

Concept Note

Dialogue with Stakeholders and Development of a Position Statement

Project: LEARN MENA

1. Background: HIV and Violence Against Women in MENA

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is characterized by gender inequality and harmful gender norms. Many deep, gendered inequalities are embedded in law, culture and traditional practices, and these inequalities underpin high levels of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women (VAW). One in three women in the MENA region have experienced violence by a partner and/or non-partner in their lifetime¹.

LEARN MENA is the first project to explore and address the linkages between violence against women and HIV in the MENA region that was led by, with, and for women living with and affected by HIV. It was implemented by MENA Rosa through participatory community dialogues and awareness raising workshops with women in their diversity. In parallel, meetings and one-to-one interviews with key national stakeholders were conducted in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia.

At the heart of the project is the Actions Linking Initiatives on Violence Against Women and HIV Everywhere (ALIV[H]E) framework. This participatory tool brought together evidence on what works to prevent violence and increases women's awareness to understand and address the linkages between violence against women and HIV in their own communities. This approach illustrated how harmful gender norms and stereotypes underpin women's experiences of violence.

One of the most striking findings is that almost all (95%) of these women had experienced violence at some point in their lives, a much higher proportion than UN regional average estimates. Violence is not a one-off event. Rather, it is systemic, and normalized in societies in the MENA Region. Women experienced violence from intimate partners, family and neighbors, the community, health workers and law enforcement agents. The vast majority of these women had experienced violence in at least two settings. More than half of the women said that violence had an impact on their ability to protect themselves from acquiring HIV or manage their HIV.

Through national stakeholder gatherings and interviews, a list of national prioritized recommendations was drafted.

2- Project Objectives:

LEARN MENA has laid the ground work for meaningful change; already the issue is gaining prominence in national debates. There is a need to consolidate a regional agenda and nourish a sustained support to take the work forward.

¹ Lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence (physical and/or sexual) or non-partner sexual violence or both among all women (15 years and older) is 36.4% http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf

MENA Rosa wishes to build on this momentum for LEARN MENA to up-scale the advocacy action plan to national stakeholders and decision makers. Under the grant of the Global Fund “HIV: Sustainability of services for key populations in MENA region”, Nadoum Programme, MENA Rosa wishes to conduct a series of virtual one-to-one interviews with key national and regional stakeholders and develop a Position Statement to address the interlinkage of HIV and GBV, prevent VAW and reduce new HIV infection. The activity will be launched in February 2023 and will extend till July 2023.

The Position Statement will be widely disseminated to the following:

- Local and regional Civil Society Organizations (CSO) working on fighting AIDS
- Local and regional Civil Society Organizations working on women’s rights, gender equality and GBV
- UN Agencies (UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNDP, UN Women) and WHO
- Local Authorities (Ministries of Health, Ministries of women affairs, National AIDS Program, Country Coordinating Mechanism against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria)

LEARN MENA will include five implementing countries of the regional grant (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon Morocco and Tunisia).

This activity will raise awareness of CSOs working on fighting AIDS to include women among Key Populations (Women in All Their Diversity and WLHIV) and will mainstream HIV on the Action Plan of CSOs advocating for women’s rights.

Afterwards, during the second phase of this activity (scheduled to be implemented from August till December 2023), MENA Rosa wishes to upscale its advocacy to decision-makers on national and regional level.

3- Target Group:

The project will solicit one-to-one physical or virtual interviews with key national and regional stakeholders from Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. (UN Agencies, local NGOs, inter-governmental bodies and key persons on decision making level).

4- Project Activities:

The focus of the project relates to the following main activities:

- Consolidate the findings and recommendations from previous national reports.
- Plan, prepare and implement a series of physical or online interviews with key national and regional stakeholders.
- Develop and disseminate a Position Statement endorsed by key stakeholders.