

AIDSTAR-Two Project Trip Report

AIDSTAR-Two Project Trip Report – Morocco & UK February 20-25, 2013

Printed April 2013

5 key words:

Rabat
Brighton
HIV
Prevention
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

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1. Scope of Work:

Destination and Client(s)/ Partner(s)	<p>Morocco:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rabat: Association Marocaine de Solidarité, Education et Développement (AMSED) and OPALS Rabat - Fes: OPALS Fes <p>UK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brighton: International HIV/AIDS Alliance (The Alliance)
Traveler(s) Name, Role	<p>Kate Killberg, Senior Program Officer, The Alliance Yadira Almodóvar-Díaz, Portfolio Manager, AIDSTAR-Two, MSH</p>
Date of travel on Trip	<p>Morocco – February 20-24, 2013 UK – February 25, 2013</p>
Purpose of trip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To conduct a site visit to implementing partners (AMSED, OPALS Rabat and OPALS Fes) that deliver HIV prevention and care services to key populations in Morocco. - To conduct a debriefing session with the Alliance/Brighton team that supports the MENA project and learn about the new Alliance’s strategic plan and their various projects focused on key populations.
Objectives/Activities/ Deliverables	<p>The specific activities accomplished during this TDY are described below.</p>
Background/Context, if appropriate.	<p>The strategic objective of the Responding to Most-At-Risk-Populations in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) Project is to increase HIV/AIDS programming that meets the needs of key populations in this region. In order to reach this objective, the project is focusing on the following priorities in Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide support to community-based programs for MSM at country level - Increase the involvement and support for people living with HIV (PLHIV) in the MENA region - Reinforce the capacity of civil society in MENA - Support partners to influence the enabling environment for MARPs in MENA <p>This TDY included Laurie Rushton, AIDSTAR-Two’s COR and Billy Pick, HIV/AIDS Senior Advisor from USAID, Yadira Almodóvar-Díaz, Portfolio Manager from AIDSTAR-Two/MSH and Kate Killberg, Senior Program Officer from AIDSTAR-Two/Alliance. During the visit, this team were able to meet with AMSED, OPALS Rabat, OPALS Fes and several local partners including the MOH, UNAIDS, The Global Fund and others. A debriefing session was also conducted at the Alliance’s office in Brighton. Below is a summary of the activities accomplished during this visit.</p>

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

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1) Met with AMSED staff to discuss their overall program, successes, challenges and opportunities for the future.

Morocco has the oldest and one of the most vigorous HIV/AIDS programs in the MENA Region. Since 1999, the Alliance has been collaborating with a non-thematic CSO called AMSED to address issues related to HIV prevention, care and treatment for MSM. Given its broad focus on development issues, AMSED has been successful at becoming a key partner in collaborating closely with the MOH, UNAIDS, the Global Fund, and the HIV/AIDS thematic NGOs.

Since 2011, AIDSTAR-Two through its partner – the Alliance, has been supporting the MENA Project through the provision of technical assistance on financial management, communications, service delivery and other areas, as well as grant funds. The project currently provides funding to AMSED and they in turn have issued grant agreements with OPALS Fes (the grant with OPALS Rabat is on hold until they re-establish their board of directors).

During this initial meeting, AMSED presented an overview of their organization's structure, programs and how they became involved in HIV issues, their current partnerships and the support they provide to OPALS Rabat and Fes. They also presented some of the key challenges they are facing and their future plans to sustain their efforts. They have also adopted/adapted and replicated the Alliance's participatory approaches into community assessments and other services they provide. These methodologies are well accepted by the thematic NGOs/CSOs, the MOH and other partners, and have helped them increase their credibility at the national level. Their work and that of other organizations such as ACLS have increased the visibility of MSM issues, leading to getting the support of the MOH to include this key population in the 2013-2016 National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan.

AMSED's current challenges are focused on ensuring the quality of services of its grantees, continuing the sensitization of providers regarding MSM issues, promoting effective collaboration among the HIV thematic NGOs (given some of the animosity that exists between ACLS and the OPALS and their mandate under their Global Fund grant), and ensuring financial sustainability beyond the life of the AIDSTAR-Two project and the Global Fund's support (which currently represents 40% of their annual budget). In response to these challenges, AMSED has been looking for new funding opportunities, integrating HIV prevention efforts into other development projects, and accompanying the two OPALS' projects to strengthen and expand their methodologies.

