

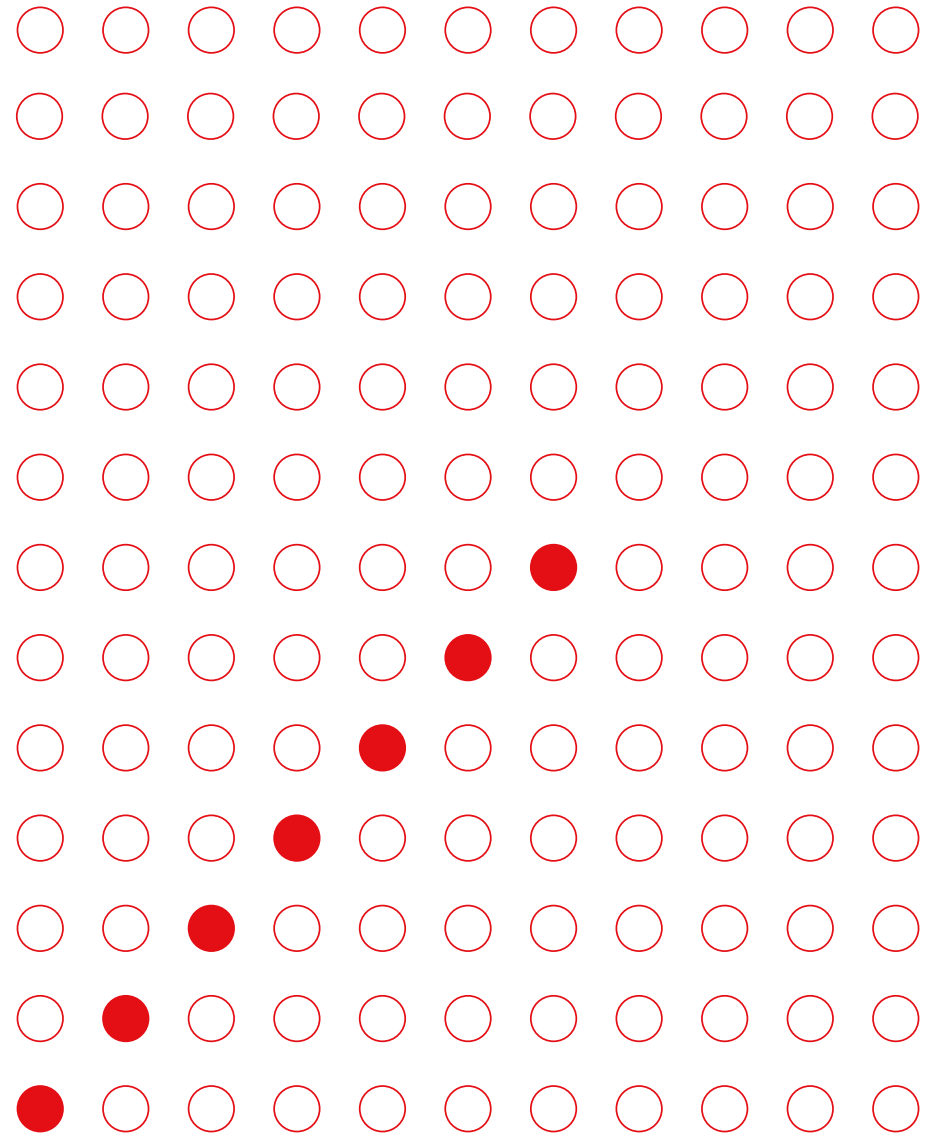
## **In Lebanon,**

a socially conservative environment where active sexual practices outside the scope of marriage are frowned upon and diverse sexual and gender identities rarely celebrated, youth, single women and marginalized individuals suffer in accessing rightful sexual health services.

A non-governmental organization named Marsa, Arabic for “dockyard”, was established in 2010 to cater to the local community’s needs in sexuality education, and sexual health service provision.

Seven years since its official launching in March 2011, Marsa has lived up to the promise behind its name in providing a safe space for the public to speak honestly and openly about the intimate details of their sexual practices and related challenges within their sexuality.

The team at the center welcomes individuals of all ages and walks of life in a friendly environment that caters to their needs.



**marsa: 7 years young**



# Services & Beneficiaries

## Between 2011 & 2017

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Through its comprehensive service provision, Marsa aims to equip its beneficiaries with needed sexual health education since it is lacking within the majority of people living in Lebanon.

