

INASP supports library consortia growth

Successes, challenges and ways forward

Strengthening southern library consortia has been an important component of INASP's work for many years. Better financial mechanisms, clearer structures and increased capacity to manage access to online research literature are some key features of recent consortia development.

INASP works to improve access, production and use of research information and knowledge so that countries are equipped to solve their development challenges. As part of this, INASP supports increased access to research and scholarly information via online research literature. One important aspect of this has been to support the development of the capacity of national library consortia — libraries which partner to coordinate activities, share materials and combine expertise — to deliver these resources.

INASP initially worked to strengthen library consortia in developing countries through the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI, 2002–2013). More recently, INASP has been implementing the Strengthening Research and Knowledge Systems (SRKS) programme (2013–2018). One of the goals of the SRKS programme is for library consortia to be able to secure, provide and manage access to online research literature.

This paper explores how consortia have grown and developed over the past three years of the SRKS programme. There is an African focus to this paper, as the main findings stem from what INASP learned during a regional meeting of seven of the strongest INASP-supported African library consortia (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe).



Getaneh Gebrehana, Director, Library System, University of Gondar, Ethiopia, talking with Emma Farrow, formerly of INASP, at the African Regional Meeting in July 2015.

Information was also gleaned from consortium “capacity checklists.” This is a tool, introduced by INASP, used for assessment, tracking and monitoring, and which provides a record of the organizational and structural development of consortia. For example, the checklist assesses “The ability to be able to communicate the value of the consortium and influence key decision makers,” which is broken down into several components, including: “The consortium is able to build strategic relationships with other relevant organizations” and “The consortium is able to make a case for investments in e-resources to university/research leaders.” Each consortium reports whether it

has the capacity to do each of the components and provides evidence of this when possible. The result is an overview of its organizational capacity in key areas. In addition to the checklists, INASP learns about consortium development from discussions on online fora, through country visits, participation of consortium members in INASP events, interviews and regular communication between INASP staff and members of the consortia Executive Committees. All of these sources - in addition to interviews with key members of the Executive Committees and INASP Associates - were drawn on to compile this Learning, Reflections and Innovation document.





INASP staff, Anne Powell and Mai Skovgaard, recently met members of ZULC in Zimbabwe.

Library consortia in context

The library consortia that INASP is involved with work in specific and unique circumstances, each with different national agendas and political landscapes. Yet discussions at the African Regional Meeting revealed common influences on their growth and development, particularly the following.

The consortia are only as strong as their members

The consortia are all governed by Executive Committees, with a chairperson who provides oversight. However, while the committee has an important coordinating and influencing role, it is reliant on member organizations to move forward. This is the case, for example, when it comes to the timely collection and delivery of payment for subscriptions for online research literature, and in establishing functioning working groups. This point is explored in more detail below.

Change takes time

As membership organizations, the consortia need to consult their members via annual general meetings or other specified

mechanisms before going forward with any proposed changes. Cost-sharing, for example, and any changes to this require agreement from the member organizations. In all instances, the members need to feel that they have been consulted.

Most work is voluntary

The majority of the time, the work of members of the Executive Committee and of member libraries is done on a voluntary basis, in addition to their daily jobs. This has implications for the amount of time and energy they can spend on consortium-related tasks and therefore affects the speed at which change happens.

Trends in consortia growth

Although each library consortium operates in a unique setting and faces particular challenges, there are a number of clear themes in their development over the past three years (the first phase of the SRKS programme). First, there are better funding mechanisms in place, including cost-sharing to secure online research literature, and membership fees. Second, the consortia now have stronger, clearer structures that help to share the workload, and they operate

based on a strategic plan, which helps to prioritize their work. Third, consortia demonstrate the ability to manage the access and use of online research literature.

Below is a detailed look at each of the key areas of growth, mainly using examples that arose during the African Regional Meeting, and commentary on some of the challenges that remain.

