primary care providers and take the needs of (ex) prisoners at the centre of the care.

Anke van Dam has joined the Advisory Board of the EFPC, sharing her considerable experience in this area, and will continue to chair this working group on behalf of AFEW International. The working group continues in 2021 in preparing a position paper and discussing the role of primary care at the Bergen Conference in 2021.

# COMMUNITY BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

AFEW International has been sharing the expertise in Community Based Participation Research (CBPR) within multiple projects including **“Comprehensive support to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and social wellbeing of vulnerable adolescents”**.

The goal of the project was to strengthen the organisational, methodological and advocacy capacity of 9 civil society organisations to provide comprehensive support to SRHR and social well-being of vulnerable adolescents in Nizhny Novgorod, Yekaterinburg and Rostov-on-Don regions of Russia.

AFEW International's role was to bring the CBPR programme as a tool to build the capacity for Russian civil society organisations on advocacy, communications and campaigning, to build stronger and more resilient organisations through self-determined, self-assessed and self-owned scientific data collection and analysis. We provided methodology and trainer for the CBPR programme; and conducted a series of online training sessions and individual consultations for CSOs staff on the CBPR.



# ADVOCACY

In 2020 *AFEW International* continued to participate in platforms and meetings to join advocacy efforts on HIV/AIDS, SRHR and key populations. Advocacy efforts were aimed at the Dutch government and policymakers, the European Commission and European Union.

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# VOICES FROM THE EAST PARTNERSHIP

Voices from the East  
Health. Rights. Care.



*AFEW International* is actively advocating for the needs to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of the EECA region at the international arena, including the need for targeted funding for the EECA Region.

On March 11, 2020 *AFEW International* on behalf of the partnership 'Voices from the East' submitted a proposal to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Policy Framework for Strengthening Civil Society for 2021-2025, Grant Instrument SRHR Partnership Fund. Under the leadership of *AFEW International*, the Voices from the East Partnership brought together 11 strong advocacy and service-oriented organisations and networks to improve access to SRHR for women and youth of Key Population (KP) groups and transgender people: *AFEW International*; Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA); ECOM – Eurasian Coalition On Health, Rights, Gender And Sexual Diversity; Eurasian Union Of Adolescents And Youth Teenergizer; Eurasian Women's Network On Aids (EWNA); Sex Workers Rights' Advocacy Network (SWAN); Eurasian Network Of People

Who Use Drugs (ENPUD); Dance4life; *AFEW-Ukraine*; *AFEW-Kyrgyzstan*; *AFEW Kazakhstan*.

The Voices from the East Partnership was asking for attention to the continued health crisis in the EECA region, being the only region in the world with a growing AIDS epidemic. In November 2020, we regrettably learned that the Dutch government was stopping their financial support to civil society organisations in EECA, which work hard to counteract public health concerns such as HIV, tuberculosis, viral hepatitis and COVID-19 and help improving the quality of life of key populations affected by those diseases.

A letter signed by 185 organisations from 34 countries has been submitted to the Minister Kaag, Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation in the end of November 2020, which resulted in a constructive dialogue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was concluded with a meeting with the Ambassador for Women's Rights and Gender Equality. While supportive and understanding of the needs of the EECA region, the Ministry could not make additional funding available for the EECA region.

## THE HIV OUTCOMES INITIATIVE



As a member of the Steering Group and a Partner organisation of the multi-stakeholder **HIV Outcomes initiative** *AFEW International* has contributed to the initiative's progress made in 2020 in advancing towards the target of ending HIV by 2030, which included:

- Contributing to the survey prepared by UNAIDS in view of the New Global AIDS Strategy beyond 2021, with the aim to identify what is needed to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.
  - Partnering with UNAIDS to host a Focus Group Discussion on October 6, 2020 with key stakeholders to discuss what priorities should be included in the new Strategy. The need to formalise a commitment to look beyond viral suppression and biomedical interventions was emphasised throughout the Focus Group Discussion and participants aligned on the need to extend the scope of the new Global Strategy to matters relating to the broader quality of life and health outcomes of people living with HIV.
- 'HIV Outcomes' flagged the need to prioritise the quality of life of all people living with HIV and highlighted the importance of going beyond viral suppression

# CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ON DRUGS PROJECT

The CSFD is the expert group of the European Commission on drug issues, that was created in 2007, based on the Commission Green paper on the role of civil society in drugs policy in the EU.

