

# LIBRARY

## Eliminating illiteracy, eradicating inequalities and building an informed nation:

an overview of the Department of Arts and Culture's community libraries conditional grant strategy

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# Introduction

- Poverty and inequality continue to afflict post – apartheid South Africa. The gap between the haves and the have nots’ is widening.
- Community/public libraries are social institutions that can contribute positively towards the battle against poverty and tackling inequalities (**Stilwell 2011**)
- Special reference is made to the DAC’s community libraries conditional grant strategy as an initiative in tackling inequalities

## Aim of the paper

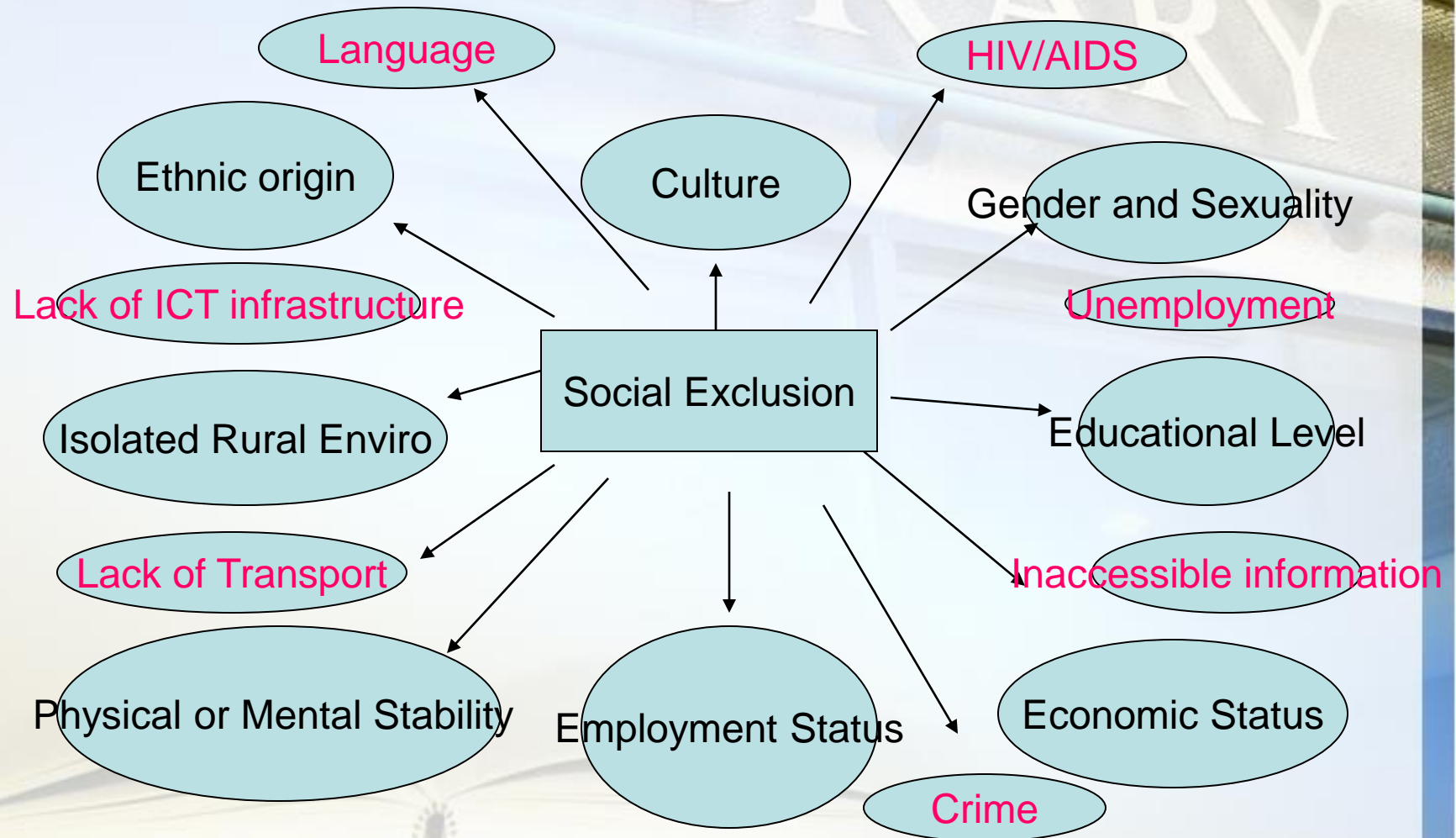
- Community libraries are considered as important institutions in SA. However their role in tackling inequalities has not been adequately recognised (**Davis 2009; Hart 2010; Stilwell 2011**).
- The aim of this paper is to explore the role of community/public libraries in the eradication of illiteracy and tackling inequalities in SA.



