



## PARTNERSHIPS IN HEALTH INFORMATION

### What it means to be part of a library partnership

We hope that each library partnership will flourish, but there is no way of avoiding the fact that distance makes working together less easy; there will be events over which we have no or little control which can affect the progress of a partnership. This leaflet draws upon the experience of ourselves and of others in suggesting good practice and providing practical information.

#### **The International Health Links Manual**

A guide to starting up and maintaining long-term international health partnerships

Maïa Gedde

Tropical Health and Education Trust: 2009.

This leaflet supplements the above since it (IHLM) is oriented towards links between clinical professionals though other personnel in the NHS may also be involved. Health Librarians are often employed in universities and colleges, though many of these provide services to the NHS.

Partnerships in Health Information believes that health librarians have a crucial part to play in underpinning such partnerships/ links and improving access to information for students, researchers, practitioners, as well as a concern for disseminating relevant and reliable information to the community. In this they may differ in outlook from the mission of institution to institution links. Health/ medical libraries with professional librarians are very few and far between in developing countries; so many of those with whom PHI works have a countrywide remit in their mission statements.

Such an objective can only be realized by cooperation with other librarians and resource managers involved in providing access to health information in the relevant developing country. These include public libraries, NGO resource centres, and both national and regional associations.

Indications of where the IHLM provides additional detailed and practical advice are indicated in yellow boxes.

#### **An introduction**



Links are about people, sharing ideas, knowledge and friendship



After set up and planning it involves some or all of the following activities: reciprocal training visits, mentoring, technical assistance, and monitoring and evaluating progress to plan future activities

International Health Links Manual (IHLM) p. 15

#### **Underpinning principles**



The focus is on capacity building



Responding to the priorities of the developing country partner



Supported by senior management at all the institutions concerned



Long-term and based on trust



Aligned with national strategies and organizational priorities



Working with existing information structures within the developing country

Slightly modified from IHLM p. 17

#### **Personal and organizational benefits for UK personnel**



Personal satisfaction and inspiration



Professional appreciation of information exchange in different cultures, development of resourcefulness



Increases reputation of organization, motivation and retention of staff with a new outlook on innovation

Modified from IHLM p. 21

## Jointly Planning the Link

**Prepare** the joint planning process - bring together key stakeholders in both partners  
**Identify** and agree priority areas where the developed country can make a significant contribution  
**Set** achievable, measurable and timely objectives  
**Plan** activities to achieve strategic aims  
**Agree** Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

See IHLM for detailed advice & examples p.40 - 49. MoU Template Appendix I

### Partnership management teams

Our experience has shown that having at least two 'Partner Contacts' in each country to lead the programme with a small number of others to advise, act as Treasurer etc. provides a good basis for promoting joint projects and activities and should raise awareness of the project.

See also IHLM p.51

### Communications between partners

E-mail, telephone, Skype/ instant messaging, SMS/ text messaging, fax, post/ mail services are all possibilities depending on the facilities available in the developing country. It is best to agree the most useful with some means of backup should it prove necessary

Note that although many people in developing countries have mobiles they may have to pay for calls received from abroad. It is also generally cheaper to make calls from the UK to landlines in the developing country.

Consider setting up teleconferences as this is an effective way of communication between teams.

Partner contacts should endeavour to keep a dialogue going even if things are quiet. But interruptions to the electricity supply and internet access are more frequent in developing countries; these can generally be overcome by using different methods of communication. Computer viruses are also a hazard; so take precautions.

To ameliorate some of the potential problems that can occur, we suggest that three people in the partnership teams on both sides exchange e-mail addresses, landline and mobile telephone numbers. Further information and tips in IHLM p.52-53



University of Zambia Medical Library

### Feedback, reports and evaluation

Notes of meetings, reports of activities and general news from both partners have great value in keeping partners in the picture during projects and between projects. It can also facilitate the appropriate support offered by Partnerships in Health Information.

See: IHLM for items to record p. 54

Reports of visits are a good way of monitoring how the project or programme is moving forward and they will be expected by donors to the project. We recommend that time (an afternoon for instance) is allocated towards the end of the visit to enable both sides to reflect on whether the objectives of the visit have been met, what remains to be followed up, and evaluation of workshops, discussions with colleagues and stakeholders, and visits to other institutions etc. See: IHLM p.72-73, 84.

