



**Report on Health Literacy Training
Workshop at the Pan African Institut
for Development West Africa
Cameroon**

Written by

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The Pan African Institute for Development West Africa (PAID-WA) (www.paidwa.org) hosted on the 1st July 2017 in its main hall a training workshop under the theme: *Health Literacy for sustainable development*. The main guest speaker was Didier Demassosso **Healthcare Information For All**, HIFA's country representative for Cameroon. This training workshop was organised in collaboration with **REMEDY association** (www.facebook.com/Remedy.yaounde) which aims among many other things in promoting health and wellbeing within communities and **WEM Afrika** (www.facebook.com/WemAfrik). The organisation aims at building a strong and powerful Africa for a sustainable peace and development. It integrates conflict management, Human Rights, Humanitarian services, Gender issues, Security issues, Environmental issues and capacity building. It is an initiative by youths to Africa and to the world at large.

Objective of training workshop:

Exposing participants to the concept of health literacy and related terms (health promotion and health information) and enabling them to reflect on the role they themselves have to play on their own health.

The workshop started at 10 am with Mr Didier Demassosso's talk on health literacy (see annex for outline). Starting from an observation of the absence of health literacy initiatives in Cameroon as stated by authors such as Pleasant (2012) and an ineffective health promotion system reported by Njdepel (2014), he showed the link between health, health information, health literacy, and health promotion. He put emphasis on the relevance that providing reliable health information has in enabling health literacy needs of Cameroonian citizens to be met.

HIFA CRC Demassosso briefly talked about depression as a major public health issue and the relevance on how been mental health literate could have in reducing the agony of suffers and their families. Then concluded his expose. Then at 11am *Nkongho Nchong Achere*, Masters in Public Health Student FHS-UB, *Founder/President of Health Promotion Foundation For All (HPFA), Cameroon women scholarship alumni sponsored by the British High Commission Yaoundé* made a presentation on *Zika Virus: a Public Health Threat in Cameroon*". According to her:

“Zika virus is a global health threat caused by the aedes specie of mosquito and has been recorded I 63 countries. The virus has serious complication especially in babies born of infected mothers. However, there is no vaccine|treatment and Cameroon is classified as a country of high risk of an outbreak. Nevertheless there is poor awareness among persons of all professions|communities. As a result, it is the responsibility of everyone (government, organisations ,communities, families, individuals) to work in their different sectors on how to prevent an outbreak or prepare to limit spread in case an outbreak”.

At about 11 45 min, *Monny Mpah Madeleine, Msc Peace, conflict studies and international relations at PAID-WA, President and co-founder WEM AFRIKA, Peace and Community development expert* did a presentation on “**Drug Abuse and Addiction in Cameroon**”. She put forward the thought that:

“Drug abuse is one prevalent threat in our country today that has been left unattended. Daily millions of youth in the country tend to abuse drugs, sometimes knowingly and other times unknowingly. How many times have you consumed a pain killer, antibiotic without the consultation or prescription. How many times have you taken drugs above the recommended dosage? The term a drug doesn’t only refer to cannabis, cocaine and other hard substances, it is also medicinal substances like pain killers/ antibiotics needed to lessen pain or prevent infection. Drug abuse is the improper use, while addiction is the dependence on a harmful drug. Signs includes hallucinations protracted withdrawal syndrome, anxiety amongst others. Drug abuse leads to health and social problems, accidents, homicides, sexual violence, rape amongst others.

The next time you consume a drug without prescription, the next time you take a painkiller above the required dosage, the next time you drink to stupor, the next time you take a malaria medicine without carrying out a malaria test to know if it is malaria /thypoid ; you are abusing drugs and sooner than later you might become an addict.”

At about 12:30 Ngole Elvis Ngome, nurse and midwife at Mount Mary Hospital in Buea made a presentation on late use of health services, malaria (types; signs and symptoms; treatment of simple/severe malaria) and HIV/AIDS.

