

3rd Regional Conference on HIV: “HIV and Gender – Creating an Enabling Environment for HIV Prevention”

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 27 – 28 March 2008



The third regional conference on HIV/AIDS – sponsored by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), UNAIDS, UNDP, GFATM Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, ILO, UNIFEM, Jensen-Cilag, GlaxoSmithkline and Roche – was held in Sarajevo on 27-28 March 2008.

The aim of the conference was to raise awareness, build capacity, share experiences and identify best practices for the future implementation of local and regional HIV/AIDS prevention programmes from a gender perspective; stress the importance of incorporating a gender-based dimension when designing HIV projects and improve the cultural and social understanding among health professionals and NGOs when dealing with ‘particularly vulnerable groups’. The two-day event thus provided a forum for information sharing on gender and its role in HIV prevention and AIDS treatment in the Balkans, in line with the objectives of the Sida-sponsored Western Balkans Regional Programme of Partnerships in Health.



The conference, which consisted of plenary sessions, presentations, interactive discussions and smaller skill-building workshops was attended by – in addition to representatives of our sponsors – over 190 participants from fifteen countries, including representatives of the Ministries of Health, Civil Affairs, Education, public health institutes, specialists and representatives of especially vulnerable groups.

During the two-day event those present had the opportunity to discuss a plethora of HIV and gender-related topics, such as gender-based violence, the necessity in adapting separate therapeutic approaches for male and female drug users exposed to trauma; mental health and HIV, the overlapping risks for youth and other groups, *inter alia*, men having sex with men (MSM) who are also sexually active with females, and adults having sexual relations with youth.

We are pleased to note that the results and overall feedback from the participants was largely positive and that particularly the two interactive skill-building sessions on TB-HIV Co-infection and Addressing Gender and Adolescents Most at Risk received a 93% top result on the evaluation scale following the feedback from the participants. For more information on the conference and its output – the conference report, also available in local languages – and the evaluation, please see the Western Balkans to Fight HIV/AIDS Programme website: www.balkans-fight-hiv.org

Multidisciplinary Diabetes Project in Bosnia conducts 151 Diabetes Trainings for Primary Health Care Providers



Diabetes is one of the major causes of morbidity and premature mortality in the world. In 2003, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) reported 295,000 diabetic patients, with a 36% increase expected by the year 2025. Because of the high costs of treating this disease and the resulting medical conditions, it is essential to improve the capabilities of the health care system to prevent and manage diabetes at the primary health care level.

In 2006, FPH started a multidisciplinary diabetes project with financial support from the Canadian Agency for International Development (CIDA), Medtronic, and Vontobel Stiftung.

In the successful second year, FPH organized 151 diabetes workshops for primary health care providers that focused on diabetes prevention, the importance of early diagnosis, and treatment options for diabetic patients. On World Diabetes Day, PHC providers screened 618 individuals for diabetes, with many more individuals screened throughout the year. Diabetes awareness increased dramatically, with significant media attention on the project and over 10,000 educational pamphlets distributed.



A core part of this project is the establishment of cooperation and collaboration between the health and social sectors, and the primary and secondary care levels. According to the head of the Family Medicine Association Dr. Zaim Jatic, “For the first time, there is collaboration between family medicine teams and doctors and nurses at the secondary and tertiary levels. The project increased the knowledge and skills [of providers] to provide quality diabetes care. The project should be continued in order to ensure continuity of the positive changes in the health care of diabetic patients.” FPH is currently seeking funding to continue and expand this project in other regions of Bosnia.

JOHNS HOPKINS CHILDREN'S CENTER CONDUCTS CHILD-FRIENDLY TRAINING IN KOZLE HOSPITAL, MACEDONIA

FPH started a new collaboration with Johns Hopkins Children's Center through a new project in the pediatric hospital of Kozle in Macedonia. We had the pleasure to have Patrice Brylske, the director of Child Life at Johns Hopkins, and Erin Munn, the education coordinator, make the trip all the way from Baltimore to Skopje to provide a five-day training for about 30 Kozle health workers. The training focused on provision of healthcare in a way that is developmentally adapted to children, including children's rights in the healthcare setting, family-centered care, children understanding and coping abilities and the role of medical play. One of FPH volunteer medical officers, Djordje Gikic (Hopkins alumni) was also present to evaluate the staff's reaction to the training and discuss possible next steps.

The impact of the way care was delivered at Kozle was immediate and huge, as nurses reported a tremendous increase in children's acceptance of medical procedures and hospitalizations. Kozle staff reported being "overwhelmed by what had happened there". FPH made the decision to build on this successful experience and continue the collaboration with Johns Hopkins by scaling up this training into a standalone regional child-friendly project. Several partners have already expressed an interest in supporting FPH with this project



New activities

Adolescent Reproductive Health – Tajikistan SPONSORS NEEDED

FPH's proposal on adolescent reproductive health in Tajikistan was approved by FEDEVACO. As this proposal covered only parts of the project, FPH is urgently seeking donors for co-financing this new initiative that is so important in assuring that these young people will be able to rebuild their country, one of the 20 poorest globally.

Tajikistan is one of the 20 poorest countries in the world with 48% of the population under age 18. 12.9% of births are to women under 20. Use of contraceptives is very low, and abortion rates are increasing in adolescent girls. Adolescents have inadequate knowledge to protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections; 86.1% of reported cases of HIV are in young people 15-29. The primary mode of transmission is sexual followed by intravenous drug use, an increasing challenge faced by Tajik society. National Plans have identified youth as the primary target group for reproductive health and HIV prevention education, but there are only limited fragmented activities implemented to-date.



