

The ePORTUGUÊSe– GHWA collaboration



WHO's platform to help Portuguese-speaking countries strengthen health systems and improve their MDGs

Background

The ePORTUGUÊSe network is a platform developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2005 to promote and strengthen collaboration among Portuguese-speaking countries.

Considering that Portuguese is the sixth most spoken language in the world with more than 240 million people living in eight Member-States spanning four continents, this platform seeks to provide access to high-quality knowledge resource in Portuguese that will help these countries strengthen their health systems and improve their Millennium Development Goals (MDG) targets.

It should be noted that the ePORTUGUÊSe network has matured during the past 5 years and it is now recognised by Ministries of Health from all Portuguese-speaking countries as an important platform for sharing and delivering health information in Portuguese as well as a platform to facilitate training and sharing of information.

The ePORTUGUÊSe meeting during the World Health Assembly 62 was a milestone for this network as four Ministries of Health, two Vice-Ministries, and two representative from Ministries were present and pledged their support to this platform.

At the end of 2009, WHO DG Dr Margaret Chan and the Executive Secretary for the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) have signed an agreement of collaboration and several of the ePORTUGUÊSe activities are contemplated in the document and in the Health Strategic Cooperation Plan for CPLP (PECS/CPLP) that was approved and signed by all the Ministries of Health from the eight Portuguese-speaking countries.

To move forward and to take the next step, the ePORTUGUÊSe is working with other WHO departments and units to strengthen collaboration and support in the Portuguese-speaking countries in the areas of capacity building and facilitating access to health information.

In December 2009, the ePORTUGUÊSe Network was recognised as a south-south solution by the UNDP South-South Development Cooperation and was a finalist at the South-South Development Forum that took place in Washington DC.

It is with this record in mind that GHWA decided to support this worthwhile project .

In 2009 the funding provided by GHWA was spent

in the implementation of three types of activities:

1. Two weeks of training of three health professionals from Timor Leste in BIREME (Latin American Centre on Health Sciences Information) together with colleagues from Angola, Cape Verde, and Mozambique in the development of their national Virtual Health Library. Professionals from other countries were funded by the European Commission Project to support development of Human Resources for Health in Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. Guinea Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe had already received training, funded from other sources.
- Translation of the report on Social Determinants of Health which is an important resource (see WHO website www.who.int).



Above and below: health professionals meet for the development of their national Virtual Health Library in São Paulo, April 2009



- Participation of three health professionals from Guinea Bissau to attend the II Coordination meeting for the VHL ePORTUGUESe held in Maputo Mozambique in November 2009. This meeting was an opportunity for countries to discuss their progresses and constraints related to the development of their own National Virtual Health Libraries (VHL).

Working together in 2010

GHWA will support the ePortuguese work in countries by:

- Continuing to promote and implement technical cooperation for the sustainability of the VHL countries. The Virtual Health Library is a platform that allows health workers to access information and share experiences in their own language. It also allows them to build their own national database of health legislation, health sites, health events, etc.
- Contributing for the development of training courses for health professionals to use the VHL in the countries to give sustainability and long-term development and use of their National VHL.
- Strengthening HRH capacity building especially using ICT tools such as distance learning platforms. An initial activity is under discussion with the Global Development Learning Network to develop the areas of maternal and child health training in Portuguese-speaking countries. The GDNL is a Work Bank project that offers advanced information and communication technologies distance learning opportunities <http://www.gdln.org>.
- Strengthening collaboration with other WHO strategic initiatives.
 - An initial collaboration has been planned with EVIPNet (a WHO initiative that encourages policy-makers in low- and middle-income countries to use evidence generated by research to improve their health systems), to organise a

joint meeting with all Portuguese speaking countries, in June/July 2010, supported by AFRO and MoH of Brazil, to promote and expand the use of evidence generated by research to improve their health systems.

- On-going planning and close collaboration of a series of joint activities with the IHR (International Health Regulation) secretariat to benefit health professionals in the Portuguese-speaking countries.
- TDR (Tropical Diseases: Special Programme for Research and Training) has asked to develop a joint collaboration and partnership with the ePORTUGUÊSe network to support Portuguese-speaking countries
- Facilitate translation of selected materials relevant to the Portuguese-speaking countries
- Disseminate and support ePORTUGUÊSe activities in selected regional meetings, seminars, and forums.

Sustainability

The ePORTUGUÊSe is a long-term platform that is already established and continues to receive support from Ministers of Health from the eight Portuguese-speaking countries and leading institutions such as the European Commission, the Work Bank and the CPLP. It is also supported by the Regional Offices in the Americas, Africa and South East Asia.

This network is committed to promote and strengthen collaboration among Portuguese-speaking countries in the area of information and capacity building.

Considering eHealth as one of the fastest growing areas in information, communication technologies (ICT) nowadays, it is important to consolidate the implementation of the virtual health library (VHL) model in all countries.

It is also important to promote and implement technical cooperation and training, particularly for

continuity and sustainability of the VHL. This will allow health workers to share experiences in their own language, on their common health challenges, and create a supportive community for addressing these challenges, through the adoption and use of best practices. We are confident that many goals have already been achieved but it is necessary to continue to move forward.



Coordination meeting for the Virtual Health Library (BVS) ePORTUGUESe held in Mozambique in November 2009. GHWA contributed to the meeting