

# Local NGO leadership to promote quality HIV testing services in North Africa

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## The urgent need to promote HIV testing in North Africa

Almost 80% of people living with HIV in low and middle-income countries do not know their HIV status (WHO/UNAIDS 2007). For this reason, the partners of the AMEDIS project ([www.projet-amedis.org](http://www.projet-amedis.org)) have prioritised access to HIV testing in our joint work for the past three years.

## Promoting the role of local NGOs as advocates and implementers of quality, HIV testing services

In 2005 AMEDIS brought together the following NGOs: AIDES (France), ALCS (Morocco), ATL Tunis (Tunisia), APCS (Algeria) and Espoir et Vie (Mauritania). AMEDIS is dedicated to strengthening community-based mobilisation on HIV/AIDS via the promotion and exchange of best practices. Our joint achievements with regards to HIV testing include:

- The opening of the first NGO-managed HIV testing centre in Algeria and the organisation of a seminar on HIV testing in Oran (with 150 participants on March 4, 2007).
- The inclusion of HIV testing as the main topic covered during the 2007 ALCS Congress in Morocco (with 300 participants May 26-27, 2007).
- Several inter-country training sessions, which enabled our Algerian partners to benefit from the Moroccan expertise in managing HIV testing services.

## Lessons learned

Local NGOs can play a leading role as direct providers and/or promoters of HIV testing:

- ALCS in Morocco provided 26,183 HIV tests in 2007 (including rapid tests provided in mobile units). This specific expertise by ALCS proved most useful for all partners (including France where, as of 2008, rapid test services are still not accessible).
- In Algeria, the opening of the NGO-led testing center and the seminar (widely covered in Algerian media) led to an acceleration of the implementation of the national Algerian HIV testing programme.

## Expanding our shared expertise

Inspired by the Moroccan and Algerian examples, our Tunisian partner is also considering implementing HIV testing services which are both free and anonymous and which are tailored to the specific needs of vulnerable groups.

### AMEDIS

Since 1989, the French NGO AIDES has forged strong bilateral links with the NGO ALCS in Morocco. In 2005, AIDES launched the AMEDIS project (Action between North Africa and Europe for HIV-testing, information and support) to encourage initiatives by HIV/AIDS NGOs in North Africa. AMEDIS today brings together the following associations: AIDES (France), ALCS (Morocco), ATL Tunis (Tunisia), APCS (Algeria) and Espoir et Vie (Mauritania).

AMEDIS is dedicated to strengthening community-based mobilization on HIV/AIDS via the promotion and exchange of best practices on prevention, support and management.



Countries in partnership for the AMEDIS programme (2008)



Members of "Espoir et Vie" (Mauritania)



Testing center, APCS (Algeria)



AMEDIS pilot committee meeting (March 2008)