

Project Team

Nata Avaliani, MD, MPH

Dr. Avaliani is a healthcare expert with over 15 years of experience in the areas of public health, healthcare policy, healthcare management and project management. She is currently a member and a public health expert at HRU. She is currently working on two major assignments, namely the development of National Hepatitis C program for Georgia for 2014-2016 (funded by OSGF) and Elaborating of TB legislation (public health adviser – contract with University Research Corporation (URC), USAID Georgia Tuberculosis Prevention Project).

In 2010-2012 Dr. Avaliani served as a General Director of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health. In this capacity, she was directly involved in the development of public health policies and programs. Dr. Avaliani provided overall administration for NCDC activities, including state programs, GFATM, EU and WB supported projects, surveillance and research projects funded by several international agencies such as WHO, CDC, DTRA, UNFPA, UNICEF, etc. As an executive officer, Dr. Avaliani supervised administrative, financial management and procurement functions at NCDC.

Prior to joining NCDC, since 1999, Dr. Avaliani held progressively responsible positions and, in 2002-2009, served as a Regional Director for the Caucasus office of the American International Health Alliance (AIHA). In this capacity she provided overall management for AIHA's multi-million US dollar program in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia funded by USAID. The program implemented over 25 projects in the areas of infection control, blood safety, prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV (PMTCT), primary care, hospital administration, community health, emergency medicine, women and child health, healthcare management and public health education. In addition, Dr. Avaliani managed the national donor database development and volunteer donor recruitment project implemented by AIHA and funded by GFATM. She also served as a technical expert and an advisor for AIHA in various public health topics. After a closure of AIHA program in Caucasus region Dr. Avaliani has founded a successor NGO "Health Alliance" and has successfully managed projects focused on Hepatitis C advocacy and policy development (funded by Open Society Georgia Foundation), and the development of the National Safe Blood Policy and Operational Plan (funded by the World Bank).

Before joining AIHA in 1999, Dr. Avaliani held a dual position as a deputy director of the Department of Public Health and the component coordinator for the WB Georgia project. In this capacity Dr. Avaliani led efforts to develop national health policy and strategy in health promotion, surveillance, and disease prevention, as well as to develop training programs in the field. She has actively participated in the restructuring and formation of the new public health system in Georgia in 1998-1999. Dr. Avaliani led the efforts in establishing a non-communicable disease surveillance and health promotion sector at the National Center for Diseases Control and directed first activities of the sector. Prior to focusing on public health work Dr. Avaliani practiced clinical medicine at the Department of Myocardial Infarction and Cardiology at Tbilisi City Hospital No.1 in 1993-1996.

As a public health expert, Dr. Avaliani served as an advisor and a member of number of advisory committees and working groups at MOLHSA, and Georgia (2005-2009) and Azerbaijan (2005-2008) Country Coordination Mechanisms (CCM) for the Global Fund projects. She has also participated in various public health research as well as program monitoring and evaluation projects in Georgia and Caucasus region.

Dr. Avaliani served as a healthcare expert at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France (2001-2011) and, in this capacity, participated in the expert committees on various public health policy topics. Since 2007 she is involved in academic education and, is now an adjunct professor at the Master of Public Policy program at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) and the Master of Health Administration program at the University of Georgia teaching following courses: healthcare policy and systems, healthcare administration and the management of healthcare organization. She is a co-author of several peer-reviewed publications.

Dr. Avaliani earned her MPH from the Netherlands School of Public Health in Utrecht, Netherlands in 1998, and her MD, with a specialty in internal medicine, from Tbilisi State Medical University in 1994. In June 2013 Dr. Avaliani completed the consultant orientation/training workshop for Grant Management Solutions (GMS) project, conducted by Management Sciences for Health in Arlington, VA and thus is well familiar with the Global Fund approach to project management, CCM governance and other matters.

Maia Kajaia, MD, MS

Dr. Maia Kajaia will serve as a HIV/AIDS prevention project manager and will provide overall management of program activities. Since 1998 she holds MD from the Highest Medical School AIETI. In 2004 Dr. Kajaia graduated School of Public Health at State University of New York and received Master's Degree in Epidemiology. In 2003-2004 in parallel to studying at MS Degree Program she completed a one-year internship at Bureau of Women's Health at New York State Department of Health, Albany, NY where she was involved in the project promoting voluntary HIV counseling and testing among women in New York State. In 2003 Dr. Kajaia completed Yale International AIDS Summer Institute at Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS at Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Currently she is a head of Epidemiologic Department at Health Research Union (HRU). She has extensive experience in directing and management of various public health projects carried out by HRU including: coordinator of USAID funded project "Youth peer education on healthy lifestyles including negative aspects of illicit drug use and associated risks including HIV infection " within Georgia HIV Prevention Project (2011-2012); manager of the project "Promotion of healthy lifestyles among juveniles in conflict with law" funded Ministry of Justice of Georgia (2012-2013); manager of "Knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) survey about TB among high risk groups and general population of Georgia" within Georgia Tuberculosis Prevention Project funded by USAID (2012); PI of the study "HCV transmission between cohabitating heterosexual partners" funded by Fogarty International Center, NIH (2009-2010); PI of the "Study of molecular epidemiology of visceral leishmaniasis in Georgia" funded by Georgian National Science Foundation (GNSF) (2009-2010); As a senior researcher she was actively involved in designing and implementation of the

following studies: “The public health impact of couple oriented HIV counseling and testing among pregnant women in low HIV prevalence countries” funded by French National Agency for AIDS Research (ANRS) (2007-2012); “Prevalence and awareness of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection among Georgian women funded by GNSF (2009-2011); ”Prevalence and awareness of blood borne infections among health care workers in Georgia” funded by CRDF (2005-2007).

