



# Afghanistan

Médecins Du Monde

Comprehensive Harm Reduction Program

## Drug Users & Methadone Maintenance Therapy Impact



Abdul Rahim while helping his Heroin Overdosed friend, Elm e Farhang Kabul



Abdul Rahim during Advocacy Demonstrations - Washington

- Thanks Medecins Du monde-France for its Harm Reduction Program in Afghanistan
- Thanks Abdul Rahim for sharing his life stories
- Thanks Farhad Habib (Project Manager) for his cooperation

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Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, consists of 7 million populations from original Kabuli and from different provinces and returnees from neighbor's countries. Kabul is known as heroin transient smuggling way, consist of more than 1000,000 people who use drug countrywide and more than 20,000 injecting drug users, there is increment of drug users.

Since April 2006, Mdm has been running a model Harm Reduction (HR) program targeting Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) in Kabul within the Afghan National HIV/AIDS framework. This program was designed to introduce HR in the country. Two of the major services introduced were ART (Anti-Retroviral Therapy) in April 2009 and methadone (used as Opioid Substitution Therapy) in February 2010, to mitigate and reduce HIV/AIDS and other blood borne viruses (BBV) among IDUs. For many years detoxification was the only intervention available, some authorities were opposite for the Harm Reduction Program even, much still to MMT. As detoxification has 90% relapsed (WHO), HIV prevalence and other BBV are increased day by day, and that's why MDM attempted to start a Pilot MMT program in Afghanistan-Kabul for People who use drug particularly for injectors. Finally after much more attempts and struggling against Ministry of Counter Narcotic and DRC, MDM succeed to start Methadone Maintenance Therapy Practically in Kabul February 2010.

At first Abdul Rahim was one of the beneficiary of MDM harm reduction program services in Kabul, he had immigrated to Iran in 1978, was working with a company which hadn't paid his salary, due to claiming for his salary, he was put imprisoned, then started using drug in the prison, deported to Kabul in 2001, he used heroin smoking and injecting for around 17 years, he had detoxed for 7 times in Kabul's detoxification centers but relapsed.

He was the one in the first batch of methadone maintenance therapy on 22 Feb 2010, his first dose was 30mg/day, during couple of weeks reached to stable dose 110-125mg, he voluntarily withdrawal himself from MMT program on 22 Jan 2012, now he is drug free, just smoking cigarettes, sometime like to drink.

During MMT Abdul Rahim was working as a peer in this program, then promoted to social worker position and now working as a focal point for outreach team and as an activist for harm reduction program doing advocacy for MMT and PWUD rights, has attended many conferences of harm reduction and HIVAIDS in the world, he is feeling well and very happy from his life, integrated to his family and got married.