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Building an Online Indigenous Knowledge Library on Culture, Environment, and History: Case Study of Elimu Asilia

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Building an Online Indigenous Knowledge Library on Culture, Environment, and History: Case Study of Elimu Asilia

By

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Definition

'Elimu Asilia' is Swahili equivalent for indigenous knowledge (IK)

- Passed over from one generation to another as stories depicting history, culture, nature, environment, health and events

- Knowledge gained and modified by community members through experience

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Background

African communities did not record events and accounts in writing

Mode of communication and transfer of IK was Oral

There is lack of Kenyan community stories and information on the web

Libraries have inadequate local content to contribute to global knowledge economy

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What is Elimu Asilia

Participatory platform for:

- Developing local content

- Contributing towards reduction of digital divide
- Sharing of community IK

- Promoting global online communities for indigenous knowledge

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AIM

- Raise awareness and promote appreciation of Indigenous Knowledge in all aspects of culture, health, environment and history

- Enhance participatory acquisition and availability of IK on culture, health, environment and history

- Enhance access, use & dissemination of IK in digital format

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Main Objective

To make IK available in electronic format and Specifically:

- Capture, document and preserve community memory
- Encourage community participation and ownership of digitized resources and promote knowledge sharing
- Process the knowledge and avail it digitally online to increase community presence online

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Scope

- Covers IK on culture, health, environment and history for the urban and rural population by involving children, community workers, elders and teachers

- Children to help identify and access community elders in certain instances

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HOW

NMK librarians, researchers and volunteers interact with local communities and children around regional museum libraries in the collection, preparation, preservation, sharing and dissemination of IK on culture, health, environment and history

For:

community memory, national sustainability and eco-social development

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Achievement of Pilot phase

- platform created for multi-cultural and widespread online communities for generation, owning, validation, sharing, education, use and exchange IK for heritage preservation

- Collected community IK preserved for the memory of the nation for eco-social development and sustainability

- Enhanced access and availability of local content so far collected online

Achievement of Pilot phase cont…

- Increased exposure of the community (children and elderly) to the online tools and ICT skills for generating, processing, digitally archiving and retrieving their own knowledge

- Scope of NMK libraries widened on the provision of relevant knowledge for education and development

- Improved interaction between communities and libraries using ICTs

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Up-scaling from Pilot Phase

Workshop to train field workers and librarians to equip them with:

- Research skills
- Interview techniques
- Social competencies (e.g. how to deal with elderly and community gate-keepers)
- Journalistic writing
- Media skills (video coverage, photography, preparation of collected raw data for uploading on the internet)

STORY TELLING SESSION: Blessing and Wealth by Amira Said Mselem (Community Elder) & NMK Ed. Officer standing



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Old lady Telling a Story of Hina Tree to Grand Children. Its Uses for Body Decorations During Weddings. The lady passed on Two Weeks Later





Mwanabwana Ahmed aged 14years narrating one of the story of Henna to the librarians





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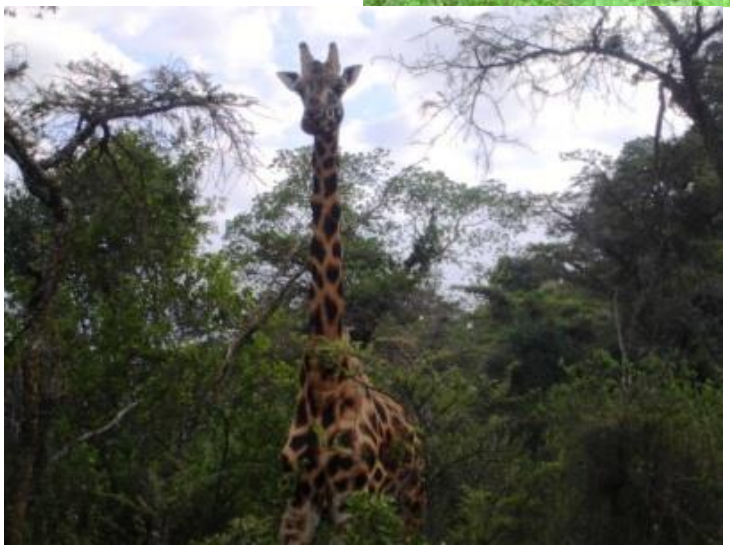
Environment: Some Faunas of Mt. Elgon







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Culture: Circumcision & Elders Taking Traditional Brew During Peace Making





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History: Mambrui by Prof Said, Sheikh Salim at Mambrui Secondary school with Madam Halima Ali (Principal)





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Actors

- Librarians
- Children
- Community
- Education Officers and Teachers
- Researchers
- ICT Personnel
- Collaborators

