

Book Chapter International Librarianship – Chantal Phillips 3,000 MLA

Building Capacity for International Librarianship through Intercultural Professional Partnerships and Civil Society Outreach in Tanzania.

This book chapter will describe the international partnership between Canadian and Tanzanian Academic Librarians over seven years of collaboration on an international project.

1. Introduction

As a professional librarian recently I have had the pleasure to serve with a team of academics in Canada and Tanzania on an international project “Building Civil Society Capacity for Poverty Reduction.” The Canadian university involved established a partnership with the University of Dar es Salaam Institute of Development Studies to re-invigorate the curriculum. Graduate programs were re-developed and expanded to engage civil society organizations and give graduate students field experience. A pilot study on information access allowed for field work and engagement of librarians in Canada and Tanzania by investigating information needs at the village level. This rural and remote case study highlighted the participatory processes needed for engaging community members and responding to local needs to ensure success.

This project supported libraries in academic environments with facility upgrading and collection development, and a small public library with local books in Swahili to match students with the collection. This paper reviews some of the project design strategies which emphasize participation in order to strengthen outcomes.

IMAGE: 2009 Baseline Study with Maasai Elders

Caption: Dr. Arja Vainio-Mattila far right with Maasai elders seated at community meeting to develop project pilot. Prof. Benedict Mongula and Prof. Rose Shayo far left kneeling. Monduli District, Arusha Region, Tanzania.

Credit: Arja Vainio-Mattila

Abstract

Key words: participatory development, gender analysis, community engagement, collaboration

Participatory Development

The unfortunate reality about working with libraries outside North America and Europe is that there is often a colonial past which taints working relationships no matter how hard we try to shed cultural baggage that hurts good working relations. The creation of a framework which bolsters equal partnerships, shared responsibilities, and clear delegation of authority goes a long way to making project teams that work together. This is always the case, but is particularly useful when managing across cultural, linguistic and historical differences between partners. If the goal is to have a project that will develop into a long term programme without external funding, then it is important that the decisions are made with both partners controlling resources.

For example, the Advisory Committee in the donor country should not be deciding which equipment is best suited for the project just because purchases can be made and shipped to the partner. Equipment budgets and specifications should be the result of a local dialogue which determines the long term sustainability of maintaining facilities, equipment and collections.

Developing the framework of responsibilities from the start can be facilitated through a variety of tools such as Results Based Management. This is a project management tool used by large organizations such as the Canadian International Development Agency and the Canadian government to manage projects. This moves the objectives of the work away from specifics such as counting books added to the collection to more valuable results such as improved access to information and promoting a reading culture.

