

# ANNUAL REPORT

2018



COLUMBIA | SIG  
SOCIAL INTERVENTION GROUP



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Project BRIDGE Nurses and Outreach Workers

## ABOUT SIG

For nearly 30 years, the Social Intervention Group (SIG) has served as a global leader in intervention, prevention, behavioral, and implementation research on communicable and non-communicable diseases. SIG conducts research and training in the United States and globally. SIG's evidence-based interventions have been identified as best practices by the Center for Disease Control, and have been disseminated and adapted nationally and globally.

SIG also provides training for faculty, visiting scholars, students, and post-doctoral fellows, and has an NIMH R25 HIV training program funded in 2007 to train underrepresented scholars on HIV implementation science. SIG manages a NIDA T32 training for pre- and post-doctoral scholars on implementation research for criminal justice-involved populations.

### Mission

The Social Intervention Group (SIG) develops and implements evidence-based sustainable solutions to emerging health and social issues affecting diverse populations domestically and globally and is training the next generation of scientists from underrepresented affected communities to address these issues.

### Vision

Our vision is to scale up sustainable effective solutions to emerging health and social issues in low resource underserved communities domestically and globally through state-of-art intervention and implementation science research and to train a cadre of underrepresented researchers from affected communities who can continue advancing our mission.

# OUR STAFF

## Social Intervention Group (SIG) Leadership

**Dr. Nabila El-Bassel**  
Director

**Dr. Elwin Wu**  
Co-Director

**Dr. Louisa Gilbert**  
Co-Director

**Dr. Timothy Hunt**  
Associate Director

## SIG Team

Dale Alexander Acevedo  
Christina Aivadyan  
Jasmine Akuffo  
Carmela Alcantara  
Chermaine Black  
Kathy Boudin  
Maria Cedeno  
Mingway Chang  
Anindita Dasgupta  
Alissa Davis  
Greer Ellis  
Dawn Goddard Eckrich  
Jenissia Jeanty

Urchin Kennedy  
Yong Gun “YG” Lee  
Tara McCrimmon  
Charlotte McCullagh  
Melissa Meinhart  
Lynn Michalopoulos  
Phillip Marotta  
Desmond Patton  
Andrea Norcini Pala  
Irene Perez Ibarra  
Cameron Rasmussen  
Ariel Richer  
Zhanjie Si  
Minh Ta  
Eleni Vlachos  
Audrey Ward  
Brooke West  
Cheryl Wilkins

[See a list of all SIG staff and affiliate bios.](#)

## Welcome to the SIG team!

- [Alissa Davis](#)
- [Jenissia Jeanty](#)
- [Andrea Norcini Pala](#)
- [Brooke West](#)

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## Global Health Research Center of Central Asia (GHRCCA)

**Leadership**  
**Scientific Advisory Committee**  
**Partners: University and Affiliates**

Global Research Center of Central Asia and SIG  
Leadership and Staff



## LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR



Dear SIG community,

We are so thankful for your support, and have had such a productive year. This year, we launched [USWEEP in Uzbekistan](#) to help expand the field of social work, and continued work with [UNI in Kazakhstan to leverage social networks](#) for the health of men who have sex with men through the [Global Health Research Center of Central Asia](#), published several papers including for project [E-Worth](#), which worked with Black justice-involved women to overcome intimate partner violence, and completed [Connect and Unite](#), a study with Black men who had experienced childhood sexual abuse, completed PACT, a [couple-based HIV prevention with men and their female sex partners](#) in probation and other alternative incarceration programs, implemented project [BRIDGE](#) in three cities in Kazakhstan and [WINGS](#) in India, and most recently [launched a multi-disciplinary collaboration to tackle the opioid epidemic](#) with [leading scientists from Columbia and beyond](#).

We were also delighted to share our research in [an article appearing in The Conversation](#), and at conferences such as the [International AIDS Conference](#) in Amsterdam and the [Gender Inequality Conference](#) in South Africa, as well as meet those impacted most directly by our work. We are also excited to have received a grant award to continue our decade-long HISTP training program, [now accepting new faculty applications](#).

We look forward to continuing our work together to address problems facing our community, including those impacted by the opioid epidemic, HIV, stigma, intimate partner and gender-based violence, the criminal justice system, and [the refugee crisis through project ASPIRE](#).

In the spirit of social justice and our continued work together, and [on behalf of the SIG team](#), thank you.

— **Dr. Nabila El- Bassel**  
Director, Social Intervention Group (SIG)

# INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED BY SIG'S RESEARCH

SIG works with the most stigmatized and underserved individuals and communities, including sexual and/or gender minorities, US racial/ethnic minorities, individuals who engage

in sex work, and women who are refugees. Populations are often substance and justice-involved, and individuals who have experienced intimate partner or gender-based violence.

## IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

~400

INDIVIDUALS TRAINED TO ADMINISTER INTERVENTIONS AND/OR HIV PREVENTION RESEARCH



>30

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS PUBLISHED BY SIG TEAM



80

ORGANIZATIONS TRAINED TO IMPLEMENT RESEARCHED INTERVENTIONS



>1000

PARTICIPANTS COMPLETED FOLLOW UP STUDIES



>1600

INDIVIDUALS SCREENED FOR RESEARCH STUDIES



## GLOBAL IMPACT

In addition to the United States, the Social Intervention Group (SIG) operates and conducts research in thirteen countries. Whether implementing behavioral interventions in Central Asia, Africa, or the middle east to improve the health of those often left behind – women, people who use drugs, sex workers, sexual and gender minorities, migrant workers, or refugees – SIG brings decades of experience to each region, while partnering with local experts to ensure cultural appropriateness.

Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, studies are conducted in drug treatment programs, homeless shelters, street-based venues, refugee camps, jails and probation sites, primary care facilities, emergency departments, and related settings.

### **ASPIRE: Advancing Solutions in Policy, Implementation, Research, and Engagement for Refugees**

Operating in Jordan and Turkey since 2017, ASPIRE is a multidisciplinary program of activities at Columbia University dedicated to innovative approaches and responses to the Syrian Refugee crisis. In 2018, ASPIRE initiated and completed data collection for its two research studies. The bi-national Women ASPIRE and Providers ASPIRE teams are now focused on analyzing the data for dissemination purposes.

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about ASPIRE.

ASPIRE focuses on two main branches of research:

#### **Women ASPIRE**

Women ASPIRE conducted quantitative survey assessments with 507 Syrian refugee women living in urban settings in Jordan finished data collection in October 2018. The study examines the mental and physical health needs of female Syrian refugees living outside of camps in Jordan and barriers to accessing healthcare. Findings from this study will be used to develop a policy brief to be disseminated with organizations in Amman and used to develop a pilot intervention to address the needs of Syrian refugee women.

#### **Providers ASPIRE**

Providers ASPIRE was created to address the unique needs of care providers suffering from secondary trauma, in this case those directly supplying services to refugees in Turkey. A mixed methods study, Providers ASPIRE examines the mental health of 100 providers of direct service support to Syrian refugees in Turkey.

In early 2018, the Providers ASPIRE took a trip to Turkey to meet in-country partners Istanbul Aydin University (IAU) & Columbia University Global Center-Istanbul to finalize their research on secondary trauma, and identify future collaborative opportunities.



Drs. Uğur Tekin and Deniz Yukseker, Providers ASPIRE leads from Istanbul Aydin University, and Melissa Meinhart, ASPIRE's Project Director, at a dinner meeting





**GHRCCA**

In 2007, SIG established the Global Health Research Center of Central Asia (GHRCCA) in Kazakhstan to lead research programs and projects in the region, recognizing that while worldwide the HIV/AIDS epidemic was improving, it was skyrocketing in Central Asia.

Twelve years later, SIG and GHRCCA continue to conduct research globally with key populations including sexual and gender minorities, individuals within the criminal justice system, women who trade sex to survive, people who inject drugs, and refugee populations.

GHRCCA is making a huge impact, and in 2018 managed project BRIDGE, UNI, Smart Couples II, NOVA, and launched Be Online.

**BRIDGE**

Only one-third of the 19,000 HIV-positive people who inject drugs in syringe exchange programs are linked to HIV care in Kazakhstan. BRIDGE aims to fill this gap by evaluating the implementation, effectiveness, and sustainability of an integrated HIV service model in 24 needle syringe programs located in four Kazakhstani cities.

In 2018, BRIDGE launched in Karaganda and Timertau at two AIDS centers and seven syringe-exchange programs (trust points). Nurses, AIDS center directors, outreach workers – who are changing their role in the system -- and vans love the ability to train others and are invested in the community of practice.

Many former drug-involved individuals are now research assistants, so BRIDGE promotes strong protocols around self-care, also mindful of what peer supporters need.

BRIDGE helped nurses and outreach workers of syringe-exchange programs work as a team, build knowledge, and increase skills by hosting a Community of Practice meeting at the AIDS Center to share progress and provide peer education. Overall, BRIDGE trained 17 nurses, eight backup nurses, 26 outreach workers, and four supervisors across two study sites.

“ Thanks to the BRIDGE program, I’ve acquired new skills...[and] learned how to identify clients’ strengths...”

*–Gulsim Dosmagambetova, Trust Point nurse, Temirtau*

...

“ The BRIDGE program has become an effective addition to the work of the AIDS Service...Thanks to the work of BRIDGE outreach workers, lost clients are found and returned to care.”

*–Mayra Tyulyupaeva, AIDS center, Infectious Disease Doctor*

...

“ The “BRIDGE” Program staff helped [me] to be linked to the clinic, to start ART treatment, as well as to identify and start TB treatment in a timely manner. They have been accompanying and helping me over this period. Thanks for the program!!! Thanks for your assistance!!!”

