

## Creation of Regional Networks of Scientific Communication Centres in African Countries

Lead academies: *Académie Nationale de Médecine*, France, and the Hassan II Academy of Science and Technology, Morocco

**This project is aimed at helping scientists from French-speaking African countries write manuscripts in good English. Although the research itself may be valid, papers are often rejected for publication in prominent journals because the quality of English fails to meet the required standards and/or does not allow peer reviewers to easily evaluate the work.**

This project was launched to upgrade scientists' writing skills so that:

- they can improve their ranking in the Science Citation Index by increasing the number of manuscripts accepted in international journals; and
- they are better able to compete for support from international donors, including foundations, when requesting finances for their laboratories and research institutions.

Indeed, the project follows up on a series of workshops previously sponsored by the InterAcademy Medical Panel (IAMP) with the collaboration of the French *Académie Nationale de Médecine* (ANM) that taught scientific writing to biologists and clinicians. Four such workshops were organized between 2006 and 2010, in Nairobi, Kenya, in Pretoria, South Africa, and twice in Dakar, Senegal. They were successful as several attendees subsequently had their papers accepted for publication in international peer-reviewed journals.

In 2013, a second phase of the project was initiated, consisting of selecting and training some African trainers so they could become qualified to teach 'scientific communication'. The 'training-the-trainers' workshops focused on preparation, revision and editing of manuscripts, oral communication skills, responding to calls for proposals, and the submission of research projects.

During 2013, two 5-day regional workshops were organized:

- 4-8 February – in Franceville, Gabon, with 14 participants; and
- 3-7 June – in Rabat, Morocco, with 25 participants.

A final workshop was scheduled for 6-10 January 2014 in Dakar, Senegal, with 11 participants expected.

Each workshop was preceded by a 1-2-day planning meeting, held either in Paris, France, or Rabat, Morocco, to determine the format of the workshop. Typically, a team of trainers from high income countries was assembled to provide the training to the future trainers. This was important as it helped to establish a network aimed at disseminating the practice of scientific communication to African universities and to sensitize their young scientific colleagues about the importance of publishing papers in prominent journals.

In future, the plan is to establish a series of regional communication centres in Africa equipped with modern and e-learning communication systems. Additional sources of finance are being explored to achieve these goals.

In 2013, as well as the two lead academies (the *Académie Nationale de Médecine*, France, and the Hassan II Academy of Science and Technology, Morocco), the project saw the strong participation of the *Académie Nationale des Sciences et Techniques du Sénégal* and the *École Doctorale Regionale*, based in Franceville, Gabon, with additional financial support from the *Fondation Merieux*, Lyon, France.



Participants at a workshop held in Rabat, Morocco, hosted by the Hassan II Academy of Science and Technology.