

AIDSTAR-Two Project Trip Report – Morocco, Lebanon, United Kingdom April 16 - 27, 2013

Printed April 2013

5 key words:

Morocco
Training
Planning
Site Visits
MENA

This report was made possible through support provided by the US Agency for International Development, under the terms of Contract Number **GHH-1-00-07-00068-01**. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the US Agency for International Development.

AIDSTAR-Two
Management Sciences for Health
4301 N. Fairfax Drive
Arlington, VA 22203
Telephone: (703) 524-6575
www.msh.org

AIDSTAR-Two Project Trip Report

1. Scope of Work:

Destination and Client(s)/ Partner(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morocco, Lebanon, United Kingdom • International HIV/AIDS Alliance (Morocco and United Kingdom), AMSED (Morocco), SIDC and sub-partners RANAA, Vivre Positif, Oui pour la Vie, and Helem (Lebanon)
Traveler(s) Name, Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curtis Feather, Senior Finance and Administration Officer (AIDSTAR-Two Project/MSH) • Ousmane Amadou Sy, Independent Consultant (contracted by AIDSTAR-Two)
Date of travel on Trip	16 th -27 th April, 2013
Purpose of trip	Conduct a training of trainers and planning sessions in Morocco to provide follow up one-to-one tailored technical support for MENA grantee implementing partners regarding USAID/USG rules and regulations and financial management best practices and help prepare the organizations for close-out of AIDSTAR-Two funding and transition to a new mechanism. Conduct site visits and follow up TA for partners in Lebanon, and conduct debrief meetings with the Alliance staff in the UK.
Objectives/Activities/ Deliverables	<p>The objectives of this TDY were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review progress made by the MENA grantees on USAID compliance and financial management best practices action plans and recommendations developed during previous technical support visits/activities (Fall 2011 internal Alliance compliance audit, January 2012 regional USG rules/regulations and financial management workshop, December 2012 follow up technical support visit); • Provide updates on USAID rules and regulations • Provide technical support (where necessary) on financial management systems strengthening; • Support AIDSTAR-Two project closeout preparation and implementation processes at the grantee level. <p>During the visit, many documents and products were developed and shared with the grantees. These deliverables (related to USAID compliance, financial and grant management, closeout process, etc.) are listed in section 5 below.</p>
Background/Context, if appropriate.	<p>Since October 2012, the AIDSTAR-Two Project has implemented the MENA regional program and has provided grant funding (beginning May 2012) and technical support for CSO's in four countries (Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia) working with key populations (MSM, PLHA, etc.). MSH provides funding, oversight, and limited technical assistance through a subcontract to the Alliance, and the Alliance in turn issues grants to the local partners, manages the regional program, and provides the majority of the technical support for the grantees. The primary grantees in the four countries are APCS, SIDC, AMSED and ATL, and there are also various sub-partners.</p>

The contents of this report are for the use of AIDSTAR-Two staff only and should not be shared without permission from the individual who completed the report.

AIDSTAR-Two Project Trip Report

AIDSTAR-Two has undertaken several USAID rules and regulations compliance and financial management strengthening activities for the MENA grantees in the last year and a half. The Alliance worked with the MENA partners through other projects and funding streams previously, and they conducted an internal compliance review/audit in mid-2011. AIDSTAR-Two then conducted a regional USAID compliance and financial management workshop in early 2012 and follow-up visits later that year to review compliance status and technical support needs for each grantee.

The AIDSTAR-Two project implementation period for the grantees has been extended to the end of July 2013, and the MENA partners are now implementing their final project activities and preparing for the closeout process.

This USAID follow-up and closeout preparation visit was conducted jointly by MSH and Alliance members of the AIDSTAR-Two Project team as well as a consultant contracted by the Alliance to review progress and adherence to USG rules and regulations compliance and financial management best practices by the MENA partners and to provide TA where needed. The visit also provided an opportunity to support the grantees as they prepare for AIDSTAR-Two Project closeout and discuss their perspectives for the future.