With the knowledge gained at the center, young individuals will be capable of determining the appropriate safer sexual practices that suit their needs; thus, empowering them to become well informed decision makers when it comes to their sexual health. Additionally, what they learn at Marsa will help foster healthy standards of communication with their partners, encouraging better decisions regarding their sexual health, and that of their partners.

Clients at Marsa can also get screened for sexually transmitted infections for free or at a subsidized price by highly skilled medical professionals who have ample experience, and are familiar with the social constraints surrounding sexual health in Lebanon and the region.

These medical services are complimented by psychosocial and alternative therapies that cater to the emotional well-being of the clientele.

An internal and external referral system has been established at the center to provide holistic care to the clients as to cater to their every need.



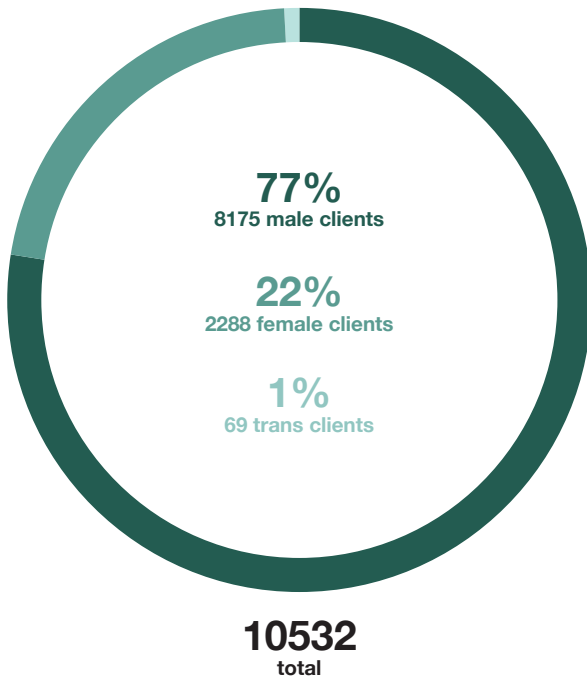
## **Voluntary Counseling & Rapid Testing**

The voluntary counseling and rapid testing for HIV and other infections is the gateway to sexual health for clients who come to the center.

While Marsa did not initiate the service in Lebanon, it has become a prominent center where beneficiaries get a comprehensive sexuality and sexual health education.

Following that, the comprehensive sexual health information available to the service seekers allows them to better assess the chances of contracting a sexually transmitted infection in various sexual practices. Additionally, they can discover the benefits of using condoms as prevention against HIV and other infections.

In 2011, Marsa started with an average of 30 clients per month that could walk into the center and request the service. Nowadays, the average has risen to 200 clients who require an appointment for testing. The center is currently running at full capacity.

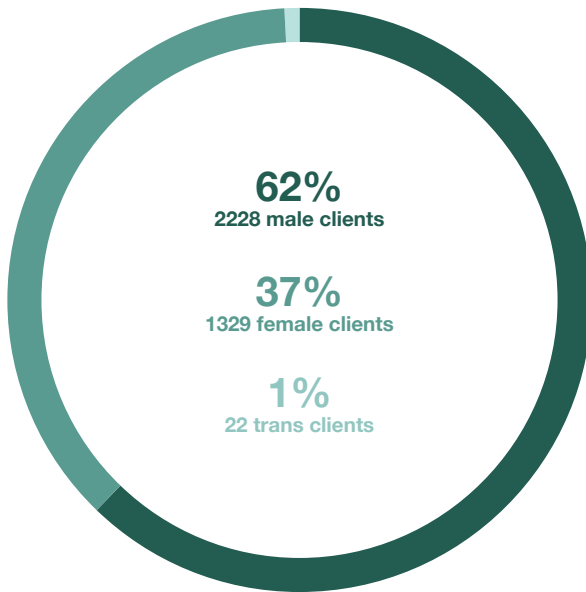


A high percentage of the clientele consists of regular beneficiaries, with a constant flow of new-comers who learn about the center from peers, outreach campaigns, promotional videos, and online searches within Lebanon and the region.



## **Medical Consultations**

Seven years into its endeavors, Marsa offered medical consultations with family doctors and dermatologists, with specialty skills in sexually transmitted infections management. Clients benefitted from friendly doctors that welcome their intimate details without judgment, stigma nor discrimination. Screening for a package of common sexually transmitted infections is available at a subsidized cost in collaboration with a prominent Lebanese hospital.



