

# Archival landscape in Eastern and Southern Africa

Nathan Mnjama

*Department of Library and Information Studies, University of Botswana,  
Gaborone, Botswana*

Archival  
Landscape

457

---

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This article seeks to answer one basic question: “Are archival institutions in the Eastern and Southern African region developing, stagnating or receding backwards?”

**Design/methodology/approach** – This article reviews the state of archives and records management in the Eastern and Southern African region. It argues that many archival services in the region have gone through a period of retardation and are in dire need of revitalization.

**Findings** – The article indicates that the challenges of managing electronic records are enormous and that unless measures are taken the region stands to lose much of its valuable historical and cultural heritage.

**Originality/value** – The article suggests various ways of revitalizing archival services in the Eastern and Southern African region.

**Keywords** Records management, Archiving, Central and East Africa, Southern Africa

**Paper type** Research paper

Received 9 December  
2004

Revised 21 March 2005  
Accepted 15 July 2005

## 1. Introduction

In 1986 Anne Thurston the director and founder of the International Records Management Trust a non-profit organization based in the UK and Kelvin Smith from the then Public Records (now the National Archives of the UK) on behalf of the School of Library Archives and Information Studies, University College London made extensive tours to nine of the national archives in Eastern and Southern Africa. The purpose of their visit was to assess current training needs in each region in order to provide a syllabus that takes full account of local needs and accomplishes local initiatives (Thurston and Smith, 1986, p. 1). At the end of their mission they came to the conclusion that:

Development in the region is very varied, from the long established and highly developed institution in Zimbabwe to those facing severe difficulties, notably the Uganda National Archives . . . In many cases the archives are operating with limited resources which make effective development difficult, if not impossible. For the most part they are understaffed for their duties, and in some cases the salaries are so low commensurate with the responsibilities that it is difficult to retain staff. In some cases as in Tanzania, staff numbers have been cut back drastically due to inflation. Over half the archives are under-equipped. Tanzania, Zanzibar, Lesotho, Uganda and Zambia have no working microfilm equipment. . . Lesotho, Uganda and Botswana have no vehicles of their own, while Tanzania's and Zambia's vehicles are in serious state of disrepair. Almost none of Archives have working facilities for fumigating documents, and only Zimbabwe has a fully operative conservation unit (Thurston and Smith, 1986, pp. 1-2).

According to Peter Mazikana (1999), a records management consultant based in Zimbabwe, archives and records management services in Africa are ineffective and inefficient. That was the last survey carried out in the Eastern and Southern African region relating to the state of archival services in the region. This article examines the development of archival services in Eastern and Southern African Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) since 1986 and highlights the main issues facing the profession. It seeks to demonstrate if at all any progress has been made at all in the development of archives and records management. The article argues that although considerable progress has been made in several areas, some archival institutions have recorded negative progress.

## **2. Methodology**

This study covers the following countries: Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, Seychelles, Tanzania and South Africa, Zanzibar, Zambia, which are active members of ESARBICA. Data for the study were collected through mailed questionnaires to directors of national archives in the region, from discussions and correspondence with directors on national archives and practising archivists in the region. A review of country reports submitted at ESARBICA meetings was also undertaken. Besides these data collection tools, some information was obtained through visits undertaken to national archives by the author between 1998-2003 to the national archives of Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique, The Republic of South Africa and the Seychelles. Although Uganda is not a paid up member of ESARBICA, nonetheless, it was included in the study as it falls within the region and there are professional colleagues working there with whom I have had numerous discussions relating to the development of archival services in their country. The study does not include Angola a Portuguese-speaking country and a member of ESARBICA as the author had not been able to establish any contacts with practising archivists there. The section that follows provides a brief description of archives and records management developments in each of the ESARBICA member states.

## **3. Archival services in ESARBICA region**

A survey of archival services in the region paints a picture of successes and failures for the period under review. A review of literature on obstacles hindering access to archival collections in Africa by Henry Kemoni and others indicates that these obstacles can be grouped into two areas: professional problems and technical problems. Their study argued that a number of archival institutions faced some of the following problems:

- inability by researchers to use archival information;
- inadequate finding aids;
- lack of recognition by national governments of the role played by archival institutions;
- outdated archival legislation which impacts negatively on access to the collections;
- inadequate number of professional archivists;

- lack of adequate archival training schools;
- poor systems of archival arrangement and description;
- understaffing of archival services;
- poor storage facilities for records; and
- inadequate retrieval tools.

