

**A FRAMEWORK FOR AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE  
MANAGEMENT OF FORMER NATIONAL LIBERATION  
MOVEMENTS' RECORDS AND ARCHIVES BY NATIONAL AND  
PRIVATE ARCHIVAL INSTITUTIONS IN EASTERN  
AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**

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**Abstract**

*This contribution seeks to highlight the plight of liberation movement records in eastern and southern Africa in an endeavour to raise awareness on the need for their sound management as they constitute an irreplaceable heritage. The struggle to liberate the eastern and southern African region was an important epoch in contemporary history. It follows then that this history needs to be accurately captured for posterity's sake. The archives generated were of differing types and status which reflected the diverse nature of the struggle itself. As a result, records were created from within and outside Africa to document this historic epoch from the 1950s to the 1990s and these records have to be made available to the public for research, scholarship and general interest as they are a treasured national asset. The main thrust of our argument is that in carrying out the documentation of these records, efforts should be made to ensure that a continuum of care is provided in terms of records' identification and acquisition, intellectual control, access and physical control.*

**Keywords:** Liberation movements, Records management, Archives management; Records lifecycle, Records continuum

## **Introduction**

The struggle to liberate the continent of Africa from colonialism was a profound and all-time consuming one for Africans during the second half of the twentieth century (Dominy 2004:1) and as such this history needs to be documented accurately in whatever form for the benefit of posterity. Cabral (1972:39) opined that the people's struggle for national liberation and independence from imperialist rule undoubtedly constituted one of the essential characteristics of contemporary history.

The struggle for liberation led to the attainment of national independence and the birth of new nations was a result of a protracted struggle by different movements that had one common objective of dismantling settler colonialism. Southall (2003:30) could not have put it better when he remarked that these struggles took numerous different forms, yet they were all characterized by the rejection of racism and imperialism and the demands of previously nationally oppressed peoples for sovereign equity with the colonial powers. Dominy (2004) acutely observed that "Liberation Struggle" Archives are of differing types and status, reflecting the diverse nature of the struggle itself. As a result, records were created from within and outside Africa to document this historic epoch from the 1950s to the 1990s, and these records have to be made available to the public for research, scholarship and general interest as they are a treasured national asset.

Citizens revere archives associated with great events or persons in history and the crusade for emancipation was no exception hence the need for its documentation for posterity's sake. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) led the anti-colonial struggle and established the OAU Liberation Committee as its principal instrument. Dominy (2003) cited in Mnjama (2005:467) commented with regard to the role played by the OAU Liberation Committee and on the importance of documenting this historical epoch as follows:

I could not stand here today in front of you if it had not been for the success of the struggle. All the frontline states hosted South African exiles and supported the armed struggle, the economic struggle, the diplomatic struggle, and the cultural struggle. On our continent the struggle was coordinated by the Liberation Committee of the OAU. The archives of this committee are in Tanzania and I believe that they are our common heritage. I would like to suggest that ESARBICA adopts a project to properly archive these records, make them accessible and to copy them to the other countries that benefited from the work of the committee: Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa.

Initially, the OAU Liberation Committee was concerned with the struggles in the following countries:

- Angola
- Mozambique
- Guinea-Bissau
- Cape Verde
- Sao Tome – Principe
- Zimbabwe
- Namibia
- South Africa (Dominy 2004:1).

Many African states hosted freedom fighters from Algeria in the north to Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana, closest to the then apartheid South Africa. Many organizations supported the struggle, both within Africa and across the world and this points to the fact that records of these liberation movements were scattered globally. Due to the nature of the war, antagonists were forced to keep their activities underground to ensure their respective survival (Hatang 2005:72; See also Sturges, Katjihingua and Mchombu 2005:735). It is possible that many records were not created as a result of the ethos of secrecy. It is incumbent upon archivists to preserve the legacy of the liberation struggle that is contained in those few records that were created.

