

# Chapter 13

## Managing Public Sector Records in Namibia

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### ABSTRACT

*The benefits of records management have been well documented; from preserving evidence and supporting accountability and transparency, to preserving nations' documentary heritage. Governments as with many other organisations have realised the importance of records management for good governance and have put in place policies, programmes and procedures aimed at managing their records effectively and efficiently. In spite of the many benefits that can be derived from records management and efforts made, challenges continue to be reported. This chapter discusses these challenges within the context of the records management programme of the Namibia public sector. The author cites studies conducted by various researchers on records management in a variety of public sector institutions ranging from central government, regional and local authorities and academic institutions. Some recommendations to address a number of the challenges identified are presented.*

### INTRODUCTION

Governments as with all organizations need to keep records of decisions and transactions to meet the demands of accountability and to meet their own information requirements. As governments strive to improve service delivery, utilize resources efficiently, respond to citizens' needs and be open about decision-making processes and procedures, they have realized the need to manage and utilize information effectively. Records management is one of the pillars of good governance. However some governments, particularly in Africa, have failed to manage records effectively. Records management challenges facing the public sector in East and Southern Africa Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) region have been highlighted by several writers (Keakopa, 2003; Makhura, 2001; Mutiti, 2001; Wamukoya & Mutula, 2005; Ngulube & Tafor, 2006; Sejane, 2004). These challenges facing ESARBICA are summarized by Mnjama and Wamukoya (as cited in Wamukoya & Mutula, 2005, p.75) and they include:

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- Absence of organizational plans for managing e-records;
- Low awareness of the role of records management in support of organizational efficiency and accountability;
- Lack of stewardship and coordination in handling paper as well as electronic records;
- Absence of legislation, policies and procedures to guide the management of both paper and electronic records;
- Absence of core competencies in records and archives management;
- Absence of budgets dedicated for records management;
- Poor security and confidentiality controls;
- Lack of records retention and disposal policies; and
- Absence of migration strategies for e-records.

Poor records management in the public sector in ESARBICA seems to persist. Ngoepe (as cited in Ngoepe and Makhubela, 2015) refer to poor records management in the public sector in South Africa. Marutha and Ngulube (2012) conducted a study on the management of electronic records in the public health sector of the Limpopo province in South Africa whose findings confirm this observation by Ngoepe. They found problems of shortage of filing space, missing files and misfiling, damage to records and shortage of staff. Chaterera, Ngulube and Rodrigues (2014) report of most government departments congested with semi- and non-current records kept in corridors and on the floor in offices. In Uganda, Luyombya and Sennabulya (2014) identified the following records management problems during their study into existing infrastructure for managing public archives in Uganda: a lack of national policy for archives management; absence of assigned responsibilities for archives management; limited resources and facilities including low staffing levels and inadequate buildings and equipment. The Uganda National Archives had not set standards to be followed by ministries, departments and agencies.

With regards to electronic records, Kemoni's (2009, p. 190) drew the following conclusion:

*The empirical research findings indicate most countries in the ESARBICA region lack capacity and face various challenges in managing electronic records. These relate to: lack of policy and legislation, standardization, authenticity, capacity building, physical infrastructure and lack of awareness among recordkeeping professionals and government authorities on electronic records management issues.*

Mutsagondo and Chaterera (2016) concur on the issue of policies from their observation that many ESARBICA members do not have archival legislation that specifically caters for the creation, use, maintenance and disposal of electronic records. Luyombya and Sennabulya (2012) reported a lack of information and communication technology infrastructure at the National Archives of Uganda. In South Africa, Marutha and Ngulube (2012) found an electronic document and management system which was not in use in the Limpopo province hospitals; as well as absence of disposal plan and disposal authority for e-records.

Namibia shares common concerns regarding records management with most ESARBICA member countries. This chapter discusses the management of records in the public sector in Namibia, highlighting the current situation and existing problems and concludes with recommendations on how the management of public sector records in Namibia can be improved.

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