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Challenges of Public Libraries Patrons in the Use of Information Services for Attainment of Health Millennium Development Goals

Abiola Modupeola Omotosho
University of Lagos, abakdiamond2000@yahoo.com

Olatokunbo Christopher Okiki
University of Lagos, chrisokiki@yahoo.com

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Olatokunbo Christopher Okiki

University of Lagos library

Introduction

Nigeria, as a country is still at the implementation stage of attaining the MDGs because of her slow developmental process and political instability, which has been a bane to achieving any set target aimed at improving the lives of her citizenry. The area of health related issues are included, 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 have been overlooked in this regard. Undermining the role of the public libraries in the community, they are not considered when decisions are made which cannot survive without the provision of information in that respect. Therefore, the role of public libraries in the attainment of MDGs health issues becomes a daunting task for these institutions.

The non-inclusion (nation's developmental processes) 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 Nigeria. As a result, the public library who is always updated and provides different categories of information are making less effort because of they believe that they have less significant role to play in achieving the health-focus of the MDGs. No programme can succeed without information, and the public library is the custodian of information, hence, it is expected that all forms of information are to be available in the library for users.

The provision of information by Public libraries on the state of the 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 (Godfrey and Benson, 2008). Libraries are playing a role in ensuring Millennium Development Goals Health attainment. They provide information and related initiatives that 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. Libraries are expected therefore, to play an active in achieving these targets.

Book and non-book materials in the Public libraries are important in helping the users. According to the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) Committee on Library work with children; I967, quoted in Aguolu and Aguolu, (2002), Books are essential in the life and development of the child. They are a stimulus to his intelligence and imagination, an incentive to independent thinking and a source to information and enjoyment. Books are indispensable tools in education and a child who has learnt to use and enjoy them is better able to continue his studies when he leaves school. It is in childhood that the use and enjoyment of books should be learnt.

According to Abba Iya (2007), 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. Through orientation and acquisition of materials on HIV/AIDS and other social disease, Public libraries provide and intimate its users, (youths in particular) on their causes, symptoms, prevention and control. illiterates also benefit from these facilities or services thorough documentary films (usually translated into local language, posters, illustrations that depicts important aspects of these diseases, benefits of education and continuing education and healthcare delivery.

Tise (2007) asserted that libraries have access to expertise – personnel that have the training to retrieve information and to package that information in a format that is easily adopted by the information seeker. Further, libraries have the infrastructure (within its environmental context) to acquire, process and make available information (books/journals). This imminent and potential resource puts the library in strategic role towards the health Millennium Development Goals. Major findings related to relaxing service constraints in public libraries and reveals that the resources available for improving service to library patrons. Most libraries face severe budget constraints and sometimes suffer neglects in most developing countries like Nigeria. The library survey showed that for most libraries, their highest budgetary priorities did not specifically include a focus on providing resources and information for health information and service development.

Challenges Facing Public Libraries in Attaining MDGs

The African continent is the contextual framework for examining the challenges confronting us in the attainment of MDGs by 2015 with particular reference to health (Ojogwu, 2009). However, Africa has 52 independent countries. Each country is different in many respects, yet they all fall within the category of developing or underdeveloped countries. While the countries are plague by socio-economic and political problems, the educational sector and the Public library in particular suffers neglect or little attention from the government. As a result, they are challenged with the provision of such services as envisioned by the goals setting up the libraries.

It is also visible that the Public library facilities in key research and education sector are not very impressive. No widespread usage of digitization is visible either in those libraries. This de-facto indicates to the lack of knowledge at policy level. At present time, without the introduction of digital libraries it is not possible for the country to meet the challenge of MDG at the education sector. Although most libraries have staff that are trained in generalized skills, such as the use of

electronic resources in the library, that can be made responsive to the needs of the users' community, the majority of libraries do not have a staff person who has received training in serving the needs of patrons who request health information. In addition, only about a third of the public libraries have a person who is designated to handle the requests for information and services from the serving community.

According to Nwokocha (1998), Highlights include low patronage; lack of current materials; lack of trained personnel; inadequate funding; and suggestions for improvement, including the involvement of multinational organizations in funding. Libraries' resource constraints are also illustrated by the fact that libraries find the lack of funds or staff time to promote library resources and services to the community to be one of the most significant barriers to improving service to the community. More directly on point, Public libraries also find that having their staff insufficiently trained to meet the demands of the users' community poses an important barrier to improving service to health Millennium Development Goals.

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In addition, financial challenges have deterred public libraries where government pays little or no attention to the running of such libraries. Thus, they lack adequate information resources and services that would properly address MDGs health related issues.

Recent Trend of Public Libraries in Nigeria

Abdulkarim (2010) carried out a study on the current situation of public library services in Nigeria, the result shows that public libraries services have declined dramatically over the past year due to the effect of both the economic and political situation in the country. The financial crisis has affected the structure and maintenance of the building, the size, and the contents of the collections and the overall provision of services. So therefore, the main library activity now is just to serve as reading and study rooms for students, who in the majority of cases use their own materials and do not consult the library collections.