*–Dima, Almaty*

## UNI

Peers have always played an important role in disseminating health tips that, when adopted, could enhance the quality of life, and -- beyond boosting morale of participants -- even save lives. The UNI Project intervention “UNI Innovator Gate,” aims to help hundreds of men of sexual and gender diversity through peer-led promotion of “HIV care continuum engagement” which includes antiretroviral medication adherence and HIV testing.

In preparation for the UNI Innovator Gate intervention rollout, the **UNI Project** held a **week-long training** that incorporated many of these elements for nine of its staff facilitators, including Site Coordinators, Research Assistants, and Clinical Coordinators from all three study cities: Almaty, Astana, and Shymkent.

The high internet-use rate in Kazakhstan makes internet-based, digital health promotion an attractive and viable approach. UNI Innovator Gate incorporates vocabulary, technologies, and strategies of information communication commonly used in digital social network methods.

In 2018, UNI screened 457 individuals during the recruitment process. Of the resulting eligible 295 participants, 28 were non-cis-gender men.

...

“Don’t underestimate this group of women. They valued NOVA. People believe they are not capable of managing finances and will just spend it on drugs. We did not find that.”

–NOVA Project director  
Tara McCrimmon

## NOVA

Project NOVA is an innovative combination of a HIV prevention and microfinance intervention to address the high incidence of HIV and other STIs among female sex workers who use drugs in Kazakhstan. The intervention and data collection was completed in 2017, and data analysis began with follow-up surveys of approximately 300 study participants in 2018.

Findings show that it is feasible to implement a combination HIV-prevention and microfinance intervention with highly vulnerable women such as these, and to address implementation challenges successfully. In fact, many judge women who sell sex and use drugs, believing them unable to complete several sessions, follow-up, and managing finances as required by NOVA.

## New research projects

### Smart Couples II

Drawing on years of SIG research supporting the powerful impact of couple-based therapies, Smart Couples II is designed to improve HIV medication adherence for people HIV-positive people who inject drugs in Kazakhstan. This antiretroviral therapy (ART) adherence intervention also should increase viral suppression and reduce transmission of HIV.



THE UNI PROJECT: Project Director, Gulnara Zhakupova, facilitates establishment of ground rules. Seated on her left is Project Coordinator Vitaliy Vinogradovis.



UNI training participants and leadership.

### BeOnline

In 2018, the Elton John AIDS Foundation announced funding to GHRCCA to launch **“BeOnline” to provide free HIV self-tests and increase HIV and STI risks awareness** among men who have sex with men and transgender individuals.

### USWEEP

Uzbekistan Social Work Education for Excellence Project (USWEEP) is part of a global alliance to bolster the field of social work in Uzbekistan through four main activities:

- Conducting a national assessment
- Providing technical support by drawing on experiences through Columbia's School of Social Work
- Building capacity through training
- Developing curriculums to build social work skills in paraprofessionals

USWEEP includes UNICEF, the Columbia University School of Social Work, the Social Intervention

Group, and the Uzbekistan National Team. This year, USWEEP worked with four universities and 13 ministries to train 148 staff and provided technical assistance to the entire region on child protection.

The team presented a six-day foundational course, led two lectures, and taught two masterclasses. In total, 195 individuals participated in focus groups, including administrators, providers, service recipients, educators, and students from four cities in Uzbekistan; 166 individuals completed a survey; and USWEEP reviewed 35 UNICEF documents and over 65 statutory laws, decrees, and regulations.

Many students said, “I was surprised to learn that social work can be applied to so many different sectors, such as correctional health, assisting those with disabilities, and so much more.”

[Read the announcement.](#)

### Intersecciones

This study examines sociostructural drivers of substance use, violence and HIV/STI transmission among with high risk females who inject drugs in Tijuana. [Read more.](#)

# INTERVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

## Connect HIP

Since inception, ConnectHIP (High Impact Prevention) has conducted training for 133 health department, clinic, community-based organizations, and other participants. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) identified the intervention as a best-practice. The innovative, three-session, couple-based intervention is tailored to target the intersection of sexual risk behavior and substance use among racial/ethnic and sexual minorities, with the ultimate goal of providing an evidence-based HIV/STI prevention intervention that can be delivered in a variety of settings.

Most recently, the intervention was translated into Spanish and a training will occur in Puerto Rico: crucial since the Caribbean has some of the highest rates of HIV regionally.

