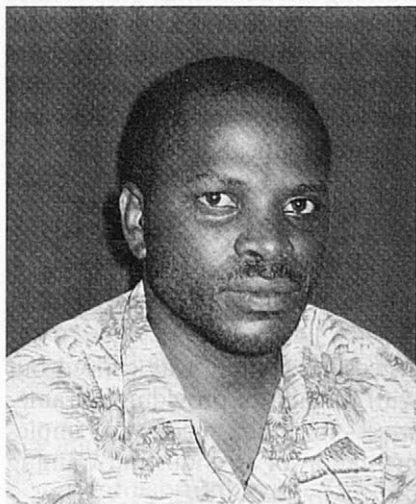


# Information Manpower Capacity Building for Decentralization in Uganda through Industrial Training

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## Introduction

Information is a key resource for development. Information can be kept in registries, records centres, archives, libraries, resource centres, research centres, documentation centres and in public offices. Information is contained in different types of media including paper (records, documents, text), audio-visual, computer based, etc. A lot of information is being generated every other day in public offices in Uganda and it is likely to increase with continued empowerment of the population. There is a need for manpower to organize and process information for timely and optimum utilization. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda<sup>1</sup> provides a National Objective of National Sovereignty, Independence and Territorial Integrity which states that

The State shall endeavour to mobilise, organise, empower the Ugandan.

This objective is enhanced by the Local Government Act<sup>2</sup> to give full effect to the decentralization of functions, powers and services at all levels of local government. The Government White Paper on Education Policy Review Commission<sup>3</sup> identifies the goals of tertiary institutions, among others, as generating advanced knowledge and innovations through research and ability to adapt to local and Ugandan needs. Makerere University<sup>4</sup> in its development strategy identifies the need for developing its capacity and performance in order to meet changing demands and increasing challenges and competition. In responding to this challenge, the East African School of Library and Information Science (EASLIS) focuses on producing high quality library and information professionals capable of responding to present

and future needs. Kajubi<sup>5</sup> observes that the curriculum and teaching methods fail to address the needs of the community, as they merely measure how much theoretical knowledge a student has acquired. He suggested the acquisition of skills to apply that knowledge to real-life situations. The study on the decentralization of local government<sup>6</sup> also identified the social factors such as 'There is poor attitude towards work and government property'. In his research on human resource management and development in the context of decentralization, Lubanga<sup>7</sup> says:

A trend has been observed that applicants for vacancies in local government tend to apply for jobs in their home region. It is also becoming evident that candidates from southern Uganda have shown less enthusiasm for jobs in north and north-east.

Lubanga further observes that this trend has been given momentum by tribal, colour, insurgency, low salaries and high transport costs. If this trend continues, he explains, there will be a self-sustaining tendency for broad ethnic cleavages to dominate local public services in each region. This erodes the national character of the civil service. He suggested producing incentives and non-monetary recognition of individuals who work outside their home regions with diligence and devotion.

The *Decentralization and Human Resource Assessment From Perspective of the District* conducted by the Makerere University Institute of Social Research<sup>8</sup> observes that the advent of decentralization created new working relationships and new demands for communication skills, attitudes and approaches to work. As one District Councillor said:

Most civil servants do not execute duties to our expectations, some are half-backed, lazy and corrupt. Yet they are not easy to dismiss, since they claim to be professional.

Mugasha<sup>9</sup> suggests a need to find ways to incorporate actual work experience of staff and students in the curriculum. Katorobo<sup>10</sup> recommends that for decentralization to succeed, it is imperative for individual and institutional capacity building to be intensified at different district levels. This calls for local authorities and training institutions like EASLIS to become involved in the social and professional development of the individual student through industrial training, so as to enable a sustainable decentralization programme in Uganda. Industrial training involves attaching students to the working environment for a given period of time in order to acquire practical skills and to familiarize themselves with working conditions.