The same study identified the technical problems afflicting archival institutions to be non or low utilization of information technology, difficulties in identifying appropriate hardware and software, and untrained staff in the field of information communication technologies (ICTs) (Kemoni *et al.*, 2003). Khamis Khamis an archivist from Zanzibar National Archives had, five years earlier, singled out backlog accumulations as the major problem facing African archives, arguing that “the overwhelming problem facing national archives in Africa and indeed in our region is how to deal with the backlog accumulation of records” (Khamis, 1999). While most of the countries surveyed in this current study experience these problems the degree at which they experience them varies greatly from one country to another.

Some archivists in the region have attributed the problems inflicting archival institutions in the region to the placement of these departments within government ministries. For this reason, a survey was carried out to establish whether there was any real justification as to why this should be so. The placement of national archives within government ministries revealed great variations. Some national archives such as those of Botswana, Kenya and Zimbabwe are placed under the Ministry of Home Affairs whereas in Namibia the national archives are under the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. In Tanzania the national archives fall under the Civil Service Department. In South Africa the national archives fall under the Ministry of Arts and Culture. It is only in Swaziland where the national archives fall under the Ministry Tourism, Communication and Environment. In Lesotho the national archives are a small component of the Department of Culture, which fall under the Ministry of Tourism, Sports and Culture. Although the survey did not reveal that there were any real disadvantages in being placed under those ministries, experience gained in other commonwealth countries such as Ghana and The Gambia indicate that where the national archives are placed in a ministry without wide ministerial powers their operations are bound to suffer.

The extent to which archival institutions are managing non-current records was yet another area this study investigated. The results obtained indicate that while some archival institutions in South Africa, Kenya, Botswana, Zanzibar, Tanzania and Zambia have made considerable progress in managing their archival heritage, the same cannot be said of Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Uganda. For instance a report to the ESARBICA board meeting held in Zanzibar in 1999 by the director of Malawi National Archives revealed that “inadequate funding for most of our services has made the institution stagnant” (Lwesya, 1999, p. 4). Malawi is not the only country that has experienced zero growth in archives and records services in the region. The section that follows looks at specific cases to demonstrates how archival services have fared during the period under discussion.



*a) Tanzania*

The Tanzania National Archives were first established in 1962 and had acquired vast quantities of archival materials which were well organized with reading facilities provided. However, in the early 1980s the national archives were in a poor state of decline which Nyirenda (1994, p. 116) in his article "Archives administration in Tanzania: *quo vadis*" attributed to economic, shortage of manpower and poor management. The author was amazed when he first visited Tanzania in 1991, to see archival records dumped and exposed to all sorts of hazards at an old Amani Cinema Hall in the heart of Dar es Salaam. The poor state of records keeping continued until the mid-1990s when the UK Department for International Development engaged the International Records Management Trust to advise the Government of Tanzania on efficient and effective records management systems as part of the wider administrative reform programmes. Since then, the situation has remarkably improved. Several workshops and training programmes were introduced, registries decongested and records appraisal work at the National Archives was carried out in order to create space and improve finding aids. A new records and archival legislation has also been enacted giving the national archives wider powers to oversee records management activities from the time of records creation to their preservation stage (Mliyansi, 2002).

Moreover, as a means of strengthening the Department and giving it greater visibility and wider inter-ministerial powers to oversee records management activities throughout the civil service, the national archives was transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Civil Service Department under the Office of the President. This effectively brought the management of all registries under the umbrella of the national archives. New strategies for managing personnel and financial record systems were introduced including the records retention schedules and other records procedures manuals. A new scheme of service for records managers has been adopted and an in-service training programme for serving records officers leading to a records vocational qualification developed. Through the project several officers were sent for training at the University College London and taken on tours to Ghana where similar records management initiatives had taken place.

Another development that has taken place during the period under review relates to the management of the records of the former East African community held at the Arusha Records Centre. Arusha Records Centre holds the records of the defunct East African Community which are of major interest to the three East African partner states of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. These records, which had hitherto received minimum attention, were appraised, listed and boxed and made available for consultation by researchers[1]. In summary it can safely be argued that large amounts of money and effort have been invested in archives and records management activities in Tanzania. However, much of this work was donor-driven. The onus is now on the local archivists and records managers to maintain the revamped archives and records systems and ensure that things will never will never return to the situation that prevailed before.