In 2011 she served as a consultant for the project “Strengthening strategic information base through operationalizing a national HIV M&E system and implementing the MoT (Modes of Transmission) study and Data Triangulation” funded by UNAIDS. She is an author and co-author of a monograph on HIV/AIDS and several publications in international peer-reviewed scientific journals. For the past 5 years she a member of local IRB and participated in ethical review of biomedical research projects conducted by HRU and other leading research institutions of the country.

Maia Butsashvili, MD, MS, PhD

Dr. Maia Butsashvili is a founding member and the Executive Director of HRU. In addition to the Executive Director’s functions she will also serve as the Technical Adviser in HIV/AIDS, TB and other infectious diseases and public health as required by the project.

Dr. Butsashvili is an infectious disease physician, public health expert and scientist with over 15 years of experience in public health and epidemiology, clinical medicine and research. She is currently the executive director, a lead scientist/epidemiologist and a multiple project manager at HRU. She is also an active clinician infectious disease specialist. Dr. Butsashvili received her PhD in Epidemiology (with concentration in Infectious diseases epidemiology) from School of Public Health, State University of New York in 2011. In 2000 she received her master’s degree in epidemiology of infectious diseases at State University of New York and her MD from Tbilisi State Medical University in 1993.

In 2010-2012 Dr. Butsashvili worked as a Deputy Director of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) and, in this capacity was responsible for surveillance and epidemiology, medical statistics and laboratory diagnostic functions of NCDC network. She has actively participated in the design and implementation of the state public health programs. Along with these functions, Dr. Butsashvili assumed administrative responsibilities and, was a member of the institutional procurement committee. In addition Dr. Butsashvili was a science director of the Reproductive Health Survey (RHS) implemented by NCDC and funded by USAID, UNFPA and UNICEF and an advisor for Malaria Elimination Project funded GFATM. She is a co-author of the paper “Elimination of Malaria in Georgia”, published in Acta Tropica. Since 2008 she is an adjunct professor at International School of Public Health teaching 3 courses: principles of epidemiology, infectious diseases epidemiology and multidisciplinary aspects of HIV/AIDS.

In 2011 she was director of the project “Strengthen strategic information base through operationalizing a national HIV M&E system and implementing the MoT (Modes of Transmission) study and Data Triangulation” funded by UNAIDS.

Prior to joining NCDC, Dr. Butsashvili worked with HRU (then MCCU) since its foundation in 2000 through 2010 and, in this capacity served as a project manager and/or a principal investigator of HRU's main projects, including: Personal and professional development of women scientists in Georgia, funded by Elsevier foundation; Public health impact of couple oriented HIV counseling among pregnant women; Prevention of mother to child HIV transmission in Georgia (Glaser foundation program); Prevalence and awareness of blood borne infections among health care workers in Georgia (CRDF project); Prevalence and awareness of human papillomavirus infection among reproductive aged women in Georgia (GNSF); Health care associated infections in obstetrics and gynecology settings in Georgia (NATO, JSI). Dr. Butsashvili started her clinical practice in 1993 as an infectious disease physician specializing in HIV/AIDS and practiced at the National AIDS center through 2000. Dr. Butsashvili was a co-PI on multiple projects and is the author of several book chapters and 21 scientific peer-reviewed publications (pubmed cited).

After assuming the Executive Director's position at HRU, Dr. Butsashvili expanded further her executive duties overseeing administrative and financial functions at HRU.