Results Based Management

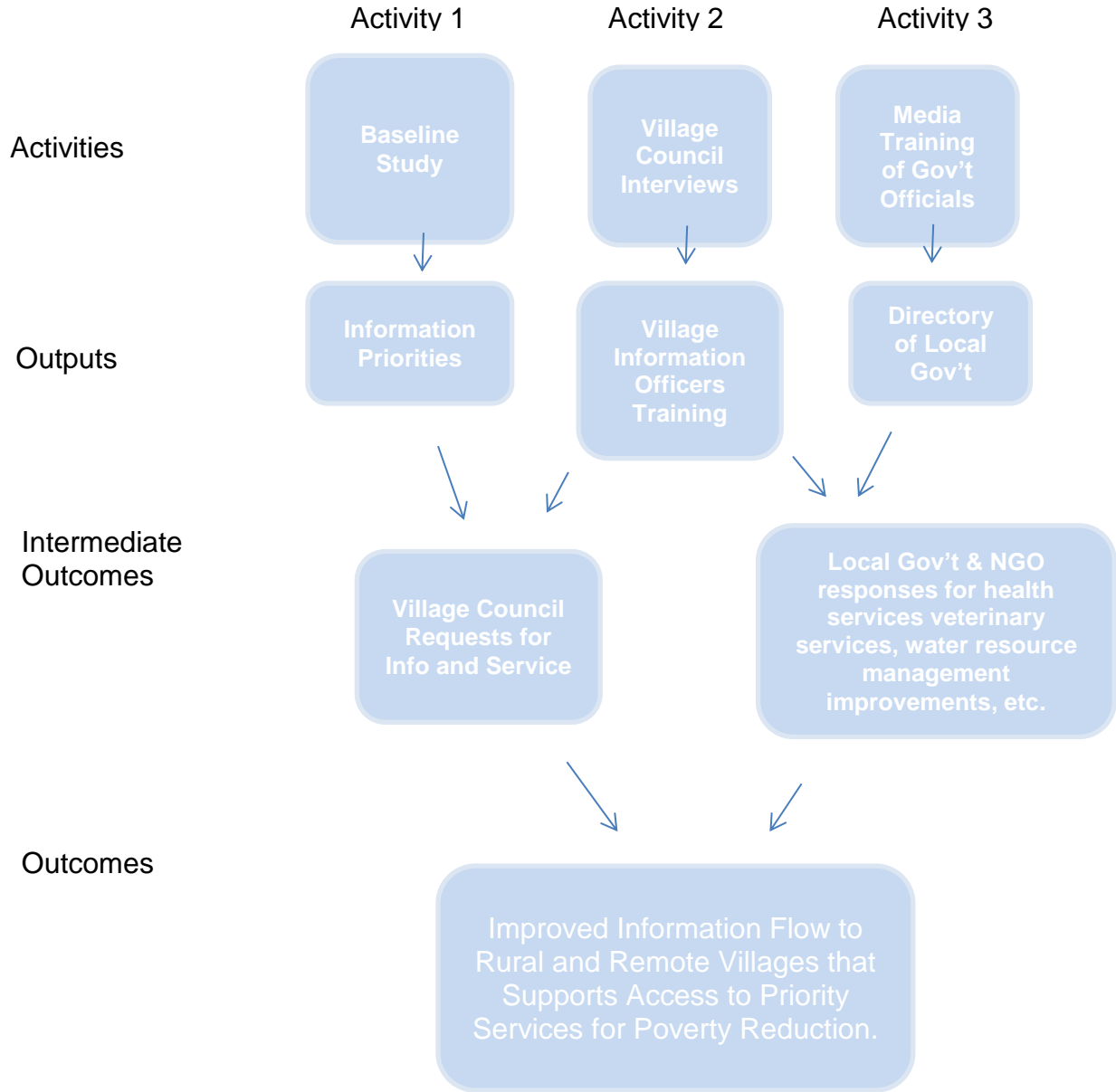
PROFILE	LOGIC MODEL	MEASUREMENT	EVALUATION	REPORTING
A concise description of the policy, program or initiative, including a discussion of the background, need, target population, delivery approach, resources, governance structure and planned results.	An illustration of the results chain or how the activities of a policy, program or initiative are expected to lead to the achievement of the final outcomes	A plan for the evaluation of the policy, program or initiative, including the identification of formative and summative evaluation issues and questions, the identification of associated data requirements, and a data collection strategy which will serve as the foundation for subsequent evaluation activities.	A plan for the evaluation of the policy, program or initiative, including the identification of formative and summative evaluation issues and questions, the identification of associated data requirements, and a data collection strategy which will serve as the foundation for subsequent evaluation activities.	A plan to ensure the systematic reporting on the results of ongoing performance measurement as well as valuation, to ensure that all reporting requirements are met.