## Defining records

There have been many debates on the definition of a record, and on how records differ from information and knowledge. The word "record" has been a site of contestation as Harris (2000) remarked. This view is shared by Cox (2001) who posited that even records professionals, archivists and records managers engage in protracted debates about what constitutes a record. Definitions with a focus on information, data, structure, origination or end-user potential are all offered. Yusof and Chell (1998) have aptly observed that there is no universally accepted definition of the term record and the varied definitions of the term have led to confusion which affects the formulation of theory to underpin the discipline of archival science.

According to Shepherd and Yeo (2003:2), a record is any recorded evidence of an activity and is not defined by its physical format or storage medium, its age, or the fact that it has been set aside for preservation. The International Council on Archives (ICA) Committee on Electronic Records defines a "record" as "recorded information produced or received in the initiation, conduct or completion of an institutional or individual activity and that comprises content, context and structure sufficient to provide evidence of the activity" (ICA 1997).

Records can further be classified as public and non-public. Public records are those created or received in the course of official business by governmental bodies at central, provincial and local levels. Non-public records comprise all other categories of records – private papers, business records, church records and so on (Harris 2000:19). The records of former national liberation movements fall under this latter domain.

It is evident that the records of the former national liberation movements are evidence of their activities regardless of the storage media. Records management is responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation of the records until their final disposition (Shepherd and Yeo 2003:1) or as Pearce-Moses (2005) has stated, it is concerned the systematic and administrative control of records throughout their lifecycle to ensure efficiency and economy in their creation, use, handling, control, maintenance, and disposition.

## **Defining archives**

The term archives has been tripartitely defined as (Oregon 2003):

- the records created or received and accumulated by an institution or organization in the course of routine business and retained due to their continuing or enduring value
- a building or area of a building used to house permanent records
- a government agency, organization, or programme responsible for appraising, scheduling, accessioning, preserving, and providing reference service to archival materials.

Archives management involves the general oversight of a programme to appraise, acquire, arrange and describe, preserve, authenticate, and provide access to permanently valuable records (Pearce-Moses 2005).

Records are not synonymous with archives, hence the dictum within the archival fraternity that archives are records but not all records are archives. This is so because while an archive collects records, not all records merit ongoing preservation (Pearce-Moses 2005). For the purpose of this article, archives are defined as non-current records that have been transferred to a building or institution where they are preserved and utilized. In many African countries archives are regarded as records of continuing or enduring value in the custody of an archive repository irrespective of their provenance (Ngulube 2006: 142).

## **Uses and importance of records and archives**

Many scholars have observed that archives help to preserve social memory and are therefore an integral part of any society's heritage (Akotia 2005; Cox 2001; Harris 2000; 2001; Ngulube 2000; Ngulube and Tafor 2006:57; Roper and Millar 1999:84; Wallace 2004). Williams (2006:18) underscored the fact by stating that archives, like records:

- permit continuity and consistency in administration;
- document, in a democracy, governmental responsibility and accountability to the people over time;
- provide us with a sense of national, regional or civic identity; and

- educate, entertain and enrich our lives by providing appealing and tangible manifestations of our history, as well as useful information.

The ICA as the umbrella body mandated with responsibility of overseeing the management of archives worldwide observed that archives constitute the memory of nations and societies and as such, they are a fundamental part of their identity. By providing evidence of human activities, decisions and transactions, archives support corporate administration and underline the rights of individuals, corporate bodies and states. Archives also guarantee citizens' rights to access information and to know their history and they are fundamental to democracy, accountability by public officials and good governance (ICA 2005). There is no area of human activity not shaped in the most fundamental ways by the archival storage of information and no continuing form of culture or community is possible without it (McKemmish, Piggott, Reed and Upward 2005:iii).

The cultural value of archives is especially important in the wake of colonial regimes which severely restricted access to information and suppressed both the people and their memories. In this regard, it can thus be discerned that archives ensure that the nation's social, economic, intellectual and cultural heritage is preserved irrespective of format (Ngulube 2000:1). This fact was also underscored by Ham (1984:329), Eastwood 2006:15) and McKemmish (1993:8) who succinctly opined that the reason archives exist is because they reflect the broad spectrum of human existence.

