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HIV testing to become more accessible and easier for MSM and Trans people in Armenia

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Артем Мовсесян

Координатор проектов “Право на здоровье” и “Профилактика и повышение осведомленности о ВИЧ и СПИД среди МСМ и Транс людей в регионах Лори, Ширак и в городе Ереване”

Гуманитарная НПО “Новое Поколение”

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«New Generation» Humanitarian NGO

''New Generation'' Humanitarian NGO (NGNGO) is a noncommercial social organization established in 1998 to promote the protection of human rights and advocacy of the society, to provide material and non-material assistance to private individuals and legal bodies, and to carry out various effective social initiatives, including support in the implementation of the obligations assumed by the Republic of Armenia under 1975, Helsinki Final Act of Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, and 1948, UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the international agreements accepted within their framework, as well as other international legal acts on Human Rights Protection. The Organization has a clearly defined structure, scope of activities, and strategy. NGNGO has realized numerous projects within its activity. It is one of the most active organizations in Armenia not only because of the variety of the projects, but also as it has the ability to cover all of Armenia. It has a qualified full staff and technical developed equipment. The organization office is situated in Yerevan.

Mission: To promote equality of rights, justice, diversity, dignity and well-being through protection of human rights and advocacy.

The Strategic Goals of the Organization:

- Protection of human rights and advocacy;
- Ensuring access to health care services and promotion of healthy life style to beneficiary communities;
- Capacity building and empowerment, NGOs and informal groups dealing with their issues;
- Social support.

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STATISTICS

From 1988 to 2018, April 30, 3036 cases of HIV infection were registered among the citizens of the Republic of Armenia, and 128 of the cases were detected in 2018.

The main modes of HIV transmission in RA are through heterosexual practices (68%) and injecting drug use (23%). Additionally, there are also registered cases through homosexual practices (3,4%), as well as mother-to-child HIV transmission(1.5%) and transmission through blood (0.1%) in Armenia.

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STATISTICS

Allocation of HIV cases registered in the Republic of Armenia is as follows

Transmission through heterosexual practices	68,0%
Transmission through injecting drug use	22,0%
Transmission through homosexual practices	3,4%
Mother-to-child transmission	1,5%
Transmission through blood	0,1%
Unknown	4,3%

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BACKGROUND

The first case of HIV transmission through homosexual contact was registered in Armenia in 2000. After that projects on HIV prevention among MSM started to be implemented in the country.

However, in terms of numbers, the projects did not give tangible results as testing was done only at the National Center for AIDS Prevention and separate medical institutions.

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ADVOCACY

Seeing the situation and realizing that the insufficient access to testing only increases the risk for HIV, “New Generation” Humanitarian NGO organized and conducted advocacy campaign on implementing community-based rapid testing for HIV among MSM and trans people.

Advocacy actions continued about a year and on August, 2017, community-based testing among MSM and trans people was launched at the NGO office.

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GOALS OF THE INNOVATIVE APPROACH

- More confidential conditions for testing
- NGO capacity building on community-based testing for HIV
- Identification of more HIV-positive cases by reaching new and hard-to-reach MSM and trans beneficiaries

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TESTING

The testing services are provided daily, even during days off and holidays, from 10 a.m. to 12 a.m.

The testing is done by trained peer to peer consultants of “New Generation” Humanitarian NGO.

The first results were already visible after 2 months.

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Indicator Variation Analysis before and after the innovation (2016-March, 2018)

Number of tested MSM and Trans persons until August, 2017	1683
Number of new HIV cases until August, 2017	15
Number of tested MSM and Trans persons since August, 2017 to March, 2018 by rapid tests through blood	694
Number of tested MSM and Trans persons since August, 2017 to March, 2018 rapid tests through saliva	569
Number of new HIV cases since August, 2017 to March, 2018 by rapid tests through blood	6
Number of new HIV cases since August, 2017 to March, 2018 by rapid tests through saliva	12