[Read more and download the intervention.](#)

## WINGS

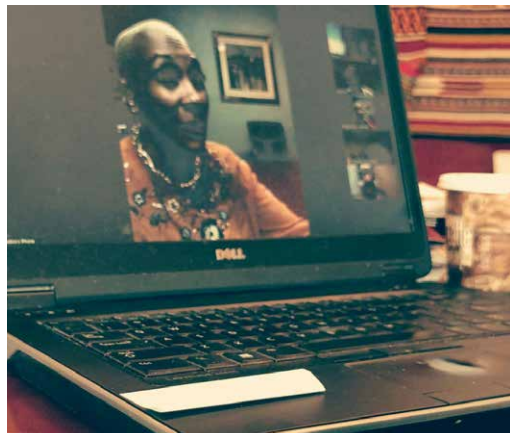
WINGS is an evidence-based screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment service tool designed to identify intimate partner and gender based violence among women who use drugs. The intervention enables participating women to develop safety planning strategies and strengthen their social support networks. WINGS is available in six countries and eight languages.

In 2018, WINGS:

- Expanded to three more sites in India, potentially serving 200 more women per year
- Trained 20 women service providers for NGOs in Tbilisi, Georgia to implement WINGS
- Expanded to Ukraine, where NGO Club Eney began implementing WINGS, serving around 50 women so far
- Was translated into Spanish to increase provider reach
- Is operating at five NGOs in Kyrgyzstan serving about 200 women

Remarkably, WINGS requires minimal resources to implement. Most organizations implementing WINGS operate in rooms no larger than walk-in closets, often barely heated. The power of the program lies within its peer counselors: Women who themselves formerly used drugs and wish to help other women with HIV counseling, violence, and overdose prevention.

[Read more and download the intervention.](#)



The WORTH team using Zoom to connect.

# DOMESTIC RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

## e-WORTH

To achieve positive health outcomes, interventions must be tailored to address the complexities faced by women such as homelessness, violence, and high STI rates. E-WORTH was designed by and tailored to Black women to achieve these outcomes.

E-WORTH is an evidence-based multimedia intervention designed to reduce risks for HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and intimate partner violence among Black women who use drugs and are under community supervision in New York. In 2018, e-WORTH completed recruitment and conducted 3, 6, and 12-month follow-ups with women who participated in the study.

[Read an interview with one of the e-WORTH facilitators from the Fortune Society, Carol Grannum.](#)

## WORTH Transitions

Long-distance is easy with Zoom technology -- here, our WORTH Transitions team conducts multi-site, long distance supervision with Community Health Workers who link formerly incarcerated women to healthcare.

Healthcare often comes last when other responsibilities like childcare, transportation, employment, and basic needs are not met. Trauma both while incarcerated and outside the justice system impact stability for the formerly incarcerated women participating in WORTH Transitions, a project building on previous research at SIG to connect women to gender-specific and trauma-informed services, as a stand-alone app that clinics download onto a smart phone or tablet. The participants experience the WORTH Transitions Intervention together in groups conducted in health clinics facilitated by peer community health workers.

With partners at Yale and in the University of Rochester, WORTH Transitions is being implemented in two transitions clinics. The research team conducted a qualitative analysis program evaluation midterm with interviews of providers, community health workers, and the women in the study. The program is extremely appreciated by the women participating, who are linked into primary health care, domestic violence services, and trauma-informed drug treatment.

“ I had a lot of fun here at E-WORTH. Being a part of something greater than myself gave me a sense of purpose. It also gave me something to look forward to each week. Keep inspiring other women. ”

...

“ Women are care takers, and forget healthcare. Women need validation. It [WORTH Transitions] teaches women to build up each other. Peer messages are more positive. I have felt inhuman. ”

...

“ I really liked the program. Great experience. The doctor communicated with me, addressed what I needed, ... listened to me. Because of the program I was able to get a therapist and psychiatric appointment.

The program helped me not to give up. I was able to finish the groups and got help with some legal issues. ”



## PACT

PACT was a couples-based STI/HIV Prevention for drug involved males within the criminal justice system in New York City. The project team are analyzing the final data, and findings of the study will be published in 2019. The promising results will be available as a couples-based intervention for implementation in criminal justice settings, non-governmental organizations, and other community agencies with criminal justice services.

## SIG Affiliates

### SAFELab

The SAFELab is a research initiative focused on examining the ways in which youth of color navigate violence on and offline. In 2018, they partnered with AI4All and the Data Science Institute to run the Digital Scholars Lab. They also launched SIM|ED - Simulation Education to develop virtual reality, computational, and social media tools for education purposes.

### Center for Justice

The Center for Justice is committed to reducing the nation's reliance on incarceration and advancing

alternative approaches to safety and justice through education, research and policy. In 2019 [they were awarded a grant by the NoVo Foundation's Radical Hope Fund](#) for new initiative, Women Transcending, to develop, amplify, and document the leadership of women impacted by incarceration, launched Everyday Restorative Justice in collaboration with the Osborne Association, as a part of Project Reset, held their 5th year of the Beyond the Bars Fellowship and the Beyond the Bars Conference focused on efforts to close jails and prisons, attracting more than 1000 attendees.

### Sleep, Mind, & Health

The Sleep, Mind, & Health Research Program integrates frameworks and methodologies from psychology, public health, social work, and medicine to understand how structural and social factors affect sleep, mental health, and cardiovascular health particularly in racial/ethnic and immigrant communities.