### **Defining liberation movements**

The definition of national liberation movement has been a source of considerable disagreement among scholars. It remains subject to confusion, doubt and disagreement and even elementary questions of definition, terminology and delimitation of the field to be explained are still not settled (Valentine 1987:43). The conceptualization of the term is a matter of interpretation and Wilson (1988) rightly pointed out that defining national liberation movement is a challenging task and argued that the label, as popularly used is imprecise.

Be that as it may, four possible lines of inquiry are in existence namely the Marxist approach, the Western anti-liberation perspective, the legal view and that espoused by radical African nationalists. The Marxist approach is historical in the strictest sense and most familiar. This school of thought conceives national liberation movements not as separatist entities, but rather as an integral part of an on-going global revolutionary process (Valentine 1987:43).

The prevailing view among Western anti-liberation authors has been to equate national liberation movements with "terrorist organizations", "surrogates of the former Soviet Union", "proliferators of international communism", "and violators of western canons of freedom and democracy", "illegal opponents, outlaws" and a host of other epithets (Valentine 1987:78). This brings us to the third school of thought represented by the legal sciences. Exponents of this school have treated national movements basically as a problem of international law, dealing with their legal status within the United Nations and its specialized agencies as well as within international regional organizations. Central in their definition of a national liberation movement is that it is a nongovernmental organization.

Finally, the radical African nationalist theoretical approaches to the national liberation debate is Pan-Africanist oriented represented by the work of three prominent figures namely Ghana's first President Kwameh Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, the first President of the African Party for the independence of Guinea Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC) and the theoretician of the Algerian revolution, Frantz Fanon.

In summary, the precise definition of national liberation movement is fraught with complexities in view of the variables involved. It's a matter of interpretation and there are as many definitions as there are many authors but there is nevertheless a definite need to provide a working definition. For the purpose of this paper, a national liberation movement is defined as a non-governmental organization which, through violent or non-violent means, strives to win effective national independence in its crusade for emancipation.

### **Selected liberation movements in eastern and southern Africa**

A number of liberation movements were involved in liberation struggles in Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, South West Africa (Namibia) and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). The liberation movements that are highlighted here were selected because they seemed to represent the will of the majority and went on to form the first majority governments when their countries became independent. In the case of Angola, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) was founded in 1956 and was one of those parties that advocated Angolan independence from Portugal and its military wing was the Popular Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA).

As for Mozambique, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) was formed in 1962 as a merger of three exiled groups - the Mozambique African National Union (Manu), the National Democratic Union of Mozambique (Udenamo) and the National African Union of Independent Mozambique (Unami). In South Africa, the South African National Congress (SANC) as a national liberation movement was formed in 1912 to unite the African people and spearhead the struggle for fundamental political, social and economic change (James 2003:29). The SANC's military wing was Umkonto we Sizwe (MK) formed in 1961. The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) was formed in 1959 by Robert Sobukwe as an African party in rivalry to Albert Luthuli's non-racial SANC. Following the banning of the PAC in 1960, militant supporters formed a quasi-military movement known as POQO (Mazrui and Tidy 1984:156). It was only after 1968 that the military wing of the PAC became known as the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA).

The South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) was founded in 1960 as a liberation organisation and had its base among the Ovambo people of northern Namibia. SWAPO was essentially a military organisation which used guerrilla tactics to fight the South African military. Its military wing was the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). It was based in Zambia and then after 1975 in Angola where it allied itself with MPLA (Landis and Davis 1982:148-155). In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) was formed in 1961 as a national movement to advance the interests



of the black populace in the then Southern Rhodesia. Its military wing was the Zimbabwe People's Revolution Army (ZIPRA), formed in 1972 to spearhead the execution of the armed struggle. In the early 1970s ZIPRA operated in the north-west, west, south-west and Midlands while their comrades in arms, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), operated mainly in the east, north-east and south-east of Southern Rhodesia (Sibanda 2005:162).

