

Ebola Crisis Improving Science-Based Communication *Local Journalism in Emergency and Post-Outbreak Periods*

Grant N. 107942

Final Technical Report to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Period covered by this report: April 2017 to September 2017

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Table of Contents

1.Executive Summary	4
2.The Project Rationale	
3.The Project's Activities	6
3.1 March 25 2016 to September 24, 2017	ε
4. Ebola Crisis Project Implementation and Management – Activities Supported by IDRC	8
4.1 Research Report	8
4.2 Digital Environment	g
4.2.1 Health Toolbox	9
4.2.2 SciJo, the Online Game	11
4.2.3 MOOC on Scientific Controversies	12
4.2.4 African Association Support	13
5.Synthesis of Research Results and Outcomes	13
Annex 1 Communication Plan, September 2017	17
Annex 2: Projet Description	22
Annex 3 Research Report, Communications Outputs	23
Annex 4 Health Toolbox Visuals	31
Annex 5 Game Contacts and Visuals	35
Annex 6 MOOC Science Controversies	36
Anney 7 Promotion by WFSI African member associations	37



Partners and funders of the "Ebola Crisis – Improving Science-Based Communication" project:

The World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) is implementing this project phase with the help and input of various partners, such as WFSJ members, Media for Environment, Science, Health and Agriculture (MESHA), SciLife Cameroon, and other African Science Journalists Associations who supported the face-to-face training activities. Concordia University (Prof. David Secko at the Journalism Department) and University Alassane Ouattara, Cote d'Ivoire (Prof. Francis Akindes) supported the research activities.

The project phase is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Canada and is also supported by Johnson & Johnson (digital activities).



1.Executive Summary

In the case of the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Western Africa, which claimed over 11,000 lives, the virus propagated faster than reliable data, leaving local journalists facing both an unprecedent epidemic and a shortage of credible information.

This project explored the experiences of local journalists during the 2014 Ebola outbreak. For journalists, it was not so much the accessibility, but the credibility of information that often felt to be missing during the Ebola outbreak. Effective journalism for future health crises thus requires improving real-time collaboration between the health sector, governmental agencies and journalists, as well as the use of verification tools.

Our outputs range from a research report, more than 100 journalists trained from 21 Sub-Saharan countries in 6 workshops and a series of digital tools. We built an online platform where African journalists can access reliable information on infectious diseases either by connecting with African experts, or via 12 fact sheets on infectious diseases. We also built an online game where journos can test their science journalism skills, and a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on science controversies.

2.The Project Rationale

The Ebola (EVD) crisis in Western Africa exposed not only failures in the local and international response to the deadly epidemic. It was also an information crisis. There is an opportunity for dialogue around encouraging people to rebuild their confidence in the public health sector, and to strengthen communication for health promotion and disease prevention. Media plays a critical role at informing the general public during any crisis. They monitor and inform the public of risks, contextualize the risk and they serve as a watchdog function for public agencies and government. Although reporters are professionals who have an important role to play during these crisis environments it is increasingly difficult for them to carry out their work properly. They lack resources, tools, know-how, very often have to manage adversarial relationships with other stakeholders and sometimes operate in a skewed communication environment.

The project is looking to develop the capacity of local journalists through science/health awareness training by helping local journalists provide reliable and unbiased information of relevance.

The applied research component of the project comes in support of the training curriculum. As part of the project, there is the development of a set of digital tools devoted to science and health journalism to help increase access to health knowledge and evidence. It will help improve the



monitoring and reporting of priority health issues in the region, and link local journalists to the wider science and health journalism community around the world.

The 4 specific objectives of the project are:

Specific Objectives

- 1) Build the capacity of local media to undertake high quality health and science journalism through a series of short-term workshops in countries directly affected by the Ebola crisis.
- 2) Develop and implement a set of complementing training courses and regional workshops that support on-the-ground communication and journalism for health promotion action.
- 3) Strengthen African science journalist associations in the longer term through the development of a digital environment that will enable increased accessibility and uptake of health knowledge, help monitor priority health issues, and link to the wider science-health journalism community.
- 4) Carry out applied research to guide and sustain the training strategies, with a particular exploration of barriers and best conditions needed to enhance information uptake and capacity building in health and science communication in the region.

Table 1

The project is now closed, all training and research components are now finalised. The Digital phase is being rolled out, and planned completion for the end of June has been extended until the End of September.



	2 years project ca	2 years project calendar					
Time Periods	April 2015 - September 2015	October 2015- March 2016	April 2016- September 2016	October 2016 - March 2017	April 2017- September 2017		
Trainings	Training of Trainers	Local Training		Regional Training	Communications		
Digital Phase		Planning	Planning & Dev Digital Tools	elopment of	Digital tools development		
Applied Research	Research Planning	Data collection	Data collection & Analysis	Final report	Communications		

Even if the Ebola outbreak has now ended, the applied research component of the training project was an opportunity to engage with journalists who covered the crisis inside and outside the countries that were directly affected. The research questions are intended to better understand the difficulties and issues in accessing information in periods of crisis. The result of the research will ultimately help to better adjust the capacity building strategies that target different communication stakeholders during a major health crisis.

The research questions relate to:

- 1) The physical availability of information
- 2) The ability to use the available information
- 3) The media's internal working environment, particularly inside the newsrooms (despite the most up-to-date information and new skills learned by journalists, its applicability in the media depends on professional settings and practices in the newsroom).

Two Universities (North-South) have implemented the research component: 1) Professor Secko from Concordia University in Montreal, Canada and 2) Professor Akindes from Alassane Ouattara University in Bouake, Ivory Coast. Both professors supervise the work of two graduate students, Anne Edimo from Montreal and Marie-France Koffi from Ivory Coast.

3. The Project's Activities

3.1 March 25 2016 to September 24, 2017

During the period from March 25 to September 24, 2017, the project implemented core activities as laid out in the initial calendar. These planned activities consisted of the following:

- Implementation of communications outputs plan in annex 1.
- Finalisation and launch of research report and related infographics in annex 2 and 3.



- IT programming UX testing and official launch of the Health Toolbox in annex 4.
- IT programming and UX testing and official launch of the online serious game SciJo annex 5.
- Creation of MOOC on Science controversies: creation of online platform, course content and design, IT development annex 6.