### Statement of the Problem

EASLIS produces library and information professionals including librarians, records workers, documentalists, database managers, publishers, etc. EASLIS programmes do not provide internship or industrial training for students, due to inadequate funds for the management and implementation of the programme. The attempts that have been made have been through interested organizations making special arrangement with interested students. The Uganda Library Association, a professional body, has tried to assist EASLIS in the management of the internship programme but has been limited by lack of finances. Most of the EASLIS graduates have concentrated on looking for jobs in and around Kampala. Those who have got jobs in the districts have, in most cases, been blamed for not responding to the needs of the local authorities. Decentralization has created work through the accumulation of records and documents that increases the need for well processed information. However, local government has not identified the need for employing qualified staff in the management of information for local government services like in school libraries, resource centres, records centres, public libraries,

community information systems, etc. Some of the needs which have been identified do not attract applicants whenever such jobs are advertised. There is a gap between the job needs of the library and information professionals and the local authorities' provisions. This has probably been due to lack of practical exposure of students to local working environments. This creates the need for introducing industrial training in the districts to enable the students to acquire necessary skills and knowledge for responding and adapting to local needs.

### A Feasibility Study for Improving Industrial Training at EASLIS

A feasibility study was carried out with the aim of providing a framework for the successful implementation of an industrial training project by EASLIS.

The specific objectives of the study were:

- to identify the library and information service status in the districts
- to assess the level of acceptance of the project by the stakeholders
- to assess the social economic sustainability of the project
- to provide guidelines on the implementation of the project.

### Methodology

This was an exploratory study attempting to identify possible areas of attachment to enable the project team gain a more accurate idea for the successful implementation of the project. A qualitative approach was used based on primary data. Physical visits were made to district administration departments, units and offices, and to sub counties. The primary data sources comprised interviews with key informants, observation, and consultative meetings.

### Study Sites

The study was conducted in the districts of Lira, Tororo, Mubende,

and Bushenyi. These districts were chosen taking into account regional representation. Political and social-economic aspects were also taken into consideration in selecting the districts. Information was collected from district headquarters, sub-counties and town councils. Purposive sampling was used to select the sub-counties based on consultations with district administrations. The strengths and weaknesses of these sub-counties were taken into consideration. At least one secondary school in each district was also visited.

### Data Collection Methods

Basically the study utilized three methods, namely key informant interviews, observation and consultative meetings.

### Key informant interviews

Key Informant Interviews at the districts were conducted with local council officials, district administrators, heads of departments, and staff responsible for information management. In sub-counties, divisions and municipal or town councils, interviews were held with sub-county chiefs or town clerks, chairpersons and sub-accountants in the absence of or together with the sub-county chief. The purpose of these interviews was to gather demand opportunities for library and information service manpower development and industrial training. Interviews were also held with head teachers in secondary schools and other educational institutions.

### Observation

Physical visits were made to registries, records centres, libraries, resource centres and storage areas for information materials. The purpose of the visits was to assess the nature of work for the trainees and the availability of facilities.

### Consultative meetings

In collaboration with district administrators, a consultative meeting was held with the sub-county chiefs, executives, district admin-

Source	Key Informant Interviews	Consultative Meetings
Tororo	12	16
Lira	10	10
Mubende	10	9
Bushenyi	9	15
EASLIS Staff	-	7
EASLIS Students	-	12
Total	41	69

Table 1: Respondents by Data Source.

istrators, heads of departments and staff manning information institutions. The purpose of these meetings was to lay strategies on how best the project would be implemented. These meetings were chaired by an official from the district administration, and involved the presentation of a conceptual brief about the project. Expectations, problems envisaged and strategies were some of the issues discussed at these meetings. Consultative meetings were also held with EASLIS staff to find out their ability to handle the tasks ahead, and with prospective students to identify their expectations for the industrial training.

### Data Analysis

Data were analysed qualitatively from the observations and comments made during the study. Weight was attached to statements made that addressed the study objectives. Conclusions and recommendations were drawn from the observations made by the local leaders, district staff and administrators, students and lecturers.

### Limitations of the Study

During the study design, it had been anticipated that consultations would be held with the top officials in the districts but they often delegated this task to others at lower levels.

## Results of the Feasibility Study

### Introduction

The results were derived from qualitative data basically taken from primary data and to a lesser

extent secondary data. Physical visits were made to the study sites. The primary data sources comprised key informants, and consultative meetings supplemented by observations. The number of respondents by various data sources is presented in Table 1.

