

# Lebanese prisons: changing a "pro-harm" environment through harm reduction

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# Presentation Outline

- Brief History of AJEM
- Drug users situation in prison
- AJEMs history of Harm Reduction initiatives
- Current Harm Reduction Project
- Activities carried out
- Results

# Portrait

- **Founded in 1996**
- **Multidisciplinary team**
- **45 permanent personnel and specialized volunteers**



# AJEM IS A Lebanese NGO Which:



- supports and promotes the rights of inmates
- enhances the conditions of detention
- facilitates their socio-professional reinsertion
- Develop and implement rehab and educational programs
- Offer protection of refugees & victims of torture during custody & incarceration



# Where we work

- **Central Prison and 21 regional prisons**
- **Rehabilitation center in prison**
- **Holding cells**
- **Drop-in Center**



Roumieh Central Prison, Google Earth, Aug 2010

# Situation of drug users and vulnerable inmates in Lebanese prisons

- Large amounts of detained drug users



**+/- 6 months  
of imprisonment**



**118  
new/month**



**Age 18-28  
years**

**Central Prison  
(AJEM - May/  
September  
2009)**

# Situation of drug users & vulnerable inmates in Lebanese prisons

Culture and structure focus on punishment rather than retribution



**VS**



# Why harm reduction in Lebanese prisons

## substances within the prison

High risks of ***increase transmitted*** and contagious diseases:

Sharing sharp instruments (shaving material, tooth brush...)

Drug use material sharing

Tattoos

Sexual relation without condom use

Proximity between inmates caused by overpopulation

Delay in providing medical care & Lack in pathologies screening

Stigmatization & isolation of contaminated inmates



1

- 1998 AJEM started working with HIV/AIDS inmates within Central prison
- 1999 AJEM conducted with the Saint Joseph University a rapid assessment about the health situation of drug users in Lebanese prisons

2

- 2006 AJEM opened a cognitive-behavioral rehabilitation center within the prison
- trained its nurses on VCT
- Trained ISF staff working in prison

3

- 2006 AJEM established a database about substance abuse through its reception service of all new entering inmates; (**more than 34%** of new comers are drug addicted, among which around **37% are IDU**)

## ***AJEM's experience with Harm Reduction (1/2)***

4

- 2007 Participated with the American University of Beirut to a research about HIV and c
- 2008 AJEM conducted a case study to evaluate the educational needs of drug users prevent transmissible diseases.

5

- AJEM participated in the creation and is an active member of a special task force with MOPH for the introduction of OST in Lebanon.
- Active member of the Multi-sectorial Task Force for HIV prevention in prison settings created by MOPH.
- 2010 AJEM conducted Educational sessions to IDU users with the participation of WHO

6

- 2010-2011 AJEM conducted more than 50 sessions on HIV prevention for the inmates and (ISF) in coordination with National AIDS Program (NAP).
- 2011 AJEM conducted a research with IDU drug users to study the prevalence of hepatitis C and the Human Papilloma Virus In Roumieh prison.