*b) Botswana*

Botswana prides itself as being the first country in the region to recognize that effective management of archives must embrace the entire life cycle of records. Whereas in many of the countries surveyed there is still debate on whether national archives

should manage registries, in Botswana, the National Archives have been managing all the registries since 1994. The challenges of managing registries country-wide have been many, but Botswana has demonstrated that this can be done. Two records centres have been opened in the country, and plans are under way to develop a third one soon. Meanwhile, at the headquarters construction work has already begun to extend the archives building in order to create additional storage and office space as well as increasing conservation and restoration facilities. Botswana has also realized that in order to make this programme successful, there is need to second qualified and competent records managers to all key ministries. These records managers are expected to influence decisions relating to records management at the policy level.

Although considerable progress has been made in the management of current records, archival activities and particularly appraisal of non-current records still lag behind. This situation was best summed by the director of the Botswana National Archives and Records Services (1999, p. 2) when she said:

[...] the appraisal of records is somewhat suffering to the advantage of records management since clients demands have to be met. Very little has gone on in terms of transferring appraised records to the archives section.

Botswana has also witnessed the opening of two commercial records centres and a growing demand for compliance with ISO 15489 standards for managing records by quasi-governmental and private organizations. In comparison to Tanzania where much of the work on records management was donor driven and closely linked to government-wide administrative reforms, this has not been the case in Botswana where much of the initiative has come from within.

#### *c) Kenya*

For a long time Kenya was seen as a success story in the management of archives and records services within the eastern and southern African region. With its headquarters in Nairobi and five regional records centres located in Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Kakamega and Kisumu, Kenya continues to be one of the countries with the best archives and records management infrastructure in the region. In the late 1970s Kenya National Archives went through a period of confusion when it sought to include among its operations activities that were non-core to archives and records management activities[2]. Some of these activities included the collection of oral traditions and the care of sites and monuments. Following recommendations from external consultants, the national archives were restructured and its operations were streamlined. Since then the institution has made tremendous progress in managing its historical records as well as instituting an effective records management programme in the country.

Although Kenya National Archives is not directly responsible for the management of registries, recently a significant number of executive officers (mainly non-graduates), with very many years of experience were re-designated as records managers in their respective ministries. This process has now established a direct link between the national archives and records creating departments and ministries resulting in better management of records throughout their life cycle. The National Archives has also participated in initiatives towards the formulation of an ICT policy that seeks to address issues pertaining to the management of electronic records.



Among archival institutions in the region, Kenya prides itself as being one of the countries to embark on formal training of archivists at different levels. Training of archivists at certificate and diploma level in archives and records management goes back to 1979 when the course was first offered at the Kenya Polytechnic. Today similar courses are offered at the Kenya Polytechnic, Sigalagala Polytechnic and the School of Professional Studies in Nairobi. A four-year degree programme is offered at the Faculty of Information Sciences, Moi University. It can therefore be concluded that Kenya is on the right course towards managing its archival heritage.

#### **4. Technological developments in ESARBICA region**

Despite the fact many national archives are experiencing major challenges in managing paper-based records, they are now faced with new challenges of managing records arising out of the adoption of ICTs by their governments. A recent regional workshop on e-government readiness in the Southern African region held in April 2004 at Gaborone, Botswana revealed that while many governments had already embarked on e-governments, the underlying issues relating to e-records readiness had not been addressed and many governments were in danger of losing valuable data and information. Similar sentiments had been expressed by directors of national archives from the Commonwealth when they gathered in Johannesburg for a conference on Evidence Based Governance in the Electronic Age sponsored by the World Bank and the International Records Management Trust in 2002.

Although ICT usage and adoption in many archival institutions in the region is still in its infancy, archival institutions being the main players in the management of records are nevertheless still expected to contribute effectively towards the management of electronic records. A survey carried out by Ndiroyi Mutiti, the then director of Zambia National Archives, revealed that "very little had been done to develop electronic records management programmes in the region". The major observations that were made in her report showed that (Mutiti, 2001):

- the most common application of computers was in the area of word processing;
- seven national archives in the region had embarked on automation of their archival services;
- no digitization programme had been launched in all the national archives;
- only one national archives had put in place rules and regulations to govern the use of electronic records in the public sector;
- lack of legal or administrative framework within which to operate an electronic records management programme;
- several national archives had their own local area networks (LANs);
- only three institutions were engaged in the acquisition of electronic records; and
- several archival institutions were linked to the internet and some had embarked on programmes to create their own web sites.