Participants and group formation for the workshop session

There were about 30 participants at this workshop

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Ngole Elvis Ngome	Health professional	Mount Mary Hospital Buea	elvisngole21@gmail.com

In order to sink the concepts better into the minds of the participants, they were then asked to regroup themselves. Four groups organized themselves and discussed the questions:

- 1) 5 ways to promote health in our communities
- 2) 5 ways to prevent diseases in our communities

After about 5 minutes of group discussion each group came out each with their thoughts. Which can be summarized using the following phrases listed below :

Sensitisation, understanding culture of community, providing health education
Community mobilisation ; vaccination campaign ; government intervention ;
primary prevention ; health communication involve stake holders ; international
and national ngo's ; health facilities should create mobile healthcare services;
development of community health ; community action of participation in health
; health insurance; healthcare services ; decentralisation ; health education ;
community directed intervention.; intersectorial collaboration; improving of
clean water access by government to people ; vaccination campaigns ;
sensitisation campaigns reaching out and providing for communities ; training
of medical personnel ; promoting hygiene and sanitation ; communication
encourage the use of vaccine and drugs ; volunteer counselling and testing ;
sanitation and proper hygiene ; check-ups and early diagnosis; health education
; training of community champions to render sustainable health informed ;
providing resources that will promote health; consistent follow-up and
evaluation; communication ; hygiene and sanitation practice ; empowering
communities to take care of their health by first ad to member community.

In order to evaluate the efficiency of the workshop we asked four questions to the participants

- 1) Rate the usefulness of the training workshop (useful or not useful)
- 2) Which aspects of the training do you want to be ameliorated
- 3) Which health literacy topics do you think needs to be addressed
- 4) How difficult was it answering the group task questions

This training workshop was the first in its kind to be organised by the HIFA in Cameroon. It proved to be of extreme relevance to evaluate the needs of local communities and of professionals. Indeed, during the training several ideas were presented that lead us to conclude that Cameroon's health system would do much better if its providers and users are all health literate. The need to develop health programmes in schools at all level of the educational system is a strategic, systematic and cost effective means to promote health and reduce disease in LMICs such as Cameroon. Especially that its population is young and a good number are schooling.

The training seminar would have been much more successful if more communication about the event was done around Buea town, more sensitisation materials on health issues of current concern to LMIC's liable to increase health information available, more support to develop more local content on the health information needs of communities.

As the Framework on integrated, people-centred health services Report by the Secretariat on WHA 69 on the 15 April 2016 seeks to promote integrated, people-centred health services in LMICs, it matters that health literacy in LMICs be made a central priority as well.

“all people have equal access to quality health services that are co-produced in a way that meets their life course needs, are coordinated across the continuum of care, and are comprehensive, safe, effective, timely, efficient and acceptable; and all carers are motivated, skilled and operate in a supportive environment” (p.4)

So long as people are not health literate the impetus, motivation to seek for health services, take their health in control by the adoption of positive health behaviours and attitudes would be truly absent. In this endeavour the HIFA will be playing a crucial role. Investing therefore more in the capacity building of CRs and providing more support for their work could be crucial in raising the

health literacy levels of citizen's in LMICs. There is no sustainable health development without health literacy, no health literacy without availability and access to professional healthcare information and lay health information. These are imperatives for attaining SDG 3.

The workshop ended at about 13: 15. I left PAID-WA with a great sense of responsibility as a HIFA CR and an urgent need to call for investing in health literacy in LMICs for example Cameroon. The need is amazingly pressing and urgent and yet astonishingly ignored or not taking into account. Therefore, I look forward to organize more talks during the year, so as to increase the awareness of the importance and link between health care information, health literacy, health promotion and disease prevention.

Annexe I

Training workshop Outline (HIFA)

Theme: Health literacy for sustainable health development

- Self-Presentation
- Introduction
- Definition of concepts (health literacy , HFA, health information, access to information and health information as a fundamental human right)
- What is relationship between health, health information, health literacy and health promotion?
- Relationship between health, health information, health literacy and health promotion
- Who can contribute to promote health literacy?
- HIFA, health literacy and health promotion in Cameroon
- A brief talk about the WHD2017. Depression: let's talk.
- Conclusion
- References

Annexe II: Photos



HIFA country Representative for Cameroon, Mr Demassosso during his presentation on health Literacy



Ms Achere during her presentation on Zika Virus



Mr Ngole talking about late use of health facilities, malaria and HIV/AIDS



Ms Monny during her presentation on Drug Addiction and drug abuse in Cameroon



Group work sessions to reflect on health promotion and disease prevention in communities



Handing of certificates, here Mr Obia Bryan Project Manager/Remedy Association



Closing photos of speakers, with participants of the PAID-WA Buea Health Literacy training workshop