The role of *AFEW International* within the project in 2020-2021 is to contribute to the following activities:

Development of quality standards for meaningful civil society involvement into drug policy formulation on the national level.



Development of national civil society networking structures to improve the linkage between European and national civil society organisations (CSOs).



Strengthening of advocacy capacities among national CSOs through the organisation of an advocacy training event.



The report on quality standards for meaningful civil society involvement into drug policy formulation on the national level has been developed by Anke van Dam and Valeria Fulga together with Peter Sarosi (Rights Reporter Foundation), and distributed. This report provided a desk review of literature on meaningful civil society involvement, by specifically addressing the area of drug policy. It described the competing definitions of civil society, from a narrow definition of registered nongovernmental organisations to a broad definition of the associational life between the government and business sectors

**find more online!** 



**read the CSFD report online!** 

# EVENTS

Due to COVID-19 restrictions many of the planned events for 2020 could not be organised or were adapted to a virtual or on-line format. Unfortunately, the annual AFEW Autumn school for the partners from the EECA region could not take place.

We did manage to conduct an offline study tour in February 2020 just before the pandemic hit, as well as another offline event in Amsterdam (film screening) in the summer of 2020 respecting all the necessary local COVID-19 related measures.

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# STUDY TOUR ON ALTERNATIVE FUNDRAISING

**EU-Russia Civil Society Forum (Forum, or CSF)** is a network of thematically diverse non-governmental organisations from Russia and the European Union, established as a bottom-up, non-partisan civic initiative. The Forum serves as a platform for members to engage in joint activities, articulate common positions, provide support and solidarity, and exert civic influence on policy- and decision-making on the (inter)governmental level. *AFEW International* is member since 2017 and helped establishing a new working group Public and Inclusive Health and is member of the advocacy group.

**find more online!** 

*AFEW International* has built a strong group of Russian NGOs who are members of the Inclusive Health Working group and has developed a proposal to organise a study tour on fundraising, which has been partly funded by the Forum. In February 2020, all members of the group have visited the Netherlands, where they got acquainted with several alternative ways to fundraise for NGOs working in the HIV/AIDS, harm reduction and social support.

**find more online!** 



## EECA INTERACT

**EECA INTERACT** is a scientific workshop on HIV, Hepatitis C and Tuberculosis in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA). The conference is a research workshop that brings together scientists, clinicians, policymakers, and civil society to debate topics facing individual countries, while building capacity and strengthening research and clinical networks. The first EECA Interact workshop was held on November 18-19, 2019 in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ambition of organising a follow-up conference EECA INTERACT in 2020 could not be realised. EECA INTERACT 2021 may be held virtually, and plans are forged to hold a hybrid conference in spring 2022. The workshop will address topics that are specifically relevant to Eastern Europe and Central Asia.



**Official website of the event** 

# DUTCH DRUGS STORIES' EXPO

## KOSTYA PROLETARSKY DOCUMENTARY FILM SCREENING

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On July 22, 2020 AFEW International together with Mainline and Poppy: Drugs Museum Amsterdam screened the animated documentary "Kostya Proletarsky". The event was held within the 'Dutch Drugs Stories' Expo and welcomed activists, civil society members and policy makers in the field of Eastern European drug policy. Istvan Gabor Takacs, director of the movie, also joined the event by Skype to talk about the goals of the film and how it was produced.

"Kostya Proletarsky" is the story of a Russian HIV activist who used drugs. He died of tuberculous meningitis at the Botkin Hospital in St. Petersburg, Russia. His death was the result of three years of harsh imprisonment at the prison facility No. 4 in Karelia, Russia. Authorities failed to provide necessary treatment of his drug use and tuberculosis, and he died in custody.

