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Namibia RSRC Activity Performance Evaluation:
Component 1 Report

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Authors: Araba Sey, Michelle Fellows

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Technology & Social Change Group
University of Washington Information School
Seattle, WA

Contact:

Araba Sey
arabasey@uw.edu

TECHNOLOGY & SOCIAL CHANGE GROUP

The Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington Information School explores the design, use, and effects of information and communication technologies in communities facing social and economic challenges. With experience in 50 countries, TASCHA brings together a multidisciplinary network of social scientists, engineers, and development practitioners to conduct research, advance knowledge, create public resources, and improve policy and program design. Our purpose? To spark innovation and opportunities for those who need it most.

CONTACT

Technology & Social Change Group
University of Washington Information School
Box 352115
Seattle, WA 98195

Telephone: +1.206.616.9101
Email: tascha@uw.edu
Web: *tascha.uw.edu*

ABSTRACT

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) contracted the Technology & Social Change group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington to conduct a performance evaluation of the Namibia Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRC) Activity. This evaluation has been designed to serve the needs of two major stakeholders, MCC and the Namibia Library and Archives Service (NLAS). The evaluation comprises a set of quantitative and qualitative data collection efforts divided into two categories: Component 1 and Component 2. This report presents the findings for Component 1 only, focusing on evaluating the RSRC planning and implementation activities leading up to the end of the MCA-Namibia Compact in September 2014.

KEYWORDS

RECOMMENDED CITATION

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Araba Sey is a Research Assistant Professor at the University of Washington Information School.

Michelle Fellows is a Research Analyst for the Technology & Social Change Group.

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Acronyms

CLDC – Community Learning and Development Centre

CNA – Community needs assessment

COSDEC – Community Skills Development Center

CPD – Continuing Professional Development, University of Namibia

ILMS – Integrated library management system

IPA – Implementing Partner Agreement

IREX – The International Research and Exchanges Board

ITOCA – The Information Training and Outreach Center for Africa

M&E – Monitoring and evaluation

MCA-N – Millennium Challenge Account Namibia

MCC – Millennium Challenge Corporation

MLS – Master of Library Science

MLU – Mobile library unit

MoE – Ministry of Education, Namibia

NAMCOL – Namibian College of Open Learning

NLAS – Namibia Library and Archives Service

NPC – National Planning Commission

RFP – Request for proposal

RFQ – Request for quotation

RSRC – Regional Study and Resource Center

TASCHA – Technology and Social Change Group

UKS – Universal Knowledge Software

UNAM – University of Namibia

1   Executive Summary

1.1   Background

As part of its Compact with the Government of Namibia, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) funded the Regional Study and Resource Center (RSRC) Activity under the Education Project. This Activity aimed to construct and develop programming for three RSRCs with accompanying mobile library units in Oshakati (Oshana Region), Helao Nafidi (Ohangwena Region) and Gobabis (Omaheke Region). Their design, collections, staffing, and areas of emphasis are meant to offer a range of specific services and activities to patrons and in their communities, to highlight the importance of literacy and learning to every age and income level, and to signal the urgency of promoting a "learning culture" throughout the entire country. The RSRC Activity was comprised of two sub-activities carried out by consulting teams and contractors, with management oversight being provided by the Millennium Challenge Account Namibia (MCA-N):

- Sub-activity 1: Construction of 3 Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRCs)
- Sub-activity 2: Technical assistance and training for RSRCs

MCC contracted the Technology & Social Change group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington to conduct a performance evaluation of the Namibia Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRC) Activity. This evaluation has been designed to serve the needs of two major stakeholders, MCC and the Namibia Library and Archives Service (NLAS). The evaluation comprises a set of quantitative and qualitative data collection efforts divided into two categories: Component 1 and Component 2. This report presents the findings for Component 1 only, which addresses the evaluation question (EQ):

- *EQ1: Was the MCC investment implemented according to plan?*

In the process of preparing for Component 1 data collection, the goal to determine whether the MCC investment was "implemented according to plan" proved too broad to address adequately, due to the absence of a clear master planning document. Therefore, EQ1 was modified to address the question:

- *To what extent were the RSRC implementation activities completed by the end of the Namibia Compact (September 2014) and what factors facilitated or inhibited completion?*

1.2   Methodology

The evaluation was limited to nine tasks and 29 subtasks identified in consultation with MCC and MCA-N. It did not include budgetary analysis. Completion of the tasks was assessed by conducting key informant interviews, reviewing project documents, and making observations in the field.

Interviewers conducted 23 interviews in March and April of 2015 with Ministry of Education officials and staff, MCA-N and/or MCC program directors and project managers, and MCA-N's contractors who had been directly involved with planning, designing, or implementing an RSRC-related task or have played an otherwise critical role in the ongoing operations of an RSRC. The document review process served three objectives: (1) to determine "the plan" for the RSRCs and how it changed over time and (2) to verify interview data by comparing and contrasting information provided by participants with planning documents provided by MCC, IREX, and others, and (3) to obtain important information about the RSRC Activity that was not communicated during the interviews. (Annex 1 provides a list of the documents reviewed.)

The primary evaluation criterion was whether or not each task had been completed by the end of the Compact, or in a few cases, whether the task was proceeding as intended. For the purposes of this evaluation "completed" was strictly defined to mean whether or not the task had been concluded by the end of the Compact in September 2014. Therefore tasks that were close to completion, including tasks in which some but not all subtasks had been completed, would still be classified as incomplete. Tasks of a more ongoing nature (e.g. relationship-building), which did not lend themselves to designations of complete or incomplete were reviewed for the extent to which some observable efforts had been made. Particular attention was paid to the extent to which a variety of factors had affected effective completion of tasks.

1.3   Summary of conclusions

Below is a summary of the conclusions that are detailed in chapter 6.

Completion of the RSRC Activity

At a high-level, both RSRC sub-activities were completed: RSRC construction finished before the Compact closed, overcoming substantial construction delays; and MCA-N and its contractors provided assorted technical assistance and training, the scope of which grew in response to the increasingly apparent needs of the MoE. To this extent, it can be said that the RSRC Activity met its high-level implementation goals.

Completion of Implementation Tasks and Subtasks

At the task- and subtask-levels, by the end of the Compact there were several items that had not been completed or still needed to be resolved. The analysis presented in Section 5 shows that five implementation tasks were incomplete while four implementation tasks were complete. Based on this, the evaluation concludes that the RSRC implementation tasks were *Partially Complete* by the end of the Compact because four out of the nine tasks were technically complete and some parts of the remaining tasks were complete or close to completion.