The financial crisis is not only the problem, but also public libraries lack adequate and professional work force needed to handle the affairs of the library. Even with the availability of few staff, the inability of the state government to train them in the field of library profession to some extent affects the quality of services rendered by them (Abdulkarim, 2010). Against this backdrop, Public libraries are challenged with the provision of services that will help in the actualization of the health Millennium Development Goals.

With the advent of ICTs, most libraries in this 21st century are migrating from traditional library settings and provision of services to the digital or electronic library settings. This is however not true of most public libraries in Nigeria. Most public libraries have not been able to computerize their collections, not to even talk of using computers to provide services, but rather they are still indulging in the use of traditional library setting to provide services to users.

Another picture of public libraries in Nigeria is that it lacks well-defined policies. This is, however very crucial if any development is to be achieved. Most public libraries only make provision of services that targets a specific group of users, which of course are literate ones, so therefore they favour the urban areas

neglecting the rural areas which is the nucleus of the goals for the Millennium Development Goals. The health related areas of the Millennium Development Goals is majorly focus on those that lack health related services, which is the rural areas.

Finally, the health Millennium Development Goals is a target to be achieved by 2015 especially in developing countries like Nigeria, where the scourge of HIV/AIDs, Malaria and Typhoid fever as well as child and maternal mortality remain a lingering fight in the community. However, in achieving these goals, every aspect of the system, both governmental and non-government is expected to key into these goals to achieve the set targets. Consequently, the Public library, which serves the community, has taken a giant step in leading this journey. This is because; the present trend of information has shown that nothing can be achieved in the system without information.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the level of users' satisfaction with the services rendered by the libraries

2. To find out the challenges confronting the effective running of the library services towards attaining MDGs.

Research Questions

1. How satisfied are users with the information they get from the library?

2. What are the challenges confronting effective running of the library services to users towards attaining MDGs?

3. What are the challenges encountered by users in getting information?

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the survey design. The target populations of this study were users from six (6) public libraries in Oyo, Ogun and Lagos State, Nigeria. Public libraries are chosen for the study because they are at the forefront in the provision of educational and information services to the various categories of users in their respective communities. The libraries cut across the local governments in the selected states. The questionnaire method was used to elicit information. The sampling method was on two hundred (200) libraries patrons.

Results of the Study

Table:1. Gender: Library Users

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

From Table 1: 61.0% of the library users are male which shows a less significant

difference with the female (39.0%) counterpart.

Table: 2. Provision of Library Services in Attaining MDGs

Type of Services	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	S.D
Books (textbooks, fiction and nonfiction)	12 (80)	3 (20)	-	-	3.80	.41
Adult Literacy programme	6 (40)	6 (40)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	3.07	1.03
Current content listing of literature	4 (26.7)	8 (53.3)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	2.93	.96
Journals, Magazines and Newspaper	11 (73.3)	4 (26.7)	-	-	3.73	.46
Information repackaging	9 (60.0)	4 (26.7)	2 (13.3)	-	3.47	.74
On-line information search	7 (46.7)	4 (26.7)	4 (26.7)	-	3.20	.86
Lending of materials	7 (46.7)	8 (53.3)	-	-	3.47	.52
Consultancy services	8 (53.3)	6 (40.0)	1 (6.7)	-	3.47	.64
Interlibrary loans	8 (53.3)	5 (33.3)	2 (13.3)	-	3.40	.74
Document delivery	13 (86.7)	2 (13.3)	-	-	3.87	.35
Exhibition and display	7 (46.7)	7 (46.7)	1 (6.7)	-	3.40	.63
Reference services	7 (46.7)	8 (53.3)	-	-	3.47	.52
Literature search	7 (46.7)	7 (46.7)	1 (6.7)	-	3.40	.63
Rental of premises	10 (66.7)	5 (33.3)	-	-	3.67	.49
User education	7 (46.7)	8 (53.3)	-	-	3.47	.52
Bindery and lamination services	11 (73.3)	3 (20.0)	1 (6.7)	-	3.67	.62
Internet services	9 (60.0)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	3.20	1.14
Photocopying services	9 (60.0)	6 (40.0)	-	-	3.60	.51
School services	9 (60.0)	4 (26.7)	-	2 (13.3)	3.33	1.05
CD-ROM search	6 (40.0)	3 (20.0)	6 (40.0)	-	3.00	.93
Indexing and Abstracting	5 (33.3)	6 (40.0)	4 (26.7)	-	3.07	.80
Translation services	5 (33.3)	4 (26.7)	4 (26.7)	2 (13.3)	2.80	1.08