The activities of the liberation movements outlined above produced a vast array of records. The same applied to people and organisations that came into contact with them. Their records form a very important part of the people of eastern and southern Africa's cultural, historical, educational and societal memory artefacts. They constitute the private archives of these nations. Most of these pearls are scattered all over the globe. For instance, Namhila (2004:226-227 cited in Limb 2005:5) remarked that a considerable proportion of Namibia's population went into exile where most of them lived not as mere refugees but were actively involved in the liberation struggle, and left a world-wide documentary trail ranging from Australia to Canada, from Cuba to China, from Algeria to Zimbabwe. Millions of records of high relevance to Namibian history were created abroad, and are now found scattered all over the world. Hence, there is need to find out how these records are accessioned, appraised, arranged, described and preserved.

### **Private archives**

Private archives or historical manuscripts originate from unofficial or non-governmental sources such as individuals, business organizations, missionary societies, political groups, trade union organizations and so on (Kufa 1983:27). The main criticism against public archives is that they are impersonal and consequently lack personal opinion on the issues they document whereas private archives, especially the personal papers of individuals are full of personal observation and anecdote. Private archives therefore attempt to fill gaps in and provide background information to official records (Kufa 1983: 27) or as perceptively put by Dahlin (2007:10):

Private archives are necessary complements to the records in public archives. Records found in private archives can give

valuable insights into personal networks. They can often contain traces of the individual's personal thoughts.

Kufa (1983:30) further noted that in Zimbabwe, and perhaps in many other African countries, colonialism played havoc with private papers belonging to black politicians, political organizations and even missionaries. For instance, many Zimbabwe-related private archives belonging to these groups are located in numerous United Kingdom depositories. Exposure to colonial powers has led to archives being taken to different destinations at independence. In such scenarios, the question that comes to mind is whether it is possible to precisely reconstruct the history of these nationalistic movements without tangible records.

Mnjama (2002:32) acknowledged that the records relating to African national liberation movements were a bone of contention at the 16<sup>th</sup> ESARBICA conference held in July 2001 in Harare. Locating these records has often proved difficult as their offices at times were raided or destroyed. In some cases, records remained in countries where freedom fighters sought refuge and the actual acquisition of copies of these records held in European cities has been very slow. In the absence of manuscript registers, it can be very difficult to establish their whereabouts (Mnjama 2002:34).

Mnjama (2002) further acknowledged that at the Harare meeting (2001), no conclusive decisions were taken about these records but archival institutions were urged to take practical steps to ensure that these records were identified and listed and where possible, proper arrangements for their housing made. This acknowledgement was the forerunner to the 2003 ESARBICA Cape Town Declaration on national liberation archives.

### **ESARBICA and the archives of former liberation movements**

The Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA) has realized that liberation struggles records have been neglected and hence the need to preserve them as they are a national asset and part of Africa's heritage (ESARBICA 2003). ESARBICA was established in 1969, in Kenya and is the regional arm of the International Council on Archives (ICA).

It brings together individuals and institutions concerned with the creation, use, preservation and management of recorded information in Eastern and Southern Africa. It is made up of thirteen member states namely; Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe (ESARBICA 2004). The mission of ESARBICA is the advancement of archives through regional co-operation.

ESARBICA, through its Cape Town Declaration on Archives in Africa, 20-21 October 2003, highlighted the fact that the archival heritage of Africa, in all aspects – oral and written – was ignored, marginalized and plundered during the colonial era (ESARBICA 2003). The Declaration further stated that the archival heritage of Africa be it in written, oral or electronic form, remains a precious resource that must be well managed, carefully preserved and made accessible to all, in this and forthcoming generations. In an attempt to address this anomaly, the National Archives of Zimbabwe in conjunction with the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe and the University of Zimbabwe jointly embarked upon an Oral History project in which they are capturing on tape, oral reminiscences pertaining to Zimbabwe's struggle for emancipation. The Namibian Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle (AACRLS) Project under the auspices of the National Archives of Namibia is also striving to capture oral reminiscences. This research initiative should also be seen as an effort to complement the efforts of ESARBICA to preserve the documentary heritage of former liberation movements of eastern and southern Africa.