2. Major Trip Accomplishments: Should include the major programmatic goals realized, relevant metrics, and stories of impact from the trip.

Overall, the TDY went quite well, and the field team was able to meet and work with all the key partners and stakeholders in Morocco, Lebanon and the UK and meet the trip objectives. This TDY was divided into three main components, which correspond with the different locations where the field team accomplished the work, as described below:

1. Rabat (Morocco): Training of Trainers and Process Planning Sessions (April 17-19):

- In Rabat, the TDY team worked with the Alliance MENA program Regional Coordinator and reviewed and discussed the results of prior grantee visits and training workshops, defined the process to be followed during the grantee visits, and finalized the documents and tools to be shared with the partners for the USG compliance/financial management systems review and closeout preparation, which included:
 - *MENA Partner Profile:* Consolidated summary document prepared for each of the four NGOs with all the relevant information on the grantees, summaries of prior visits and compliance action plans and recommendations, progress and actions taken as reported by the grantee, a summary of the potential priority technical support needs to be completed before the closure of the project, and an area to add notes and update compliance action plans during the final pre-closeout visits;
 - *Grantee Closeout Matrix Template:* Excel matrix with Gantt chart listing the key areas which need to properly completed and documented for grant closure purposes and the person responsible for each task.
 - *Closeout Checklists:* Several simple checklist tools provided to the grantees for closing out personnel,

The contents of this report are for the use of AIDSTAR-Two staff only and should not be shared without permission from the individual who completed the report.

AIDSTAR-Two Project Trip Report

consultant, and subaward files.

- The team also conducted a detailed review and refresher of key USG rules and regulations, including the following:
 - Acquisition vs. assistance and overview of rules and regulations frameworks
 - Standard Provisions for Non-US NGOs
 - A-122 cost principles
 - Cost share overview
- The team also discussed the grantee's financial reporting processes and templates in use as well as subaward management, both of which were identified as key areas to follow up with directly with the grantees.
- While working onsite at the AMSED office, the team also met with the AMSED management team (who had previously indicated to the Alliance that they were not available and did not require additional technical support/closeout support visits from AIDSTAR-Two) to discuss their needs, and during this meeting AMSED made a request to receive a technical support visit for compliance/financial management follow-up and closeout preparation (as well as a request for additional TA related to their new accounting system and financial management training for their Global Fund sub-subrecipients). However, the team later asked AMSED to provide responses to several questions regarding their specific needs and actions taken to date before determining if an additional visit will be programmed.

2. Beirut (Lebanon): USG Compliance/Financial Management Best Practices Review and Closeout Planning (April 22-24 with grantees):

- In Beirut, the field team completed various tasks with the MENA grantee SIDC and its local partners (RANAA, Vivre Positif, Helem, Oui pour la Vie):
 - *Introduction Meeting:* during which the objectives of the visit and an overview of SIDC as well as the AIDSTAR-Two Project and MSH were presented; the partnership arrangements between USAID, MSH and the Alliance within the AIDSTAR-Two Project were also explained in detail to the partner;
 - *Review of SIDC USAID Compliance and Best Practices Status:* using the partner profile document as a guide, the team discussed the previous compliance areas identified, updated the partner profile on progress made and actions accomplished by the grantee, and conducted reviews of samples of files and processes in place by SIDC with a focus on identifying outstanding issues to be addressed prior to AIDSTAR-Two closeout;
 - *Financial Reporting and Subaward Management:* The team conducted detailed discussions around the financial reporting formats and challenges the partners have encountered as well as their subaward management process, templates, reporting formats, and payment schemes.
 - *Technical Assistance Provision:* The team provided targeted technical assistance in various areas throughout the review process, but particular attention was given to procurement practices, policies and formats and bank reconciliation processes. Standard provisions related to these areas were also reviewed in detail with the partners.
 - *Closeout Preparation:* using the closeout matrix and checklists as a guide, the team led a plenary session with SIDC and its local partners' managers to go through the key tasks needing to be completed and documented during the grant and sub closure process. The partners were able to discuss and agree on key closeout products and deliverables required for the AIDSTAR-Two Project before the grant end-date, and the roles and responsibilities between SIDC and the sub-partners were further discussed and clarified.
 - *Debrief with SIDC:* following the various meetings, the team met with the SIDC management team to review the activities completed over the three days and to agree on next steps. The TDY team agreed to