Better funding mechanisms have been put in place

By increasing their membership and putting into place structures to improve financial management, library consortia should be in a better position to plan for and procure online research literature and diversify their activities. The INASP capacity checklist includes aspects of securing reliable sources of funding and putting in place specific systems. In particular, the checklist recommends that each consortium: creates a clear membership agreement to ensure equitable collaboration and shared responsibilities; introduces a cost-sharing model for dividing costs between members/constituent institutions; becomes registered



as a legal entity with its own bank account; has a financial plan and/or is able to build a financial reserve; and has a strategy for growth. The Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Ghana (CARLIGH) is one of the library consortia that has grown substantially in this area, partially as a result of its relationship with INASP. It has invested its internally generated funds with the aim of financial sustainability. According to CARLIGH's capacity checklist, the consortium builds financial reserves through annual membership fees and periodic levies of members. Aided by this drive to recruit more members (eight new institutions have joined CARLIGH in the past two years), it is now in a more financially stable position. This has allowed CARLIGH to acquire two acres of land to build offices, conference facilities and hotels for future income generation. It has also conducted three self-funded workshops: on e-resources management, scholarly writing and mentoring.

The consortium capacity checklist recommends "developing a strong membership and financial base" in part by setting up a "cost-sharing model for dividing costs between members/constituent institutions". Those consortia that have successfully set up an equitable cost-sharing model have improved their financial situation. For example, the Malawi Library and Information Consortium (MALICO) introduced a cost-sharing model and as a result, in 2015, for the first time in many years, it was able to add a new publisher package (SAGE) to its subscription list. Working at a consortium level allows for economies of scale and therefore offers savings to the consortium members.

Other consortia are adapting their model as they realize that their organization's success is influenced by the way that costs are shared. The Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium (KLISC) recently



Sylvia Ogola of KLISC, Mac-Anthony Cobblah of CARLIGH and Mai Skovgaard of INASP at the African Regional Meeting, July 2015.

changed its payment model, as a KLISC representative described in an email to the Zimbabwe Universities Libraries Consortium (ZULC):

"...we have been using a payment model based on the type of institution, where we had classified our members broadly [as] public universities, private universities, research institutions/tertiary colleges.... The model ... worked well over the years but eventually, with increases in membership and ... institutions that have different sizes of user populations, we realized that it was time to rethink the payment model. This was also enabled by the fact that since [2014], the consortium management structure has been strengthened with the help of INASP and now we have an active Executive Committee in place that was ready to review the model.

"I did a set of recommendations and presented it to the Executive Committee during a meeting we held last year. The paper was based on ... [an INASP Consortium Development Coordinator] paper ... that discusses Library Consortia cost-sharing models... After discussions, it was agreed that KLISC adopt a method based on the size of the user population in each member institution. The proposal

was adopted by members during our AGM in May 2014 and we will start implementing it in 2016."

ZULC is also now re-thinking its model in response to its changing membership. With new, smaller universities joining, some of which do not have adequate funding, ZULC is considering changing its payment model and has already introduced staggered payments for financially weaker institutions. This was explained by the Chair of ZULC in an interview:

"...there are others who are slow paying — particularly ... the new ones, because most of them, a few that are private, don't have adequate funding as yet. They've shown commitment, so we've tried to take them on board by making special arrangements where, instead of paying the amount all at once, we have come up with a staggered payment model. This has been acceptable to most of them, and they seem to be eager to pay up using that model."

The consortia understand the importance of securing payments and having in place models that respond best to the needs of their members. Moreover, they benefit from the advice provided, not only

by INASP but by other consortia, as demonstrated by the email excerpt from KLISC to ZULC above.

Challenges

Despite the efforts of consortia to improve their membership and financial structures, late payment for subscriptions for online research literature by some members remains a challenge. In addition, not all members pay membership fees. For instance, only 20 of the 38 members of the Consortium of Uganda University Libraries (CUUL) pay membership fees. MALICO's members are not obliged to pay

and do so "out of good will," so its fees are inconsistent and unreliable. Clearly, it does not bolster a consortium's financial ability to access online research if it has members that cannot afford the membership fee.

One INASP Associate (who was a former Chair of a consortium) advises that, based on her experience, membership to a consortium should be dependent on paying fees: no fees, no membership. This stance is a real challenge for some of the consortia, however, as they are keen to maintain and grow their membership levels. Some consortia offer free access to selected resources in the first year to encourage membership.

Another challenge to the long-term financial sustainability of some of the consortia is their current reliance on donor funding. Among the consortia working with INASP, the Consortium of Tanzania University and Research Libraries (COTUL), the Consortium of Ethiopian Academic and Research Libraries (CEARL) and CUUL receive funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation (Sida) and therefore are able to supplement funding from members. CUUL and COTUL are working to increase the contribution of member funds for subscriptions and decrease the proportion provided by Sida. It will be an interesting challenge for these consortia to move from reliance on external funding to self-financing.

