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## *HERA – Health Education and Research Association*

### **Case report from The FYR MACEDONIA**



**NGO Social Contracting**  
**HERA – Case Report from The FYR Macedonia**

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# 1. ABOUT HERA

HERA was established in February 2000 in Skopje, as a volunteers' movement of medical students with the mission to improve access to HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI) prevention among young people and psycho-social support for people living with HIV. Being part of international schools helped HERA volunteers in 2000 to set up its own peer education team and to engage in non-formal educational activities

in and out of schools. In addition, with the support from UNICEF (first funded project), HERA opened the first national info line for HIV/STI prevention. A year after, an HIV testing and counselling (HTC) programme was launched and it included psycho-social support for people living with HIV, broadening HERA's activities beyond the provision of HIV information.



*Doctor of medicine delivering services to a client at HERA's Youth Friendly Centre 'I Want to Know' - Vodno, Skopje*

## 2. HERA'S HIV PROJECTS BEFORE THE TIME OF GF GRANTS IN THE FYR MACEDONIA

The beginnings of HERA are related with the introduction of peer education and info line counselling on HIV/STIs. It was HERA that started promoting HTC in 2001 by organizing roundtables with service providers and by introducing pre/post-test counselling services in its own facilities. In 2003 HERA launches the community lead HIV info line for MSM. Moreover HERA became member of the

National Multi-Sectorial Group and took part in the development of the first National HIV Strategy. In 2004 HERA started an advocacy project on procurement of antiretrovirals with the purpose to establish a national revolving fund at the Health Insurance Fund. The annual average turnover of the organisation before the start of GF programme was between \$ 77,000 and 110,000.



*The entrance of the Youth Friendly Centre 'I Want to Know' – Vodno, Skopje*

**Table 1: HIV projects of NGO HERA before GF grants in The FYR Macedonia**

<b>Project title</b>	<b>Target groups</b>	<b>Level of coverage</b>	<b>Start date</b>	<b>End date</b>	<b>Available budget</b>	<b>Source of financing</b>
1. Educational TV show for HIV prevention among young people	Youth	National	Mar 2000	Dec 2000	\$ 1,500	Agency for Youth and Sport
2. HIV/AIDS SOS telephone line	General population, PLHIV	National	Feb 2000	Dec 2000	\$ 15,600	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
3. Establishing network of peer educators for HIV prevention in high schools	Youth in schools	National	Jan 2001	Dec 2001	\$ 5,550	Institute for Sustainable Communities; Agency for Youth and Sport
4. HIV counselling services and support group for people living with HIV	PLHIV families, partners of PLHIV	Skopje municipality	Jan 2001	Dec 2003	\$ 84,090	Norwegian Church Aid
5. HIV prevention, SOS telephone help line on HIV and sexual reproductive health; campaign for promotion of HIV testing and World AIDS day	General population, PLHIV	National	Jan 2002	Dec 2003	\$ 74,100	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
6. Regional HIV media awareness project in The FYR Macedonia, Bosnia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	Youth	Regional	Jan 2002	Dec 2002	\$ 31,266	Canadian International Development Agency
7. Peer educational workshops on HIV and STI prevention	Youth in schools	Skopje municipality	Jan 2003	Dec 2003	\$ 2,794	Agency for Youth and Sport
8. Coordinated activity for development of multi-sectorial commission for HIV and info telephone line/ counselling services for men who have sex with men	Policy makers, NGOs, MSM	National	Jan 2003	Dec 2003	\$ 30,529	Institute for Sustainable Communities; Population Services International, Romania
9. Risk net regional HIV prevention project	MSM	Regional	Jan 2003	Dec 2004	\$ 31,400	Population Services International, Romania
10. Improving treatment and care for people living with HIV in The FYR of Macedonia	Decision makers	National	Jan 2004	Dec 2004	\$ 22,268	Institute for Sustainable Communities
11. Support of the revolving fund for ARV treatment	Decision makers	National	Jan 2004	December 2004	\$ 13,731	Norwegian Church Aid
12. HIV/STI counselling services and improving the quality of life for people living with HIV	PLHIV and their families	Skopje municipality	Jan 2004	Dec 2004	\$ 74,204	Norwegian Church Aid
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$ 387,032</b>	

### 3. HERA'S HIV PROJECTS UNDER THE GF GRANTS IN THE FYR OF MACEDONIA

In 2005 in the Clinic for Infectious Diseases an HIV Counselling Centre was opened by HERA, with the aim to deliver free of charge HTC, day care, support and treatment of people living with HIV. With continued efforts in ensuring participation of men who have sex with men in the national HIV response, the EGAL – Equality of Gay and Lesbian with the mission of HIV/STI prevention among LGBT community was established with the support from HERA. Since 2005

HERA together with the Institute for Public Health is responsible for overall national coordination and capacity building of HTC programme and in 2007 HERA introduced mobile HTC for key populations, with active involvement of 14 local NGOs. In 2009 HERA was selected to administrate the CCM. As from 2011 HERA has been strategically involved in building institutional capacities of PLHIV through the formation of non-formal group Stronger Together.

