

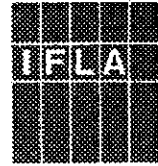


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## **WSIS Follow-up Conference on Access to Information and Knowledge for Development**

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### **Management of government information in Kenya**

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Presented at the International Seminar on the Strategic Management and Democratic Use of Government  
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*MANAGEMENT OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION IN KENYA (G.G.SHIBANDA)*

**MANAGEMENT OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION IN KENYA**

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**A PAPER FOR THE JOINT FAIFE/GIOPS WORKSHOP IN ADDIS ABABA  
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**ABSTRACT**

More than 50 per cent of the Kenyan imprint constitute official publications. They form part of the multiplicity of Government publications emanating from ministries and departments, local governments (councils), judiciary, parastatal organizations, Commissions and government education institutions. They contain very important information on legal policy, education, agriculture, economic, health and environment with implication on day today lives of citizens. People require this information in appropriate and adequate format to keep in steps with the government thinking and directives. Educational institutions use government publications to support their curriculum while other sectors of publications support scholarship in terms of research finding emanating from Government research institutions. In the name of indigenous publishing, the government set up its own publishing houses to compete with multinational publishing companies to produce cheap textbooks for schools through Jomo Kenyatta Foundation and Kenya Literature Bureau, forming the Government Printers to produce official documents and University Presses for publishing University level books. Some government institutions resort to hiring private or commercial publishing firms to produce their documents known only to themselves thus avoiding the services of the Government printers and other government publishers. The Government has legal instrument supporting its own publishing activity.

It is important to analyze these legal instruments in relation to the behavioral pattern of the official information.

There is also need to find out the extent the Kenya Government publications meet the Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) approach.

The paper looks into categories of Government publishing houses, nature, range and scope of publications, bibliographic control and levels of accessibility. Basically the argument is that the government publications lie in suit and require sustainable professional efforts to bring to light all that is published for common good nationally and internationally.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Kenya Government publications are from ministries and departments, local governments (councils), judiciary, parastatal organizations, Commissions and government education institutions. Government publications contain very important information on legal matters, education, agriculture, economics, health and environment. Such information has an immediate impact on the day today lives of Kenyan citizens. Therefore the people would normally require this information in appropriate format, adequate and timely manner just to keep in steps with government policy and directives. The school education sector rely on government publications to support the curriculum in terms of textbook and other educational materials. Reports and research findings emanating from parastatal research institutions are useful for further research, planning, training and extension services.

The Kenyan government has therefore set up its own publishing and printing houses to produce to textbooks that are relevant for schools. Official information need be promptly and cheaply. Besides, it plays the role of indigenous publisher against the multinational companies to equip its people with official information conveniently.

## **PROBLEM CONCEPTUALIZATION**

While looking into categories of Government publishing lines, nature, range and scope of publications, this paper argues that the Kenya Government publications lie in situ and require professional and international efforts to bring to light all that is published for common good nationally and internationally. The government has to pass its information management capability through bibliographic control and levels of accessibility.

## **LEADING QUESTIONS**

The leading questions are whether Kenya's bibliographic control activities have on board all government published information for ease of identification and whether all Kenya government information is available to people through organized centers of knowledge, information system and services.

## **2. ASSUMPTIONS**

The management of Government information is based on the following assumption:

- Government information needs are common among Kenyans and Kenyan institutions.
- The Kenyan Government ministries, departments and parastatal institutions form a strong corporate author base.
- The Kenya Government information emanates from vibrant publishing house.
- There exists an infrastructure for information accessibility and document delivery.
- Documents description meet international standards.
- Language is not a barrier in information utilization.

## **3. OBJECTIVES OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION**

- Access to government policy and legal matters.
- Democratization of the citizenry.
- Cost-benefit analysis
- Education based
- Research based
- Indigenous role player

## **4. CHARACTERISTICS OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION**

Government information is produced as a result of the work of official bodies at all levels. Large volume is produced every year and are important and

authoritative in nature. They contain legislation, statement of government policy, debate on current topics of importance, reports of government sponsored research, official histories, statistical data. The government information appears virtually in all subjects and is published in any format including book, periodical, map and electronic.

