

Concept Note

Workshop on Treatment Literacy in Egypt

General Outline:

Title of the Grant	HIV: Sustainability of Services for Key Populations in the MENA region
Donor	Global Fund
Activity Title	Workshop on Treatment Literacy
Activities	Two-day workshops in Egypt in each of Alexandria, Cairo, Fayoum, Tanta and Zagazig. Number of attendees: 22 in each workshop
Estimated Implementation Date:	August 2024 - November 2024

MENA Rosa is the first regional network dedicated to women in all their diversity, in particular Women Living with and affected by HIV, in the Middle East and North Africa.

MENA Rosa's mission is to support and empower women and girls in their diversity, those living with HIV, women and girls at high risk of infection, and their families and partners, through: developing their leadership, promoting effective participation in the response, advocacy, networking, raising awareness and mobilizing resources to guarantee their rights, as well as universal and equitable access to care, treatment, support, prevention and a better quality of life. The network was founded in 2010 and is currently composed of a regional secretariat based in Beirut, working directly with focal points from 11 countries in the Middle East and North Africa region (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Yemen, Bahrain, Oman).

Background Information:

“Treatment literacy means people, both individually and in communities, understand what HIV drugs are, why they are needed and what they can and cannot do. Treatment literacy translates medical information about Antiretroviral Treatment (ART) into languages and formats that are accessible for everyone.” - WHO 2005

Although there is no cure for HIV, ART has demonstrated effectiveness and positive long-term outcomes for people with HIV, including reduced HIV-related morbidity and mortality and improved quality of life¹.

The UNAIDS ‘treatment cascade’ and 95-95-95 targets for 2025 illustrate how ART (in conjunction with continued combination prevention efforts) can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target 3.3 of ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, whereby:

- 95% of people living with HIV know their HIV status
- 95% of people who know their HIV status are on treatment
- 95% of people living with HIV on ART have an undetectable viral load

A number of additional global targets support the achievement of this, including:

- 95% of women living with HIV have access to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services
- 95% coverage of prevention of vertical transmission services
- 90% of people living with HIV have access to person-centered, integrated health care (including for non-communicable diseases and mental health services), and
- less than 10% of people living with HIV experience stigma, discrimination, criminalization, or gender based violence.²

People living with HIV who have low health literacy often face more complications related to their disease, struggle to understand health information, and have difficulty adhering to treatment.³

HIV treatment literacy is therefore a critical component in the efforts to ensure universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care, and to promote wellbeing and quality of life among people living with HIV.

In 2021, under the Global Fund grant, “HIV: Sustainability of Services for Key Population in the MENA region”, Nadoum Programme, MENA Rosa drafted a treatment literacy informative toolkit that aims to expand the quality care, treatment, support and prevention services to reach women living with and affected by HIV. Under the same grant, MENA Rosa, organized a four-day training of trainers in 2022/2023 in: Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, to empower MENA Rosa’s focal

¹ Report: HIV and AIDS Treatment Education: A Critical Component of Efforts to Ensure Universal Access to Prevention, Treatment and Care UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education.

² 2025 AIDS TARGETS - UNAIDS

³ Study: Levels of health literacy among people living with HIV in outpatient care: a cross-sectional study from Denmark.

points and members to provide accurate information to the community on HIV treatment literacy and most importantly to update the treatment literacy toolkit.

Thus, in 2024, MENA Rosa will update the toolkit developed in 2021, based on the community's feedback, with the support of an infectious disease physician, and a gender expert. Moreover, and based on the updated toolkit, MENA Rosa will conduct five two-day workshops on treatment literacy in Egypt (Alexandria, Cairo, Tanta, Fayoum and Zagazig).

Description of the Activity:

MENA Rosa wishes to increase the knowledge and awareness of women living with HIV in Egypt regarding their health and wellbeing; and thus, empower them to make informed decisions about their HIV treatment and lives.

This activity will be implemented in partnership with Freedom Association in Cairo and Caritas Association in Alexandria.

A two-day workshop involving 22 women living with HIV will be conducted in each of Alexandria, Cairo, Tanta, Fayoum and Zagazig. This workshop will include topics such as basic HIV awareness (prevention, transmission, testing and treatment), antiretroviral therapy (ART) including access/enrollment and retention in care, side effects, adherence, viral suppression and 'Undetectable = Untransmissible' (U=U), treatment as prevention technologies including pre and post exposure prophylaxis (PrEP and PEP), prevention of vertical transmission, sexual and reproductive health (SRH), sexually transmitted infections (STIs), mental health, and specific challenges and barriers facing women living with HIV, including HIV-related stigma, discrimination and gender based violence.

Peer Educators who attended the ToT on treatment literacy in 2022, will give sessions, highlighting their experiences as peer educators and women living with HIV.

Project's Objectives:

The workshop aims to empower women living with HIV to make decisions about their health and lives by improving their HIV treatment literacy:

- increase the knowledge of women living with HIV on several topics such as HIV, SRH, STIs, etc.
- enable women living with HIV to make informed decisions about their treatment and care, based on understanding the benefits of antiretroviral therapy when weighed against side effects
- educate women living with HIV on the importance of treatment adherence for their own wellbeing and to reduce onward transmission

- reduce self-stigma by addressing misconceptions about HIV, and learning about U=U.

Project's Outcomes:

- Increased awareness among women living with HIV regarding the HIV prevention and treatment cascade, and related health literacy including sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and health-related quality of life,
- promotion of universal access to holistic, person-centred treatment, care and support among women living with HIV and their communities; and
- improved adherence to HIV care and treatment among women living with HIV and their communities.

Participants:

- Women living with HIV in remote and rural areas (Alexandria, Cairo, Fayoum, Tanta and Zagazig).
- Sudanese women refugees in Egypt, who are living with HIV.