The LATino Sleep and Health Study (LASH) examines the relationship between sleep, stress, and health. In 2018, the study team focused on recruiting participants. A new project, Dormir Mejor, also began.



Above: SAFELab at the TED headquarters for their Digital Scholars Lab Fellows' presentations



Above, The Center for Justice's Fourth Annual Beyond the Bars Conference. Below: The Sleep, Mind, and Health team at a recruitment event.



# TRAINING PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

SIG runs two key HIV research training programs for pre-doctoral, post-doctoral, and new faculty.

## HIV Intervention Science Training Program for Underrepresented New Investigators (HISTP)

For a decade, SIG has managed the HIV Intervention Science Training Program for Underrepresented New Investigators (HISTP). This year, the National Institute for Mental Health awarded HISTP funding to continue. The team launched a new website and began accepting applications from new faculty across the country. Faculty will be selected in early 2019. HISTP will work with technology-focused partners to allow researchers to develop new ways to conduct HIV prevention research.

- Previous scholars continue to finalize their research pilots.
- **HISTP Scholar Dr. Juan DelaCruz receives two awards**
- **New publication by HISTP Scholar Dr. Juan DelaCruz**
- **New publication by HISTP Scholar Dr. Larry Keen**

See all updates at [histp.columbia.edu](http://histp.columbia.edu).



“ HISTP is an exceptional program for a variety of reasons. Relationship-building among our peers was key: I’m still in contact with everyone accepted in program. We have published together, seen one another at conferences, and talked about challenges as people of color in academic settings. I can’t say enough about how valuable it was to speak to those at different stages of the tenure process.”

–Dr. Michele Rountree, HISTP Scholar

## T32

The criminal justice system is a recognized epicenter of the HIV epidemic in the U.S. Launched in 2014, the T32 addresses aims to address that alarming trend by focusing on the co-occurring issues of HIV, substance use, and criminal justice through a robust mentorship and research training program.

Hosted and housed jointly at Columbia University’s School of Social Work and the Mailman School of Public Health, the T32 allows participants to leverage resources at the university. The goal is for fellows to gain skills and knowledge for research that can lead to meaningful reductions in HIV, substance use, criminal justice involvement, and associated health disparities, and enhance career opportunities.

Several Fellows have since published in prestigious journals and continued to successful careers in research. The T32 program is undergoing a renewal application process.

See all updates at <http://cjhd32.columbia.edu>.

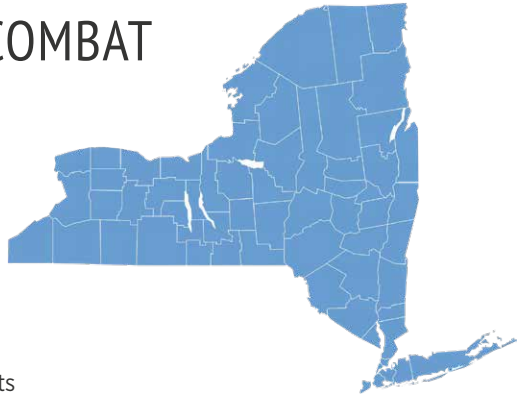


“ The research opportunities, training environment, mentorship opportunities, and resources at Columbia University’s Social Intervention Group have maximized the value of my postdoctoral training experience and has greatly enhanced my potential to become a future independent researcher. Specifically, my post-doctoral training in the Social Intervention Group has allowed me to extend my research agenda to include the development and evaluation of evidenced based interventions.”

–Dr. Kristi Stringer, T32 Postdoctoral Fellow



# COLLABORATIONS TO COMBAT THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC



## HEALing Communities

Dr. El-Bassel, a leading expert on the opioid epidemic, recently assembled a group of scientists from different disciplines to address the opioid epidemic in New York State, which has the second highest increase in heroin and prescription opioid-related deaths. This cross-university multidisciplinary collaboration will bring different perspectives and approaches to address the opioid epidemic.

[Read more about the collaboration.](#)

## New York State

The SIG team, New York State Lieutenant Governor, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) collaborate to address the opioid epidemic.

[Read more about the collaboration.](#)



HEALing Communities Team

# AWARDS AND HONORS

## Elton John Foundation Grant

The Elton John Foundation announced that the GHRCCA “BeOnline” project would be awarded funding at the International AIDS Society press conference. [Read about BeOnline.](#)

## HISTP Grant Award

The [HIV Intervention Science Training Program for Underrepresented scholars](#) was awarded funding to continue the decade-long work to strengthen universities, diversify HIV research, and elevate scholars of color across the country.

## Graduation Marshall

On graduation day Dr. Nabila El-Bassel served as Graduation Marshall.

## Tenure and Full Professorship

Drs. Elwin Wu and Susan Witte were awarded full professorship, and Drs. Louisa Gilbert and Desmond Patton were awarded tenure.