See: <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/acdi-cida.nsf/eng/NAT-92213444-N2H>

PROFILE	LOGIC MODEL	MEASUREMENT	EVALUATION	REPORTING
Improve access to information for rural and remote villagers on areas of priority such as improving maternal and child health, getting access to education, better animal	Rationale: better information can improve decision-making in health, agriculture and education. Assumption: there is local, relevant support to address	A baseline study of villagers to assess needs and restraints as identified by the locals. Measure population, identify schools, clinics, vet and ag extension offices and other supports.	A journal of activities to measure and report on Village Information Officers. A meeting with Village officials to review actions taken on priority	Mid term review and annual reports and final report deadlines

<p>husbandry and water resource management.</p>	<p>priority needs in district government and local NGO sector. Print resources are not read by most people, don't reach village government offices and aren't in the local languages.</p> <p>Resources: cell phones and local government officials can provide access to better info.</p>	<p>Village council meetings to establish information needs of villagers.</p> <p>Interviews with key local officials and elders to identify priorities, threats to progress and opportunities.</p>	<p>issues.</p> <p>An assessment with local government officials on solutions provided for priorities.</p>	
-------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

“Flow Chart” Logic Model



Borrowing a page from successful international partnerships in international development aid is a good idea. Participatory development techniques are designed to help increase the effectiveness of projects and reduce the inequality within international teams. Robert Chambers is one of the original proponents of techniques called Participatory Development. Action research is another name given to such engaged techniques for working with communities using an approach that strengthens the role of citizens in development. For example, techniques are implemented in discussions which try to increase the participation of marginalized groups, such as the poor and women, in order for the project to be informed by key stakeholders. This research happens before the activities and priorities are set for action on the ground. Too often outsiders

have set action items and only when they hit the ground do they realize the roadblocks for a successful project.

Some key considerations in developing the project and action plan are:

When

Is your trip to the project area designed to happen during rainy season when roads are impassable or during holidays when key people are away?

Who?

Have you surveyed only those who showed up, or do you have a plan to talk to those who are sick at home, unable to travel due to childcare responsibilities, speak a dialect but don't read the official language?

How?

Are you making assumptions about who does what in this community? Perhaps men and women have different ideas about this topic based on different responsibilities at home and at work. Can you use a process that encourages gender disaggregation of results?

Techniques such as meeting with community leaders to learn local issues and prioritize needs can inform a project by tying it to the existing realities. Dividing up women and men into small groups for discussion; valuing youth, elders and children can create a fuller picture to describe the community. Using groups to create maps of a place such as a campus or a village can highlight issues that are important to people who are not fluent in literate cultures which demand written submissions and reports to create background documents. There are many participation strategies to choose from and they all help form relationships, build a strong base for future work, and increase options when unforeseen circumstances require the re-direction of project plans.

IMAGE: 2011 Mesha Pius and VIOs Meeting

Caption: Mesha Pius, graduate student, training Village Information Officers, Monduli District, 2011.

Credit: Mesha Pius

The tight or non-existent acquisition budgets in many African libraries for example, can lead to decisions that are not based on collection assessment or user assessment but simply lack of materials. Full shelves are better than empty, aren't they? Using the input from baseline research and other participatory processes can lead to better decisions than filling shelves with second hand materials cast off from North American libraries or choosing a shelving system with no spare parts when a local carpentry school could be tapped as a partner.

Creating a selection tool for locals to use as a decision-making guide is one strategy for supporting a locally focused collection with new information on available resources created by the international team. This project developed a selection tool every year and used it in the academic and public library systems to support project funded acquisitions. In our village case study the use of phones to access information rather than print allowed better flows of information for decision-making and access to government officials rather than government documents achieved user needs in local languages.

2. Tanzania and Africa

Tanzania is an African country with a specific history linked to its multiethnic past and its present as a Muslim and Christian nation with many believers of pantheistic religions. The

context of the library project is always unique and skills related to an environmental scan or a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) are extremely useful.

IMAGE: 2009 Government Officials Monduli Training

Caption: Prof Benedict Mongula front, with local government officials from Monduli District. Chantal Phillips and Mesha Pius, graduate student, right at rear. Training for Village Information Officer pilot study, Monduli, 2009.

