

Effect of Public Libraries in the Attainment of Health Millennium Development Goals in Senegal

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ABSTRACT

This study surveys the roles of Public libraries in the attainment of health Millennium Development Goals in Senegal. It also identifies the health-information needs of the community and information services rendered by the libraries. The role of public libraries in the attainment of health-MDGs has been a daunting task for public libraries as a result of government negligence. The methodology adopted for the study is the survey design in which questionnaires was used for obtaining data. The target population was public library staff/users in Senegal. The result showed that public libraries have played significant role towards the attainment of health-MDGs and library users make significant demand for all categories of health information especially in the area of maternal and childcare. However, majority of the public libraries have no Internet services. The findings make it imperative for all other relevant agencies to key into the health-MDGs especially in assisting the Public Libraries. The study will bring to the awareness of users, the roles public libraries plays in supporting local and international policies and the provision of information services for library users

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1. INTRODUCTION

The bid to reduce infant and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, Malaria level worldwide led to the declaration of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2000. Countries, especially developing countries, were mandated to cut by half the incidence of poverty and child mortality rate by 2015 among other goals. In Western and Central Africa, mortality rates for under-fives are among the highest in the world [1-2].

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) came as a tool through which governments are struggling to implement and succeed in transforming the lives of their citizenry in all aspects of human endeavour. Libraries as an important agent for information dissemination and other services have a vital role to play in the actualization of the MDGs. Universal access to information on health related issues is a prerequisite for meeting the health Millennium Development Goals and achieving Health for All. Lack of access to information remains a major barrier to knowledge-based health care in developing countries. The development of reliable, relevant, usable information can be represented as a system that requires cooperation among a wide range of professionals including librarians, health-care providers, policy makers, researchers, publishers, indexers, and system reviewers. It is essential that Public Libraries take the lead in championing

the goal of “Universal access to essential health-care information by 2015” or “Health Information for All” of the Millennium Development Goals.

The attainment of the health-MDGs in most African nations, especially, Senegal is very slow considering the effort of international organisations on meeting the deadline, which is 2015. Senegal, as a country is still at the implementation stage of attaining the MDGs because of her slow developmental process, which has been a bane to achieving any set target aimed at improving the lives of her citizenry. The area of health related issues including, maternal and child mortality has plagued the country through time. Lately, government and stakeholders are discussing development of health policies, establishment of health centres, and setting up information management centres on health for some hospitals in the country. However, public libraries expected to champion dissemination of health information have been overlooked in this regard. Therefore, the role of public libraries in the attainment of MDGs health issues becomes a daunting task in Senegal.

The non-inclusion of Libraries, especially public Libraries, where users of all categories can have access to up to date information is another challenge retarding the attainment of MDGs in Senegal. The specific purposes of the study are to:

- To Know the roles of public libraries in the attainment of health-MDGs
- To ascertain the level satisfaction on the part of users
- To identify the types of health information needs of users of public libraries
- To find out the health information services offered by public libraries.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

People all over the world have accepted education as an essential instrument for human development, and various means (such as schools and seminars) have been put in place to extend the benefits of education to all. Another means that has attracted little or no attention is the public library. [3-4] describes a public library as a key source of information to citizens and to a lesser extent, to politicians and businessmen. Librarian Glossary [5] defines a public library as a library established by local, state or central government for the use of the general public. However, there are some individuals or organisations that establish library for the general use of the people. A public library is therefore a library that offers services to the public free of charge and it also provides educational, social and political information to people in a particular community [4].

Since libraries have to play a significant role in developing countries where there is scarcity of information and even less production of knowledge, librarians' needs to be equipped with knowledge principles to dismantle the semantics of many concepts to provide information where there is such a lack of data, information and knowledge. It becomes critical for librarians to adopt an uncomplicated definition of knowledge in favour of an examination of the role that the library would play in embracing or supporting access to data, information and knowledge. The critical issue is the creation of awareness, awareness that one plus one equals two, that good nutrition helps eradicate infant mortality, that abstinence or protected sex reduces the spread of HIV/AIDS and so on. Libraries have long been crowned (described as) knowledge institutions as they provide the public with opportunities for information and learning. These opportunities are accessible to all groups of society, irrespective of age, gender and ethnic affiliation. This role of the library must be seen against the backdrop of the fact that the development of society and individuals can only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society [6]. Public library is a library, which is accessible by the public, is generally funded from public sources, such as tax money, and may be operated by civil servants.

