



ADDICTION RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT IN GEORGIA PROJECT

Project: Addiction Research Development in Georgia

Project Final Report

August 1, 2014– July 31, 2016

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Abbreviations

AG	Alternative Georgia
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ARDG	Addiction Research Development in Georgia
BSS	Behavioral Surveillance Survey
BSU	Batumi Shota Rustaveli University
CDA	Czech Development Agency
CDCS	Country Development Cooperative Strategy
CzAA	Czech Association of Addictologists
CE	Continuous education
DoA	Department of Addictology
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EU	European Union
GAA	Georgian Association of Addictologists
GHI	Global Health Initiative
GIPA	Georgian Institute on Public Affairs
GoG	Government of Georgia
GPS	General Population Survey
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDU	Injecting Drug User
ILIAUNI	ILIA State University
IoA	Institute of Addictology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MA	Master's program
MoC	Ministry of Corrections
MOES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NCDC	National Center for Diseases Control and Public Health

NCEQE	National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
NEWG	National Experts Working Group for GPS
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OST	Opioid Substitution Treatment
UNODC	United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	U.S Government

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We cordially appreciate the support received from the EMCDDA in conducting first-ever in Georgia General Population Survey (GPS) on Drug Use.

Special thanks should be extended to Professor Jim Anthony, from Michigan University, US for his invaluable contribution to the GPS in Georgia.

We are grateful to local stakeholders and institutions, particularly the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health in Georgia as well as partner universities – Ilia State University, GIPA and Batumi State University for fruitful collaboration with the Project.

We believe that concerted efforts of Georgian and Czech partners have substantially supported sustainable development of addictology field in Georgia that would not have been possible without the support of the American people through the USAID.

ARDG Project Team from Alternative Georgia:

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Executive Summary

The overall goal of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAD/Georgia) funded project *Addiction Research Development in Georgia Project (ARDG project)* was to increase institutional and human capacity of local stakeholders and researchers in the field of addiction through offering extensive capacity building training programs. The cooperative agreement AID-114-A-14-00007 was signed on July 25, 2014. This two-year initiative funded at \$209,500.00 began on August 1, 2014 and ended on July 31, 2016.

The project was implemented by Addiction Research Centre - Alternative Georgia in cooperation with the Institute of Addictology established at Ilia State University and Charles University in Prague that implemented the project funded by Czech Development Agency to support development of addictology field in Georgia.

During the 24-month period of the project implementation numbers of experts as well as institutions active in the field of Addictology have further advanced their research and dissemination capacities on different levels in a sustainable and self-developing manner.

ARDG project in partnership with Czech partners conducted several rounds of training for Georgian professionals:

- On September 8-12, 2014 six Georgian experts attended the training course “Contemporary approaches in drug monitoring” organized by EMCDDA and Reitox Academy in Prague.
- On October 6-8, 2014, eleven Georgian professionals attended the three-day training in Tbilisi – ‘*Key and Core Indicators of Drug Epidemiology, and Annual Reporting*’ led by the experts from National Focal Point in Czech Republic.
- Seven Georgian experts attended the training on Drug Monitoring at the National Focal Point (NFP) of Czech Republic on November 10-12, 2014.
- On November 10-12, 2014, five researchers from Alternative Georgia, the Institute of Addictology, and NCDC traveled to Prague to participate in the three day training in modern approaches to general population surveys.
- Nine persons benefited from the training in Scientific Publishing organized in Tbilisi, on November 2-3, 2015. The training was led by Mr. Roma Gabrhelik, PhD from Charles University, Prague.
- Two staff members and lecturers of the Institute of Addictology - Ms. Irma Kirtadze and Mzia Tabatadze participated in the five-day extensive workshop in Foundations of Economic Evaluation in Health Care organized by York University, Great Britain.

A team of Georgian experts trained within the frames of the ARDG project developed and published two national drug reports for 2013 and 2014 calendar years. Development of the national drug report for 2015 Year is currently in progress.

ARDG project has conducted the first ever in Georgia General Population Survey on Drug Use Practices and Drug use related attitudes. The survey, in addition to classical methodology, used an innovative ‘Randomized Response Technique’ that attracted immense interest not only from Georgian professionals, but also from EMCDDA, and Czech and US partners.

The project conducted cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of harm reduction programs in Georgia – namely the CBA for Opioid Substitution Therapy funded by the Global fund and by the Government of Georgia on one hand, and Needle and syringe program funded by the Global Fund on the other hand.

With the intention to expand addictology education to BA level, the project partnered with two universities – Georgian Institute of Public Affairs in Tbilisi, and Shota Rustaveli State University in Batumi. Each of the two partner universities developed and initiated teaching four training courses for BA students of various faculties.