AIDSTAR-Two Project Trip Report

incorporate final revisions in the partner profile document, incorporate agreed upon compliance actions in the closeout matrix, and then send the final materials to SIDC.

- The team also met individually with the four sub-awardees in Lebanon (Vivre Positif and RANAA based in the SIDC office, and Helem and Oui pour la Vie through site visits to their separate offices). The subawardees presented on their organizations and activities, Curtis presented on AIDSTAR-Two and the USAID/MSH/Alliance structure, and the group discussed the relationship and processes in place with SIDC, challenges encountered in implementation, and goals and prospects for the future.
- The different meetings and working sessions with the SIDC team and its local partners enabled the field team to better understand the granting relationship and processes in place between the umbrella partner (SIDC) and the subawardee organizations. A direct payment system/cost reimbursement mechanism has been put in place by SIDC to manage all the in-country project funds and provide financial support to the local partners to implement their project activities. The main reason for this system is that the local partners are not fully/officially registered and/or do not have sufficient management structures and controls in place to directly receive and account for the USAID funding.

- Brighton (UK): Debrief Meetings with Curtis Feather and the Alliance Secretariat Team (April 26):
- Curtis Feather traveled onward from Lebanon to the UK to meet with the Alliance Secretariat Team to debrief on the work completed in Morocco and Lebanon and the next steps. The one day visit included many meetings and key discussions, including:
 - *Initial Debrief Meeting with the Secretariat MENA Support Team and the Regional Coordinator in Morocco:* Discussed work completed in Morocco and Lebanon as well as key findings and next steps with partners in Lebanon and the region.
 - *Meeting with the Alliance Contracts Staff:* Discussed process completed in Lebanon, items identified during the Lebanon visit, subaward management processes, reporting formats, and closeout planning for MENA and the overall Alliance subcontract.
 - *Meeting with the Alliance Finance Staff:* Discussed challenges with the grantee financial reporting formats and issues identified during grantee visits, possible revisions to the templates to enhance financial management practices for the grantees and the MENA support team, the frequency of grantee reporting and the importance of capturing accruals and subaward expenses as closeout approaches, upcoming Alliance NICRA adjustments, and closeout planning for MENA and the overall Alliance subcontract.
 - *Meeting with the Africa Team Lead to Discuss AMSED:* Discussed AMSED's recent request for TA (following prior communications declining the support), the Alliance's previous internal audit of AMSED as an Alliance Linking Organization and follow up status, subaward management and invoicing challenges, and alignment of future technical support cycles.
 - *Final Debrief/Recap with the Secretariat MENA Support Team and the Regional Coordinator in Morocco:* Recapped the meetings conducted throughout the day, discussed key findings and next steps, and discussed lessons learned for future grantee cycles, including:
 - The need for proper grantee inductions/orientations at the start of each project cycle
 - The need for more robust and individualized compliance and financial management TA cycles/plans for each NGO that include regular follow up and TA site visits; the recommendation is to conduct NGO assessments at the start of the next funding cycle to help inform and direct the individualized TA cycles/plans for each NGO
 - The need to focus more on subaward management processes and systems to reduce risks and also to utilize the grant and sub-grant cycles as capacity building and organizational strengthening