The story was narrated by Anya Sarang, Kostya's friend, public health activist and the president and a founder of Andrey Rylkov Foundation for Health and Social Justice (Russia). It was extremely intense and souled up all the guests.

The screening was followed by a panel discussion where panelists, including Anke van Dam, director of AFEW International, Gerda van 't Hoff, former strategic adviser of the Custodial Institutions Agency, Machteld Busz, Director at Mainline Foundation and Anna Sarang, talked about the movie, drug policies and the issues which people like Kostya face daily in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.




The Rights Reporter Foundation presents  
**KOSTYA PROLETARSKY**

An animated documentary based on the original interviews with Kostya Proletarsky and his mother, Irina, recorded in 2008. Animation and design by **Lili Rontó**  
Directed and edited by **István Gábor Takács** Narrated by **Anya Sarang**

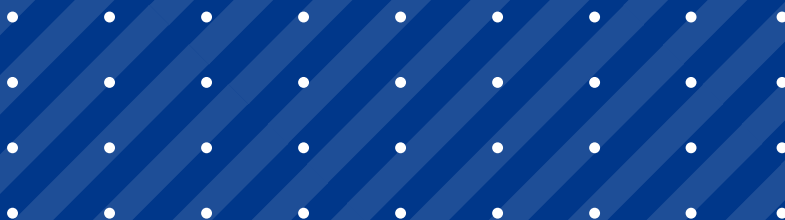
PRODUCTION: PETER SAROSI, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: DANIEL HUSZAR, EDITOR AND MUSIC: ANDREAS BENCE DOZSI, TAMAS BOHACSI, HEAD OF POST PRODUCTION: ANDRAS KISS, PETER WAGNER-PURKOS, HEAD OF TRANSLATION: MAGDA MAJOR, TRANSLATION AND INTERVIEW: ANASTASIA APERTHIA, TRANSLATION: KATALIN SOS, ALEXANDRA GURBANOVA, FERENC PERECZSI, GABOR KUDRINSKI, KARINA KOTVALL, HEAD OF TRANSLATION: ANASTASIA APERTHIA, ALEXANDRA GURBANOVA, KATERINA ZINGEL, HEAD OF POST PRODUCTION: GERGELY TOSCA, HEAD OF TRANSLATION: LILI RONTÓ, ISTVAN GABOR TAKACS, KING / VIKTOR TOSCA, HEAD OF TRANSLATION: DANIEL SALLAI, HEAD OF TRANSLATION: THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION, AFEW INTERNATIONAL, AND JESUSBLANDIERAND, RIGHTS REPORTER FOUNDATION AND DRUGREPORTER.NET/OSTEM

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# 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF AFEW INTERNATIONAL

20 years ago, on the 1st of December 2000, World AIDS Day, AFEW was officially established to promote health and increase the access of key populations to prevention, treatment and care for major public health concerns such as HIV, TB, viral hepatitis, and sexual and reproductive health in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.



# 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF AFEW INTERNATIONAL

find more online!



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In autumn 2020 AFEW International developed activities devoted to 20th Anniversary of the organisation. The plan included articles about projects of the organisation and interviews. A hashtag #AFEW20 was developed to mark all the publications on this topic. AFEW International received around 30 videos from partners with congratulations. The videos were published on social media and the website of AFEW and partners.

In this anniversary interview, Anke van Dam, (former) director of AFEW International, shared about AFEW's work these last 20 years, important projects, achievements, missed opportunities and her most memorable experience working at AFEW.

