# CPD: Developing strong librarians and transforming library services in Kenya

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**Abstract:**

*This paper aims at showing how continuous professional development has enabled vibrant librarians to advocate for change in libraries and to transform library services in Kenyan Coast and all over the country.*

*The Kenya National Library Service (knls), which runs a network of 62 public libraries in Kenya, strongly believes that continuous development of skills is essential for good performance of public librarians. Currently most librarian graduates are unprepared for the challenges of working in libraries, especially in remote, under-sourced rural and urban communities. At the same time library staff, who has been working in libraries for long time, desperately need to keep up with modern approaches to librarianship and library service development. To fill these gaps, knls partnered with an international NGO called EIFL (http://www.eifl.net) to implement a comprehensive continuous professional development programme in Kenya.*

*The initiative has started two years ago and has focused on development of local trainers, who could then equip their peers all over the country with new skills. The knowledge received in this partnership programme has totally changed the way librarians are approaching needs affecting local community, making their work easier and achieving better results.*

*One of outcomes of this training, has been an advocacy program to improve availability of library services to citizens of Kenya Coastal region. A needs assessment, performed through questionnaires and one on one interviews, has showed that the existing library is not robust enough to serve a population of 649,931 (2009 census). Most libraries across Kenyan coast region are not visible in service delivery resulting to poor understanding on impact of libraries to the region. Equipped with new skills, librarians were able to act upon this need for additional services.*

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## Introduction

Kenya passed the Kenya National Library Service (knls) Board Act in 1965 Cap 225 of the laws of Kenya in order to enhance stakeholders' participation for equitable development, promote information literacy and reading among Kenyans, advise the Government, local authorities and other public bodies on all matters relating to library, documentation and related services. The Act acknowledges the fact that rural and urban poor communities are better able to tackle their problems and introduce social change if they have access to relevant information that meets their needs and interests. Librarians' capacity is key to making sure these local needs are met, so knls has been constantly working on improving the confidence and skills of their staff, especially in the non-traditional areas of librarianship, such as information and communication technologies, project management, advocacy, etc.

To ensure, that librarians have up-to-date skills, since 2014, knls has been working with EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries, http://www.eifl.net), an international not-for-profit organization based in Europe and working in collaboration with libraries in more than 60 developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. During 2014-2017, knls and EIFL jointly provided training on various topics to about 100 public librarians. The assessment showed that the training significantly improved public librarians' skills and confidence in performing basic ICT functions as well as in new services development, community needs assessment, partnerships and communications and advocacy. Librarians, who participated in the training, said it helped them to think "out of the box" and served as an "eye opener" on how ICT can be used to improve library services. Librarians understood the importance of community needs and were able to target their services to respond these needs. In2018, knls and EIFL took yet another step and started a new initiative, aimed at strengthening the continuing professional development (CPD) system in Kenya.

## What is CPD?

As defined by Institute of Risk Management, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the lifelong process of learning and continuing personal development. It's the means by which one can maintain and enhance knowledge and skills to complement both current job role and future career progression[1]. IFLA guidelines "Continuing Professional Development: Principles and Best Practices" state that the quality and effectiveness of library and information services depend on the expertise of staff. Constant flux in the needs of societies, changing technologies and growth in professional knowledge demand that librarians and other information professionals expand their knowledge and update their skills on an ongoing basis[2]. To tackle issues with CPD of public librarians in Kenya, in 2018, knls and EIFL

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[1] Source: Institute of Risk Management. Continued professional development. URL: https://www.theirm.org/media/3888261/CPD.pdf

[2] Source: Jana Varlejs. IFLA Guidelines for Continuing Professional Development: Principles and Best Practices. Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning (CPDWL) Section, IFLA, 2016. URL: https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/cpdwl/guidelines/ifla-guidelines-for-continuing-professional-development.pdf

launched an 18-month project to develop 'in-house' training skills and review and strengthen the knls human resources development strategy.

The work started by creating a cross-departmental working group of knls staff who were involved (in one way or another) in staff development. The group included members of the Human Resource department, which manages budgets for staffing, analyses skills gaps of librarians and organizes staff training; the IT department, which conducts technology training; the Resource Mobilization and Projects Coordination department, which has an overview of training that takes place as part of different projects, and the Research & Development department which collects information about services provided in library branches. The discussions identified opportunities for improved communications between departments and interventions that would strengthen capacity building in the network.