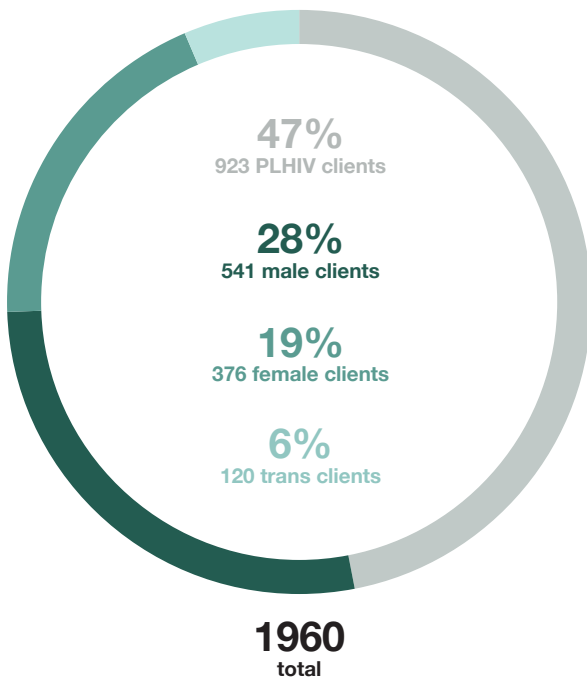
**3579**  
total





## **Psychosocial Counseling & Alternative Therapies**

Marsa has catered to the psychological and emotional well-being of beneficiaries by providing counseling sessions for subjects falling under the umbrella of sexual health, such as sexual traumas, sexual violence, and various gender and sexuality subject matters. Specialized counseling is also offered for People Living with HIV and other chronic infections to support their adaptation to the newly acquired virus and its implications, to learn that the virus is manageable, and to draw a life map and plan their healthy futures.





## Outreach Campaigns

Through its outreach at the center and regular street campaigns and awareness sessions, Marsa has distributed:

Condoms: 32,400

Flyers on Marsa's services: 7,000

STI Brochures: 7,000

Contraception brochures: 4,000

Posters: 1,000

Targeted bar areas: Hamra, Gemmayze, Mar Mikhael, Badaro.

Annual events: World AIDS Day, Fête de la Musique (Downtown Beirut), Wickerpark Festival (Batroun, North Lebanon), Valentine's Day, Christmas and New Year's holidays.

**DECEMBER/JANUARY**

Christmas &  
New Year Holidays

**FEBRUARY**

Valentine's Day

**DECEMBER**

World AIDS Day

Hamra

Gemmayze

Mar  
Mikhael

Badaro

**SEPTEMBER**

Wickerpark  
Festival

**JUNE**

Fête de la  
Musique

**32400**  
condoms

**7000**  
marsa flyers

**7000**  
STI brochures

**4000**  
contraception  
brochures

**1000**  
posters



## Prevention of sexual transmission



### Marsa Sexual Health Centre (Lebanon)

## CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

## RED RIBBON AWARD 2014

Category: Prevention of Sexual Transmission

### Marsa Sexual Health Centre

Lebanon

is recognized as an outstanding example of excellence in the community based response to AIDS worldwide

Michel Sidibé  
Executive Director of UNAIDS  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

XX International AIDS Conference  
Melbourne, Australia  
20 – 25 July 2014

# Awards & Recognition

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## **Red Ribbon Award**

Today, Marsa has become the laureate of the global Red Ribbon Award for the years 2014-2016 for prevention of sexual transmission of HIV, granted by the UNAIDS. Marsa was nominated for the award as a community based organization that has shown outstanding efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

## **Leader in LGBT Health Equality Award**

On a local level, Marsa is also the laureate of the Leader in LGBT Health Equality Award (2016) granted by the Lebanese Medical Association for Sexual Health (LebMASH) as an organization that demonstrated excellence in health care without discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

## **Wajih Ajouz Award**

In 2017 Marsa won 3rd place for the Wajih Ajouz Award by Samir Kassir Foundation for “How to use a condom” campaign. The award honors excellence in Lebanese online activism to defend human rights and freedom of expression.