Ndiroyi Mutiti identified the major constraints hampering the development of electronic records management programmes as lack of adequate technical expertise resulting in archivists and records managers focusing on the management of paper-based records at the expense of electronic records and failure by national governments to understand

the role of national archival institutions in managing records including e-records. Many of these challenges are yet to be resolved. From the author's observations many of the problems relating to the management of electronic records stem from the fact more than often governments adopt different ICTs without adequate consultation with nation archives on how best to manage records that will emanate from these technologies. This trend has to be reversed otherwise much of the archival heritage created electronically will be lost.

Despite the fact many archival institutions are faced with major challenges of managing paper-based records, yet many archival institutions in the region aspire to transform their institutions and join the rest of the world in providing access through the use of modern ICTs such as the internet. Digitization or migration of information from fragile archival materials electronic formats still remains a dream to many archival institutions in the region.

The survey also revealed that several countries have begun to publicize their holding through the internet. The following national archives have already created their own home pages:

- Botswana - National Archives and Records Services (Gaborone) – [www.gov.bw/government/ministry\\_of\\_labour\\_and\\_home\\_affairs.html#national\\_archives\\_and\\_records](http://www.gov.bw/government/ministry_of_labour_and_home_affairs.html#national_archives_and_records)
- Kenya – National Archives (Nairobi) – [www.kenyarchives.go.ke](http://www.kenyarchives.go.ke)
- Malawi – National Archives (Zomba) – <http://chambo.sdn.org.mw/ruleoflaw/archives/index.html>
- Mozambique – Arquivo Histórico (Maputo) – [www.ahm.uem.mz](http://www.ahm.uem.mz)
- Namibia – National Archives (Windhoek) – <http://witbooi.natarch.mec.gov.na/>
- South Africa – National Archives (Pretoria) – [www.national.archives.gov.za](http://www.national.archives.gov.za)
- Swaziland – National Archives (Lobamba) – [www.gov.sz/home.asp?pid=2002](http://www.gov.sz/home.asp?pid=2002)
- Tanzania (United Republic) – Zanzibar Archives – [www.zanzibar-archive.org/content.htm](http://www.zanzibar-archive.org/content.htm)
- National Archives of Zimbabwe – [www.gta.gov.zw/](http://www.gta.gov.zw/) (Unesco, 2002)[3].

##### 5. Preservation and conservation of archival materials

Perhaps one of the areas where archival under-development can easily be noticed in many of the archival institutions surveyed relates to the provision of archival conservation and restoration facilities. The development of preservation and conservation facilities has been hampered by lack of facilities as well as lack of trained staff. For a considerable number of years, Zimbabwe was known for its excellent conservation and reprographic facilities. However, with the current political and economic crisis in the country, much of the work on preservation and conservation has virtually come to a standstill. Kenya has rather been fortunate in that with the support of donor agencies such as Unesco, it has been able to mount some training programmes for conservators. It has also tried to maintain its conservation facilities, but a lack of specialist training in this area has reduced the type of conservation work that can be carried out. Swaziland on the other hand provides a typical example of the state of conservation activities in the region. In her country report to ESARBICA Board meeting held in Pretoria in July 1997, the director of Swaziland National Archives



(1997) lamented that “presently no repair work is undertaken and a lot of records are in danger of falling apart”. Much of the work now being carried out has been restricted to microfilming and binding. The only other country where some excellent work in conservation and preservation is being done is in South Africa.

