



MENAHRRA

Engaging civil society in harm reduction

...a glance into 3 years
with MENAHRRA

2014-2016



In loving memory of

Sheikh (Dr) Alaa Eddine El Hamawi

...a respected, compassionate and generous soul, who dedicated his life to helping others. His motivation and commitment to human rights in general, as well as rights of people who use drugs, were a driving force within the regional religious leaders group supporting harm reduction. An immense loss for MENAHRA and the field of harm reduction, his presence is greatly missed.





Vision

Our vision of success is a **MENA region** that respects the rights and improves the quality of life of drugs users. This involves wide acceptance and implementation of comprehensive harm reduction services for different groups of drug users, which are of high quality, widely available and easily accessible.

Our vision of success for **MENAHRA** as an institution is to be the leading network of expertise and reference on harm reduction for drug users in the Middle East and North Africa region – providing high-quality services in the field of advocacy and policy development, research, information services, technical assistance and capacity building, and implementation of pilot programs with a potential to become best practices for the whole region.



Mission

MENAHRA's mission is to improve the quality of life of drug users through advocacy, capacity building, and technical assistance, and by serving as a resource centre in the region. Feasibility and effectiveness of harm reduction activities in the MENA region.



Areas of Work

The MENAHRA network intends to support the creation of policy, legal and social environments that are conducive for the implementation and scaling up of harm-reduction activities in the countries of the MENA region through research, advocacy, information services and training. MENAHRA also aims to build the capacity and enhance the knowledge and skills of governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) to deliver harm-reduction services for People Who Use Drugs (PWUD).

Priority populations include non-injecting drug users; People Who Use Drugs (PWUD); men who have sex with men who use drugs; sex worker drug users; people living with HIV who use drugs; refugees who use drugs; and partners and family members of drug users. In this regard, MENAHRA supports CSOs in developing and implementing model programs that are capable to demonstrate feasibility and effectiveness of harm reduction activities in the MENA region.



Introduction

Harm Reduction is a general term defined as policies, programs and interventions that are designed to reduce or minimize harms that are associated with certain behaviors, including those that are risky and illegal. Harm Reduction aiming at reducing harms related to drug use is currently a strategy that is adopted by many countries around the world.

The MENA is a diverse region with economic disparities between countries, including rich high income countries such as the Gulf States, as well as middle-to-low income countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria. The region has witnessed a highly unstable political environment in recent years. Through the past decade, a number of conflicts, many of which are still ongoing, have erupted in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. These conflicts have affected their surroundings, creating a refugee influx mostly to the middle and lower income countries, a number of which are already struggling with scarce resources.

In parallel, although still characterized as a low prevalence region (at 0.1% prevalence) with an estimated 230,000 People Living with HIV (PLHIV), the latest UNAIDS Gap report has highlighted an increase of 4% in new Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infections between 2010 and 2015. In countries such as Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen, new infections have increased by 30-40%. Moreover, out of an estimated 21,000 new infections reported in 2015, more than 95% were found to be among key populations and their sexual partners. Twenty-seven percent of these infections were among PWID (UNAIDS Gap Report 2016).



Due to the limited amount of collected scientific data available in the region, the range of estimates of PWID varies from 335,000 to 1,635,000. A new estimate will be released in 2017 after the finalization of the Third Assessment of Situation and Response of Drug Use and its Harms in the MENA currently being conducted by MENAHRA. HIV prevalence among PWID in the region is also variable with countries such as Libya reporting the highest measured prevalence at 87%, while other countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Tunisia reporting low prevalence.

In 2014, it was estimated that about half of PWID in MENA have contracted Hepatitis C. Updated data on prevalence of viral hepatitis is limited, however new infections among PWID are continuously reported in countries of the region through programs that are supported by MENAHRA (Mumtaz et al., 2014 and MENAHRA Program Data).

Throughout the last decade, MENA has witnessed noted progress in the field of harm reduction. Resources and efforts have been deployed to advocate for and implement harm reduction in the region, with MENAHRA leading on many initiatives. However, even with all the efforts placed on both the national and regional levels, by various stakeholders and partners, further concentrated efforts and resources are required in order to create a more conducive environment for harm reduction within the region.