The ARDG project has placed substantial efforts to support and strengthen the operation and visibility of the Institute of Addictology established at Ilia State University in 2013, as well as the Georgian Association of Addictologists (GAA). ARDG project assisted the GAA to develop three-year Strategic Plan, to create the website, and establish partnership with the Czech Association of Addictologists that was culminated by the signing the Memorandum of Understanding between the two associations in May 2016.

To ensure accountability and disseminate the ARDG project outcome to wide professional circles and general public, all the reports produced by the USAID-funded ARDG project have been publicly accessible on the Alternative Georgia website at www.altgeorgia.ge

Overview of the Project

The overall goal of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAD/Georgia) funded project “Developing Sustainable Research and Dissemination Capacity in the Field of Addictology in Georgia” (hereinafter -Addiction Research Development in Georgia Project-ARDG project) was to increase institutional and human capacity of Georgia to better tackle acute problem of drug addiction and its negative consequences in the country. Through offering extensive capacity building training programs the number of experts as well as institutions active in the field of Addictology have further advanced their research and dissemination capacities on different levels in a sustainable and self-developing manner.

The cooperative agreement AID-114-A-14-00007 was signed on July 25, 2014. This two-year initiative funded at \$209,500.00 began on August 1, 2014 and ended on July 31, 2016. The project was implemented by Addiction Research Centre - Alternative Georgia in Tbilisi, Georgia, in cooperation with the Institute of Addictology established at Ilia State University in 2013 under the project “Introducing Addictology in Educational System of Georgia” funded by USAID and the Czech government through the Emerging Donors Challenge Fund mechanism. Within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed in June 2014 between the USAID and Czech Development Agency (CDA), USAID-funded ARDG project has coordinated its activities with the CDA-funded project that also aimed at supporting development of sustainable research capacity in the field of addictology in Georgia.

The **Addiction Research Development in Georgia** project has supported the U.S government’s (USG) vision for Georgia under the Foreign Assistance Framework for “Investing in People” to contribute to the improved health and well-being of all Georgians, especially the poor and disadvantaged, with the overall goal of achieving a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Georgia.

Pursuant to the USG Country Development Cooperative Strategy (CDCS) for fiscal years 2013-2017 for Georgia, the project has contributed to the CDCS Development Objective – DO 3 and its two Intermediate Results (IRs):

DO 3 - Increasingly stable, integrated and healthy society

IR 3.2 Increased inclusion of target population

3.2.3 Support to other disadvantaged groups sustained

IR 3.3 Improved and sustainable health outcomes and decreased incidence of communicable disease

3.3.2 Individual, institutional and systems capacity building

To achieve its objectives, the project has built upon the achievements of the previous projects funded by the US and Czech Governments through the Emerging Donors Challenge Funds mechanisms that were implemented by Alternative Georgia in partnership with the Department of Addictology First Faculty of Medicine and the General Teaching Hospital and Charles University in Prague in 2012-2013.

Under ARDG project, Alternative Georgia has continued close collaboration with Czech colleagues as well as the local stakeholders, namely: Georgian Association of Addictologists (GAA); Institute of Addictology (IoA); ILIA State University, Batumi Shota Rustaveli University (BSU), and Georgian Institute on Public Affairs (GIPA).

Overall goal of the project has been achieved via four specific principal objectives:

Objective 1: Develop the drug situation monitoring capacity of the Institute of Addictology (its function of the National Focal Point on Drugs and Drug Addiction)

Activity 1.1. Establish national capacity and mechanisms for sustainable periodical (annual) reporting on drug monitoring

Activity 1.2. Development of a methodological guideline for drug situation monitoring in the Republic of Georgia

Activity 1.3. Development of institutionalized partnership with the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).

Objective 2: Enhance the research capacity of the Institute of Addictology

Activity 2.1. Conduct program evaluation studies of harm reduction programs

Activity 2.2. Conduct the first ever in Georgia General Population Survey on Drug Use Practices and Related Attitudes

Activity 2.3. Train the staff of the Institute in addiction research

Objective 3: Create specific teaching modules in Addictology to be implemented in the bachelor's (BA) curricula

Activity 3.1. Create teaching modules for BA courses of disciplines related to decision-making and outcome dissemination in Addictology (journalism, public policy and administration)

Activity 3.2. Support Institute of Addictology in successful implementation of the MA course in Addiction Science at Ilia State University

Objective 4: Support further development and institutional position of the Georgian Association of Addictologists (GAA), especially in terms of its capacity to certify continuous education courses in the field of Addictology.

Activity 4: Carry out capacity building and advocacy initiatives for strengthening institutional capacity and visibility of Georgian Association of Addictologists.

