

[SMR International Briefing](#)
[August, 2010](#)

INFORMATION AFRICA ORGANIZATION (IAO): RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION'S WORK

A basic premise of successful work in the development and humanitarian field is focused attention to raised awareness about the work of the organization. For the organization to perform at the highest levels of excellent, the identified “market segment” (to borrow a phrase from the business community) must know about the organization and its work. The organization – whether it is a non-governmental organization (NGO) or other non-profit – must ensure that all appropriate parties understand organizational goals. Especially important is the quest for potential future participation in the organization’s work, including (but certainly not limited to) financial support.

The Information Africa Organization (IAO) is a Nairobi-based NGO committed to educating Kenya’s large youth population in information and communication technologies (ICT) and knowledge management/knowledge services (KM) skills. Registered by the NGO Council of Kenya in late 2009, IAO has moved beyond the NGO’s initial stages and has begun to reach out to interested contacts internationally. The following report documents some recent awareness-raising activities.

Since January, 2010, a number of volunteer activities have been undertaken on behalf of IAO. Much of this activity has been in the form of awareness raising and/or gathering information about the workings of other NGOs and not-for-profit organizations. The result is that IAO now has an informal body of knowledge that can be shared within the organization for the further development of IAO’s programmes.

Primarily, what has been achieved is a networking exercise, giving IAO’s board and staff contacts and connections that have potential for future benefit to IAO.

Several articles about IAO’s work have been published by SMR International, a management consulting company based in New York, NY USA. The company specializes in strengthened knowledge management and knowledge services for organizational effectiveness, with particular emphasis on corporate and organizational knowledge strategy development. A current assignment in Nairobi enables SMR International to provide shared expertise to IAO.

Among the published articles has been an SMR International e-Profile of IAO’s Executive Director William Mibei and Vice-Chairman Moses Akaranga. The Information Africa Organization (IAO): [The Birth of a Movement - Kenya’s Focus on Youth Opens the Door to Amazing Potential for the Country](#) was published in January, 2010. In May, 2010 SMR International published a Special Report, [Closing the Digital Divide: Dealing with Drucker’s “Responsibility Gap” In Africa - Kenya Anticipates The ICT/KM Future With Enthusiasm](#). Additionally, several reports of IAO activities have been published at SMR International’s corporate blog, [SMR Int'l – Knowledge Services Notes](#), including a home page widget on the then newly formatted [SMR Int'l site: Information Africa Organization \(IAO\): What Do You Think?](#)

On an informal basis, general discussions – led by SMR International team members – have taken place in San Francisco, Santa Cruz, CA and New York, NY USA during March-August, 2010. In May, 2010, Marcie Stone, former Director of Information Services, United States Defense Technical Information Center and now a private consultant and writer in information management/KM/ knowledge services, introduced the IAO concept – with links to relevant documentation – to Don Horowitz, judge and advocate for justice through ICT, author of the *Access to Justice Technology Bill of Rights*, and leader of the [Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal](#) project. Mr. Horowitz has sent concept notes and SMR Int'l links to faculty members at the Seattle University Law School.

Also in May, Guy St. Clair, SMR International's president met with the IAO Board of Directors. Following a presentation describing a frame of reference for IAO ([A Second Chance: IAO's Splendid Mission – Taking Social Responsibility Seriously](#)), board members and invited guests discussed possible future activities that might be undertaken. At about the same time, in meetings with leaders of the UN-HABITAT Partners and Youth Branch, efforts were made to establish mutually beneficial networks for continued discussion and, where feasible, cooperative or collaborative activities.

In June 2010, an SMR International blog post: [Advice for a New NGO – or Any Organization – for ICT/KM/Knowledge Services Strategic Learning](#) was published on June 1, 2010, followed by discussions at the International Annual Conference of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) held in New Orleans, LA USA. The meetings focused on the need for strategic learning and, particularly, in developing ICT and KM skills amongst Kenyan youth. The first programme was sponsored by the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), and details are available at the SMR Int'l blog post: [CCC's "Beyond the Book" – Specialized Librarianship and KM/Knowledge Services in Africa](#), with the audio available [here](#) or the transcript [here](#) (14 June).

Prior to the discussion, the programme included a recorded presentation from Stephen Kizza, Assistant Librarian, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources in Kampala, Uganda, who spoke about the need for moving forward with strategic learning and resource development for specialized libraries in his country (Kizza was to have delivered his presentation in person but was unable to obtain a visa from the U.S. Embassy in Kampala).

Participating in the discussion was Dennie Heye of Shell, Inc. in The Hague, who has since communicated with IAO Executive Director Mibei about possible collaboration leading to video training, computers, etc. to assist IAO in achieving its goals. Heye expects to identify colleagues in his network who might participate and follow up with IAO in the near future.

A second IAO-focused presentation, not recorded, was delivered on 15th June to the members of SLA's Environment and Resource Management Division at the conference.

Following the June SLA conference, discussion continued during July and August with management leaders of several companies and organizations, focussing on corporate social responsibility and leading to a variety of concepts and strategies that will be reported to the IAO Board of Directors. Additionally, [Littleton M. Maxwell](#), E. Claiborne Robins School of Business, University of Richmond, VA USA described the school's work with the [Circle of Peace School](#) in Makindye, Uganda and indicated the school's interest in working with IAO in a possible partnership or information exchange.

In meetings with leadership of [The Peter Drucker Society of New York](#), discussion focussed on possible benefits for IAO from from the society's new programming in corporate social responsibility. The current plan is to produce a review/study (tentatively titled "Developing the Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy: Strategic Learning and Training for ICT/KM/ Knowledge

Services – The Opportunity in Kenya”) for possible publication by [The Drucker Institute of Claremont Graduate University](#), Claremont, CA USA and/or presentation to other chapters of the Peter Drucker Society. The study will give attention to IAO as a potential beneficiary of corporate responsibility strategy.

A related effort were discussions with senior management of [Green Team USA](#), the leading international communications agency for the sustainability movement, to discuss funding opportunities and branding/communications options for IAO. Similarly, meetings with donor management teams or other involved staff at organizations, corporations, and philanthropic organizations focussing on sustainability and development/humanitarian activities sought to identify processes and activities which might be adapted by IAO. These included meetings with with management leaders at the [Science, Industry, and Business Library of the New York Public Library](#), to identify resources which might be shared with IAO. A specific first step will be shared training curricula and learning tools which can be adopted by IAO’s training and development managers. Continued contact will be made with management leaders at SIBL/NYPL.