“HRI has been a partner with MENAHRA from the beginning, and has have watched the organization grow into a critical voice for harm reduction and human rights in the MENA region. MENAHRA's leadership has proven that harm reduction policies and services can be successfully introduced even in the most challenging national contexts. Their work saves lives.”

Dr. Rick Lines
Executive Director
Harm Reduction International (HRI)



Advocacy

MENAHRA works to create a conducive environment in favor of harm reduction programs in countries of the region. This includes high-level advocacy for policy change and enhancing the rights of PWUD to health and access of health services.

High-Level Political and Public Awareness Raising:

Political statements and declarations at the High Level Meeting, UNGASS, PCB and other regional and international forums

10 Position Statements highlighting the rights of People Who Use Drugs and related issues on World Tuberculosis Day, World AIDS Day, World Hepatitis Day, International Drug User Day and the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

1 Fact Sheet on Overdose Awareness Day

Program-Specific Advocacy:

Advocacy within **Jordan** resulting in the piloting and scale up of Outreach and Needle/Syringe Programs for PWUD and PWID

Advocacy within **Lebanon** resulting in the piloting of a Hepatitis B Vaccination campaign for PWID, and initiation of process towards making Naloxone available for community use

Advocacy with **Libyan** stakeholders resulting in two in-depth trainings on harm reduction, followed by a plan to implement a harm reduction program in Libya including a drop in center supported by a national CSO and a series of national workshops organized to advocate for harm reduction components, specifically OST and NSP, with stakeholders such as the judiciary police, government representatives, religious leaders, and CSOs.

“ We must have a role in the prevention and services, the church and the mosque are the first place to embrace people who use drugs ”

Sheikh (Dr) Alaa El Hamawi
Religious Leader from Syria

“ MENAHRA gives us hope and empowerment, as key populations, to take the lead in improving our health and lifestyle, and fighting for our rights ”

The Middle East and North Africa Network of/for People who Use Drugs (MENANPUD)



Networking and Communication

MENAHRA works to maintain, strengthen and expand the network of civil society organizations, community groups and activists within the field of harm reduction in the MENA region. Networking activities, increased communications and campaigns are some of the methods in which this is ensured.

Ensuring MENA region representation in **over 16** international and regional conferences and meetings including CND, UNGASS, HLM, and PCB meetings

Organizing MENAHRA's **3rd Regional Conference on Harm Reduction**

Engagement of 14 countries within MENA in the **Support! Don't Punish** campaign on the decriminalization of drugs

Securing support of key influencers to combat stigma and discrimination such as the establishment of a regional **Religious Leaders** group that issued a Declaration of Support for Harm Reduction

Collaborating with international and regional partners and organizations to follow-up on and co-sponsor meetings with **Law Enforcement** officials and representatives to encourage support for harm reduction programs within their jurisdictions

Providing support and mentorship for the Middle East and North Africa Network of/for People who Use Drugs (**MENANPUD**) to build capacities, strengthen the structure of the network, and support the group's official registration

Collaborating with a number of regional organizations to establish the **MENA Coalition on HIV and Human Rights**, a Platform for Key Population Networks to allow for coordination and comprehensiveness of regional program

“The workshops and exchange of experiences between countries were really useful and beneficial and many participants were happy and appreciated the MENAHRA efforts that initiated such useful learning environments”

Dr. Zemaray Amin

Executive Director

Organization for Harm Reduction in Afghanistan (OHRA)

“The [MENAHRA program] provided many opportunities to build my experience in harm reduction... and increased my information. I became increasingly accepting of vulnerable groups and providing them with support became the most important thing I wanted to do.”

Jordan Outreach Program
training participant and outreach worker



Capacity Building

MENAHRA works to build the capacity and enhance the knowledge and skills of governments and CSOs to increase availability, access and coverage of Harm Reduction services for People Who Use Drugs. Capacity building activities are organized by the MENAHRA Network Secretariat as well as its Knowledge Hubs, KH-INCAS in Iran and KH-SIDC in Lebanon.

