UGANDA CAPACITY PROGRAM

Internship Program Report

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Uganda Capacity Program (UCP) launched the internship program in 2010 to help carry out its Human Resources for Health Information System (HRHIS) initiatives and to build Open Source development capacity in Uganda.

UCP's HRHIS initiatives include supporting the country's national implementation of the iHRIS software. iHRIS Qualify, licensure and certification software, is used by the four professional health councils, and iHRIS Manage, HR management software, is deployed at the Central Ministry of Health and its affiliated institutions, Regional Referral Hospital (RRH), National Referral Hospitals (NRH), and districts.

This was to expand on the experience of supporting the iHRIS software beyond UCP's small HRIS team. As more installations are added (iHRIS Manage is now installed in 69 districts, 13 RRH, 2 NRH, Ministry of Health, and 2 of its affiliated institutions (Blood Bank and Uganda Virus Research Institute), UCP recognized that more people are required to provide timely and reliable technical assistance to users throughout the country. To this end, UCP leadership reached out to Universities to create the internship program.

For 2010, six interns, representing top graduates from Makerere University's department of Computing and Information Technology, carried out internship at UCP and five completed successfully. For second year 2011, four interns were selected and one additional from Allied Health Professionals.

It is important to note that although the universities produce graduates per year, they are not provided with specific training in Open Source programming needed to directly jump into and work with HRHIS. With additional hands-on training provided by the UCP internship program, some of these graduates become experts that can adequately provide the necessary support for the iHRIS software and help ensure its sustainability after UCP ends.

The UCP HRIS team supervises the interns and tasks for the interns to address over the six months period include trouble shooting the HRIS in the different institutions, completing any outstanding data entry for the MOH and professional councils, cleaning and analyzing data, training users in data analysis, and assisting with the iHRIS Manage rollout.

SELECTION OF INTERNS

In order to get the best of graduates, UCP writes to university explaining the internship program (how it is run and the objectives). It is upon this that the university selects the best students and recommends them to UCP. For this period, the university recommended seven interns (Ochola Jacob, Kaijamurubi Harry, Mukambonera Gloria, Ssanyu Lydia, Anyumiza Peter, Agaba Sulaiman, and Judas Tadeo), but due to financial limitations four interns (Harry, Gloria, Lydia, and Tadeo) were taken on with one extra intern (Seryazi Andrew) came from Allied health professional.

INTERNS' EXPECTATIONS

As the interns joined the UCP, they had their own expectations which included

- The first time I heard of the internship, I thought it was an opportunity to practically apply the knowledge I had acquired while studying in preparation for employment and later on get employed.

- Networking is the backbone of information technology; therefore I expected to gain more hands on experience in networking.
- Troubleshooting computers and networks is a basic skill in information technology which i anticipated to learn with intra health.
- Since intra health is supporting enhanced use of human resource information systems which handle data, Therefore i expected to utilize this opportunity to learn more database management
- To learn how to work with HRIS and be able to manipulate in all ways for any purpose.
- To learn more in programming as we work with the HRIS system.
- To improve in database management and development using the different platforms.
- To learn how to set up a network in a given area and configure the different devices.
- To learn how to develop systems, all through to maintenance and influencing people to appreciate and use the system that is developed.
- To learn overall hardware maintenance and be able to troubleshoot any hardware problems.
- To train and acquire work etiquette through the interactions in the working environment.
- To familiarize with office practices and norms.
- To get a feel of hands on solutions of world's challenges/problems in a way of programming and networking.
- To be employed by this organization.
- To Learn how to solely interact with Linux OS and be well versed with its commands
- To improve my Programming and documentation techniques
- To improve on the troubleshooting techniques for the different IT equipment
- To be more resourceful and competent in the Computer Science / IT field
- And also to network (to make more friends)

INTERNSHIP MANAGEMENT

Internship management was headed by the HRIS manager and with support from the rest of UCP HRIS team. The interns were integrated into the on-going drive by UCP to create a big HRHIS technical support team in Uganda and this met that they had to work and interact with HRIS resource persons being trained through the country.

The UCP HRIS team had to make sure that from the intern's initial understanding of the program are properly trained to become comfortable in handling HRHIS, as one of the interns – Andrew put it *"When I first heard of internship with intra health, I thought it was about supporting the health sector to build capacity using the electronic advanced technology"*.

The internship program was practical and interns were always tasked to practice their skills from the every start of the program as interns recalls – Harry *"Ideally, I had a fair beginning especially when I was asked to go to the field as early as the second week of my internship. All I realized was real hands on experience"*. Andrew *"I started with installation of Ubuntu archives and the system which was a good hand on experience"*.

Through the internship program, intern were treated with respect and due respect and UCP HRIS team made sure that interns' problems were solved and made them to feel as part of the UCP team as evidenced from the interns themselves as Lydia observed *"I started off very well with a very welcoming and friendly environment availed by all the staff at Capacity; especially the HRIS staff, who provided to us knowledge in all aspects. This made life very interesting and easy for me"*.

