

SUPPORT IN TURBULENT TIMES

Final report of the HEALTHLINK project on
"ACCELERATING UKRAINE'S EFFORTS TO END HIV/AIDS"

HEALTH
LINK



2024



100%LIFE





All activities are made possible within the HealthLink project "Accelerating Ukraine's Efforts to End HIV" by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Since 2017 the HealthLink project has been implemented by CO "100% LIFE" in partnership with ICF "Alliance for Public Health"

The final report is a series of described cases, infographics, success stories, media publications that form a practical guide for other projects / organizations / teams / institutions on best practices and tools, lessons learned and recommendations in the style and on behalf of personalized teams and their heroes [1] (CO "100% LIFE" and ICF "Alliance for Public Health", NGO subgrantees and project HCFs).

[1] It is about employees and beneficiaries, partners and volunteers, relatives of PLHIV and profile specialists — everyone who who has been /is a role model for teams, guided by the principles and approach of the Project.



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ACRONYMS

- APH** — ICF "Alliance for Public Health"
- ART** — Antiretroviral Therapy
- CPD** — Continuous Professional Development for Physicians
- HIV** — Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- HCV** — viral hepatitis C
- IDPs** — Internally Displaced Persons
- PrEP** – pre-exposure prophylaxis of HIV
- IEM** — information and educational material
- STIs** — Sexually Transmitted Infections
- GP** — General population
- HCF** — healthcare facility
- KG** — key groups
- PWID** — people who inject drugs
- LGBTI** — lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community
- PLHIV** — people living with HIV
- MoH** — Ministry of Health
- NHSU** — National Health Service of Ukraine
- NGO** — Non-Governmental Organization
- PAS** — psychoactive substances
- CSW** — Commercial Sex Workers
- AIDS** — acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
- SP** — sexual partners
- TP** — transgender people
- TB** — tuberculosis
- PHC** — Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine
- PHCC** – Primary health care center
- MSM** — men who have sex with men
- PEPFAR** is an extraordinary initiative of the President of the United States to help fight HIV/AIDS

History of the HealthLink project

**COP of USAID.
HealthLink Project
KHYSTYNA BRODYCH**



DMYTRO SHEREMBEI, HEAD OF COORDINATION COUNCIL OF CO "100% LIFE"

The lives we saved thanks to the project is the most important indicator. To date, 126,000 Ukrainians on antiretroviral therapy have survived thanks to this project. We continue our fight. We are grateful to our partners for supporting us in this fight. Because when we go through difficult times, only those who appreciate and support us remain with us. During the hard times of the COVID-19 pandemic, when it was the most difficult time for the entire

health sector, the HealthLink project set up oxygen stations that saved dozens and hundreds of people in hospitals every day. During the full-scale war, with USAID funding, the project expanded its reach and helped restore primary health care.

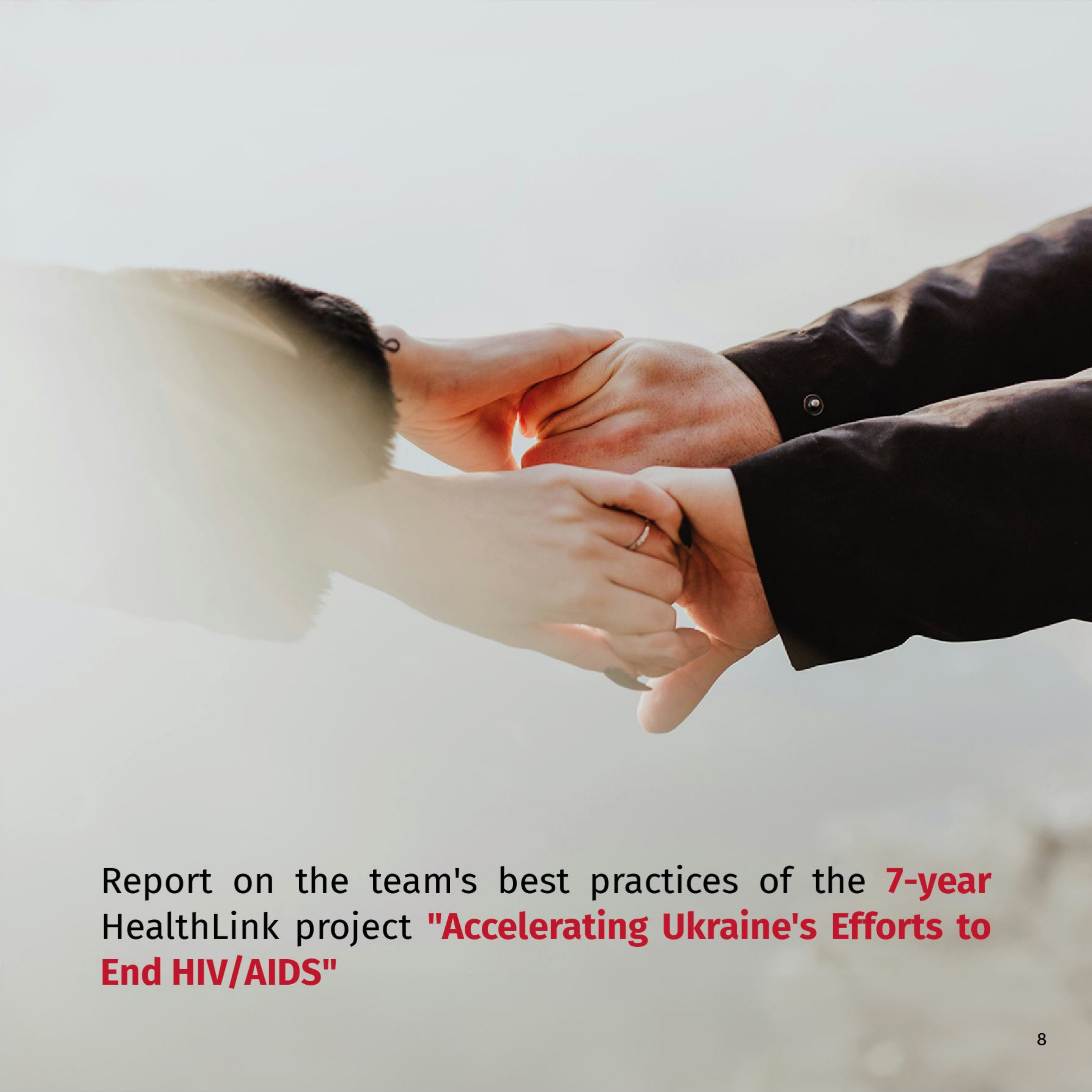
COP OF USAID.HEALTHLINK PROJECT KHYSTYNA BRODYCH

Since the autumn of 2017, we have been implementing a project that has become one of the largest and most effective in the field of public health in Ukraine. Now you have in your hands a report with amazing results and valuable experience, for which we are very grateful. The history of the HealthLink project is one of constant search and implementation of innovations, high adaptability to changes, and maximum efficiency and sustainability. We have been able to create a comprehensive and diverse health care mechanism with a single goal: that people in Ukraine have access to HIV testing and treatment and live full lives. We have achieved a lot, and we want to tell you about it.

Our tremendous achievements are the result of the synergy of the efforts of a significant number of people who have joined the HealthLink project at different stages and levels. From the beginning, the project has been based on partnerships, especially with health care institutions, NGOs, government agencies, regional health departments, companies and individual experts. It is thanks to your trust and solidarity with our ideas and views that it has been possible to move forward with enthusiasm for 7 years and have an unprecedented impact on the achievement of national HIV targets. Together we have built an effective system of support for Ukrainians that has not been shaken for a moment, neither during the COVID-19 pandemic nor with the outbreak of full-scale war. We are grateful to you!