### **6. Management of human resources in archival institutions**

Perhaps one of the challenges that has persistently been experienced by national archives in the region is that of staffing. As early as 1984, Mwiyeriwa (1984, p. 1) the then national archivist of Malawi had observed that “a cursory glance at the archival scene in Eastern and Southern Africa would convince any observer of the serious case of understaffing”. A survey of changes at senior management level in ESARBICA reveals some very interesting findings. In Zimbabwe, Mrs Ageline Kamba a well-known and articulate director left the service on promotion. In Botswana Mrs Masisi Lekaukau was elevated to the position of deputy permanent secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs and her portfolio included overseeing activities at the Botswana National Archives. In Malawi, Charles Malunga left to join one of the Human Rights Organizations, while in Tanzania Mr Karugila retired from the public after serving as Director of the National Archives for several Years. Zambia too was not spared as the Mrs Ndiroyi Mutiti who had excelled herself as a distinguished director and member of ESARBICA was transferred to head the Immigration Department. Ms Marie Olivier, the director of the National Archives of South Africa retired and was replaced by Dr Graham Dominy who joined the Department from our sister profession – the National Museums. Joachen Kutzner, the director of Namibia National Archives retired from public service towards the end of 2002. Musila Musembi, a long time serving director with Kenya National Archives and Documentation Services recently retired after heading that institution for over 20 years. All these directors served their national archives at very critical stages when administrative and structural adjustments programmes were at their peak and when budgetary allocations for archival programmes were on the decline.

The survey results further revealed that trained staff continue to move from national archival institutions to more attractive and lucrative positions in the private sector while others opt to take general administrative jobs. For instance, in Botswana more than five trained archivists have left the national archives to join government corporations. Like all the other archival institutions in the region, Kenya National Archives and Zimbabwe National Archives have not been spared from brain drain that has seen many of their trained personnel moving either into the private sector or into other non-records management jobs. Unfortunately this migration of archival experts is taking place at a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult for national archives to provide training overseas.

### **7. Archival legislation in ESARBICA region**

Archival legislation plays a crucial role in the management of public sector records as it provides the legal framework under which the national archives operates. For this reason, the study sought to establish if archival legislation in the region was in line with archival developments in the region. A survey of archival legislation in the region revealed that except for Tanzania and Uganda which have enacted new legislation



---

enabling national archives services to manage records from the time of creation to their ultimate disposition, most the other national archives were still operating under archival legislation modelled along the UK model. The greatest weakness that was noted from the responses received was the failure of archival legislation to address issues relating to electronic records. Another weakness observed from the responses and literature surveyed was the role of the archives advisory councils, many of which were virtually ineffective.

The Uganda National Archives Act as well as the new Tanzania National Archives Act were all drafted with the assistance of the International Records Management Trust, a records management consulting firm based in the UK. However, the National Archives Act of South Africa does not strictly conform to the British model as it was largely influenced by Australian and Canadian thought. No substantial amendments have been made to the archives acts except in some countries where the closure period for records has been reduced from 30 years to 20 years. Moreover, a review of the literature further indicates that except for South Africa where a Freedom of Access to Information Act has passed, no meaningful effort has been made to introduce such legislation elsewhere in the region. If the nations of this region are to become more democratic and accountable to their citizens, there is dire need for them to formulate laws and policies that guarantee the nationals the right of access to vast quantities of government held information. There is therefore need to review archival legislation in the region and specifically those areas of archival legislation which restricts access to information.

### **8. Archival buildings and facilities**

Most of the responses received from national archives indicated that inadequate storage facilities was one of the critical factors affecting the transfer of public records to the national archives. In Namibia construction of a new National Archives/National Library Building began in 1997. Zambia National Archives has had its building extended while in Botswana construction work is currently going on to expand the existing Botswana National Archives and Records Services building. All other national archives reported no new buildings or expansion of their storage facilities. The only expansion that was reported by some national archives was the opening of regional records centres, that were almost full as soon as they were opened. This situation is unlikely to change in the near future as most governments in the region have rated archival services to be areas of low priority when it comes to national development projects. Perhaps the only way of creating some space in the already occupied areas is to re-appraise some of the collections that have been occupying valuable space and yet are of little research value.

As indicated above, a lack of adequate storage facilities is one of the major hindrances to the growth of archival services in the region. This problem is further compounded by the fact that in the past many archival institutions accepted unappraised collections or materials with very little information/research value into their custody. The challenge now is how to re-appraise these collections and at the same time deal with backlog accumulations awaiting appraisal in the ministries and departments.

