

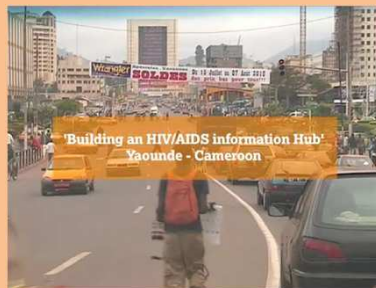
Program for Innovative Libraries in Developing Countries

“Building on an operational health network to develop a health information library network in Cameroon”
2010 Annual project report

Bridging the digital divide by providing equipment computer at peripheral hospitals with the primary purpose of strengthening the Early Infant Diagnosis National Program

Much of what we proposed for implementation during this reporting period and outlined in the year 1 progress report was completed. Specifically, all sites are now connected to the Hub, there is contact flow of information transmission as part of the early infant HIV diagnostics, provision of the latest HIV/AIDS bibliographical materials. In addition, laboratory personnel at all nodes have been trained on data management and other activities related to a better use of the equipment.

The overall success so far registered for the Elsevier project is illustrated by the level of achievement of the set goals on one hand and the number of additional opportunities (such as the WHO, interviews, movies) on the other hand. Our views and those of other key stakeholders continue to be very positive about this project. Undoubtedly this has contributed to the reduction of the digital divide between clinicians in resources poor and rural areas of Cameroon and their colleagues in large metropolitan cities. Through activities completed, health officials in those areas are now better prepared for improved treatment of HIV/AIDS infections and reporting of other emerging infectious diseases, which continue to threaten a significant proportion of the world population.



3' Video from Africa Interactive
www.elsevierfoundation.org/

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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Tackling HIV/AIDS: Developing a health information library network in Cameroon

Library Connect interviewed Odile Ouwe Missi Oukem, PhD, and Appolinaire Djikeng, PhD, about their project to develop a health information library network in Cameroon. Odile is located at the project's hub, the Chantal Biya International Reference Centre for Research on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Management (CIRCB) in Yaoundé-Messa, Cameroon. Appolinaire is located at the BeCA-ILRI Hub in Nairobi, Kenya.

Library Connect: Why did you respond to the Elsevier Foundation Program for Innovative Libraries in Developing Countries?

Odile Ouwe Missi Oukem and Appolinaire Djikeng: When we saw the RFP, we were already involved in various activities focusing on HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. We had identified gaps and weaknesses in information sharing and dissemination from ongoing projects, which could be overcome by putting in place a health information network. Our proposal, "Building on an Operational Health Network to Develop a Health Information Library Network in Cameroon," addressed these gaps.

What makes this project different from other efforts to improve healthcare in Cameroon?

Like in many other countries, the relationship between the Ministry of Health and the peripheral hospitals is weak, but to our knowledge, information and communications technology has rarely been used to address this weakness. Investment is more likely to be with basic or sophisticated medical equipment rather than communication and documentation infrastructures. Although this is a pilot project with few sites constituting the network, this initiative attempts for the first time to bridge this gap by linking remote health facilities, thereby reducing the digital divide.

When did you begin?

The proposal was selected for funding in January 2009, and we began in March 2009 when the funds were transferred to CIRCB.

What was your goal?

In Cameroon and in most sub-Saharan African countries, healthcare professionals still suffer from the digital divide. It was clear to us that reducing this divide could improve their access to up-to-date biomedical information relevant to their efforts in controlling several infectious diseases — such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria — with a devastating impact on public health. In addition, they could access tools to accelerate the transmission and documentation of biomedical information in the context of control (diagnosis, treatment and vaccination) of diseases. Furthermore, using informatics tools to manage and control infectious diseases would set the stage for efficient and early reporting of new and unknown infections, known and reemerging infections, drug-resistant strains of known and usually treatable infections, etc.

How did you go about achieving this goal?

We took advantage of a network of collaborating institutions for research and control of HIV/AIDS to establish a library information system in selected public and private health institutions in Cameroon (nodes) and linked them to CIRCB (the hub).

What success have you seen to date?

Rural health facilities now receive HIV patients' results as soon as they are available at the central testing lab (CIRCB). This is particularly beneficial to infants born of HIV-positive mothers because early diagnosis guarantees early treatment, which may prolong and improve their lives.

Health information, such as the latest information related to HIV/AIDS treatment, Ministry of Health decisions, information on national and international conferences on infectious diseases, debates occurring through electronic forum and training opportunities, are being disseminated to healthcare workers. As a result, one technician based in one node of the network (in the far North region) has been selected to attend the 2010 session of a postgraduate training in biological retrovirology in Dakar. In addition, relationships between the rural health facilities and the reference laboratory located in Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon, are stronger.

What are your next steps?

We will finalize the digitization of the HIV bibliography in Cameroon to make it accessible to remote health facilities, and we'll continue to use the communication infrastructure to maintain regular interactions with the rural health facilities. Depending on need, we will propose personalized activities, including training on basic software (e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint). Finally, we would like to extend this project to as many health facilities as possible to really see an impact at the country level. For this step, we will require funding for a second phase. LIC

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THE ELSEVIER FOUNDATION

The "Elsevier Network"



THE ELSEVIER FOUNDATION

Bridging the digital divide by providing equipment computer at peripheral hospitals with the primary purpose of strengthening the Early Infant Diagnosis National Program 2010 Annual project report

Early in June 2010, we traveled to the far North region and installed the equipment of the project in the laboratory of the private hospital of Tokombéré. We took this opportunity to visit also two other hospitals (the Regional hospital of Maroua and the private hospital of Petté), which are involved in the HIV Early Infant Diagnosis national program but not part of this project. Since the private hospital of Petté is already equipped with computers and regular Internet access, the staff requested to receive the results of the EID program by email, like the five other nodes. They were so interested in the project that we wish to consider Petté hospital as the 6th node of our network. They now receive also all other health related information and electronic documents that we send from the hub to the nodes and we'll extend to them our second site visit (later in 2011).



Petté hospital has become the 6th node of the Network



Shooting at CIRCB at the Library



Pi of the Project (taken from the video)

During the reporting period, the following activities were also completed:

1. **Purchase of additional equipments** (including a sophisticated scanner)
2. **Monitoring and Evaluation** of the implementation of the project at each node (using site supervision and questionnaires)
3. Implementation of the project focusing on the **inventory of all HIV bibliography since the 80's in Cameroon**: more than 2,000 references have been collected and classified so far. Articles in PDF have been printed then numbered. These have been copied and numbered and are currently being digitalized. This work is now extended to conference abstracts and books or book chapters.
4. **Dissemination of information from the hub to the nodes** (Diagnostics results of the EID program and health related information, especially concerning HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis in general or focusing more specifically on health in Cameroon)
5. **Dissemination of information on the project at the international level** (Shooting of a video at the CIRCB and in Obala with Africa Interactive, Realization of an Interview with the staff of Library Connect and Submission of an application to the ACRL/STS Innovation in Science and Technology Librarianship Award)

Main staff Involved in the project @ CIRCB

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