## F-31 Award

An [F-31 was granted to former T32 Fellow Phil Marotta](#) to explore drug arrests and retention in an HIV prevention intervention.

## Ethics of HIV Research Training Institute

Sholpan Primbetova, the GHRCCA Deputy Regional Director, was awarded an NIH-funded and Fogarty International Center-supported grant to translate and adapt the [CITI Human Subjects training modules](#) as a contribution to bioethics in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

## Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Sleep, Mind, & Health Director, Dr. Carmela Alcantara received a \$1.9 million dollar grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to culturally adapt and test a digital behavioral intervention for insomnia among Spanish-speaking Latina/o primary care patients, a project called Dormir Mejor.

## Association of Latina/Latino Social Work Educators

Sarah Valentina Diaz of the Sleep, Mind, & Health team was awarded the 2018 Scholarship from the Association of Latina/Latino Social Work Educators.



Left, SIG Director and Columbia University Graduation Marshall Nabila El-Bassel, May 2018. Above, Sholpan Primbetova, GHRCCA Deputy Regional Director and grant recipient.

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# TRENDS IN THE FIELD

## High retention rates among study participants

Participants in research studies, despite being stigmatized as not being able to stick to anything – have retention rates as high as 80% despite barriers such as past incarceration, lack of adequate housing, substance use, and other destabilizing conditions in their lives. Their remarkably high retention rates in follow-up studies continue months and often years down the road. Further, many research participants of color may not trust research for historical reasons, but culturally appropriate study design, in large part, plays a role in the trust individuals place in the study and the scientists involved. For more on the importance of study design, see our post on [e-Worth](#) and [infusing PRIDE into research](#).

## HIV is still on the rise in one part of the world

[In Central Asia, HIV is still on the rise](#). In some cities where project UNI recruited participants for their study, the HIV prevalence rate is at an alarmingly high rate of 30%. The need for research to address HIV in Central Asia has never been more stark. [See a video](#) highlighting our global center, the Global Health Research Center of Central Asia, doing just that.

## Technology can combat healthcare disparities

Technological advances such as digital behavioral health treatments have the potential address disparities in mental health care and beyond. Most research programs within SIG, including UNI, LASH, WORTH Transitions, the SAFELab, and WINGS, leverage technology to extend reach and address stigma and disparities in healthcare.



# RESEARCH DISSEMINATION AND INFLUENCE

## Media & Publications

Dr. Nabila El-Bassel published an article “An addiction researcher shares 6 strategies to address the opioid epidemic” in the online publication *The Conversation*. It was shared over 500 times and republished in the Chicago Tribune.

### Infectious Disease Advisor

Interview with Dr. Nabila El-Bassel: “[Disparities in HIV Healthcare: An Expert Perspective](#)”

### Columbia and School of Social Work

[Social Intervention Group Joins the HEAL Initiative and Will Address Opioid Epidemic in New York State](#)

[On World AIDS Day 2018, “Know Your Status” Really Is a Matter of Status](#)

[International AIDS Conference Focuses on People Left Behind in Central Asia and Eastern Europe](#)

[#PRIDE in the Work: A CSSW Research Team reflects on #PRIDEMonth](#)

[Honoring the Marginalized Women in Five SIG Studies Who Have Pressed for Progress on Female-Specific Health and Social Problems](#)

### Journal of Substance Use

WINGS of HOPE shines a light on economic abuse of Kyrgyz women. [An exploratory study of economic abuse among substance-involved women in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia](#)

### International Journal of Drug Policy

[Reducing opioid overdose in Kazakhstan: A randomized controlled trial of a couple-based integrated HIV/HCV and overdose prevention intervention ‘Renaissance’](#). Also: [Read our summary here](#).

[Individual, social, and structural factors affecting antiretroviral therapy adherence among HIV-positive people who inject drugs in Kazakhstan](#)

[Differences by sex in associations between injection drug risks and drug crime conviction among people who inject drugs in Almaty, Kazakhstan](#)

### Journal of Urban Health

[Drug use and HIV among Men in Community Correction Programs and Their Female Primary Sex Partners](#)

[Men in Community Correction Programs and Their Female Primary Sex Partners: Latent Class Analysis to Identify the Relationship of Clusters of Drug Use and Sexual Behaviors and HIV Risks](#)

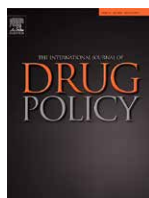
### PLOS One

[Childhood sexual abuse among Black men who have sex with men: A cornerstone of a syndemic?](#)

### AIDS and Behavior

[Project Nova: A Combination HIV Prevention and Microfinance Intervention for Women Who Engage in Sex Work and Use Drugs in Kazakhstan](#)

[Traumatic Events and HIV Sexual Risk Behaviors Among Migrant and Non-Migrant Male Market Workers in Central Asia](#)



THE CONVERSATION



Yong Gun (“YG”) Lee, a doctoral student at CSSW, Project Coordinator for the UNI research project, at the UNI field office in Kazakhstan.