Organization of **14 trainings/workshops** on harm reduction programs, outreach, developing and managing and Needle/Syringe Programs (NSP), grant and organizational management, gender specific services, among others

Training of **over 2,500** professionals, stakeholders, and community members
Establishment of a network of over **100 CSOs**



“While looking at the MENAHRA website, I found SO MANY GREAT resources ... all of them are of a high quality. You should be very, very proud having so many manuals and resource books developed under your leadership -- excellent scope, each item absolutely applicable to the context of harm reduction NGOs working in my lovely Kyrgyzstan!!”

Danil Nikitin

Harm Reduction activist and Chairperson with the Global Research Institute (GLORI) Foundation based in Kyrgyzstan

“MENAHRA has been instrumental in raising the profile of harm reduction in the region. Through its advocacy, capacity building and mobilization of community groups, it has positioned the civil society at the core of the HIV response among people who inject drugs”

Joumana Hermez

Technical Officer, HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases
WHO/EMRO

IT'S
TIME!



Research and Publications

MENAHRA works to enhance knowledge and skills within the field through contributing to research and publications, including manuals and tools, which are specific to the MENA region.

4 Research Studies & **7** Publications

Research

- MENAHRA 2012 Situation Assessment in Arabic (2014)
- Operational Research on Refugees and Drug Use (2015 – unpublished)
- Population Size Estimation – Lebanon (2015)
- Operational Research on MSM and Drug Use (2016)

Publications

- Advocacy Tool for Harm Reduction Activists (2015)
- Guidelines for Religious Leaders on Harm Reduction (2015)
- Manual on Gender Equality in Harm Reduction Services (2016)
- Guidelines on Developing Communication Strategies for Harm Reduction (2016)
- Guidelines on Networking in Harm Reduction (2016)
- Advocacy Briefs on MSM and Drug Use (2016)
- Advocacy Brief on Gender Specific Services in Harm Reduction Programs (2016)



“What encourages me the most is the confidentiality and anonymity as well as the way I was treated by the team who showed support and care for my health. They respect us and do not treat us like criminals and give us free services including clean needles and psychological support”

26 year old man, 3 years of drug use – Jordan

“The way that I am treated is what motivates me to use these services, the outreach workers are very good people and I would return just to see them if I don't need kits”

34 year old man, 19 years of drug use – Lebanon



Service Delivery

MENAHRA works to increase availability, access and coverage of harm reduction services for drug users. The organization's focus has been to support the provision of health services to PWID through civil society organizations by providing funding for harm reduction programs, as well as capacity and institutional building and technical assistance. Within the duration of 3 years (2016-2014), MENAHRA established and supported the scaling up of **6 NSP** and outreach programs within 3 countries of the region that contributed to:

Providing access to NSP for **over 2,000 PWID**

Distributing over **450,000 needles** and **120,000 condoms**

Providing Voluntary Counseling and Testing services for HIV, HBV and/or HCV for **over 800 PWID**



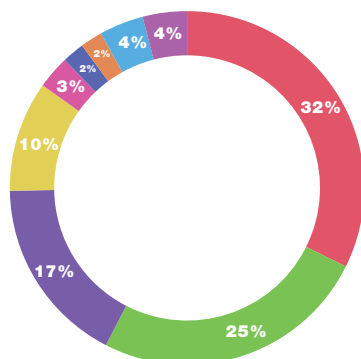


Financial

MENAHRA's financial expenses for the years 2014 to 2016 amounted to 3,816,558.41 US dollars. Source of income is a variety of donors that provided funds towards implementing programs and activities. The major donor during this time was the Global Fund, contributing to 83% of all expenses for the regional grant on harm reduction. Other donors include:

- Arab Human Rights Fund
- International HIV/AIDS Alliance
- MAC AIDS Fund
- Robert Carr civil society Networks Fund
- The Global Commission on Drug Policy
- The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- World Health Organization

