GROWING FROM CHALLENGE

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SAMP – the Swedish-African Museum Programme:

- * is a network joining museums in Sweden and in African countries;*
- * helps to establish institutional twinships (not institutional support);*
- * encourages concrete actions by museums to change themselves;*
- * wants to initiate exchange, not aid, in a dialogue between one Swedish museum and another museum in an African country.¹*

Alpha Oumar Konaré presented the idea that gave birth to SAMP when visiting Stockholm in 1984. He was at that time vice-president of ICOM; today he is the first democratically elected President of the Republic of Mali.

In May 1989 museum professionals meeting in Sweden further developed SAMP's ideas. During a period of one week Africans and Swedes shared their educational methods and ideas and developed new ones around the concrete objects they had brought along, with «Death a part of life» as the common denominator. The ideas were further analysed in a two-day seminar, which included more professionals, to discuss «The concept of culture in a museological perspective». Thirteen twinships were established as a result of this meeting.

Ten years later, at the beginning of 1999, this programme for museum development through professional exchange, comprises 12 participating Swedish museums (2 national museums, 7 regional

and 3 local museums) and 13 African museums from 9 countries and 4 island countries in the Indian Ocean.

The institutional twinships in the programme are:

Östergötlands länsmuseum, Linköping – Musée

Historique d'Abomey, Bénin

Bohusläns museum, Uddevalla – Kisumu Museum, Kenya

Torekällbergets museum, Södertälje – Musée d'Art de d'Archéologie, Antananarivo, Madagascar

Älvsborgs länsmuseum, Vänersborg – National Museum of Namibia, Windhoek

Malmö City Museum – District Six Museum, Cape Town, South Africa

Kristianstad läsmuseum – Swaziland National Museum, Lobamba

National Natural History Museum, Stockholm – National Natural History Museum, Arusha, Tanzania

Skansen, Stockholm – Village Museum, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Skellefteå Museum – Nayuma Museum, Limulunga, Zambia

- 126 Länsmuseet Gävleborg, Gävle – Moto Moto Museum, Mbala, Zambia
 Värmlands länsmuseum, Karlstad – Mutare Museum, Zimbabwe
 (the island-project:) Gotlands länsmuseum, Visby – the Regional Museums in Madagascar, The National Museum of Seychelles, Le Centre de Documentation et Recherches Scientifiques, Comores, and The Regional Museums Network of Réunion.

There are still many museums from all over the African continent as well as from Sweden who would like to participate in SAMP. Among Swedish museums looking for a SAMP partner are Ekomuseum Bergslagen, Länsmuseet Västernorrland, Helsingborgs Museum and Sjöhistoriska museet, Stockholm.

In order to continue to develop and to facilitate the exchange within SAMP special efforts have been made regarding various kinds of training activities. One professional recently said that SAMP is training, using the word not in a strict and traditional way to mean courses and lessons, but to refer to the total approach in the exchange programme.

This implies that a SAMP project is not only a good project among other good museum projects but has specific requirements. It should

Include new initiatives in professional methods and ways of working

Address new public groups and new collaborators;

Make the element of exchange visible throughout the project. The two museums share the realization of an activity, either

first in Sweden and then in Africa or vice versa.

Produce a transparent comprehensive budget and permit no capital investments, within the part of the budget financed through SAMP.

Every single SAMP project must be defined by the two museums working together and should preferably be carried through in collaboration with other institutions and associations. In the long run the project should include all museum staff and have an effect on all types of museum work. We can therefore claim that SAMP today represents a network of 500 museum professionals exchanging ideas and experience. The network comprises museum directors, specialists in academic subjects – such as Art History, Archaeology, Ethnology, Ethnography, History and Natural Sciences – as well as education and information officers, technicians – such as photographers, carpenters and taxidermists – secretaries and computer technicians.

The network is maintained and extended by different means such as e-mail, web pages, newsletters, meetings and projects. All the museums taking part in SAMP are connected by e-mail and many of them have web sites. When setting up these connections SAMP also offered training for at least three persons in each institution. The training was followed-up with a workshop in Namibia for one person from each African SAMP-museum. At the workshop the participants learnt, among other things, to make their own web pages. The SAMP Newsletter is prin-

128 ted in Tanzania once a year and will also be on the Internet in the near future. In addition to various meetings organised within the twinships there is one meeting a year organised for all the museums in the programme. We have found that, in order to really get to know each other, meetings are a necessary complement to other forms of communication. Professor Ki-Zerbo, historian and politician from Burkina Faso, asked at a partnership conference in Stockholm 1997: «How can you work with someone you don't know?»

The Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lena Hjelm-Wallén, quoted Professor Ki-Zerbo in her opening speech at the SAMP-meeting at Skansen in 1998 and added: «This is not only a result of partnership but also a prerequisite for it».

At a meeting in 1997 the participants identified a need for common working tools. Late in 1997 we therefore initiated a Management Development Programme (MDP).

An extensive investment in training was offered to two professionals from each museum. More than twenty professionals have so far participated. A session for museum directors had its first meeting in December 1997 at the National Museum of Namibia in Windhoek and concluded the whole MDP in November 1998 at Skellefteå Museum, Sweden. In between, the group of twenty project managers met twice, first in Linköping, Sweden in February 1998 and then at Musée Historique d'Abomey, Benin in October the same year.

The major part of the MDP consists of studying Logical Framework Analysis, LFA, a method used for project identification, project documents and reports. This

method has now been made available for the mutual exchange projects in SAMP. Other managerial tools such as methods for accomplishing building plans, time management, conflict management, personnel management and productive meetings were also taught and developed in group sessions and exercises by the mixed Swedish and African participants.

Those who participated expressed their satisfaction in sentences such as: 'We got to know how important the objectives are', 'Our role as managers was strengthened', 'The MDP improves the twinning arrangement through a mutual language' and 'We've become more aware of what SAMP stands for'.

In the MDP the participants were also asked to analyse the management of SAMP. The most urgent task was seen to be involving governing structures above the level of the museums, such as the boards. Tasks were set for the museum directors, project managers and coordinators. Each museum director should be able to provide information about all SAMP-museums and projects. The director should also influence and inform the museum board, train the staff and make sure that SAMP is included in the museum's objectives and budget. The role of the project managers was likewise defined. The tasks for the SAMP coordinator were analysed and adapted according to the new needs of the museums. Subsequent to the training in management this means, among other things, that the coordinator must help with more information to politicians and decision-makers. A special coordinator is needed for every project comprising more than four museums. This will be one element in the ongoing decen-

*Akatoka Iseteketo from Limulunga, Zambia, visiting local women, baking bread, at Varuträsk, Sweden.
Photo: Krister Hägglund, Skellefteå museum. From Kulturens kraft, published by Sida 1999.*

tralisation of the coordinating function.

A sustainable future for SAMP presupposes a consolidation of the existing network, whereby the museums fulfill their obligations by having informed and active staffing throughout the museum organisation and a greater awareness among concerned politicians and decision-makers.

In a general meeting in Swaziland in August 1997 «Society's needs for SAMP-projects» was discussed. The museums stated the possibility and duty they had to address society at large when defining a SAMP-project. Important guidelines for the work were formulated in the resolutions of the meeting.

The step forward taken in Swaziland was followed up in August last year at Skansen, Stockholm. About 70 professionals gathered to find ways of developing the future position of museums in society. Papers had been prepared on the theme «Museum without walls». The presentations were organised in four sub-themes: *Opening doors – theoretical reflections, Diversity – presentation of projects, Man and Nature* and *SAMP-projects that fit the conference theme*.

For the first time the programme was also made accessible to a larger public during the conference. The delegates met the public in a half-day seminar with the

130 theme *Images in Black and White*. The Swedish author Per Wästberg led a discussion about how we have regarded each other in the past and how we do so today. Museum Director Manyando Mukela, Zambia, and the author and filmmaker Lasse Berg, Sweden, gave introductory presentations. During another half-day seminar the theme was *Culture the focus in a time of change*. Contributions by Museum Director David Elliott from the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, Museum Director Paul Msemwa from the open-air museum in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and actress Astrid Assefa from Stockholm were followed by a cross-cultural discussion led by actor Tomas Bolme, Stockholm.

In a performance *Music from the villages* nine groups from nine different African countries – in total 47 musicians – played at Skansen and on stages in the suburbs of Stockholm.