# Quotes About Marsa

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“In Beirut, a holistic sexual health centre “Marsa” was established in 2011 and immediately became the most popular facility in Lebanon, with large numbers of clients requesting sexual health services, such as VCT and STI screening and treatment. Key factors contributing to the centre’s success include the comprehensive nature of services provided, the non-judgmental environment, together with full anonymity and confidentiality. Services are delivered by a highly trained and friendly team with expertise across a wide range of medical, psychological and social fields.”

– UNAIDS 2013 Regional Report for the Middle East and Africa

“The progress made by Marsa at establishing an organization that can disseminate sexual health information in Lebanon and bring treatment and testing services into the Beirut community has been very impressive. The most important measure of this success is the very rapid increase in the rate of client visits and in the number of individuals seen for services. This very substantial increase in such a short time is a testament to the need for services in the community and the trust that Marsa is developing in the community as a safe, professional, and confidential location for receiving these services.”

– University of California, Los Angeles Evaluation Report on Marsa for Drosos Foundation

# Media Representation

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Over the years, Marsa has been featured in numerous video reports on LBCI, MTV, AlJadeed, Future TV, OTV, NBN, France 24, BBC; press interviews in prominent media outlets such as Assafir, Annahar, The Daily Star, L'Orient Le Jour, Beirut.com and Stepfeed among others; in addition to radio interviews and interventions. The media has so far proven to be an ally to Marsa in promoting sexual health services, education and awareness.

“Marsa Sexual Health Center in Lebanon, which has just released this hilarious video that cuts through the universal secrecy, myths and coded language around menstruation and shows it for what it is: a natural part of being a woman.”

– Global Post, 28/04/2015

“With the absence of governmental agencies to provide free sexual counseling and healthcare and the absence of sexual education classes in most schools, we rely on centers like Marsa to take the lead and offer people some much needed guidance and care.”

– Beirut.com, 21/01/2016

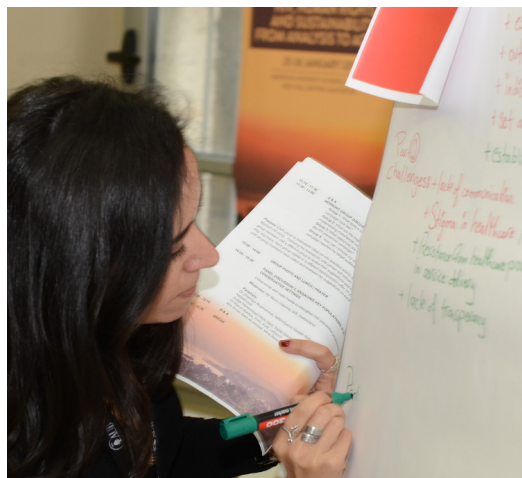
“L'ONG Marsa offre aux jeunes l'espace dont ils ont besoin. Un espace d'échange, d'écoute, de partage et surtout de soins. Et c'est une gageure au quotidien.”

– L'Orient Le Jour, 06/07/2016

“Marsa invites resident doctors in family medicine to train at the clinic on rotation, giving them a unique opportunity to learn about sexual health needs of the local community in a stigma-free environment. When they leave, they take the centre's approach with them, passing it onto a wider pool of community-based colleagues.”

– IPF (Empowering youth journalists), 02/08/2016





# Knowledge Dissemination

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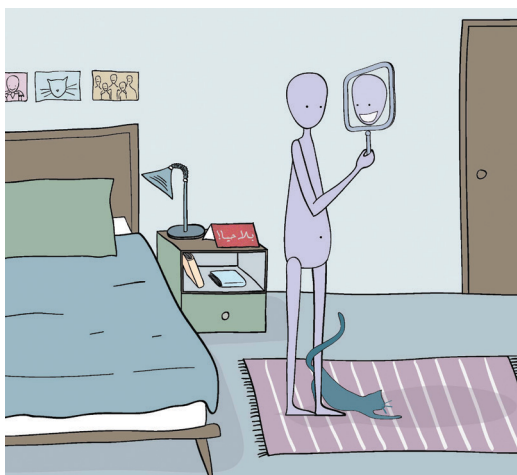
Disseminating knowledge on sexual health among professionals in Lebanon and MENA:

Marsa is currently the leading voluntary counseling and testing center in Lebanon that is catering to key populations affected by HIV and other STIs. The data thoroughly collected by the center has been presented to health care professionals in scientific meetings (AIDS conference-Melbourne 2014, IUSTI conference-Marrakesh 2016), and will be published in scientific journals on sexual health as pioneering findings from the Middle East and North Africa region.