## ***AJEM's experience with Harm Reduction (2/2)***

# SITUATION OF DRUG USERS AND VULNERABLE INMATES LEBANANESE PRISONS

**91%**

- IDU participated in the study



**6%**

IDU inside prison



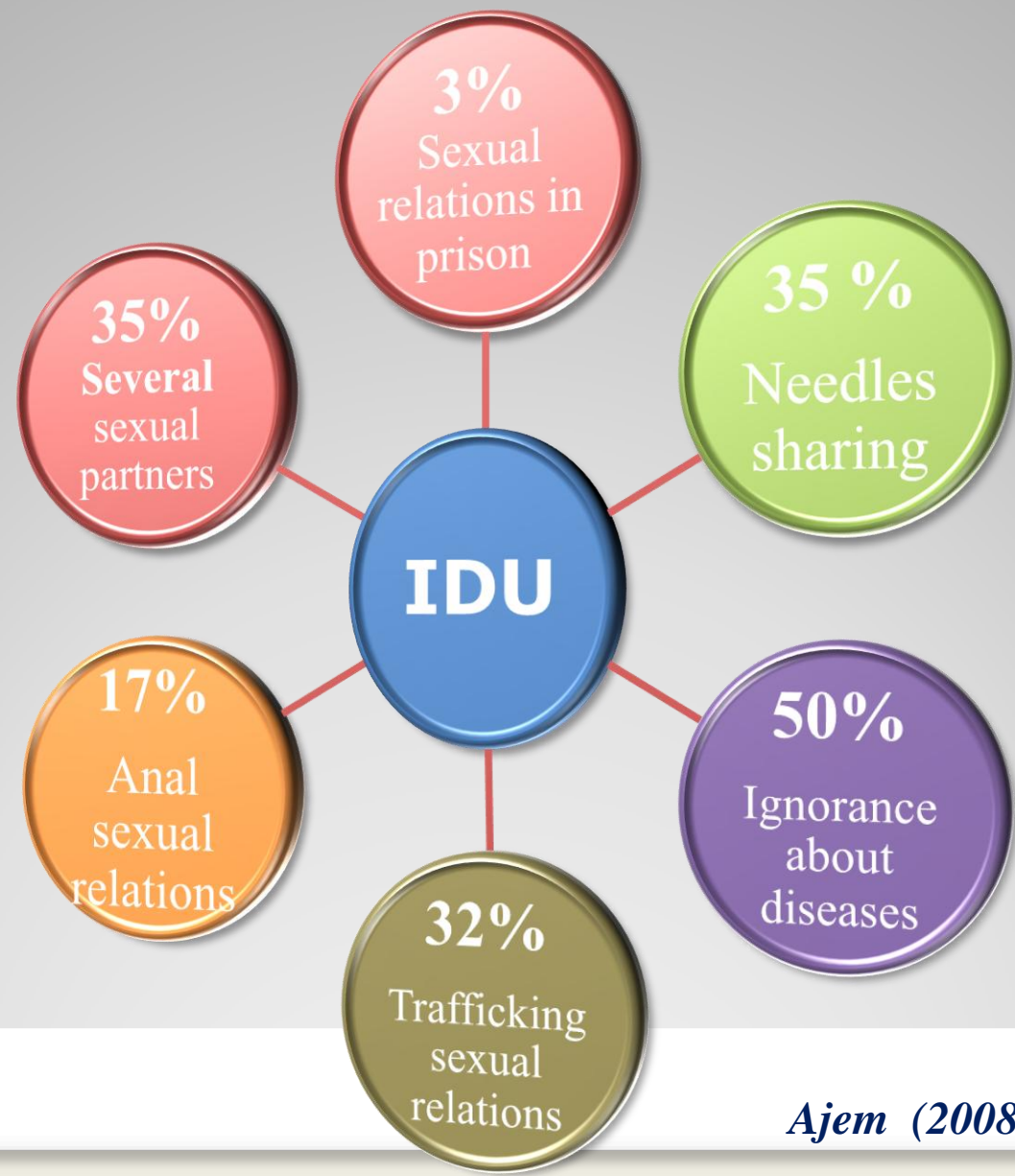
**65%**

- Tattoo inside prison



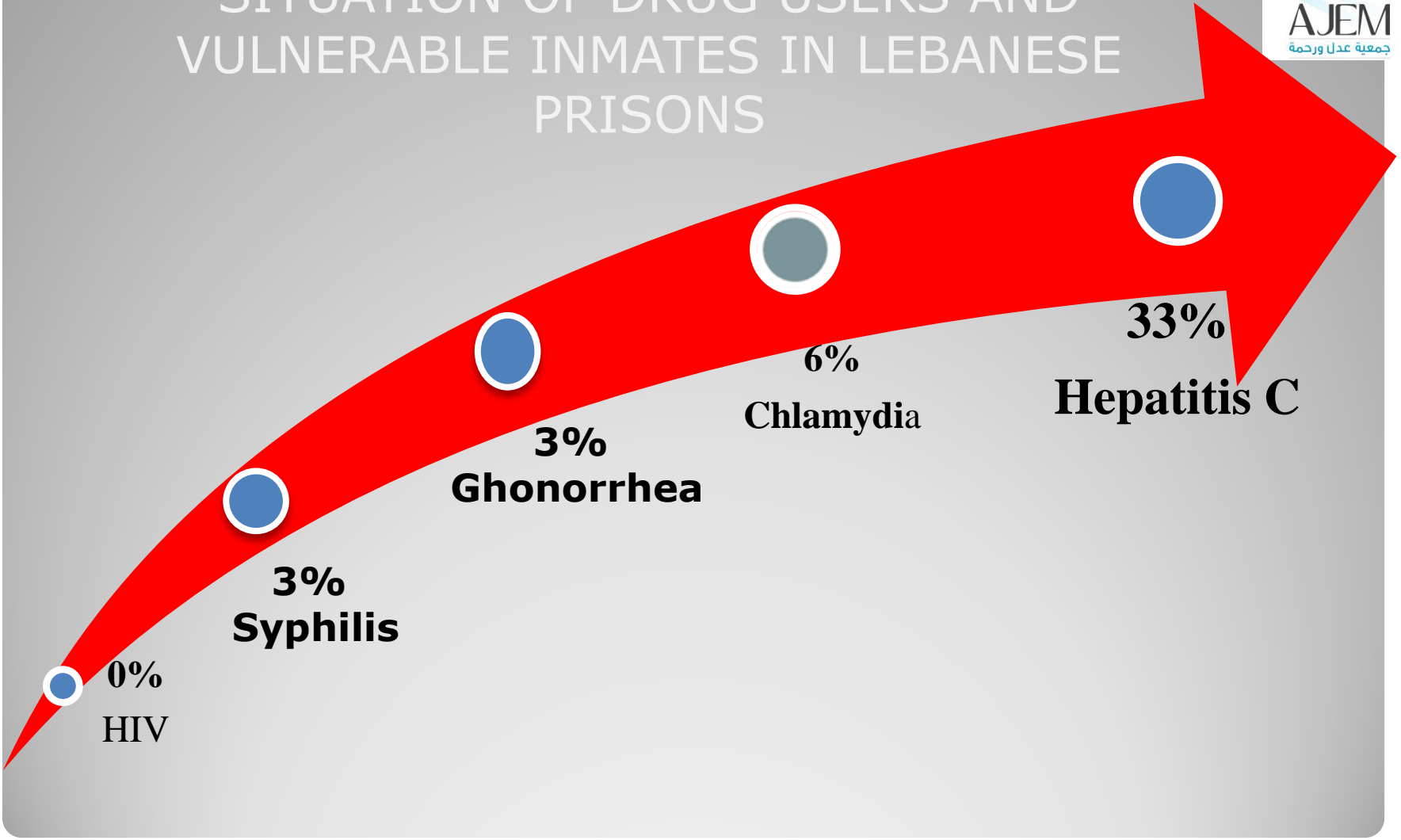
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# Situation of IDU's in Lebanese prisons



*Ajem (2008-2011)*

# SITUATION OF DRUG USERS AND VULNERABLE INMATES IN LEBANESE PRISONS



# AJEM's Harm Reduction project in the collaboration with Menahra

A multi-country HIV proposal addressing HIV prevention, treatment and care among drug users including injecting drug users (DU/IDU) through a Harm reduction approach.



- MENAHRA's mission:
  - ❖ Support, development, advocacy for harm reduction approaches in the field of drug use, HIV/AIDS, public health, and social exclusion by following the principles of humanity, tolerance and partnership with respect to human rights and freedoms, in the MENA region.

# The project

- To create a favorable environment for the harm reduction interventions
- To Establish a framework and an agreement with the penitentiary authorities
- Enhance NGO's and ISF personnel's knowledge on how to deliver harm reduction services for drug-users in prison

# The project

- **Duration** : one-year project
- **Targets**:
  - ❖ IDU inmates
  - ❖ NGO's working in prison
  - ❖ ISF working in prison
  - ❖ Stakeholders and decision makers in criminal justice