2) Met with MOH, UNAIDS and the Global Fund and got their perspective regarding AMSED, the OPALS and the MENA Project.

After the meeting with AMSED, the visiting team met with Aziza Bennani and Amina Latifi from the National HIV/AIDS Program, Boutaina El Omari from the Global Fund, and Kamal Alami from UNAIDS. They provided an overview of the four National HIV/AIDS Strategic plans the country has developed/implemented and how the response has evolved overtime to address the needs of those most affected by the epidemic. These partners spoke very highly about the collaboration and support provided by AMSED and thanked the team for the condom and lubricant donation USAID is delivering to Morocco.

Some of the key challenges the country is facing are related to the need of having reliable size estimations of the key populations, being able to reach "bridge populations" such as partners and clients of sex workers, and closing the funding gap that is required to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups.

With regards to the Global Fund, Morocco has received funding from Rounds 1, 6 and 10; totaling about \$100 million dollars. A total of 20 MOH staff are currently paid by the Global Fund and 80 are paid by the country. With the support of GIZ, they conducted an evaluation of their current Sub-recipients (SR) and are focusing on strengthening the areas identified. AMSED is one of their current SRs and has been tasked with conducting a baseline assessment of the PLHIV groups working in the country to develop a plan for better coordination and integration and are also responsible for coordinating the efforts of the HIV thematic NGOs working with key

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populations. They were selected for this given their horizontal approach and their excellent relationships with these partners.

3) Met with OPALS Rabat to better understand their program components, challenges and opportunities.

On the second day of this TDY, we met with the MSM project coordinator, Boutaina Alami, a social worker, Khadika El Ouazzani, the coordinator of the Global Fund grant, Loubaba Laraki and one of the MSM peer educator, Rachid Anigueur. The project coordinator provided an overview of the OPALS national secretariat and its 16 chapters (with a particular focus on the Rabat chapter), the scope of the services they provide to MSM, and their collaboration with AMSED. She also discussed the governance challenges they are facing and what they are doing to resolve them in order to sign the grant agreement with AMSED. Given that their MSM programming is about one year old, they are partnering with OPALS Fes to learn about their methodology, their outreach strategies and use some of their tools. They are also striving to increase their visibility and being recognized as a key player by the MOH, ACLS, and other partners.

We also visited their new center for ambulatory treatment (CTA in French), where they are planning to continue delivering comprehensive prevention services to MSM and other community members. This is complemented by their Tb/HIV mobile unit which is used to deliver counseling and screening services to the community.

4) Visited a harm-reduction center in Rabat called Centre de Réduction des Risques, sponsored by the Global Fund.

Zoubeida Rochdi, coordinator of the GF grant that supports the center, and the project coordinator of the centre provided an overview about the services available to people who do drugs, including PWID and their collaboration with other service providers. The center is currently serving only a small number of PWID clients but is just starting its outreach program. PWIDs can receive a prescription for OST from a staff physician but most go to a local hospital to have the prescription filled.

5) Met with La Rabita Mohammadia Des Oulémas to get an overview of their partnership with AMSED, the MOH and others to address stigma and discrimination issues and promote the access to HIV-related services.

Ahmed Abbadi, General Secretary of La Rabita provides a description about the work done by his organization, the approach they take to teach scholars to respond to the needs of their communities and their vision to expand the word they do. Mr. Abbadi has been very progressive in his support for condom distribution and the trainings conducted for religious teachers that improve their ability to work with marginalized communities and their families.

6) Met with OPALS Fes to learn about their program and participate in a peer education session.

We met with the executive director, Jilali Krissou, the project coordinator, Rachid Krissou, the secretary general, Said Abzouzi, the MSM peer educator supervisor, Driss Housseini, and various staff and volunteers from OPALS Fes, including the doctor in charge of the VCT centre, two MSM peer educators and two sex workers peer educators. The project coordinator provided an overview about the organization and the processes used to deliver services to the general population (women, youth, and men), sex workers, MSM and migrants. Through their MSM outreach work, they have increased the visibility of this group, are addressing human rights and development issues, and implementing a combination prevention strategy.