Credit: Chantal Phillips

At the initial stages the team or project instigator should be able to draw an accurate picture of the project context. In this project we were able to do develop the initial project documents for a large grant with the team of academics including librarians and faculty who were equally balanced between Tanzanian nationals and Canadians with international experience.

After that a baseline study was developed with the field work of Tanzanian faculty and graduate students who had multiple trips into the field were case studies would be developed selecting the best pilot sites with the support of local leaders and municipal government. Locals were used to translate in a trilingual multi-ethnic environment.

This heavy investment in building a collaborative environment within which the project can operate was validated over and over as we relied on the local officials to support decisions for the project and sustain it beyond the life of the grant.

Key results of working with local leaders:

1. Local elders identified priority information needs highlighting current problems with water, animals, children and health.
2. Local elders allowed project staff into council meetings.
3. Local elders appointed Village Information Officers giving them access to council meetings and the right to speak

Without the initial meetings with leaders there would have been less information about the types of information needed to support strong communities and less of an opportunity for project volunteers such as the Village Information Officers to be integrated into decision-making.

Given our choice of working with poor and rural Maasai villagers it was important to validate their cultural traditions and use successful information gathering practices from their cultural heritage. Our information officers were patterned on the tradition of using young people to run from boma (homestead) to boma spreading information. The use of a model which represented a successful cultural practice strengthened the sustainability of our idea and laid a foundation for the work which was easy to translate between three working languages and cultures.

The analysis of gender roles within the local environment also helped to identify the differences between women and men in the project environment. The creation of specific groups to ask for input from both men and women helped to clarify the differences in their priorities for information. It also used traditional models of a women's council and a men's council.

The importance of stressing the need for both a man and a woman to be an information officer from each village was justified by both the cultural practices and the differences stated in the baseline study between women and men. For example women get water and fuel wood; they are more concerned with water and

fuel management issues. Men prioritize livestock and veterinarian services and are concerned with grazing rights and market sales of animals. These different priorities are equally important and were represented in the life of the project due to the explicit goal of using gender analysis as a tool.

2010 All VIO Training

Caption: Village Information Officer Training at Nanja, Monduli District, 2010. Mesha Puis front row left. Chantal Phillips, rear centre with Monica Shank, Canadian student intern.

Credit: Lauren Giffen

3. Local Content

Relevant local content is the cornerstone of a successful library project. The problems of access to good quality local information remain whether we speak of books or digital objects.

The book is still a medium of great value in a project environment where electricity and internet services are in short supply. The rapid disintegration of print materials in humid tropical climates should be considered however. There is great value in the development of the local book publishing and sales industry in the project environment. And much more flexibility in providing the content in digital or print formats nowadays.

Several organizations in Canada are strong supporters of the development of the local book chain in the global South. CODE Canada works with a Tanzanian NGO The Children's Book Project. Through this connection I learned how local authors are involved in competitions for new book awards. The winning entry as judged by local experts is published and distributed to school libraries. This ensures quality book concepts are supported and new authors have a chance to thrive where there are few opportunities for growing a book audience.

The book chain can now include non-book items that are useful for information such as digital recordings and online resources. The inclusion of technologies to support the development of local content is very valuable in a multi-lingual country where reading culture struggles to thrive but oral cultures are going strong.

4. Challenges of Collaboration

The many challenges of team work are mirrored in the collaboration required with international projects. Some of these challenges are mired in the realities that poverty and inequality bring to bear on the project environment. Creating a project framework that anticipates obvious challenges is important. International colleagues in the Global South may not have access to credit cards, for example. Travel to North America can require credit card transactions for tickets, accommodations, transport and numerous other logistical details. Try not to assume that your colleagues share your financial reality.

Often we carry stereotypes about the lack of financial accountability in countries of the Global South which can alter our project outcomes. This can be reflected in the request for repeated and rigorous financial accounting which is expected by projects and in reports. The relative non-existence of receipts for goods, invoices for sales, itemized records for contracts and labour costs is often poorly understood. It would never occur to most people to question whether the project team has differing values and restraints placed on them by the financial transactions and imbalances in the work environment.