### **9. Management of audio-visual materials**

Of all the archival materials available in the region, perhaps the most neglected archival resource are audio-visual collections which remain unprocessed and hence inaccessible to researchers. A survey carried out by Matangira (2003) from Zimbabwe National Archives covering the Eastern and Southern African region indicates that most archival institutions have done very little to develop their audiovisual archiving programmes. Although some countries such as Zimbabwe, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia have acquired vast quantities of audio-visual materials in the form of films, photographs, phonographic discs, videos, maps and microforms, these are not managed adequately due to a lack of specialized equipment, training and inadequate storage facilities. In South Africa, the management of audiovisual collections is directly under the national archives, but in most member states, audio-visual records are still held by the various departments such as mapping and surveys, radio broadcasting and television stations. Owing to a lack of trained archivists in the field of audio-visual materials, there is strong evidence to suggest that virtually all the national archives in the region are ill-equipped for the management of audio-visual materials. Despite these limitations national archives such as Zambia have proceeded to collect audiovisuals[3]. The author does not foresee a situation in the immediate future when national archives will be endowed with facilities and trained personnel for managing audio-visual archives. This is a view that is shared by Hamooya (2003), the acting director of Zambia National Archives who has rightly observed that "financial constraints make extremely difficult to convert all old holdings to modern storage media and to keep abreast with technological changes". Perhaps the way forward is to declare institutions holding audio-visual collection places of deposit for archival purposes as long as these places meet some minimum archival standards for the storage of audio-visual materials. Therefore, there is need for the respective departments of information to be declared as places of deposit for sound recordings as provided for in most of the archival legislation in the region.

### **10. Restitution of archival claims**

Despite the fact that many archival institutions in the region are unable to manage their archival collections effectively, yet they all aspire to regain materials relating to their countries held in western capitals. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the issue of archival claims (commonly known by many archivists as migrated archives) was very popular in the Eastern and Central African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives meetings. During that period national archival institutions undertook visits to metropolitan cities especially to UK to locate records held at the Public Records Office and other records offices in the UK. For instance, soon after attaining independence, Zimbabwe dispatched one of its national archives staff to London to identify Zimbabwean Records held in the UK. It was also common practice for African students studying at the School of Library, Archives and Information Studies, University College London to undertake practical sessions at the Public Records Office UK listing records relating to their nations. The actual acquisition of copies of records held in European cities has been very slow. Apart from Kenya which had one of its archivists based in London for ten years acquiring copies of official records from the Public Record Office (the national archives for England, Wales and the UK)



---

and other repositories, the other ESARBICA member states have only carried out surveys and microfilmed very few items[4].

Archivists in the region can count on the support of their governments in realizing their goal of gaining access to archival holding relating to their countries held in western capitals. During recent meeting for ministers responsible for archival heritage held in Cape Town, South Africa a declaration was signed which in part states “the Africans have lacked access to records created in colonial capitals about African history and that this has resulted in the disempowerment of the African peoples”. The declaration recommended that “all the archival material taken from or within Africa in whatever from should be repatriated to countries of origin” (ESARBICA, 2003).

Archival claims have not only been restricted to those records held in European and American cities. Within the region archival claims are known to exists between several ESARBICA member states. For instance, soon after Namibia gained independence, negotiations were made to have certain records held in the Republic of South Africa returned to Namibia. Namibian records were satisfactorily repatriated back to Namibia, something that had not happened before in the region. Although South Africa was keen to repatriate Namibian Records back, it insisted on retaining microfilm copies of the same. Namibia is not the only country to have archival claims against South Africa. Botswana Lesotho and Swaziland all had their High Commissioners based in South Africa and some of their records are still held there. A lasting solution is yet to be is yet to be found relating to this issue.

Within the Eastern and Southern African region, the issues of records pertaining to migrated archives located within the region has not been forgotten. During the 16th biannual conference of the Eastern and Southern African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives held July 2001 at Harare, the question of records relating to African liberation movements was raised. This issue was recently reiterated by Dominy (2003, p. 4) the director of South Africa National Archives at Maputo when he said:

I could not stand here today in front of you if it had not been for the success of the struggle. All the frontline states hosted South African exiles and supported the armed struggle, the economic struggle, the diplomatic struggle, and the cultural struggle. On our continent the struggle was coordinated by the Liberation Committee of the OAU. The archives of this committee are in Tanzania and I believe that they are our common heritage. I would like to suggest that ESARBICA adopts a project to properly archive these records, make them accessible and to copy them to the other countries that benefited from the work of the committee: Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and south Africa.