Overall, we can consider the April-September period enabled to:

- 1) Consolidate project outputs into an integrated web platform Health Toolbox: research report, outbreak files, online game, blog and MOOC.
- 2) Produce and launch one consolidated research report including data collection phases I and
- 3) Produce numerous tweets, Facebook posts and articles on the WFSJ blog during the summer (see annexes)



4. Ebola Crisis Project Implementation and Management – Activities Supported by IDRC

One of the project's primary objectives was to enhance the use of credible science and health information by non-specialized journalists, both during a crisis and in a post-crisis period (mostly health and sanitary emergencies).

The following activities occurred between April 2017 and September 2017:

- 1) Finalise and publish the research report.
- 2) Finalise and launch digital tools.
- 3) Roll out communications activities.

4.1 Research Report

We officially launched all research results in the form of a consolidated report on Sept 14, 2017. We had visuals for social media and WFSJ newsletter, including an infographic (see annex 2), an email mailing list for institutional partners, as well as a press release in 2 languages (annex 3 and 4). We sent report highlights in the form of an email to over 210 key international organisations' contacts that have a link with health.

The report was written by David Secko, Chair Journalism Department, Concordia University. Blanche Morel, MA candidate and Anne Edimo, MA.



In essence, the report highlights numerous communications problems journalists faced during the crisis: access to credible, accurate and relevant sources as well as conditions for access such as proximity, expertise and influence. For example, the local Public Health agencies were identified as the most difficult source to access. Lack of collaboration and misinformation were the 2 main reasons journalists gave to explain why credible information was hard to find. Some



experts needed governmental authorisations to speak to the press which limited interactions. Many journalists believed the lack of cooperation from the government and the unavailability of health professionals were the most important problems impeding science-based journalism during the Ebola outbreak.

Essential recommendations to help alleviate these challenges: increased governmental collaboration, centralized information and increased access to information, and increased journalists training on health outbreaks.

The research report including a summary is available online at https://healthtoolbox.wfsj.org/resource-centre/exploration-lived-experience-african-journalists-2014-ebola-crisis/

4.2 Digital Environment

4.2.1 Health Toolbox



On Our Radar (OOR) was the NGO contracted to create the online platform to host the digital tools and resources. OOR is a UK-based NGO developing solutions to bridge communication gaps between isolated groups and influential communities.

They created a platform containing 1-the dashboard connecting journalists with sub-Saharan infectious disease experts, 2- a resource centre containing basic infectious diseases information such as outbreak files, a blog and an online game. After first assessing user needs in Winter 2017, OOR built the fully functional platform: healthcolbox.wfsj.org



We hired a PhD student from Cotonou, Benin Karel Houessionon between February and May 2017 to help scout African research institutions in both Francophone and Anglophones Africa. He created a list of over 100 research centres, subsequently contacted them by phone to explain the features of Health Toolbox and ask their researchers engagement to register. This was a very time-consuming task.

We soft launched the platform at the End of June 2017 to user test the platform and invite researchers and journalists to sign up and connect. We officially launched the platform with all its components mid-September 2017.

The outbreak files are 12 illustrated fact sheets on infectious diseases: Ebola, Hepatitis C, Malaria, Pandemic influenza, Yellow ever, Avian flu, MERS SRAS, Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, ZIKA, Measles, Dengue. The outbreak files were written by an independent science writer, Martin Enserink. These serve as background information in the resource centre section of the site. The blog is sustained by African journalists from member associations. Please see Annex 4 for an example.

The CMS of the toolbox is easily accessible using a simple login in and profile building. The more the profile is detailed, the more helpful it is for users. Users may email each other using the system directly, which was a feature requested by our needs assessment.

We currently have 181 journalists and 92 researchers on board (as of November 3 2017). Number of experts and journalists featured on Health Toolbox will be monitored by the WFSJ on a regular basis.

Using Google Analytics, we are monitoring the traffic on the online tools and see how the tools are being used. Since we launched the portal at the end of June, we've had 845 users, that stay an average of 3.48 minutes and visit 3.52 pages /session.

As expected, the majority of user are coming from African countries (27,08%) more specifically from Kenya (13.07%), Nigeria (3.65%), South Africa (3.65%), Benin (3.53%), Cameroun (3.18%). The remaining majority is coming from Canada and USA (22.73%) and European countries France, UK and Switzerland (11.30%).

Although this is a simple tool built in response to user needs, we find that we are still grappling with similar problems related to relationship building between journalists and scientists. Some scientists fail to return phone calls or emails generated by the system. Besides this issue, this connection platform is appreciated from its users who believe it is helpful to access reliable information.



4.2.2 SciJo, the Online Game





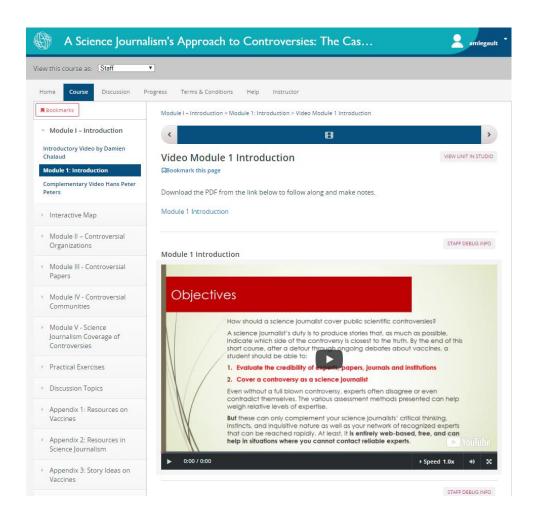
We built the serious game for journalists with the Montreal-based firm CREO Inc. See visuals and contact information in annex 5. The SciJo Game is available when clicking on the PLAY button on the Health Toolbox home page or go to healthtoolbox.wfs.org/scijo. The game is available in English and in French. Launch of the game was done at the same time as the other Health Toolbox components on September 14. Two WFSJ local member associations, "Media for Environment, Science, Health and Agriculture" (MESHA) and the "Association des journalistes et communicateurs scientifiques du Benin", helped to test the game over the summer and promoted the game in their local networks.

The goal of the game is for trained journalists to review basic science-focused concepts using the complex example of tuberculosis and HIV/Aids linkages. Adele Baleta, South African science journalist was the course content writer. Multiple exchanges between the WFSJ, the writer and CREO were needed to find the best way to first determine the concepts we needed to convey in the game. The next phase consisted in translating those concepts in the form of questions adapted for a game format. We also user tested the game with the help of our two local journalists' associations in Kenya and Bénin.