This finding should be interpreted in context of the complexity of the RSRC Activity. Every single task and subtask came up against one or more inhibiting factors, even as most also benefited from some facilitating factors. The inhibiting factors ran the gamut from basic construction and hiring delays to delicate political relationships. Certain critical tasks, specifically staffing and collections, seemed to have been particularly hard hit by inhibitors that were out of their control, such as a systemic talent shortage. Others, such as relationship-building, may have suffered from some vagueness of definition as well as general low capacity and skill of staff.

Task completion was most facilitated by a continuity of relationships between the RSRC Activity implementing partners (especially NLAS and MCA-N) and other stakeholders, such as the larger MoE and national educational institutions, the persistent lobbying of implementing partners to gain various concessions needed to keep the project moving (e.g. improved salary structure for library staff), the allocation of additional tasks to the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX, contracted to provide technical assistance), and the general public and official goodwill towards the RSRC concept.

The issues that most greatly inhibited task completion were changes in the program timeline and changes in staffing plans and recruitment. These two issues were interrelated, with timeline changes (mostly construction-related) holding up the staffing process, and delays in the staffing process contributing to lags in the timeline.

Major Successes

Rallying support for the RSRC Activity: RSRC Activity management was particularly successful in generating an inclusive consultative process (even though important partners could not always participate). Key informants communicated a clear sense of value attached to the RSRC concept at community, regional and national levels.

Persistence and responsiveness to emerging gaps and limitations: Several key informants emphasized that simply "getting it done" was a significant achievement. While it is not clear whether some challenges could have been avoided, or if the rate of response could have been faster, management did react to the numerous challenges the Activity faced and took action to mitigate them – e.g., bringing IREX on board to address capacity issues, lobbying for better compensation rates for librarians to improve recruitment prospects.

Influencing policy: MCA-N, the MoE, and IREX pushed to make sure the central government understood that obtaining quality RSRC staff was critical to the MoE and MCA-N achieving the Compact's objectives. MCA-N's lobbying on behalf of the libraries may also have helped institute long sought changes that may help make public librarianship a more attractive profession in Namibia. In this sense, staffing was one of the biggest challenges faced by the RSRC Activity, but also one of the areas of most significant achievement.

Planning for foreign exchange fluctuations: The provisions made by MCA-N to hedge against foreign exchange losses instead led to budget gains – when currency fluctuations worked to the advantage of the RSRC Activity.

Major Challenges

Low capacity of local industry and workforce: Some of the most critical aspects of the RSRC Activity were impacted by the dearth of qualified or experienced professionals. First the construction industry did not have the capacity to carry out the volume of work required to build the facilities, leading to delays for rebidding processes. Second was the staffing challenge, which was recognized as a high-risk area from the start with the likelihood of this occurring rated as "somewhat high" and the potential impact rated as "high" (M&E Plan, p. 37). An insufficient pool of library professionals, particularly for junior and mid-level professionals, has remained the critical issue. The MoE was only able to fill the chief librarian positions by recruiting individuals from outside Namibia, as those with both library and strategic management expertise within the country were in very short supply.

Construction delays: As happens with most building projects, the construction process was significantly delayed, in this case for over one year for each RSRC. However the challenge was exacerbated by the impending closure of the Compact, which led to the rush to the finish line in September 2014, meaning a compressed timeline for other activities such as staffing, training, community needs assessment, and equipment-testing.

Proportionately limited personnel resources: Despite significant effort and dedication to this Activity, the MoE did not have the capacity to administer the RSRC Activity at the level expected by MCA-N, mostly due to a shortage of personnel at NLAS. Thus, as several key informants noted, MCA-N had to take a major role in providing tactical leadership for the RSRC Activity, which had not been the original vision.

1.4   Summary of recommendations

Below is a summary of the recommendations that are detailed in chapter 6.

For NLAS

Implement full-scale community needs assessment (CNA): The current services of the RSRCs are based on the results of needs assessments conducted in communities proximal to Oshakati and Helao Nafidi. Those assessments were essentially part of the staff training program at these locations rather than the full-scale,

farther-reaching CNA activities planned by IREX. By the Compact's close, the Omaheke RSRC had not conducted a CNA because it had not yet opened and had hired few staff people. It may be worth following up as soon as possible with a full-scale CNA at all three RSRCs. Doing so would allow for a more complete assessment of the information needs of community members or, at the very least, to verify that the current body of services provided at the RSRCs is adequate.

Explore options for meeting the goal of extended opening hours: The planning documents reviewed express consistently and clearly the expectation that the venues would have extended hours of operation to facilitate convenient access for different populations. This goal remains unfulfilled due to staff shortages and national policy that limits the amount of overtime public employees can work. It is not clear whether this has resulted in any significant populations being systematically excluded from use of the venues.

Closely monitor status of RSRC infrastructure, especially facilities and mobile library units (MLUs): Maintenance is likely to be a recurring challenge, despite the low-maintenance goals built into the RSRC design. The assignment of a full-time person to be in charge of managing and maintaining each facility should be seriously considered to pre-empt avoidable long-term maintenance problems.

Strategize on best approach to collaborating with organizations with which conflicts of interest may arise: There is a potential for duplication of effort by RSRCs and other organizations with similar information access objectives. Some, such as fee-based information centers may have different (commercial or profit-oriented) business models, whilst others, such as other government agencies, may have the same model. Care will need to be taken if RSRCs seek to develop public/private partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

Revive the mobile library units: These units are essential to accomplishing outreach goals, which are strongly tied to the RSRCs' effectiveness in meeting broader objectives of the Activity. However, their sustainability is questionable considering that, at the time of this evaluation, the MLU at each RSRC had broken down after, in most cases, only a single trip and was awaiting replacement parts and repair.

Allow time to observe and learn from pilot RSRCs: It would be advisable to monitor the three RSRCs for a period of time to learn from their operational experiences as well as users' experiences before embarking on significant upscaling of the concept.

For MCC/MCA

Develop a clear vision of success and set more distinctive targets toward its achievement: The specific tasks associated with project implementation should be explicitly identified, there should be a clear articulation of what success would look like, and appropriate indicators should be agreed on to measure success. Although broad goals were set for the RSRC Activity, there was limited specificity associated with several tasks. Looking at the relationship-building task for example, this is not a discrete task and it is likely that staff and management will do some degree of relationship-building in the normal course of their duties. However, establishing more concrete and explicit goals about relationship-building would be necessary to elevate this from an incidental activity to a task of more critical significance. It will also make it easier to monitor and evaluate, if indeed that is desirable.

Identify critical success factors and ensure measures are in place to facilitate execution: In the case of the Namibia RSRC Activity, critical success factors could be said to have been the completion of construction and the availability of suitably qualified library management staff.