Expenses \$3,816,558.41



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|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Service Delivery | General & Admin expenses | Capacity Building and Meetings |
| Research | Infrastructure | Publications |
| Networking and Communication | Regional Conference | Concept Note & Regional Dialogue |

“To end AIDS by 2030 in MENA Region, as part of sustainable development goals, we must maintain an enhanced leadership and meaningful engagement with civil society, PLHIV and community based organizations. Regional civil society networks such as MENAHRA have been and continue to be fundamental pillars to fast-track the AIDS response, promote harm reduction and eliminate stigma and discrimination against key and affected populations in the region”

Dr. Yamina Chakkar
Director
UNAIDS Regional Support Team
for Middle East and North Africa





Partners and Supporters

MENAHRA would like to thank all of its partners and funders who have contributed to the achievements of the past 3 years, whether through providing technical expertise or financially supporting certain activities or collaborating on activities and programs for a stronger and more united voice in the region.

We look forward to more successful partnerships and collaborations to improve the Harm Reduction response in MENA.



Together we can make a difference in the lives of People Who Use Drugs in our region.

- Al Majles Al Ahli – Tajamoa Saidia (Lebanon)
- American University of Beirut
- Arab Foundations for Freedom and Equality
- Arab Human Rights Fund
- Arrazi Hospital
- Association El Hayet (Algeria)
- Association of Justice and Mercy (Lebanon)
- Association Tunisienne d'Information et d'Orientation sur le Sida et la Toxicomanie
- Association Tunisienne de Lutte contre les MST et le sida
- Association Tunisienne de Prevention de la Toxicomanie
- Ayadi Al Kheir Society (Libya)
- Balamand University
- Bridge Hope and Health Organization (Afghanistan)
- Bushra Center (Jordan)
- Caritas – Alexandria
- Caritas Jerusalem
- Cenacle de la Lumiere (Lebanon)
- Consultancy for Research and Development
- Dar El Amal (Lebanon)
- Egyptian Development and Human Rights
- FHI 360
- Forearms Of Change Center to Enable Community (Jordan)
- Freedom Drugs and HIV Programme (Egypt)
- Friends Association (Egypt)
- Friends of Development and Investment Society (Jordan)
- Friends of HIV+ Association (Egypt)
- Harm Reduction International
- Association Hasnouna/AHSUD (Morocco)
- Helem (Lebanon)
- International Development Law Organization
- International Drug Policy Consortium
- International HIV/AIDS Alliance
- International HIV/AIDS Alliance in Ukraine
- International Treatment Preparedness Coalition
- Iranian National Center for Addiction Studies
- Jeunesse Contre la Drogue (Lebanon)
- League of Arab States
- Lebanese AIDS Network of Associations
- MAC AIDS Fund
- Maqdesi Association (Palestine)
- Marsa Sexual Health Center
- M-Coalition
- MENA-Rosa
- Mentor Arabia
- Middle East and North Africa Network of/ for People who Use Drugs
- MTV – Lebanon
- Nai Zindagi (Pakistan)
- National AIDS Programs in MENA countries
- Network of Associations for Harm Reduction (Egypt)
- Nusroto (Lebanon)
- Order of Nurses in Lebanon
- Organisation Panafricaine de lute contre le Sida (Morocco)
- Organization for Harm Reduction in Afghanistan
- Organization for Social Development (Pakistan)
- Pakistan Society
- Rebirth Society (Iran)
- Regional Arab Network Against AIDS
- Robert Carr civil society Networks Fund
- Sagesse University
- Sawt el Mada
- Skoun Lebanese Addictions Center
- Soins Infirmiers et Developpement Communautaire (Lebanon)
- Support Don't Punish Campaign
- The Daily Star
- Global Commission on Drug Policy
- The Global Fund
- The Global Fund Community, Rights and Gender Technical Assistance Program
- The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth
- World Health Organization
- Youth Association for Population and Development (Egypt)
- ZAD Communication and Production

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