Trying to understanding different financial practices and values makes it easier to reach compromises that meet the needs for accurate reporting and outcomes which contribute to the project goals. Not sure whether the carpenter is charging too much? Don't use a foreigner to get estimates. A local project leader will be sure to use

the budget wisely if there is an incentive to get the most for their project and they feel ownership and responsibility to their fellow villagers or colleagues.

Is there generally a lack of paper receipts for work and no time sheets for labour charges? Determine from the outset whether it is best to bring receipt books to the project or create log books for staff and volunteers to track charges and labour expenses. Perhaps there is a customary practice which will work best if the project can adapt it to the reporting requirements. Try to be explicit about money matters from the start and discuss issues as they arise.

Governance structures and processes can reinforce strengths and weaknesses in project environments. If the balance of the project team is matched well then a partnership can respond when challenges arise. Locals can provide alternatives that work in the real world. Foreign nationals can bring alternative suggestions from other countries into the project to test and trial.

The time taken in good project design and balanced team composition pays off down the road. Likewise, the language(s) and materials the project operates can either reduce or increase barriers for participation. Is there a common language? Can time be taken for translation and interpretation during meetings or is it better to have bilingual and trilingual team members to facilitate cross-cultural encounters? The promotion of plain language usage and support for oral cultures and multilingual resources is another tool to increase the number of people who can actively support and participate in a project. Closing the door to multiple languages decreases the breadth of a project beyond the teams' boundaries.

After all is said and done and the project has achieved its stated mission there can still be issues to iron out which require practice on the ground and a review of what has been implemented. Despite our best efforts to reach out and support a district library with books that met local classroom reading lists we still found that the books were catalogued, but not on display at the library. It is a disappointment to think that if we hadn't visited the books may never have made it out of storage. Obviously, a crucial set of questions hadn't been asked. Perhaps there was a fear that the books would be stolen by students from the shelves, perhaps there was a belief that they should only come out when students visited to keep them in good condition and away from leaks in the roof. Perhaps there were other logical reasons to restrict access that we never considered. An open dialogue about all relevant issues that impact activities and outcomes can arise only if project partners feel their concerns and ideas are valued and listened to with respect. Clearly we hadn't spent enough time in the library to know what concerns existed. It seemed that when we requested that books be on display the librarians were happy to comply. A broader discussion would have been a more satisfying process with open ended questions that didn't suggest we were unhappy with the status quo.

5. The Results:

Our project outcomes were broad and can be illustrated with a few results:

1. Capacity development: strengthened the capacity of the University of Dar es Salaam to offer gender equitable programming on civil society and poverty reduction for students and civil society organizations through a curriculum renewal process. New programs developed and implemented, new courses being taught and students are getting field experience working with local groups.
2. Information resources and services development : increased, sustained and equitable access to gender inclusive information on civil society and poverty reduction primarily through the library of the University of Dar es Salaam and the Graduate Resource Centre of the Institute for Development Studies

at UDSM. Over 300 books were donated and catalogued for student access in the main library, a renovated graduate student centre and the district library of Bagamoyo.

3. Outreach: a successful case study engaged Village Information Officers and local officials to respond to information needs in remote and rural villages. A partnership with one district library led to better access to local language materials for students.

2009 IDS Graduate Resource Centre

Caption: IDS Graduate Resource Centre Opening Ceremony at UDSM. From left: Prof. Robert Mhamba, Library Technician, Ibrahim Abdallah and Prof. Rose Shayo standing in front of new shelving, books and theses.

Credit: Arja Vainio-Mattila

This international partnership was a success by several measures but one key indicator of success is the strengthening of ties between partners. There is no doubt that this project will lead to other successful collaborations. The partners in both countries would entertain new proposals to continue collaborations and hopefully this success will inspire others to take the time to build new projects in future.