## Evaluation

**What difference are we making:**  
a toolkit on monitoring and evaluation for  
health links

Mya Gordon and Caroline Potts.

Available for download from Tropical Health  
and Education Trust website <http://thet.org>

- Monitoring and evaluation in context
- Planning
- Practical data collection
- Analysing data & writing reports
- Designing evaluation of links / [partnership]
- Follow up evaluation



Machakos Library, Kenya

### Simple - Qualitative - Quantitative - Impact

A more detailed evaluation at set intervals during the project and at its end needs to be agreed in the initial stages of the partnership so that the relevant data is collected. Both qualitative and quantitative data will should be collected and consideration on how to measure impact; this may be difficult but is probably of more value than other measures. See publication above.



Mozambique workshop

## Financial Matters

### Funding a partnership/ link

How much money do we need  
Developing a fundraising strategy  
Who will coordinate fundraising and how  
What are the funding sources available  
See: IHLM p.106-113.

### Managing and transferring funds

Money needs to be kept in a bank account  
If a new account has to be opened ensure there are two signatures required for each transaction  
Before making a transfer agree a budget  
Consult developing country Partner about transfer of funds to an agreed account

See: IHLM p. 55-56.

PHI has several times had difficulties with the transfer of money to an institutional account, where it can become mixed with other monies. We therefore suggest that as much as possible is paid for in the UK e.g. air travel, bearing in mind that buying, say, books or computer equipment etc. in the developing country helps their economy

## PHI's support for partnerships

We realize that librarians, though they may call on support from other stakeholders, tend to be thin on the ground compared with the number of medical and nursing staff in any one institution. It is therefore our policy to support partners as far as we are able, bearing in mind that Phi itself has a very small staff and most of them are voluntary - as are its Trustees, who may also hold responsible posts.


We also know that for many librarians thinking of taking part in a partnership or link we will be taking them into 'unknown territory'. Although this might be considered a valuable broadening of experience it does not sit very well with our colleagues in developing countries and in the UK who have a primary responsibility to their institution and to the people who use their information services.


Our policy is, therefore, to provide as much practical help and advice to those starting a new partnership and, whilst not withdrawing that help as the partnership develops, we hope to enable library partners to do as much as possible themselves, using advice our website ([www.partnershipsinhealthinformation.org.uk](http://www.partnershipsinhealthinformation.org.uk)).


In return, and in order for us to provide assistance to partnerships Phi needs to be kept up to date with partnership activities through: minutes of partner team/group meetings, reports on visits, annual reports and anything else you consider might be helpful to our understanding.





## General principles for Training visits


 The training provided is based on the priorities of the partner country as outlined in an agreed programme during a preliminary visit or meeting with key players in the UK


 Training visits should be two way - some in developed country as well as in the developing country


 Visits are more productive if two people can be involved in the visit to the developing country or the UK


 Sending CVs in advance of the visit is helpful to those planning the visit programme

 The length of the visit should generally be about 7 - 15 days in order to give time for the visitors to settle in and meet with partner personnel and to give time for a final evaluation of the visit

 It is good practice to agree an outline of a report of the visit and training activities before the visitors depart for home. We suggest that an afternoon towards the end of the visit is set aside for this activity.

 The UK visitors would normally come from within the partner library organization, but if trainers from other professions or organizations are involved, the needs and involvement of librarians should be borne in mind

 Visiting other organizations for experience and better understanding of the information environment is important but the main focus should be on training

 Whenever possible training visits should be coordinated with conferences or the training activities of other organizations working in collaboration with Partnerships in Health Information

Workshop at Gondar University, Ethiopia

## Planning a training visit

Joint planning well in advance of a training visit is essential to its success

Specific requests for training based on the strategic plan need to be proposed by the developing country partner

The level of expertise of workshop recipients needs to be made known to the trainers e.g. basic, intermediate, more advanced or mixed

Accommodation and venue for training is best researched and booked by the host partners who have local knowledge

Discussions to be held with key people and visits to other organizations might be suggested by both the host partner and the visitors; and when agreed, arranged by the hosts

The provision of short synopses on the proposed training content are useful to ensure that the training sessions match expectations

The jointly prepared programme needs to be agreed well in advance of the visit

The above will include: who will do what and when to make the necessary practical arrangements. Air fares are cheaper if they can be booked well in advance and at less popular times of year.