Stronger, clearer structure for sharing workload and strategic prioritizing

Library consortia have refined and strengthened their organizational structures with the aim of working more effectively as a network representing and working for member institutions. INASP's consortium capacity checklist recommends "developing strong and

responsible management structures" in part by establishing "operational working groups/committees responsible for coordinating strategy and activities in key areas." To this end, it was notable that at the African Regional Meeting there was a recurring theme of success among consortia in establishing working groups with the view to sharing the workload and expertise within the wider consortium.

For example, ZULC reorganized its structure so that it was better aligned with its strategy. Recognizing the importance of its working groups, ZULC reconfigured and strengthened them. As a result, the Advocacy and Marketing Working Group has coordinated marketing and promotional activities in member institutions, leading to an increase in the use of online research literature in most institutions. The Chair of ZULC explained this in an interview:

"We agreed to go on with 'workshopping' with INASP, and that helped us finalize our strategic plan. ... We've even published it and distributed it to our various stakeholders, to our various Vice-Chancellors, and they've got it in their offices, which has helped us show our Vice-Chancellors that we're really committed....

"But we want to move a step further in implementing the strategy, and I think this is where we are now, where we're saying it's good to have a document, it's good to have plans, but it's just as bad if they stay like that. So we're now working on coming up with tactical plans that are meant to operationalize the strategic plan through our work groups. We are now requiring each work group to come up with a tactical plan on how they are going to do certain things that we've said they should do — in what timeframes, at what cost, and who is the leader."

Correspondence between KLISC and INASP has revealed that the

"INASP is working on behalf of our interests, understanding the skills gaps, understanding what we market and advocate, understanding how we are negotiating and how we are using licences, how we are setting a price, our cost-sharing modalities among the consortium members."

Chair, CEARL, Ethiopia



consortium has established an “efficient working management structure.” It is managed by its Executive Committee, which is assisted by six working committees. The teams have already started implementing the strategic plan. The engagement of people in working groups has also helped to increase levels of commitment when it comes to taking part in activities. The Chair of ZULC explained:

“It appeared that people were reluctant to give commitment to activities ... to taking on responsibility, so they wouldn’t answer a particular email. They would let it go. But I’m happy to say that it’s changing now, and we’re demanding that we get positive feedback from them. And most of the Consortium members belong to work groups where they are actually required to do things. So that is changing.”

Other consortia are focusing on understanding and growing their membership. COTUL is continuing its efforts to engage institutions and build membership, new and lapsed, by talking to university leaders.

Challenges

Despite having drawn up terms of reference for each working group and identifying members, some consortia have not been as successful as ZULC and KLISC in operationalizing their working groups. Members are not responsive and/or responsible: they exist on paper but not in reality. For example, correspondence from CARLIGH indicated that “inactive working groups/sub-committees” is a major challenge.

Greater abilities to manage access to and use of online research literature

The consortia are in a much stronger position to manage access to and use of online research literature than before the start of SRKS. According to feedback from one INASP Associate:

“The capacity building that has been supported by INASP has seen positive developments in terms of staff being able to manage and sustain access to electronic

resources, [and] build repositories, just to mention a few cases.”

Further feedback from an INASP Associate revealed that: “The licensing and negotiations trainings that have been conducted by INASP have no doubt enabled the consortium to get skills that would enable it to handle e-resources subscriptions. ... We have a pool of members that are able to see these activities through.”

Some of the consortia have been involved in direct negotiations with publishers. This is partly attributed to the changes to structures and processes that have occurred as part of INASP’s efforts to strengthen the consortia. COTUL has improved its purchasing power and has “managed to stand on its own feet in terms of purchasing online databases.” Support from INASP has come from training workshops and coordination and negotiation with publishers, while Sida provided vital support in the form of funding for online research literature. In 2014, for the first time, CUUL was able to negotiate and subscribe to e-books through Proquest.

