The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a global leader working on illicit drugs and crime. It is the designated UN agency responsible for HIV prevention and care related to people who use drugs, prisoners and people vulnerable to human trafficking.

Established in 1997, the Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA) is based in Cairo and covers nineteen countries in the region.

The Regional Programme for the Arab States supports the region’s development priorities and facilitates a holistic, integrated and nationally-owned approach to the countries’ key security challenges. It proposes three priority sub-programmes for UNODC’s support:

- Countering illicit trafficking, organised crime and terrorism
- Promoting justice and building integrity
- Drug prevention and health

**HIV Work of UNODC**

UNODC supports the national responses towards HIV and encourages governments and civil society organizations to develop and implement policies and programmes, for drug users and in prison settings, that are evidence-informed, human rights based and gender responsive.

The epidemics in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), are concentrated among the most at risk populations (MARPs). Recently, countries have been increasingly engaged in addressing the epidemics among MARPs, including among people who use drugs and in prison settings. In the region, ROMENA is implementing the following activities.

**Research and Analysis**

To develop and orient evidence-based strategies and to monitor and evaluate their implementation, ROMENA provides technical assistance to carry out national situational assessment studies based on international guidelines and tools. ROMENA also worked on the development of assessment protocols for specific populations, such as the Protocol on Assessing Drug Use and HIV in Prison Settings.

**Harm Reduction forInjecting Drug Users**

ROMENA provides support to countries to implement comprehensive HIV prevention, care, support and treatment for injecting drug users based on internationally agreed guidelines.

**Community Outreach**

ROMENA supports NGOs to undertake community outreach activities in order to reduce negative social and health consequences among drug-users, and to increase their access to HIV prevention and drug treatment services.

**Drug Treatment Including Opioid Substitution Therapy**

ROMENA builds the capacity of Member States to increase access to evidence-based, comprehensive and ethical drug dependence treatment. Countries from the Middle East and North Africa region are now benefitting from the global Treatnet program. In addition, ROMENA is supporting Opioid Substitution Therapy as a pioneering initiative in the Middle East and North Africa, in terms of developing and implementing national guidelines, operating procedures and technical capacity building, in countries showing political commitment.

**HIV Prevention and Care in Prison Settings**

UNODC provides technical assistance for strengthening HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services in prisons and community aftercare services in selected countries, through a range of initiatives:

- Establishing national strategies for HIV in prison settings
- Increasing knowledge among prison inmates and personnel on drug use, HIV and ways to reduce potential risks
- Strengthening social and health facilities for drug use and HIV prevention and care in prison settings
- Reducing over-crowding and improving general prison conditions

**Networking and Advocacy**

In an effort to promote best practices aiming at reducing harm from drugs, ROMENA supports a networking structure between various stakeholders, NGOs and resource centres, within the region and externally.

**UNODC Partnerships and Roles**

- UNAIDS Cosponsor: As the lead organization in the UNAIDS family to address HIV prevention and care among drug-users, in prison settings and with a specific mandate for people vulnerable to human trafficking, UNODC supports countries to respond in a comprehensive way to the HIV and AIDS epidemics.
- Convenor of the UN Working Group on Drug Use and HIV, to harmonize and coordinate UN action on drug use and HIV in the Middle East and North Africa region.
- Convenor of the Regional Working Group on Drug Use and HIV, in partnership with select UN agencies and relevant national stakeholders.
- Partnerships with good practice resource centres and civil society organizations across the region.