Set clear milestones and roles, and be ready to change the program oversight structure if needed: The roles, responsibilities, and rights of partners and vested interests need to be clear from the beginning. Looking again at the relationship-building task, it was not clear whether the task was considered a strategic activity (to be implemented by MCA-N and RSRC top management) or a practical activity (to be implemented by RSRC staff), or both. The capabilities of partners would ideally be well understood from the outset, but be prepared to amend Implementing Partner Agreements if it becomes apparent that such plans are not feasible given the reality of implementation.

Bring program management consultants into the project earlier: Technical assistance, such as that provided by IREX, should begin early in the project to ensure activities like strategic planning, policy development, and staff training plans are incorporated into facilities design and are not derailed if construction runs behind schedule. Such consultants could also provide ad hoc assistance to the implementing partner organization (e.g., MoE) should support be needed. It is possible that NLAS' technical capacity was not well understood before the oversight structure was determined, hence the late realization of the need for additional support.

Ensure local partner is provided with adequate autonomy, authority and capacity resources for critical decision-making: Given the Compact's fixed end date, project management needs the ability to make critical decisions to avoid unnecessary delays. This can be challenging in a project that seeks to be participatory and collaborative in nature because it could require, for example, granting managers the authority to move forward with action, even if a full consultation process cannot be completed (e.g., because stakeholder feedback is not forthcoming). Additionally, the implementing partner organization (e.g., NLAS) needs to have the appropriate resources (personnel in this case) to be able to focus on high-level management tasks. In some instances, this may require hiring a specialized and dedicated person to serve as a counterpart to MCA-N's project manager.

Consider possible modifications to Compact closure procedures and policies: A more phased out process for closing out Compacts may be beneficial to support adequate handover of facilities and knowledge, make it possible for pending sub-contract obligations to be met, and prevent an excessive rush to complete tasks, potentially compromising quality.

In addition, key informants also highlighted the following in their recommendations for future RSRCs:

1. If RSRCs are used as a template for future venues, tailor them to community specificities

2. Build smaller and more durable facilities

3. Improve design consultation process to promote clearer understanding of technical design details

4. Engage with local community for community needs assessment and RSRC awareness creation

5. Improve staffing situation by beginning hiring process before construction work starts, and investing in building the capacity of existing staff members

6. Change Compact agreements to require earlier declaration of maintenance strategies, and to facilitate smoother transition after closing

2 Background

2.1 Regional Study and Resource Center Activity

As part of its Compact with the Government of Namibia, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) funded the Regional Study and Resource Center (RSRC) Activity under the Education Project. This Activity aimed to construct and develop programming for three RSRCs with accompanying mobile library units. The RSRCs have been designed as major new resources in each of the three initial locations in Namibia – Oshakati (Oshana Region), Helao Nafidi (Ohangwena Region) and Gobabis (Omaheke Region). Their design, collections, staffing, and areas of emphasis are meant to offer a range of specific services and activities to patrons and in their communities, to highlight the importance of literacy and learning to every age and income level, and to signal the urgency of promoting a "learning culture" throughout the entire country. The RSRC Activity was comprised of two sub-activities (Implementing Partner Agreement (IPA, p. 22):

- Sub-activity 1: Construction of 3 Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRCs)
- Sub-activity 2: Technical assistance and training for RSRCs

These sub-activities were carried out by consulting teams and contractors, with management oversight being provided by MCA-N. The primary partners in the implementation were:

- The Millennium Challenge Corporation – The U.S. foreign aid agency that instituted and funded the Compact and provided oversight and advising to all Compact activities.
- Millennium Challenge Account Namibia (MCA-N) – An organizational unit established within the National Planning Commission of Namibia (NPC) to oversee and manage the implementation of the Compact in Namibia, including the RSRC Activity.
- The Ministry of Education (MoE) – the operational partner, or Partner Ministry, of MCA-N's education program.
- The Namibia Library and Archives Service (NLAS) – The MoE directorate responsible for the country's public library services, including the Community Library Service sub-division.
- The Regional Directorates of Education in the Ohangwena, Oshana, and Omaheke Regions – The MoE jurisdictions responsible for ongoing management of the RSRCs.
- The International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) – An international nonprofit organization contracted by MCA-N to provide technical assistance to the MoE.

The Compact came to an end in September 2014, and the three initial RSRCs were opened to the public in late 2014.

2.2 RSRC Evaluation Project Terms of Reference

MCC has contracted the Technology & Social Change group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington to design and implement a performance evaluation of the Namibia Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRC) Activity. This evaluation has been designed to serve the needs of two major stakeholders, MCC and the Namibia Library and Archives Service (NLAS). For MCC, the evaluation provides a *summative* assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of its investment in the RSRCs from the planning phase through the first two years of their operation. In this way, the evaluation will inform MCC's ongoing strategies for education-sector investments while also performing an accountability function for citizens of Namibia and the United States. For NLAS, which is a directorate within the Ministry of Education, this evaluation provides a *formative* assessment to help guide program improvements within the three RSRCs studied, as well as other RSRCs and libraries across Namibia, a

summative assessment of the achievements of the first years of the RSRCs, and a foundation for ongoing assessments of the initial and future RSRCs.

The Namibia RSRC Performance Evaluation project comprises a set of quantitative and qualitative data collection efforts divided into two broad categories:

- Component 1 addresses the evaluation question:
    - *EQ1: Was the MCC investment implemented according to plan?*
- Component 2 addresses the evaluation questions:
    - *EQ2: What types of resources and programming are RSRCs providing?*
    - *EQ3: Who uses the RSRCs and what do they do?*
    - *EQ4: Do students, job seekers and business people report outcomes such as improved test scores, job seeking and acquisition, and business creation and enhancement as a result of using the resources provided by RSRCs?*
    - *EQ5: How sustainable are the RSRCs?*
    - *EQ6: How active is leadership in promoting and achieving the vision of the RSRCs?*
    - *EQ7: What is the influence of the RSRCs beyond their walls?*

The evaluation does not examine financial documents or employ intervention counterfactuals. Approaches such as return on investment, benefit-cost analysis, economic impact assessment, and randomized controlled trials are beyond the scope of this evaluation.

This report presents the findings for Component 1 only, focusing on evaluating the RSRC planning and implementation activities leading up to the end of the Compact in September 2014.

Revision of Evaluation Question 1

In the process of preparing for Component 1 data collection, the goal of Evaluation Question 1 to determine whether the MCC investment was "implemented according to plan" proved too broad to address adequately, due to the absence of a clear master-planning document (see Methodology section for further discussion). Therefore, Evaluation Question 1 was modified to answer the question: *To what extent were the RSRC implementation activities completed by the end of the Namibia Compact (September 2014) and what factors facilitated or inhibited completion?*

Note on methodology

The views and conclusions presented in this report are based primarily on key informant interviews and represent the opinions of the interview participants. The report should therefore be interpreted with the understanding that those opinions may not always be accurate. Since most of the facts in this case cannot be empirically determined, the Evaluators make extensive use of direct quotes to indicate the source of information. Wherever opposing viewpoints are expressed, the Evaluators endeavored to represent both points of view. To protect the identity of respondents, the sources of quotations and paraphrases are not identified and, in some cases, portions of the quotes are omitted for the same purpose.