### **BMC Springer Nature**

**Microfinance for women at high risk for HIV in Kazakhstan: study protocol for a cluster-randomized controlled trial**

**The effectiveness of a group-based computerized HIV/STI prevention intervention for black women who use drugs in the criminal justice system: study protocol for E-WORTH**

### **Child Indicators Research**

**Adaptation and Validation of the Shame Questionnaire Among Ugandan Youth Living with HIV**

### **Trauma, Violence and Abuse**

**Global Posttrauma Symptoms: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Literature**

### **Publishing and Press by SIG affiliates**

SafeLab published in Biomedical informatics insights, Social Science Computer Review, Digital Medicine, and Pediatrics. The work of SafeLab was featured in over nine articles in the media including [Wired.com](#), [NPR](#), [the Washington Post](#), [Vice](#), and [the Chicago Tribune](#).

Sleep, Mind, & Health Director Dr. Carmela Alcantara, [published seven peer-reviewed publications](#).



## Events

### International AIDS Conference

Global leaders convened at the 22nd International AIDS Conference to discuss the rising HIV epidemic in Central Asia. Researchers and scientists from both SIG and the Global Health Research Center of Central Asia (GHRCCA) participated in multiple sessions.



- **Announcement of award in press conference with Elton John**

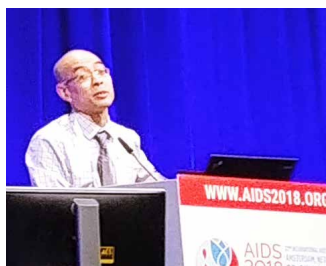
The Regional Director of GHRCCA, Assel Terlikbayeva, participated at a press conference with Sir Elton John announcing an award from the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

[See the interview](#) with Dr. Terlikbayeva explaining how the award will help promote self-testing among men who have sex with men using digital technology and social media.

- **Symposium**

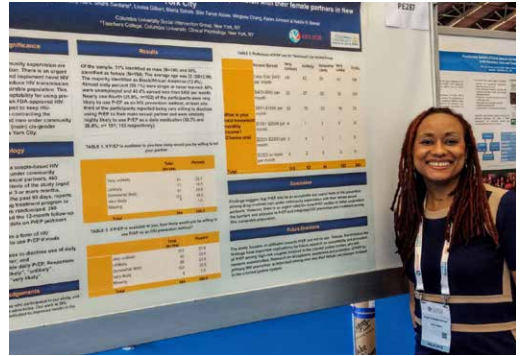
*Innovative multi-level HIV interventions with key populations in Kazakhstan and Central Asia: From efficacy to implementation research*

The symposium presented lessons learned over ten years of GHRCCA's work in the region including a number of multi-level evidence-based HIV interventions conducted among key populations in Kazakhstan in Central Asia. These include Project Renaissance, Project Nova, the UNI Project, and Project BRIDGE.

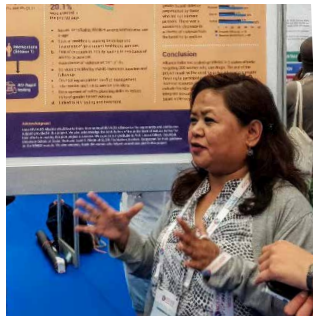


Far left: Dr. Elwin Wu presented Partner violence: A significant part of a syndemic among Black men who have sex with men." Left: Philip Marotta presents "Dignity has no nationality: HIV and migrants' rights."

• Research presented at several poster sessions

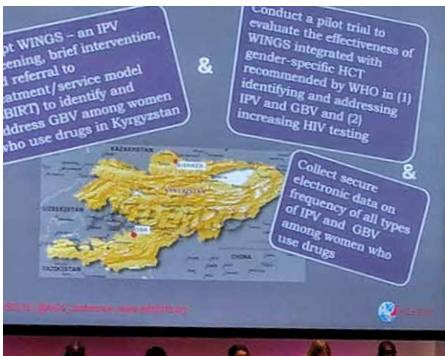


Above left: Tara McCrimmon presents “Female sex workers who use drugs and HIV/STI risk in Kazakhstan: Implications for HIV prevention.” Above right: Dr. Dawn Goddard-Eckrich presents research “Attitudes towards PrEP among drug-involved men under community supervision with their female partners in New York City.”



Far left: Dr. Louisa Gilbert presents “Deconstructing the relationship between non-fatal opioid overdose and HIV/HCV risks among PWID in Kazakhstan.” Left: Pemu Bhutia presents research “Spreading WINGS (Women Initiating New Goals of Safety): Cross-cultural adaptation, feasibility and preliminary effects of an intervention to address gender-based violence among women who use drugs in India.”

• The SIG and GHRCCA teams gave several presentations





### International Women's Day

SIG honors both the women leading the research studies as well as the women participants.