The African museums within the SAMP programme had chosen the groups for the event. The selection was based on the idea that modern urban African music owes a debt to traditional African village folk music. It was the roots of the music, rather than the musicians themselves, that had to come from the villages. None of the participating bands had ever performed outside Africa. Most of the Swedish SAMP museums arranged a tour for the band from that museum's twin country. The essence of the event was to show how African music culture today is as exciting and diversified as music from the Western World and to give Swedes an idea of the kinds of music which are popular in the African countries taking part.

The various activities which were open

to a broader public did to some extent influence the discussions and work in groups that took place during the conference week.

The first day focused on the question *With whom do museums communicate?* Different partners were presented in papers and the need to break down restrictions because of gender and age were strongly underlined. Intense debate followed the presentation of Muso Kunda, a women's museum recently opened in Bamako, Mali. Mrs Adame Ba Konaré took the initiative to establish this museum and she presented the intellectual steps she had to take before coming up with the idea of a museum. The discussion was summarized by stating that a museum is a place for cultural self-expression: whenever you have something to say you have the possibility and the right to create a museum.

During the second day concrete examples of how museums have reached new target groups were presented. The discussion emphasised the necessity of not having any restrictions and limits on museum actions. The difference between nationalistic and national actions was demonstrated through examples and discussed in detail.

The participants came back repeatedly to the museum's duty to serve the common people first of all. The museum must turn to everyone and respond to their needs. The museum should be a forum where it is possible for each individual to stay in harmony with his and her cultural spirit and background and find an identity in the age of globalisation.²

After four days of presentations, work in groups and discussions, the participants presented the following resolutions.

The partnership between the museums of Bénin and Östergötlands länsmuseum in Sweden within SAMP resulted in an important seminar at the Abomey History Museum 12-16 May 1997. The report from the seminar was published in 1998.

The Museum without walls conference resolves that:

Museums should strive toward greater inter-disciplinary cooperation within themselves and with other relevant institutions and individuals, in order to be innovative and professional.

Museums should provide space for the practice of democratic ideals such as freedom of expression, the promotion of peace and accessibility to all. In particular, as a first step, museums should observe the 50th Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights on Thursday 10 December 1998.

132 Museums should continue to collect, protect, utilize and document indigenous knowledge as a means of promoting the sustainable use of the environment and other traditional resources.

Museums should strive toward greater community involvement in museum activities.

Museums should create an appropriate environment which will enhance the role of women in museums and society.

Museums should be encouraged to use contemporary technology such as the Internet to enhance their services, visibility and public interface.

Museums should strive toward becoming centres of excellence, by encouraging high standards of professionalism through improved staff development and training. Furthermore, museums should lobby for cultural studies to be included in national school curricula.

Museums should strive to create appropriate conditions which provide children and youth with a voice and an opportunity to play their role in the museum and society. We further urge our communities to facilitate such access to museums and allied institutions.

During the Skansen seminar an important question was raised:

Is an exchange between museums in the north and in the south really possible? Is it possible to have a mutually beneficial exchange between museums in very different cultures, between museums with very different material conditions?

Alpha Oumar Konaré answered the question in the following way:

A partnership could never be valid as a one-way relationship – then it is not a real partnership. It must be a mutual giving and taking, enriching for both partners. In order to establish a relationship of equality between north and south it is necessary for both to contribute. Together we must determine what should be the contribution of each partner. If this is not done properly I believe that our twinship project will weaken and die to the irremediable detriment of both. It is not true that we cannot contribute, even though our level of material wealth is low today. Material poverty does not justify the absence of a meaningful contribution in the exchange. It is necessary today to concentrate on the options at hand to bring life to the relationship between partners far away from each other in space – the possibilities for exchange, for intellectual contributions, on the Internet seem limitless. Why don't we profit from this technological revolution? We could skip several steps in development, and thus gain time. But the problem as I see it, is that we must overcome our intellectual laziness. If we cannot do so, the exchange is impossible.³

The «SAMP twins» can only agree with Konaré. A mutually beneficial exchange is possible only if you give yourself a lot of time, if you are able to start from zero over and over again, if you are flexible and willing to integrate new ideas and experiences into an ongoing project.

Some of the projects within SAMP can provide a glimpse of this experience.