Project Activities:

Objective 1: Develop the drug situation monitoring capacity in Georgia

Activity 1.1. Establish national capacity and mechanisms for sustainable periodical (annual) reporting on drug monitoring

One of the major objectives of the ARDG project was to develop the drug situation monitoring capacity in the country. The purpose of this objective was to prepare a cadre of professionals from government institutions, civil society and academia staff who would have knowledge and practical skills, and would be capable to support the Government of Georgia in producing national drug reports to be submitted to EMCDDA on an annual basis.

Within the frames of the USAID-funded ARDG Project a series of training took place to increase technical capacity of local stakeholders in drug monitoring.

The EMCDDA Training in Drug Monitoring: On September 8-12, 2014 Georgian experts traveled to Prague, Czech Republic to attend five-day training course that was organized by EMCDDA and Reitox Academy. The training course “Contemporary approaches in drug monitoring” was aimed at increasing technical capacity of professionals in organizing a national drug information system, collecting, analyzing and interpreting drug-related data. Main objective of the course was to help participants respond to the following questions: (1) why drug monitoring system is needed; and (2) how novel methods and academic research data should be used in the context of monitoring and analyzing drug situation at the national and global levels. To ensure diversification of trained staff, ARDG project supported participation of six Georgian experts from various institutions: two staff members from the National Center of Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC); representatives from civil society organizations and the Institute of Addictology at Ilia State University. Participants learned about standard monitoring tools and indicators recommended by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs & Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) for European countries.

Training in drug epidemiology and EMCDDA standards for drug reporting: On October 6-8, 2014, ARDG in partnership with the CzDA funded project organized three-day training on drug monitoring reporting in Tbilisi, at the Institute of Addictology, ILIAUNI. The training ‘*Key and Core Indicators of Drug Epidemiology, and Annual Reporting*’ was facilitated by a Czech team of trainers: MUDr. Viktor Mravcik, PhD, Head of the National Focal Point on Drugs in Czech Republic, and Mr. Tomas Zabransky, Department of Addictology, Charles University in Prague. To ensure wider and multi-sectoral representation of Georgian experts,

ARDG project invited representatives of government institutions, relevant ministries and faculty members of partner universities. In total, **11 participants** from NCDC, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ilia State University, and Global Initiative in Psychiatry, and Alternative Georgia participated in the training held in Tbilisi.

Training on the EMCDDA standards for Drug Reporting: The third round of training on drug reporting was held in Prague at the National Focal Point (NFP) on Drug Monitoring of Czech Republic on November 10-12, 2014. The training was facilitated by experienced and well-acknowledged Czech experts: Victor Mravcik; Pavla Chomynova; Katerina Grohmanova; and Vlasic Necas. Experts' team of the Czech NFP shared their experience with Georgian colleagues, and provided practical guidance in report writing. ARDG Project supported participation of **7 professionals:** Davit Otiashvili, (AG); Jana Javakhishvili – (GIP-T); Tamar Kikvidze and Sofo Alavidze (NCDC); Lile Batselashvili, (IoA); and Nino Duchidze, Ilia State University. Within the partnership of the National Anti-drug Council, two representatives from Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Internal Affairs also participated in the training through the financial support of the CzDA funded project.



As a result of series of training, technical capacity for annual reporting on drug situation in Georgia was substantially strengthened. A team of Georgian experts consisting of representatives from National CDC, academia staff from the Institute of Addictology of Ilia State University, and experts from civil society organizations has been well established to ensure sustainable national capacity for producing national drug situation reports annually.

In addition, based on the agreement between the USAID and CzDA projects, for quality assurance, national drug reports were peer-reviewed by the experts from the National Focal Point (NFP) on Drug Monitoring of Czech Republic which has been consistently evaluated as being on the top of “New EU countries” by the EU authorities, including EMCDDA.

As a result of joint, concerted efforts of the USAID and CzDA funded projects, the quality of the annual drug reports has significantly improved over the last three years. During the implementation of the ARDG Project, two annual reports for Year 2013 and Year 2014 were developed, printed and disseminated. In the last year of the project operation, Georgian experts started working on the third round of Georgia drug report for Year 2015. The work currently is in progress and it is expected that the report will be finalized by the end of December 2016.

On May 25, 2015 and June 27, 2016, ARDG project organized dissemination meetings to present the 2013, and 2014 annual reports on the Drug Situation in Georgia. The meetings were attended by more than 50 persons, representatives from government institutions, Ministries of Justice, Internal Affairs, and Education, civil society organizations, academic universities, media representatives, and drug policy activists. Hardcopies of the report were distributed to meeting participants. Annual drug reports for 2013 and 2014 Years have been printed in Georgian and English languages. Reports are publicly available on the web sites www.altgeorgia.ge and www.addige.eu.