Google analytics data show players consult the game for an average 7.21 minutes, which indicates players stay enough time to really test their skills.



4.2.3 MOOC on Scientific Controversies



Working with University Laval Chair of Journalism and Concordia University Department of Journalism, we built a science journalism e-learning module on scientific controversies using the case study of vaccines. Built on an Open EdEx platform, this course is free and easy to follow anywhere using internet connection. It is designed for early career science journalists but anyone interested in learning about science journalism can benefit from this course. Course registration started on Oct 16 and the course began on November 1st and runs until December 6th. This course is in English only. As of November 8th, we had 260 students registered on the MOOC. See annex 6 for visuals.

All materials available at: <u>Learningseries.wfsj.org</u>

The course uses statements from stakeholders involved in the vaccine controversy debate to propose different procedures helpful in assessing the credibility of experts. The procedures are mostly web-based and free. They build on the numerous ranking systems that academic and



research institutions have put in place to assess the performance of research centres, researchers, and academics.

In practice, the students learn how to identify the most credible institution, scientific journal, scientific paper and scientist. In the process, they are initiated to the new world of scientific publishing, to the different types of public scientific controversies and the weigh-the-experts approach to produce stories.

4.2.4 African Association Support

Our African member associations involved in last period Health Toolbox testing, also helped promote and disseminate information about the Health Toolbox content. The purpose was to give greater visibility to the toolbox amongst a large community of local journalists. Creating and maintaining these linkages will also help sustain the resource after project end.

MESHA is one on our local science journalism member association in Kenya and has many active members across the country. Their support helped us find African journalists for user testing. They also helped with the promotion. We also hired the "Association des journalistes et communicateurs scientifiques du Benin" to help promote infectious diseases experts in research centres in Africa.

A new Guinean association was formed after a journalist trained by the project inspired to create a network to connect science journalists in Guinea. We supported them to set-up their website and also for the twining with the French association.

See reports containing detailed activities of past and future promotions activities in annexe 7.

5. Synthesis of Research Results and Outcomes

Stronger research collaboration

There seemed to be a methodology dichotomy between anthropological research framework developed by the Ivory Coast research team and the journalism framework as developed by David Secko's team in Canada. Because the framework was not co-constructed at project off-set, it became obvious the team had to choose between a journalism focused framework or an anthropological framework in order to move forward. It was decided the journalism framework was the most optimal, as we were exploring the problem from the journalists' point of view.



Other barriers such as the physical distance, language, cultural differences, time and resource constraints contributed to steering research towards a journalism focused framework. Deeper learning could have emerged from a true co-constructing exercise between disciplines and started at the off-set of the project.

The research highlighted:

- -The need to increase real-time collaboration and the use of information verification tools in place so that journalists can verify with the help of experts the credibility of new claims, in preparation for the next potential outbreak. More opportunities for experts and journalists to collaborate need to be developed. They need to build a relationship of trust on an ongoing basis, in anticipation of the next outbreak. When the next health crisis hits, they will be able to actively solicit their functional network.
- -The need to clarify and support the role of journalists when designing health campaigns, even without a health crisis. Journalists need to be part of the solution. We cannot remove the human factor when dealing with a disease outbreak. Science helps shape guidelines, but then humans must implement them.
- -The need for increased capacity building through mentorship and training. Journalists need to improve their reporting techniques of health epidemics. The better they get at reporting, the better they can prepare for health epidemics in the future.

More training and mentorship in the field

There is a need to be additional science focused journalism training in Africa. Many past trainees have argued that the WFSJ training has been very helpful and continue to transfer and apply knowledge, skills and competence acquired in training to daily working practice. We believe that building a long-term relationship between journalists and experts can help build capacity for early career world journalists.

At the WFSJ's Annual General Assembly held on October 29th at the World Conference of Science Journalists in San Franscisco, WFSJ member associations from the Global South specifically mentioned the need for more training programmes such as innovative mentorship initiatives on science topics such as climate change, vaccines, food security, maternal health, etc.

Effective digital dissemination strategy

Having an active on the ground dissemination strategy to make sure tools are used was imperative to the success of the project. An important outcome is the mobilisation of African associations to help with the dissemination of the tools. Because we knew the hardest thing about digital tools is user engagement, we did our best to make sure the target audiences were well briefed on the tools and their purpose. We made numerous phone calls to WFSJ journalist



associations and research institutions in Africa to coax them into making the best usage of the Health Toolbox.

It has been a challenge to convince experts to join our Health Toolbox. Even after the research centre's approval to include researchers coordinates on the dashboard, we struggled with the same issues journalists have had in the past: researchers do not reply to email solicitation nor phone messages.

Building the MOOC-on scientific controversies, with Concordia University and University Laval, has been a first collaborative step. We wish to pursue this type of collaboration in the long term and hopefully develop further MOOC components and eventually have the MOOC part of a credit eligible university course on Science journalism.

Another positive outcome is that Adele Baleta, one of our trained trainers that taught at local and regional workshops (Sierra Leone, Liberia and Kenya), also developed the serious game content. As an expert in health awareness training for journalists, she was able to translate these skills into a new competency, game content creation. This was our first experience creating a serious game. This allowed to strengthen capacity by developing local African resources in a new area, which is gaming. We believe we can build more educational products in Africa, in a number of different areas, using local resources.

We know we have impact when journalists get to test their interviewing skills in a reduced stress training environment. That is why we privilege this skill in our trainings. We are aware that there are disabling persistent factors that remain out of our control: government withholding information, experts not answering calls, editorial assignments, etc. However, we believe we need to pursue hands-on workshops for yearly career developing countries journalists in Africa to build science journalism capacity.

We showcased project outputs at the Concordia Summer Summit August 6-12 2017 on Science Journalism and also at the World Conference of Science Journalists in San Franscisco 27-30 Oct 2017 where nearly 1400 participants convened. We organized 2 workshops on site where 6 IDRC fellows participated. The workshop on UC Davis campus allowed trainees to reflect on social challenges of applying technical agriculture innovations and also provides specific examples of low-cost post-harvesting techniques applicable to their home countries. The post Zika in Latin America and the Caribbean looked at how journalist need to report when the science is not very clear on guidelines, ie when controversies around causes and effects of a disease diverge from different science perspectives. Both workshops used small groups discussions and exercises to maximize interaction.