The composition of data sources as per the positions is presented in Table 2.

### Library and Information Services in the Districts

The study intended to identify the status of library and information services (LIS) in the districts. The information institutions, staffing positions, problems and LIS plans for the districts were identified in the study.

### LIS institutions in the districts

Each of the four districts had a central registry and all of them were using the same filing system approved by the Ministry of Local Government. All the central registries in the districts, apart from Tororo, have received equipment and supplies from the capacity building programme of the Ministry of Local Government. Except for Lira, which already had a resource centre, all the other districts had a plan for establishing one. Departments at the districts kept specialized records with no filing systems in place. Lira and Tororo had public libraries. All town councils visited had registries in places and were using filing systems similar to those used at the district headquarters.

In the sub-counties, it was found that records and files were kept either in cupboards or in individu-

Position of the Respondents	Key Informant Interviews	Consultative Meetings
District Administrator (CAO's office)	3	3
Personnel Officer	3	7
ACAO	-	4
Head of Department	3	7
LCV Executive	2	4
LCIII Executive	4	2
Town Clerk	4	-
Sub County Chief	7	16
Information Worker	10	4
Head of Educational Institution	4	-
Other (Secretaries, Sub Accountants, etc)	1	3
Total	41	50

*Table 2: Composition of Respondents by Positions in Districts.*

Notes: ACAO = Assistant Chief Administrative Officer  
 CAO = Chief Administrative Officer  
 LCV = Local Council 5: District level  
 LCIII = Local Council 3: Sub-County level

als' offices. There was no library in any of the sub-counties visited, although almost all the officers interviewed recognized the need for a library and a registry. Bushenyi district had plans for establishing health information centres in every sub-county. Lira and Tororo had acquired computers for records management although they had not been put to use. Plans were under way to acquire the same in Bushenyi. Educational institutions had libraries in place and expressed needs for organizing students' records. Mubende District had a teachers' resource centre at the headquarters.

**LIS personnel in the districts**

The study addressed the capacity of the personnel managing information institutions in the districts. Low levels of LIS training were found in almost all the districts except for Bushenyi Central Registry, which was manned by a Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) graduate. The majority of the staff manning registries and libraries of educational Institutions had either O or A level education. They had, however, acquired basic inservice training. This was also the case for town councils. In sub-counties, records management is a responsibility of the sub-county chief, assisted by sub-accountants.

Some officers manage their own records in their offices.

**Problems faced in managing information in the districts**

The study indicated a general problem of failure to cope with management of the increasing volume of records. So many records are generated every day and correspondence was increasing, making it difficult to manage them. One sub-county chief said

Correspondence is increasing and sometimes you cannot keep track.

In Lira, one Records Assistant observed that

We don't know what and how to weed. There is too much accumulation.

It was also observed that officers personalize documents or files. During a consultative meeting in one of the districts one officer said

Officers at sub-counties personalise documents such that they go with them when they leave offices

while another one is quoted as saying

transferring an officer meant transferring him with documents.

There was a general lack of access to information when required. This is due to lack of a filing system at sub-counties, while at the districts, where such systems exist, records officers are not conversant enough with the systems, or they do not have adequate skills. In Tororo, one LCV executive lamented the fact that his father had failed to get his pension because his file could not traced.

Information flow was generally poor both in the districts and to the sub-counties. Some officers reported never receiving some important communication or receiving it when it was overdue.

Generally at sub-counties, there was no filing system in use and personalization of documents was common, coupled with a lack of storage equipment and supplies. In educational institutions, libraries existed but the staff manning them lacked the required skills in library management.

**District LIS plans**

Generally districts had no concrete plans for library and information services and manpower development as they depended highly on the Decentralization Secretariat. However Mubende was organizing a training programme for records assistants at sub-counties, while similar workshops for records assistants and sub-county chiefs were going on in Bushenyi District. In Lira, records assistants were undergoing training in computer operations.

