



Health Information and Libraries in Africa: the case of Mozambique

Presenter

Flatiel Vilanculos

WHO Mozambique Documentalist/ AHILA Secretary General

12th EAHIL Conference

14 - 18 June 2010

ESTORIL, PORTUGAL



Access to Health Information

- Analysing access to health information in Africa will help us understand where we are and where we want to go
- By so doing it will also equip us with the challenge we will face in the attempt to respond to health information needs in Africa

Summary

- Access to health information for health workers in Africa in general and Mozambique in particular is limited and inadequate;
- Therefore, meeting the health workers information needs requires that diverse information delivery methods are used;
- Beside of many effort and initiatives to provide access to health information for health workers using various formats, these has not yet yield the desired results due to various adversity in the rural areas;

Summary

- The identification and strengthening of existing health information delivery mechanisms so as to meet their information needs is critical;
- It is important to scale up the local initiatives that have been successful in delivering health information to rural health workers;
- building up a functional network to reduce the gap between knowledge and access at district level

Access to Health Information in Africa

- Equitable and universal access to health information is
 - an important component of the U.N.'s 2015 Millennium Development Goals for Health
 - a key factor in reducing global disparities in health
 - would benefit multiple groups of stakeholders
 - clinicians, researchers, students, policy makers, patients and consumers

Access to Health Information in Africa

- Globally, progress has been made:
 - Access to ICTs is increasing;
 - Availability of
 - more and better content to growing number of people, especially in academic institutions and urban settings;
 - more and better free resources on the internet;
 - Larger and wider range of health information support programmes;

Access to Health Information in Africa

- But, the progress have not yield the desired results:
 - Specialist and academic health care are much better served with information than rural primary care;
 - The majority of health professionals, especially those working in primary health care face different adversity to get access to information such as:
 - Absence of printed materials;
 - From Slow, or unreliable internet connectivity to absence of ICT infrastructure;
 - Lack of electricity or Constant electricity cut;
 - Lack of trained information providers/ professional

Meeting Information needs of Health Professionals in Africa

- To overcome some of the adversity there is need to:
 - Establish partnership;
 - strengthen the existing initiatives;
 - strengthen the moral and financial support of health libraries;
 - Ensure that the information acquired is used for the advancement of our people's health;
 - Identify or strengthen information delivery mechanisms that are appropriate and adequate to local environment;
 - Promote continue education/ training and retention of information professionals
 - Promotion of local content

The case of Mozambique



- Its located in southern Africa
- It has 11 provinces and 128 districts
- Its population is 20.226.296
- Rural population 14.197.384
- Urban population 6.028.912
- Illiteracy 54,4%

The case of Mozambique

- Mozambique face the same problem of the other African countries in term of access to health information;
- It gets worse as one moves to the district areas;
- This problem is further compounded by the language issue;
- Most of available initiative within WHO and other partners are either English or French based
 - For instance WHO has created the Blue Trunk Libraries (BTL) for the Health Districts and this has been recognized as valuable source of information and it provided validated information to support training activities, health promotion and community information
 - A number of electronic abstracts and full-text services from health journals are available online without charge at the point of use. *African Journals Online* and *African Index Medicus* provide access produced in and relevant to Africa.

The case of Mozambique

- This reality leads to some important questions:
 - What is happening within the country?
 - How can Mozambique benefit from those initiatives?
 - How can health professional access reliable information if the information is not available or accessible in the appropriate language?
 - Where do people find the answers to their questions?

What is happening within the country?

- Much of knowledge is being generated but is not reaching those who are in need
- Start compiling a comprehensive bibliography of PT literature
- Participation of MoH Librarians at AHILA and other health information forum

How can Mozambique benefit from those initiatives?

- Mozambique start contributing with its content to Afirican Index Medicus
- Through the ePORTUGUESe initiative the Blue Trunk Library Portuguese version was available and at the present Mozambique has 42 BTLs
- Under the same initiative and in collaboration with BIREME Mozambique is developing its Virtual Health Library <http://mocambique.eportuguese.org>
- Access to HINARI and other Health electronic based resources

MAPA DE DISTRIBUIÇÃO DE BTLs EM MOZAMBIQUE



How can health professional access reliable information if the information is not available or accessible in the appropriate language?

- Through the various mechanism are being putt in place, such as:
 - BTL
 - VHL,
 - HINARI
 - AIM
 - Others
- Where do people find the answers to their questions?

Challenges

- Training Librarian on the use of this resources
- Training of health professional on the use of those resources
- Sustainability of the initiative
- Funding and partnership

Conclusion

- Access to Health information can help fight diseases as well as uphold good health
- In Africa, access to medical and health information has always been a problem and it gets worse when one moves to rural areas
- Combining different delivering mechanism is the key to provide access to health information
- Most importantly partnership and experience sharing.



www.ahila.org

email:

vilanculosf@mz.afro.who.int

Thank you