The ultimate goal was to have an increased high-quality science coverage of health stories by both training participants and member associations' journalists. Journalists have multiple tools available for accessing reliable sources when covering EVD, infectious diseases and vaccines. Many share their stories via our WhatsApp or Facebook networks. We already know journalists are using their networks created through WFSJ workshops such as Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups to collaborate or inform each other about emerging stories

Short term next steps

We wish to create a workspace where journalists can access useful tools such as easily accessing health data sets, fact checking tools as well as visualisation tools. This space could be two-fold: have a private section for individual projects and also have a shared space with a working collaborative environment.

If funding allows, in the near future we are hoping to organise webinars on how to access and appraise evidence based science when covering infectious diseases. This will be an opportunity to showcase these tools. See our communication plan in Annex 1 for details.

Another issue we will need to address in future research is the fact that media audiences are increasingly fragmented. We would urge a recommendations report around media situation, ie lack of specialised journalists, role of editors, role of CSOs and what are the dynamics in place?

Administrative recommendations:

We appreciated the flexibility of IDRC's administration for project extension, deadlines for final report and constructive feedback during entire project unfolding. We also received useful contacts and help for project dissemination from the IDRC communications team.

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Annex 1 Communication Plan, September 2017

Ebola Crisis - Improving Science-Based Communication for Local Journalists in Emergency and Post-Outbreak Periods - 2015-2017

Project summary

- To develop the capacity of local journalists in Sub-Saharan countries through science/health awareness training
- To help local journalists provide reliable and unbiased information of relevance.

The project has 3 components: research, training and a digital platform.

1. The Communications Objectives

General objective:

Disseminate and promote results of the 3 project components (research, training and digital platform) in French and English
Specific objectives

Training:

Project objectives 1 and 2	Communications objective
1.Build the capacity of local media to	Disseminate training quantitative and
undertake high quality health and science	qualitative results in relation to problems
journalism through a series of short-term	faced during Ebola outbreak, including
workshops in countries directly affected by	trainee testimonies to key partners (Funders,
the Ebola crisis.	local African organisations and WFSJ member
	associations).
2. Develop and implement a set of	
complementing training courses and regional	Disseminate on importance of training
workshops that support on-the-ground	journalists in Africa.
communication and journalism for health	
promotion action.	

<u>Digital platform:</u>

Project objective 3	Communications objectives
Strengthen African science journalist	Disseminate digital modalities to optimize its
associations in the longer term through the	use.
development of a digital environment that	
will enable increased accessibility and uptake	Train local organisations to disseminate the
of health knowledge, help monitor priority	digital platform.
health issues, and link to the wider science-	
health journalism community.	



Encourage more Sub-Saharan journalists
covering health stories in French and English
to use the platform to connect with experts
and learn about infectious diseases.
Increase presence of experts from the
international infectious disease community
on the platform.

Research:

Project objective 4	Communications objective
Carry out applied research to guide and	Contribute to research publication: Adding
sustain the training strategies, with a	knowledge on health communication.
particular exploration of barriers and best	
conditions needed to enhance information	Communicate key research findings amongst
uptake and capacity building in health and	our network and likeminded stakeholers. so
science communication in the region.	they can understand better the medias role
	in crisis environments.
	Communicate the lessons learned about best
	practices,

2. Target audiences

Priority 1:

1-African journalists and African journalist associations En and Fr speaking and All other journalists interested in infectious diseases in Africa including Non African WFSJ member associations

Priority 2:

2- African Research centres (communication representatives/media or press officers in charge of promoting centre's activities)

Other target audiences:

Funders (actual and future; Canadian and international)
Health related international organisations
WFSJ newsletter subscribers



3. Key messages and channels

Key audiences	What they need to	Key messages	Key channels
Sub-Saharan African journalists Local African partner organisations and WFSJ members' associations	know The tool can Help you do your work better	 Easy online tools are available to help you do your job better Test your science journalist skills 	Social media, email list, WhatsApp, WFSJ website
African research centres	The tool can help you communicate your research better	You can communicate research results easier	Social media, email list, WhatsApp, WFSJ website
International research community	scientific publications results in the form of infography, research report	 Journalists' suffered from lack of access to information. Many barriers impeded journalists' capacity to cover Ebola outbreak Credible use of information during outbreaks needs to be improved 	Peer review publication journals,
Funders	All Project results	 Project has improved journalists' capacity to cover infectious diseases Help the WFSJ disseminate online tools 	infography, research report
Newsletter subscriber and General public	Key Project results in a lay language	Project has improved journalists' capacity to cover infectious diseases	Social media, press release and newsletter

Key messages for directory (journalists and experts based in Africa) Why should you join the Health Toolbox?

Connecting African Journalists and Health Experts on Infectious Diseases to Create Impactful Health Stories.

A Free Directory and Communication Tool Connecting African Journalists with Health Experts on Infectious Diseases.



Contact a Health Expert on Infectious Diseases to Add Credibility to Your Stories.

As a journalist: Get Discovered by Health Experts Who Want to Share a Story.

A Free Tool for African Journalists to Get Access to Sound Information to Better Inform on Infectious Diseases Outbreaks.

Key research results (for researchers, journalists, practitioners):

Journalists' suffered from lack of access to information during the Ebola outbreak of 2014. Many barriers impeded journalists' capacity to cover Ebola outbreak Credible use of information during outbreaks needs to be improved.

Main challenges journalists faced:

Collaboration: Lack of collaboration from governments Contacting experts: Difficulty accessing health experts

The state of the s

Timely information: In the context of a health and trust crisis

Centralized information : Absence of clear-cut centralized information

Most difficult sources to access:

01 Ebola patients and survivors

02 Local authorities &government officials

03 Ministries of Health & Ebola Response Centres

04 Doctors, nurses, & health workers

Future needs:

Increase capacity building through mentorship and training, and by improving available techniques of reporting health epidemics. Better anticipate health epidemics in the future. Increase real-time collaboration and the use of information verification tools between journalists and experts in preparation for the next outbreak.

Key messages for serious game (Journalists covering health stories)

SciJo: Test your science journalist skills

Missed our infectious disease trainings? Play now and test your science journalist skills.