2.1. The United Nation Millennium Development Goals

About a decade ago, a total number of one hundred and ninety one countries, adopted the United Nations Millennium declaration at the Millennium summit which was held from September 6 - 8 in the year 2000, thereby renewing their commitment to peace and security and to promote democracy, good governance and respect for internationally agreed upon human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. The summit identified and adopted a set of eight time-bound, measurable goals aimed at eradicating extreme poverty and improving living conditions for women and men alike.

Some one [7] discusses the advances that some of the developed countries have made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. However, a large number of the developing countries have not even gotten out of the starting blocks as they are plagued by extreme poverty, high death rates due to diseases, high infant mortality rates, devoid of sound educational system, and are hounded by ravages of HIV/AIDS. Even though the challenges are massive, the opportunities to improve access to information and knowledge become greater.

2.2. Public Libraries and United Nations Health Millennium Development Goals

As indicated [8], libraries have the potential of being key partners with health workers and health initiatives in promoting the behavioural changes needed to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. [9] claims that “public libraries should be proactive in providing information about HIV/AIDS including the use of “drama, song and dances, seminars, peer discussion and to provide information in regional languages”. In other words, information should be acquired especially in the area of health and other related subjects to meet the different category of users in the library.

Without the proactive involvement of libraries, these Millennium Development Goals (especially on health) are going to be very hard to achieve as each country looks for ways to fulfill these goals. Libraries, especially public libraries, need to be at the forefront of the discussion, offering skills and ideas and showing what is possible with libraries as key participants in this change. The collaboration will involve helping patrons, patients and providers access healthy information by becoming part of the health team. Public libraries can approach neighborhood clinic or health care facility to develop partnership. Librarians are expected to be trained to explain food security, poverty, health resources at library and be willing to collaborate for referral of patients seeking health or patient education.

With the provision of wide variety of information sources, users of library are exposed to different information with their respective values. They also give users the opportunity to learn and continue learning throughout their lives. Despite life-long learning provision, public libraries also provide a much wider range of information services including those from local and central governments, health authorities and other organizations. Libraries being “not only an information system but also a communication system, the more complex the society is in its bureaucratic and educational requirements, the greater its dependence upon library based information services” [2].

In view of this, the provision of information by Public libraries on the state of health and its interactions is critical in helping decision makers develop sound policies that can ensure health related sustainability. In order for different sectors of society to appreciate and mitigate possible MDGs health impacts, access to reliable maternal health, child mortality and HIV/AIDS information is vital [10-11]. Libraries are playing a role in ensuring Millennium Development Goals Health attainment. They provide information and related initiatives for users’ utilization. MDGs therefore, serve as the new framework for sustainable development by setting social equity goals and targets that aim at contributing to economic development. Public Libraries are expected therefore, to play an active role in achieving these targets.

Literature has shown that many public libraries are in a poor state without adequate funding [12]. This also includes inadequate staffing, relevant information sources and necessary facilities. With the advent of information technologies, most libraries and librarians are yet to embrace the new trend for effective services.

The government can work in collaboration with libraries particularly the public libraries to enlighten a larger population (literate and non-literate alike) on the health Millennium Development Goals, the opportunities attached to them and government's plan to achieve the goals by the year 2015. Public libraries can be used in continuing education through its print and non-print materials where librarians, due to their professional skills in both educating and searching for information, will enhance the process. Some one[12] also states that public librarians are trained on how to relate with everybody as well as to interpret policies and decisions of government to the people and vice versa. This is paramount in any society particularly in a democratic society where people need information on government activities and programmes such as the HIV/AIDS eradication, maternal health and child mortality. According to [12], libraries facilitate in reducing HIV/AIDS and malaria fever through the provision of such materials like, the newspapers that give or announce opportunities of campaigns and immunization, place of study, health organizations that give health services etc.