# Brief history of community libraries in SA

Date	Action
1818	Record of first public library established in Cape Town for youth development by English settlers
1910-1930s	Missionaries, white liberals and few black intellectuals start collections in some English speaking areas in SA.
1930- 1940s	Carnegie Corporation provides funding to develop community libraries in struggling white communities and non- white communities.
1948	Apartheid. The separate development policies resulted in the decline and demise of library services for non- white communities
1994 -	SA inherited a mixed library legacy. Governance and administration is hampered by Schedule 5, part A of Act no.108 of 1996 of the constitution; it does not clarify how provincial governments or municipalities should manage libraries.
2006-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•KPMG Status Quo investigation</li><li>•Establishment of the National Council of Library and Information Services (NCLIS)</li><li>•Draft Library and Information Services (LIS) charter</li><li>•Draft Community Library and Information Service Bill</li><li>•Rollout of the conditional grant to transform library services in SA</li></ul>

# Factors related to Social Exclusion (adapted from Stilwell and Munyua 2009)



# Community libraries in the fight against illiteracy and eliminating inequalities:

## Social Exclusion

- Provide relevant information, training and facilities to address these challenges
- Collaboration with other government departments, organizations and the private sector is essential.
- This is happening in SA but there is still room for improvement (**Raju and Raju 2010; DSAC North West 2008; Stilwell 2011**)

# Community libraries in the fight against illiteracy and eliminating inequalities:

## Illiteracy

- Literacy is a critical element in a democratic society
- Approximately over 2.5 million people over 15 years cannot read and write in SA (**SAIRR, 2009/10**). Functional illiteracy is also a major challenge in SA.
- Non literate citizens are unable to fulfill their potential and play a part in society (**Mchombu and Cadbury 2006**)
- Community libraries can provide resources and facilities for literacy training.
- Only 23% of SA community libraries offer this service (**Raju and Raju 2010**)



# Community libraries in the fight against illiteracy and eliminating inequalities

## Information Communication Technologies

- The use of ICTs in our lives is almost unavoidable
- In 2007 only 6% of South African households had access to internet at home (**Hart 2010**)
- To play role in reducing the digital divide (**Hart, 2010 citing Tlabela et al., 2007**)
- Library staff can offer computer and information literacy training to communities.
- Computer and information literacy play a critical role in Life long learning.
- Life long learning is described as an increase in skills, knowledge and the capacity to reflect (**Raju and Raju 2010**)

# Why are community libraries important?

## **Community libraries play the following roles; They:**

- Provide public access to knowledge and information
- Promote reading and literature to all ages
- Enable learning and literacy from cradle to grave
- Serve as a hub to deliver essential services
- Act as a cost saver for society by combating ignorance, alienation, isolation, division and lack of aspiration
- Stand for important values in society i.e. equality of opportunity, intellectual freedom, engaged citizenship etc. **(CILIP 2011)**

# DAC's conditional grant strategy

KPMG ( Audit, Tax and Advisory Body)

- Tasked in 2006 to investigate the status quo of community libraries
- Major finding- **1537 libraries in the country**
- Developed countries have a ratio of **216 libraries per million people**. In SA the ratio stands at **30 libraries per million people**.

The conditional grant project started in 2007, 1.3 billion rands was allocated to transform urban and rural community library infrastructure, facilities and services.

The project is ongoing.

# DAC's conditional grant strategy contd.

According to the DAC, reasons for rolling out this project are:

1. The unfunded mandate challenge at local government level: municipalities can refer to Schedule 5, part A of the constitution of SA Act no. 108 of 1996 and state that they are not responsible for funding libraries
2. Improve access to information
3. Develop skills of library staff and the communities they serve
4. Raise public awareness of community library services
5. Deal with disparities in community library service provision
6. Take part in social cohesion and community building



# DAC's conditional grant strategy contd.

## Successes

- Introduction of the DAISY project-providing facilities and resources for the visually impaired
- Funded the reprinting of African literature classics
- Boost collections
- Upgraded or installation of ICT infrastructure
- Hiring of additional staff and staff training
- Funding outreach programmes such as literacy initiatives and others

*Table 1: No. of new community libraries and upgraded community libraries funded by the DAC's conditional grant project (DAC 2011)*

Province	No. of newly established public libraries	No. of upgraded public libraries
Eastern cape	1	32
Free State	4	18
Gauteng	3	4
Kwazulu Natal	4	n/a
Limpopo	2	15
Mpumalanga	3	13
Northern Cape	3	12
North West	4	22
Western Cape	1	n/a
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>116</b>

# DAC's conditional grant strategy contd.

## Challenges

- High staff turn over and shortage of skills- this is related to the contract nature of employment.
- The unfunded mandate- Provinces struggle to reach agreements with municipalities regarding maintenance of the libraries
- Moratorium at provincial and municipal levels
- Infrastructure related problems- relating to tenders, cooperation with the Department of Public Works and maintenance

# Recommendations

- **Support from government and other agencies.**
- **Monitoring and evaluation.**
- **Legal framework for uniform norms and standards.**
- **Empirical research.**
- **Collaboration and cooperation**
- **LIS staff in community libraries should strive to do more to enhance equality in South Africa.**

# Conclusion

- Government is committed to improving social cohesion in SA, however implementation is not always easy.
- There is a need for strong policy to cater for all needs of the LIS sector, its services and implementation in SA.
- More resources are required to build new libraries, upgrade current facilities, improve access to ICTs and facilitate outreach programmes, the DAC needs the support of others to transform library services in the country.
- An informed citizenry can effectively participate in good governance and lead fulfilled lives.



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# Thank you

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