To create leadership among the interns and to make sure they perform and carry out tasks assigned to them, the HRIS manager put in place a number of measures including appointing a weekly leader from the interns themselves whose duties among others included reporting the status in terms of welfare for every intern and communicating any administrative issues to others, the interns submitting a weekly summary of activities they have been involved in and what they the feel was their accomplishment, putting in place weekly and monthly plans for the interns, having monthly meeting to evaluate progress via face to face discuss

ACHIEVEMENTS

Out of the five interns who were taken on, one (Tadeo) got a job with a software company mid-way the program, the remaining four completed successfully the internship.

UCP has been able to selling the idea of internship to other institutions through demonstrating the importance on internship, this year, Allied health came on board and their intern was successfully trained together with other interns.

The interns gained skills in the different aspect of IT, programing, deployment, and training in relation to HRIS including HRIS installation, configuring the system, navigating through the system, managing the system, carrying out on-job training, and data cleaning. In the process many staff have been trained in HRIS usage and management and HRIS has been deployed to various institutions and the quality of data improved as Andrew put it into perspective *"Having been deployed to allied*

health professionals council, I have been a key factor in data cleaning of the allied health database. This has helped the council to have accurate records".

The internship program has helped to build mental strength of interns by through team work. The exposure through training and applying what they have learnt immediately into the real world has motivated and built the interns to high levels that they are now able to move on alone as the interns put it in their own words – Andrew *"Am looking forward to continue supporting intra health in the human resource information system expansion thought the country as a member of the core HRIS team"*.

Internship has been able to build both technical and social skills in the interns as they went through the different activities and moved around the country interacting with different people of varying cultures and skills as one intern Ssanyu put – *"I have gained a lot of confidence in interacting with people ahead of me; this has been attained through attending meetings & HRIS Trainings (i.e. good interpersonal skills). My trouble shooting skills have been improved for different kinds of hardware, like printers, computers and others. I have attained a lot of friends both in and outside IntraHealth"*

The internship program has achieved its objectives and moved UCP towards its objective and vision of having a big pool of locally and technically able resource persons who can support the various organizations using and those which want to take on HRIS as their core HR management tool. As the intern Andrew summarizes it, "I feel so honored and grateful for having done my internship with intra health and Uganda capacity program; I have learnt and achieved all my objectives". I will use all the skills and knowledge I have acquired through my internship to help in innovation, research and development of information systems in Uganda.

WHAT INTERNS SAY THEY LEARNT

Below is what interns say they learnt through the internship program using their own word

- I have learnt new aspects in networking through using various platforms and operating systems like Linux and windows.
- Linux platform- Ubuntu environment (right from installation, through customization up to usage).
- Installing the VMware and the virtual machine on the computers.
- HRIS installation and working with all its different components, preparing data to be imported into the system. Then importing the data into the system.
- Through working on different computers, I have managed to acquire more troubleshooting skills.
- HRIS is a data management system; therefore this has helped me understand how to manage databases.
- This internship has enabled me to learn (HRIS) human resource information system installation and configuration.

- Due to sufficient involvement in workshops and follow up's, I have gained a lot of training skills to train others on how to use a system that they have not used before.
- Attaining Quality data; through data cleaning
- Improved on my documentation techniques, this was due the frequent report writing assignments and it has been a great achievement.
- Using WISN software to find the staffing needs of the health workforce.
- Office procedures and office discipline.
- I have gained a lot of love for team working and traveling for duty, so interesting!

CURRENT STATUS OF INTERNS

Name	Internship End Date	Status	Current workplace
Gloria	13th January 2012	Completed Internship	UCP
Harry	13th January 2012	Completed Internship	NSSF
Lydia	13th January 2012	Completed Internship	BIMSOFT NV Belgium, Kamwokya
Andrew	13th January 2012	Completed Internship	Allied Health
Judas	29th July 2011	Never Completed Internship	BIMSOFT NV Belgium, Kamwokya

CHALLENGES

a) Lack of enough working space to accommodate the interns at the beginning of the program, but that was solved by the COP of UCP as time went on.

b) The demand on the UCP staff to bring the interns to the speed in terms of HRIS skills needed in addition to their daily activities of rolling out HRIS to districts and other institutions, which necessitated the UCP HRIS working long hours daily and working on the weekends.

c) Balance between the daily work of HRIS manager and the internship management (weekly monitoring, terms of reference for interns, deploying interns, etc.) coupled with the fact that half of UCP HRIS technical team had just joined UCP and HRIS resource persons being trained through the country was very demanding and called for extra mental strength.

d) Moving the interns from the student thinking into professional working class conduct called for the UCP team to be extreme careful not to affect the interns' personality

RECOMMENDATIONS

The internship program to be continued and expanded to more universities as this is the way HRIS will be supported locally in the long run. It is through the internship that the program will be able to pass over the development to universities as its build a pool of HRIS knowledgeable lecturers - currently there are two who have ever successful completed their internship with UCP, which provides a good starting point.

Although the UCP budget for internship is over, if there are any funds it is worth putting those funds into internship program as it is helping to build a big local pool of HRIS experts in universities and NGO who are going to compassion the usage and maintenance of HRIS.

During internship, it worth to set aside one person for the first month to take interns through advanced open source programming as tight schedules by all UCP staff limits the training to standard HRIS programming.