This easy and fun game will help you refresh your science journalist skills.

The game that reviews what you need to know to cover the next health outbreak.

SciJo wants to publish a story on TB and HIV/Aids linkages. Can you help?

Test your science journalist reflexes by reviewing steps to covering a health story.

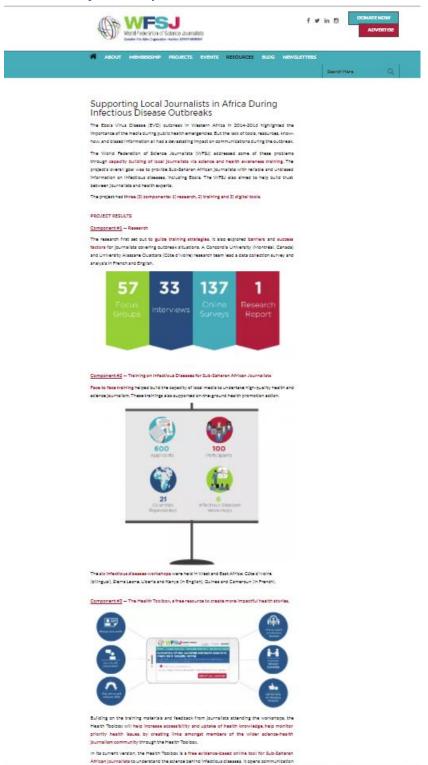


4. Draft workplan

Comms objective	Target audience	Activity description	Timeline 2017
Why they need to use health Toolbox?	Journalists	Teaser using SM posts and WFSJ website	April
nearth rootbox:		allu Wi 33 Website	
Connect to experts to	Journalists	SM posts, WFSJ website	June 22
find credible info			
Connect to experts to	Journalists	SM Posts, WFSJ	July
find credible info		Newsletter, blogs posts	
Play a game to test your	Journalists	SM posts, WFSJ	Mid-Sept
science journalist skills		newsletter and website	
Risk communication	Journalists	Infography, press	Mid-sept
learnings		release, newsletter and	
		social media (SM) posts	
Risk communication	Researchers	Infography and research	Mid-sept
learnings		report (including	
		summary)	
Risk communication	Health related	Letter via email and links	Mid-sept
learnings and tools to	and non-	to tools, research report,	
share with networks	health related	Infography	
	Intl		
	organisations,		
	NGOs		
Connect to experts to	Researchers,	WFSJ newsletter and	Sept
find credible info	Journalists	website, SM posts	



Annex 2: Projet Description



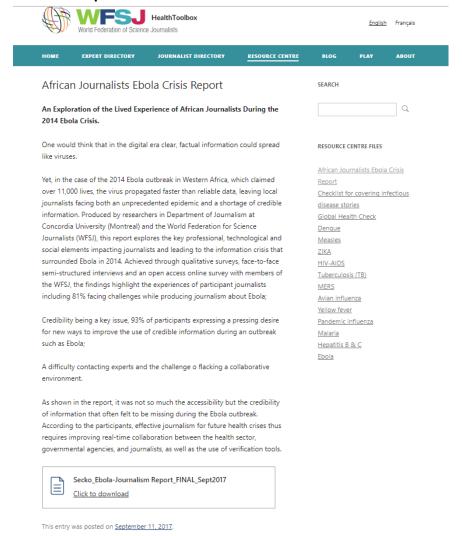
http://wfsj.org/v2/supporting-local-journalists-in-africa-during-infectious-disease-outbreaks/



Annex 3 Research Report, Communications Outputs

Complete Report available online : https://healthtoolbox.wfsj.org/resource-centre/exploration-lived-experience-african-journalists-2014-ebola-crisis/

Research Report:





Research Results Infography:

Comment les journalistes africains **HOW DID AFRICAN JOURNALISTS** ont-ils vécu la crise de l'Ebola? **EXPERIENCE THE EBOLA CRISIS?** Between September 2015 and January 2017, the Department of Journalism at Concordia University performed a qualitative survey (57 participants), face-tinace semi-introtreed interviews (13) participants) and an open access online survey (13) participants) among African journalists, in both English and French, to better understand the barriers and success factors experienced by journalists covering contranal situations.² What Qu'avonsdid we learn? nous appris? 93% Principaux défis auxquels sont confrontés les journalistes : Main challenges journalists faced: Centralized information Les sources les plus difficiles à accéder : Most difficult sources to access: Ebola patients & survivors Patients atteints d'Ebola et survivants 60% 60% 02 Local Authorities & government officials 43% 42% 42% **Besoins futurs** Future needs: In preparation for the next outbreak: afin de mieux préparer la prochaine crise : *The complete survey outcomes are evaluable in the Report on "The Ebots Crisic: A Report on the Lived Experience of African Journalists during Emergency and Post-Outbreek Periods"





Cover letter to international organisations in EN:

Dear international organisation contact name,

The World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) is launching a research report which confirms that during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014, many deaths could have been avoided if local journalists had better access to credible and independent information on this infectious disease and if more effective modes of communication had been in place.

Research conducted by the WFSJ, in partnership with the Department of Journalism at Concordia University, showed that 93% of African journalists surveyed agreed that the use of credible information during an outbreak such as Ebola needs to be improved. Local journalists reported that during the outbreak the main challenges were:



- a lack of collaboration from government
- difficulties with accessing local health experts
- finding timely, accurate and centralized information on infectious diseases.

A project summary link to infography and the full report are available on WFSJ's website.

Similar feedback was received from over 100 participating journalists during the six infectious diseases workshops organized by the WFSJ in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2015 and 2016.

In response to some of these major challenges, we created the <u>Health Toolbox</u>: A free online resource, available in English and French, putting African journalists in touch with local infectious disease experts. This helps to build trusting relationships that result in more reliable health stories and a public that is better informed on health issues.

In its current version, the goal of the Health Toolbox goal is to help African journalists to better understand the epidemiology, treatments and chain of events behind infectious diseases. The toolbox also contains a resource centre with fact sheets on 12 infectious diseases such as Ebola, yellow fever, malaria, tuberculosis, dengue, measles, etc.



And <u>SciJo</u>, an interactive game, allows players to test their health journalism skills and to review their science journalism skills and basic knowledge of concepts related to disease outbreaks.