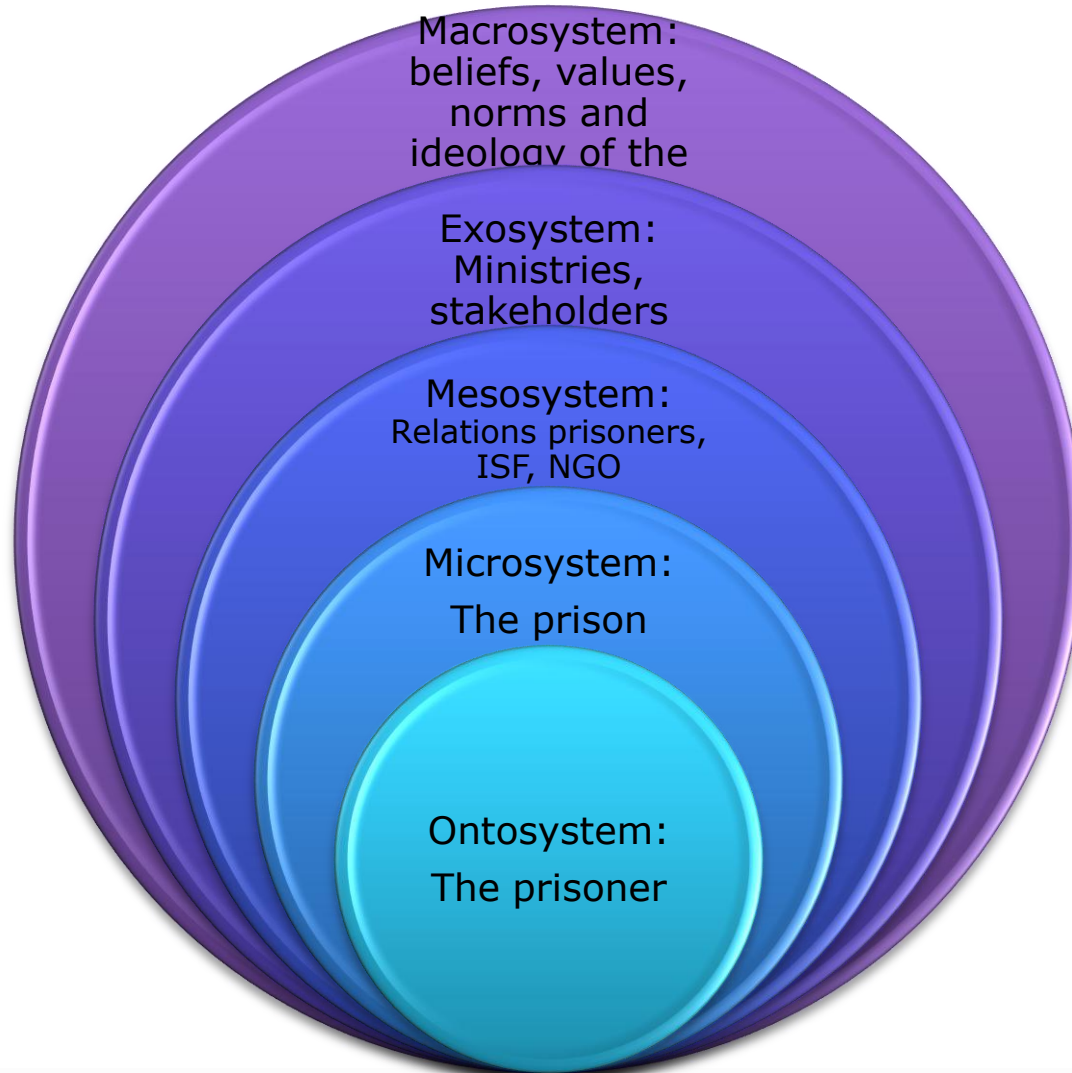


# Multidisciplinary Team

This project was possible by the collaboration of a multidisciplinary team:

- Produce material of education
- Give the educational sessions
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of the project
  - Psychiatrist
  - Psychologists
  - Nurses
  - Social workers
  - Lawyers

# Rational of the Harm Reduction Approach in prisons An Ecological-System Approach



## *Projects goals and objectives*

- **Objective 1:** to institutionalize the policies of harm reduction within prisons.
- **Target1:** Establishment of a framework and a written agreement with ISF for harm reduction in prisons
- **Target2:** VCT use in prison

# Target 3: Stakeholders seminar

## **Objectives:**

- Inform policy makers on the issue of infectious diseases in prisons among IDU's inmates.
- Suggest ways of prevention
- Propose modalities for treating and monitoring inmates and those at risk