3   Methodology

3.1   Data Collection Methods

3.1.1   Interviews

Interviews were conducted in March and April of 2015 by the authors of this evaluation report. Interviewees included Ministry of Education officials and staff, MCA-N and/or MCC program directors and project managers, and contractors. In total, 23 interviews were conducted with 24 participants (one interview had two participants, at the key informant's request). Of the 27 participants invited, two declined and two were unavailable. This report also reflects comments from MCC officers on select issues.

Selection began with a list of 50 potential interview participants whose names had been gathered from communications with key evaluation stakeholders, including the implementation partners listed above. The list was narrowed down to 27 individuals on the basis of their experience and expertise. To be included in a key informant interview, subjects must, as part of their job responsibilities, have been directly involved with planning, designing, or implementing an RSRC-related task or have played an otherwise critical role in the ongoing operations of an RSRC. Additionally, selection accounted for a balanced representation across implementation partner organizations and the three regions.

The Evaluators recruited participants by email with written support from the National Planning Commission. A pre-interview questionnaire was included to encourage participants to prepare for the interview, as well as to guide interview questioning and to be used in analysis. Using a semi-structured questionnaire, interviewers asked participants about their work with RSRC-related activities, the status of these activities by the end of September 2014, and their opinion on the future of RSRCs in Namibia.

As planned, most interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, depending on a participant's level of involvement in the period leading up to the RSRC launches, although a few interviews went longer given the eagerness of these participants to provide comprehensive responses. As for medium, 14 interviews were conducted in person, eight by telephone, and one by email. In-person interviews were conducted in Namibia within the city of Windhoek and the towns of Gobabis, Oshakati, and Helao Nafidi at a private location convenient to the subject (e.g., a workplace conference room). Telephone interviews were conducted with participants based in the United States or South Africa, along with two individuals based in Namibia who were unavailable for in-person interviews. The email interview consisted of written responses to the interview questionnaire. Additionally, 14 pre-interview questionnaires were returned to the Evaluators via email, four were completed in-person prior to or during the interview, three were not returned, and two were not provided to a participant given participants' specialized role in the project.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were coded using Weft QDA, after which the output was annotated using Microsoft Word. Pre-interview questionnaire responses were aggregated and tabulated using Microsoft Excel, from which frequencies, medians, and modes were calculated.

3.1.2   Document Review

The document review process served two objectives: (1) to determine "the plan" for the RSRCs and how it changed over time and (2) to verify interview data, to compare and contrast with planning reports, and to locate any additional information needed for this report. Reports produced early in the RSRC Activity were examined to satisfy the first objective, and reports produced toward the end of the Compact were reviewed to meet the second. (For a full list of document analysis resources, see Annex 1). Document types include the following:

- Compact agreements, e.g.:
    - The Millennium Challenge Compact (2008) signed by the MCC and NPC
    - The Implementing Partner Agreement (2009) signed by MCA-N and the MoE
- Concept documents, e.g.,
    - Education and Training Sector Improvement Program (ETSIP) (2007) prepared by the MoE
    - RSRC Concept Brief (2009) prepared by NLAS
- Due diligence reports, feasibility studies, and project documentation, e.g.,
    - The MCC Project Design and Implementation Documentation Activity Plan for RSRCs (2008) drafted by the MoE and MCA-N but not finalized
- Technical assistance reports prepared by IREX, e.g.,
    - The Strategic Objectives Implementation Plan (2013)
    - Final Report and M&E Report (2014)

The reports were provided voluntarily by MCC, MCA-N, NLAS, the architect, and IREX. Most were shared with the Evaluators several months prior to the key informant interviews. Such documents had been read on prior occasions and were scanned again to find information relevant to the two objectives above. Additionally, several documents were obtained after the key informant interviews. Participants had been asked about official plans or documentation, and any reports unfamiliar to the Evaluators were provided either by the key informants themselves or the organizations listed above upon request.

For the first objective noted above, the Evaluators reviewed the reports, compiled notes on the anticipated activities and outputs of the RSRC program, and organized their notes in accordance with the tasks listed in the pre-interview questionnaire. For the second objective, relevant information was incorporated directly into this report or used to provide context.

3.1.3   Media Analysis

A media analysis was conducted to complement data yielded from the key informant interviews and to understand how the RSRCs have been characterized in the popular press. Articles were assessed to reveal basic themes, including which topics had received coverage (e.g., which public events and/or implementation issues), which RSRCs were attracting the most attention, and what was the underlying tone of the coverage (e.g., supportive or critical, promotional or investigative).

The sample of articles was drawn using three news aggregators – LexisNexis, Google News, and AllAfrica.com. The newspapers in their purview included *The Namibian*, *New Era*, *The Namibian Sun*, *Namibia Economist*, and *The Media Institute of Southern Africa*. Common search terms were "libraries," "library," "RSRC," "regional study," "MCC," and "MCA-N." (See Annex 3 for a summary of media analysis results and Annex 4 for the list of articles reviewed.)

The media analysis was not comprehensive. Although the Evaluators reviewed all articles they located, there are a dozen dailies, weeklies, and online sources that were not searched due to access restrictions, limited online search functionality, and the Evaluators' limited knowledge of local languages. *Die Republikein,* an Afrikaans paper, for example, was not part of our search.

3.2   Evaluation Criteria

As described in Section 1, the Compact specified that the RSRC Activity would be comprised of two sub-activities – construction and technical assistance. The Evaluators suggested to MCC that Component 1 of the evaluation should also assess the initial status of tasks considered necessary to achieving broader Activity-level goals. As

such, within the two main sub-activities, nine task areas were identified for evaluation from a variety of planning documents. Each of these was further broken down into subtasks, as outlined in Table 1, for review and approval in consultation with MCC and MCA-N. Therefore, the tasks evaluated in this report were not all explicit Compact-level expectations.

The primary evaluation criterion was whether or not each task had been completed by the end of the Compact in September 2014, or in a few cases, whether the task was proceeding as intended.

For the purposes of this evaluation "completed" was strictly defined to mean whether or not the task had been concluded by the end of the Compact in September 2014. Therefore, tasks that were close to completion, including tasks in which some but not all subtasks had been completed, would still be classified as incomplete. Tasks of a more ongoing nature (e.g. relationship-building) that did not lend themselves to designations of complete or incomplete were reviewed for the extent to which some observable efforts had been made.

