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Our MEPI initiative has four main goals. One to increase the number and the quality of training of residents so that they will be the future faculty members for the three public universities in Mozambique and the others that will come later. The second goal is to develop the infrastructure for the research because we see that we are behind in the research. We don't do much research in Mozambique due to diverse reasons. The third goal is to develop the infrastructure for bioinformatics. Since we are a country with a lack of human resources, and in fact MEPI came to overcome, to help overcome this issue. We are based in Maputo and until five years ago we were the only medical school in the country. Now there are two more public universities. But they face, they don't have enough human resources for teaching. So with this bioinformatic infrastructure we'll be able to support teaching through telemedicine, through video conferences.

We will also be able to create, we want to create a library where we are going to share all materials, text books, other materials for research, journals, so we will be able to share with all of these medical schools.

The other aim of this bioinformatic complement is to provide distance learning and also will help us to connect with other universities in the region and in the world. So that we can have the same standards as in the university around us.

The fourth aim of our initiative is to develop strategies for retention of health workers, especially medical doctors where the MEPI is, and also develop strategies for sustainability. In principle the MEPI initiative is for five years. But after five years we know that some of the goals that we have defined, we are not going to achieve them in full after these five years. But since we have this MEPI support, it is a way of starting these activities and also work on sustainability. This is one of the challenges we have.

As we are now at the end of the second year, at the beginning, the main challenge was to set up in place all we need, the people, talk with different stakeholders, to set up the initiative and start our activities. Now in the second year we feel that we have the basis of it. And it was also challenging sometimes to convince people. As always when you start something new, there are people who don't believe. There are people who are reticent, and there are people who quickly pick it up and join us. So we have been working the first year, mainly in this one, set up the activities and also working, meeting people, talk to them, negotiating, because as you can see, these goals that we have proposed means that we have to work with different institutions, different peoples.

But now in this second year, we feel that we have the basis to work quietly and think ahead what is going on, well, what is not going well, what we need to do to improve, and even think in the middle term, what is going to be.

Well, there are several things that me and my team should be proud of. The first things we are proud because we were able to bring all these different stakeholders together. Work together, we plan everything together because if not we wouldn't be able to achieve our aims. Once we set these basis then we started our activities.

The second thing that I am proud of is in terms of the training program. We have already achieved some visible goals. Yes, we have some achievements. In the past until we are supporting under the MEPI initiative the training of internists. Medical internists. In the past years there were few people, few candidates wanting to do this speciality for different reasons. But with work that we have done negotiating with the medical council, Ministry of Health, working as a team, we were able last year to increase the number of candidates for this speciality from around six to 30. And this year also we will have more or less the same number, or even more. That is because people see how good our program is

going and so they are motivated to candidate in these specialities, because there were several issues that wouldn't demotivate them to candidate in the training residence in internal medicine. After a few more years, one thing that we will see, and in part now we can see, is the increased number of medical residents, not only in internal medicine but also in the other minor specialities like surgery, like pediatrics and like gynecology. Because what we have been doing in internal medicine is working so well that people are happy and other colleagues from other departments also want to copy the experience and in fact we are working with them to help organizing, introducing new technologies and new ways of teaching. So in a few years we will have all these departments in this main teaching hospital.

But also we will have created an embryo of people prepared to do the same in other hospitals that have teaching activities. Because the national directorate of hospitals in Mozambique, which is based in the Ministry of Health, knows the impact that MEPI is having in the internal medicine department, because at the end what we do when we improve the teaching activities, we are improving the health care delivery to the patients. So they have seen the impact that our MEPI initiative has created in this department. It is not only to support other departments in this hospital but to work with them and organize in other few hospitals. So we will have it for sure replicated in other few hospitals in Mozambique.

The other thing that we will see after five years is that we will have a strong core group of researchers. We do a little research in Mozambique. And developing research is one of the strategies to retain people and also for the sustainability. We will retain people because if they are able to write grants and get funded, first they will feel professionally happy about this. Through these grants they will be able to improve the living conditions they need in the working place. They will be able to get incentives to improve their salaries. And of course we will produce knowledge because since we don't have many people doing research, we don't know much about what is going on in terms of knowledge in Mozambique. So we

will have been produced more knowledge. We are focusing mainly in the infectious disease because of the characteristics of our country.