One million Ukrainians taking charge of their health:

How did the HealthLink project team change the approach to HIV testing and diagnosis at the national level?



Report on the team's best practices of the **7-year** HealthLink project "**Accelerating Ukraine's Efforts to End HIV/AIDS**"

HealthLink. Support in Turbulent Times

HealthLink Project "Accelerating Ukraine's
Efforts to End HIV/AIDS"

the 7-year report

- One of the **largest and most effective public health projects** in Ukraine.
- It has had an **unprecedented impact** on the achievement of national HIV targets¹ (namely, the first "90"): **one in three new** HIV diagnoses in Ukraine was tested through the **HealthLink project**.
- **More than 1 million people in Ukraine have been tested and know their HIV status through the HealthLink project.**
- For the first time, the following number of health care facilities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were covered: 714 healthcare facilities, **29 NGOs, more than 10,000 medical workers (10,222), 639 testing sites outside healthcare facilities.**
- It has been implemented **since 2017** by the largest patient organization in the country CO "100% LIFE"² in partnership with the ICF "Alliance for Public Health"³ with the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID)⁴.
- **Since 2017**, it has covered the **12 priority regions for PEPFAR**: the Dnipropetrovsk, Kirovohrad, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Odesa, Chernihiv, Poltava, Cherkasy, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Kyiv regions and the city of Kyiv; and since 2022, it has also been operating in the Lviv, Frankivsk, Zhytomyr and Zakarpattia regions.
- The US Government' investment in the project exceeded ~ \$37 million.



KEY RESULTS OF THE HEALTHLINK PROJECT "ACCELERATING UKRAINE'S EFFORTS TO END HIV/AIDS" (AS OF APRIL 2023):

- **1 038 631** people in Ukraine have been tested for HIV and now know their HIV status thanks to the HealthLink project;
- **25 961** people learned about their HIV+ status for the first time;
- **22 264** people started ART;
- **152 365** oral HIV tests distributed;
- **76 800** safe boxes* distributed;
- **> 1 700** people received PrEP for the first time;
- **96 026** people tested for hepatitis;
- **6 673** people were tested for syphilis;
- **381** people were enrolled in a program to improve adherence to treatment.

FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING PLANES:

- services (e-health, protocol, participation in working groups);
- communication campaigns;
- training for service providers;
- an advocacy component;

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

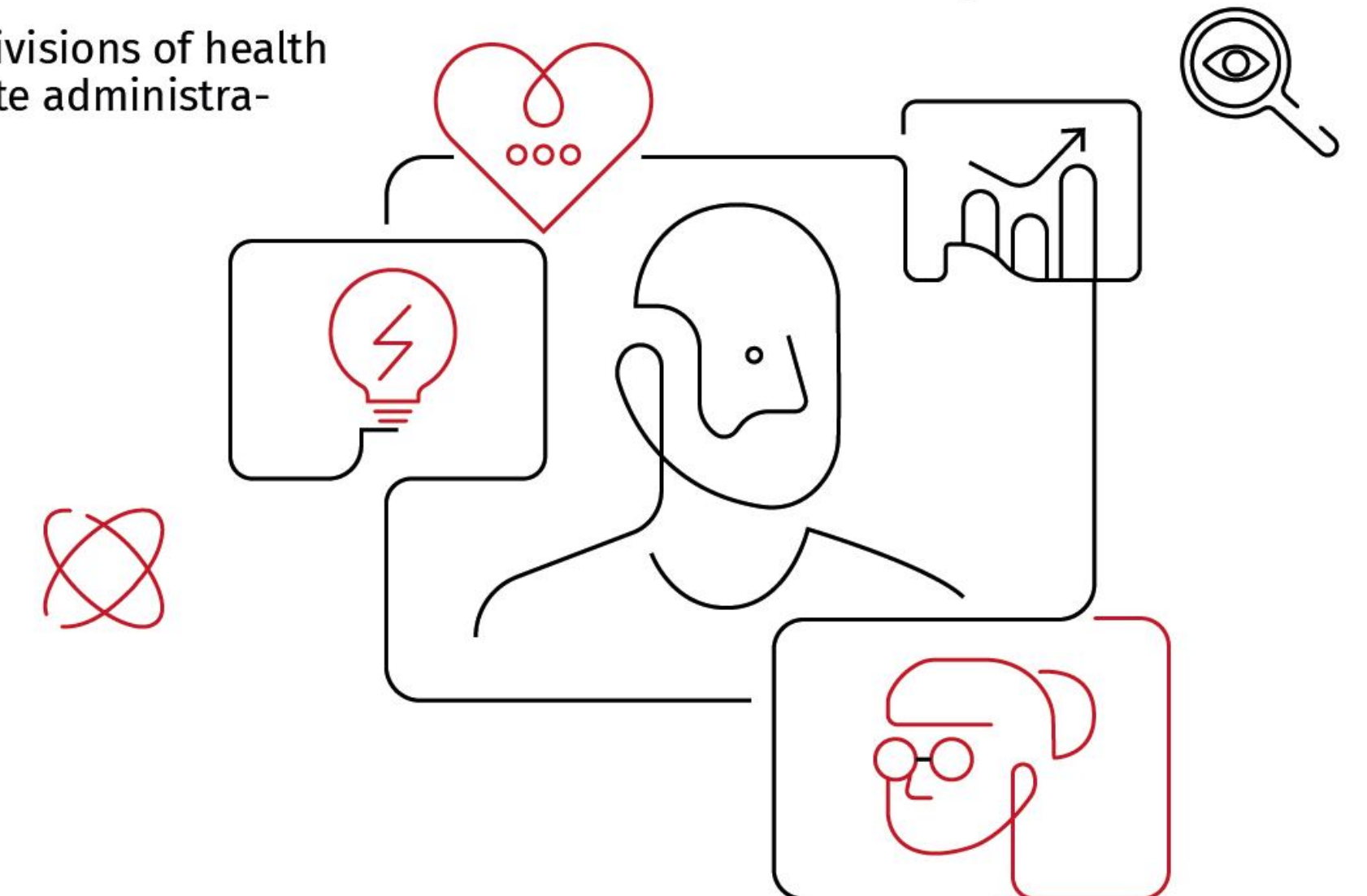
- optimization of the ability to quickly and safely qccess HIV testing and start treatment;
- improving access to HIV prevention and treatment services for PLHIV and at-risk populations;
- reducing stigma and discrimination against PLHIV among the general population and healthcare workers;
- restoration and expansion of healthcare services in the regions affected by the full-scale invasion;
- expansion of healthcare services taking into account the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

TARGET GROUPS OF THE PROJECT:

- KG and vulnerable population, as well as their SP: PWID, RSS, MSM;
- PLHIV and their close associates;
- internally displaced persons;
- sexual partners of military personnel of both sexes;
- demilitarized military and their close associates;
- civilians providing PHC;
- victims of gender-based violence;
- patients and healthcare workers.