The Tanzanian graduate students who were a multilingual and multiethnic group, and undergraduates from Canada were integral to the success of the project and allowed the work on the ground to be carried out as planned, managing all the inevitable bumps along the way. The successful completion of 2 Masters degrees during the project and the support to 3 PhD candidates was an important benefit of the project lifecycle. The fact that over half the Canadian students stayed or returned to work in Tanzania confirms the benefits of project work for professional development among this group of students.

The development of this project through a long partnership and engagement process was a cornerstone to its successes and offers an alternative to top down models of collaboration across borders which are often driven by tight deadlines and external indicators for success. The long lasting impact within the University through the curriculum renewal process and the strengthening of library facilities and collections is a benefit broadly shared and continuing to reap rewards for students. Lastly, thanks to the solid relationships between graduate students and villagers, a positive model of information access from local government officials to local leaders was demonstrated by the Village Information Officers. Using a variety of techniques and technologies this international partnership has many benefits. No doubt the next collaboration will build on the strong and deep ties we have enjoyed which continue to bind us together despite the distance between us.

References:

Braman, Sandra. "Theorizing the impact of IT on library-state relations in Information Technology". Leckie & Buschman (Eds.) *Librarianship: a new critical approach*. (pp.105-125). Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited. 2009.

Byrne, Alex. *Libraries and Democracy*. Keynote Paper for Seminar on *Libraries and Democracy*, Stockholm, 4 November, 1999, IFLA Stockholm. <<http://archive.ifla.org/faife/papers/others/byrne3.htm> 3 January 2011> 1999.

Chambua, Samuel E. and Benedict Mongula. "Building Civil Society Capacity for Poverty Reduction: A Report of the Base-line study carried

out in Monduli, January 2009." Institute of Development Studies, University of Dar es Salaam, 2009.

Golding P. and Murdock, G. Unequal information: Access and exclusion in the new communication marketplace, In M. Ferguson (Ed.), *New communication technologies and the public interest: comparative perspectives on policy and research*, (pp.71-83) Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.1986.

Maranz, David. African Friends and Money Matters: observations from Africa. Dallas, TX: SIL International and International Museum of Cultures. 2001.

Varpatoli, Aniko and Chantal Phillips. North-South International education Partnerships: Two Canadian Project with Tanzania. Canadian and International education/ education canadienne et internationale. 41: 3/4 (2013). <http://hdl.handle.net/10214/6369>

Vainio-Mattila, Arja, Chantal Phillips, Benedict Mongula, Alice Nkhoma-Wamunza. “democracy, literacy and poverty – can text messages bring the academic library to African leaders ?” *Partnership: the Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research*. 5.2 (2010).

Pieterse, Jan N. Multiculturalism and museums: discourse about others in the age of globalization. *Theory Culture and Society*. 14.4 pp.123-146. 1997.

Sey, Araba and Fellows, M. *Literature Review on the Impact of Public Access to Information and Communication Technologies*. CIS Working Paper No.6 Seattle: Information School, University of Washington.2009.

Tostensen, Arne, Inge Tvedten & Mariken Vaa . The urban crisis, governance and associational life. In Tostensen, Arne and Inge Tvedten & Mariden Vaa (Eds.) *Associational Life in African Cities: Popular Responses to the Urban Crisis*. (pp.7-26). Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute. 2001.

Bio: Chantal Phillips is an associate librarian who specializes in serving marginalized groups including remote, rural and ethnic communities at the University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus. Her work combines a background in development studies with an interest in Latin America and Africa. Her current research projects include “Building Civil Society Capacity for Poverty Reduction in Tanzania”, “Open Access and Copyright Issues Related to Knowledge Translation and Transfer for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture – University of Guelph Partnership” and “Veg Out! Crowdsourcing Keywords for Vegetable Crop Reports Online”.