The consortia in Africa also demonstrated a confident and coherent approach in response to one publisher that was negotiating — with a high starting rate — with individual institutions rather than at consortium level. The consortia were able to use the online “communities of practice” group to share experiences and agree on a common response to this particular publisher. The consortia are now in a position to build on and develop the management of their online research literature for advocacy purposes, as described in an interview by the Chair of ZULC:

“...the subscriptions and e-resources have been a major success for our respective institutions. We have saved many a dollar through cooperative acquisition schemes. Our institutions have been able to afford taking out subscriptions to a whole suite of online research

“The most important thing that INASP has done for our consortium is enable us to get an awareness of various trends in the procurement of e-resources, in marketing and in information literacy.....

I like [INASP] because they don’t treat us in any way with inferiority. I find [the relationship] to be a mature partnership and in particular the things that INASP has introduced, such as ‘communities of practice’ or regional networks have ... broken the barrier ... [and] we are now able to share knowledge within our other consortiums and within the INASP team.”

Member of KLISC, Kenya





Helena Asamoah-Hassan, INASP Associate (right), talking to a participant at the African Regional Licensing and Negotiations workshop, November 2015.

literature. In my case, Harare Institute of Technology subscribes to 10 or 15 electronic resources, and for [a contribution, without which the consortium would only have been able to purchase] five or six of those platforms at today's rates.

"So through the consortium we've been able to leverage our numbers and have a substantial amount of resources that are very beneficial to our respective institutions. That's a major success, and our stakeholders, our Vice-Chancellors, our universities ... appreciate our effort. ... We've demonstrated the value of the electronic resources that we are getting into our institutions. But we need to go a step further in our thinking, in my view, ... to measure and evaluate the actual success, because it could be nominal. We could be saying that we're saving x amount of dollars, but the actual usage becomes critical."

Challenges

Some consortia members still lack confidence in their ability to manage and secure online research literature in the future. The early INASP licensing and negotiations workshops trained two people from each consortium, but the consortia Executive Committees wanted more individuals to be trained and confident in negotiations. In response to this, INASP organized

an African regional workshop on licensing and negotiations, with a training-of-trainers component.

In many cases, there is also a need for the consortia Executive Committee members who interact with publishers to improve their skills and expectations. This came out strongly in the African Regional Meeting, when the organizations took the first steps towards drawing up consortium principles (to mirror the principles of responsible engagement for publishers). KLISC requested that INASP provide support in introducing the members of the consortia Executive Committees to publishers, which is an intermediate stage before INASP withdraws from the relationship: "to hold our hands" as the publishers and KLISC get to know each other and KLISC familiarizes itself with the language used in negotiating with publishers. INASP will be supporting this phased handover by making introductions and working with the consortia to pick up and build publisher relationships.

External factors affecting consortium growth and development

Consortia operate within political contexts that determine, to some

extent, how they evolve. This can be positive or negative, or a combination of both. The consortia, in partnership with INASP, navigate and respond to these external influences which play a part in how they have grown over the past three years.

An INASP Associate with KLISC explains some of the ways that the policy climate influences consortia: "The political climate is a determining factor in [the] development of consortia in a number of ways. The goodwill that is afforded to a consortium may not be sustained throughout since management and administration [can change]. At one time, we may have a lot of support depending on the understanding and leanings of a certain political class, whereas at other times, such support may diminish. If the support came with financial support, it is possible that once it is withdrawn, then the consortium may suffer.

"Also, [the] political climate affects personnel in institutions of higher learning. Where the consortium is relying on the experience and capabilities of certain members and they happen not to be in [the] 'good books' of the political class, then it may experience turmoil.

"Also, the political class [is] in control of the economy and the way the economy develops has a strong impact on the consortium. We have seen instances where consortium funding is heavily affected by the economy in terms of exchange rate fluctuations and also starving of funding to institutions. Also, [the] introduction of some policies, such as in Kenya where procurement policies have been stringent of late, affects subscriptions."

Recognition by national governments

The effects of the political climate are not always negative. Government recognition of the importance of consortia and



investment in research and higher education can have a positive influence. For example, in Ethiopia the work of CEARL is in line with the national agenda and is recognized as such. At the African Regional Meeting, which took place in Addis Ababa, the Directorate-General of the Ministry of Education presented at the opening ceremony. This reflects the government's support but also points to the successful advocacy work undertaken by CEARL.

Policy in Uganda has changed the membership of CUUL, as universities have been mandated to join by the National Council of Higher Education. However, not all new members have paid membership fees. In Kenya, the government, through the Commission for University Education, has developed library standards for university libraries. Among them is provision of electronic information resources. All institutions must adhere to them for accreditation, which in practice they can only do by joining KLISC. This has encouraged the growth of the consortium and prompted member institutions to pay their dues.

