

5 key words:

Algeria  
PLHIV  
HIV  
AIDS  
MENA

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## AIDSTAR-Two Project Trip Report

### **1. Scope of Work:**

Destination and Client(s)/ Partner(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, UK</li> <li>• ATL, APCS, AMSED, International HIV/AIDS Alliance</li> </ul>
Traveler(s) Name, Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curtis Feather, Senior Finance and Administration Officer (AIDSTAR-Two Project/MSH)</li> <li>• Ousmane Amadou Sy, Independent Consultant</li> </ul>
Date of travel on Trip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July 3-5- Tunisia TA (Ousmane Sy and Curtis Feather)</li> <li>• July 7-9- Algeria TA (Ousmane Sy and Curtis Feather)</li> <li>• July 11-12- Morocco TA (Curtis Feather)</li> <li>• July 15-16- UK debrief and closeout planning (Curtis Feather)</li> </ul>
Purpose of trip	Provide follow up one-to-one tailored technical support for MENA grantee implementing partners in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco 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 debriefing meetings with the Alliance staff in the UK.
Objectives/Activities/ Deliverables	<p>This technical support visit was scheduled to fulfill the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review progress made by ATL, APCS, and AMSED on USAID compliance action plans and recommendations from previous technical support visits/activities (internal compliance review 2011, Regional USAID compliance workshop 2012, USAID Compliance Follow-up visit 2012, etc.)</li> <li>• Provide updates on USAID rules and regulations and provide technical support (where necessary) on financial management systems strengthening and best practices</li> <li>• Support AIDSTAR-Two project partners on closeout preparation activities.</li> </ul> <p>During the TDY, the team utilized a partner profile document summarizing the visit findings and progress, helped each partner complete a closeout matrix with key dates and point persons for various closeout-related tasks, and provided face-to-face guidance and training to the partners' finance managers and teams on financial management and closeout.</p>
Background/Context, if appropriate.	<p>Since May 2011, the AIDSTAR-Two Project has implemented work with key populations (sex workers, MSM, PLHA, etc.) in several countries in the MENA region (Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia). The program has been primarily implemented by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance and local grantee partners APCS, SIDC, AMSED and ATL.</p> <p>The AIDSTAR-Two project has implemented several USAID compliance and financial management strengthening activities with the MENA grantees:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) USAID compliance audit in mid-2011 (completed by the Alliance prior to AIDSTAR-Two funding)</li> <li>b) Regional USAID compliance and financial management workshop conducted in January/February 2012</li> <li>c) Follow-up visits in 2012 to review and monitor compliance status of each</li> </ol>

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- partner
- d) Technical support and closeout preparation planning in Morocco and TS visit to SIDC and local partners in Lebanon in April 2013

The grants were extended to the end of July 2013, and at the time of the July visits to the partners in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, the partners were finalizing implementation and preparing for grant closeout.

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

Overall, the final technical support visit with each partner went well. The field team was able to meet and work with all key project staff members in ATL, APCS, and AMSED (at minimum, the finance manager/accountant and the project coordinator). The Senior Management Team (SMT) and Board of Directors at APCS were particularly engaged and mobilized during the visit, where a key meeting was conducted with the entire APCS staff at arrival and two debrief sessions were later held with the Board of Directors. Curtis Feather was also able to fully debrief on each partner visit and various closeout-related items with the International HIV/AIDS Alliance MENA team and other key staff in Brighton, UK. Highlights from the field visits are provided in the following sections.

### 1. Field visits: USAID compliance and financial management technical support and closeout preparation: ATL and APCS

- The Team conducted the partner visits following a standard approach (per the April 2013 visit to SIDC and other partners in Lebanon):
  - Introduction meetings: These meetings included the key grantee staff (and the full NGO staff in the case of APCS) and provided the field team and the partner the opportunity to discuss the objectives of the visit and review and validate the agenda and work schedules. Each partner presented their organization and their work under AIDSTAR-Two, and the technical support team presented the partners with an overview of the AIDSTAR-Two Project and the partnership arrangements between USAID, MSH and the Alliance.
  - Compliance status review: In the April 2013 preparation visit in Morocco, the technical support team prepared a short profile document for each partner compiling key information and action points from previous compliance and financial management reviews, and the team used these profiles to guide the process and help focus on key aspects. During the July visits, each partner updated the team regarding their status for each of compliance action points. Narrative notes on the compliance status and key recommendations for each partner are captured in the revised partner profiles. The team also reviewed supporting documentation and selected files to confirm actions taken and to provide additional recommendations.
  - Closeout preparation: During the compliance review, the team identified specific compliance action points for the partner to complete prior to closeout, as well as other longer-term strengthening activities. The team then worked with each partner to complete a closeout matrix listing key steps, dates, and persons responsible, and they added the partner-specific compliance action items to this list.
  - Debrief meetings: At the end of each partner visit, the team conducted plenary sessions with partner staff (including the full Board in the case of APCS) to discuss the visit accomplishments and review and discuss the immediate and longer-term compliance action items and recommendations.