**Table 2: HIV projects of NGO HERA funded by the GF during the period November 1, 2004 – August 31, 2015**

Project title	Target groups	Level of coverage	Start date	End date	Available budget
1. Building a coordinated national response to tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS in The FYR Macedonia, which included: HIV prevention among MSM, Improving the approach and quality of HTC, HIV prevention among young people, and Improving treatment and support to people living with HIV, in partnership with Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile Conditions	Youth, MSM, PWID, SW, Prisoners, Roma, PLHIV, Teachers	National	Jan 2005	Dec 2007	\$ 393,332
2. Keeping HIV Prevalence Low in The FYR Macedonia: Scaling-up and focusing Interventions, which included outreach HTC among key and vulnerable populations	Youth, MSM, PWID, SW, Prisoners, Roma	National	Apr 2008	Dec 2010	\$ 306,242
3. Sustainable and community oriented approach to HIV response for key populations in Republic of Macedonia, which included: HTC and STI testing among key populations, Youth friendly services among key populations, and Strengthening of the people living with HIV community	MSM, SW, PWID, Prisoners	National	Jan 2012	Dec 2014	\$ 411,192
4. Secretariat of Country Coordinative Mechanism to fight HIV and tuberculosis	Government, NGOs, Private sector, FBOs	National	Apr 2010	March 2016	\$ 439,681
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$ 1,550,447</b>

## 4. HERA'S NON-GF HIV PROJECTS DURING THE PERIOD 2004-2015

During the period of 2004 – 2015 other non-GF related projects on HIV focused primarily on people living with HIV initiatives, including provision of psycho-

social support, building capacities of non-formal group of PLHIV as advocates and peer counsellors as well as advocacy projects for access to medicine.

**Table 3: Non-GF HIV projects of HERA during the period November 1, 2004-August 31, 2015**

Project title	Target groups	Level of coverage	Start date	End date	Available budget	Source of financing
1. Peer educational workshop for prevention of HIV and STI's	Youth	National	Jan 2005	Dec 2006	\$ 3,249	Agency for Youth and Sport
2. Youth, sexual health and HIV in the Balkans – protection-prevention-provision	Youth	Regional	Jan 2005	Dec 2005	\$ 64,655	International Planned Parenthood Federation
3. Youth friendly services, SOS help line of HIV and peer education	Youth, general population	National	Jan 2005	Dec 2005	\$ 12,538	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
3. Services for counselling of people living with HIV – HTC at the Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile Conditions	PLHIV and their families, General populations	National	Jan 2005	Dec 2006	\$ 108,603	Norwegian Church Aid
4. Creative methods of peer education – photography	Youth	Municipality Skopje	Jan 2005	Dec 2005	\$ 4,227	United States Agency for International Development
5. Capacity building on HIV/ STI prevention among health professionals, local community NGO's and especially vulnerable young people within the UNICEF Area Based Development project	Roma Young People Service providers NGOs	National	Jan 2006	Dec 2006	\$ 49,563	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
6. Roundtable on HIV for the members of the parliament of The FYR Macedonia	Members of Parliament	National	Jan 2007	Dec 2007	\$ 8,000	European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development
7. HIV raising-awareness campaign among young people in Skopje	Youth	Municipality	Jan 2008	Dec 2008	\$ 6,640	City of Skopje
8. Building capacities of the NGOs and local communities in the field of HIV and peer education	NGOs	National	Jan 2008	Dec 2008	\$ 1,200	Agency for Youth and Sport