## Anke, AFEW started its work 20 years ago. What was happening in Eastern Europe and Central Asia at that time?

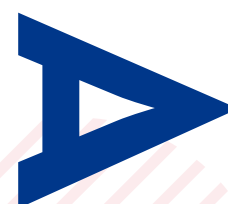
At the end of the 1990s there was an outbreak of cases of HIV among people who inject drugs in Russia. At that time there were hardly any activities to support people living with HIV, or to prevent new cases. That is how it all started. Harm reduction activities in support of people who inject and who use drugs started by introducing clean needles and syringe exchange program, and we opened discussions about opiate substitution treatment. 20 years ago, AIDS Foundation East-West was established to scale up these good practices of HIV prevention, treatment and care! There was a window of opportunity, the international and national communities felt that we could stop HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA). There were already so many lessons learnt from other countries, lessons that we could use for our work. Russia was and still is one of the countries in the region with most HIV cases. At that time, Russia was more open to new ideas and interventions from other countries, so harm reduction activities could be introduced. After Russia, our harm reduction activities also started in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and other countries in the region.

The EECA region faces at least three, and now with COVID-19, even four epidemics. Next to HIV, TB and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis are a big problem in the region. Viral hepatitis, specifically hepatitis B and C, are highly prevalent among the group of people who inject drugs. Pretty soon after we launched our projects to stop HIV, we included tuberculosis (TB) and viral hepatitis as public health concerns to our activities. On top of that, nowadays we have to deal with COVID-19, which is a huge burden on health systems; the key groups in society that we work with don't get the care and support they need.



## When and how was AFEW established? ■

Due to the outbreak of HIV among people who inject drugs in Moscow as I mentioned above, Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières, MSF) started activities to prevention, treatment and care for HIV as an emergency aid. That was in 1996 and MSF introduced harm reduction activities for people who inject drugs. At the start, MSF had an office only in Moscow, but slowly they expanded their activities to Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. At that time, it was a new intervention for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In 2000 few MSF workers who started several HIV prevention programs in Russia for MSF decided to found a new organisation, allowing them to expand their successful activities in the whole region. AFEW, Aids Foundation East-West, with headquarters in Moscow and with branches in other countries, was established. In 2007, it was decided that the headquarters should move to Amsterdam to intensify the relationships with donors, such as the Dutch Ministry and European Commission. Since 2013 the local branches, country offices, became independent NGOs and together we formed the AFEW Partnership.



## Why were the Netherlands so interested in funding harm reduction in the EECA region? ■

The Netherlands have been one of the front-runners for harm reduction in the world and they had a lot of experience in implementing harm reduction in the Netherlands, with very good results. They supported the idea that the knowledge and expertise built up in the Netherlands should be introduced to other countries. At that time HIV was high on the political agenda of the Dutch Government and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Harm Reduction measures were the right way to stop new infections among people who use drugs!



## Has AFEW's mission changed over the years? ■

We always have affiliated ourselves as a public health organisation with the goal of improving access to quality health services, in the beginning mostly HIV related health services. Over these last 20 years our mission has changed into a mission with much more focus on key populations at risk for HIV, TB and viral hepatitis. This also means with a bigger focus on stopping stigma and discrimination and promoting social justice.

## What has AFEW achieved in these 20 years? ■

I think that there are three things that we can be proud of. Firstly, we introduced harm reduction to EECA. Secondly, we introduced a client management system with a person-centered approach. According to that system, the patient is at the center of the healthcare services, the needs of each client is the starting point of every health service provision. And thirdly, we helped establish many civil society organisations, like harm reduction NGOs, People living with HIV NGOs and networks, and community-based organisations run by people who use drugs. We built up their capacity to make them as strong as they are now.



## What have been the biggest challenges for AFEW and how did you overcome them?

The biggest challenge has always been funding. There is so little attention and so little money for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In 2008 we faced a difficult period and suffered as many others from the financial crisis. We had to reduce our staff by half. We reorganized our organisational structure to become more agile and flexible. Nowadays we are again facing a situation where we see many donors withdrawing and reducing their funding.

For the rest, we didn't have a lot of challenges. We have never had trouble receiving government permission to implement our projects. We always build good relationships with governments and local authorities.