Today’s Public Libraries as social institutions look vastly different, since a variety of forces, such as Social, Technological, Economic and Political developments have reshaped and redefined their roles as community activities center, community information center, formal education support center, independent learning center, popular materials library, preschoolers’ door to learning, reference library, and research center. To fit into in the above-depicted roles, assuring ‘equitable access to information and/or knowledge’ to the public should be the prime motive for Public Libraries [13].

In a society where targets are set - whether of a formal or informal nature - public libraries will be nodes connecting the development goals, setting with the global resources of information and knowledge. Public libraries must therefore be allowed to play a role of fundamental importance in the development of future systems of the Millennium Development Goals. The development of the information and communication technology has already laid the basis for the creation of information networks, giving users even of small local public libraries access to the worldwide sources of information. The public libraries also

offer guidance and training in information search and quality rating of information sources. Thus, public libraries are prerequisites for a democratic knowledge society.

In this new situation of attaining the Millennium Development Goals, public libraries and professional librarians will though have to change and adapt to new demands, professional tasks and working conditions. At the present though, we need more knowledge about how libraries and the professional profiles of librarians should be designed in order to improve their preconditions to meet the new needs and demands directed towards them.

Apart from informational provision, Public libraries also provide and facilitate the search for information from the-large information available in various formats (print and electronic, database and the Internet). The NGOs on the other hand, particularly those aimed at the Millennium Development Goals, libraries can facilitate in activities geared towards youths, adult literacy program and in providing research reports that would help in improved farming, eradication of poverty and maintenance of healthy environment and the society in-general. Libraries provide recreational facilities for children's activities, good and conducive environment for relaxation with light reading materials, academic environment for conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures and literacy programs. Therefore, libraries have a big and important role to play to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015.

2.3. Health Information Provision By Public Libraries

However, the health information provision by libraries is challenging, but the objectives of meeting the health information needs of the people towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals has propelled the library in the provision of effective information services to the users. On the demand side, there are different users and uses of information, which include people and patients, communities, service providers, programme managers, policy-makers, providers of funds, global agencies and organizations. All need information on a range of health-measurement areas including mortality and morbidity rates; disease outbreaks; determinants of health such as nutrition, environment, and socioeconomic status; access, coverage and quality of services; costs and expenditures; and equity. On the supply side, the libraries are challenge in the acquisition of different categories of information materials treating health related issues. Unfortunately, supply and demand in the health information materials are not currently in equilibrium because of the financial challenges of Public libraries.

Information on adult mortality and cause of death is not generally available in libraries. Morbidity too is poorly measured, while the coverage and costs of many interventions are not measured properly, and the information needed to monitor equity is inadequate. In addition, the quality of health information is often highly variable with little standardization across definitions and methodologies, and considerable overlap and duplication. Information dissemination is inconsistent, and the use of information to inform decision-making is weak at all levels of the health-care system.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study the context chosen is Senegal public libraries. Methodology adopted is the survey design in which questionnaire was used for obtaining data from library staff and users. The researcher chose Public Libraries because of the roles they have been meant to serve in the society especially in the provision of information services for the whole categories of persons in the community. The target population is staff and users of Public libraries (Dakar, Saint-Louis, Thies, Kaolack, Tambacounda and Ziguinchor) region of Senegal. Multi-stage sampling method and simple random sampling was adopted in the research. The multi-stage sampling method was used to select two Public Libraries each from six regions, while simple randomization was used to select respondents from the selected public libraries. Thereafter, a total of 200 questionnaires were administered for staff and users of the libraries. Here, six Public libraries from the region were randomly chosen for the study. However, two categories of respondents were selected through random sampling, from the six public libraries. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics involving the use of tables showing frequency of responses and corresponding percentages.