Changes in funding for higher education

The growth and development of ZULC has been strongly influenced



Sophia Kaane of KLISC spoke about her consortium at the 2015 Publishers for Development conference.

by changes in national funding for higher education. ZULC and universities in Zimbabwe are facing uncertainty, as the government plans to cut grants to state universities by one third and then one half. Coupled with this is the growth in ZULC's membership as more universities have joined (as the new policy dictates). Similarly, the growth of the Kenyan university system is straining the consortium. Growing numbers bring new challenges, as well as potential benefits.

Advocacy and action at national level

KLISC has been actively trying to engage with national policy

frameworks. Its work has led to an Executive Committee member from the Commission for University Education becoming a liaison between KLISC and the Commission. In addition, a member of the KLISC Executive Committee sits on the Board of the National Research and Education Network and advocates on behalf of the consortium.

CARLIGH has links with the Ministry of Education in discussions about extending membership to colleges of education, although the depth of this relationship has been questioned: publishers have been able to access the Ministry, while the consortium found it hard to establish a meaningful connection and become involved in these discussions.

In the Asia region, the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka had been supportive of the consortium in that country, and formally agreed with the Coordinator of the consortium to liaise between the UGC and publishers. Unfortunately, a change of government has raised some uncertainties about future UGC and government support.

Support and funding from other organizations

Some of the consortia have developed relationships with other organizations and funding bodies,



Joel Sam of CARLIGH spoke about his consortium at the 2015 Publishers for Development conference.



Florence Mirembe of CUUL at the African Regional Meeting, July 2015.

which provide support similar to that which INASP has delivered. For example, CEARL worked with Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) and Addis Ababa City Government Culture and Tourism Bureau to deliver a training programme. It also collaborated with publishers and information providers, including Emerald, EBSCO and Springer, to train members of the consortium. COTUL still relies on Sida funding to purchase the electronic resources that it has successfully secured from publishers.

How INASP support has made a difference

INASP deliberately works to form partnerships and provide support to influence and assist library consortia on their journeys. This approach to building capacity is encapsulated in INASP's working relations with partners and, according to comments from the African Regional Meeting, in how its partners perceive those relationships. It is also reflected in the benefits that INASP brings to its partners.

Over the past three years, as part of the SRKS programme, INASP has taken steps to help the consortia make their organizations more robust and their structures and processes more sustainable.

It prompted each consortium to consider what it wanted to achieve and what its needs were, and then matched these to the support that INASP could offer. The result was a "strategic plan for INASP support" created by each consortium, which was used as a basis for planning training workshops and other activities during the first three years of the SRKS programme.

The activities included, for example, training in the management of electronic resources, workshops on licensing and negotiation skills, tailored workshops on strategy development, and a regional meeting that brought together various consortia. There were also online "communities of practice" for discussing licensing and negotiations, online research literature, and research access and availability, as well as competitions, grants and support for consortium members to attend conferences (such as the Publishers for Development conference in London, in June 2015, where two consortia members made presentations).

INASP recently began expanding beyond providing only skills-based training, taking a more tailored approach to developing skills and capacities, and focusing more on the organizational structure of the

consortia. In all its work, INASP's approach is one of partnership, with activities driven by partners and with the goal of sustainable outcomes. One method that INASP uses in providing ideas, advice and support is to engage two INASP Associates (former Chairs of library consortium) to work with consortia, either facilitating training workshops or giving advice in a mentoring capacity. These Associates are trusted, and their advice is greatly appreciated. According to one INASP Associate:

"The most appreciated approach has been giving countries an opportunity to identify their needs for support. This ... encourages ownership of most of the projects and hence commitment to ensuring success of the project."

When the consortia were asked how INASP has helped them in recent years, what was striking was the lack of a single answer: INASP has engaged in so many ways that it was hard to pinpoint the assistance that the consortia appreciated most. Support has been practical, such as training workshops and coordination and negotiation with publishers, as well as some less tangible inputs, such as sharing ideas and approaches. What was clear from talking to consortium members is



“Because of the fact that our consortium is partnering with a respected international organization, that in itself has made it easy for KLISC to penetrate through the governance system of the country and in so doing has earned respect in the country.”