The working group reviewed the ways in which training plans were created, funded and communicated within the knls network. It reviewed knls existing methodology of continuous professional development. As a result of this reflection, a Capacity Building Framework was developed to map and evaluate library services in each branch library, and the skills needed to deliver them.

The group also discussed criteria for identifying staff who could become trainers within the network, and selected 20 librarians to become master trainers. It was agreed that in-house skills will be developed in four broad topics: Training and facilitation; Technology; Leadership and Management; and Impact and Advocacy. Below you can see complete list of modules, which were delivered to master trainers by international experts in respective areas.

**Table 1. Modules/Courses Learned**

| NO. | COURSE | AIM OF THE COURSE |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | TOT Training abilities | Gain skills on being an effective trainer and a confident facilitator. |
| 2. | Mobile Information Literacy | Gain skills in accessing e-resources using mobile phones. |
| 3. | Library Spaces | Gain skills on how to make libraries friendly, easy, adaptable to users so that more people to access library services. |
| 4. | Strengthening Innovative Library Leaders | Gain skills how librarians and library staff can better appreciate their own leadership skills,have strategy for problem solving, and a plan to implement an innovative idea in their library. |
| 5. | Project Management | Gain skills on how to write a convincing library project proposal for funding to potential donors and stakeholders/partners. |
| 6. | Performance and outcome evaluation | Gain skills on measuring and evaluating library performance and outcomes. |
| 7. | Design Thinking for public librarians | Gain skills aimed at having a process used to creatively solve a problem that has been affecting a community. |
| 8. | Advocacy and Communication for public libraries | Gain skills for defining advocacy goals, coming up with catchy messages and communication for purposes of influencing change or funding for the library to serve the target community. |

All 20 master trainers participated in all courses and could choose to specialize to become a trainer in either Technology-related topics or topics such as Leadership and project management and Impact and advocacy. After the training the trainers have started conducting cascade training (cascade training is when local trainers deliver the training) supervised and mentored by EIFL trainers and staff.

**How the CPD programme has changed my approach to library services**

As one of master trainers, who was selected for this initiative and participated in the whole training program, I can say that CPD initiative has helped me in a unique way to facilitate trainings, use e-resources in my library, make my library spaces conducive for library users, strengthened me on leadership, especially on the part of taking responsibility of challenges and avoiding blame, using the design-thinking process on library services impact to communities, coming up with catchy and convincing project proposal for funding, improving library performance and outcome evaluation and use of data and, finally, advocacy and communication in championing for a course. These training experiences transformed me from a librarian, who is just passively waiting for a user to come, to a librarian, who understands the needs of users for life transformation and transforming libraries to be safe places for our communities. CPD also taught me that partnerships and stakeholders involvement is the greatest tool for any change to take place.

**CPD knowledge applied in practice**

After taking part in the CPD programme, I felt a need to deploy new knowledge to improve my own library and my own region. To learn more about the needs of local community, a survey was carried out in May to August 2018, which revealed that 80 percent of Kwale county (Coast region of Kenya) people do not access library services, and coast region as a whole does not feel the effect of libraries as agents of change in their communities. There are several reasons for that:
- There's only one knls public library in Kwale County.
- 10 coastal region Knls Libraries are not visible in service delivery.

After this situation was identified, a plan was drafted to address both issues.

**Response to a low access to library services due to limited number of libraries**

According to the 2009 census report, Kwale County had a population of 649,931 with only one knls public library serving about ¼ of the total population. The decision was taken to request for another library and as an advocacy strategy it was decided to use the examples of already existing library services and evidence of the impact of use of these services on academic performances, on creating employment, on more active participation in e-governance and other benefits, that people gain from using the library.

Kwale community stakeholders and partners were identified, among them being Kwale county government departments (e.g. education, sports culture and talent management), NGOs (e.g. Plan International-Kenya, Agakhan Foundation), community members, etc.