AIDSTAR-Two Project Trip Report

tools and opportunities for the partners

3. Next steps: Key actions to continue and/or complete work from trip.

Description of task	Responsible staff	Due date
Update the closeout matrix with the agreed upon compliance/financial management recommendations to be addressed by SIDC and its partners prior to grant closeout ; send to SIDC	Curtis/Manuel	May 14
Complete the closeout matrix by assigning responsible staff and due dates for each action; send to the Alliance	Nina (SIDC)	May 22
Ensure all outstanding compliance and financial management actions are addressed by SIDC, per the closeout matrix	Manuel/Curtis	Per dates in closeout matrix
Edit and summarize the notes in the SIDC Partner Profile document; send to SIDC	Curtis/Manuel	May 14
Provide the Alliance, SIDC, and its partners all the tools, templates, presentations, and other materials used in the ToT and onsite with the partners	Curtis	May 14
Prepare an updated summary version of the grantee Standard Provisions; provide to the Alliance for translation and dissemination to the partners	Curtis	May 24
Conduct regular follow up and check ins with SIDC on its closeout progress/send the closeout matrix and updates to the Alliance on a bi-weekly basis	Manuel/Nina	Biweekly
Ensure AMSED returns their completed NGO profile document, analyze the needs, and look for cost savings in the budget to cover a closeout/follow up TA visit	Manuel	May 17
Translate the NGO profile documents for Algeria and Tunisia and send them to the partners for completion prior to the next visits	Manuel/Wilson	May 24
Confirm dates with Manuel and ATL and APSC, and conduct follow up visits with the partners	Ousmane/Manuel	June-July

4. Contacts: List key individuals contacted during your trip, including the contacts' organization, all contact information, and brief notes on interactions with the person.

Name	Function	Home organization	Notes
Abdelkader Moumine	Executive Director	AMSED	Morocco
Rachida Akerbib	Manager Health Department	AMSED	Morocco
Bouchra	Finance Manager	AMSED	Morocco
Manuel Couffoungel	MENA Regional Coordinator	Alliance	Morocco
Karine Nasser	Executive Director	SIDC	Lebanon
Nina Richa	Finance & Admin Assistant	SIDC	Lebanon
Nadia Badran	Program Coordinator	SIDC	Lebanon
Golda Eid	Network Coordinator	RANAA	Lebanon
Dalal Farah Baird	Program Officer	RANAA	Lebanon

The contents of this report are for the use of AIDSTAR-Two staff only and should not be shared without permission from the individual who completed the report.

AIDSTAR-Two Project Trip Report

Rita Wahab	Program Assistant	Vivre Positif	Lebanon
Rabih Maher	Field Work Coordinator	Helem/Oui pour la Vie	Lebanon
Elie El Mik	Chairman/President	Oui pour la Vie	Lebanon
Cat Simmons	MENA Program Manager	Alliance	UK
Wilson Ashimwe	MENA Program Assistant	Alliance	UK
Simon Topping	Senior Contracts Officer	Alliance	UK
Ian Kidd	Finance Officer/Reporting	Alliance	UK
Alain Manouan	Head of Africa Team	Alliance	UK

5. Description of Relevant Documents / Addendums: Give the document's file name, a brief description of the relevant document's value to other staff, as well as the document's location in eRooms or the MSH network. Examples could include finalized products and/or formal presentations, TraiNet Participant List, Participant Contact sheet, and Meeting/Workshop Participant Evaluation form are examples of relevant documents

File name	Description of file	Location of file
MENA Partner Profiles	Word documents for SIDC, AMSED, ATL, APCS	AIDSTAR-Two P drive
Closeout Matrix Template and Files	Excel sheet + other checklist annexes/tools (Word, Excel)	AIDSTAR-Two P drive
Standard Provisions Summary	Pending updates by Curtis	AIDSTAR-Two P drive
MENA Partner Training Materials	Presentations and other files used during ToT and partner visits	AIDSTAR-Two P drive