



SWALA Report 2014-2016

Compiled by Jabu Hlophe – SWALA President

1. Introduction

On behalf of the Swaziland Library and Information Association (SWALA) and its members, the President of SWALA wishes to express her gratitude for SCECSAL members for having graced the occasion of SCECSAL XXII, 2016 in Swaziland.

Below is the report on SWALA activities and projects during the past two years.

2. Progress Report

2.1 Strategic Plan

SWALA now has a strategic plan for the period 2016 – 2020 and the activities are aligned to the national development agenda (vision 2022) and sustainable development goals. The strategic plan was developed with financial and technical assistance from the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) through the Building Strong Library Associations (BSLA) project. The executive committee started the process of developing the strategic plan at a special meeting that was held on 14 October 2014 at UNISWA Luyengo Campus. A task team was put in place to lead the consultative meetings which culminated in a draft document. Two consultants from IFLA, Mr. John Tsebe and Dr. Kay

Raseroka provided technical support to the strategic planning task team. The constructive criticism and feedback received from members was not only informative, but also played a crucial role in shaping the strategy. The draft was presented at the AGM on 18 September 2015 where it was discussed and unanimously adopted. The strategic plan is being implemented and most of the activities are on track.

2.2 SCECSAL XXII

The conference has formed the core activity of SWALA in the past two years, with the previous year being dominated by planning activities for the conference. The theme for the conference was “Digital Transformation and the changing role of libraries and Information Centres in the sustainable development of Africa”. The attendance at the conference was more than 331 participants from SADC and other countries across the globe. Among participants there was IFLA general secretary, MS Jennifer Nicholson.

The conference would not have been a success without the tireless efforts of the executive committee, the organising committee, sub-committees and volunteers. The organising committee deserves specific mention here

for their tremendous application of effort which is evidenced by the successful conference we are about to conclude. The members are listed below:

SCECSAL XXII, 2016 Organising Committee

Chairperson - Faith Mkhonta

Vice Chairperson - John Anbu

Secretary - Dudu Dlamini

Treasurer - Nkosinathi Dlamini

Publicity - Sanele Dlamini

The conference has revitalized SWALA and we are hoping to keep the momentum going as we endeavor to continue with the implementation of our strategy.

2.3 IFLA 2015 Conference

I would like to congratulate LIASA for hosting a successful IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Cape Town. Swaziland was able to send a delegation of 15 officers to attend the conference. One of the outcomes of the congress was that the ministers and country representatives committed themselves to provide the necessary resources for the development of African libraries to respond to modern day challenges and provide

access to modern technologies. They further committed themselves to encourage the use of e-books and virtual libraries more effectively to facilitate cultural and scientific exchange and encourage a culture of reading in Africa.

2.4 eBook Readers

In October 2015, a Book Reading Club was launched in the Nhlanguano Public Library and received 15 e-book readers (Kindle Fire HD) with titles. This technology ushers our young book club members to the latest technology and is equipping them with the necessary skills to make use of the gadgets.

2.5 Services for People with Special Needs

In order to ensure that library services are accessible to people with special needs, assistive technologies were deployed in Mbabane and Manzini public libraries with financial support from the American Embassy and Swaziland Revenue Authority. The equipment in each library includes personal computers with JAWS screen reading software and Zoom Text, a braille embosser, an OpenBook Scanner, headphones and braille material. The equipment is being used by users with visual impairment to access information resources. The Swaziland

Association for Visually Impaired Persons (SAVIP) is also using the equipment to train its members on how to use the technologies. It is envisaged that the trainings will be conducted throughout the country.

2.6 Other Developments

The Ministry of ICT is working on improving the ICT infrastructure that is being used to expand communications, speed up the delivery of services and provide access to crucial information particularly in rural communities. In the current financial year, the ministry will develop a national broadband policy and implementation plan to facilitate universally available and affordable internet services. Government has embarked on a program to rehabilitate public libraries and has been concluded in Mbabane (Headquarters), Manzini, Pigg's Peak and Simunye. An automated library management system sourced from UKS will be launched in May 2016 in all public libraries.

3. Challenges

We are still faced with some challenges. To highlight a few, resources available to libraries are dwindling, trainings on contemporary issues in the profession are inadequate and some critical pieces of legislation are outdated (e.g.

Copyright Act 1912 and Legal Deposit Act). The SWALA strategic plan has some strategies to address these challenges.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen, I would like thank all sponsors contributed towards hosting this extremely important conference. May God almighty add more in their coffers and sustain their businesses for more years to come.

I thank you.