A plan was drafted to visit all stakeholders to tell how new library services like e-reading programme, distance learning, outreach services, bulk book lending, creative activities has made the library a safe place for children and youths, professionals and the general public, some who have to walk long distances to access the library services. We also involved leadership in launching library events and celebrations hosted by the library and we used such forums to communicate our strengths and challenges of our libraries while serving the community.

This advocacy campaign has been a success and in financial year 2018/2019, the county government of Kwale allocated kshs. 25 million ($250 000 USD) to build a second modern library at Kwale township in conjunction with The Kenya National Library service to extent library services.

**Invisibility of knls libraries and library services in the Kenyan coast**

While knls has 10 branches in coast region, Kwale community library, which is one of the 10 knls branches in coast, is the only library offering innovative technology based services, such as learning circles. Learning circles are free study groups for people who want to take online classes together and in-person (more about learning circles at: https://www.eifl.net/news/learning-circles-hit-kenya-public-libraries ). As a master trainer, who has gone through the CPD programme, I decided to take the responsibility of training fellow librarians from other branches in the application of learning circles.

A WhatsApp group was created for knls coast librarians to discuss challenges and solutions for the identified issue. I suggested that for our libraries to be visible, we need to introduce new services so that our communities would see our libraries differently. I wrote a small proposal to our knls C.E.O showing how other coastal libraries are not visible and the solution was to cascade learning circles skills to librarians, aiming at training 20 librarians in the region to facilitate the program. A budget was allocated and 21 librarians in 8 knls coast branches were trained on learning circles program.

 As a result of the training, learning circles in knls coastal libraries are now running, more youths are enrolling for online courses through p2pu.org for free. Libraries in coast region are now busy places for learning and research. Political leaders now sponsor programmes like awareness campaigns on road safety to boda-boda operators (public transporters Motor bicycle operators), modern farming techniques to farmers, youths access e-government services etc. through the library, access to libraries has increased by 30 percent for the last eight months, which is a clear indication that relevance of libraries is now felt in coastal communities.

**Cascade training to other public librarians in Kenya**

In addition to implementing changes in my own library and my region, I was also asked to run cascade trainings for other public librarians within knls network. The journey towards becoming a trainer has never been so easy until when I went through EIFL course on training abilities and discovered new ways of facilitation, training styles, time management, giving constructive feedback and other skills, which every training should have. My first practical task was to train knls ICT officers who were a difficult audience, because it was quite unimaginable, that a non ICT trainer would train ICT professionals. However, with the skills of understanding my audience in a training really helped to deal with this task. On the training on how to organize and run learning circles, I also could not believe that that dialogue with fellow coastal librarians would make me take control of a programme in my region that would eventually make libraries and librarians more visible because of new services. As a result of the change seen in Coast region and my ability to identify challenges

in libraries and turning them into fortunes, my professional reputation has grown. And this is important because if librarians are empowered through CPD it leads to clear impacts on the community. More than 10 learning circles have been created reaching out to more than 150 people in a period of 6 months. Also local politicians and NGOs have sponsored more than 300 bodaboda operators in road safety programmes and reaching to more 100 farmers in modern farming methods in partnership with the libraries. A clear indication that the communities have embraced change through introduction of new services.

## Conclusions

CPD initiative in Kenya has changed how librarians approach library services with a user centred thinking. CPD has made librarians think beyond books circulation and made librarians into life transforming personalities who identify users' needs and react to them. This approach means the library staff are now performing better in their job and have even gained self-confidence to take initiative on developing new services and programmes. Being more active in communities, they improve their own professional reputation, as well as library image in the community, suggesting that indeed libraries are the best places for livelihood transformation by accessing a variety of online courses. CPD has made librarians partner with other stakeholders in developing libraries through constructive dialogue.

My vision is to have literate and self-dependent communities by building and extending the services currently provided in the library to each village in Kwale county, my region, my country, my continent and the whole world. This will be successful through continuously assessing my knowledge gaps against the needs of my community and the entire global library community.

Our experience shows that CPD programme has had positive results both on individual level, as I have been able to improve availability and access to library services, and on a national level as it impacts fellow librarians through cascade trainings, where they learn various ideas for new library services and learn how to implement these services.

## Acknowledgements