

# Welcome message from SADCAMM

By

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Presentation at the conference *High Expectations, but Low Funding: How do poor museums meet their targets?*.  
Lusaka and Livingstone, Zambia July 28 - August 2, 2002.

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- Guest of honour
- Chairman, NMB, prof. Oliver Saasa
- Your excellencies
- Distinguished guests
- Fellow conference participants
- Ladies and gentlemen

It is my rare privilege and honour, as chairman of SADCAMM to welcome our international museum professionals to Zambia.

On behalf of the national museums board and on my own behalf, I wish to extend a warm welcome to all of you, particularly to members of the ICME and the SADCAMM

Executive committee who have traveled from other parts of the continent and overseas, to assist in making this conference a success.

The five-day conference is being organized by the NMB in conjunction with the International Committee for Museums of Ethnography (ICME) and has drawn participants from Africa , Europe, PMDA, and AFRICOM and the theme is:

***"High expectations, but low funding: how do poor museums meet their targets?"***

From the gathering in this room, it is gratifying to notice that there are more than twenty countries represented, an indication that many nations of the world are indeed

Concerned and paying particular attention to their heritage and native cultures.

It is in this vein that we in the NMB of Zambia feel happy to be associated with this important gathering which aims at laying groundwork for increased international contacts in matters of museum development.

We hope that all participants will work towards promoting the exchange of ideas and experiences and also breaking the isolation that museum professionals in our sub-region and beyond have often been subjected to due to lack of financial resources.

As members of SADCAMM, we would like this meeting to work

Towards defining our shared perceptions on long-term funding to museums in the region in order to achieve sustainable development.

Through lack of long-term funding strategies in the region, each year that passes, museums are short of the money needed to keep buildings and equipment in working order resulting in the collapse of the infrastructure, lack of motivation among staff, decline in museum activities and huge deficits.

The problem of underfunding to museums in the SADC region has resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of good quality exhibitions, research activities, outreach educational

Problems, publications and a cut back on research and ancillary staff. It is unfortunate that we have had to scale down activities at a time when we are supposed to be expanding to meet international targets and public expectations.

In 2000, the NMB successfully restructured its institutions in an effort to make them efficient, cost effective and refocused. At the heat of this restructuring, the board strengthened museums' analytic capability by urging them to generate their own income within the approved mandate. In essence, museum management has been mandated to use approaches that are likely

to ensure financial sustainability. Today, the results of the restructuring remain blurred as the institutions are

Crippled by underfunding with staff complaining of more workloads than the staffing levels can support.

Reports from museums in the region indicate that it is not easy to raise funds through community-related funding activities in a country where more than eighty percent (80%) of the population can barely scrape one meal a day.

An average African has to make a hard choice between getting involved in museum activities and spending time scratching the earth for a living.

Preservation of our cultural and natural heritage and provision of adequate financial resources to our museums should not be treated as separate challenges. We all know

That development at any level cannot be adequately achieved if resources are inadequate.

It is therefore important to emphasise that an integrated plan of action is initiated by our governments to ensure that cultural resources are properly managed.

The SADC region has very serious concerns about the status of museum infrastructure, collections, research, education and other aspects of museum work as well as our ability to preserve mankind's cultural expressions.

In 1998, the NMB in collaboration with the Norwegian Museum Authority and with the financial support from NORAD, a needs assessment of all national museums in the country was

Undertaken. It is gratifying to note that a similar project is currently being undertaken by PMDA in all SADC countries. The report cited, among other things, the inability of Zambian museums to generate sufficient funds to maintain and rehabilitate physical infrastructure and support all other activities.

It was also revealed that not a single museum maintains a reserve of financial resources that would enable these institutions to survive during lean periods. A situation that has made our museums to be perpetually broke making it impossible to manage them on a sustainable basis.

We are therefore asking our governments in the SADC region

To increase funding to museums through extra-budgetary sources especially for long-term programmes and infrastructure development. We are not asking for too much and we do not want to be accorded top priority as this is not possible in the current economic climate. But we want our governments to reverse the marginalisation of museums in the development process.

As equal partners in our quest to develop museums meaningfully, the success of this meeting will depend on how well we build partnerships between ourselves from Africa and Colleagues from western countries.

There is need to develop common appreciation that lack of adequate financial resources in African museums is strongly linked to lack of economic growth and foreign investment in African countries.

I do not want to sound too optimistic, but perhaps the new partnership for Africa's development (NEPAD) - (that is, Africa's home-grown recovery plan which targets increased foreign investment better economic growth) may be the answer for our museums.

Through NEPAD, museums may benefit from new partnerships between Africa and developed countries, especially if

- African products including curios are given market access.
- A level playing field for African products and goods is created, and
- A trade partnership that is transparent is created.

During the planning for this meeting, mr. Per Rekdal and ourselves have shared the desperation of African museum professionals who have expressed the wish to attend the meeting but are not here with us due to lack of funds.

Had it not been for the generous support we received from NORAD, it would have not been possible for the NMB to host this meeting. I therefore wish to thank NORAD and in particular mr Hem and mrs Karlsen for their understanding and support and for making it possible for my fellow African museum professionals to be here.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank mr Per Rekdal, chairman of ICME for inviting the NMB to co-host this meeting as equal partners in our quest for solutions to underfunding to museums in Africa

I would like to congratulate the acting executive secretary and director of the Lusaka national museum, mr Sibanyama Mudenda and his vibrant and highly motivated staff for the splendid organisation they have had to put up. I trust that the

international participants will have an enjoyable stay in our beautiful country.

Thank you.

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**ICME** - International Committee for Museums and Collections of Ethnography

<http://icom.museum/icme>

Updated by [webmaster](#), 25.01.03