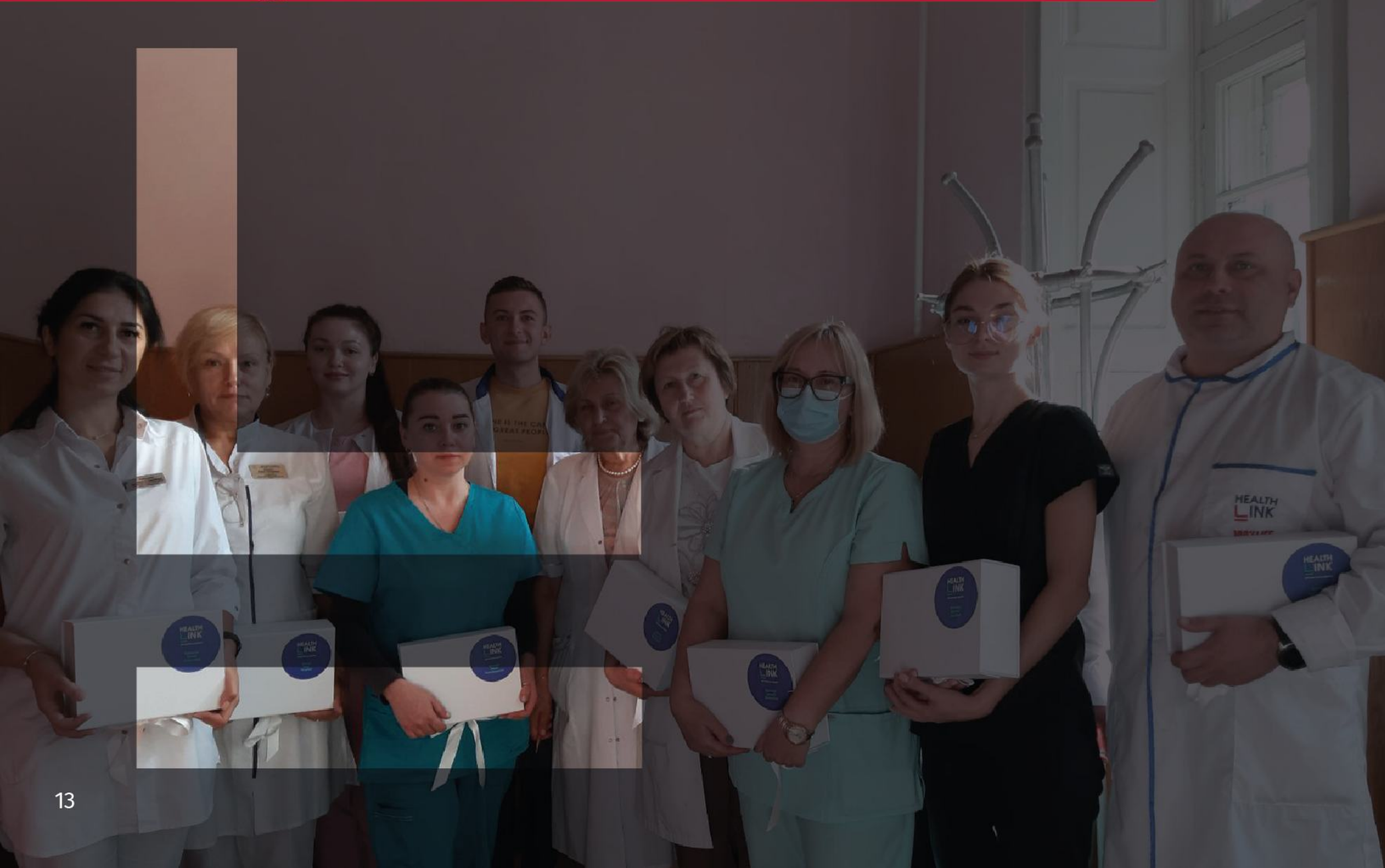
KEY PARTNERS:

- Ministry of Health;
- The Public Health Center of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine
- The National Health Service of Ukraine
- departments and divisions of health care of regional state administrations;
- health care facilities in 15 oblasts of Ukraine;
- international, national and local non-governmental organizations;
- representatives of the expert community.



Best practices and key achievements

Supporting the implementation of systemic changes in Ukraine's healthcare sector



- In 2018, support was provided for the development of and the advocacy for the adoption of a new law¹ on HIV testing and a new clinical protocol² for the use of ART for treatment and prevention of HIV infection.
- The HealthLink project has become one of the elements of medical reform, introducing a new model of patient care, where the role of primary and secondary care physicians in combating the HIV epidemic in Ukraine has changed: since then, free HIV testing can be obtained through family doctors and inpatient doctors.
- An electronic eHealth³ system has been developed and implemented. In particular, HealthLink provides:
 - relocation of the eHealth system to servers in Ukraine;
 - stability of SMS authentication of patients, thanks to which 16 million people registered in 4 months from the start of the system's launch campaign;
 - controlling⁴ the transparency of regional procurement of medicines for PLHIV through the ProZorro system.
- Development and implementation of DataCheck.
- Development and implementation of an intervention for self-testing with oral HIV tests in HCFs.



MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE INTERACTION WITH HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

- ~88% of project’s tests were carried out in healthcare facilities (~810,000 as of April 2023¹).
- >600 HCFs are involved in collaboration — from large regional dispensaries to district level facilities (in particular, those where rapid HIV testing has not been used before).
- 9 679 HCWs trained in rapid HIV and Hepatitis C testing techniques.
- 10 222 participated in stigma and discrimination reduction training for PLHIV /GMR representatives.
- 2 809 received training on index testing.
- Close collaboration with HCFs has enabled a detailed understanding of the situation from the inside: what and how it works, and what and why it does not work.

TRAINING OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

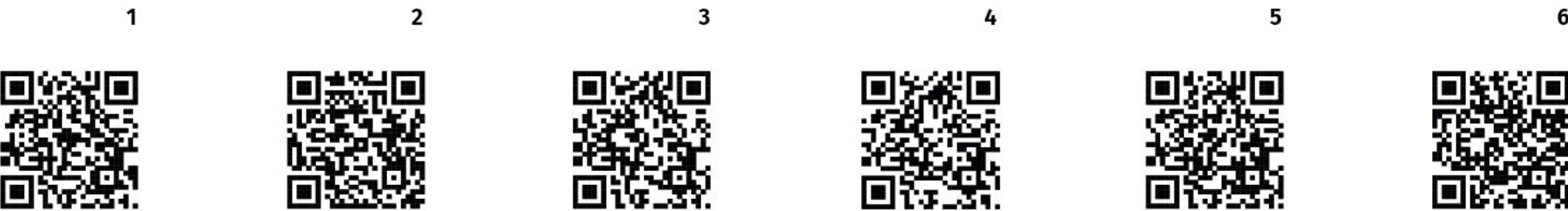
- ~10 000^[2] HCWs were trained in the use of rapid HIV and hepatitis C tests, the use of oral HIV tests, index testing /co-infection, PrEP, stigma and discrimination reduction, health workers' burn-out, motivational counseling, and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Information and education products:
 - a library of thematic materials² for healthcare professionals, PLHIV and the general public
 - a guide with tips for healthcare professionals³ to better understand their patients and influence behavioral change in HIV prevention and treatment;
 - A guide with tips for NGO workers⁴ helps to plan communication activities wisely and interact effectively with target audiences.

[2] Total number of HCWs trained by the HealthLink project (2018-2024)

- Online courses:
 - online course for doctors "What a PHC doctor needs to know to accompany HIV patients"⁵
helps to master new knowledge about HIV in order to provide effective support to patients;
created in partnership with the NHSU Academy and the PHC
 - online course for nurses⁶
enables them to improve their professional level and the quality of medical care for PLHIV.

NGO COLLABORATION WITH HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

- Coordination meetings with NGOs, HCFs, HCAs, local governments and other stakeholders.
- Joint development of legislation.
- Monitoring and technical assistance visits.
- Introduction of a medical coordinator model.
- Involvement of social workers to provide HIV testing services.
- Training for healthcare professionals.
- Material and technical support:
procurement of equipment, office equipment, medical furniture, medical clothing, personal protective equipment, consumables, rapid tests for HIV and hepatitis B and C;
arrangement of Dovira offices in Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia, Odesa, Lviv regions.



