



Building Stronger Library Associations

Sweden and
Kenya in close
cooperation

SWEDISH LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
KENYA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION







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IFLA (The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users. The cooperation between the Swedish Library Association and the Kenya Library Association takes place in close connection with IFLA in general and with the IFLA Building Strong Library Associations (BSLA) programme in particular.

Library associations all over the world have often played a crucial role in the development of libraries. This particular bilateral partnership involves exchanging experience between the two associations in Sweden and Kenya. The most important objective of this cooperation with Kenya is to strengthen the Kenya Library Association (KLA).

IFLA Building Strong Library Associations Programme (BSLA)

BSLA is a comprehensive IFLA programme offering a strategic and coordinated approach to capacity building and helping the sustainability of library associations. Strong Library Associations support and enrich society and the library and information profession. They unite a country's library community around a common platform for advocacy and development of the profession.

BSLA helps library associations to:

- Improve services for library users
- Provide equitable access to information
- Advance the library and information profession

Programme activities include training and mentoring, which helps associations to form partnerships, strengthen governance and member services, and to become better advocates for their library community. Training and activities are customized to the objectives of local library associations, and for different cultural, political, technological and social conditions.

However, this project is not using the whole BSLA programme, but has, from the beginning, focused on three main areas – Libraries on the Agenda, Libraries in Society and Sustaining Associations. The programme's detailed and applicable evaluation process will also be used at regular intervals during the lifespan of the whole project.

Pre-study, first visits and signing agreements

In May and June 2011, representatives from Sweden visited Kenya. During the stay they visited libraries in Nairobi and Mombasa, met with the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) and Swedish authorities and organisations

with the purpose of learning more about the country. In addition they took part in the KLA's annual conference in Mombasa.

During the visit they had an opportunity to learn and discuss library matters in Kenya concerning university libraries, public libraries, school libraries as well as corporate libraries. The first visit in Kenya gave a wide perspective of matters important to the future common focus. At the KLA's annual conference, Swedish representatives were invited to give a presentation of the Swedish Library Association, which also covered how Swedish libraries function in general.

In March 2012, The Swedish Library Association arranged a workshop in Stockholm, Sweden for eight representatives and colleagues from Kenya. The main task of the workshop was to introduce the BSLA programme and discuss future common work. During the stay in Stockholm they also had the opportunity to meet with local librarians and with the Embassy of Kenya in Stockholm.

In October and November 2012, representatives from Sweden attended the KLA's annual conference in Kisumu. During this visit, they were informed about the process of, and took part in, KLA's recruitment of an executive officer for the new office in Nairobi. They were also invited to a stakeholder forum arranged by KNLS to discuss the development of the library system in Kenya.

During meetings with the Kenyan Ministry of State for National Heritage & Culture, the Swedish delegation became convinced that the cooperation between the two countries was appreciated.

At the annual conference in Kisumu, a workshop based on the BSLA programme was presented to the conference delegates as well as a presentation of the Swedish marketing campaign "Library Lovers".

In August 2012, during the IFLA WLIC (World Library and Information Congress) in Helsinki, the Swedish Library Association and Kenya Library Association signed a five-year cooperation agreement starting the project, "Stronger Together".





Further exchanges and evaluation

Since the project started delegates from the KLA's board have visited the annual meetings of the Swedish Library Association in Örebro 2013 and Umeå in 2014. At these meetings the board members have presented both KLA and the current situation regarding libraries in Kenya during seminars. In Örebro, they had the opportunity to visit "Number 52", a special branch library with cultural and leisure activities for citizens of all ages. When the Swedish delegates, in their turn, attended the KLA's annual meeting in Kakamega 2013, two representatives from "Number 52" gave a speech about their work to more than 100 Kenyan colleagues.

Further exchanges of experience took place in Umeå, when the Kenyans visited another special branch library in Holmsund, which, in the same manner, will be presented by two people from Holmsund at the annual meeting in Eldoret, 2014.

In Kakamega, the first questionnaire about the impact of the project was introduced as part of an on-going evaluation process. The questionnaire was sent out to all members of KLA, and the results were analysed and discussed in Umeå. So far, the members of KLA have expressed satisfaction with the development of the project and have great expectations for the future of the association.

Every year a delegate from KLA is given financial support from the project to attend the IFLA WLIC, where colleagues from both countries can meet and continue the discussions and spread information. Meetings were held in Singapore 2013 and in Lyon 2014. In Lyon, the project was jointly presented at a BSLA satellite meeting on marketing entitled "How strong is your association".

Achievements

Engagement from many different stakeholders is important for a successful project. Consequently, members from the Swedish Library Association and KLA have, together, met representatives from Government Offices, KNLS and other important decision-makers. The purpose has been to secure a wide and broad-based engagement for the project.

Two important goals of the project have already been attained. One was to establish a strategic plan showing how KLA will build a stronger library association. The strategic plan states in what way KLA intends to work with dissemination, advocacy, marketing, development, long term financing, stakeholders, working groups, different libraries, as well as KLA's efforts to gain approval for their work in society from library members and others. The other major goal for KLA was to establish a staffed office in Nairobi in order to have the means to develop the organisation, work with marketing, advocacy and spreading information to stakeholders, members of the association and citizens throughout the country. The office and its manager have been in place since January 2013, situated in the KNLS building in Nairobi.

The Secretary General of IFLA mentioned the cooperation between Sweden and Kenya and their tailored use of the BSLA programme as a role model for other countries to learn from, and be inspired by, in her annual report in Singapore 2013.

The Kenya Library Association Executive Committee conducted several meetings and conferences between May and October 2014, which enabled the association to be promoted locally and internationally. These activities were facilitated through funding by the Swedish Library Association and internal income.

Regional branches development

One of the most important and appreciated achievements concerning libraries in Kenya is the development of regional branches around the whole country. Through the KLA office, librarian meetings, workshops and training sessions were organized within these branches to enable librarians to be



trained, to network and also to make the association stronger. The number of librarians and information professionals attending regional workshops has more than doubled. More people are registering as members of the association. The level of service delivery in libraries has gone up and branch members are calling for more activities within the branches. The branches where workshops and training sessions were conducted 2014 included Mount Kenya branch, Nyanza branch, Western branch, Rift Valley branch and the Coast branch, while Nairobi's branch workshop was called off due to logistical challenges. The launch of the new North Eastern branch is planned for November 2014.

The future

It is important that lessons and experiences from the project are shared within both associations. A good example to follow to ensure this is the IFLA's "train the trainers" model. The recently established branches of KLA, in different regions of Kenya, are important platforms that are in on-going development. The annual meetings of both KLA and the Swedish Library Association are key occasions for implementing workshops and meetings to disseminate knowledge. The contacts that have been established through this project can, in the long run, form partnerships between libraries in Kenya and Sweden. Swedish LIS students will be able to apply for grants to visit, study and work as volunteers in Kenyan libraries; workshops and seminars can be held, study tours arranged. It is our hope that the project can inspire many more ideas and activities in the years ahead!

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"Kaituma shirika"



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