Today's communication challenges cannot be tackled without your help. Please do share information on the Health Toolbox among your networks and via your social media channels.

We also welcome any suggestions for further improvements to the toolbox, as well as partnership requests. Kindly contact Anne-Marie Legault, Project Manager, via amlegault@wfsj.org or +1 514 508 2777.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Damien Chalaud, Executive Director, WFSJ



PRESS RELEASE in English

Journalists in Africa Need Better Access to Credible Information During Disease Outbreaks

Montreal, September 14, 2017 - Journalists based in Africa suffered from a lack of credible information during the West African Ebola viral epidemic in 2014, states a <u>report published today</u> by the World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) in partnership with the Department of Journalism at Concordia University. "The report concludes that if better communication and access to credible information were in place, many deaths may have been avoided," says Damien Chalaud, Executive Director of the WFSJ.

The research set out to better understand the barriers and success factors experienced by journalists covering disease outbreak situations.* It was conducted from late 2015 to early 2017 in several Ebola crisis affected African countries and included a qualitative survey (57 participants), qualitative interviews (33 participants) and an online survey (133 participants). The complete report is available online.

The online survey results showed that 93% of journalists surveyed agreed that the credible use of information during outbreaks such as Ebola needs to be improved. "Journalists were very clear in expressing challenges with a lack of collaboration from government, difficulty accessing health experts, and finding timely, accurate and centralized information," says David Secko, Chair of the Department of Journalism at Concordia University and leader of the Concordia Science Journalism Project.

In response to these challenges, the WFSJ organized 6 infectious disease training workshops in sub-Saharan countries in 2015 and 2016. Over 600 applications were received, and more than 100 health journalists participated coming from 21 countries. Training covered the science related to infectious disease outbreaks, such as differentiating a good information source from a bad source, a vaccine from a drug, etc. During the training, journalists repeatedly mentioned the need to connect with independent, local health experts to validate facts behind disease outbreaks.

Because building trust between journalists and experts increases successful collaboration, the WFSJ built the <u>Health Toolbox</u>, an interactive platform on infectious diseases, allowing journalists and local experts to connect easily. "After login, journalists search the directory and email experts directly through the platform. It's safe, quick and easy," says Damien Chalaud.



The <u>Health Toolbox</u> has other important features such as a <u>Resource Centre</u> containing key information on infectious diseases such as Ebola, yellow fever, malaria, dengue, measles, ZIKA, HIV-AIDS, tuberculosis, MERS, avian influenza, influenza pandemics, and Hepatitis B and C.

<u>SciJo</u>, an interactive online game, allows players to test their health journalism skills and review basic knowledge of concepts related to disease outbreaks.

The report points to important lessons to be learnt and the future work that needs to be done. "More capacity building is needed to improve disease epidemic reporting, as well as real-time collaboration between journalists and experts for facts validation," says Chalaud, "but we're on it".

This project was funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa.

*A report on survey outcomes are available in the report "An Exploration of the Lived Experience of African Journalists During the 2014 Ebola Crisis"

-30-

Contact information:

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WFSJ/Concordia Ebola Journalism Project publications October, 2017

Publications

- Chalaud, D., Aghan, D., Otindo, V., Bennett, A., and Baldet, T. (2015). Ebola: improving science-based communication and local journalism. http://thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(15)01047-8/fulltext
- Edimo, A. (2016) In the Backstage of the 2014 Ebola Crisis News Coverage: A Focus on the Lived Experience of Involved African Journalists. Masters thesis, Concordia University. https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/981299/
- 3. The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine. 2017. Chapter 4 Achieving effective communication. Training the trainers Pp 57-59. Building communication capacity to counter infectious disease threats Proceedings workshop held December 13, Washington, DC. 2016. 120 p.



- Secko, D. M., Edimo, A., Morel, B. (2017). An Exploration of the Lived Experience of African Journalists During the 2014 Ebola Crisis. research report. http://wfsj.org/v2/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/WFSJ Ebola Journalism Research -Report FINAL Sept2017.pdf
- 5. Morel, B., Edimo, A., Secko, D.M. (In preparation). Perspectives on the 2014 Ebola Outbreak: Rethinking Health Journalism from Within, to be submitted to *Science Communication*.

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- 2. Secko, D. M., Edimo, A. (2016). The Ebola Crisis: A study on improvements to science-based journalism in emergency and post-outbreak periods. Paper presented to the Canadian Communication Association Conference, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, May 28-31.
- 3. Secko, D. M., Hunter, A. (2016). An Ebola/Journalism Simulation, Concordia University Summer Research Institute, Concordia University, June 2.
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10. Secko, D. M. (2017). "Local journalists as social mobilizers: A qualitative assessment of local journalism during the 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa." Paper Presented at Is No Local News Bad News? Local Journalism and its Future Conference, Ryerson University, Toronto, June 3-4.

Media coverage:

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Related book from a trainee:

Kenmogue, Rigobert. (2017). Cameroun: le vrai visage de la gouvernance, Editions Universitaires européennes.



Annex 4 Health Toolbox Visuals









HEALTH TOOLBOX

Created by the WFSJ, the Health Toolbox is a free online resource, available in English and French, to help African journalists better understand the epidemiology, treatments and chain of events behind infectious diseases.

Many journalists in Africa face the daily challenge of gaining access to sound information on infectious diseases to better inform the public. This tool helps journalists access high quality scientific evidence and strengthen their critical appraisal skills for evidence use in their contexts.

Research conducted in partnership with Concordia University showed that journalists in countries affected by health outbreaks (Ebola, for example) had severe difficulties connecting with independent, local infectious disease experts. Carrying out an interview with a local expert on infectious diseases always makes for more impactful and context relevant reporting. For experts, making sure journalists correctly understand and report scientific findings should be a crucial concern.

With that in mind, the Health Toolbox puts journalists in touch with experts to encourage a move away from traditional practices and beliefs, and to focus on the facts behind infectious diseases. As journalists interact more with the local research community, the reporting becomes more grounded in science, and scientists are more frequently questioned about how they can respond to the public's needs and concerns.

Thanks to a more trusting relationship and collaboration with local experts, the Health Toolbox allows journalists to create reliable health stories originating in their countries or regions, resulting in a public that is better informed on health issues.