Secondary criteria related to the extent to which external factors affected the effective completion of the task.

Task and Subtask	Associated Planning Document

1. COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT
    1.1 Conducting community information needs assessment
    1.2 Using community needs assessments in service design
	RFP for Technical Assistance, 2012

2. IT & EQUIPMENT
    2.1 Purchasing & installing computers (hardware, software, peripherals) & Internet connectivity
    2.2 Purchasing and, installing Audio-Visual equipment, copiers, and other office equipment
	MCC Design & Implementation Draft Plan, 2008

3. STAFFING
    3.1 Developing RSRC staffing plan
    3.2 Hiring of RSRC chief librarians
    3.3 Hiring of RSRC staff
    3.4 Providing training to staff at each RSRC
	MCA M&E Plan, 2013, Annex 2
	
	RFP for Technical Assistance, 2012

4. FACILITIES
    4.1 Designing RSRC facilities and grounds
    4.2 Constructing the RSRC buildings
    4.3 Furnishing RSRC facilities and grounds
    4.4 Maintaining RSRC facilities (e.g. utilities, routine cleaning, grounds keeping)
	Compact, 2008
	MCA M&E Plan, 2013
	MCC Design & Implementation Draft Plan, 2008
	Implementing Partner Agreement MCA-N and MOE, 2009

5. COLLECTIONS
    5.1 Developing, acquiring, and managing collections (books and other resources)
    5.2 Purchasing, installing and configuring Integrated Library Management System (ILMS)
	Implementing Partner Agreement MCA-N and MOE, 2009
	
	RFP for Technical Assistance, 2012

6. RELATIONSHIPS
    6.1 Building relationships with education partners (e.g., schools)
    6.2 Building relationships with private partners (e.g., businesses)
    6.3 Building relationships with nonprofit partners (e.g., community-based organizations, NGOs)
    6.4 Building relationships with community libraries
    6.5 Building relationships with (MCA-supported) vocational projects
    6.6 Building relationships with Central Government partners
    6.7 Building relationships with Regional Government partners (e.g., Regional Councils)
    6.8 Building relationships with Local Government partners (e.g., Town Councils)
	Implementing Partner Agreement MCA-N and MOE, 2009

7. MANAGEMENT
    7.1 Developing and updating RSRC operational plan and internal policies
    7.2 Gathering, assessing and using information for decision-making and ongoing improvements
	RFP for Technical Assistance, 2012

8. MOBILE LIBRARY UNITS
    8.1 Designing and purchasing mobile library units
    8.2 Developing operational plan and internal policies for mobile library units
	Compact, 2008
	
	RFP for Technical Assistance, 2012

9. SERVICE DELIVERY
    9.1 Developing business services and resources
    9.2 Developing student services and resources
    9.3 Developing services and resources for other patrons
	Compact, 2008
	Evaluation RFQ, 2013
	MCC Design & Implementation Draft Plan, 2008
	RFP for Technical Assistance, 2012

3.3 Limitations & Challenges

The Evaluators encountered the following challenges and limitations while collecting data and preparing this report.

Identification of RSRC Activity master plan – Typically an evaluation of this kind would have a clearly defined set of targeted goals against which to measure performance. For the tasks evaluated under Component 1, however,

the implementation of the RSRC Activity was largely characterized by an emergent rather than established implementation plan. In the absence of a definitive planning document to benchmark performance, the list of implementation tasks to be examined during Component 1 was determined in consultation with MCC and MCA-N. The Component 1 key informant interviews then had the further aim of trying to determine whether there was a master plan/blueprint for any or all parts of the RSRC Activity, and if yes, what that plan was. The interviews confirmed that there was no single overarching plan covering all tasks, but that different elements of the RSRC Activity were determined over time during the planning and implementation process, and were documented in different reports. Subsequently, based on documents obtained from project stakeholders before, during and after the key informant interviews (See Annex 2, List of Tasks and Implementation Goals), we compiled the goals that seem to represent what the RSRC Activity was expected to achieve during the implementation period. These include some broad, high-level goals as well as other more detailed targets. Overall, we found these to be mostly consistent with the task areas that were the focus of Component 1 key informant interviews.

Access to MCA-N staff and documents – MCA-N was dissolved post-Compact, which created some minor but anticipated challenges for the Evaluators in regard to access to project information. Such access issues were resolved with assistance from MCC's monitoring and evaluation team in Washington D.C., which shared archived project documents and supplied the Evaluators with contact information for individuals formerly employed at MCA-N so they could be recruited for interviews.

Perceived versus actual – The main source of data for this report is key informant interviews. Interviews provide valuable subjective information from multiple perspectives; however, the Evaluators understand interview data often reflects respondents' perceptions of events rather than fixed facts. To the greatest extent possible, the Evaluators verified interview data using project reports, field observations, and comparisons within the body of interview data.

Utility of pre-interview questionnaire data – Using a pre-interview questionnaire, key informants rated the status of 29 project subtasks as of the end of September 2014 (median ratings are displayed in Table 2). In themselves, ratings from the pre-interview questionnaire are not reliable indications of the status of the different tasks because of the different levels of knowledge possessed by the respondents. Throughout this report, the ratings have been interpreted with caution and in the context of respondents' comments.

4   Effect of Program Changes

As a means to contextualizing the state of completion of the implementation tasks, key respondents were asked to discuss any changes that had occurred in certain aspects of the RSRC Activity during the Compact period. This section briefly outlines the changes identified and their overarching influence on the implementation tasks. (See Figure 1 for an overview). For each area we outline the original approach, changes if any, and reasons underlying changes. A brief discussion of the general impact of changes is included, with more targeted explication of their impact on specific tasks left for Section 5. Unless otherwise indicated, all italicized quotes here and throughout the rest of the report are direct quotes from key informants.

Figure 1: Changes to RSRC Activity implementation

Type of change	>	Description of change	>	Tasks affected
Program tasks		New activities added, and the scope of some existing activities was expanded		CNA, MLU, Staffing
Program timelines		Construction and hiring delays led to significant shifts in the timeline		CNA, IT & Equipment, Staffing, Facilities, Collections, Relationships, Management, MLU, Service delivery
Program budget		There were both gains and shortfalls in the budget		Collections, MLU
Duties and responsibilities of key program stakeholders		MCA-N and IREX took on additional duties		IT & Equipment, Collections
Staffing plans and recruitment		Number and type of staff and the recruiting process was modified		CNA, Staffing, Facilities

No major changes to: Program objectives, Program management structure, Key program stakeholders, Populations targeted

4.1   Change in Program Objectives

Nearly all key informants (15) stated either that there had been no changes or they were not aware of any changes in the RSRC Activity's program objectives. Those who did note a change (2) explained that the objectives were initially vague but fleshed out over time.