MOTIVATIONAL PROGRAMS

- Since October 2018, 12 PEPFAR regions have implemented motivational programs for an entire year to accelerate the process of identifying new PLHIV:
 - **140 healthcare workers** who helped identify the most of new HIV+ cases received **293** motivational gifts, and **14** people received **tablets**;
 - 77 social workers who managed to get the identified clients to their regular medical checkups received motivational gifts.
- Such incentives were particularly motivating for health workers from **small towns and remote areas**.
- Implementation of a financial incentive model for healthcare and social workers.
- Development and implementation of a tool for assessing the effectiveness of HIV testing and treatment at the level of individual healthcare facilities.

MONITORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

- Using of business intelligence (Power BI) tools to analyze the monitoring and evaluation of project results.
- Effective website management.
- Practicing the RISE evaluation form – evaluating of the effectiveness of HCF activities.
- In 2020, a strategy for timely exit from sites that, according to the results of the quarterly assessment, do not meet the appropriate indicator for identifying new HIV cases has been implemented.

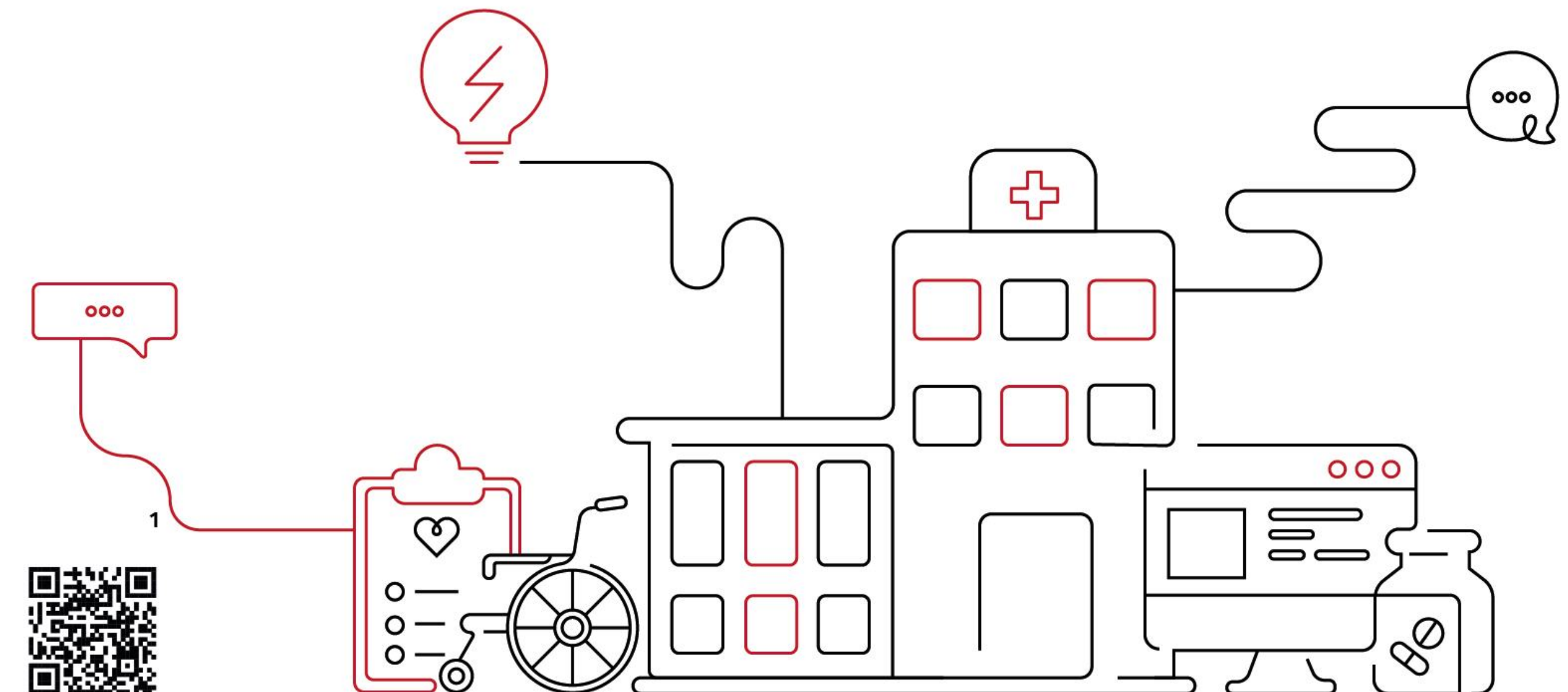
RANKING OF HCFs AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

- The ranking* has been introduced based on:
 - improving the quality of services in each HCF;
 - reducing stigma and discrimination.

- informing patients about HCFs and the quality of services they provide (in particular, about the attitude towards PLHIV)

- The ranking was evaluated in **2018–2020**
- The assessment was carried out by **12 teams of public** reporters in 12 oblasts using the **Check & Rate mobile application**.
- **5 032** patients took part in the survey¹ (regarding the assessment of specific healthcare facilities and services provided there).
- **176** HCFs were assessed and ranked accordingly.
- The results are presented on Help24.org.ua.

* Since 2021, the HCF ranking has not been assessed, firstly because of COVID-19, and secondly, since February 2022, because of the large-scale war in Ukraine.



SUPERVISION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS IN NGOs AND HCFs
OFFLINE AND ONLINE

In 2018–2023, a system of supervision for healthcare and social workers, and case managers was developed and implemented, which made it possible to ensure constant monitoring of the quality of service provision and training of service providers. The main task of supervision is to increase and maintain a high level of professional knowledge and skills of service providers and regional project implementers.

Supervision is based on the principles and standards of providing medical and social services: confidentiality, safety, professionalism, etc. This format was familiar and understandable to NGO workers, while **supervision in HCFs was a breakthrough**. As **this was the first time for the doctors**, the relationship in supervision was built from the ground up.

THE MAIN THEMES OF SUPERVISION ARE:

- counseling and testing related to HIV and TB;
- motivational interview;
- professional burnout;
- psychosocial support in difficult situations with clients / patients in interaction with colleagues;
- counseling clients with PAR dependence;
- supervision of the trainer;
- stigmatization and discrimination of community representatives, HIV+ patients and COVID-19 patients;
- case management, online customer support in an epidemic;
- online customer support.

DURING THE WAR, NEW TOPICS WERE ADDED TO SUPERVISIONS:

- motivation for HIV testing in wartime;
- mental health and ways to preserve it in wartime;
- counseling clients / patients in wartime;
- pre-psychological work with war trauma in clients/patients, etc.

2 mechanisms are used for supervision: online supervision and face-to-face supervision.



- **YEAR 2:** of the project: 93 face-to-face supervision sessions were held in HCFs and NGOs. 834 health workers including doctors, nurses, paramedics and 144 social workers actively participated in the supervision.
- **YEAR 3:** 9 NGO-based and 77 HCF-based supervisions were conducted. A total of 51 NGO representatives and 752 health workers participated in face-to-face supervision. A total of 1,269 online supervisions were conducted in Year 3 of the project, involving 387 supervisees from 23 regions of Ukraine, including 12 PEPFAR regions.
- **YEAR 4:** 67 face-to-face NGO and health facility supervisions were conducted for 61 NGO staff and 619 health care workers, and 1,652 online supervisions were conducted with 234 supervisees participating.
- **YEAR 5:** 74 NGO and health facility-based supervisions were conducted for 146 NGO representatives and 547 health workers. A total of 1,434 online supervisions were conducted in Year 5, involving 153 supervisees from 19 regions of Ukraine, including 9 PEPFAR regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Of the supervisees, 95 were partner NGO staff and 58 were health care workers.
- **YEAR 6:** During Year 6 of the project, the number of in-person supervisions in both NGOs and HCFs decreased significantly due to the war. 13 supervisions were conducted in NGOs and HCFs. A total of 15 NGO representatives and 99 health care workers, including nurses and doctors of various specialties who provide counseling and testing for HIV and hepatitis, participated in the face-to-face supervision. Online supervision was intensive. A total of 1,118 online supervisions were conducted during Year 6, involving 213 people. Of the supervisees, 101 were partner NGO staff and 112 were health care workers.