June 26, 2016: Presentation of National Drug Report for 2014 Year. NCDC

Activity 1.2. Development of a methodological guideline for drug situation monitoring in the Republic of Georgia

Following extensive series of training in drug monitoring, Georgian experts in close partnership with Czech National Focal Point on Drug Monitoring, developed a methodological guideline for drug situation analyses to be in full compliance with the EMCDDA standards established for European countries. The guideline follows the format provided on the EMCDDA website and provides detailed description on the EMCDDA indicators, potential sources for data collection; responsible agencies for data submission and preferred timeline for reporting.

The guideline spells out the methods for data collection and analysis for key five epidemiological indicators: (1) Drug use among general population; (2) High-risk drug use; (3) Treatment Demand Indicator; (4) Drug-related deaths and mortality; and (5) Drug-related infectious diseases.

General Population Survey on drug use that was conducted first time in Georgia within the frames of the ARDG Project, has enabled the country to start reporting on one of the five indicators - drug use among general population that was missing from the country's reports from previous years.

In addition, while working on the guideline, it was found that Georgia lacked the adequate data to report about the treatment demand indicator. This was due to the fact that treatment centers were not collecting information about the patients in a standardized way that would allow data presentation and disaggregation according to the EMCDDA standards. NCDC in close partnership with ARDG project team developed a data collection form, and designed a simple, user-friendly database on addiction treatment services. The form was formally approved by the NCDC. The database was shared with all clinics including private clinics in Tbilisi, and since 2015 the treatment data has been collected in a standardized way.

The guideline on drug reporting is readily available to facilitate the work of Georgian Drug Observatory as soon as the country decides to take responsibility for reporting on drug situation in Georgia to EMCDDA.

Since 2014, Georgia has strictly followed the EMCDDA guideline for development of the National Drug reports for 2013, 2014 and 2015 years. Working on the report has helped Georgian experts accumulate practical experience on data collection and report writing, and this capacity can be utilized by the Drug Observatory in Georgia when established.

Activity 1.3. Development of institutionalized partnership with EMCDDA

The ARDG project established partnership with the Georgian Anti-drug Interagency Coordination Council that has been functional under the umbrella of the Ministry of Justice. The Council established through the Presidential Decree in 2012 among other tasks, was expected to realize the following: a) control drug situation in the country and coordinate drug related multi-sectoral response at the national level; b) establish national drug focal point (drug observatory) in Georgia that would be responsible for producing country drug reports annually, and c) establish collaboration with the EMCDDA and institutionalize/formalize the system of reporting to EMCDDA on drug situation in Georgia.

ARDG project team leader, Mr. David Otiashvili, and the Director of the Institute of Addictology, Mrs. Jana Javakhishvili as members of the Drug Council were actively engaged in policy dialogues organized by the Council.

It should be noted that the Council has initiated partnership with the EMCDDA and a memorandum of understanding was signed. Based on this memorandum numbers of activities have taken place that should have been followed by the establishment of a National Drug Observatory in Georgia. In October 2014, Ms. Tea Tsulukiani, the Minister of Justice, made a formal announcement that the Drug Observatory in Georgia would become operational under the Inter-agency Council by the end of 2014. However, the process was significantly delayed. The composition of the Drug Observatory is expected to be composed of 5 representatives from line ministries: Ministry of Internal Affairs (1) Ministry of Justice (2), Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs (3), Ministry of Corrections (4), and Ministry of Education and Science (5). In addition, one member will be nominated by civil society organizations functional in the field of addictology, and one member from academia.

Ms. Jana Javakhishvili, Director of the Institute of Addictology submitted a formal written request to the Council on behalf of academia and civil society organizations, and requested to approve having a scientific board (instead of one academia staff member) within the formal system of the National Drug Observatory of Georgia. The composition of the scientific board can be defined by research communities and educational institutions through consensus-based participatory process. If this initiative is approved, the scientific board will become an institutional member of the NFP in Georgia.

ARDG project has had communication with the EMCDDA team in Lisbon to increase the visibility of the Institute of Addictology for future partnership with the EMCDDA.

During the week of Reitox Academy training in Prague, Jana Javakhishvili and David Otiashvili met with Mr. Alexis Goosdeel, then the Head of Unit “Reitox & International Cooperation” of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs & Drug Addiction. Mr. Goosdeel also confirmed that the EMCDDA mission was planning to visit Tbilisi in mid October 2014 to discuss with Georgian authorities details of future partnership as well as the possibility of signing a memorandum of Understanding between the EMCDDA.

On September 25, leaders of the ARDG and CzDA projects, Drs. Tomas Zabransky and David Otiashvili met with Mr. Alexis Goosdel, who was appointed as the EMCDDA Director starting his term from January 1, 2016. Two main topics were in the focus of discussion – technical assistance of the EMCDDA to ARDG project, and enhancement of collaboration between Georgia and EMCDDA. Mr. Goosdeel also assured the EMCDDA’s commitment to continue supporting the development of drug information and monitoring system in Georgia.