The Health Toolbox currently has four components:

- 1. A resource centre with outbreak files containing key information on infectious diseases, with fact sheets on Ebola, Yellow Fever, Malaria, Dengue, Measles, ZIKA, HIV-AIDS, Tuberculosis, MERS, Avian influenza, Pandemic influenza, Hepatitis B & C, etc
- 2. An online game to test your health journalist skills
- 3. A directory, including a messaging tool to get a speedy response from an expert or journalist
- 4. A blog where journalists and experts can share publications

Sign up as a journalist or a health expert and help us build a strong infectious diseases communications network in Africa and internationally that will result in better informed, safer and healthier populations.

Healthtoolbox.wfsj.org



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About the World Federation of Science Journalists

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September, 2017

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HOW DID AFRICAN JOURNALISTS EXPERIENCE THE EBOLA CRISIS?

Journalists need better access to credible information during disease outbreaks

A new WFSJ and Concordia University Departement of Journalism research report reveals that African journalists during the Boola crisis in West Africa in 2014 suffered from a lack of credible information on infectious diseases. Many deaths could have been avoided if better communication and better access to oredible and independent information on infectious disease; and been in place.

The Research shows that 93% of African Journalists surveyed agreed that the use of credible information during an outbreak such as Ebola needs to be improved.

Local journalists reported that during the outbreak the main challenges faced were:



READ THE FULL REPORT

View a research summary as an infographic have

SCLIO

Play the game and review your health journalism expertise

8olJo is an Interactive game, available in English and French, allowing players to test and review their health journalism skills and basic knowledge of concepts related to disease outbreaks.

Did you miss our training workshops on infectious diseases? Do you want to retresh or update your knowledge? Play the game and have fun reviewing! After that, you will be on the right path to good science journalism.



HEALTH TOOLBOX FOR AFRICAN JOURNALISTS

A free online tool to create more impactful health stories









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BLOG

JOUEZ

À PROPOS



Riposte contre le Lassa à l'hôpital de Tchaourou

Le calvaire inoubliable des agents de santé

Dans la commune de Tchaourou au Nord du Bénin, la fièvre hémorragique à virus Lassa laisse un goût amer non seulement aux populations mais aussi aux praticiens hospitaliers. Cette épidémie a occasionné le décès de deux agents de santé sur les 8 qui ont contracté la maladie. Selon le ministère de la santé, la maladie a mis en contact 61 personnes. Plus de 17 mois après, les agents de santé qui sont allés en guerre contre le mal, en gardent encore un souvenir vivace. Selon Cyrille Agboli-Agbo, chirurgien à Saint Martin de Papané, hôpital de référence de la commune, au départ les agents de santé ont considéré comme une maladie ordinaire. Ils allaient au chevet des malades sans aucune mesure de protection particulière. Mais avec le temps, ils se sont rendu compte de la dangerosité de la maladie. « Tous ceux qui ont fait la garde à l'hôpital du 4 au 5 janvier étaient tous malades et il y en a un qui venait de mourir », confie Dr Emile Kouton, directeur de l'hôpital.

SEARCH

Q

CATEGORIES

lassa Maladies infectieuses newborn Non classifié(e)

RECENT POSTS

Riposte contre le Lassa à l'hôpital de Tchaourou La plateforme HealthToolbox séduit les journalistes béninois Pour publier un article de blog Un hôpital universitaire sans bloc opératoire au Bénin



Annex 5 Game Contacts and Visuals

Caroline Julien, CEO, CREO inc. cjulien@creo.ca
Libby Powell, CEO, On our Radar, libby@onourradar.org





Annex 6 MOOC Science Controversies

www.Learningseries.wfsj.org







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MY COURSES



A Science Journalism's Approach to Controversies: The Case of Vaccines

WFSJ - WFSJ001 Started - Oct 31, 2017

View Course



Projected Futures: Experimental Science Journalism Studies

Concordia - JOUR Ended - Oct 31, 2017

View Archived Course





Annex 7 Promotion by WFSJ African member associations

MESHA and Association des Journalistes et Communicateurs Scientifiques du Benin



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Tel: +254 728 27 99 66, aghan@meshakenya.org, www.meshakenya.org

INITIAL REPORT

HEALTH TOOLBOX

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES REPORT

MARCH – AUGUST 2017

WFSJ/MESHA AUGUST 10, 2017

NAIROBI, KENYA



INITIAL REPORT

Communication Activities <u>Aghan Daniel</u> – <u>CEO and Secretary, MESHA</u>

Activity	Deadline	Observation
1. Email, whatsapp and	March to date	MESHA has 70 members. About 50 of these are very active
telephone calls to members.		journalists with about 35 being health journalists. We sent an
		email to all the members urging them to sign up for the tool.
2. Face to face meetings	April to date	So far, I have held face to face meetings with three
		communication officers in Kisumu (400km away from Nairobi),
		KEMRI Wellcome (600km from Nairobi) and KEMRI
		headquarters in Nairobi. I have also held meetings with over 10
		organisations based in Nairobi such as Afidep (<u>www.afidep.org</u>)
		The African Population Health Research centre
		(<u>www.aphrc.org</u>) etc based in Nairobi.
3. Send out calls for sign up	March to date	Having received the terms of engagement from wfsj in March,
the test phase of the tool		we went out email, undertook telephone calls to about 15
box to scientists and		institutions, 15 communication officers in Kenya and in Africa
journalists		seeking volunteers to participate in the rest run of the tool.
		About 20 journalists, 20 communication officers and scientists
		were reached with this approach. Follow up is already being
		done. Expected to be continuous up to the last quarter of the
		year.
4. Identify key persons,	March -	During the reporting period, the CEO was instrumental in
research institutions and	ongoing	identifying relevant institutions, communication officers and
communication nodes to		journalists to be approached with an aim of having them
work with		understand and sign up for the tool once the test run was up
		and subsequently take it up for their benefit in their daily work.
		The core team so identified will the foot soldiers in bringing on
		board their scientists.
5. Use of our magazine to	May 2017	A detailed article was produced and published in the MESHA
promote the tool.		science magazine, SAYANSI May edition which articulated the
		features and benefits of the tool. The science magazine is
		circulated among top scientific organisations, is available on line
		on MESHA website and that of wfsj. It is also available on our
		facebook pages ie both wfsj and MESHA's.