## What does AFEW mean to the region?

I think that we are meaningful to the region because we raise awareness about the significant needs of support to civil society organisations in the EECA region. AFEW is part of many networks, alliances and other advocacy groups which allows us to advocate for political and donor attention. Furthermore, I hope that people and the organisations in the region also see AFEW as a reliable partner that always tries to help. Our partners can always reach out to us. We listen to them, even in hard times.

## Have AFEW's activities been appreciated by national and local governments?

Definitely. A common way of appreciation for work in the EECA region is to give certificates and diplomas. We received many, from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan. Our way of working is bringing authorities and civil society organisations together, facilitating the dialogue. We always reach out to local authorities and governments to inform them about what we are going to do, to ask for their involvement, and to ensure that it's sustainable. The Dutch government recognized our role for development cooperation in the EECA region by giving us the important assignment to engage the EECA region in the International AIDS Conference in 2018 in Amsterdam. UN institutes, UNAIDS, UNICEF also appreciate our work. I think in general we have a good name, a good reputation, and people indeed appreciate what we are doing.

▶▶▶ [read the full interview online](#) 



# ON THE AGENDA 2021



# ON THE AGENDA 2021

**The COVID-19 pandemic** is expected to continue to impact and disrupt “business as usual” within political and fundraising landscapes well into 2022. *AFEW International* will continue to digitalise the organisation and improve skills in facilitating virtual meetings, trainings, and webinars. Although the transition to working remotely has been successful, action will now need to be taken to accommodate the shift in working culture, and better balance working from the office and working remotely, while safeguarding health and well-being of staff.

**Political unrest** in the EECA region, such as protests in Belarus and Russia, tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the protests against corruption and fraud during elections in Kyrgyzstan, the ‘frozen’ conflict in East Ukraine, will continue to influence political perspectives on the region. EU – Russia relations are on an all-time low at the time of writing this report. The combination of COVID-19 and these political developments also affect the health and the access to health services for key population groups.

In 2021 *AFEW International* will continue **supporting local organisations** through the Emergency Support Fund and the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund and will aim to keep public health concerns as HIV, TB and viral hepatitis on the political agenda, as well as address the shrinking space for civil society in the EECA region.

To address **changes in the political and funding landscape**, *AFEW International* has established a **Reset Task Force** in 2020, to discuss and prepare strategic directions for the organisation’s future contributing to a healthy future in the EECA region in a sustainable way. Out of these discussions, the following priority themes were defined:

**1** *AFEW International’s* role as a global and regional advocate for public health free from stigma and discrimination;



**2** An exploration of hybrid organisational models (donor funding combined with activities to generate income) and social enterprising in order to generate revenue for civil society organisations;



**3** Digitalisation: the need for improving digital structures and skills of local partners;



**4** *AFEW International’s* role as a facilitator of change in and advocate for legal and social change and justice in the broader Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, empowering communities to have power to voice, participate and decide.



In 2021, priority will be put on organisational change, renewed visibility, and fundraising, including alternative forms of revenue. The discussions that evolved from the Reset process will complement these priorities. Building on the Theory of Change and the Key Performance Indicators developed for the *AFEW Partnership*, *AFEW International* will update and develop donor overviews, context analysis, background papers, and fundraising materials to support the functioning of the Partnership.

By providing support and empowering communities and civil society organisations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA), *AFEW International* will continue to contribute to better **access to good quality health services for all**, including people whose access is denied due to stigma and discrimination.