### **Other liberation struggle projects**

There are a number of projects worldwide currently underway to document the history of the liberation struggle. Although differing in geographic scope, scale and internal structure, all these projects share a common objective: to ensure that this historical epoch is adequately documented lest it might be consumed by the tides of time. Examples of such projects are: SADC project: a history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa, South African research and archival project (SARAP), The University of Connecticut-African National Congress partnership, African activist project at Michigan State University, Nordic documentation on the liberation struggle in

southern Africa under the auspices of the Nordic African Institute, Digital Innovation South Africa (DISA), Aluka Project and the liberation struggle living archive project. A brief outline of the projects follows.

*SADC project: a history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa*

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) through its history project aims at collecting the history of the liberation struggle in the Southern African region. As is well known, the OAU Liberation Committee was wound up in 1994 following South Africa's attainment of independence and SADC has thus taken up the task of documenting that history. The project is operational in Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The project was approved by the Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government when they met in Botswana in August 2005 to mark the Silver Jubilee of the regional community. The project is funded entirely by SADC governments (The SADC Today 2006).

*South African research and archival project (SARAP)*

The South African Research and Archival Project (SARAP), was designed to identify, locate, inventory and disseminate information pertaining to the involvement of Americans in the liberation struggle of South Africans, especially during the anti-apartheid movement. Although the project focuses primarily on the African American role in the struggle against apartheid, the scope extends into southern Africa, where many South Africans migrated, settled, and continued their struggle for freedom. This project also extends to other parts of Africa as well as to Europe and the Americas, reflecting the global reach of South Africa's freedom struggle (South African Research and Archival Project 2001).

*The University of Connecticut-African National Congress partnership*

The history of this project traces back to March 8, 1999 when the University of Connecticut signed a partnership agreement with the ANC to promote international understanding and cooperation based on the principle of reciprocal learning and consultation. The Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Connecticut and the African National Congress established a number of initiatives including the creation of the Comparative Human Rights Program

(which later became the UNESCO Chair and Institute of Comparative Human Rights), the ANC Archives Project, and the ANC Oral History Project (African National Congress Oral History Transcript Collection 2007). The goals of the ANC Archives Project are to share knowledge and expertise in archival administration, as well as to acquire, make accessible, preserve and publicize materials dealing with the African National Congress and human rights. In 2000, archivists from the University of Connecticut travelled to South Africa to assess the conditions of the ANC collections housed at the University of Fort Hare, as well as to assist in the development of a long term preservation strategy (African National Congress Oral History Transcript Collection 2007). Another element of the project is to research the locations of ANC materials held repositories in North America and to assist in obtaining copies or returning collections to South Africa.

*African activist project at Michigan State University*

The African Studies Centre at Michigan State University has an African Activist Archive Project which seeks to preserve for history the record of activities of US organizations and individuals that supported African struggles for freedom and had a significant collective impact on US policy during the period 1950-1994. The organizations and individuals in mind here include community activists, students, churches, unions, city and county councils, state governments, and others. The project focuses mainly (but not exclusively) on smaller local and regional organizations that supported the struggle against colonialism and white minority rule in Africa, especially in Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe (African Activist Archive 2008). The project locates material produced by these organizations, preserve that material by placing it in archives at depository institutions, and produce a database directory of the organizations and material. The project arranges to have selected material microfilmed, digitized onto CD-ROM and placed on the web in order to make the material available to scholars and others in the U.S. and Africa (African Activist Archive 2008).

*Nordic documentation on the liberation struggle in southern Africa under the auspices of the Nordic African Institute*

The Nordic region played a crucial role in rallying international support for liberation in Southern Africa. These disparate regions of the globe were linked together by long-standing missionary ties and

the extensive mobilisation by solidarity groups beginning in the 1960s. The governments of four countries - Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark - provided support to the movements in Southern Africa and were significant sources of financing for parallel efforts by the United Nations and for anti-apartheid organisations elsewhere, such as the International Defence and Aid Fund. A fifth Nordic country – Iceland - supported these initiatives despite its lack of direct involvement. In every sphere of activity except the military, the Nordic region was almost certainly the single most significant source of direct support for southern African liberation struggles in the 1970s and 1980s (Aluka – Nordic Africa Institute, *National Liberation in Southern Africa 2006-2008*).