	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	S.D
Extension and outreaches	8 (53.3)	4 (26.7)	3 (20.0)	-	3.33	.82
Selective dissemination of information	4 (26.7)	6 (40.0)	5 (33.3)	-	2.93	.80
Quick and long queries	7 (46.7)	4 (26.7)	4 (26.7)	-	3.20	.86
Weighted Average Mean = 3.36						

From table 2, Document delivery services had the highest response of Mean = 3.87; SD = .35, while others also had significant level of responses. However, it can be observed from the overall response that the weighted average mean of 3.36 out of 4.00 shows that the library has provided services in attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

Table: 3. Library Users: Level of Satisfaction with the Services Offered in the Public Library

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	STD. DEV.
Not satisfactory	0	0.0	3.13	.77
Fair	47	23.5		
Satisfactory	80	40.0		
Very satisfactory	73	36.5		
Total	200	100		

Table 3.indicates that 40.0% of the users claimed to be satisfy with the services offered. Other lower responses include Very satisfactory (36.5%) and Fair (23.5%). The mean score of 3.13 (SD = .77) out of maximum of 4.00 shows that the level of users satisfaction with the services offered in the library is significantly convincing.

Table: 4. Problem of Access to Information

NO.	Problem of Access To Information	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	S.D
1	High cost of information materials	119 (59.5)	45 (22.5)	25 (12.5)	11 (5.5)	3.36	.90
2	Lack of awareness	110 (55.0)	56 (28.0)	31 (15.5)	3 (1.5)	3.37	.80
3	Language barrier	98 (49.0)	30 (15.0)	46 (23.0)	26 (13.0)	3.00	1.12
4	Lack of Internet access	116 (58.0)	36 (18.0)	30 (15.0)	18 (9.0)	3.25	1.02

5	Lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	95 (47.5)	50 (25.0)	42 (21.0)	13 (6.5)	3.14	.97
6	Distance	119 (59.5)	34 (17.0)	30 (15.0)	17 (8.5)	3.28	1.01
	Weighted Average Mean = 3.23						

Table 4. Indicates that Language is a problem to access information (Mean = 3.00; SD = 1.12), Lack of ICT (Mean = 3.14; SD = .97), Lack of Internet access (Mean = 3.25; SD = 1.02), Distance (Mean = 3.28; SD = 1.01) and High cost of information materials (Mean = 3.36; SD = .90). While majority of the users claimed lack of awareness (Mean = 3.37; SD = .80) as a problem of access to information. However, overall weighted average of 3.23 indicates that users face many challenges in accessing information.

Discussion of Findings

In relation to the research questions and the objective of the study, the analyzed data fully shown the level of use and challenges facing public libraries in the attainment of health Millennium Development Goals. The study also revealed that the level of users satisfaction with the services offered in the library is significantly convincing. The Public libraries are meant to serve the needs of the users in the community. Although, previous studies have shown that users needs are usually not met adequately, as a result, they are discouraged from using the Public library services. But this survey has shown that the library users have gain a significant level of satisfaction towards the services rendered in the library. However, it should be borne in mind that the Public libraries offers range of services that cut across information and non-information service, which could possibly, must have satisfied the users.

Inadequate funding is the major challenge faced by the library staff in the provision of effective library services to users, the study reveals. Therefore, the assertion that "Libraries' resource constraints are also illustrated by the fact that libraries find the lack of funds or staff time to promote library resources and services to the community to be one of the most significant barriers to improving service to the community (Glass, Harris, Clifford, Rose, 2000)", still remains a significant assertion despite being asserted for about a decade. Adequate funding remains a bane towards Public libraries provision of services to the communities.

Lastly, the finding also reveals that lack of awareness is a major challenge library users encounter in getting access to information. Many library users in Nigeria have always had the challenge of knowing the kind of information housed by the Public libraries. Therefore, the Public libraries may have challenges in attaining the health Millennium Development Goals because the library users are the same category of people the Millennium Development Goals are meant to serve. That is, if they are unaware of the information services possessed by the Public libraries, the attainment of the health Millennium Development Goals may become a daunting task to be achievement by the Public libraries.

Summary and Conclusion

The survey research methodology was used and the main instrument for data collection was the questionnaire whose questions were sectionalized to address the research questions. Radom sampling method was used to select 6 (from the South-West region) public libraries from which 200 library users where drawn. Results gotten from questionnaires administered were analyzed using the

Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), and the result for analyzed data reveals that Public. The research, which was conducted to survey the use and challenges facing public libraries in the attainment of health Millennium Development Goals, generated the following findings: The level of users satisfaction with the services offered in the library is significantly convincing.

- That inadequate funding is the major challenge faced by the library staff in the provision of effective library services to users.
- Lack of awareness was also found to be the major challenge library users' encounter in getting access to information.

The study then recommends that public libraries in Nigeria should create awareness of her services to the communities they serve and support other roles that is not centred on information service delivery that can lead to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

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