



---

## **TAKING LIBRARY SERVICES TO HOSPITAL WARDS: A CASE STUDY OF EMBU PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL - KENYA**

by  
**AUGUSTINE M. MUTISO**  
MSc. Info. Sc.  
Provincial Librarian,  
Kenya National Library Services – Embu  
E-Mail: [mutisoau@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mutisoau@yahoo.co.uk)

**Meeting:** 85. Literacy and Reading in co-operation with the Public Libraries and Library Services to Multicultural Populations  
**Simultaneous Interpretation:** Not available

---

*WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS: 74TH IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL*  
10-14 August 2008, Québec, Canada  
<http://www.ifla.org/iv/ifla74/index.htm>

---

### ***ABSTRACT***

*This paper is about the provision of library services to hospitalized children (paediatric ward) at Embu Provincial Hospital. During a child's admission to hospital, family life is disrupted, physical aspects of normal life such as eating and sleeping arrangements are altered. These children need emotional and psychological support. The service was mainly started as a campaign strategy to increase on library membership, attendance and book issuing.*

### **EMBU PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL:**

The hospital is government funded and was started in 1922 as a dispensary. In 1965, it was upgraded to a district hospital, while in 1984; it became a fully pledged Provincial hospital. The hospital has 500 staff, and a bed capacity of 630 beds. The hospitals vision is to be the leading health facility in the East African Region by offering quality and passionate health care that is acceptable and cost-effective. Its mission is to promote and provide quality curative and rehabilitative health care services with emphasis on professionalism, innovation and use of new and safe technologies. The hospital insists on honesty, integrity and trustworthiness throughout the process of service delivery and is committed to among others, provision of health care and rehabilitative services as well as the provision of accurate information to its clients and

the general public. The clients on the other hand have right to accurate information and right to access services which are available and timely.

### **EMBU PROVINCIAL LIBRARY**

Embu provincial library is one of the 46 branches of Kenya National Library Service (KNLS).KNLS branches are categorized into 8 Provincial, 7 District and 31 Community libraries respectively. Embu library is thus one of the 8 Provincial libraries.

In Embu Provincial Library we do recognize that information is a basic commodity to everyone's life. To this end we do ensure that services provided are responsive to the needs and translate to both individual and community empowerment. The services are aimed at helping people make informed decisions affecting their lives and community.

Our customers include individuals, student, researchers, governmental agencies, private institutions, pensioners and Virtually Impaired Persons (VIPS). A wide range of services are provided, this includes; Adult and Junior Lending, Advisory Library Services and technical assistance for library development to those institutions both private and government interested in setting up libraries, bulk lending to learning institutions-however, this is limited to availability of stock, inter-library lending and HIV/AIDS information to encourage openness and reduce vulnerability. We also offer outreach services through motorized library services to schools.

### **WHY LIBRARY SERVICES TO THE PAEDIATRIC WARDS:**

- i.** Children admitted to hospital need emotional and psychological support. As *Linda shield, 2004* writing on parental needs during a child's hospitalization says, "*Children Have Needs Too*". It was on the realization that hospitalized children needed emotional and psychological support that library services were started for them at the paediatric ward of Embu Provincial Hospital.
- ii.** The primary focus of this paper is thus on young people admitted at the above hospital, who were unable to access library services. Service gaps were realized hence the provision and introduction of the service.
- iii.** During a child's hospitalization, family life is disrupted, physical aspects of normal life such as eating, sleeping and hygiene arrangements are altered while emotional and psychological needs are changed.  
*Cook, H.1988*

- iv. Young people are also seen as a low priority when it comes to the provision of basic services. *Linda Shields*
- v. Hospital admission of a child also means physical disruption for family friends and neighbors, since the child may be admitted for a long period in hospital. Provision of books to read makes them nearer to school.

### **HOW THE SERVICE IS CARRIED OUT**

The service is carried out every Tuesday for 2 hours from 11am - 1pm and by two Librarians in collaboration with the officer in charge of health education services in the hospital. 100 copies of books are taken to the hospital (various titles: - Math's, English Fiction and Picture books. The wards served are ward 6,7,16 & 17. Ward 6 & 7 are surgical wards (fracture and Burns cases). Ward 16 is where abandoned kids are kept for up to 5yrs. Ward 17 is an isolation ward, and handles infectious and dermatological condition cases, majority of the patients admitted here stay for long periods hence need for books. Those able to move from the wards are moved to one room and books given to them to read. Those unable are given books to read or the books are read for them. Those to whom books are given have their names taken for security of the books. The books are left for 1 week under the care of the officer in charge of Health Education Services department in the hospital. The process is then repeated the following week.

### **WAY FORWARD**

The service has been well received by the children, parents and the hospital management. With resources, the programme can be replicated in the 4 districts that are served by Embu Library (viz, Mbeere, Kirinyaga, Chuka and Embu). The hospital has also approached the TSC (Teachers Service Commission) for a teacher to be posted at the hospital to take care of the education needs of the children. The said teacher will also teach at the nearby St. Michael Primary School.

### **CHALLENGES THE SERVICE IS FACING**

1. Parent/Guardians accompanying the sick are requesting for the same services.
2. Hospital staffs are also demanding the same services. They want to be served there, not in the library.
3. Current and up-to-date reading materials are lacking e.g. syllabus books.

## CONCLUSION

Our Library is the first in the entire KNLS network to start library services to hospitalized children. This service can be extended to hospitalized adults also, although this would require extra human (staff) and financial resources. The entire KNLS network of libraries and other public libraries all over the world can replicate this service in the areas they serve.

## REFERENCES

**Cook, H (1998)** “*Disturbed children and adolescents - Whose responsibility,*” The bulletin of the National clearing house for Youth studies, vol. 7, No.4, November.

**Linda, shields. (2004).** *We have needs Too: Parental needs during a child’s hospitalization*, available at [http:// www.uff.br/ nepae / obju303shieldsetal.htm](http://www.uff.br/nepae/obju303shieldsetal.htm)

**Embu Provincial general Hospital service Charter.**

**Kenya National Library Services - Service Charter.**