**Table 3: Non-GF HIV projects of HERA during the period November 1, 2004-August 31, 2015 (contd.)**

<b>Project title</b>	<b>Target groups</b>	<b>Level of coverage</b>	<b>Start date</b>	<b>End date</b>	<b>Available budget</b>	<b>Source of financing</b>
9. Care, support and capacity building of people living with HIV	PLHIV	National	Jan 2009	Dec 2009	\$ 4,615	International Planned Parenthood Federation
10. First Y-PEER training of peer educators in sex work and HIV prevention	Sex workers	National	Jan 2009	Dec 2009	\$ 13,000	United Nations Populations Fund
11. Youth training of trainers modules on sexual and reproductive health	Youth NGOs	National	Jan 2009	Dec 2009	\$ 9,030	International Planned Parenthood Federation
12. HIV prevention card for young women and girls	Policy makers	National	Nov 2010	Dec 2010	\$ 4,698	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
13. HIV peer education	Youth	National	Jan 2010	Dec 2010	\$ 12,724	Institute for Public Health
14. Nothing About Us Without Us – Strengthening people living with HIV community in The FYR Macedonia	PLHIV	National	Jan 2010	Dec 2011	\$ 14,694	International Planned Parenthood Federation
15. HIV prevention card for men who have sex with men	MSM, Decision makers	National	Sept 2010	Dec 2010	\$ 10,000	International Planned Parenthood Federation
16. Building a stronger voice of the people living with HIV community	PLHIV	National	15 Jan 2011	31 Dec 2011	\$ 5,090	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
17. Ensuring long-term availability of quality HIV treatment The FYR Macedonia	PLHIV	National	1 Dec 2011	31 Dec 2014	\$ 30,894	Open Society Foundation
18. Strengthening capacities of the CCM in linking sexual and reproductive health and HIV	CCM	National	28 May 2012	31 July 2012	\$ 11,821	International Planned Parenthood Federation
19. Concert for solidarity and support for people living with HIV	PLHIV	National	Nov 2012	31 Jan 2013	\$ 3,200	United Nations Development Programme
20. Community-based research-men having sex with men	MSM	National	Feb 2012	1 July 2012	\$ 23,852	United Nations Development Programme
21. Improving social care and support of people living with HIV in The FYR Macedonia	PLHIV, Social workers	National	1 July 2012	31 Dec 2013	\$ 12,891	International Planned Parenthood Federation
22. Universal access beyond the Global Fund – continuing the efforts for all	Decision Makers, NGOs	National	1 Jan 2014	31 Dec 2015	\$ 17,088	International Planned Parenthood Federation
23. Small group discussions with young key populations to document access and availability on HIV and sexual reproductive health services	Decision makers, Key populations	National	1 July 2015	30 Sept 2015	\$ 4,896	International Planned Parenthood Federation
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$ 437,168</b>	



## 5. HERA'S EXPERIENCES WITH ACCESSING FUNDING FOR HIV PROJECTS FROM DOMESTIC RESOURCES

Most of the domestic funding sources for HIV before the GF projects in The FYR Macedonia have been limited to prevention among young people. From 2008 HERA started more actively to advocate for assessing funds for HIV projects at national level, especially for youth targeted programmes. HERA was involved in the participatory process of drafting the national HIV strategic programme. This resulted in recognition of young people in the 2009 National HIV Programme and moreover a budget was allocated for HIV education. In 2012, an inter-party parliamentary group on HIV was established by HERA as an advocacy strategy for improved domestic financing for HIV programmes. In 2013, with the contribution of the members of the Parliament, a public hearing was held

in the parliament of The FYR Macedonia, resulted in the 2014 budget for ARVs increased for 190% compared to the budget available in 2012. In 2014 in partnership with 15 NGOs, HERA established Platform on Sustainability of Services for HIV Prevention and Support with the mission to advocate for providing financial sustainability of HIV services beyond GF and their integration into the national and local self-governments programmes. As a result of the activities of the Platform, the 2015 HIV/AIDS Government programme recognized the need for accreditation of NGOs (drafting standards and setting up a registry of civil associations), including budgeting 14 NGOs to carry out HIV prevention activities among key populations.



*Training of peer educators organised by HERA*

## 6. LESSONS LEARNED AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Changing the culture among decision makers in involving NGOs in social contracting for HIV prevention is a significant policy challenge due to fact that public health structure recognizes only health institutions established by the government as eligible recipients of funds for implementation of preventive activities. Ensuring legal recognition of NGOs as potential recipient of government financing requires intensified and constant dialogue and efforts, as well as building capacities of government health authorities in order to address the lack of adequate and transparent selection procedures and human resource capacities within MoH. NGOs should demonstrate proactive role in the process of annual planning of government HIV programmes. Joining the forces of various NGOs, including community-based organisations, is important first step in shaping advocacy strategy in order to ensure better legitimacy in the policy dialogue for domestic resource mobilisation.

Members of parliament can have important role in the process of advocating for annual health budget

programming in order to ensure NGOs recognition as Government implementing partner in HIV and thus involvement of members of parliament should be considered as important resource mobilisation strategy.

It is necessary to establish a wide and capacitated network of NGOs dealing on HIV and apply different advocacy strategies, through involvement of members of parliament, influencers of decision makers in public administration, media, private sector, to ensure NGOs can benefit from domestic resources for HIV. Invest in capacity building of NGOs in setting up social enterprises (i.e. condom social marketing) could be a resource mobilisation strategy for sustainable HIV funding for prevention service. It is also necessary to build capacities of the public administration for setting up transparent administrative procedures for the selection of NGOs in social contracting for HIV prevention.



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