



knowledge without boundaries

# EIFL-PLIP

Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

## Library e-health service connects people to doctors

### Lori Regional Library, Armenia

IMPACT CASE STUDY

The library's Health Bridge e-health information service -

- Contributed to improved health of 90 service users.
- Attracted over 1,200 new library users - a 34% increase - including health workers, university lecturers, medical students, pensioners, parents and school pupils.
- Convinced the national Department of Culture to contribute new computers, health journals and books.
- Established a strong and sustainable partnership with Vanadzor State Medical College, whose doctors volunteer to staff the Health Bridge online consultation service.

*“With the help of this service I learned to search the internet - and now I provide online consultations for Health Bridge. I am working with my students to apply these new methods.” - Armine Manucharyan, doctor-lecturer at Vanadzor State Medical College.*

Lori Regional Library serves Vanadzor, the capital of Lori Region, with a population of over 104,800, and surrounding areas. The region struggles with several factors that cause health problems: it is prone to earthquakes, the climate is damp, and in the past there were many chemical factories in the region, polluting the environment. There is a great need for health information, and Lori Regional Library is using information and communication technology (ICT) to fill this gap.

With a grant of US\$15,000 from EIFL-PLIP to cover equipment and some operational costs for one year, the library created the Health Bridge centre, with three notebook computers, a TV set for screening films and over 200 health books and journals. The centrepiece of the service is the Health Bridge website - [www.healthbridge.do.am](http://www.healthbridge.do.am) - including the popular confidential interactive question and answer service, through which people consult doctors. The service sometimes attracts up to 20 questions a day from people concerned about issues like TB, maternal health and diabetes, and the doctors, all volunteers, struggle to keep up.



*“There is no other such centre in our town!” Librarians work with Health Bridge service users to make sure that they find reliable health information.*

*“When my children have health problems, I research the Health Bridge website to find the right specialists - and I find detailed information.” - Ms Gayane Pogosyan, who learned how to use ICT at the library.*



knowledge without boundaries

# EIFL-PLIP

Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

In just one year, the library...

- Trained five librarians and five doctors to manage and staff the Health Bridge service.
- Trained 114 service users to use ICT to research health information.
- Responded to over 2,600 requests for health information.
- Created the popular Health Bridge website, attracting 133 online consultations between patients and doctors and over 6,000 visitors.
- Hosted health lectures, film screenings, round-table discussions, seminars and a picture exhibition, to raise awareness about local health issues.

## The future

Strong evidence of impact has convinced the library's Board of Governors to absorb future costs into the library's budget. The partnership with Vanadzor State Medical College will ensure the online doctor-patient consultation service continues, and that Health Bridge has access to a steady stream of information and expertise.

### Public libraries - partners in development

The Armenian government is currently taking steps to introduce e-health services. Free internet access, ICT skills in communities and reliable health information are the three main conditions for public uptake of e-health services. Lori Regional Library's groundbreaking Health Bridge Service provides a cost-effective model for meeting these needs.

The service also demonstrates other advantages of public libraries. Known and trusted in their communities, and staffed by skilled librarians to guide information seekers, public libraries can build public confidence in e-health. There are over 1,000 public libraries in Armenia. Together they present a strong platform for supporting the government's e-health programme.

*"I believe this project is important not only for medical staff and students, but for everyone!" - Vahan Vavoyan, volunteer at a local NGO.*

The EIFL-PLIP grant was awarded in November 2011. A year later, the library assessed the impact of the service. Information presented here is based on the library's impact assessment. For further information contact Ms Anahit Qocharyan Director of the library at [liblori@yahoo.com](mailto:liblori@yahoo.com).

[EIFL](#) (Electronic Information for Libraries) is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to enabling access to knowledge through libraries in more than 60 developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) supports libraries to implement community development projects. Learn more at [www.eifl.net/plip](http://www.eifl.net/plip). EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme is supported by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