To date, no conclusive decisions have been made regarding these records. Archivists are however, urged to take practical steps in ensuring that these records are identified, listed and if possible proper arrangements are made for their housing. The question of whether records of these movements should be treated as migrated archives or they should be incorporated into the holding of archival institutions where they are located needs to be addressed in the region. The author is, however, of the opinion that there is a moral obligation on the part of the present custodians of such records to have them repatriated back to the countries where the freedom fighters came from.

### **11. Archives and records management in the private sector**

The efforts of preserving Africa's rich archival heritage within the private sector is also an areas that this study sought to investigate. The results of the study indicate that the private sector is yet to fully participate in the collection and preservation of records and archives. Brad Abbot a records manager with Umgeni Water in South Africa has observed that "within the private sector there is a marked lack of awareness of records management in general and of electronic records management in general" (Abbot, 2001). A similar study conducted in Tanzania by Chachaze (2005, p. v) revealed that many companies in Southern Tanzania were not managing their records effectively. The above situation is true for the rest of Africa where the development of archives and records management has largely lagged behind. Due to various reasons including the need for ISO certification and the need to satisfy local regulatory requirements, several institutions such as Bank of Botswana, Bank of Zambia, University of Botswana, University of the Witwatersrand, University of Nairobi, Fort Hare University, Housing Finance Company of Kenya, Botswana Telecommunications, Water Utilities Corporation of Botswana, Botswana Meat Commission etc. have been forced to adopt records management practices. There is strong evidence to suggest that many more organizations will adopt ISO 15489 records management standards as the only way of continuing to trade with the Western world.

Finally, the study has further revealed that several companies have been formed to address records management issues in the region. Although some of these companies have recruited professional archivists and records managers, there are others who are out to make quick money from the lack skilled records managers particularly those with competencies in managing electronic records. Therefore there is a need to be on the look out for those who are out to exploit archival services without offering any meaningful services or lasting solutions.

### **12. The way forward**

A survey of archival institutions in ESARBICA region has revealed that many of these institutions are faced with many challenges ranging from inadequate funding, lack of training, poor storage facilities, ineffective and outdated archival legislation, shortage of qualified and competent staff and challenges brought about by the introduction and adoption of modern ICTs. Faced with these challenges, is there hope for archival institutions in the eastern and southern African region? Will these archival institutions cope with these challenges and if they are to do so what options do they have? The discussion that follows outlines some of the ways which can be explored in either enable the archival institutions survive the turbulent period they are going through or to enable themselves to re-invent themselves into vibrant government institutions serving their citizens effectively and efficiently.

First, there is need to re-assess the placement of national archives within the government administrative arrangements. As indicated elsewhere in this study, many archival institutions are placed under ministries which lack wide ministerial powers and thus rendering them ineffective. In order for archival institutions to become more visible, they need to be placed in ministries with wide ministerial powers such as the Office of the President.

Second, there is need for archival institutions to re-invent themselves from their traditional cultural role as custodians of archaic historical materials to true information



management institutions. This calls for retaining and equipping of archivists and records managers with skills and competencies that will enable them to operate effectively using modern ICTs. There is also need for greater collaborative work between archivists, records managers and other information profession providers such as librarians and computer scientists on issues relating to information collection, processing storage and dissemination.

Third, there is need to enact new archival legislation that is in line with modern trends particularly on issues pertaining greater access to information such as Freedom of Information and the removal of all laws that restrict or hinder full access to information. The removal of such regulations as the official secrets needs also to be abolished.

Fourth, the need for involvement and engagement with local communities can not be overstated. Archivists and records managers need to work with local communities especially in the collection, storage and dissemination of indigenous knowledge that will supplement the information contained in colonial records. Moreover, it is also imperative that national archives takes interest in issues affecting day-to-day operations of their governments and to be in the forefront is assisting users in dealing with issues of democracy, accountability and protection of citizens' rights through the provision of timely, reliable and verifiable information.

Finally, there is need to develop vibrant national records management professional associations within the ESARBICA member states. Except for South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia, where national professional records management association exist, the rest of the member states lack such bodies which regulate the conduct of records management professionals. These associations may be used as forums of exchange of information and also serve as lobbying groups for support to national archives. Above all, national archives must seek new ways of marketing themselves and their products.