The Nordic Africa Institute (NAI), based in Uppsala, Sweden, has taken the lead in documenting this history, beginning with a research project on “National Liberation in Southern Africa: The Role of the Nordic Countries,” co-ordinated by Tor Sellström. The NAI is continuing with research on the history of Nordic involvement in Southern Africa and supports similar efforts by partners in Southern Africa. NAI is working with Aluka to ensure that the efforts of each are complementary and consistent with long-term plans for capacity-building of their Southern African partners (Aluka – Nordic Africa Institute, *National Liberation in Southern Africa 2006-2008*).

#### *Digital Innovation South Africa (DISA)*

Digital Innovation South Africa (DISA) is based at the Killie Campbell Collection in South Africa. The project aims at making accessible to scholars and researchers worldwide materials relating to South Africa’s struggle for democracy between 1960-1990 (Ngulube 2002: 77). The emphasis of the project is on periodicals and the title of the project is *South Africa’s struggles for democracy: anti-apartheid periodicals 1960-1990*. The project covers the three key decades in the growth of opposition to apartheid rule, a period when the African National Congress (ANC), black consciousness, and other resistance movements were very active (DISA 2008).

#### *Aluka Project*

The name *Aluka* is derived from the verb *ukuluka*, which in Zulu means “to weave” (In Oshivambo, spoken in parts of Namibia, the word means “to return” or possibly, “to repatriate”). The choice of

name reflects Aluka's overarching mission – of joining together in a single place resources from around the world. The Aluka Project, "Struggles for Freedom in Southern Africa" is in partnership with DISA and intends to stimulate debates on the liberation struggles and the analytical frameworks through which the freedom campaigns were originally studied and represented. The first phase of this project will focus on the freedom struggles in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa and Botswana. In a subsequent phase, the scope of the initiative will include Angola, Tanzania, Zambia and other countries in the region that figure prominently in the larger freedom struggle (Isaacman, Lalu and Nygren 2005:56).

*The liberation struggle living archive project*

The focus of this project is to digitise audio-visual archival material of the post-colonial liberation struggles in South Africa. The Liberation Struggle Living Archive Project intends to preserve crucial audio-visual archives and to develop resources on the history of the South African liberation struggle into a digital format and to make them accessible and to utilize these digital archives to create interactive knowledge environments. The Liberation Struggle Living Archive Project is a joint initiative between Doxa Productions, the CHR at the University of the Western Cape and DISA (Digital Imaging South Africa) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (South African Liberation Struggle Living Archive Collection 2008).

**Why this study and framework is necessary**

Archival activities and records management services within national liberation movements in eastern and southern Africa have been largely neglected (ESARBICA 2003). Academic studies on nationalistic movements in Southern Africa such as those of Friedland (1980); Pandya (1987); Courville (1988); Schreuder (1995); Mavhunga (2000); Steyn (2002); Chimhanda (2003) and Sibanda (2005) have tended to focus on the ideological framework that underpinned the struggle for self-determination to the extent of "overlooking" the upkeep of the raw material; the lifeblood of historical research, in this instance the records themselves.

Of late, however as argued by Isaacman, Lalu and Nygren (2005:56), archivists, researchers and public intellectuals have begun a vigorous

effort to preserve, digitize and disseminate on the web collections of documents on the struggles for freedom in southern Africa. These projects cover certain aspects of the records of the former liberation movements as shown in the sections above. There is therefore need to complement these efforts by carrying out research which examines, in detail, how records and archives management is being carried out because these archives are part of Africa's heritage to be bequeathed to future generations or as Isaacman, Lalu and Nygren (2005:56) have remarked, to ensure that the record of this moment in world history is not lost to posterity.

Consequently, the research problem should centre on whether records are being managed throughout their lifecycle. A cursory glance on the literature at hand on the management of records and archives in national liberation movements starkly reveals deficiency of information on this genre. Research in archival science has tended to focus on the management of records in universities (see Chinyemba 2003) and primarily on the ESARBICA region at large (see Mnjama 2001; Mutiti 2001; Tafor 2001; Garaba 2005; Ngulube 2005; Mnjama 2005 & 2006; Ngulube and Tafor 2006; Abankah 2008).