**Member of KLISC,
Kenya**

that INASP has been instrumental in providing ideas that would bring about positive change. Coupled with these ideas was the prompting, encouragement and means to put them into practice. According to one consortium member, this prompting will be missed, as the consortium contemplated how its relationship with INASP will change as it becomes more independent (although INASP plans to maintain relationships with consortia, even once they are independent). The Chair of CEARL explained:

“First and foremost, the INASP office understands the challenge of negotiation and access to e-resources from different publishers in the world. One of the basic cases

is to get this access through INASP. Also, INASP is working on behalf of our interests, understanding the skills gaps, understanding what we market and advocate, understanding how we are negotiating and how we are using licences, how we are setting a price, our cost-sharing modalities among the consortia members. And [establishing] documents such as a strategic plan, working plans, action plans ... These are some of the basic tasks of our Consortium [that] benefit from working with INASP in Ethiopia.”

A member of KLISC stated:
“The most important thing that INASP has done for our consortium is enable us to get an awareness of various trends in the procurement of e-resources, in marketing and in information literacy..... I like [INASP] because they don't treat us in any way with inferiority. I find [the relationship] to be a mature partnership and in particular the things that INASP has introduced, such as 'communities of practice' or regional networks have ... broken the barrier ... [and] we are now able to share knowledge within our other consortiums and within the INASP team.”

One INASP Associate described the ways that INASP supports local ownership and needs:
“INASP has always challenged the consortium to consider its home-grown needs and works hand in hand ... to explore ways of meeting those needs. We have had the opportunity to tailor the trainings to our own local circumstances. For example, in consortium development, we have had the opportunity to look internally with the help of INASP and realize our strengths and weaknesses through strategic planning, ... [and] focus our energies on the weak areas.”

Through their association with INASP, consortia have also enjoyed an elevated standing in their countries, as explained by a member of KLISC in an interview:

“Because of the fact that our consortium is partnering with a respected international organization, that in itself has made it easy for KLISC to penetrate through the governance system of the country and in so doing has earned respect in the country. ... KLISC has earned respect as a result of partnering with an international organization like INASP.”

INASP has also been successful in building a network of consortia, creating platforms and occasions for members to share experiences and offer advice. According to one INASP Associate, in relation to KLISC: “We are ... able to work hand in hand with other consortia in the region, as well as call on INASP staff and suggested experts when we need further guidance.”

Remaining challenges

Several key lessons have been learned over the past three years of the SRKS programme. These are outlined below, along with the challenges that remain, and how INASP is already meeting these challenges with new activities and approaches.

Support organizational and structural changes within the consortia

Over the past three years INASP has adjusted its focus from the development of skills and knowledge of individuals, to addressing the organizational structure in which these individuals operate. Further work is needed to support organizational changes, such as ensuring the effective functioning of working groups. To this end, INASP has piloted different forms of support. This has included, for example, organizing workshops on strategy development for individual consortium. However, this is a relatively new area for INASP. In light of this, INASP is recruiting staff with expertise in individual and organizational capacity development.



Improve internal communication and commitment from members

Internal communication between the consortia Executive Committees and members is another area that could be addressed. This is associated with a lack of prioritization of the work of the consortium by its members. For example, some Executive Committees struggle to get members to respond to requests regarding online research literature and the payment of fees, to take initiative and to engage in working groups. CEARL reported that a couple of members of the Executive Committee did all the work related to fundraising and securing resources. A next step could be to further investigate why many members are generally unresponsive and disengaged, and how this could be resolved.

Boost consortium confidence in negotiating with publishers

In recent conversations at the African Regional Meeting, consortium representatives, by and large, did not report great confidence in their ability to maintain reasonable pricing with publishers. As the discussions about principles of engagement for consortia (during the African Regional Meeting) showed, the consortia think they are in a weak position and have a level of distrust of their publishing counterparts. INASP could address this by building on its current work engaging with publishers via the Publishers for Development forum, to create the best possible situation for consortia to deal independently with publishers.

Lessons learned and future directions

Over the past three years, INASP has learned a great deal about its



African Regional Licensing and Negotiations workshop participants and facilitators, November 2015.

partners, and appreciates that, as they develop and grow, the type of support they need may also change. The growth of consortia is continuous and non-linear, with each responding to different external influences. INASP will use the lessons that have been learned over the past three years to further improve and tailor the support it offers to consortia during the final phase of the SRKS programme. The key lessons learned, and some of the plans for moving forward, are outlined below.