6. Use of social media and		Social media is catching on very well at MESHA. We have used
website		the facebook of MESHA, and my personal wall to reach out to
		our followers and members.
7. Presentation of the tool	July 27-29	A short presentation was made to the MESHA membership
during MESHA Strategic Plan		during the development of the MESHA strategic plan 2017 –
		2022. The aim was to popularize the tool among journalists and
		also to seek their acceptance of the tool with a view to having
		them spread the word to those they work with in their
		newsrooms.

Way Forward

8. Key assumption from start of the project: Our assumption at the beginning of the project was that our stakeholders, members and partners would take up the tool immediately. The reality on the ground is that this needs to be re-evaluated because of the slow pace at which acceptance and adoption is moving in Kenya. It should also be emphasized that MESHA, through me, has tirelessly approached other science journalists from Africa hence we were not confined to Kenya alone.

9. We therefore propose	Aug to Dec	i.	Organise for our members based in Nairobi a half day
eight major additional	2017		seminar to promote the tool
activities to popularize the		ii.	Promote the tool during the inaugural health café to be
tool. These events will			held in October for journalists and scientists from all
supplement what we are			over the country. These will be monthly to cover a
already using – the above			whole year.
activities are continuous		iii.	A select MESHA team of three have already decided to
			spend 2 days per week of tweeting on the toolbox using
			three members twitter handles beginning September
			10, 2017 through to November 2017 (contents to be
			tweeted already agreed with the team leader).
		iv.	The Third Kenya Science Journalists Congress (in
			attendance will be journalists from East Africa) will be
			held in November in Nairobi – we hope to have three
			members share their experiences on the use of the tool
			in their work.
		v.	A major science journalists meeting will be held in Addis
			Ababa from Sep 15 to 17, 2017 – we will promote the
			tool in this meeting co-organised by MESHA and the
			India based CSE.
		vi.	We are developing cards to specifically distribute to
			scientists and science journalists bearing the link of the



toolbox and a short explanation of the same. The cards will be ready by September 1. vii. We are also developing a banner/poster to be used on line to create awareness about the tool. viii. MESHA will soon meet with the Media Council of Kenya to provide us with additional list of journalists who do health in the country with a view of spreading the word to this cadre. Other efforts 10. Here below, please find a list of persons and institutions that I have had personal contact with, either through whatsapp, email, sms or skype in Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya. The response has been good but action still remains to be done ie they have not signed up to use the tool. I wish to continue for the next one month with follow ups on their next course of action. i. Dr Ivan Namusooka - Clinical trialist - Uganda Virus Research Institute +256 772494942 ii. Ms Marion Natukunda Research and Advocacy Officer - Uganda Aids Information Centre - +256702290640/+256774290640 iii. Mr Joshua Musinguzi - Aids control program manager at MOH +256 772611135 iv. Dr Dan Kajungu, the executive director of Makerere University Centre for Health and Population Research (MUCHAP) +256 772207127 v. Dr Akoth Lydia - Research Assistant, Prime Project MoH — Uganda - +256 712 936 704;+256 702 936 704 vi. Pamela Nabukenya Wairagala - Uganda Virus Institute - Public Engagement and Communications Officer; MRC/UVRI Uganda Research Unit on AIDS - Plot 51-59 Nakiwogo Road Entebbe, Tel: Reception +256 417 704000 +256 312 262910/1, Tel: Direct: +256 417 704187, Tel: Cell phone; ±256 716 833457 +256 701833457, Website; www.mrcuganda.org vii. Andrew Kiggundu, akigeundu@email.com. (National Research			
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vii. Andrew Kiggundu,			
Tradicial research			akiggundu@gmail.com, (National Research



	Centre), a researcher who has promised to
	provide key persons able to come on board.
viii.	Rwanda - Malik Kayumba - Rwanda Biomedical
	Centre (RBC); Communication officer who also
	doubles up as the CO for the Ministry of Health;
	+250 788 350 035 – <u>kayumbamalick@gmail.com</u>
ix.	James Wodera - <u>JWodera@kemri.org</u> - Kenya
	Medical Research Institute (KEMRI). Getting
	them on board has been hampered by the
	demise of the head of their department, who
	died suddenly a month ago.



Rapport d'activité de l'Association béninoise Activités réalisées pour Health Toolbox

Juin 2017: Téléchargement de profils d'experts et de journalistes sur la plateforme

20 juin 2017 : Publication de l'article « Un hôpital universitaire sans bloc opératoire au Bénin » dans le Blog du site.

23 juin 2017 : Présentation officielle de HealthToolbox aux journalistes béninois accompagnée de l'inscription de certains participants sur la plateforme dans le cadre rencontres hebdomadaires du club de presse : « Café Médias Plus ». Cette rencontre a connu la participation d'une vingtaine de journaliste été a été suivi par des centaines d'autres en direct sur Whatsupp.

4 Juillet 2017: Publication du premier article « La plateforme HealthToolbox séduit les journalistes béninois » dans le Blog du site

27 Juillet 2017: Présentation sommaire des outils de formation en ligne de la WFSJ (Cours en ligne sur le journalisme scientifique, HealthToolbox etc.) à environ 30 journalistes du journal étudiant « Le Révélateur », à l'Université d'Abomey-Calavi, dans le cadre d'une formation sur la spécialisation en journalisme.

Août 2017 : Echange et présentation de HealthToolbox au Secrétaire Général de l'Association des journalistes scientifiques du Togo, Gabriel Adonou pour inciter leurs membres à s'inscrire sur la plateforme.

Evaluation des activités exécutées

- Bon déroulement et bonne satisfaction de la présentation de HealthToolbox aux iournalistes béninois.
- Adhésion et intérêt des journalistes béninois pour l'outil.
- Distribution à l'avenir aux participants quelques supports d'information sur l'outil.

Difficulté notée au niveau de l'opération de téléchargement des profits d'experts :

- Mangue d'informations sur les experts.
- Faible disponibilité d'informations sur les sites web des institutions africaines employant des experts en santé
- Absence de réponse de la part des experts et autres chercheurs inscrits.

Prochaines Activités

Septembre à Décembre 2017 : Publication d'articles dans le blog de HealthToolbox.

Septembre à Décembre 2017 : Poursuite du téléchargement de profils d'experts et de journalistes sur la plateforme.



Novembre 2017 : Organisation d'une rencontre autour des outils de formation de la WFSJ à l'intention des membres de l'AJCSB et des journalistes béninois.