Ngulube and Tafor (2006) in their cross-sectional study of the ESARBICA region pointed out a number of anomalies with regard to the management of records and archives. Records management was being compromised by the acute shortage of resources. Secondly, records management processes were neither governed by a code of ethics nor any defined standards. Thirdly, electronic records were being threatened by benign neglect and finally records management staff was not adequately trained (see also Mutiti 2001; Ngulube 2001 and 2004; Garaba 2005; Wamukoya and Mutula 2005).

Accordingly, weak institutional capacity and the absence of comprehensive records management policies, guidelines and practical standards have been cited as the main causes of archival underdevelopment in Africa (Ngulube and Tafor 2006:58). Records management in general and electronic records in particular within the ESARBICA region is severely under resourced which has resulted in skills deficiencies. Little is known on the administration of former national liberation movements' records and archives by national and private archival institutions within ESARBICA and there is need to



investigate whether there are any sound records and archival management practices.

### **Theoretical framework for the investigation**

The conceptual framework for investigation should be premised on the broad field of records and archives management from which two major theories stand out, namely the lifecycle and records continuum concepts. The researchers' argument was anchored in the proposition that the records continuum model be the cornerstone of records and archives management activities within these organizations. Flynn (2001:79) poignantly reminded us that little attention has been paid by archivists and records managers to the records continuum model as a theoretical basis for the management of records and archives. This is in spite of the fact that the concept is wide embracing and cuts across the records management spectrum as it advocates a coherent and integrated approach to records management.

More importantly, the concept traces its roots to Hilary Jenkinson (1937:8), who in his celebrated *Manual* alluded to the fact that there are plenty of cases where documents have been drawn into the administrative circle again after a century or more of idleness. The point Jenkinson (1937) was trying to put across then, was that records could lie dormant for a while and then be activated for business purposes. According to the continuum concept, the distinction between records management and archives management need not be rigidly maintained (IRMT 1999). The Australian Standard for records management (1996) has defined the record continuum model as a consistent and coherent regime of management processes from the time of the creation of records (and before creation, in the design of record keeping systems), through to the preservation and use of records as archives (cited in Flynn 2001:80).

The continuum offers a holistic approach to records keeping as managing records is seen as a continuous process where one element of the continuum passes seamlessly into another. Upward (2001), an adherent of this model has summed it up by advancing the view that the continuum model, provides a worldview that can help harness the development of knowledge in archives and records management globally. In view of the fact that the records under

scrutiny have been created already special emphasis needs to be put at the end of the lifecycle and Millar (1997:14) further explains the four actions of records care under the records continuum model:

- Identification and acquisition – archives management actions relate to the selection and acquisition of archives.
- Intellectual control – archives management actions relate to the arrangement and description of archives
- Access – archives management actions relate to the arrangement and description of archives
- Physical control – archives management actions relate to the preservation of records.

The foregoing framework encapsulated by Millar (1997) should provide the backbone for future research. Emphasis should be on the non-current stage of the cycle as these records have since been created, selected as having continual value and their use regenerates the formative stage of the lifecycle hence the need to provide a continuum of care and access. More importantly, research within the ESARBICA region (see Mutiti 2001; Ngulube and Tafor 2006) has confirmed that the majority of archival institutions are still paper-based and subscribe to the records lifecycle framework – the shift to electronic records is still in its infancy and consequently, the change process from paper to e-systems is bound to be more complex than is often realized (Wamukoya and Mutula 2005:76).

## **Conclusion**

Records of former national liberation movements have been neglected and this needs redress considering that the struggle for emancipation signifies an important epoch in contemporary history. Previous studies on national liberation movements focused primarily on the ideological framework at the expense of the records themselves which constitute the life-blood of historical research. There is a dearth in literature on the management of records and archives of former national liberation movements. This article attempted to highlight the void for the benefit of scholarly research.

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