A questionnaire was used to collect data. Data are presented in figures and tables and analyzed using statistical percentages.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Population Sample

States	Dakar	Saint-Louis	Thies	Kaolack	Tambacounda	Ziguinchor	Total
No. of Public Libraries	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
No. of respondents	35	33	33	33	33	33	200

Table 2. Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	122	61.0
Female	78	39.0
Total	200	100

From Table 2, 61.0% of the respondents are male which shows a less significant difference with the female (39.0%) counterpart.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents According to Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
0 - 17yrs (1)	10	5.0
18 -30yrs (2)	134	67.0
31-40yrs (3)	41	20.5
41 -50yrs (4)	9	4.5
51 – above (5)	6	3.0
Total	200	100

Table 3 shows that respondents within the ages of 18-30yrs (67.0%) are the highest, while others are; 0-17yrs (4.0%), 31-40yrs (20.5%), 41-50yrs (4.5%) and 51-above (3.0%)

Table 4. Roles of Libraries In Achieving Health-MDGS

Note: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree), SD (Strongly Disagree)

No	Roles of Libraries in Achieving Health-MDGS	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)
1	There is relationship between public libraries and health related issues like HIV/AIDS, Child/Mother mortality	28(14.0)	172 (86.0)	-	-
2	Public Library services can contribute to the attainment of health policies	68 (34.0)	132 (66.0)	-	-
3	Public libraries organise campaigns and other sensitization programmes on HIV/AIDS	40 (20.0)	132 (66.0)	-	28 (14.0)
4	Health-MDGS has been part of our objectives since ten years ago	96 (48.0)	52 (26.0)	24 (12.0)	28 (14.0)
5	Provision of community health information by libraries can help to reduce health-related problems	56(28.0.)	120 (60.0)	24 (12.0)	-
6	We frequently organise forum on child/maternal health in our library	64 (32.0)	28 (14.0)	80 (40.0)	28 (14.0)
7	Public Libraries has partnership with other agencies like NGOs, health workers etc in contributing to the attainment of the MDGs	28 (14.0)	76 (38.0)	68 (34.0)	28 (14.0)
8	We have partnered with international organizations in the distribution of mosquito net to rural dwellers	40 (20.0)	96 (48.0)	36 (18.0)	28 (14.0)
9	Our library organize programmes on environmental sanitation around our community	92 (46.0)	108 (54.0)	-	-
10	Our Library acquire materials related to health focus of the MDGs	184 (92.0)	16 (8.0)	-	-
11	Public Libraries services has contributed to the attainment of the health MDGs	80 (40.0)	120 (60.0)	-	-
12	Our Library have organize seminar, lectures, talks shows etc on Health Information to their patrons	92 (46.0)	52 (26.0)	28 (14.0)	28 (14.0)
13	Our Library is connected adequately and effectively to the Internet at all times for ease of access to information	24(12.0)	32(16.0)	76(38.0)	68(34.0)
14	Materials, both hard and soft copy, are current and adequate on health-related matters in our library	28(14.0)	52 (26.0)	92 (46.0)	28 (14.0)
15	Our Library have relevant materials on health information	56 (26)	80 (40.0)	36 (18.0)	28 (14.0)
16	The library provide other forms of health information services to our patrons	108 (54.0)	92 (46.0)	-	-
17	To combat HIV/AIDS and other diseases is a goal of the MDGs which all libraries must support	108 (54.0)	92 (46.0)	-	-
18	Public libraries will always be accessed based on the roles in the attainment of the MDGs	108 (54.0)	80 (40.0)	12 (6)	-
19	Child and maternal health is one of the goals of the MDGs that needs more focus by public libraries.	84 (42)	104 (52.0)	12 (6.0)	-

Table 5. Types of Health Information needs of User

NO.	Health Information Needs	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)
1	HIV/AIDS	92 (46.0)	61 (30.5)	27 (13.5)	20 (10.0)
2	Sexually Transmitted Diseases	101 (50.5)	57 (28.5)	30 (15.0)	12 (6.0)
3	Typhoid fever	118 (59.0)	45 (22.5)	29 (14.5)	8 (4.0)
4	Malaria fever	106 (53.0)	51 (25.5)	33 (16.5)	10 (5.0)
5	Cancer	102 (51.0)	46 (23.0)	38 (19.0)	14 (7.0)
6	Headache/Migraine	100 (50.0)	43 (21.5)	41 (20.5)	16 (8.0)
7	Hypertension	119 (59.5)	33 (16.5)	31 (15.5)	17 (8.5)
8	Diabetes	110 (55.0)	38 (19.0)	39 (19.5)	13 (6.5)
9	Influenza/Cold	102 (51.0)	43 (21.5)	44 (22.0)	11 (5.5)
10	Old age diseases	103 (51.5)	36 (18.0)	41 (20.5)	20 (10.0)
11	Hepatitis	117 (58.5)	38 (19.0)	34 (17.0)	11 (5.5)
12	Maternal and Child care	120 (60.0)	49 (24.5)	25 (12.5)	6 (3.0)
13	Food and Nutrition	113 (56.5)	53 (26.5)	28 (14.0)	6 (3.0)
14	Diarrhea	122 (61.0)	38 (19.0)	26 (13.0)	14 (7.0)