#### Notes

1. Details on the work carried out on the Records of the former East African Community at Arusha can be found at Mnjama (2000).
2. For a comprehensive report on the situation at the Kenya National Archives see Walford (1982).
3. For further information regarding the management of audiovisual materials in Zambia National Archives see Hamooya (2003).
4. For instance, in 1997 it was reported that Zanzibar had received a grant of \$20,000 from Unesco towards acquiring microfilm copies from the UK "Zanzibar National Archives strategic planning report (10 yrs period)" (1999, p. 2).

#### References

- Abbot, B. (2001), "The state of electronic records management in Africa: an overview", *ESARBICA Journal*, Vol. 20.
- Botswana National Archives and Records Services (1999), *Country Report for Botswana for the Period 1998/99*, report submitted to ESARBICA Board Meeting, Zanzibar, 1 July.
- Chachaze, B.L. (2005), "Developing a model for a corporate records management system with special refrence to sustainability reporting in Iringa region, Tanzania", PhD thesis, University of Natal, Durban.

- Director of Swaziland National Archives (1997), "Swaziland National Archives", country report presented to the ESARBICA Board Meeting, Pretoria, July, unpublished.
- Dominy, G. (2003), "Accountability, culture, heritage and training: towards regional co-operation regarding our common archival heritage; suggestions for a framework of collaboration", paper presented at XVII Bi-annual Eastern and Southern African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) General Conference on Society and Good Governance, Maputo, 22-26 July.
- Eastern and Southern African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) (2003), *Declaration on Archives in Africa by Ministers Responsible for Archival Heritage*, ESARBICA, Cape Town, 20 October.
- Hamooya, C. (2003), "Overview of the National Archives of Zambia audiovisual collections", paper presented at the FIAT/IFTA Workshop, Lusaka, 8-11 April, available at: [www.fiatifta.org/aboutfiat/members/archive/zambia\\_nat\\_arch.html](http://www.fiatifta.org/aboutfiat/members/archive/zambia_nat_arch.html) (accessed 8 November 2004).
- Kemoni, H.N., Wamukoya, J. and Kpilang'at, J. (2003), "Obstacles to utilization of information held archival institutions: a review of literature", *Records Management Journal*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 40-1.
- Khamis, K. (1999), "Making the transition: from backlog accumulation to a new order", paper presented at XV Bi-annual Eastern and Southern African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) General Conference, Zanzibar, 26-30 July.
- Lwesya, K.L.K.A. (1999), "National Archives of Malawi country report: 1998-1999", report submitted to ESARBICA Board Meeting, Zanzibar.
- Matangira, V. (2003), "Audiovisual archiving in the third world – problems and prospects: an analysis of audiovisual archiving in ESARBICA region", *ESARBICA Journal*, Vol. 22.
- Mazikana, P.C. (1999), "Editorial", *ESARBICA Journal*, Vol. 18, pp. 4-6.
- Mlyiyansi, P. (2002), "Tanzania passes a new records and archives law", *New Utumishi: Journal of the Tanzania Public Service Reform Programme*, No. 2, pp. 4-7.
- Mnjama, N. (2000), "The records of the East African community", *African Research and Documentation*, Vol. 82, pp. 3-12.
- Mutiti, N. (2001), "The challenges of managing electronic records in ESARBICA region", *ESARBICA Journal*, Vol. 20, pp. 58-9.
- Mwiyeriwa, S. (1984), *The Future of Archival Training in the ECARBICA Region*, Zomba.
- Nyirenda, H.D. (1994), "Archives administration in Tanzania: *quo vadis?*", *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*, Vol. 4 No. 2, p. 116.
- Thurston, A. and Smith, K. (1986), *Report on a Visit to National Archives I: East and Southern African Region*, School of Library, Archives and Information Studies, London.
- Unesco (2002), "Unesco archives portal: an international gateway to information for archivists and archives users", available at: [www.unesco.org/webworld/portal\\_archives/pages/Archives/National\\_Archives/](http://www.unesco.org/webworld/portal_archives/pages/Archives/National_Archives/) (accessed 8 November 2004).
- Walford, J. (1982), "Review of the Kenya National Archives", Unesco serial No. FMR/PGI/82/147, Unesco, Paris, unpublished.
- "Zanzibar National Archives strategic planning report (10 yrs) period" (1999), report submitted to ESARBICA Board, Pretoria.