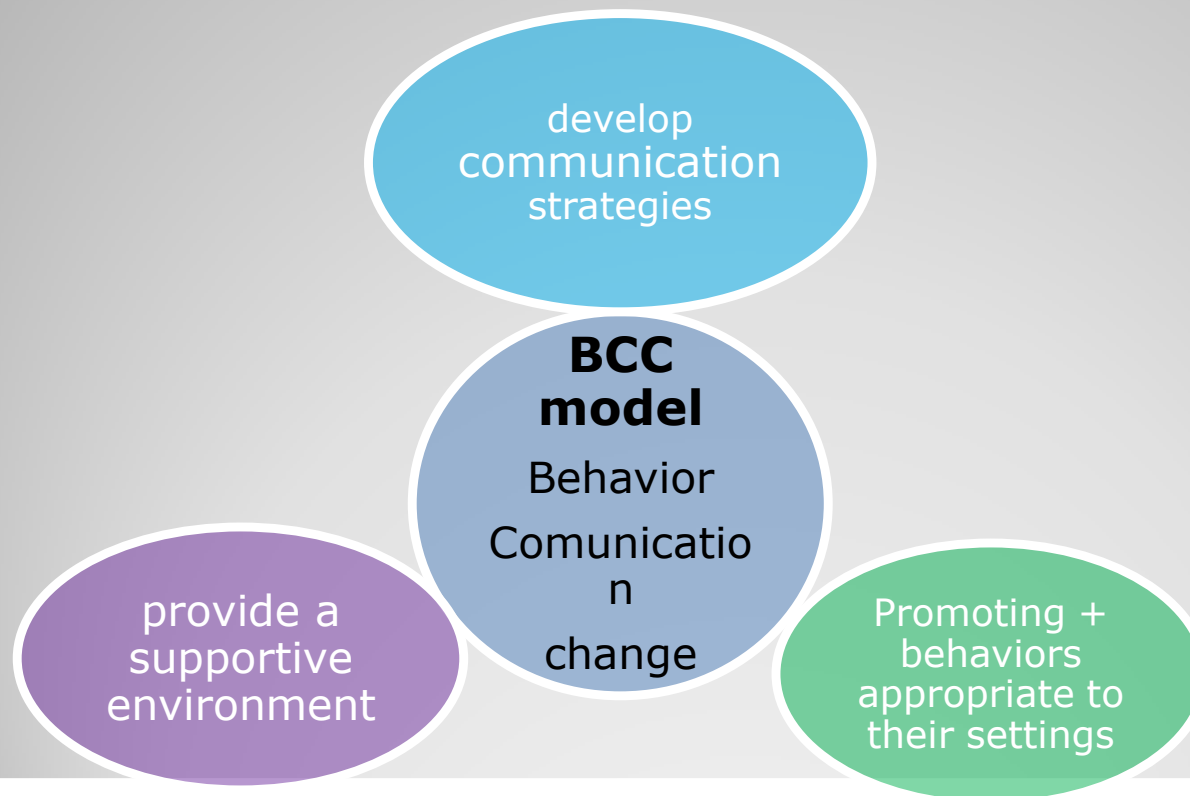
## **Target audience:**

- Ministry of Public Health
- Ministry of interior
- Ministry of justice
- Ministry of Social Affairs
- Deputies, College of Physician and pharmacist