Table 6. Information Services Rendered in the Library to Users

Information Services	Frequency	Percentage
Internet services (1)	12	6.0
Photocopying (2)	14	7.0
Statistical data analysis (3)	40	20.0
Video rental (4)	2	1.0
Loaning of materials (5)	7	3.5
Canteen (6)	12	6.0
Technical Report Writing (7)	14	7.0
Use of Book Resources	99	49.5
Total	200	100

From table 6, it can be seen that majority of the respondents claimed that the library renders Internet services (55.5%). Other responses had lower percentages such as; Statistical data analysis (20.0%), Photocopying (7.0%), Technical report writing (7.0%), Canteen (6.0%), Loaning of materials (3.5%) and Video rental (1.0). Therefore, it can be concluded that the library renders more of Internet services than other form of information services

Table 7. Level of Satisfaction with the Services Offered in the Public Library

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not satisfactory (1)	9	4.5
Fair (2)	80	40.0
Satisfactory (3)	64	32.0
Very satisfactory (4)	47	23.5
Total	200	100

Table 7 indicates that 40.0% of the respondents indicated fair services. Other lower responses include very satisfactory 23.5% and satisfactory 32.0% however 4.5% indicated not satisfactory.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In relation to the research questions and the objective of the study, the analyzed data fully showed that, public libraries have played significant role in the attainment of health Millennium Development Goals. Public libraries offered range of services, which include other forms of non-information related services. Hence, they fit into the role of assisting the government in achieving any set target since they are at the heart of the community. This finding is in line with who stated that libraries facilitate in reducing HIV/AIDS and malaria fever through the provision of such materials like, the newspapers that give or announce opportunities of campaigns and immunization, place of study and health organizations that give health services. Thus, Libraries are playing a role in ensuring Millennium Development Goals Health attainment [14].

In addition, library users make significant demand for all categories of health information especially in the area of maternal and childcare. This type of information is considered the most striking part of the health system in most communities. Libraries are places where information to empower communities to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, can be made available in written, spoken or electronic

form. 'The pervasive influence of Libraries in modern societies is well illustrated in the study of the role of public libraries as disseminators of information regarding health promotion and illness prevention[15].

The finding revealed that the Library has contributed significantly in the attainment of health-MDGs, especially in the acquisition of information materials on health issues. In addition, the result also indicated that the users make significant demand for all categories of health information especially in the area of maternal and childcare. The findings also revealed that most public libraries do not render Internet services to users, consequently the result showed that the level of users' satisfaction with the services offered in the libraries in view of attaining the health millennium goals clearly indicated unsatisfactory rating.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research, which was conducted to survey the role of Public Libraries in the attainment of health Millennium Development Goals, generated the following findings:

- Public Libraries contributed significantly to the attainment of health Millennium Development Goals, especially in the acquisition of related materials on health issues.
- Library users make significant demand for all categories of health information especially in the area of maternal and childcare.
- The findings also reveal that most public libraries do not render Internet services to users hence the level of users' satisfaction with the services offered in the library is significantly low.

From the result of the findings in the study, the researcher recommends the following;

- There should be more attention from government and individuals on development of the public libraries in Senegal.
- Public libraries should be considered as the hub towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Public libraries should be adequately funded so as to acquire adequate and relevant books, computers and ensure regular Internet facilities.
- Library staff should be trained and saddled with the responsibility of providing services geared towards the attainment of health Millennium Development Goals.
- Policy makers should also consider the unique role of public libraries in various communities. In this regard public library should be well paid.

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