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Challenges of Building a Digital IK Library

- Data collection sessions determined by informants' availability. They prefer weekends
- Lack of funds for data collection and equipment . Most stories are collected using personal funds
- Informants look forward to some incentives
- Language translation and modification e.g. from Kiswahili intonation to English while retaining original meaning
- Storage medium and capacity is limited
- Lack of technical expertise in some stations
- Migration from analogue to digital medium

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Expected outputs

- Establishment of an online community platform for widespread participatory knowledge creation and ownership, validation, sharing, education, use, exchange and preservation

- Enhanced access and availability of local content

- Current, relevant and focused IK, available in digital format (through website, internet, mobile phones, CD/DVDs etc)
- Library profile appraised to information society level

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Expected outputs Cont…

- Community exposure to the internet through Library
- Enhanced social cohesion through Preservation of indigenous knowledge
- Community Publicity and Socio-economic empowerment for development

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ICT:

- After post-SCECSAL CORAT Africa meeting, there was need for an avenue to disseminate IK in the pilot phase

- After much research, a blog was settled on

- Aim of avenue was to make the information available and accessible to a wider audience to aid in education and development of Kenya and the rest of the world

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Why Blog - Strengths

- Blogging is free.
- Offers avenue for dissemination of indigenous knowledge, aiding in education and development
- Can accept various data formats
- Can be easily accessed by the communities from any internet enabled device like computers, palmtops and even mobile phones.
- Easier to transfer blogging skills than website content management.
- Interactive: Users can interact with the content and make comments without authentication.

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Blog Views as at 14th March 2013

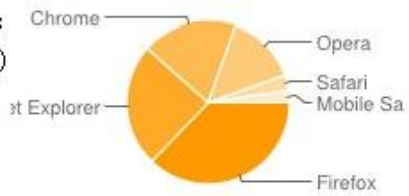
Pageviews by Countries



Entry	Pageviews
Kenya	1511
United States	656
Tanzania	258
United Kingdom	129
Germany	127
Russia	108
France	43
Ukraine	41
China	32
India	24

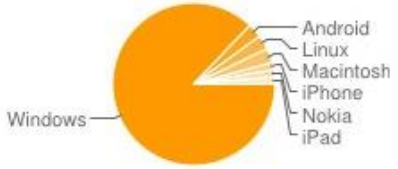
Pageviews by Browsers

Entry	Pageviews
Firefox	1499 (37%)
Internet Explorer	973 (24%)
Chrome	757 (18%)
Opera	569 (14%)
Safari	118 (2%)
Mobile Safari	96 (2%)
BingPreview	10 (<1%)
chromeframe	10 (<1%)
Mobile	8 (<1%)
NokiaBrowser	5 (<1%)



Pageviews by Operating Systems

Entry	Pageviews
Windows	2923 (87%)
Android	100 (2%)
Linux	84 (2%)
Macintosh	82 (2%)
iPhone	45 (1%)
Nokia	42 (1%)
iPad	30 (<1%)
BlackBerry	12 (<1%)
Other Unix	10 (<1%)
compatible	9 (<1%)



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Weaknesses of a Blog

- Content is classified under date, month and year, not disciplines like history, culture, environment etc.

- Lower level of technological capabilities i.e. does not allow interaction with various media formats like longer multimedia clips.

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Lessons Learnt

- Communities willingly gave their stories, and were eager to see the stories published and shown to them through the local libraries
- Communities deferred publishing endeavours and lack of opportunity to preserve their IK
- A lot on untapped IK is still out there

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Conclusion

- Story telling gives African oral culture a new face of documenting and sharing information
- The collected data is helping in filling the gaps on cultural and local knowledge left out by school syllabus, especially among primary and secondary school going children and youth
- Online access is the most cost effective mode of disseminating IK to the rest of the world as evidenced from over 3,400 number of hits on the Elimu Asilia Blog
- In particular the digital preservation of the knowledge for education and development of the Kenyan people

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Conclusion *cont…*

- IK enhances inter-cultural understanding and appreciation of other peoples culture. In turn this erodes stereotypes created by wrong perception of what people do not clearly understand about others' cultures

- IK enhances revival of knowledge transmission between generations. The act of bringing together elderly and younger people for common purpose of sharing and documenting knowledge for future reference is an assurance of continuity in learning

Appreciation

- On behalf of NMK and Elimu Asilia team I would like to appreciate the Goethe-Institut's support towards this very worthwhile initiative

- It is prudent that NMK/Goethe Institut cooperation continues to enable the process of participatory local IK data collection, documentation, preservation and dissemination to the rest of the world

THANK YOU

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