INDEX TESTING IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE MODALITY OF THE PROJECT

- In order to find and include in HIV testing those people who are at highest risk of infection but do not know it, global best practices were adapted, including: index testing - testing partners of people living with HIV;
- This has increased the efficiency of PLHIV detection by more than tenfold.
- **2 809** health workers were trained in index testing.

AS A RESULT:

PLHIV partners
were tested

>29 000

5 000

of whom learned their HIV+
status for the first time..

the proportion of PLHIV newly detected through index
testing out of the total number of newly detected cases

17%

INNOVATIVE "VIDEO DOCTOR" PROGRAM

- Launched in December 2021 to improve index testing results.
- Doctors were given tablets to **show the following videos to patients** during counseling:
 - How to invite a male partner for HIV testing?¹
 - How to invite a female partner for HIV testing?²
 - How to invite a partner for HIV testing (male to male)?³
 - Why should I invite my partner for HIV testing?⁴
 - Who should be invited for HIV testing?⁵

After watching the videos, patients were given comics that duplicated the information provided in the films so that they could review useful information at home.

In the two years from 2021 to 2023, **2 074** customers watched the videos. Of these: **1 292** of their partners were involved in testing, **425** people found out that they had HIV. The videos are also used by the project's social workers to recruit index partners.

INNOVATIVE "TELL FREE" ANONYMOUS PARTNER NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

- **tellfree.org.ua** was launched in 2020 as an additional resource for index clients to inform their partners anonymously if they choose not to use traditional methods of notification.
- On the website, PLHIV could send an anonymous text message to inform a partner or request a call from a qualified healthcare professional.



Coverage of hard-to-reach group — MSM

>25 000 tested — men who
have sex with men

CREATION OF A REGIONAL MSM COMMUNITY

The MenSpace community in the Dnipropetrovsk region, which has become a **brand** and the first large **community center** to attract a large number of MSM.

Community center in Mariupol, where clients of the Donetsk region could receive a full package of HIV services, including PrEP, and professional counseling (psychologist, lawyer). After February 24, 2022, the community ceased to exist due to hostilities in the region and the occupation of Mariupol.

COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

The campaign, targeted at the MSM community and heterosexual men, aimed to raise awareness about HIV testing and promote oral self-testing on the online platforms prozdorovia.in.ua¹ and oraltest.org.ua².

In 2021, at the ceremony of awarding the most prestigious marketing award in Ukraine, Effie Awards Ukraine, the campaign received **two gold awards** in the categories "Hitting the target audience in media campaigns" and Positive Change — Social Good: Non-Profit, as well as a **silver** award in the category "Low-budget campaigns" and a **bronze** award for "Non-profit organizations". NEW».

For more information, see the section "Communication campaigns".

SIMULATION GAME "TEMPTER"

- The online game was launched in 2021 specifically for the MSM community to:
 - raise awareness about HIV and prevention services;
 - engage more people in the services available in the PEPFAR regions;
 - with the intention of attracting players to the offline services of NGOs through the online point exchange program for a package of services.
- During the game, participants had the opportunity to transform into characters, experience different behavioral scenarios and see the possible consequences of their actions.

1



2



Distribution of oral HIV tests

>152 000 oral tests distributed

ONLINE

The promotion of a self-testing strategy and the active distribution of oral HIV tests were strategically important to reduce the volume of testing due to the COVID-19 lockdown. To this end, the project team is launching a new functionality on the prozdorovia.in.ua website will allow people to order home delivery of tests based on the results of the screening questionnaire.

- **prozdorovia.in.ua:** **>34 000** oral tests were distributed in safe boxes*.

** A safe box is a free prevention kit containing an oral HIV test, instructions, contact information for a social worker, useful brochures, a package of stickers, condoms and lubricants.*

- **oraltest.org.ua:** **~14 000** oral tests are distributed in safe boxes to the LGBTI community and their partners. Most of the oral tests were ordered from villages in small towns of Ukraine and were mostly ordered by MSM over the age of 35.

TESTOMATS:

>4 000 oral tests distributed

- focused on MSM, LGBT, general population;
- 10 testomats worked in 5 regions of the country in gynecological, narcological, polyclinic departments of hospitals, PHC, antenatal clinics, pharmacies, shopping centers, nightclubs and community centers for MSM.

COMMUNITY BASED NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:

~69 000 oral tests distributed.

Targeted assisted and unassisted delivery of oral tests or safe-box kits to people at high risk of HIV infection by NGO-based social workers or outreach routes. Tests are provided to index clients (sex and/or injecting) for their partners if the index client refuses to engage a partner in HIV counseling and testing services; directly to sex / injecting partners who refuse to receive an HIV testing service with a traditional HCF-based test or an NGO-based test; key groups at high risk of HIV infection who, for any reason, refuse assisted testing with a traditional test.

TESTING BY HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IN HCFS

activity introduced from 2022: **>31 000** oral tests distributed.

- Target groups for testing in HCFs: people at high risk of infection, who are difficult to involve in traditional testing, or who refuse to be tested with blood tests; war-affected population, in particular IDPs, victims of violence, civil defense workers (specialists involved in emergency response), partners of the military personnel of both sexes;
- also, a rapid oral test can be taken in HCFs for partners of HIV-positive clients who refuse to involve partners in index testing services; HIV-negative clients at high risk of transmission to their partners and social environment (PWID, MSM, RSS); partners of patients in STD and TB clinics, and family planning centers.

COMMUNITY-BASED TESTING

- Introduced to reach as many KG representatives as possible who, for various reasons, **avoid visiting medical facilities**.
- **It makes it possible to increase** the rate of early detection of HIV.
- Client focus is at the heart of the effectiveness of this **approach**.
- **Three leading strategies** that have consistently shown the best results in detecting PLHIV:
 - **index testing** is the most effective strategy;
 - **mobile testing:** rehabilitation centers, dormitories, places where people congregate (shopping centers, markets, bus lines, stops, etc.);
 - testing on **outreach routes** of KG representatives.
- A manual¹ for social workers and case managers on motivational interviewing of PLHIV was developed to shape adherence to ART.
- Taking into account the expansion of the project geography to new regions, community-based services include:
 - **index testing** for partners of PLHIV of both sexes who refuse to visit medical institutions or prefer home testing;
 - **distribution of self-testing kits** with the participation of trained social workers from among KGs and vulnerable groups, in particular IDPs, victims of gender-based violence and other war victims;
 - **retesting** of clients who have received a reactive self-test result;
 - support and assistance in accessing ART.



HIV DETECTION IN MEN AGED 30–50 YEARS

- Men aged 30–50 years are a cohort of people with a high level of HIV detection.
- Among all men, this age group is:
 - ~77 %** of those tested for HIV
 - ~91 %** of those who learned for the first time that they had HIV
- Among all people tested for HIV within the HealthLink project:
 - 41 %** of men aged 30–50 years who were tested
 - ~54 %** learned for the first time that they had HIV

In 2021, regional partners from 100% Life and APH within the HealthLink project jointly developed and implemented communication campaigns to increase motivation for HIV testing of the priority TA: men aged 35-50 years, as defined by project analysis. The organizations worked with employers to identify and actively engage male-dominated collectives.

In Chernihiv, CO "100% Life. Chernihiv" and NGO"Revival of the Nation" jointly developed and implemented the communication campaign "5 Life-Saving Tests ". Joint events, sharing of a promotional video on social media and local television, creation of a website with the screening tool of the HealthLink project. In Kropyvnytskyi, the Kirovohrad Regional Branch of the All-Ukrainian Charitable Organization "100% Life" and the Return to Life Charitable Foundation jointly implemented the "Test Your Own" campaign.