# ***AFEW TEAM***



# AFEW INTERNATIONAL SUPERVISORY BOARD

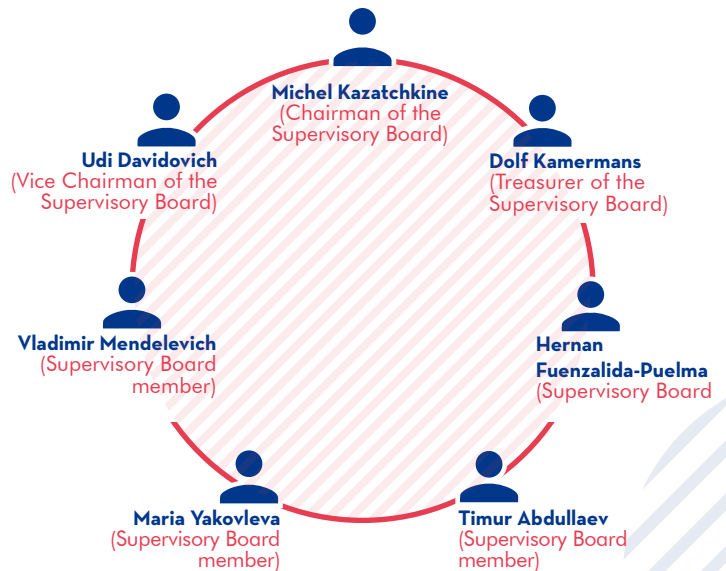
AFEW International relies upon the expertise of its Supervisory Board members for guidance and support. Therefore, the Supervisory Board is comprised of professionals with extensive experience in organisational management, programme development and evaluation, financial management, and research.

The supervisory board is charged with overseeing the overall operation of the organisation in order to ensure good standards of transparency and accountability. The supervisory board approves the organisation's strategy and the budget, as well as advising the director and management team on strategic issues. The supervisory board also evaluates and appraises the work of the director. Supervisory Board members receive no financial compensation for their work.

The day-to-day management of AFEW International is led by the Management Team, which consists of the Director and the Director of Finance. The Management Team provides leadership and guidance for all AFEW International staff as we carry out our mission in the regions where we work.

As of 31 December 2020, AFEW International Supervisory Board consisted of 7 members and 2 observers.

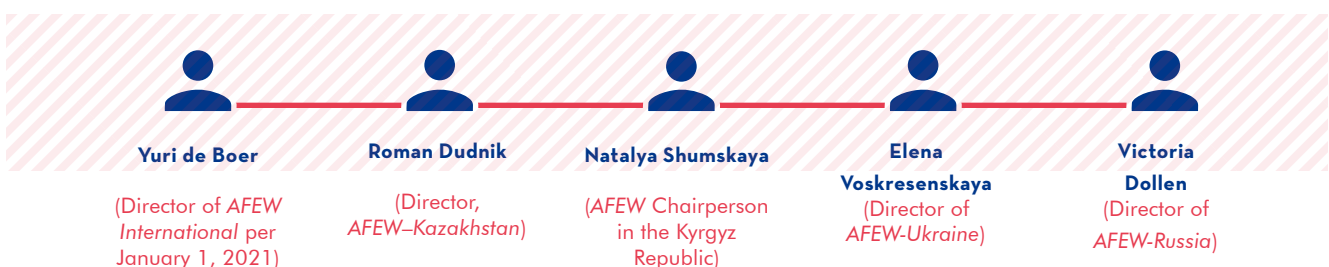
## BOARD MEMBERS



## OBSERVERS



# AFEW PARTNERSHIP STEERING COMMITTEE



[Read their biographies here](#)

# AFEW INTERNATIONAL STAFF IN 2020 AND 2021

## 2020 → 2021

Executive Director *Anke van Dam*  
Director of Finance *Yuliya van Polanen*  
Director of Programmes *Daria Alexeeva*  
Senior Programme manager *Yuri de Boer*  
Grant Writer *Michiel Beker*  
Communication officer *Olga Shelevakho*  
Junior Project Officer *Valeria Fulga*  
Junior Project Officer *Helena Arntz*  
Office manager *Irina Orlova*  
Intern *Chamid Sulchan*

Director *Yuri de Boer*  
Director of Finance *Yuliya van Polanen*  
Grant Writer *Michiel Beker*  
Project and Grant Officer *Valeria Fulga*  
Programme Development and Public Affairs  
Advisor *Yulia Koval-Molodtsova*  
Communications Officer *Olga Shelevakho*  
Administration Manager *Irina Orlova*

- Following her formal departure at the end of 2020, Anke van Dam remains active on a voluntary basis as Strategic Advisor to the management team.