## Training sessions to AJEM and other NGO's staff members working in prisons

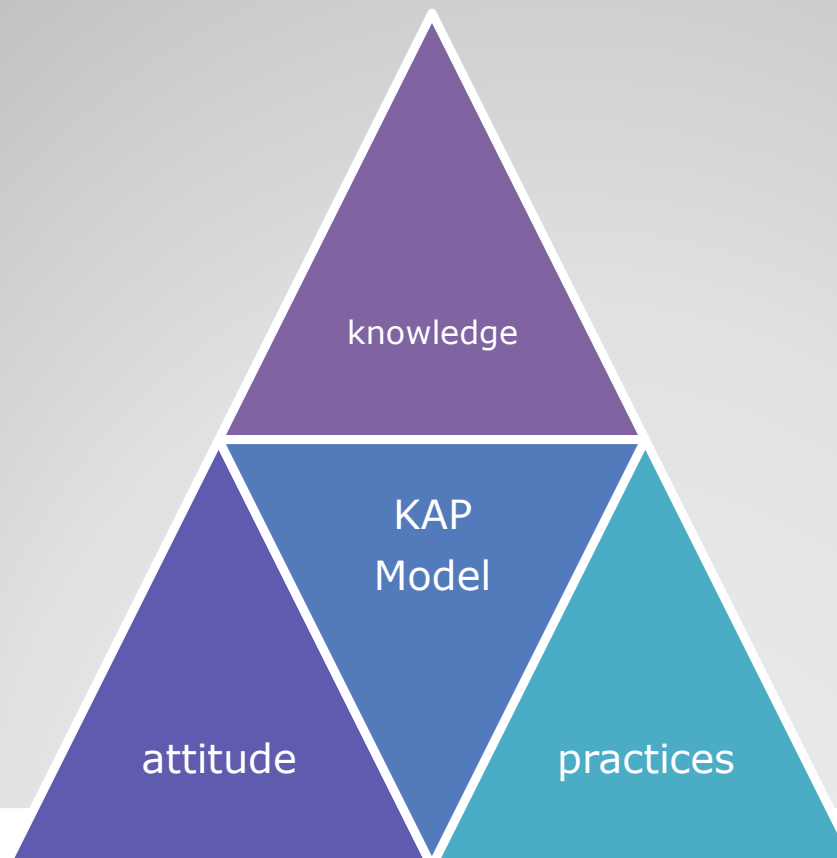
The training sessions are based on three successful models for AIDS prevention and for drug users' awareness:

1.



# Training sessions to AJEM and other NGO's staff members working in prisons

2)



Training sessions to AJEM and other NGO's staff members working in prisons

### *3) Peer education*

## Training sessions to AJEM and other NGO's staff members working in prisons

- **Objectives:**

- ❖ To strengthen skills in developing strategies to improve and/or change health behaviors among IDU inmates