Regional communication campaigns with joint interaction of two partners confirmed that such synergy is an effective tool to achieve the main goals of any project — to benefit people. These regional campaigns were implemented through a communications mentoring program. Read more about the role of the mentoring program in the "Thoughtful Communications" section.



INTEGRATION OF HIV PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PREP) SERVICES IN THE LARGEST PEPFAR REGIONS

- Pre-exposure prophylaxis is prescribed to HIV-negative people who are at high risk of infection.
- Thanks to HealthLink, >1,700 people in Ukraine received PrEP for the first time.
- The PrEP component was implemented in Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kherson, Kyiv regions and in the city of Kyiv and included:
 - screening and recruitment of “PrEP candidates”;
 - patient navigation for medical services and PrEP prescription;
 - follow-up visits and social support for 3 months (optional).
- PrEP counseling is progressively integrated into the index testing process — both in HCFs and in communities.
- We are providing health facilities with the services of social workers to assist with PrEP counseling.
- A comprehensive national communication campaign was launched in 2021, with the travesty diva Monroe as its ambassador.
- The campaign disseminated knowledge about PrEP and communicated the value and importance of taking PrEP to people at high risk of HIV infection:

~830 000 people
reached by information

~420 000 people
reached through Instagram
bloggers

for more details, see the
section on Comprehensive
Communication Campaigns

■ Developed informational materials for customers, including:

- "Let's talk about PrEP?" brochure¹;
- "PrEP: Let's get to know each other better" brochure².



SYSTEMIC TRAINING OF REGIONAL PROJECT TEAMS

- **The most important participants** of the project were social and healthcare workers who provided:
 - pre-test informing and post-test counseling;
 - testing for HIV, as well as HCV and syphilis;
 - explanation of the algorithm of actions in case of detection of HIV+ status;
 - PrEP counseling in case of HIV-negative status, but with a high risk of infection;
 - psychological support to everyone who needed it;
 - forwarding or physical support to a doctor;
 - engaging customers in relevant care and support programs and harm reduction.
- Regional social and health workers were selected based on the **ability to work with risk groups** and the ability to provide services on a peer-to-peer basis.
- Particular attention was paid to improving the expert skills of workers of partner NGOs, since they are the key partners of the government at the local level in the provision of social services for PLHIV: such as communication, stigma and discrimination reduction, professional burnout of health workers, motivational counseling, the COVID-19 pandemic, etc.
- Trainings for family doctors in Lviv:
 - more than 500 primary care physicians in Lviv and Lviv oblast were trained in HIV testing and counseling and received appropriate BDP scores;
 - for 6 months, 20,288 people were tested in Lviv, which is 2.5 times more than last year;
 - we want everyone, and not only in the Lviv region, to have the opportunity to quickly, free of charge and confidentially find out their HIV status.
 - Partners: Your Family Doctor, the Second Medical Association of Lviv, Lviv City Council, CO "100% Life. Lviv."

THOUGHTFUL COMMUNICATIONS: PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY, NGO MENTORING PROGRAM

- **Since 2019**, project communications have been implemented on based on **an agreed communications strategy** that included activities at the national and regional levels. This helped to:
 - focus on specific target groups;
 - maximize efforts in the regions;
 - identify the right communication channels, effective messages and formats for their presentation.
- **In March 2020, a communications mentoring program** was launched for 27 regional partner organizations to help them communicate their work more effectively.
- The program was conducted by communication experts with experience in the public and business sectors, including Anastasia Bezverkha, Maryna Govorukhina, Anna Borshchevska, Olga Tymchenko, Nadia Chorna-Bohniak and others.



MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

- audit of communications in subgrantee organizations
- development of individual communication plans
- specialized training Consulting



SUPPORT FROM CO "100% LIFE"

- team ~50% of tasks and activities
- risk management
- effectiveness monitoring
- adjustments of tactics



CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT



PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In practice, NGOs have found that effective communication bears fruit: people know about you, come for testing and counseling. Thus, it has been possible to gain a well-established PR campaign with a lot of tools, skills, and knowledge.

Since 2020, regular training has been provided for NGOs: from training sessions held by mentors; through ProBono work with a digital agency; to a series of webinars by a communications mentor with practical studies on improving cooperation with HCFs, communication in war conditions, black-outs, etc.

During the mentoring program, anonymous surveys were conducted to understand the effectiveness of the program, the appropriateness of the tactics chosen, and the need for important further changes.

As a result, 90% of grantees believe that the quality and volume of NGO communications have changed significantly as a result of working with mentors. Most NGOs:

- changed their approach to communications in general;
- reviewed their TA and their behavior;
- improved the quality of marketing materials and the level of copywriting;
- improved the narrative and visual part of the content on social media;
- added more graphics, videos, and personal stories;
- increased the level of presence in regional media.

Communications campaigns

A COMPREHENSIVE DIGITAL CAMPAIGN TO ENGAGE PRIORITY TARGET AUDIENCES (MEN) IN HIV TESTING

- Priority TA (defined by the project analysis): men aged 35–50 years (heterosexual men and men who have sex with men) — **a cohort of people with a high level of HIV detection.**
- The campaign, targeted at the **MSM community and heterosexual men**, aimed to raise awareness about HIV testing and promote oral self-testing on the online platforms prozdorovia.in.ua and oraltest.org.ua.
- In 2021, at the Effie Awards Ukraine, the most prestigious marketing awards ceremony in Ukraine, the **campaign won two** gold awards in the categories "Reaching the target audience in media campaigns" and "Positive Change — Social Good: Non-Profit", one **silver** award in the category "Low-budget campaigns" and one **bronze** award in the category "Non-profit organizations. NEW".
- Banner ads, videos.
- **5 000 000** people saw the campaign.
- **>2 500** oral HIV tests distributed through prozdorovia.in.ua.
- **60%** of users of the prozdorovia.in.ua website were men.
- At the same time, 75% of the test customers were women and almost every second customer chose 2 tests — for themselves and their partner.
- For 3 months, **60,000** people watched videos that were developed as part of the campaign, and distributed on the most popular web resources among men.

NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PREP CAMPAIGN "WHEN MASKS ARE OFF", THE AMBASSADOR OF WHICH WAS THE TRAVESTY DIVA MONROE

- In this way, we disseminated knowledge about PrEP and communicated the value and importance of taking it among people at high risk of HIV infection:
- **~840 000** people were reached online.
- **~420 000** people were reached through community leaders and social media influencers.
- Monroe's video can be viewed at prozdorovia.in.ua/prep/.¹
- To find out where to get PrEP: prozdorovia.in.ua/de-projty-test/?prep.²



COMPREHENSIVE #OUR_SECRET CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE HIV TESTING IN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES IN 2023-2024

- The main idea of the campaign was to build trust between the patient and the doctor through #our_secret. In the campaign, we showed that it's okay to feel insecure, ashamed, and other similar feelings. And it's okay to tell the doctor about it. Because all this will remain a secret between the doctor and the patient.
- 50 project HCFs, 8 NGOs ("100% of LIFE" and AH), 314 health workers were involved.
- Tools: digital advertising, involvement of influencers, provision of materials for HCFs (signs and posters), popularization of the online platform prozdorovia.in.ua with a section on testing sites.
- **>750 000** people were reached through bloggers
- **>140 000** doctors and patients were reached through social media profile communities.
- **95 000** users on prozdorovia.in.ua.

WORLD HEPATITIS DAY CAMPAIGN

- Dissemination of visual materials through social media.
- **>290 000** people saw the campaign.

**NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE CAMPAIGN U=U (UNDETECTABLE EQUALS UNTRANSMITTABLE)
IN ORDER TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE U=U PRINCIPLE AMONG HIV-POSITIVE PATIENTS
AND MEDICAL STAFF**

- 32 influencers, including doctors, were engaged through Instagram. Socially responsible influencers addressed the issue of discrimination against HIV-positive people and talked about ART in simple terms. Reach: >380,000 users.
- TA geotargeting in advertising messages — based on keywords related to TA, and based on the analysis of their content, within a radius of 1 km around AIDS Centers and ART sites; thanks to geotargeting within 1 month: >2,000 unique users in the "How to live with HIV" section on prozdorovia.in.ua; >130,000 users saw the campaign visuals.
- Online training course on the platform of the NHSU Academy "What a PHC doctor should know to accompany HIV patients" academy.nszu.gov.ua/course/view.php?id=174¹, developed by the Health-Link project together with the teams of the Academy of the National Health Service of Ukraine, the Public Health Center and with high-quality assistance in the implementation of the MI Health Agency. As of 2024, >5,000 doctors have registered for the course, of which ~3,500 doctors received their certificates. Upon successful completion of the course, the doctor receives a certificate equivalent to 5 points of BPD! Thanks to the course, primary care doctors receive information within the framework of the national U=U campaign and acquire skills in the management of HIV patients.



Unique digital products

PROZDOROVIA.IN.UA

The first Ukrainian-language website with key information on HIV and public health. It has:

- the largest developed database of HIV testing and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) sites throughout Ukraine;
- during the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to maintain the popularization of HIV testing, the project team launched a new functionality that allows to order a free oral HIV test at home based on the results of a screening questionnaire to determine the risk of infection;
- a library of thematic materials was created that will be useful for healthcare workers, NGO specialists, PLHIV and the general public;
- **700 000 website visitors.**

HELP24.ORG.UA¹

The Help24 website, which was created as part of the HCF ranking project, has expanded its activities with the support of other donors and is a portal for free online services: here you can get psychological or legal help, health advice, and order the HelpBox, a free set of products to help you have safer sex and reduce the harm from drug use:

>5 100

egistered patients;

>3 200

healthcare counseling sessions provided;

>4 400

HelpBoxes ordered.



What else is there on the website?

- **Information about HCFs, healthcare professionals and services** available at relevant facilities.
- **Hospital and doctor rankings** based on an independent rating system.
- **Free online support groups** (currently only for MSM and women living with HIV) are a safe space for communication, dating, mutual support, and advice from specialized professionals.

ITC «DATACHECK UKRAINE»

ITC «DATACHECK UKRAINE» is a system that provides means of accounting for counseling and services, as well as control and confirmation by participants (clients) of counseling or provision of services. The key declared feature of the system is the high accuracy and transparency of the data obtained through the social support projects implemented for clients and various target groups. Data, respectively program indicators, are checked/verified, which increases the reliability of program monitoring data for service provision and increases the percentage of verified services.

The object of automation of ITC “DATACHECK UKRAINE” are the processes of project implementation, which provide for direct provision of services to their final beneficiaries (clients) by the NGO subcontractors of CO 100% LIFE within the framework of project implementation, as well as their accounting and reporting.

The data on the services provided are entered directly during or at the end of the service provision until the end of the direct contact with the client. When entering the service provided by the social worker into the system, the method of verification of the fact of providing the service is selected.

The following ways of verification of the fact of service provision are available in the system:

- via SMS
- by phone call
- entry by the documenter
- verification by the documenter
- without verification

ITC «DATACHECK UKRAINE» is implemented all over Ukraine and **50** NGOs are involved in it. In 2022-2023, within the framework of the HealthLink project, about **126 000** services were provided, of which 16.7% were confirmed by a call from the client, **12.2%** - by SMS, **11.6%** - by the documenter, **52.2%** - without verification, **7.3%** of the total number were entered into the system by the documenter (with a preliminary check of the service).

In 2020-2021, within the framework of the HealthLink project, a separate module for appeals and complaints was implemented, which made it possible to

- self-registration of the complainant in the complainant's account;
- self-registration of complaints/appeals;
- implement a catalog of complaints and navigation tools and easy search;
- have the operator's workplace (web application), through which it is possible to process or redirect complaints / appeals;
- create statistical and operational reports.

In 2021–2023, the system recorded 13,739 appeals, 94% of which received assistance from paralegals and social workers with a positive result.

ORALTEST.ORG.UA¹

oraltest.org.ua is a website with key information on HIV, which was launched in 2019 **specifically to enable the ordering of safe boxes for the MSM community**, as well as representatives of the LGBTI community and their partners. **Thanks to the 24/7 access to the website** and the increased level of confidentiality, the ordering of safe boxes has made it possible **to increase the coverage of MSM** and expand access to testing for representatives of the most difficult-to-reach target groups, namely **people from small towns and villages**, as well as MSM over the age of 35.

The website can be used to:

- learn important information about HIV and oral testing
- request and receive counseling
- assess one's risk of infection with HIV, hepatitis, or syphilis

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION PRODUCTS

- **A library of thematic materials** for healthcare professionals, PLHIV and the general public.
- **A guide with tips for healthcare professionals:** to better understand their patients and influence behavioral change in HIV prevention and treatment;
- **A guide with tips for healthcare professionals:** to help them plan communication activities wisely and interact effectively with target audiences.

LARGE-SCALE STUDIES

- **The Stigma Index of People Living with HIV in Ukraine 2.0.**¹
- **Study of communication processes related to HIV infection.**²
- Assessment of nurses' knowledge and willingness to provide HIV services.
- The impact of the war on primary care facilities providing HIV services for the implementation of self-testing within the HealthLink project.

ONLINE COURSES FOR HCWS

- Online course for doctors **"What a PHC doctor needs to know to accompany HIV patients":** the course helps to master new knowledge about HIV in order to provide effective support to patients, created in partnership with the NHSU Academy and PHC.
- **Online course for nurses:** enables them to improve their professional level and quality of medical care for PLHIV.
- **Online course on mental health:**³ is available on the YouTube platform of the Public Health Center in times of emergency.



MENTAL HEALTH: THE “TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF” ANIMATION PROJECT

Animated psychological videos with mental health tips have been placed on the website in the dedicated section on mental health prozdorovia.in.ua/mentalne-zdorov-ia/¹.

Created with the support of the HealthLink project by the team "Your Family Doctor" and director Anastasia Falileeva. Ukrainian psychologists specializing in this topic worked on each video. The first videos were created in cooperation with psychologists Tetiana Vehera, Vanui Martirosyan, Oleksii Karachynskyi and Andrii Kozinchuk. These are short videos in which experts speak clearly about the problems and conditions in which Ukrainians are currently living. In each video, viewers will hear answers to everyday questions: "How to deal with the feeling of guilt for being safe?", "What to do when you lose control?", "How to calm a baby under stress?", etc. Specialists explain exactly what is happening to our mental and physical health and offer simple practices to help.



HIGH-QUALITY TEAM BUILDING

The low staff turnover for 6 years and the high efficiency of the planned indicators, even in the face of rapidly changing external circumstances, underline once again that an **effective HR component plays a major role in the success of the project implementation.**

What is important?

Cohesion, regular coordination meetings and training

Being prepared for any changes, challenges, complex and unpredictable circumstances

MOBILITY AND FLEXIBILITY:

HEALTHLINK'S RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES POSED BY COVID-19 AND FULL-SCALE WAR

- **Continuous production of ideas and practices depending on new challenges, requirements of the time and circumstances** (the COVID-19 epidemic, Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, the emergence of local problems in the regions, etc.).
- **Development of innovations and changes in formats taking into account current contexts.**
- **Rapid learning** — learning new things quickly and teaching others.

