

**Public Access to Health Information Workshop,  
Maputo, Mozambique, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> March 2011.**

**Facilitator's Report**

This report deals with a workshop funded by IFLA and jointly managed by IFLA and Phi. Also supporting the workshop were the Universita Pedagoga of Mozambique (rooms and AV facilities, contribution to local expenses and time of Aissa Issak) and the Mozambique office of the World Health Organisation (time of Flatiel Vilanculos). The chief facilitator was Paul Sturges. We were honoured by the presence of the UP Rector, who opened the workshop and joined participants for lunch on the first day, revealing a strong commitment to the mission of the workshop. A representation of the local WHO office also made a positive and highly appropriate speech at the opening.

Participants were drawn from several sectors including librarians, mass media, road traffic administration, medical doctors and academics from relevant subject fields. Although attendance varied slightly during the course of the two days according to availability, there was a core group of 26 with a slight female majority (14, as against 12). An invited participant from the National Library of Angola was in attendance. The engagement of all participants was excellent and the majority intervened at least one occasion during proceedings and some on many occasions. Contributions varied from comments, matters of fact or questions to sustained and lively debate on specific topics (traditional healers is a good example of such a topic). UP provided highly suitable rooms for the sessions and refreshment breaks and technology worked smoothly at all times.

The workshop followed the IFLA FAIFE Learning Materials for PAHI workshops, with the slides translated into Portuguese. The workshop language was officially English, but the local facilitators, aided by a marvellously competent volunteer from the group, mediated with translation of passages not fully set out in the slides, summaries in English of ongoing discussion in Portuguese to the facilitator, and translation of both questions and responses. The effect was satisfyingly seamless.

As usual with such workshops, the discussion produced striking and worthwhile examples related to points raised by the materials. For example:

- Rejection of white mosquito nets by Muslim communities because white is associated with death;
- Suspicion of chlorine water purification products because of a supposed similarity between the words chlorine and cholera;
- Rejection of certain sprays against insect infestation, on the suspicion that they encouraged rather than eliminated infestation.

Improvised modifications to the programme also aided concentration and involvement. For instance, in response to the (rhetorical) question 'If you were in a remote rural area and your child began to suffer from bad diarrhoea, would you consult a traditional healer?', the local facilitators immediately organised an amusing secret ballot, which produced the interesting result – 24 Yes, 3 No and one spoiled

ballot paper. The rumour was that the spoiled ballot paper was that of a medical doctor who couldn't make up her mind.

The chief modification to the materials was to spend a longer time than scheduled on the HIV/AIDS module and formally present the other four modules fairly briefly. This enabled the content of these modules each to be discussed by a separate group at some length. All groups dealt with a common set of questions relating to their allotted health problem (target groups, methods of promotion, structure of an information programme, use of library premises and facilities).

The workshop ended with final, summarising thoughts, votes of thanks and the presentation of certificates of attendance. Participants were encouraged to take the workshop materials (which all received on a memory stick in the Portuguese translation) and use them with other groups, with the intention of spreading the message of the workshop as widely as possible in Mozambique (and Angola).

The workshop was an extremely efficient operation: properly organised, well publicised and effectively run on the day. Shane Godbolt and Phi planned the workshop meticulously and provided for all eventualities. Flatiel Vilanculos and Aissa Issak and their institutions deserve hearty thanks from IFLA and Phi for the quality of their input. The separate financial report shows that costs were generally kept within budget.

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