



Drugs & HIV

MOROCCO



EPIDEMIOLOGICAL CONTEXT

HIV prevalence¹

General population
<1%

Other key populations:

- People who inject drugs (PWID): **7,9%**
- Men who have sex with men (MSM): **5,7%**
- Sex Workers: **1,3%**

HCV Prevalence

General population
1,2%²

People who inject drugs (PWID)³:

- Tangier: 45%
- Nador: 79%

People who inject drugs are the most impacted by HIV and HCV epidemics in Morocco.

POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

Morocco stands out by its progressive, yet contradictory attitude towards drugs. The country remains the world's largest cannabis producer⁴, which represents almost a quarter of the GDP⁵ and would support up to 1 million people. On the other hand, the sale, possession and consumption of psychoactive substances are criminalized.

Recently, supported by initiatives from political parties like Authenticity and Modernity as well as Istiqlal, the legalization of cannabis for pharmaceutical, medical and industrial purposes has become an open public debate. However, the current Islamist government is burying its head in a moralistic approach towards the use of drugs.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

There is a repressive legal framework when it comes to the use and sale of psychoactive substances in Morocco (Law of 21 May 1974). In theory, people who use «substances or plants classified as narcotic» are thus liable to up to 1 year in prison and a fine of € 450. In practice, they can be arrested and sentenced as traffickers. In theory, this sanction may come with a therapeutic injunction, but it is rarely the case.

OUR ACTIVITIES

Member of Coalition PLUS, ALCS has been pioneering harm reduction initiatives, as well as advocacy around drug use and drug policy in Morocco. As early as in 1996, ALCS carried out the first survey among people who use drugs in the country, in Tangier and Tetouan specifically. Also, in collaboration with other partners, ALCS initiated harm reduction programs, much before these were integrated in the national HIV response.

Harm Reduction

Since 2014: implementation of a harm reduction project around Tetouan. The mobile unit welcomes and sensitizes service users in a friendly environment.

- Mobile unit with night services
- Distribution of prevention materials
- Needle and syringe program
- HIV and STI rapid testing.

Some figures:

- Nearly 2000 people reached by activities of the project
- More than 13 000 injection kits and more than 200 000 inhalation kits distributed
- More than 20 000 contacts made

Advocacy

2011:

- Publication of a survey documenting human rights violations among people who use drugs in three cities in northern Morocco (Tangier, Tetouan, Nador)⁶.

- Report on Drug Use and the Law in Morocco⁷

- Rabat Declaration "for a new health and human rights-based approach towards drug use"⁸

Since 2011, ALCS is keeping up with the advocacy work to:

- Promote the inclusion and respect of rights of people who use drugs
- Push for decriminalization of drug use.

1 source UNAIDS, 2017

2 Ministry of Health, Morocco, 2015

3 Ministry of Health, Morocco, 2011-2012

4 UNODC, 2017

5 UNODC, 2017

6 Survey Report, ALCS, Open Society Foundations, 2011. Available online: http://www.coalitionplus.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ALCS-OSF_Enquete_Violations_DH_UD_2011.pdf

7 Report on Drug Use and the Law in Morocco, ALCS, Open Society Foundations, 2011. Available online: http://www.coalitionplus.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ALCS-OSF_Rapport_UD_droit_Maroc_2011.pdf

8 Statement available online: http://www.coalitionplus.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Declaration_Rabat_261011.pdf



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PERSPECTIVES

Morocco has included harm reduction strategies in its national HIV/Aids policy since 2008, and opioid substitution treatment (methadone) has been available since 2010. Nevertheless, to develop this rights and health approach towards people who use drugs, advocacy work and in-depth sensitization has to be on-going towards policymakers, intermediate professions and communities. In this perspective, ALCS has set up and maintains strong partnership dynamics with other civil society actors, such as Hasnouna and RdR-Maroc, as well as cannabis growers' representatives.

Legal framework:

- Criminalization of drug use

Socio-cultural framework:

- Stigmatization of PWID

Financial framework:

- Scarce sources of funding
- Serious threat of grants discontinuation with Global Fund stepping out of middle-income countries



Dr. Mohammed El Khammas,
ALCS National Manager for the PWID Project
and harm reduction program

« ALCS' interventions are unique in Morocco: we are really driven by the needs of people who use drugs who are fully integrated in the program and implementation of our activities, be it through peer individual and group discussions, or through peer educators involvement in the field projects. »

OBSTACLES

Policy framework:

- Changing political environment with conservatism rise

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ALCS

Founded in 1988 and recognized as a Public Utility Organization in 1993, ALCS is the first and largest organization working in the HIV response in Morocco and the Maghreb and Middle East region. Activist and community-based, ALCS is the only organization in Morocco that is involved both in the prevention of HIV infection, as well as in the treatment, care and support of people living with HIV. Since 2014, ALCS coordinates Coalition PLUS MENA Platform.

The ALCS in figures:

- 300 volunteers
- 150 contributors
- 24 centers supplying information and free HIV testing
- 5 mobile screening units
- More than 100,000 beneficiaries
- ALCS contribution in achieving the national objectives: 80%