All districts which had no district information resource centres indicated that they would plan for setting one up in the near future. Tororo district had a plan for setting up a library, and a room had already been allocated for this. Bushenyi was in the process of putting up a records centre at the district headquarters and were waiting for acquisition of the remaining equipment. They also had plans to computerize the records

system. Sub-county health information units were also to be established and records assistants had already been recruited. Sub-counties waited for plans from district headquarters while the district plans are hampered by financial constraints. Lira has a sub-county administration and management project to improve management and service delivery in the district.

## *Willingness for Industrial Training*

The study intended to assess the level of acceptance of LIS trainees by the districts. All the respondents to the interviews and consultative meetings accepted the idea. The following are some of the comments made:

Yes, right now we have veterinary doctors who are already on internship. Yes, if approved by executive.

It's a bright idea. Idea appreciated. Step ahead towards managing information in Tororo District.

Lira District has been accepting Makerere University students during vacation. I agree with the idea. Good gesture; we will benefit from such a move.

Long overdue, as reported by DCAO Tororo. The project may benefit us, we are interested.

The system is very good: students used to stay on but very green in the field.

This will help the young generation to get where to read. When the local people see these students, they will appreciate. Attitudes of people will change.

When you bring people, we will acquire more people to improve the day to day work.

When students were requested to comment on their willingness to go for attachment, the majority of them showed willingness. The following are some of the comments they made:

I think it will help me identify the loophole I have; I will get familiar with the working environment.

I would like to get experience in working in rural environment.

I would like to socialise with people in rural areas since I was born in urban areas.

I would wish to find out local needs of people upcountry.

## *Manpower Needs for Industrial Training*

The district local authorities were requested to indicate some of the activities or tasks that they would need to be carried out by the trainees. The following are some of the activities mentioned: organizing information, filing records, research and collecting field data, setting up registry systems, indexing and cataloguing in libraries, management of students' records in schools, computerization of records systems, teaching users in records, initiating training programmes; planning for information institutions, public relations, reformation or translation, information dissemination, receiving, recording and dispatching mails, file routing, extension services, setting up and managing libraries at district, establishing information units where they don't exist, development of standard forms for information storage and improving information access. One ACAO commented that there is a need to get people to set up libraries in the sub-counties. An officer in Tororo is quoted as saying:

there is need of creating a library at every level of local authority.

One personnel officer observed that

We already have manpower limited at the sub-county. People are on contract and we are trying to keep them. We are waiting to have people to bail them out.

Students' wishes tallied with the manpower gaps expressed by local

councils. Students expressed interest in being attached to do, among others, activities like cataloguing, research, records management, librarianship, database management, reference work, advisory work and public relations. One student commented that

We don't go there to learn from them but they should also learn from us.

## *Sustainability of the Project*

The study sought to assess the social-economic sustainability of the project. In order to achieve this, respondents in the districts were asked whether they would facilitate the interns. It was generally found out that districts could not provide accommodation to student interns. However the cost of accommodation ranged between UGX 30,000 and 50,000 per month. District officials expressed willingness to arrange accommodation early enough before the interns reported. Respondents in the districts promised to provide the working sites, equipment, furniture, immediate supervision and moral support to the interns. In Lira, they proposed the establishment of a project committee at each of the districts to ensure sustainability and supervision, comprising among others, representatives of the benefiting units, the district personnel officer and the secretary for finance and administration. Respondents in the districts could not commit themselves to the provision of logistical support (lunch, transport and subsistence allowance). However, they said that the matter would be dealt with if given ample time. Lira promised that, if they were given a copy of the feasibility report, the item would be considered in the district budget. Mubende pledged to include the item in their budget if notified early enough before the budget conference in January or February. However, heads of educational institutions promised to provide meals to the trainees. The daily cost of meals was between UGX 5000 and 7000 per day, while commuting costs averaged UGX 2000 per day.

Responses from students showed that accommodation and meals are the basic requirements for the successful implementation of the project. The students emphasized the need for proper induction of both parties, students and local authorities, to lay the grounds for the project and the need for well laid-out terms of reference for the work to be done.