# ***FINANCIAL RESULTS***





# FINANCIAL RESULTS

## BALANCE SHEET

(As of 31st December 2019, after appropriation of the year-end surplus)

		2020		2019	
		EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
<b>Tangible fixed assets</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12.454</b>		<b>4.163</b>	
			<b>12.454</b>		<b>4.163</b>
<b>Inventory</b>					
For Immediate and full use in the context of the objective			<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Accounts receivable and deferred assets</b>					
Donors	<b>2</b>	<b>450.945</b>		<b>1.551.270</b>	
Other	<b>3</b>	<b>10.858</b>		<b>58.699</b>	
			<b>461.803</b>		<b>1.609.970</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>390.409</b>		<b>1.447.798</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>			<b>864.666</b>		<b>3.061.931</b>
<b>Reserves and funds:</b>					
<b>Reserves</b>	<b>5</b>				
Continuity reserve		<b>309.896</b>		<b>259.743</b>	
			<b>309.896</b>		<b>259.743</b>
					<b>169.303</b>
<b>Funds</b>					
Special purpose funds	<b>6</b>		<b>6.274</b>		<b>6.274</b>
<b>Long-term debts</b>					
Subsidy commitments	<b>7</b>				
<b>Short-term debts</b>					
Subsidy commitments	<b>7</b>	<b>383.353</b>		<b>2.642.765</b>	
Other liabilities	<b>8</b>	<b>165.144</b>		<b>153.149</b>	
			<b>548.496</b>		<b>2.795.914</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>			<b>864.666</b>		<b>3.061.931</b>

		Actual 2020		Budget 2020		Actual 2019	
		EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>10</b>						
<b>Income from own fundraising:</b>	<b>A</b>						
- Grants from international Foundations/NGOs		0		0	0	0	
- Grants from Businesses		0		0	0	0	
- Other Donations/Collections		33.214		0	33.214	66.017	
			<b>33.214</b>			<b>66.017</b>	
<b>Income from joint activities</b>	<b>B</b>		<b>859.746</b>			<b>133.251</b>	
<b>Subsidies from governments</b>	<b>D</b>		<b>1.928.825</b>			<b>2.876.210</b>	
<b>Other income/loss</b>	<b>E</b>		<b>39.309</b>			<b>27.103</b>	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>			<b>2.861.094</b>			<b>3.102.582</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>11</b>						
<b>Spent on objectives</b>	<b>A</b>						
Capacity Strengthening		1.841.932		1.864.910	1.841.932	1.968.111	
Advocacy		460.483		466.227	460.483	492.028	
Research/Assessments		133.551		62.220	133.551	192.101	
			<b>2.435.965</b>			<b>2.652.239</b>	
<b>Costs of raising income:</b>	<b>B</b>						
Cost of own fundraising		104.684		81.180	104.684	100.226	
Costs of obtaining governmental grants							
			<b>104.684</b>			<b>100.226</b>	
<b>Management and administration:</b>	<b>C</b>						
Costs Management and administration		224.875		216.480	224.875	240.784	
Human Resource Development		45.416		14.983	45.416	16.554	
			<b>270.292</b>			<b>257.338</b>	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>			<b>2.810.941</b>			<b>3.009.804</b>	
<b>Balance of income and expenditure</b>			<b>50.153</b>			<b>92.778</b>	
<b>Allocation of Year–end result:</b>							
<b>Correction of previous years</b>							
Continuity reserve			<b>50.153</b>			<b>92.778</b>	
<b>Total allocation of Year–end result</b>			<b>50.153</b>			<b>92.778</b>	

**AFEW International closed the financial year–end 2020 with a positive balance. Based on the Board's decision, the amount of 50 153 EUR has been added to AFEW International's reserves.** An external auditor has reviewed and positively evaluated the statement of accounts for 2020. The full financial statement over 2020 is available on our website.



SOLIDARITY IN THE TIME OF THREE PANDEMICS  
Annual Report 2020

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