On November 3, 2015 project representatives: Mr. David Otiashvili, Tomas Zabransky and Ms. Lucie Jurystova had a meeting with the EMCDDA high officials: Mr. Wolfgang Coetz, EMCDDA Director and Ms. Cecile Martel, Head of the EMCDDA International Division. The discussion covered topics related to the MOU and new perspectives for closer cooperation between Georgia and EMCDDA. It was stressed that Georgia will have now opportunities to engage in capacity building and coordination activities related to drug situation monitoring at the EU level. The necessary prerequisite for Georgia’s meaningful engagement in those activities is the establishment and efficient functioning of the National Drug Monitoring Center in the country.

The Observatory, once created, will become a formal national coordination body responsible for development of the drug situation annual report to be submitted to the EMCDDA on an annual basis. The Anti-drug Council has been relatively inactive in 2015-2016 and the Georgian Observatory has not been yet established. Due to this reason, the ARDG project was unable to establish formal partnership with the Georgian NFP and the EMCDDA.

Objective 2: Enhance the research capacity in the field of addictology

Activity 2.1: Conduct program evaluation study of harm reduction programs

ARDG project conducted cost-benefit analysis of the Opiate Substitution Treatment (OST) program and Needle Syringe Programs in Georgia. The OST in Georgia is

being financed through two financial sources: the Global Fund and the Government of Georgia. The needle-syringe program is solely funded by the Global fund.

Given that in-country capacity for conducting economic evaluation studies in Georgia is limited, the ARDG project contracted an international consultant, Mr. Carl Schutte, who has conducted Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) for health programs, and published several publications in peer-reviewed journals on Cost-Benefit Study of male circumcision programs.

The study was conducted into two phases: during the first phase Ms. Irma Kirtadze collected data on program expenditure from the two programs. Data collection was based on the toolkit that that was created through the financial support of USAID (Assessing the Costs of Medication-Assisted Treatment for HIV Prevention in Georgia. Washington, DC: Futures Group, USAID | Health Policy Initiative Costing Task Order). Unit price for OST and NSP per one beneficiary per year was established.

During the second phase, researchers assessed costs of alternative 3 scenarios for the next two decades and associated health benefits and cost-savings through averting new infections of HIV and Hepatitis C among injecting drug users. Three scenarios were different in terms of increase in coverage of Needle/Syringe Programs, Medication Assisted Treatment, and ARV Treatment over the next 20 years. Through analyzing the cost and benefits of each scenario, researchers developed recommendations that can be used by policy makers and program planners for prioritization of high-impact harm reduction services in Georgia.

Activity 2.2. Conduct the first ever in Georgia General Population Survey on Drug Use Practices and Related Attitudes (GPS-DPA)

One of the most remarkable achievements of the ARDG Project was successful implementation of the General Population Survey on Drug Use Practices and Related Attitudes in Georgia. Till 2016, Georgia lacked information about the scale and patterns of psychoactive drug use among general population as such survey has never been conducted in the country before. The survey results will help the Georgian government better understand the drug situation in the country and plan drug prevention and other relevant interventions based on sound scientific evidences.

To ensure participatory process and generate ownership among national stakeholders, ARDG project established a national experts working group that was actively involved at all phases of the survey planning and implementation. The Experts' group met several times to agree on the survey methodologies and survey instrument.



May 1, 2015: workshop with national stakeholders. Ms. Singleton (EMCDDA; Portugal); Professor Jim Anthony (Michigan University, USA); Dr. Tomas Zabransky (Charles University, Czech Republic)



In addition to Georgian experts, representatives of EMCDDA as well as partners from Czech Republic and USA were actively involved to finalize the study methodology. Mr. David Otiashvili, the Project Team Leader held intensive communication with Mrs. Cecile Martel, Head of the International Cooperation Sector, EMCDDA to obtain technical guidance from the EMCDDA. As a result of negotiation, Mrs. Nicola Mary Singleton was designated to serve as an EMCDDA consultant for the GPS-DPA in Georgia. Mrs. Singleton is a policy researcher and expert with extensive experience in general population prevalence studies.

On May 1, 2015, ARDG project conducted a workshop with the participation of Professor Jim Anthony, from Michigan State University; Mrs. Nicola Singleton, EMCDDA, and Mr. Tomas Zabransky, Charles University. Invited guests shared their expertise with Georgian colleagues and provided comments on the study methodology, sampling framework and the questionnaire. During the meeting, experts discussed country specifics and highlighted that due to restrictive legislation underreporting of drug use behaviors was expected, and explored possible risk mitigating techniques.

Professor Jim Anthony has encouraged research team to apply an innovative method – a Randomized Response Technique (RRT) as a check on completeness of survey

responses to questions about sensitive and illegal behaviors such as drug use. Using the RRT in the survey aimed to overcome the cultural sensitivity of the drug use (and other marginal behaviors) that might have threatened the reliability of study findings. It was expected that using two alternative methods would allow the survey to derive best possible analysis on drug use in Georgia.