While Marsa caters to the needs of its clients, it also offers practical experience to resident physicians. The center is a keystone in the vocational training for family medicine and dermatology residents in the unique expertise they can acquire. To this date, over 50 residents have benefitted from Marsa. Many of them have been certified and launched their personal clinics or currently work at various hospitals in Lebanon. They refer their patients to Marsa whenever necessary.

Trough the residents' rotation, Marsa learned of the ample lack of information on sexual health in medical and nursing schools curricula. For this reason, project Inc!te was launched in 3 Lebanese universities, to incite medical health care providers to shift their attitudes positively towards sexuality and sexual practices.

Within Inc!te, a contextualized best practices manual will be created for a model sexual health center in the Middle East and North Africa region.



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# Promotional Campaigns

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Through its commitment to public sexuality education, Marsa has produced four videos.

For International Women’s Day 2014, Marsa tackled women’s perspectives of their vaginas. The video presented direct quotes from women living in Lebanon.

It was followed by the viral and silence-breaking *Leila The Spy* (2015), tackling misconceptions about menstruation. Leila, 11 year-old, takes us along with her journey of self-discovery of her first period and her will power to bust the shame around menstruation.

In *Trans Meets World* (2016), Ms. Tania Awad Ghorra lent her voice to introduce us to “Personne”, a trans individual who informs us of what it’s really like to be transgender while living in Lebanon through the current medical, legal, and economic challenges.

To top it off, Marsa collaborated with lead singer of Mashrou’ Leila Hamed Sinno and actress Yumna Marwan on *How To Use A Condom* (2017), as they demonstrated on camera the proper way to use a condom and highlight the importance and accurate usage of condoms.

## ◀ Stills from videos

International Women’s Day, 2014 (top)

*Leila The Spy*, 2015 (center left)

*Trans Meets World*, 2016 (center right)

*How to use a condom*, 2017 (bottom)





# Marsa's Team

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## Board of Directors

**Ayman Assi**, PhD, President, Founding Member

**Georges Azzi**, Founding Member

**Nizar Kinge**, Medical Doctor, Founding Member

**Rima Majed**, PhD, Board Member

**Sahar Mandour**, Board Member

**Tarek Masri**, Board Member

**Mohammed Naja**, Medical Doctor, Board Member

**Christine Tohme**, Board Member

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**Lama Ftouni**, Administrative Officer

**Sara Abu Zaki**, MPH, Project Manager

**Wissam Dalati**, Project Coordinator

**Miled Abou Jaoude**, Senior Psychotherapy Coordinator

**Antoine Ghanem**, Medical Doctor

**Jihane Naous**, Medical Doctor

**Nassif Ghebaly**, Medical Doctor

**Rami El Husseini**, Nutritionist

**Fatima Khalil**, Voluntary Testing and Counseling Coordinator

**Rabih Maher**, Sexual Health Educator

**John Abou Elias**, Sexual Health Educator

**Rana Aaraj**, Sexual Health Educator

**Iman Feghaly**, Sexual Health Educator

**Nohra Ghaoui**, Sexual Health Educator

**Anthony Nemr**, Sexual Health Educator

**Gisele Najm**, Sexual Health Educator

**Mourad Maaliki**, Financial Officer

# Marsa's Partners

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National AIDS Control Program

Ministry of Public Health

Helem

Skoun

Abaad

Syrian League for Citizenship

Middle East and North Africa Harm Reduction Network

Sida Info Service International

Association de Lutte Contre Le SIDA

LebMASH

ITPC MENA

ATL (Tunisia)

Solidarite SIDA



# Marsa's Donors

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World Health Organization  
Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality  
Medico International  
Drosos Foundation  
Hivos  
French Government – Région Aquitaine  
Middle East Partnership Initiative  
American Embassy in Lebanon  
MSM Global Forum  
International Rescue Committee  
UNFPA  
UNAIDS  
Mairie de Paris

Marsa wishes to express its gratitude for all of its friends, allies and private donors for their contributions behind the scenes.

Your support has been key to Marsa's success.





marsa ●● مرسى  
sexual health center مركز الصحة الجنسية

## Get in touch



@MarsaSHC



@MarsaSHC



MarsaSexualHealth



@Marsa\_Sexual\_Health\_Center

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