Kenya Government official publications emanate from Government Printers covering reports, legislation, government policy reports and statistics. Others are Kenya Literature Bureau, Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, Kenya Ordinance Survey (maps) and University Presses.

The Government Printers is obviously overwhelmed by demands of its services. Quite often, some government bodies outsource for publishing of their documents to commercial publishing in order to beat deadlines.

## **5. GENERATION LINES**

The Kenya Government Printers is a single one publishing house producing all government publication containing legislation, government policy, debates, reports and statistical data.

### **KENYA ORDINANCE SURVEY**

Kenya Ordinance Survey deal mainly with the production of cartography maps through the Department of Kenya Survey, Ministry of Lands.

### **KENYA LITERATURE BUREAU/JOMO KENYATTA FOUNDATION**

These are strategic government publishing houses for production of school textbook as recommended by Kenya Institute of Education or Kenya Ministry of Education. They also undertake publishing within the commercial market for profit.

### **UNIVERSITY PRESSES**

Moi University, University of Nairobi have existing presses for production of university level books of support teaching and learning in their respective programmes.

### **DOCUMENTATION SERVICES**

Most government bodies involved in documentation services engage in film, video documentary production at their local levels.

### **COMMERCIAL HOUSES**

A number of government institutions outsource publishing activities from the private sector. The documents sourced contain important information on research activities and service operations of the organization concerned.

## **6. LEGAL INSTRUMENT ON GOVERNMENT INFORMATION**

### **KENYA NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Kenya Government National Development plan 1997-2001 provides for information resources and management whose objective is to have effective means of institutionalizing systematic flow of and access to information in the country.

### **KENYA GAZETTE SUPPLEMENT**

The Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 63, 2005 provides for access to information emphasizing the right to demand the correction of deletion of untrue or misleading information. The state has also to publish all important information affecting the nation whereas Parliament is given leeway to enact legislation to provide for access to information.

### **LEGAL DEPOSIT ACT (1987)**

The Books and Newspapers Act (revised 1987) provides for deposit and registration of books and newspapers published in Kenya to an appointed Registrar to keep returns and register of books and newspapers collected in respect to this act.

However, this act exempts books and newspapers printed or published by or on behalf of the Government institutions. Benefiting from this legal requirements include Kenya National Library Services (KNLS), Kenya National Archives and the University of Nairobi.

## **7. BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL CONCEPTS IN OFFICIAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

### **UNIVERSAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL (UBC)**

The UBC programme evolved from IFLA and adopted by UNESCO as a major policy objective that:

- works towards the creation of a world wide system for the control and exchange of bibliographic information.
- Makes universally and promptly available, in a form of which is internationally acceptable, basic bibliographic data on all publications issued on all countries.

### **UNIVERSAL AVAILABILITY OF PUBLICATIONS (UAP)**

The Universal Availability of Publications was derived as a programme whose objective is to have the availability of published material to intending users wherever they are and whenever they need it. It targets having improvement of availability of publications at all levels of society from local, national to international. This was a precursor to having listings of all published material for ease of identification via national bibliographies and subsequently avail them for use.



## **8. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION MISSING-LINK**

It is noticeable that while the Kenya National Development Plan 1997-2001 provides for effective means of institutionalizing systematic flow of and access to information, the official 'ball-game' is distorted with bad refereeing. Most government information is confidential, not freely acquired, is inaccessible and remain untraceable.

The Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 63, 2005 provides for the right of citizen to access information held by the state is not practical due to official bureaucracy and typical public ownership syndrome. Lack of civic education and political interference led to the loss of this fundamental right through the first ever Kenyan referendum of November 2005.

The Books and Newspapers Act (revised 1987) provides for deposit and registration of books and newspapers published in Kenya. But the government killed the initiative by exempting its own publications. It is not therefore possible to know what government information is available through the Registrar's records. In the absence of their being recorded as part of Kenyan imprints, over 50 per cent of official information is just lost.

Although Kenya National Archives is one of the three depository centers and whose mandate is to document all Kenya government information, the financial implications in procurement of the information and human capacity to undertake proper acquisitions is a limiting factor.