4.2   Changes in Program Tasks

Eight key stakeholders felt program tasks had changed; the rest either did not know or had not perceived any changes. The initial program tasks were directly linked to the two sub-activities: providing support for the RSRC construction process (contract and consultation processes) and securing training for staff. Ultimately the scope of some tasks was expanded significantly to either introduce new tasks or redefine existing tasks. The changes related primarily to Sub-activity 2 – obtaining technical assistance and training. These changes did not occur all at once but as needs were recognized.

Introduction of new tasks: The type of technical assistance sought was extended to include development of a toolkit of policies and plans for day-to-day venue operations. Additionally, although community consultation of some sort was expected in the RSRC planning process, the inclusion of community needs assessment as a discrete and systematic task appears later, in MCA's RFP for technical assistance released in March 2012.

Redefinition of tasks: The plan for staff training was broadened significantly from training that was "*more or less supposed to provide refresher training for librarians on being librarians*" to training that was intended to prepare staff for higher level RSRC management duties.

The community needs assessment task was also re-scoped to have more limited aims than planned. This became necessary, as there was insufficient time to carry out two rounds of CNA before RSRC launch as originally intended. The time constraint was primarily due to the delays in completing construction and hiring staff. By the time some staff members were available to participate in the first round of training, it was close to the RSRC launch dates.

Reasons for change:

- Absence of an operational framework for RSRC-type institutions – NLAS and the MoE did not have pre-existing operational structures for the RSRCs to follow. These had to be developed anew.
- Limited managerial experience and expertise of library staff – the RSRC concept required staff with skillsets above and beyond those that library professionals coming out of educational institutions in Namibia were prepared for, notably strategic management as well as outreach knowledge and practice.
- Staffing delays – certain tasks such as training and CNA could not be fully executed in the absence of staff to participate.

Impact of changes: In most cases it could be argued that the changes were necessary, and added value to the Activity, helping to support stronger institutional capacity. Areas of potential negative impact were the task modifications that limited the extent of training and CNA.

4.3   Changes in Program Timeline

The majority of key informants (12) indicated that the program timeline had changed. This was the most dramatic area of observable change. The original timeline goal was to complete construction and have the three RSRCs officially launched by March 2013. The schedule fell short of this target by over one year, with two RSRCs being launched in September 2014, and the third in November 2014. This outcome had fairly severe knock-on effects throughout the program. Delays arose due to the following:

- Longer than expected design period – This can be attributed to the novelty of the RSRC concept as well as the extensive consultative approach adopted for the RSRC design and planning process.

- Limited capacity of local construction firms – The local construction industry consisted primarily of relatively small firms with limited capacity to handle projects as large as the RSRC Activity. Initial attempts to identify suitable candidates for the construction work were therefore unsuccessful and project time was lost to the process of repeating the bidding process with a wider net to allow international bids.
- Longer than expected construction period – the actual construction process took about a year longer than anticipated at each site (over two years instead of 15 months). Apart from the general tendency for construction work periods to be underestimated, there were issues such as having to deal with soggy land at Omaheke that slowed down construction progress.
- Equipment installation delays – Primarily related to internet connectivity, which was not secured until launch date or after.
- Staffing challenges – The limited availability of qualified trained local library professionals to take up RSRC positions. As with the search for construction firms, time was lost in multiple recruitment efforts within Namibia and then internationally.
- Delayed opening dates – primarily due to the delays in recruiting qualified staff, as well as delays in other deliverables such as equipment and books, even when the RSRC buildings were ready, the venues could not be opened.

Impact of changes: Timeline changes had serious repercussions for the RSRC Activity. As one key informant put it, "*No greater factor influenced how the program was implemented. It cannot be overstated how dramatically the program was altered by the delay in opening the centers.*" Essentially most other program tasks could not be carried out, either because a functioning RSRC was a prerequisite, or because there may have been some reluctance to invest time and resources in specific tasks until there was certainty about when the venues would open. For instance, there were some suggestions that the search for suitably qualified staff may have been pursued more aggressively but for a desire to avoid expenditure on salaries until the RSRCs were operational.

Other major impacts were: inability to obtain appropriate hands-on training (e.g. with a live Integrated library management system (ILMS)), inadequate time for training overall, the lack of trial and testing time for systems and equipment within maintenance warranty/defect notification periods, inability to get feedback on design or policies from functioning staff, inability to follow up on staff adherence to and/or experience with operational policies and practices, and loss of institutional knowledge resulting from the close of the Compact right at the time the venues were opened for business. On the other hand, a positive impact was the time availed by consultants to prepare training and policy materials.

4.4   Changes in Program Budget

There were both gains and shortfalls to the RSRC Activity budget during the Compact period. Of key informants, the largest number (8) said the program budget had changed, although almost as many stated that they did not know (7). In some cases, MCA found itself coming in under budget, while in others budget constraints were encountered.

Sources of budget gains:

- Beneficial fluctuations in foreign exchange rates – At the start of project, the exchange rate was about 7NAD to 1 USD. During the course of the Activity it dropped to 14NAD to 1USD. Two significant outcomes of this were cost savings from major expense items such as construction, as well as the ability to release funds that were being held in a contingency fund that had been established to mitigate exchange rate losses.

- Lower cost of materials – the budget also generated savings from the purchase of solar panels, which ended up costing about half of what was budgeted for.
- Tax agreements – extra funds were realized as MCA-N was reimbursed by the Namibian government for taxes paid, in accordance with the provision by the US government for taxes to be waived on project expenses.

Reasons for budget shortfalls:

- Financial constraints at the MoE – Although the MoE budget was increased to cater for some RSRC activities (e.g., staffing), a few key informants noted instances when the Ministry was unable to provide the resources necessary for the components it was responsible for (e.g., first three months of the Internet subscription, larger book collection).
- Increase in cost of materials – There were increases in the cost of some imported equipment.

Impact of changes: Overall, the MCA-N found itself in the enviable position of having excess funds, some of which was channeled into the RSRC Activity, possibly as one respondent put it, "*the first MCA in the world that had this 'problem'*." The unexpected infusions of funds from these savings enabled MCA-N to "*implement more… activities found relevant to supporting program implementation,*" as well as to compensate for shortfalls in other areas. For example, MCA-N could accommodate "*shifting Ministry contributions,*" which they were "*constantly able to do because (of) the currency fluctuations between local and US dollar currencies.*" This included investing USD3.5m in the library collection (up from an original 2m Namibian dollars) when the MoE's expected contribution "*wasn't approved by Cabinet,* as well as carrying out the ILMS component. In addition, resources were available to expand the role of IREX (e.g. to handle collection procurement), to expand the mobile library unit (MLU) concept, and to cover the first three months of RSRC internet subscription costs.

