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**Soul Beat Africa: Communication for Change - Experiences - African Progressive Librarian and Information Activists' Group (PALIAct) - Africa**  
<http://www.comminit.com/africa/experiences/Pds72006/experiences-3861.html>

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### **Programme Experiences**

#### **African Progressive Librarian and Information Activists' Group (PALIAct) - Africa**

##### **Summary**

The African Progressive Librarian and Information Activists' Group (PALIAct) is an initiative of the Department of Applied Social Sciences at the London Metropolitan University. PALIAct is a network of information activists seeking to develop people-oriented information services decided upon by workers, peasants, pastoralists, fisher people and other marginalised individuals and groups whose information needs have not been met in Africa. PALIAct operates on principles of equality, democracy and social justice and sees the right to relevant information as a basic human right.

##### **Main Communication Strategies**

The idea of PALIAct emerged out of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) meeting in Glasgow in 2002, when a number of participants agreed that a new approach to meeting Africa's information needs was needed.

PALIAct provides a vision of a people orientated information service that could meet the information needs of workers and peasants. The initiative is based on the opinion that African librarians need to rethink what a public library is all about, in terms of what is needed, what will be used, and what is sustainable in Africa. It is hoped that new and more viable visions will result. In particular, they believe that public libraries in Africa need to start to be more aggressive and introduce services that are attractive to users. Librarians must begin to know their potential users, and not only assume that they are school children. More dynamism and more involvement of the user community, extended to all -users are required for the improvement of public library services.

PALIAct aims to explore new methods of providing an information service by forming partnerships with progressive information and other workers within Africa and overseas and with the people they are servicing. "An important principle that guides PALIAct is that there should be a strong partnership between information professionals, communities and groups. This is to ensure that librarians do not work in isolation as often happens now. At the same time, it is important that whatever new services are developed reflect the real needs of communities as decided by the communities themselves. For this to happen, it is essential that communities are active partners and decision-makers in planning and monitoring services."

PALIAct is still in the process of building its network of activists and supporters. It has so far published the first issue of <http://www.seapn.org.uk/PALIAct-new.html> PALIAct Ideas and Action. This is an irregular publication which carries news on developing the PALIAct vision to help create a people orientated information service. It will bring news about innovative services, experiences and ideas from all countries and continents where similar struggles for creating "information equality" are taking place.

In addition two pilot country centres in Kenya and Ghana have been set up. The

Kenya PALIAct centre is now on the organising committee of the next World Social Forum (WSF) to be held in January 2007 in Nairobi.

**Development Issues**

Democracy & Governance, Economic Development.

**Partners**

Progressive Librarians Guild, London Metropolitan University, Bibliotek Samhde.

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<"/redirect.cgi?r=http://www.seapn.org.uk/PALIAct-new.html">PALIAct Website

**Source**

E-mail received from Shiraz Durrani on June 18 2006.

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