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Organisations

New African library group in development

A new organisation has been initiated by a group of African librarians and information workers '...to help create a people-orientated information service that can meet the information needs of workers.'

The embryonic African Progressive Librarian and Information Activists' Group (Paliact) states: 'We recognise that current "leaders" in the African information field have done little to break the colonial and imperialist policies and practices in meeting the information needs of working people in Africa, or to make the profession more relevant to the needs of African librarians and information workers. We have therefore decided to take the initiative to set up an alternative organisation.

'Paliact... will also seek to set up an alternative information service in partnership with the potential users of the service...' (*IFLA Journal* Volume 31).

Membership will be open to all who agree with the vision and principles of the group, and initially pilots for the new group are being set up in Ghana and Kenya.

In the UK, Shiraz Durrani, Senior Lecturer in Information Management, London Metropolitan University, is the main contact. Support, including financial and the exchange of best practice, is important, says Shiraz, both for the success of the pilots and for the development of relevant information services in Africa: '...although the projects will take off with voluntary support from local communities and librarians, each pilot needs resources to employ some local staff who are committed to the ideas of Paliact. Another need is books and equipment.'

A mechanism to exchange best practice and ideas from Britain to Africa is also envisaged. The London Metropolitan University-based Quality Leaders Project (Youth)* is currently developing short courses and modules which would be appropriate to develop staff and services in Paliact countries.

The plan is to launch PALLiAct at the IFLA conference in South Africa in 2007.

Support from CILIP members should be directed to Shiraz Durrani (020 7133 5017; s.durrani@londonmet.ac.uk).

* (www.seapn.org.uk/qlp.html)