Our Mission

Because « good health is a fundamental resource for social and economic development, » as well as an inalienable right, Fondation PH (FPH), a Swiss NGO, is dedicated to building critical health knowledge and skills through health education and training of primary care providers. In partnership with the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, FPH assists local institutions to build up their capacities and achieve sustainable improvements in the quality of basic and essential health services.

Program Expertise

- Family Medicine
- HIV and AIDS
- Reproductive Health
- Maternal and Child Health
- Chronic Diseases

Program Countries

Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kyrgyz Republic, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan, UNMIK Kosovo, Uzbekistan

Programmes Looking for Sponsors

Give Tajik adolescents reproductive health and life skills

Premature pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection endanger the health of Tajik youth. In Tajikistan, the fertility rate among adolescents is 3 times greater than in Switzerland; almost 20% of births are to women under 20 years of age; the number of abortions among adolescent girls is rapidly increasing; and 86% of HIV victims are under 29. Support the first life skills education program that reduces unwanted pregnancies, abortions, and life-long health problems, to help the Tajik youth to rebuild their post-war country.

CHF 100,000 still needed for this project (CHF 47,250 already donated)



Prevent diabetes and improve diabetes treatment in the Balkans

Diabetes is becoming one of the world's most prevalent disabling and killers. In the Western Balkan countries, approximately 730,000 people are affected by diabetes, and it is estimated that the number will increase to more than 1 million by 2030. In Serbia alone, a risk factor reduction approach could save 19 million euros in direct diabetes disease management costs. Contribute to the implementation of a multidisciplinary approach that improves public education, disease prevention, and cost-effective treatment at the primary care level.

CHF 160,000 per country per year



Increase the survival of Kyrgyz mothers and young children

In the mountainous region of Naryn, people live at 3000 meters above sea level. These isolated rural communities, with poor access to acceptable health care, experience child and maternal deaths that exceed those of Switzerland twenty-fold and more; one-third of child deaths occur in the home or within 24 hours of hospitalization. An innovative project focused on building the skills of community nurses and grandmothers, who are often the key decision makers for family health, will increase local knowledge of maternal and child disease prevention, and increase timely care-seeking for health care as well as the quality of home care.

CHF 100,000 is needed to start this project



Help prevent death and illness related to smoking

Tobacco use is projected to cause nearly 450 million deaths worldwide during the next 50 years. In Serbia and Macedonia, smoking rates among the general population are extremely high. Doctors and nurses can play a critical role in reducing tobacco use by advising and counseling patients who want or need to stop, but don't know how. However, these health professionals lack the skills to help their patients in dealing effectively with their tobacco addiction. Support the replication of a successful programme implemented in Bosnia & Herzegovina that prepares health professionals in tobacco-use prevention and cessation counseling.

CHF 90,000 per country



Child-Friendly Hospital Initiative

Admission to the hospital can be a serious and lasting trauma for children and their families. Knowledge of child psychology and child development, as well as the use of modern methods in line with the child's level of understanding are not common in many countries, including the Balkans. Support a needs assessment of major hospitals treating children in that region and a working meeting of key hospital managers and staff to develop a "Child friendly Hospital Initiative for the Balkans region."

CHF 200,000 per country

HIV Education and Testing for Migrant Workers in Kyrgyzstan

High rates of unemployment, low income, and political instability have caused an increase in migration from Kyrgyzstan. Currently, more than 350,000 individuals from Kyrgyzstan are labor migrants working in neighboring higher-prevalence HIV countries. These workers, if infected with HIV while away, transmit HIV to their spouse upon return and spread the disease to the general population. Support the implementation of a community-based program to educate migrant workers to prevent HIV infection to reduce the rapid increase of HIV infection in Kyrgyzstan.

CHF 75,000

To contribute to any of these programmes or to our ongoing programmes, please contact the Foundation's head office.

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Look for us on the web:

www.partnershipsinhealth.ch
www.balkans-fight-hiv.org

Dr. LeeNah Hsu takes over management of the Western Balkans HIV and AIDS Programme

Dr. LeeNah Hsu has been involved in *Partnerships in Health* activities since 2005, when she conducted the midterm evaluation of our Western Balkans HIV and AIDS Programme funded by Sida. Coming from a prior engagement with UNDP in South East Asia where she managed a 12-country regional HIV prevention programme, she has introduced many new ideas based on her past experience in our programme in the Balkans.



One of Dr. Hsu's goals is to strengthen the capabilities and initiative of the local Partnerships in Health staff and our local partners. As a "health" NGO, we also approached HIV from a health perspective, but she has shown us that HIV is a multi-sectoral issue and cannot be resolved by the health care sector on its own. This change is enriching Phase II of this programme which started in mid-2007.

Dr. Hsu is a Family Nurse Practitioner, with a masters degree in Health Policy and Management, a Doctorate of Science in Public Health from Harvard, and a J.D. from La Salle University Law School. She has taught at Maidol University, Thailand, The Johns Hopkins University and is an adjunct faculty at the Simon Fraser University in Canada. She has served on Technical Review Panel of the GFATM and at The Independent Review Committee for Health Systems Strengthening of GAVI, and conducted several large programme evaluations.

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Contribute your expertise or learn new skills by volunteering with Partnerships in Health: We routinely have needs in all offices for committed individuals to assist with administrative tasks, data entry, fund raising, communications, and web site changes. To explore opportunities, please contact: Laurent Zbinden at lz@partnershipsinhealth.ch

A big thanks to our current volunteers: Djordje Gikic, Pierre Giovannini, and Laja Destremau