The Universal Bibliographic Control Programme has seen the establishment of Kenya National Bibliography (KNB) whose centre is at Kenya National Library Services headquarters (KNLS). Although KNLS is one of the three depository centers and conveniently ideal for Kenya National Bibliography production, it is not able to receive all government information under the Books and Newspapers

Act due to legal exemption. The listing of government publications in KNB is a result of concerted efforts of acquisitions on the part of KNLS.

The Universal Availability Publications (UAP) provided for availing published material to intending users wherever they are and whenever they need it. The government information shows peculiarity that cannot conform to the UAP programme concept. As already noted, the information emanating from government lines cannot easily identify themselves by International Standard Book numbers and international Standard Serial Number. It is not a must for such publications to have ISBN and ISSN. Most of these publication are not listed in the Kenya National Bibliographic (KNB). Those documents containing official information are classified and are available in Kenya government offices and libraries to serve only those serving officer in government. Lastly accessing such literature in government institution is restrictive to the general public and although, where they can be sanctioned for public use, their organization for storage and access is another deterrent.

## **9. TRACING GOVERNMENT INFORMATION INSTITUTION**

Parliament – Parliamentary debates which are recorded in the Hansard.

Judiciary – contains Laws, court decision, recommendations of presidential commissions.

Ministries/Departments - administrative reports, five year plans, Parliamentary proceedings, Laws, statistics, general reports, Economic policy plans and maps/survey plans, extension services.

Local Authorities/Government – Council committee minutes, committee plans and reports, Laws, statistics.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL SERVICES**

Government Printers Catalogue – The commonly available catalogue on government publications is 1977 edition. Otherwise the Government Printers Bookshop is the current source.

Kenya Gazette - This is a weekly publication printed by the Government Printers. It tends to list all government publications published by the Government Printers.

Kenya National Archives Catalogue – Being one of the three centers under Books and Newspapers Depository Act, produces a listing of government publications within their collection – ‘A guide to the Kenya National Archives’.

Kenya National Bibliography (KNB) – It attempts to provide a complete listing of all Kenyan imprints. The information on government documents is not conclusive. It is an annual tool for books and periodicals.

Kenya Publishers Catalogue – which attempts to list all books produced by publishers and Kenya Publishers association.

The Library of Congress (Nairobi office) – it produces the Library of Congress list bimonthly with an annual supplement. It lists government publications too.

University of Nairobi – National Union Listing of Periodicals – it contains periodical holdings in libraries within East Africa.

African Bibliography – It is annual and edited by Hector Blackhurst.

The African Publishing Companion: a resource Guide by Hans Zell Publishing Consultants.

However, it must be noted that individual libraries and information centers produce guides to their collection which include:

- Accession lists
- Subject indexes
- Union catalogues listings
- General indexes/abstracts.

## **10. CHALLENGES**

To achieve solutions to the lead questions of this paper in bibliographic control services and accessing government in organized centers of knowledge, information systems and services, there is need to direct efforts in addressing the following challenges:

- (i) The right to access government information.
- (ii) Put in place an information service infrastructure that looks into telecommunication deployment, digital divide, hybrid libraries (internet based services) and creation of repositories.
- (iii) Creation of databases and development of content information.
- (iv) Placing of content on the Internet in local languages
- (v) The implicit cost in generating/creating knowledge and information, access and use.
- (vi) Developing village ICT centers / Telecentres.

## **11. WAY FORWARD**

IFLA in partnership with World Bank, UNESCO, CIDA, SIDA, USAID and national institutions to work out an achievable formulae and projects within sectoral programmes to jump-start activities that will help manage and access government information.

## **12. CONCLUSION**

There is need to incorporate government information in the information society concept as there is also great need to recognize that access to knowledge and information is fundamental.

There is need to recognize that government information is plenty yet scanty to those who need it.

Forming consortiums and collaborations with deployment of ICTs may provide solutions in the patent issues of information management and delivery. What is therefore required is creating an enabling environment for tracing, acquiring, organizing for access, retrieval and utilization of government information.

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