- ❖ To form specialized and trained teams in the usage of BCC materials and peer education
- ❖ to promote knowledge on harm reduction strategies.
- ❖ To enhance NGO's cooperation and networking



## Target 1-B Training sessions for ISF staff prison

- **Objectives:**

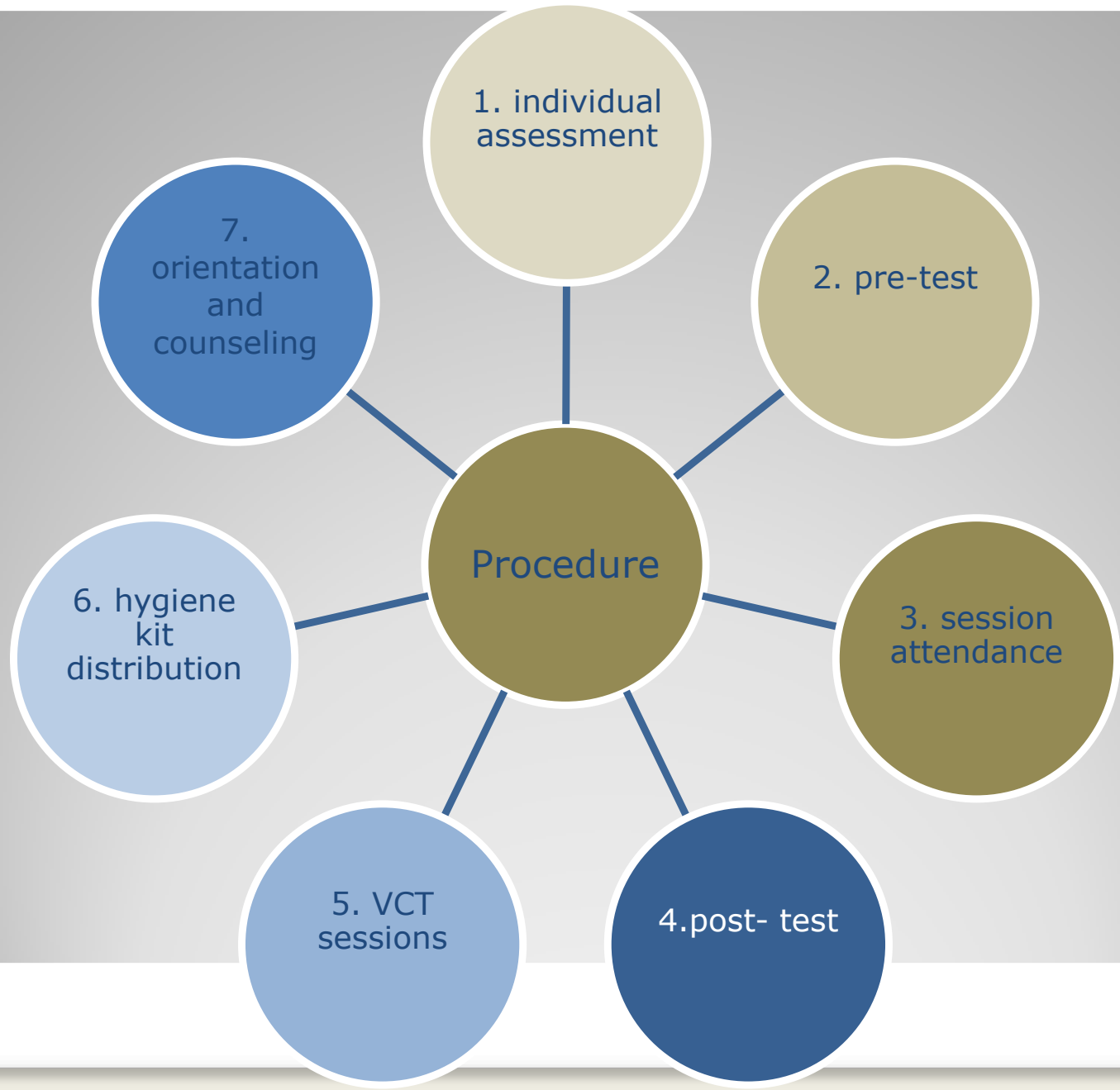
- ❖ To develop knowledge about infectious and contaminating diseases, about the harm reduction strategy and the substitution treatment.
- ❖ To propose changes to be made in the administrative functions in prisons to support the successful implementation of harm reduction