It should be emphasized that EMCDDA became interested to closely watch piloting the RRT for GPS survey to assess its methodological advantage and explore its potential for validation of drug use data collected through the classical survey instrument. EMCDDA intends to explore possibilities for replicating this approach in other countries with similar legal and social environments.

In November 2015, the GPS protocol was approved by the Bioethics Committee of the Health Research Union in Georgia. The survey was conducted in close partnership with the National Center of Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) that was contracted to conduct the survey fieldwork. The NCDC staff members were trained on the survey protocol and questionnaire, and detailed Standard Operation Manual was given to each interviewer.



Training of interviewers on GPS-DPA protocol and survey instrument. November 21, 2015; NCDC

Involving the NCDC in the GPS was important step for building the capacity within the major public institution that is expected to make every effort to institutionalize GPS survey, and advocate for carrying out follow-up surveys at least once in every 3 to 5 years to monitor the national trends in drug abuse practices in Georgia.

The survey has involved 4800 respondents from randomly selected households from the capital city – Tbilisi and all regions of the Country. Having nationwide representative sample has ensured generalizability of study results to the entire

population of the country. The survey was carried out strictly in accordance with the standards of the EMCDDA model questionnaire for GPS, and with the guidelines of the US Household Surveys on Drugs that has made survey data fully comparable with similar studies not only in Europe, but also in the U.S.

On July 28, ARDG project held a final conference where the results of the GPS-DPA were presented. The interest towards the survey results from professional communities not only in Georgia, but also from EMCDDA and partner countries, US and Czech Republic, was immense. Among honorable guests of the conference were the Ambassador of US to Georgia, Mr. Ian C. Kelly, and the Ambassador of Czech Republic, Mr. Tomáš Pernický. The dissemination meeting was also attended by Dr. Zaza Sopromadze, Deputy Minister of Health, Labor and Social Affairs, Mrs. Nicola Singleton, Scientific analyst, from EMCDDA, project partners from Charles University, Prague, and more than 30 representatives from Georgian government institutions and civil society organizations.



The GPS-DPA study results were enthusiastically welcomed by the Georgian experts. Representatives of mass-media have shown keen interest to publish the study results, and broadcast the event and interviews with project experts on various TV channels and print media. The GPS final results on Georgian and English versions have been uploaded and are now available at the Alternative Georgia website <http://altgeorgia.ge/2012/myfiles/GPS%20eng.pdf>

Activity 2.3. Train the staff of the Institute of Addictology in addiction research

ARDG project substantially contributed to strengthening the research capacity of IoA staff and lecturer of the MA program in addiction science. In addition to numbers of

training in the EMCDDA standards for drug monitoring reporting, the ARDG in partnership with Czech colleagues organized special training for Georgian professionals in addiction research.

Training in modern approaches to General Population Survey on drug use: On November 10-12, 2014, five researchers from Alternative Georgia, the Institute of Addictology, and NCDC participated in the three day training in modern approaches general population surveys. The training was led by Professor Jim Anthony, Michigan State University, USA who was invited by the Charles University under the CzDA funded project. Mr. Victor Mravcik also provided session to share the experience of Czech Republic in conducting General Population Survey on Drug Use.

Training in Scientific Publishing: On November 2-3, 2015 Mr. Roma Gabrhelik, PhD from Charles University, Prague visited Tbilisi to conduct two-day training in Scientific Publishing. The training was held at Ilia State University. Conducting the training in Tbilisi, has allowed the ARDG project to expand the group and invited not only staff of the IoA, but also other institutions. In total, nine participants, representatives from Addiction Research Center, Institute of Addictology, GIPA, and Batumi State University, as well as three MA students of Addiction Science from Ilia University participated in the training in Scientific Publishing.

Training in Foundations of Economic Evaluation in Health Care – York University: Two staff members and lecturers of the Institute of Addictology at Iliauni, Ms. Irma Kirtadze and Mzia Tabatadze participated in the five-day extensive workshop in Foundations of Economic Evaluation in Health Care. The training was organized by the York University, on June 20-24, 2016 in York, Great Britain. The workshop included a comprehensive coverage of all key issues in the methods and practice of economic evaluation studies. The workshop was led by two prominent professors: Mr. Michael Drummond, and Mark Sculpher who authored that best-selling textbook – “Methods for the Economic Evaluation of health Care Programmes.”

Objective 3: Create specific teaching modules in Addictology to be implemented in BA level

Activity 3.1 Create teaching modules in Addictology to be implemented in the bachelor's (BA) curricula of disciplines related to decision-making and outcome dissemination in Addictology (journalism, public policy and administration)

The project “Introducing Addictology in Educational System of Georgia” funded by USAID and the Czech government through the Emerging Donors Challenge Fund mechanism established a solid base for introducing and institutionalizing multi-disciplinary education program in the field of Addictology in Georgia. As a result of successful implementation of this project, an Institute of Addictology was established and two-year MA program in Addictology was accredited at Ilia State University.