COVID-19: RESPONDING TO PANDEMIC OUTBREAK

- The KG **retained the ability to receive the necessary services** in compliance with all security measures.
- For example, in 2020, **247,000 customers were tested** out of a planned 244,000.
- Activities that were affected by the lockdown restrictions were **adjusted and reformatted** as quickly as possible:
 - training sessions went online
 - kcounseling became available remotely
 - drug supplies were delivered using mobile laboratories

- **A series of thematic information materials** were developed on COVID-19 vaccination, proper disinfection of healthcare facilities, and special recommendations for PLHIV.
- **Combined COVID-19 and HIV testing.**
- **Personal protective equipment** was purchased for organizations and institutions working with vulnerable groups.

With USAID support, we were able to provide¹

- 20 stand-alone oxygen generation stations for flagship COVID-19 hospitals throughout the country;
- 19 portable blood gas analyzers for patients on mechanical ventilation;
- 4 centrifuges, ice machines and consumables for the PHC reference laboratory;
- strategic and technical support to government agencies such as the Ministry of Health, NHSU, and PHC

And we also implemented:

- media projects reaching >8 million people;
- a campaign for health workers on the importance of immunization (reaching >2 million people, 700 doctors);
- the "Take care of yourself" campaign on post-COVID depression (8 animated videos, >4 million views).



WORKING DURING THE FULL-SCALE WAR

Read about how the HealthLink project worked in the context of a full-scale war on the website prozdorovia.in.ua in the section "Work in conditions of war" (for example, for 2023, the Ukrainian-language¹ and English-language² versions).

Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused a devastating health crisis and mass migration of people. Active search for new HIV cases has decreased significantly due to security concerns and staff relocation. The regions of Kherson, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya and Mykolaiv suffered the most from shelling by the Russian army. In addition, the war affected logistical infrastructure and supply chains, resulting in shortages of essential medicines, especially ARVs.

For more than 2 years of full-scale war:

- **69 %** of the planned PLHIV detection rate was achieved;
- **90 %** of newly diagnosed patients started treatment;
- **81 %** of newly detected cases were tested in healthcare facilities;
- the total number of project HCFs gradually decreased on a quarterly basis, reaching 217 facilities at the end of the reporting period.

How did the partner NGOs work?

- The war forced them to adapt the process of providing HIV services to a new context: PLHIV and KG faced urgent humanitarian problems and additional difficulties.
- NGOs continued to provide access to HIV testing, treatment and prevention, and other services that emerged during the full-scale war.
- During the first year of the full-scale war, 6,498 clients received additional services.
- Visits were made to Christian centers, probation centers, shelters, etc. to recruit clients for HIV testing.



For the contractor: add a Recovery component — as a separate item and at the same time as part of the work in the context of the full-scale war.

THE HEALTHLINK.RECOVERY INITIATIVE AIMS TO RESTORE and expand health services in the regions affected by the full-scale invasion. An annual summary in Ukrainian¹ and English² on the website prozdorovia.in.ua in the section "Work in conditions of war".

The main goals are:

- Improving the health status of the entire population (with a focus on non-communicable diseases — NCDs).
- Increase the number of re-signed declarations among IDPs.
- Ensure further strengthening of primary health care in the context of war.
Main beneficiaries: Ministry of Health of Ukraine, NHSU, HCA of Dnipropetrovsk region, 14 health care facilities, including 72 outpatient clinics in Kamianske and Pavlohrad districts.

Key outcomes of the Initiative:

- management and clinical training was provided to the management and medical staff of the targeted HCFs;
- more than 50 items of medical and non-medical equipment, medical supplies, and vehicles were purchased for targeted health facilities;
- a pilot of the certification program for advanced training for senior positions of the specialized level "Modern Tools for Management of a Health Care Facility on the basis of the Bohomoletz National Medical University".
- development of a course for health care teams "Communication with people traumatized by war", which will soon be available on the platform of the NHSU Academy;
- two information campaigns were conducted - on the prevention of cardiovascular diseases and on the re-signing of health declarations in the current place of residence (with a focus on internally displaced persons).

DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE OF UKRAINE WEBSITE

Since the creation of the National Health Service of Ukraine and the launch of the healthcare reform in Ukraine, the NHSU website has been focused on the most urgent needs: signing contracts with service providers. At the same time, it was difficult for the general public to use, as it had an incomprehensible structure of information and a complicated interface. Thanks to the initiative of CO "100% LIFE" and the capabilities of the HealthLink project, and subsequently thanks to the HealthLink.Recovery initiative, the NHSU website has been completely updated, becoming understandable, structured and user-friendly, with extensive explanatory materials for patients and, most importantly, free state-guaranteed health services can now be found nearby.



1



2

Data-driven project

A decision-making strategy that includes the analysis of data from multiple sources:

- an internal database of customers and services provided. Results are visualized in PowerBI on a daily and quarterly basis;
- internal sociological and other studies (evaluation of the self-testing model, testing on the initiative of a medical professional, etc.);
- feedback from NGOs and hospitals (a quasi-research);
- national research and evaluations (Stigma Index, bio-behavioral studies, etc.);
- academic research (scientific articles, meta-analyses, systematic reviews, etc.);
- open data (NHSU, PHC, eHealth).



International project team visits to share HIV response experiences

The HealthLink team presented the results of the Ukrainian study within the Stigma 2.0 Index during the PLHIV Stigma INDEX 2.0 event in Istanbul, Turkey. It is the EECA REGIONAL REPORT, including key challenges and identifying new potential interventions to advocate for the reduction of stigma and discrimination at national and international levels.

At the 24th International AIDS Conference in Montreal, Canada, the HealthLink team presented innovative tools and project results.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the PEPFAR program in 2023, representatives of the NGO "100% LIFE" were invited by the White House Administration to the George W. Bush Presidential Center to present their experience in fighting the HIV epidemic under emergency conditions. This was a recognition of the amazing results of the work of CO "100% LIFE" as one of the key partners of the PEPFAR program over the years.

There were also many other visits.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF REGIONAL PARTNERS (NGOS) IN THE HEALTHLINK PROJECT

- Continuity of service, including during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the context of the full-scale war.
- Continuation of a positive trend in the detection of new HIV cases despite adverse external factors (loss of HCFs due to occupation, population migration).
- Openness and interest of HCFs in cooperating with NGOs.
- Acquisition of experience by HCFs in the use of oral tests through the innovative approaches of the project.
- Applying a comprehensive and patient-centered approach to providing services to clients.
- Provision of ART and essential drugs.
- Providing ART to PLHIV evacuated to other regions of the country and abroad.
- Providing humanitarian assistance to people living with HIV and other beneficiaries.
- Cooperation with regional/local self-governing bodies, active participation in coordination councils.
- Providing training for health workers.
- Improving detection of new HIV cases among index partners.
- Providing health facilities with the necessary supplies, equipment, and information materials.
- Participating in the development of relevant internal regulations in HCFs, especially regarding patient routes.
- Established social media channels to communicate with healthcare professionals to disseminate important information about HIV and other diseases, as well as other announcements.
- Established collaboration between medical and social workers.

- Ensuring the interest of medical coordinators and HCF management in achieving the project's goals.
- Providing psychological and legal support to project clients.
- Providing continuous technical support visits to HCFs.
- Involving more departments in health facilities in HIV testing.
- Ensured coordination actions for IDPs: restoration of documents (passport of a Ukrainian citizen), referral to specific health specialists, assistance in signing health declaration with family doctors.
- Initiation of ART; 85% of clients who learned their HIV status through the project started ART.
- Conducting HIV testing campaigns.
- Participated in a television program on the importance of HIV testing.



HEALTH LINK

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