So I see in the future at the end of these five years we will have a strong group of researchers. Because in terms of research we are not only creating the infrastructure in terms of laboratories to support this research, but we are doing courses to help people in methodology, in writing grants, in writing papers.

And the most important also we have very good partners from UCSD, University of California, San Diego. So we have these good partners, very engaged. And we are together working and seeking for grants to help improve our goals in terms of research. And although we have two years, we have written more than 30 projects, we have more than 10 funded. With the support of MEPI we have created a research support center, which is very, very important because through this research support center we will be able not only to do a good management as it is necessary for these grants, which have different ways of dealing with these, but also through this research support center we have been partnering, but we want to partner with other institutions and help people not only from Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, but anyone in the country who wishes to do research we will help to write this grant proposal, we will help when it gets funded we will help with the research until the final stage which goes with the publication. Now in these few years we have some results.

The library as information access is very, very important for our MEPI work and for the work of the institutions as it develops. You cannot teach properly if you don't have proper information. You can't do research if you don't have information. So it is something that we need every day. That's why in our MEPI initiative we have this component of bioinformatics. The first years were to improve the structure. So we were able to put the internet not only in the medical school but also in the departments of the hospital that we are working. With this internet connection the next step, and we have already identified when this will finish, we have identified a place where through the MEPI initiative we brought in clients, there is internet connection and we want to fill with medical content, text

books, journals, so that not only will it be used by us in Maputo, but we want to make it available to all medical schools. With this it is important. We know that we will be able to achieve our goals. And then the challenge that we have now is to have someone prepared to deal with this infrastructure that has been set. People prepared.

I am glad that once again through this MEPI symposium, it organized this presentation that you did about the librarians. I know that there is a meeting coming of the African librarians. We didn't know that there is this association. It is good, and we are planning to send our librarian to this meeting.

He started his career as a nurse and then became a teacher of nurses. So later on I did my studies and I decided to go to medical studies. Since I was doing my medical studies, I knew that one day I wanted to teach. At that time in Mozambique because of the few medical doctors we were, every medical graduate when finished with school had to go to work in the community and then return and to the speciality. I'm talking about until 1985. No, sorry. Until 1994 no-one, the university was not allowed to employ directly people, to recruit directly people to be the faculty staff. And there was a reason for that after independence all medical doctors left the country. The faculty was almost about to close. But the Ministry of Health, in its mission, wanting to provide health care to the people, took care of our medical school by using its medical employees to teach part time. So the priority was to provide health care. So when I finished my studies in 1994 I was the first group to, there were more doctors this time, so I was the first group of new graduates to be asked to stay to graduate. We were ten. The dean made a meeting with us and asked us if we want like to stay for teaching. Since I knew that one day I would like to teach I said, yes, I am staying. The other colleagues of mine said you are crazy you should go and think. Because the way we were taught is we would be doctors to take care of the patients. But at the end my colleagues also accepted. We were ten, eight stayed at the medical school. So that's the way I started.

Yes we are learning some lessons. First we need champions. MEPI goals are very ambitious. Our MEPI goals are very ambitious. So we need champions. We need to have people with us who believe that if we want we can achieve what we proposed to do. It is time consuming, but it is in our blood. I feel MEPI is in my blood. Because the MEPI initiative no one came like we used to have projects that someone writes and says this starts one day and finishes. MEPI program it is an initiative that we wrote what we want to do and we have the support to do our activities. It's part of... having an initiative like that where you have the ownership, you have the leadership, it's not with all....,this is going well, what is not going well. What do I need to do to improve to do better? What else? I need what?

Just first of all once again to thank our UCSD partners. From the beginning they believed. It is not easy to come so far, fly to Mozambique, a Portuguese speaking country, to seek for collaboration. And after we have established this collaboration in 2008 we didn't stop. Both sides thinking what else we could do together. Until we were awarded this MEPI initiative. I also would like to thank my institution. Because whenever I seek for support or a recommendation letter they were there to give the support. And for the MEPI initiative I must thank the government through the Minister of Health and Education who believed and also gave us all support they keep doing orientations on how to do, what would be better for the country. And finally for the US government who also released this MEPI initiative and believed that we can also be able to do something different for our continent.

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The Network of African Medical Librarians

Voices of Change

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**Dr. Emilia Noormahomed: MEPI
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<https://youtu.be/FfkaBtXk76M>

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