With the purpose to expand addictology education in the country, the ARDG project established partnership with two universities – Georgia Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) and Batumi State University (BSU) to develop new training modules to be implemented for BA students from various faculties.

The following courses were developed for BA students at Batumi State University:

1. *Rehabilitation services in the field of addiction* –Faculty of Physical Medicine and Medical Rehabilitation
2. *Drug Policy and legal aspects in Addiction* –Faculty of Law
3. *Primary Prevention of Addiction in Secondary Schools* – Faculty of Education
4. *Medical Foundations (Basics) of Addiction* – Faculty of Health Care and Social Sciences

Georgian Institute of Public Affairs developed four training course that will be offered to BA students from various faculties, including public administration and media journalism.

1. *Bioethics in public health and addiction;*
2. *Economic evaluation of health care programs;*
3. *Health policy in the field of Addictology; and*
4. *Health promotion strategies.*

It should be noted that both universities demonstrated interest to prepare and submit for accreditation a new MA program in public health in late 2016. If programs are accredited, more courses related to addiction studies will become operational that will contribute to sustainable development of addictology education in Georgia.

Activity 3.2 Support Institute of Addictology in successful implementation of the MA course in Addictology at Ilia State University

Within the frames of the USAID-funded program: *Introducing Addictology in Educational System in Georgia* that was implemented by Alternative Georgia in 2012-2014, the first MA program in addictology was accredited by the National Center for Quality Enhancement of the Ministry of Science and Education. The MA program was accredited in April 2014 and it started recruiting first potential students for 2015 academic year. To increase visibility of the 2-year MA program in Addictology, and ensure that the program could attract motivated young professionals, ARDG Project in partnership with the Institute of Addictology worked closely with the Public Relations (PR) office of Ilia State University to carry out aggressive promotional campaign.

ARDG project team and the institute staff developed an informational leaflet about the program. In total 1000 copies of the leaflet were printed through the USAID-funded ARDG project. The leaflets were disseminated among targeted groups of students and professionals. A Facebook page also was created to increase awareness of the MA program.

On February 23, Mr. Tomas Zabransky with the support of the Czech Embassy/CzDA, delivered a public lecture on the latest trends of marijuana policies in European countries. The lecture organized at Ilia State University was attended by more than 100 persons. During the opening ceremony, key academic staff members of the Institute of Addictology (Professor Nino Javakhishvili, Ms. Jana Javakhishvili and Mr. David Otiashvili) talked about the MA program in Addictology, and disseminated program promotional materials among attendees. In addition, the Institute of Addictology and ARDG team volunteers disseminated leaflets among candidate students during the national admission exams for MA degree.

As a result of promotional campaigns led by the ARDG and the Institute of Addictology 7 and 10 students were admitted for 2015 and 2016 academic years, respectively. High numbers of applications received provide positive signal that launching MA program in the field of addictology was needed, and the program will become sustainable.

Even after the ARDG project ended, the project staff, who are also lecturers of the MA program have continued working closely with the Institute of Addictology to ensure the program is run and managed in most effective and academic way.

Objective 4: Support further development and institutional position of the Georgian Association of Addictologists (GAA), especially in terms of its capacity to certify continuous education courses in the field of Addictology.

Activity 4: Carry out capacity building and advocacy initiatives for strengthening GAA institutional capacity and visibility

One of the objectives of the ARDG Project was to promote the Georgian Association of Addictologists (GAA) and increase its potential for establishing quality service standards in the addiction field in the country. Through the technical support from ARDG project, the Georgian Association of Addictologists (GAA) which was established in 2013, has intensified its effort to increase institutional visibility of the association in the field of addictology. ARDG Project supported the association to create the GAA logo, and a web-portal. Currently, the GAA operates the website that contains several domains: about the GAA; News and Events; Resources; Trainings; and Contacts. Visitors can find brief information about the association and activities that have been implemented by the Association.

The GAA should play the key role in human resource development in addiction field through offering continuous education courses for in-service professionals. Therefore, the website also offers online registration for trainings. Currently the GAA continues working to develop continuous education training modules that will be submitted to the MoH for certification. If granted, the GAA will start offering trainings to different professionals, including addictologists, general practitioners, social workers, prison staff, school staff, journalists, etc. This may help the GAA generate income and become self-sustainable. However, it should be acknowledged that continuous education is not accredited/regulated in the country; therefore it is expected that the interest of professionals and/or employers to undergo and/or finance staff training might be relatively low.

