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## SUCCESS STORY: UKRAINE

### Promoting HIV/AIDS Awareness

#### A photography exhibit brings the story of HIV/AIDS to light in Crimea



Photo: IRD

The “Look Into Their Eyes” exhibit in Symferopol, Crimea, featured photographs and text telling the story of HIV/AIDS in Crimea and beyond.

***“We often set lofty global goals, fight against something, or try to change the world, but we forget that everything starts with changing yourself.”***

***– Natalya Yegorova,  
Director of the Crimean  
branch of the All  
Ukrainian Network of  
People Living with  
HIV/AIDS.***

Fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS requires both awareness and action. People must be educated about the disease and willing to act to prevent its spread. Equally important, people infected by the disease can only achieve a better quality of life when the communities they live in are understanding and supportive. In Ukraine, many communities need increased awareness and understanding of HIV/AIDS.

Filling this need, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through USAID supported a local group’s awareness campaign for World AIDS Day through an unusual medium: a photo exhibit. The event was organized by the All Ukrainian Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS. Titled “Look Into Their Eyes,” it was held in Symferopol, Crimea. Through 50 photographs and 40 text frames, the exhibit exposed the viewpoints, opinions, and attitudes of different people toward HIV/AIDS. The Crimeans showcased in the exhibit ranged from individuals who had never met someone with HIV to people who know the disease well from firsthand experience. The exhibit also displayed stories from people all over the world affected by the disease, as well as thoughts about the HIV/AIDS epidemic from politicians, governmental officials, business leaders, and celebrities.

More than 2,000 people visited the exhibit in just one day. The faces, stories, and thoughts the event brought to light proved so compelling that other cities asked to host similar exhibits. As a result, additional exhibits have been organized for Yalta, Feodosiya, Belogorsk, Donetsk, Mariupol, Slavyansk, and Dimitrovo. After visiting the exhibit, Crimea’s Minister of Health, Sergey Donich, said, “We should start by changing people’s attitudes and by giving more information about HIV prevention, ways of transmission, and protection.” Although the battle against HIV/AIDS is far from over, the event’s popularity shows that Ukraine is making progress in increasing HIV/AIDS awareness and understanding.

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