We also visited a group of MSM peer educators who shared how they got involved in the program, the methodology they use to reach others, and the support they provide to each other. Many members of this group demonstrated extraordinary leadership skills and a capacity to take on additional responsibilities to expand their reach.

7) Debrief with AMSED

The final meeting in Morocco was with the AMSED Executive Director, Board President and key program staff.

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USAID provided their feedback from the overall visit to AMSED.

USAID appreciated its appreciation for the well-organized visit and all the support provided by Manuel Couffignal. In general USAID was impressed by the work that they saw and discussed the program's strengths and challenges. USAID recommended that AMSED intensify their capacity development work with key Opals Rabat staff. They mentioned that the current program interruption needs to be addressed quickly and that the issues with another MSM service provider in Rabat, ALCS, is a distraction. We discussed that Opals Rabat could benefit from some advocacy training that would help better define its niche in the NGO community and raise its profile.

Feedback on Opals Fes was focused on the obvious commitment of the MSM peer educator team. USAID also commended Opals Fes on how well they've integrated their MSM PEs with their work with youth and sex workers. USAID recommended that AMSED continue to track Opals Fes progress on increasing testing, finding a more appropriate meeting place for the MSM PEs and the development of targeted IEC materials.

USAID commended AMSED for the work they are doing at the community and national level. It was clear from our meetings that AMSED is trusted by the national program, Global Fund and CSOs.

8) Meetings with the International HIV/AIDs Alliance in Brighton, UK

The Alliance organized a day of meetings in Brighton to highlight the work being done with key populations around the world. The day began with a debrief meeting with MENA Project Manager, Kevin Orr. USAID shared the same feedback with Mr. Orr as is discussed above.

Additionally, the team met with Head of Team for Policy, Anton Ofield-Kerr and Acting Head of Team for Africa, Alain Manouan. We discussed the Alliance's work in policy areas that impact key populations such as access to services, human rights and decriminalization. Mr. Manouan provided the team with a brief overview of the Alliance's new project working with MSM in Sub Saharan Africa.

Susie Mclean, Senior Advisor for HIV and Drug Use, briefed the team on the Dutch funded Community Action on Harm Reduction that is active in 6 countries. While the Secretariat is the awardee the project is actually managed by Alliance Ukraine. Ms. Mclean and Billy Pick discussed several challenges to the work in Kenya and Mr. Pick offered to put the project in touch with key USAID/Kenya staff to help overcome those challenges.

We had a working lunch with the Alliance Global Fund brain trust to brief Laurie Rushton on Global Fund issues as she was transitioning to become the new COR for the GMS project.

The team was also briefed about the Alliance's new Buza funded Link Up project that will address sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS integration among young people in 5 countries around the world.

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

Description of task	Responsible staff	Due date
AMSED to arrange a follow up meeting with La Rabita to find additional ways of working together		
AMSED to arrange a meeting with Opals Fes to follow up on VCT issues and meeting space		

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

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Name	Contact info	Home organization	Notes
Abdelkader Moumane	Executive Director a.moumane@amsed.ma	AMSED	
Hamid Benchrifa	President of the Board	AMSED	
Moubarak Morli	Treasurer of the Board	AMSED	
Rachida Akerbib	Head of Health Department	AMSED	
Said Karouiche	Coordinator of the MENA Programme	AMSED	
Boutaina El Omari	Coordinator of the GF Management Unit boutaina.elomari1@gmail.com	Global Fund	
Dr. Aziza Bennani	Head of the National AIDS Program bennani.aziza08@gmail.com	MOH	
Dr. Kamal Halami		UNAIDS Rep	
Kevin Orr	korr@aidsalliance.org	IHAA	
Anton Ofield-Kerr	aokerr@aidsalliance.org	IHAA	
Susie Mclean	smclean@aidsalliance.org	IHAA	
Greg Munro	gmunro@aidsalliance.org	IHAA	
Renato Pinto	rpinto@aidsalliance.org	IHAA	
Simon Mollison	smollison@aidsalliance.org	IHAA	
Felicia Wong	fwong@aidsalliance.org	IHAA	

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