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- Other Technical Support: Throughout the visits, the technical support team also provided technical assistance to the partners in a variety of areas including file management, bank reconciliations, petty cash management, sub-award management, procurement, inventory/asset management, personnel files, etc. Throughout this process, the team provided the partners with various tools and templates that they can utilize moving forward.

### Selected Grantee Visit Findings:

The team agreed with the grantees on actions to be addressed prior to the closeout of the AIDSTAR-Two grant cycle (such as updating certain procurement or HR files), and the team also presented the grantee partners with various medium and longer-term recommendations for consideration in future cycles. The following notes summarize some of the key findings from the recent technical support cycle.

### Tunisia- ATL:

- Strengths and Improvements Noted Since 2012 Regional Workshop
  - Improved overall filing and documentation
  - Usage of an electronic accounting system
  - Completion of bank reconciliations through the accounting system
  - Thorough staff recruitment/selection files
- Other Areas Being Addressed and for Future Focus
  - Development of written procedures and policies compiled in an admin/operations manual
  - Procurement files and complete documentation
  - Establishment of individual personnel files
  - Complete timesheet filing
  - Cash management (cash advance management and creation of a petty cash system)

### Algeria- APCS:

- Strengths and Improvements Noted Since 2012 Regional Workshop
  - Committee review for procurement vendor selection
  - Timesheets complete and on file
  - Inventory/asset management procedures
  - Peer Educator files and monitoring process
  - Maintenance of financial and HR files in secure, locked cabinets
- Other Areas Being Addressed and for Future Focus
  - Training for new finance/accounting staff
  - Cash management (bank and petty cash reconciliations)
  - Procurement files and full documentation
  - Internal controls and prior approvals (usage of payment/disbursement request voucher forms)
  - Improved accounting system per national norms
  - Revision of procedures and policies manual (adjust thresholds, add travel and advances)
  - Consolidation of files and improved organization

### Morocco- AMSED:

- Strengths and Improvements Noted Since 2012 Regional Workshop

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- Strong procurement practices and documentation
- Well-organized and thorough personnel files
- Sub-grant management system
- Other Areas Being Addressed and for Future Focus
  - Revision of procedures and policies manual (adjust thresholds, revise per restructured finance unit)
  - Revision of micro-purchase threshold and policies to reduce bottlenecks and seek efficiencies
  - Complete timesheet filing
  - Organization-wide financial and technical monitoring
  - Information/data management

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

Description of task	Responsible staff	Due date
Conduct regular follow up with partners to ensure they complete their action plans and closeout matrices.	Manuel C. (Alliance)	Complete
Debrief with AIDSTAR-Two (MSH and Alliance) staff on the visit, key findings, and next steps.	Curtis F.	Complete
Debrief with LMG team and assist with planning during project transition period from AIDSTAR-Two to LMG.	Curtis F.	Complete

**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
Bilel Mahjoubi	Coordinator	ATL	Tunisia
Mazen Aouainia	Finance Manager	ATL	Tunisia
Raho Faiza	Executive Director	APCS	Algeria
Omar Ouadad	Project Coordinator	APCS	Algeria
Ainkouir Mohamed Amine	Accountant	APCS	Algeria
Abdelaziz Tadjeddine	Chairman	APCS	Algeria
Fatiha Razik	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	APCS	Algeria
Djamila Ouabdesselem	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	APCS	Algeria
Illyes Kessal	Secretary General	APCS	Algeria
Zoubida Bouzada	Treasurer General	APCS	Algeria
Khadija Khouti	Medical Doctor (VCT)	APCS	Algeria
Karima Mellal	Psychologue	APCS	Algeria
Bouchra	Finance Manager	AMSED	Morocco
Said Karouiche	Project Coordinator	AMSED	Morocco
Abdelkader Moumane	President	AMSED	Morocco
Manuel Couffignal	Regional MENA Advisor	Alliance	Morocco
Cat Simmons	Grants Manager	Alliance	UK
Wilson Ashimwe	Grant Assistant	Alliance	UK
Andy Gilles	Head of Finance Team	Alliance	UK
Alain Manouan	Head of Africa Team	Alliance	UK

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**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
Partner Profile	Word document summarizing the various partner visits, progress to date, ongoing challenges, and areas to focus in future cycles	AIDSTAR-Two P Drive
Closeout Matrix	Excel matrix with closeout plan for each partner	AIDSTAR-Two P Drive
Closeout Checklists and Templates	Various file checklists (Personnel, Grants, etc.)	AIDSTAR-Two P Drive