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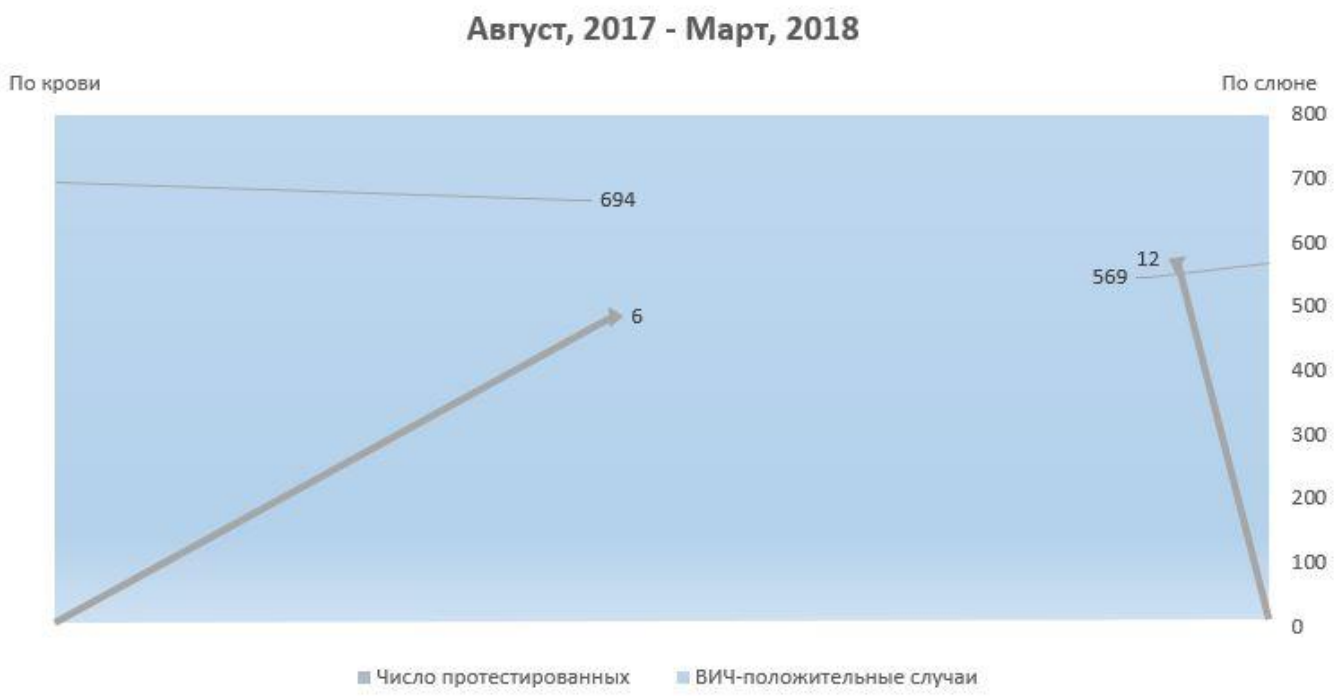
Comparison Analysis for the period of August, 2017 – March, 2018



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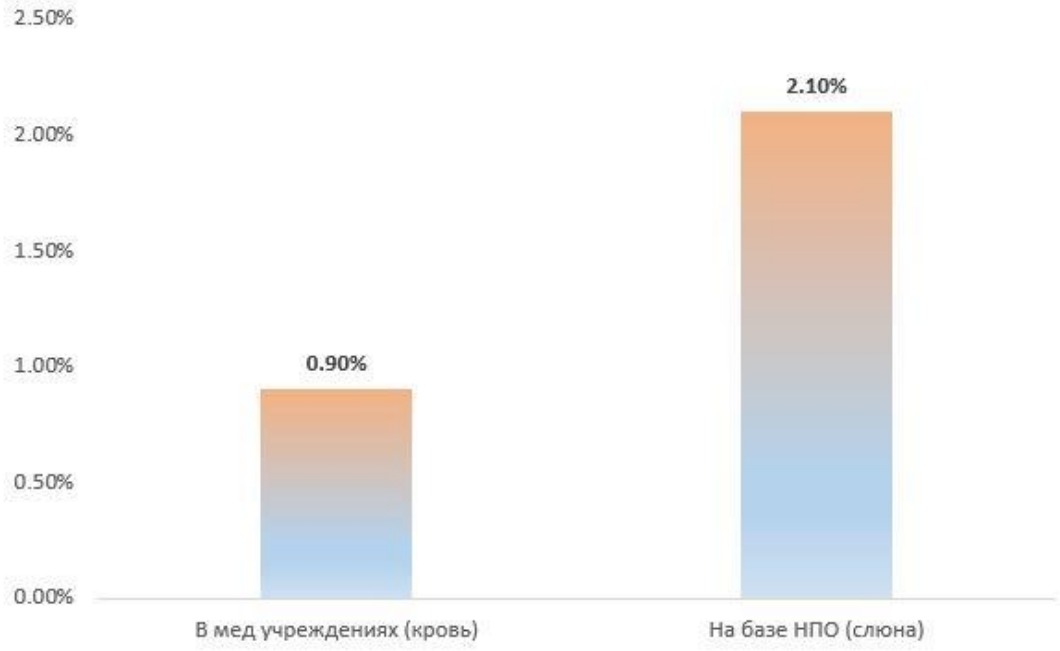
Analysis of registration of new HIV cases in % comparison



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CONCLUSION

Within the period of August 2017 to March 2018, 569 beneficiaries underwent oral mucosal transudate rapid testing for HIV.

12 positive cases were detected.

Thus, community based testing is an important step in Armenia to define new HIV-positive cases among MSM and trans people.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- “Test kit order to home” service establishment
- Community based testing for HIV through blood
- Community based testing for hepatitis B, C and syphilis through blood.
- Provision of a separate space for testing

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