Strong organizational structures are only a first step

Helping to build a framework for the consortia so that they have resilient structures with a shared workload (for example, in the form of working groups) seems to be essential. However, this should be seen as a first step, rather than an aim in itself. With strong foundations, the indicators are that consortia can expand and develop their work. One example of this is CARLIGH's purchasing land and planning to expand its sources of income. The consortia will need to develop innovative responses to the changing circumstance, as explained by an INASP Associate with KLISC: "Adoption of innovative methods can enable us to carry out extra activities. I have in mind what

other consortia are doing, such as CEARL in Ethiopia, which has been undertaking trainings on behalf of organizations and taking a certain percentage of the fees."

Taking an organizational development approach is vital

This might begin with an analysis of a consortium's organizational structures and membership, as a basis for advice and support. For example, an organizational analysis may reveal that relations with member organizations and internal communications and commitment are major barriers to a consortium's growth. While this is covered in the capacity checklist, lack of engagement in working groups and lack of communication or response to information and membership fees are challenges for many of the consortia. This might call for an intervention that explicitly focuses on the development, roles and responsibilities of membership bodies.

It is important to recognize the changing nature and goals of consortia

As consortia grow stronger and attract more members with



different concerns, their Executive Committees must also adapt to represent these changing interests. This was described by the Director of CEARL in an interview:

“When we started, we only focused on how to get electronic resources, but now we are expanding our interests, because the responsibility of consortiums depends on the interests of member institutions, especially how to address the skills gaps, ... show the products of the consortium to member institutions, [and] ... work with different international organizations.”

Assess and adapt online fora to ensure they are effective

The “communities of practice” groups were designed to provide a platform for peer exchange and support. There is evidence of that taking place (for instance, when negotiating with one of the publishers, as mentioned previously). An INASP Programme Officer suggested that there is anecdotal evidence that such groups are useful:

“Once access to e-resources is secured, it is important that these resources are being used. It is therefore great to see lively discussion among the librarians on our e-resources ‘community of practice’ this week sharing ideas and experiences with each other on the topic of discoverability.”

However, group members have reported that, as their work in library consortia is voluntary and falls outside their paid employment, they

do not have enough time to fully engage with the online groups and benefit from them as much as they would like. Additionally, the way that the groups have been designed and INASP’s way of working mean that some people are members of more than one group, affecting the extent to which they can engage in the discussions. This raises interesting questions about how INASP itself has been engaging with its online community members, and suggests the need to review the current approach.

The online forum for communication may be better appreciated and used as regional alliances grow. For example, the East African Community is encouraging and facilitating stronger regional ties. According to an INASP Associate: “I ... foresee a situation where CEARL, COTUL, CUUL and KLISC are able to work closely.”

Support and help to develop leaders within consortia

While the consortia have moved towards sharing responsibilities — for instance, having a rotating Chair — the personality and drive of key people within each consortium seems to be an important aspect of consortium development. The fact that both of the INASP Associates are former Chairs of their respective consortia, for example, helped these consortia grow: talented individuals with vision are an important aspect of organizational change.

INASP has also been working with the African Library and Information

Associations and Institutions (AfLIA) to promote leadership skills among the next generation of leaders

Concluding thoughts

It has been an important and enlightening exercise to reflect on how much the consortia have achieved, and where there needs to be further support to these organizations as they move towards independence. INASP is diversifying and expanding the type of support it offers as it focuses on building enduring capacity of the strongest consortia in the final phase of SRKS.

While continuing to build the skills of individuals, INASP is moving towards building organizational capacity as an explicit aim. In doing so, it will be using new approaches: mentoring, larger grants to support project work, collective problem solving, leadership development and input from experienced advisors and Associates. The remaining two years of the SRKS programme will be an exciting time for library consortia and INASP. ●

References

1. For more information on the Licensing and Negotiations workshop which included a training-of-trainers component see: blog.inasp.info/building-licensing-negotiation-skills-supports-sustainable-access
2. For more information on the Publishers Principles initiative see: www.inasp.info/en/network/publishers/responsible-engagement-publishers

INASP Team

Emma Farrow, Former Consortium Development Coordinator

Jon Harle, Senior Programme Manager, Research Access and Higher Education

Dr Fran Deans, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