4.5   Change in Program management structure

The vast majority of key informants (16) stated either that there had been no changes or they were not aware of any changes in the management structure for the RSRC Activity.

4.6   Change in Key Program Stakeholders

Most (11) key informants felt that no changes occurred here.

4.7   Change in Duties and Responsibilities of Key Program Stakeholders

Key informant responses were split – six said there were no changes, five said there were changes, and the rest did not know or did not respond. The evidence indicates that there were some important changes in the duties of key program stakeholders, primarily taking the form of an expanded role for IREX and additional responsibilities taken on by MCA-N. The changes in roles and responsibilities occurred mainly in the following areas:

- Overall Activity leadership – MCA-N took on a more central role than is typical for such projects, for example driving decision-making processes, developing the RSRC concept and implementing the project. Most respondents found this to be unusual but necessary, stating for example that: "A*ctually before in other projects… I haven't seen anybody kind of sit back and let the donor really call all the shots but in this particular case, that was evident that… (MCA-N) did have to take a lead.*" Some MCC staff also took on a more hands-on role: "*It's supposed to be … about, maybe, 80% oversight and 20% support, but … ended up doing a lot more … pretty much in the design of the concept and the facilities and then in helping implement the program.*" One key informant suggested that the relevant responsible parties might

eventually have stepped up to facilitate progress, however MCA-N "*couldn't afford to take that risk*" and so "*did a lot of the pushing.*"

- Book procurement – Both MCA-N and IREX took on additional responsibility for the book procurement process. "*Because of the shortage of personnel, [NLAS] asked MCA to… hire staff members from IREX who helped [NLAS] put the collection together. So they worked closely with [NLAS] staff members.*" MCA-N also got involved with book procurement: "*instead of just sort of providing oversight, a bit of support,*" they were essentially "*implementing some of it… scurrying the Internet and Amazon.com, everything to come up with sort of a collection.*"

- Development of staffing plan – MCA and IREX also had higher than anticipated levels of engagement with the process of developing the staffing plan, including the various activities involved with getting the RSRC staff positions approved and sufficiently compensated within the MoE hiring structure. A key informant explained, "*in the implementation agreement … the ministry, they were supposed to provide … a staffing plan I think three months after the start of the construction. And they were really sort of struggling to do that and (MCA-N) had to sort of try to help them… define what that's going to look like. They came up with all the initial staffing plan but as the building was progressing … the staffing plan that was initially drawn up was not sufficient.*"

- Training – Some training responsibilities shifted to different parties as attempts were made to find suitable partners for different aspects of this task, for example at the University of Namibia (UNAM). The scope of RSRC staff training also shifted to address skill and capacity gaps in the hiring pool.

- Internet installation – Opinions differed as to which organization, MCA-N or MoE, was initially responsible for installing the internet (i.e., laying the fiber to the RSRC property, laying a direct line to each RSRC, and wiring within the RSRC). According to one key informant, MCA-N "*hadn't actually envisioned getting involved in trying to provide an Internet connection but in the end … had to change … and say 'okay, we'll pay for the line to come there and then you'll just have to pay for the subscription.'*" Yet another felt the responsibility had always been with MCA-N: "*I have yet to hear of a building that is sponsored with equipment and all, but cabling is not part of that, especially cabling for the sponsored core function of providing fast internet. MCA-N was in charge with all the constructions – cabling and telephone lines installation, etc., was part of that.*".

Reasons for change in duties and responsibilities:

- Lack of capacity at the Ministry of Education – this led to MCA-N needing to take on some practical and strategic roles that were initially assigned to the Ministry. A key informant commented that, "*The problem is that NLAS continues to have a constraint of staffing so for instance they don't have deputy director currently since two years, I think, so there is a lot of constraint in doing all these kind of things.*" Another observed that "*The lack of an NLAS Deputy Director should have compelled MCA to negotiate a better leadership function for the RSRC project, but it is possible that MCA-N did not have good guidance here.*"

- Lack of clarity about the distribution of responsibilities – In some instances there may have been "*a bit of a grey area of who's responsible for what,*" as one respondent said in relation to relationship-building. The challenges in completing internet connections at the RSRCs also seem to have been somewhat connected to this ambiguity.

- Inexperienced professional staff – resulting in more capacity and leadership training required from IREX.

Impact of changes: The changes were mostly targeted at addressing observed Activity challenges and therefore had largely positive outcomes. For instance, the decision to expand the role played by IREX helped to begin

addressing the need for capacity-building at operational and management levels of the RSRCs. The Activity would likely have experienced even more significant stalling than it did in various areas if this type of action had not been taken. The relatively late start of some of the interventions (such as training on community needs assessment) may however have limited the benefit of these actions. As one key informant observed, "*involving a partner like an IREX or some technical experts… alongside those that focus on infrastructure from the very beginning is key. IREX came in very late.*"

4.8   Change in Staffing Plans/Recruitment

Changes in staffing plans were acknowledged by most (12) key informants. Essentially there had to be significant adjustments to the original staffing plan developed by MoE, along with lengthy negotiations with the Office of the Prime Minister (e.g. around issues such as job descriptions and salary structure) to accommodate the new staffing elements that the RSRCs had introduced. Changes to staffing plans included increasing the total number of staff, creating new staff positions (e.g. for facility maintenance and IT), regrading positions to increase salaries and attract more qualified applicants, and seeking approval to hire non-Namibian nationals to key management positions.

 As one key informant explained in detail:

> *I think then something like 14 positions, and you're looking at it and trying to place all of them there. You had like almost all wings of the building where there wouldn't be anybody and… started to realize that the staffing plan that was initially drawn up was not sufficient. And that was just on the professional staff and then, again, as the building kept developing, we realized that just maintaining the building is another issue. It's like a huge, huge building and they had, I think, two or three cleaners, which just wouldn't do. I mean in one day they wouldn't be able to get to everything they needed to get to maintain the facilities. So then… [MCA-N] had to review the facilities and the staffing plan based on that and came up with far bigger, I mean I think double, in some instances quadruple the initial staffing size and staffing plan. But there were no available positions on the ministry structure to allow for that so… [MCA-N] actually had to go to the Office of the Prime Minister to justify the bigger staffing plan and it was not well received because they're decentralizing a lot of the services and they're trying to make the government smaller… So eventually… an expanded structure… was approved but the grades were a bit lower and we went through, I think, iterations [of] trying to recruit the staff and it was just not attractive enough for people to express interest. And those who did express interest were just not qualified for the job so… had to go back to them and try to convince them that we have to create a grade higher to incentivize people to come, which was not very easy because the public service commission does not make exceptions because then everybody else, all other ministries and departments of government will also want the same. So again… [MCA-N] had to do some convincing to say okay we've gone through this number of recruitment drives and we haven't been successful.*