GAA will continue working with the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health to assess the political will of government officials for institutionalizing continuous education in the country. However, it should be acknowledged that positioning GAA within the addictology education system is largely dependent on political processes and commitments of high officials to institutionalize continuous education system at the national level.

In addition, the GAA has a potential to become a key institution in improving the quality of addiction researches in Georgia. For this purpose, ARDG project supported the GAA to initiate registration process at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The process was completed successfully and the GAA is now assigned the *Federal wide Assurance number for the Protection of Human Subjects (FWA #*

FWA00023887). The GAA now has been registered at **System for Award Management (NCAGE Code: SAQN6, DUNS number: 506860236)**. The account is active/valid for one year starting from 17.03.2016 and expiring on 17.03.2017. This process was very important for the GAA as it plans to establish an Institutional Review Board (Bioethics Committee) which will be entitled to review addiction research applications involving human subjects, and to issue a permission for conducting researches in most ethical way safeguarding human rights and privacy of research participants.

Within the frames of the ARDG and CzDA program partnership, Czech Association of Addictologists (CzAA) invited GAA Advisory Board members to participate in the study tour. November 12, 2014 GAA representatives met with the CzAA that was established in 2010 in Czech Republic and has already gained acknowledgement among professional circles. Georgian visitors have become familiar with the operation of CzAA. The study tour laid the groundwork for establishment of institutionalized partnership between the two associations of addictologists. During the study tour the two associations started working on the Strategic Plan of the GAA.

On May 12-13, 2016 Mr. Davit Otiashvili, GAA Chairperson, and Ms. Mzia Tabatadze, the GAA Advisory Board Member traveled to Prague to meet partners from Czech Association of Addictologists, and signed a Memorandum of Understanding that has formalized sustainable future partnership between the GAA and the Czech Association of Addictologists.

In July 2016, Ms. Lucie Jurystova, CzAA Board member, visited Tbilisi and discussed potential areas for future partnership between the two associations. We believe, that GAA will continue functioning after the ARDG project ends on July 31, 2016. The GAA currently is one of the recipients of the EC/Tempus project and within the frames of the Tempus project the GAA is leading the process of the development of lifelong education framework as well as establishment of quality standards in the field of addictology in Georgia.

Summary of problems encountered

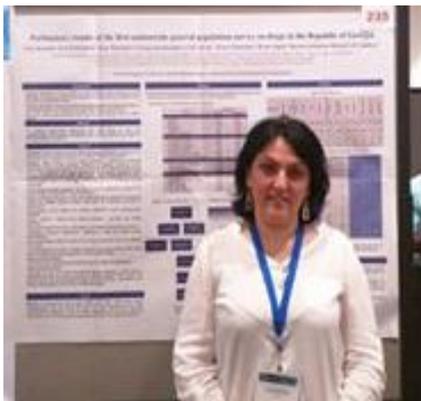
ARDG project has achieved considerable advancement of Addictology education in Georgia. The project contribution was immense in terms of strengthening a cadre of professionals who were trained in drug monitoring reporting. However, the project was unable to fully realize the objective #1 that was aiming at achieving a greater engagement of the Institute of Addictology and other trained experts in the National Drug Monitoring system that was supposed to be established by the end of December

2014. Even though that Georgia has signed a memorandum with the EMCDDA, the Anti-drug Interagency Council has become inactive in 2015-2016 and the Monitoring Center has not been established in Georgia.

No meetings of the Council have been organized during 2015- July 2016 that has prevented the ARDG project to further intensify its effort for positioning the Institute of Addictology in the national drug monitoring system. This has also hindered the project to present project outcomes and achievements, such as national drug reports and the GPS survey findings to the members of Interagency Council.

Success story

Poster Presentation: Ms. Irma Kirtadze submitted an abstract to NIDA about the General Population Survey that was accepted for poster presentation. The poster was presented at the 2016 NIDA International Forum held on June 10–13, 2016, at the La Quinta in Palm Springs, California.



The 2016 NIDA International Forum. June 10–13, 2016. La Quinta in Palm Springs, California. US.

Oral Presentation for EMCDDA: The ARDG Project successfully implemented the first ever in Georgia General Population Survey on Drug Use and Related Attitudes. The GPS-DPA in addition to standard study methodology used a Randomized Response Technique to obtain more sincere responses from study respondents and deal with expected problem of underreporting of drug use behaviors.

Ms. Irma Kirtadze was invited by the EMCDDA to make a presentation about the survey at the EMCDDA meeting which is held annually to discuss GPS study methodological developments and other drug-related monitoring tools among experts worldwide. The meeting was held on September 19-20, 2016 in Lisbon. More than 40 European and international experts attended the meeting where Ms. Kirtadze

presented Georgia experience about using innovative methodology for the general population survey on drug use.

Meeting topics and presentations are available at the EMCDDA website:

<http://emcdda.europa.eu/meetings/2016/gps>