To ensure that the project is sustainable and acceptable by all parties involved, the lecturers at EASLIS were consulted. Some of the issues raised included:

- getting students well equipped with the required skills
- identification of immediate supervisors and offering them the basic training required
- sensitization of local authorities; during a consultative meeting in Mubende, one officer said "we need to be trained so that we know what is expected of us"
- assurance that the necessary equipment and supplies would be in place for the interns.

These observations tally with the comment by Tororo district officials that

Students should come with necessary supplies as they report for industrial training.

When students were asked to indicate the kind of environment in which they would work, they wished the following amenities would be available: good water system, entertainment, good road network, communication network, no segregation, health services, electricity, Internet services, postal services and security guaranteed. Observations at the district and local authorities indicated that these amenities are available.

## Conclusion

There are a lot of opportunities for industrial training, as reflected by the number of LIS institutions and the inadequacy of staff in these institutions. A willingness for indus-

trial training was expressed by all parties consulted, namely, students, EASLIS staff and local councils. The kind of work to occupy the trainees has been specified. The willingness of district officials to include project expenses in their budgets ensures the sustainability of the project. Socio-economic conditions proved to be conducive for the students to work in. Based on the above factors, the project on information service manpower capacity building for decentralization is feasible and worth undertaking.

## Implementation of the Pilot Project

Based on the findings of the study presented above, the pilot project will be implemented by East African School of Library and Information Science.

The aim of the project will focus on building a sustainable Human Resource Capacity for Library and Information Services in the Decentralized System in Uganda.

### *Objectives of the Pilot Project:*

- to provide induction for the stakeholders
- to allocate trainees to the identified places of industrial training
- to assess the performance of the trainees
- to identify information manpower needs in library and information services in the local authorities
- to develop sustainable library and information service manpower development plans for local councils.

*Proposed Activities, Timeframe, Methodology and Indicators (Outputs) (see Table 3)*

### *Scope of the Project*

The project will be conducted in the four districts where the feasibility study was conducted, namely, Bushenyi, Mubende, Tororo, and Lira. Concentration will be at the district headquarters and one sub-county in each district. It is assumed that one sub-

county will act as a model for the other sub-counties in the districts. Emphasis will be laid on registry/records centres and the provision of library and information services. In each district, at least three students will be attached for industrial training.

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Activities	Tasks	Responsibility	Duration	Personnel Resources	Methodology	Location	Expected Output
1. Induction of stakeholders	Sensitization of local authorities Sensitization of immediate supervisors Preparing staff for supervision Sensitize students on the programme	Project leaders	1 month	EASLIS staff Local council authorities	Physical visit Mail Meetings Workshops Demonstrations	Local authority offices in districts EASLIS	Stakeholders ready for ongoing project Authority guaranteed by local councils
2. Allocation of trainees to the identified places of industrial training	Availing equipment and supplies Posting students to their stations Acknowledge the reporting of the candidates Deployment of the trainees	Project leader Local authority	2 months	EASLIS academic staff Project leader Local authority staff Students	Seminars Mailing and ICT facilities Instruction and guidance	EASLIS Local councils Duty station	Awareness of the students about the programme Students reporting to areas of attachment Industrial training takes off
3. Assessing the performance of the trainees	Supervise trainees Discussion with the trainees Meeting with authorities Writing reports for each trainee	Supervisors Project leader	1 month	EASLIS academic staff Supervisors Local council staff Students	Participatory and practical demonstrations Questions and answers Discussions Report writing	Duty station	Hands on experience gained Report produced
4. Identification of information manpower needs	Organize meetings Consultation with stakeholders Analysis of findings Report writing	Project leader	2 weeks	Supervisors Local authorities Student representatives	Participatory Interviews Focus Groups Questions and answers Statistical analysis	Selected venues in each region	Manpower gaps identified Report on LIS manpower needs
5. Developing LIS manpower development plans	Designing job description for LIS personnel Designing terms of services for LIS personnel Designing selection criteria for LIS staff Designing LIS action plans for local authorities	Project leaders	1 month	Academic staff Student leaders Professional bodies Representation of local government	Workshops Brainstorming	Selected venues	Terms and conditions of service for LIS professionals for local government identified Local authorities' action plans developed

Table 3: Proposed Activities, Timeframe, Methodology and Indicators (Outputs)