### Syrian Refugees in Turkey: How Legislation and Practices Influence Integration

Presented by Dr. Deniz Yukseker, Chair, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul Aydin University

### Society for Social Work and Research Annual Conference: Achieving Equal Opportunity, Equity, and Justice

Drs. Lynn Michalopoulos and Louisa Gilbert of SIG, Melissa Meinhart of ASPIRE, and Angela Aifah of Columbia University School of Social Work each presented research in a Symposium entitled "Multi-Level Risk Factors Related to the Health and Mental Health of Migrant Populations from Non-Western Low and Middle Income Countries."

### Ending Gender Inequalities: Evidence to Impact

On October 8th, SIG Director Dr. El-Bassel presented her keynote "Typologies of Gender Inequalities Among Refugee Women: Global Perspective." Dr. Anindita Dasgupta, ASPIRE Co-investigator, presented research on PACT and WORTH. [Read the takeaways from this powerful conference in South Africa.](#)

Dr. Anindita Dasgupta, Co-Investigator for ASPIRE and former T32 Fellow, also presented research in two sessions:

- Reproductive health concerns among substance-using women in community corrections in New York City: understanding the role of environmental influences
- Assessing the relationship between intimate partner violence, externally-decided pregnancy and unintended pregnancies among women in slum communities in Mumbai, India

### National Social Work Conference

Melissa Meinhart, Project Director for ASPIRE, delivered a keynote presentation at the National Social Work Conference in Istanbul, where the



Dr. Anindita Dasgupta presenting research at *Ending Gender Inequalities* conference.



theme centered around the role of social work in refugee response. As Melissa explains, the exchange was a two-way street:

“While the US has a highly solidified social work program in general, social work with refugees still has a lot of room for improvement stateside. This conference shed light on how social workers in Turkey are pioneering methods in social work with refugees, which we can learn from here in the US.”

### Facebook Live: Columbia School of Social Work

Dr. Elwin Wu participated in a Columbia School of Social Work Facebook Live session discussing both intersectionality in social work and his latest findings from the Connect and Unite study on the impact of childhood sexual abuse on health outcomes for black men who have sex with men.

[View the session.](#)

### New York State Assembly

In November, Dr. Timothy Hunt [presented \(starting at 3:40\) research](#) on the need for medication assisted treatment (MAT) in jails and prisons in a testimony to the Assembly.

### Protection of Children in Uzbekistan: Best National and International Practices

USWEEP team Dr. Timothy Hunt and Lyudmila Kim presented “Social Service Workforce of Social Sector in Uzbekistan - strengths, challenges and



Above: Dr. Timothy Hunt and Lyudmila Kim at the *Protection of Children in Uzbekistan* event.



Dr. El-Bassel (left) with Redi Tlhabi, UN Global Journalists Corps (middle). Photo credit: Redi Tlhabi

ways to moving forward.”

### TEDX

Research on the NOVA project was [presented by Assel Terlikbayeva](#), Regional Director of GHRCCA, at TEDX in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

### FemAgora Central Asia

Research on the NOVA project was presented at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation’s conference on Gender Equality by GHRCCA Deputy Regional Director Sholpan Primbetova.

### 13th European Evaluation Society Biennial Conference Evaluation for More Resilient Societies Resilience Measurement, Evidence and Learning Conference

### Board for International Food and Agricultural Development Public Meeting on Resilience Measurement and Analysis

Dr. Lynn Michalopoulos presented research on resilience on three separate panels at conferences in Europe and the US. The panels were “Resilience and Psychosocial Factors: The Relationship and Measurement,” “The Economics of Resilience Returns: When 1+1 is Greater Than 2,” and “Applied

Resilience Measurement: The Role of Psycho-social Factors.”

**Sleep, Mind, and Health Presentations**



Dr. Carmela Alcantara gave an oral presentation to the Department of Psychiatry at the Weill-Cornell Medical College-New York Presbyterian Hospital-Westchester Division on Latina/o sleep health and behavioral interventions, was an invited participant in the NHBLI/NIMHD Workshop on Sleep Disparities, and a panelist for an ADAA

workshop on culturally responsive clinical work and mentoring.

Two team members (Luciana Giorgio, and Hannah Binder) gave two poster presentations at the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) conference (April 5-8 in Washington, DC): Acculturation Stress, Social support, Social Burden, and Insomnia among Latina/o Adults and Shift-Work Status and Substance Use among Latina/o Adults.

The team also participated in health fairs and offered insomnia screenings, and sleep hygiene information, and links to resources for mental health and sleep in the New York City region.

**SIG Launches new website**

SIG launched a [new website](#) in 2018.



Above right: SIG team gathers for an interview with an undercover narcotics detective. Right: The SIG team in Amsterdam during the #AIDS2018 Conference.



# GRANTORS AND FUNDERS

The research, training programs, and global work of the Social Intervention Group would not be possible without the generous support of our grantors and funders.



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