## Training visits from UK to partner country

Collaborating organizations and other partnerships / links appreciate being informed about the visit and having a report made available to them after it has taken place

Specialist skills may already be available in the developing country. Their advice and participation during training visits will be invaluable.

Some requested expertise may be in short supply. PHI will need time to identify experts to meet such training needs.

## Practical information for visits to a developing country

Reasons for being given time off to participate in the partnership

Confirm time of flights with partner contacts, accommodation address and how to get to it from the airport if not being met

Ensure that you have shared your contact details - mobile numbers for partner contacts, and address of the partner organization - useful in case of emergency

You will need a valid passport with at least 6 months to run, the appropriate visas, injections & malaria prophylaxis - UK

Ensure you take any other necessary medication with you to cover the length of your visit

Good insurance cover is necessary - and take advice on the precautions with regard to food, drink and climate

Carry a mixture of cash with you, a debit card (not useful in rural areas in Africa), travellers cheques may be an option but can be complicated to exchange.

Baggage - take all handouts and teaching materials with you

Be prepared for electricity or internet problems in developing countries

Keep a photocopy of your passport

Take a copy of the telephone number and address of the British Embassy or its High Commission in case of emergency

See: IHLM p.61-71.

Take all **teaching materials** with you. Handouts on CDs are lighter to carry but some paper copies of handouts might be needed.

Feedback on the visit to be made available to the Trustees of PHI and others involved in its organization and execution.

This feedback might then be used or adapted as publicity to attract the attention of more people and improve fundraising.

## Training visits to UK

These might be different in nature e.g. for specialized training or added on to a visit to the UK made for a different purpose

Middle level managers of library or resource centres and those newly qualified in library and information studies would be welcome

Contacts with other health libraries will need to be made in good time if specialized training outside the UK partner organization is to be arranged.

CVs of the visitors are appreciated and helps to optimize the visit programme

A joint report on the visit should be outlined before the visitors return to their own country. It should include a section on how the learning and experience will be passed on to colleagues and how it might change or begin to change practice and services.

## Workshops / Training sessions in developing countries

Coordination of training with other training organizations is desirable as an effective way of transferring expertise and sharing expenses.

Trainers need to bear in mind that English is, at best, a second language for most participants

Flexibility in the means of delivering training is desirable due to uncertainties in electrical supply and connectivity

Handouts on CDs with a few paper copies for those that cannot use them are appreciated and light to carry

Small group work and new methods of enabling learning are appreciated

Time for an introductory speaker needs to be taken into account if it is intended to invite senior personnel to open the meeting

The Millennium Goals might be used for case studies and training examples

Take certificates of attendance for participants

## Practical information for those visiting the UK

Ensure that you have the necessary invitation from the UK, valid passport, and permissions from your employing organization in order to apply for a visa

Liaise with your UK partner for travel arrangements. It may be easier to book your air ticket in the UK

Make sure you have some money and the contact numbers and addresses of two people.

Ensure that you know where someone will meet you and that you have precise instructions about using public transport should you need it to get to the meeting place or your final destination

It is best to travel light as you may want to return with more than you came with. Warm and waterproof clothing is generally needed in the winter (Nov-Apr), but it can be cool and rain at any time of the year

Always be on time for meetings and other arrangements. If traffic or public transport problems delay you, telephone one of your contacts to let them know what has happened

Please ask as many questions as you like. The people you will meet realize that your experience is different from theirs; so do not be embarrassed to seek clarification and take notes.

Although the UK is a fairly safe place you should seek advice from your hosts about any personal security issues e.g. being out late at night etc. See IHLM p. 76-85 for further useful detail

HIV/AIDS resource centre, Lusaka, Zambia

