

## INFORMATION WITHOUT BORDERS

### Free software for African hospitals

For 4 years, Informatici Senza Frontiere has been active in Africa, mainly in Uganda and Kenya, aiming to reduce the digital divide.

The first project was launched in 2005. The organization has been working on developing useful software for hospitals, additionally installing hardware components and giving assistance during use.

Also, Informatici Senza Frontiere volunteers teach and train local operators to make them autonomous in the use of the information technology.

Open Hospital was the first software the organization developed and installed in several African hospitals, of which the first was Angal Hospital in Uganda. This software assists in different fundamental operations of hospital management. These include registration of patients, management of examinations and laboratory analyses, and hospital pharmacy management.

Open Hospital is an open-source software, written in Java, currently supported on Windows and Linux operating systems; also, it is available both in English and in French.

The software has been launched in more hospitals, enabling developers to improve it through user feedback.

In early 2009 the third version of the software was released, and installed in hospitals in Uganda, Kenya, Benin, Afghanistan where it has been proven to be reliable and user friendly. Its manual is online at [http://downloads.sourceforge.net/angal/user-manualbeta22.doc?use\\_mirror=puzzle](http://downloads.sourceforge.net/angal/user-manualbeta22.doc?use_mirror=puzzle).

After they install software, Informatici Senza Frontiere volunteers travel to the hospitals to train local personnel and make additional trips to monitor and support client use.

Claudio Tancini, Informatici Senza Frontiere volunteer, returned from the last mission in Angal, Uganda during 2008. He says: "I convinced myself even more deeply of the importance of information technology and of our work; there still are some areas where our intervention could help to improve the sit-

***"The international community should take the necessary steps to ensure that the poorest countries of the world have full access to information and communication technologies. Our objective is to connect all villages of the world to the Internet. Only this way we will have a digital democracy."***

***Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, at the World Summit on the Information Society Tunis, 16 Nov 2005***

"Angal Hospital is in rural Uganda. It has a catchment area of about 120,000 people and has 280 beds, a laboratory for chemical and microbiological analyses, a radiology ward, an operating room and a centre for the treatment of child malnutrition.

"Amici di Angal" association ([www.amiciangi.org](http://www.amiciangi.org)), founded in 2001 by doctor Mario Marsiaj from Verona, provides the funds and coordinates the Italian voluntary doctors who cooperate with the 4 Ugandan doctors employed by the Ugandan government." ***From ISF web-site.***

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uation, and, without any doubt, a lot of things going on find in information technology use one of their strongest points."

Another volunteer, Alessandro Domanico, is, at the time of writing (February 2009) in Matiri, Kenya, for the second time. At Tharaka Hospital, Alessandro trains personnel in using information technology. He additionally optimizes and updates the software according to difficulties and suggestions that come up from the close contact with users.

Right now, Informatici Senza Frontiere is working on the start-up of a multilingual assistance center for all Open Hospital users. Additionally, Informatici Senza Frontiere is developing Open Staff, a software enabling human resources management. As well as Open Hospital, Open Staff is open-source, and is characterized by an extreme portability and facility of utilization, great flexibility in using and adding applicative components.

Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI, <http://www.cooopi.org>) is an Italian nongovernmental organization founded in 1965 for development programs and emergency interventions in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Balkans, and organize activities in Italy to foster knowledge exchange between cultures. COOPI requested software development for use in the Goz Beida refugee camp, Ciad. Our organization expects this software, once completed, to have broad application.

Informatici Senza Frontiere is developing a software called WALKS (Web Aided Laboratory for Knowledge Sharing) which is a multilingual web application. This means that expert information technology users help novice users solve information technology problems. This software can be downloaded freely from [www.sourceforge.net](http://www.sourceforge.net): information, uploads and contacts with Informatici Senza Frontiere volunteers

### LINKS TO INFORMATION WITHOUT BORDERS

Updates on ISF open source software:  
<http://www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org/blog?p=446&lang=en>  
<http://www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org/blog?p=503&lang=en>

Updates on Kenya:  
<http://www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org/blog?p=466&lang=en>  
<http://www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org/blog?p=435&lang=en>  
<http://www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org/blog?p=546&lang=en>

Updates on Uganda  
<http://www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org/blog?p=518&lang=en>  
<http://www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org/blog?p=471&lang=en>  
<http://www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org/blog?p=450&lang=en>

Updates on Madagascar:  
<http://www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org/blog?p=498&lang=en>

Updates on Afghanistan:  
<http://www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org/blog/?p=143&lang=en>

can be found at the website, [www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org](http://www.informaticisenzafrontiere.org).

Informatici Senza Frontiere has started a collaboration with organizations that develop microcredit projects in Madagascar, and gave its contribution to the realization of a specific software supporting report activities.

Informatici Senza Frontiere is working hard to increase awareness that more work has to be done, and is always careful in following the challenge that the former Secretary General of the United Nations gave, on the previous page, which is for the countries to give the poorer countries access to information and communication.

### By Aldo Ceccarelli

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**Informatici Senza Frontiere initiative: Cable and hardware laid down in Uganda.**