The conservation of the built heritage is the goal of a project in the twinship Musée Historique d'Abomey, Benin, and the regional museum of Östergötland, Linköping. The need to maintain and restore palaces within the area of the Palaces of Abomey gave birth to the idea. In Östergötland there was an interest in offering competence and working meth-

ods in a practical restoration workshop. But as the date for the workshop approached the professionals realised that they did not really speak the same professional language and there were wide differences in expectations. The first step therefore became a theoretical workshop, or seminar, where the parties presented the ways they thought and worked, thus laying a common ground for a better project. The professionals in Benin produced a conservation plan and other instruments for future restorations. Meanwhile different ways of involving society were examined. The museum in Linköping has a small group of young people who, on a small-scale, stage actions in the museum that they would like to find there. This idea has been transferred to the Benin context. An association has been formed by a group of young people planning activities in the museum. Recently the two groups met in Benin. The young Swedes stayed with the families of the friends in Benin. Both groups presented themselves on videofilms and in oral presentations. A drama about the events around King Gezo's coronation was performed by the Benin-group telling the story as it is seen by young people today. Having young people tell the story of the place to other youngsters is perhaps as good a restoration project as physically restoring a building. And maybe in Abomey a building will also be restored, wholly or in parts. But in that case it will include a reflection of how to involve the surrounding community. The project goes on...

A documentation programme is being set up in Nayuma Museum, Limulunga, Zambia and Skellefteå Museum in order to organise the collecting of local history.

The two museums have identified this common need because of the rapid changes taking place in the two societies. An exchange of working methods and training and the formation of local history groups in some villages surrounding Nayuma have already taken place. A group of women living around Nayuma started to tell their life stories. The narrations were recorded, transcribed and translated into English. The same kind of material was produced in Skellefteå. At this point the idea of making an exhibition came up. A workshop was organised in Nayuma where staff from the two museums put together a flexible, portable exhibition in two copies, one for Zambia and one for Sweden. The women took part in the making of the exhibition by weaving the panels for the photos and texts. It was impossible not to offer the women the possibility of meeting after their important contribution. Three Swedish women travelled to their «sisters» in Nayuma and later, the same year, three women from Nayuma came to Skellefteå. The impact of such visits is difficult to estimate, but it is certainly there. The title of the exhibition *Far away, yet the same* was given a deeper meaning and still has an impact on the twinship. The project goes on...

Follow SAMPs history on the webpage
<http://www.natmus.cul.na/samp/samp.html>

NOTES

1. SAMP has from the beginning been financially supported by Sida, the Swedish international development cooperation agency. Sida did an

evaluation of the SAMP programme in 1995 and the necessity to develop a broader financing for the sustainability of SAMP was indicated.

Throughout the years the participating museums have been asked to estimate the financial value of the contribution to the different SAMP activities they are doing each year. The museums are mainly contributing with the salary of their participating staff but items such as transport and accomodation can also be included. The contribution of the museums in 1996 was 900.000 SEK (813.000 from Swedish partners 87.000 from African partners). In 1997 the corresponding sums were 817.000 – 633.000 – 184.000. The total budget for 1996 was 4.300.000 SEK, for 1997 5.200.000 SEK and for 1998 5.500.000 SEK.

2. «restent eux-memes en harmonie avec leur aspiration culturelle et trouver sa place dans la globalisation».
3. «Mais ce partenariat ne sera jamais un partenariat à sens unique, sinon il n'est pas partenariat. Il s'agit d'une rencontre du donner ou du recevoir, où chaque partenaire doit s'enrichir. Mais dans un partenariat nord-sud équitable il est important que chacun apporte quelque chose. Il s'agit ensemble de nos réflexions de voir quel peut être l'apport de tout et chacun. Si cet apport n'est pas identifié croyez-moi notre partenariat s'émoussera et s'éteindra pour le plus grand malheur de chacun d'entre nous. Il n'est pas vrai que nous ne puissions pas apporter quelque chose quelque soit aujourd'hui le niveau de notre pauvreté matérielle. La pauvreté matérielle ne peut pas justifier l'absence d'apports au niveau des échanges. Je dis aujourd'hui il y a des champs nouveau qui sont ouvert pour les échanges, qu'est ce qu'on ne peut pas faire avec Internet, comme échanges, comme contribution intellectuelle. Pourquoi nous n'utilisons pas la révolution technologique aujourd'hui? C est même une chance parceque ca nous permet de brûler des

étapes, ca nous permet de gagner du temps.

Alors, mais le problème, je vous le dis il faut aussi qu'on sort d'une paresse intellectuelle. Si on ne sort pas d'une paresse intellectuelle on ne fait pas d'échanges».

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