

Museum Association of Namibia

Chairperson's Annual Report, 1st May, 2004- 31st April, 2005.

I would like to start by acknowledging that our ability to support museum development in Namibia has been tremendously helped by the recognition and financial support that has been given to the Museums Association of Namibia by the government over the last two years. In previous years we have also benefited from grants for particular projects provided by the Finnish Embassy and the American Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. I welcome this opportunity to publicly thank them for their support.

However I would also like to emphasize that the Museums Association of Namibia's great strength is that it is a network that is built on the enthusiasm and commitment of its members all over the country. Up until very recently our entire staff has consisted of our Administrator, Ms Fransiska Kangombe, who works **just** one day a week. Much that we have achieved therefore has depended on work done on a voluntary basis by our members. I really believe that the museum sector provides a very good example to the nation of what can be achieved with relatively few resources through hard work and partnerships. Indeed one of the central beliefs of the Museums Association of Namibia is that by working together and building partnerships we can achieve great things. I would like to highlight some of our most significant achievements over the last twelve months.

1. Regional Museum Development.

Two years ago the National Museum of Namibia gave the responsibility for the award and management of small grants to regional museums to the Museums Association of Namibia. Let me just give three examples of the ways in which these small grants can make a significant difference to museums in the regions. Outjo Museum has been able to build a new storage room and workshop and has set a very good example by using the grant from MAN to encourage the Municipality to co-fund the project and so expand on its original plans. Nakambale Museum at Olukonda has been able to make repairs to its traditional homestead and both the Otjiwarongo Heritage Explorium and the Keetmanshoop Museum have been able to buy computer equipment which will enable them to improve the cataloguing of its collection and communications. The Luderitz Museum for the upgrading of their Outdoor display Section, The Grootfontein museum is working on its problem of Termite infestation. The Rehoboth Museum is currently busy renovating its indigenous huts.

2. Regional Museum Training.

The Museums Association of Namibia has implemented a programme of training workshops aimed at helping individual museums to recognize and resolve problems and to make policies and plans for the future. Over the last twelve months workshops have been held at Walvis Bay Museum in August, 2004, at Tsumeb Cultural Village and

Nakambale Museum in October, 2004, at Otjiwarongo Heritage Explorium in February, 2005, at Keetmanshoop and Outjo Museum in March, 2005 and (with the support of the Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle project) at Gibeon in April, 2005. In addition a consultancy, Heritage Solutions, carried out a workshop in December, 2004 on behalf of the Museums Association of Namibia which sought to bring together a number of museums and related stakeholders in the Khomas Region. Each of these eight workshops has resulted in a Report and Action Plan for the museum concerned. In addition, a training manual was produced and provided to participants providing over a hundred pages of information and ideas to support museum development. In addition two one day brainstorming sessions were held with two emerging heritage sites, Okakarara Cultural Center and the Omaruru Heritage Tours.

3. National Training Workshop on Museum Education

Each year the Museums Association of Namibia organizes one national training workshop in response to the needs of our member museums. We have just completed a four day training workshop which, for the first time in Namibia's history, brought together teachers and museum curators to discuss the ways in which museums might play a more dynamic role as educational resources. The workshop was very successful and, as a result, the Museums Association of Namibia has produced a Handbook for Namibian Museums on Museum Education.

4. Information and Communication

The bi-annual newsletter of the Museums Association of Namibia has improved significantly in length and quality over the last twelve months. We have also recently been able, thanks to our Government grant, to purchase (for the first time) a computer and printer for the Museums Association of Namibia. We have also started to purchase books on various aspects of museum marketing, conservation, display techniques and museum management that members will be able to consult. The profile of Namibian museums has also been raised and communication and links with international partners improved by the participation of delegates from the Museums Association of Namibia in the bi-annual Conference of the African Council of Museums (AFRICOM) in Nairobi, Kenya and the annual Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in Seoul, South Korea.

5. The SCAM Project

The Museums Association of Namibia is committed to encouraging more young people to visit our museums and heritage sites. This year we introduced the 'School Clubs and Museums' project (which we call the SCAM project for short). The project aims to encourage links between school clubs (such as history clubs or environmental clubs) and museums. The clubs are encouraged to work with their local museum to develop a new display that can be shown in the museum. The displays might, for example, be based on work done by learners to interview local residents or to write about a particular event,

place or theme. The SCAM project is also a way in which museums can develop displays that will link them more closely with subjects on the national curriculum.

In the first year five small grants were made available to fund the establishment of local SCAM projects and Keetmanshoop, Otjiwarongo, Outjo, Rehoboth and Walvis Bay museums were successful in obtaining grants. The groups were tasked to produce a small mobile display and these will be shown and judged at the AGM tomorrow morning. Learners from the winning SCAM group will win a trip to Cape Town to participate in Robben Island's Spring School! We hope that other museums will be encouraged to apply for support to establish SCAM partnerships with local schools this year.

Future Plans

In conclusion I would like to take this opportunity to inform members about **some** of the major plans that the Museums Association of Namibia has for the future:

- i) We intend to continue with a second series of seven more training workshops for individual museums around the country.
- ii) We will be working with the National Monuments Council, UNESCO and other relevant partners to launch a project to map heritage sites all over the country.
- iii) We are already planning a national training workshop for next year.
- iv) We would also like to further develop the SCAM Project ensuring greater participation thus strengthening the links between the schools and the heritage sites.
- v) We hope to introduce a programme of museum internships and exchanges which will enable new museums to send people to spend a week or more at another museum in Namibia or South Africa to learn about the ways in which they work and to share experiences.
- vi) We would like to establish an office and resource center for the Museums Association of Namibia and have it staffed on a full-time basis.

We do so much and we don't even have our own office. Indeed it should be noted that we probably would not be able to function at all if it was not for the generosity of the National Museum of Namibia which allows Ms Kangombe to work from my own office.