## Target 1-B Training sessions for ISF staff prison

- **Target audience:**
  - ❖ 20 ISF members of the administrative staff of the prisons
  - ❖ 20 ISF members of the Health staff in prisons

## Objective 3: to increase knowledge of IDU inmates about harm reduction strategies

- Target 1 : to conduct IEC sessions within different prisons
- Number of participant: 300 IDU inmates in central and regional prisons
- Sessions content:
  1. HIV
  2. Hepatitis
  3. STD
  4. Drugs



## VCT sessions available within the prisons

- Target: 150 VCT IDU inmates
- The VCT services were suggested to the inmates directly after the HIV and hepatitis sessions.
- Nurses trained for the VCT.
- High demand
- Tattoo in prison

# Individual counseling orientation and orientation

Referral and orientation

Inmates referral within Roumieh prison to our rehabilitation center

Inmates out of prison, the referral was decided upon the need and motivation.

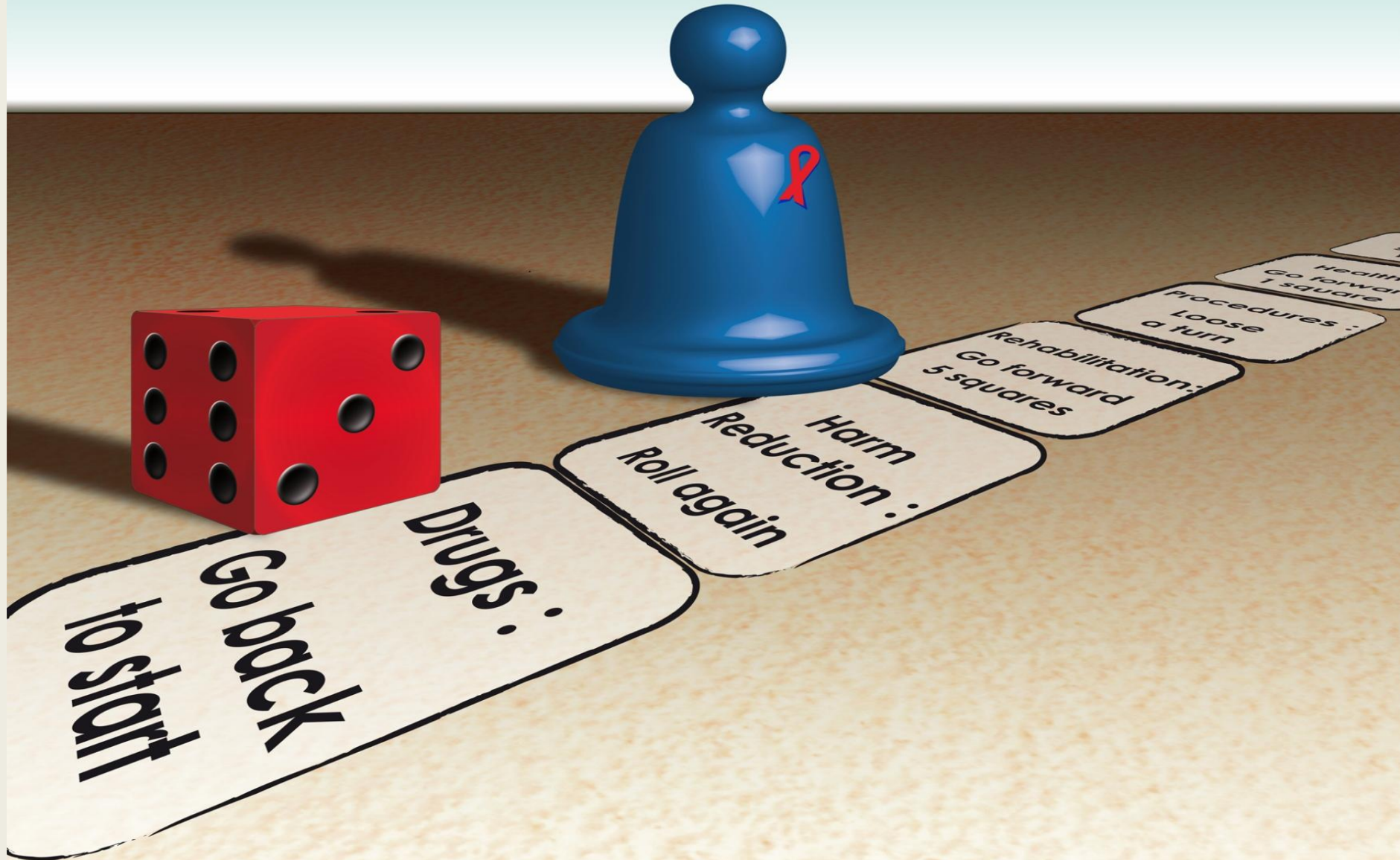
# Challenges

- Gouvernement does not see the importance of initiating or funding rehabilitation programs
  - Absence of laws supporting rehabilitation
  - Security is the main objective of the incarceration
  - Prison's conditions
- Lack of ressources since the project is over

# Conclusion

- This project encompassed several aspects of harm reduction
- It was an essential stepping stone to promote harm reduction strategies and changing Lebanese prisons from a pro-harm environment to the reduction of harm.
- AJEM will continue its work with the project, hoping for a deeper collaboration between members of ISF, stakeholders and NGOs in order to raise awareness and adapt international harm reduction policies





# التهابات الكبد (ب) و(س) والسيدا والأمراض المنقولة جنسيا طرق الإنتقال والحماية

## طرق الإنتقال

لا تنتقل عبر



تنتقل عبر



- علاقة حميمة غير محمية
- الدم الملووث
- الجلد (خاص ببعض الأمراض المنقولة جنسيا)



## طرق الحماية



- داخل العلاقة الحميمة (إمتنع/أخلص/استعمل الواقي)
- عبر الجلد (لا تشارك المناشف/الثياب الداخلية/الفرشاة...)
- عبر الدم (لا تشارك/طهر المعدات الحادة...)
- لقاح التهاب الكبد (ب) (جرعات على ثلاثة مراحل)



## في جمع الأحوال:

في حال وجود أي شك: إستشر طبيبك لإجراء الفحوصات اللازمة وأخذ العلاج ولا تنسى حماية شريكك، وتحفيزه لإجراء الفحوصات وأخذ العلاج.

إن التعرض لمرض منقول جنسيا والشفاء منه لا يكسب مناعة ضده