George Kamkamidze, MD, PhD, MS

Dr. George Kamkamidze will ensure development of proper monitoring and evaluation framework, data collection/management, and implementation of other M&E activities under the project. George Kamkamidze, MD, MS, PhD has an extensive experience in working in different fields to HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. These include basic and epidemiological research, conducting public health projects, implementation of modern diagnostic methods. He has a solid background and expertise in laboratory sciences, clinical medicine (infectious diseases and immunology) and biostatistics. Currently Dr. Kamkamidze is the senior staff member at HRU (former Chair of the Board at MCCU), associate professor at the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, Tbilisi State Medical University (TSMU) and an adjunct professor at the International School of Public Health, TSMU, Tbilisi, Georgia. He got his MD from the Department of Pediatrics of TSMU in 1991 and the degree of the Candidate of Sciences from the Department of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, TSMU in 1994. During 1994-1996 he worked as a pediatrician at the Medical Rehabilitation Center for Children, Tbilisi, Georgia and during 1997-1998 was the head of the Laboratory for Clinical Immunology, Georgian AIDS and Clinical Immunology Research Center. In 1998-2000 Dr. Kamkamidze was a postdoctoral researcher (fellowship from the Fogarty International Center (FIC), NIH) at the Wadsworth Center for Laboratories and Research, Albany, NY in the field of HIV virology and genotyping. During 2000-2001 he was a postdoctoral researcher (fellowship from the European AIDS Clinical Society) at the Laboratory of Immunology, Hospital Pitie-Salpetriere, Paris, France in the field of HIV cellular and molecular immunology. In 2005 Dr. Kamkamidze received his PhD in Immunology from TSMU (the topic of the thesis included the investigation of the molecular and immunological mechanisms of HIV persistence). In 2009 he graduated and received his MS in Biometry and Statistics from the School of Public Health, SUNY, Albany, NY (MS degree program supported by FIC, NIH). He is the member of the Pan-

American Society for Clinical Virology, International AIDS Society and European AIDS Clinical Society.

Khatuna Khatiashvili, MD, MS, MPH

Since 2003 Dr. Khatuna Khatiashvili holds MD from Tbilisi State Medical Academy. In 2007 Dr. Khatiashvili graduated from the Research Institute of Psychology, Department of Clinical, General and Applied Psychology and received Master's Degree in Psychology. Her research was on "Depressional Realism". Since 2007, she worked as a Psychologist-Consultant on the project: "HIV/AIDS Harm Reduction Among Injection Drug-users", with the NGO "Imedi", in Batumi, Georgia. During the psychological occupation she has dealt with various types of personality who had very heavy emotional and physical problems like: drug and alcohol abusers, HIV infected victims of violence etc. Working with injection drug users at NGO "Imedi" played important role in defining Dr. Khatiashvili's future career directions with the emphasis on harm reduction. Dr. Khatiashvili became a Fogarty Fellow of the Emory AIDS International Research and Training Program in 2009 and earned MPH degree in Behavioral Science and Public Health in 2011. Having acquired master degree in public health at Emory University, GA, gave her the excessive experience of mastering grants and proposal writing, program design and evaluation. During the Master's program Dr. Khatiashvili completed courses on HIV/AIDS for international fellows to achieve the professional level in this field. For her masters Capstone she developed Curriculum for HIV/HCV & Injection Drug Harm Reduction among Georgian Adolescents. In 2012 Khatiashvili worked as a deputy head of onco-hematology and neuroscience departments at M.Iashvili Central Hospital in Tbilisi, Georgia. From April 2012 Khatuna became a staff member of NGO Welfare Foundation. Currently she is involved in the following projects carried out by Welfare Foundation: Diabetes Prevention and Care Improvement; The main challenges in establishing universal health care system in Georgia and Westminster Foundation for Democracy NGO Program in Georgia.

Marika Kochlamazashvili, MD, MPH

Dr. Marika Kochlamazashvili will serve as a TB project Coordinator. She started her career in UNDP project „Capacity Building of Public Defender's Office" as an intern of Senior Expert of Patient's Rights Center. In 2010, Dr. Kochlamazashvili graduated Tbilisi State Medical University School of Public Health in Tbilisi, Georgia and received MPH degree. During one semester of her MPH program she has completed advanced coursework in epidemiology at the University at Albany School of Public Health as part of the NYS-ITRP Georgia-US Collaborative MPH Program. The program was sponsored by the Fogarty International Center at the National Institutes of Health. In 2009 Dr. Kochlamazashvili completed Graduate Summer Institute of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD, USA. Currently she is an Epidemiologist, Research Scientist at Health Research Union (HRU). She has been involved in numerous peer education programs (PE) to promote healthy behaviors among youth through peer education on healthy lifestyle, reproductive health, HIV, TB and illicit drug use. She has extensive experience in public health project management conducted by HRU. Dr. Kochlamazashvili is PI of the project "Evaluation of risk factors of transmission of blood-borne

diseases among dental health care workers in Georgia” funded by Fogarty International Center, NIH (2013-2014); She was field supervisor of the project “Knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) survey about TB among high risk groups and general population of Georgia” within Georgia Tuberculosis Prevention Project funded by USAID; Currently she is the researcher in the project “Influence of immunogenetic factors on the course of hepatitis C virus infection” funded by Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation.

Tinatin Abzianidze, MD, MPH

Dr. Abzianidze is working at Health Research Union. After completion of her training program she was actively involved in public health research projects, as epidemiologist/research scientist and educational projects in the field of HIV and reproductive health. She was co-investigator for the project “Prevalence and awareness of human papillomavirus among Georgian reproductive aged women”. The results of the study are accepted for publication (Dr. Abzianidze is co-author of the manuscript) by Journal of family medicine and reproductive health.

Dr. Abzianidze was also participating in epidemiological research within the project “Framing potential research in the area of immunogenetic, viral and behavioral risk factors of clinical course of HCV infection in Georgia”.

Tinatin is also trainer of HIV/STI and reproductive health within two projects: “