Regarding negotiations to adjust hiring policies at the MOE, another respondent stated,

> *Almost completely overhauling the way in which the library system is structured and managed throughout Namibia to accommodate these new centers was a tremendous undertaking. And that required sort of bureaucratic adjustments with the ministry of education…. They had to make some mental shifts to their hiring policies that had to allow for varied new positions that previously just did not exist…. Anyone who engages governments will probably tell you that that's not a very easy thing to do.*

Staffing needs were initially underestimated. A respondent noted that this was possibly because the RSRC staffing plan was modeled on the national library system,which did not have very high staffing needs due to relatively low population density of the service area and overall low usage rates:

> *The model that they were using was the national library and it doesn't get a lot of use... So the model they used didn't take into account that the north is heavily populated... So that's why we ended up with the initial [staffing] structure being so small. I mean it's a big building, big facilities about the same size as the RSRC, maybe slightly bigger.*

In addition to underestimating the number of staff needed, expectations about the availability of qualified and experienced or well-trained staff were not realized. The implementing partners quickly found that UNAM's Master of Library Science (MLS) degree program was not adequately preparing students to provide RSRC-type services. According to one informant:

> *The Library Science program does not offer the extensive level of professionalism and specialization that most countries would expect.... Librarians are not trained in providing for the operational functions of these new RSRCs – e.g. facilities, IT systems, contractual relationships with other government agencies and for kiosks, revenue generation.*

As a result, the implementing partners realized the RSRCs' demand for qualified, well-trained librarians could not be addressed entirely within Namibia (which NLAS's initial pool of applicants corroborated), and henceforth revised the recruiting process by expanding the search internationally, especially for chief librarians, resulting in more hiring delays.

Also, in response to the issue of the quality of MLS graduates, NLAS and IREX consulted with UNAM in hope of extending the MLS program from one year to two years. However this did not transpire because the MLS department lacked the personnel capacity to expand its program.

Impact of changes: Changes in staffing and recruitment plans mainly contributed to delays in other tasks such as training staff, opening completed RSRC venues, carrying out community needs assessments and building relationships.

4.9   Change in Populations Targeted

The general consensus was that no changes had occurred (8 key informants) in populations targeted. The specific populations of priority interest – students and other learners, job-seekers and small and micro enterprises – remained constant, as did the goal of reaching at least 8,000 people per year, which is approximately 10% of the population in the RSRC towns (Compact, Annex 6, under "Beneficiaries").

Section 5 presents the results for the primary Component 1 objective: to determine the extent to which the tasks related to the construction and opening of the RSRCs had been completed by the end of the Compact period.

5 Status of RSRC Implementation Tasks by End of Compact

5.1 Overview

Overall, based on the key informant ratings, interview responses, and the Evaluator's observations in the field, four implementation tasks are deemed to have been completed, while five tasks are deemed to have been incomplete by the end of the Compact. To a large extent, the late completion and opening of the Omaheke RSRC affected all ratings.

5.1.1 Complete Tasks

Task 2: **IT & Equipment** – All equipment had been procured and installed even if not fully operational.

Task 7: **Management** – Operational plans and policies had been prepared, and the consultative process for design and construction of facilities had occurred.

Task 8: **Mobile Library Units** – Units had been purchased and operational plans were ready.

Task 9: **Service Delivery** – The RSRC venue setup in itself ensured that all three service priorities (students, business, other) were being addressed.

5.1.2 Incomplete Tasks

Task 1: **Community Needs Assessment** – Training and pilot CNA had been conducted in Oshana and Ohangwena only.

Task 3: **Staffing** – The staffing plan had been developed but positions were not fully filled (63% at Ohangwena, 48% at Oshana, and 15% at Omaheke). Three chief librarians had been selected, but only one had begun working. Senior librarian and IT positions were generally the slowest to be filled.

Task 4: **Facilities** – The Oshana, Ohangwena, and Omaheke buildings were designed, constructed and furnished before the Compact closed. Maintenance plans were not in place, however.

Task 5: **Collections** – Some collections had been procured. It is unclear what level of stocking was expected to be complete by the end of the Compact.

Task 6: **Relationship-Building** – Some relationship-building had occurred but RSRC staff was mostly unequipped for this task. It is also unclear what the precise expectations were for MCA-N and NLAS versus RSRC staff.

This section is organized as follows: First an overview is provided of the task completion ratings given by key informants in the pre-interview questionnaire. This serves to summarize their views on task completion before discussing the Evaluator's perspective. Task-specific details are discussed next – for each task the following is provided:

- A description of the overall task implementation plan, if known
- A discussion of each subtask comprising:
  - A brief statement about whether or not the subtask was deemed complete
  - A discussion of the degree of completion, focusing on what or how much had been accomplished
  - A discussion of factors that facilitated completion, if any
  - A discussion of factors that inhibited completion, if any

o   A summary of the discussion for the overall task (or for subtasks where there is a lot of discussion material), including whether the task was affected by particular types of program changes.

Where appropriate, subtasks are discussed jointly to limit repetitiveness.

5.1.3   Key Informant Ratings

As explained in the methodology section, the pre-interview questionnaires were used primarily to help guide the interviews. The ratings provided are not substantive data on their own, yet in aggregate they provide an overview of key informants' perceptions of the amount of progress made toward each subtask.

Key informants were asked how much progress had been made in accomplishing each subtask at each of the three RSRCs by September 2015. Their responses were captured on a scale of one to five, as shown in Table 2. "Don't know" was an acceptable response that was not factored into the overall ratings; it was also a common response, as several key informants' had limited knowledge of RSRC Activity developments beyond their region, job description, or dates of employment.

Table 2 displays the median rating provided for each RSRC subtask. The median score was used because it shows a single score (as opposed to frequencies) that isn't unduly weighted toward high or low outliers (as opposed to averages) and incorporates every rating into the score, rather than the most popular one (as opposed to modes). The median does not capture the extent to which respondents' ratings varied from one another, which was quite wide in some cases. These variances can likely be attributed to respondents' varying levels of knowledge about particular activities, as well as possible differences of opinion about progress made.

Table 2: Key informant ratings of completion status (median ratings)

Key
Key
1 = **No progress** by end of September 2014
2 = **Very little progress** by the end of September 2014
3 = **Some progress** by the end of September 2014
4 = **A lot of progress** by the end of September 2014
5 = **Implementation completed** by the end of September 2014
Oshana (OSH), Ohangwena (OGW), Omaheke (OKE)

TASK	OSH	OGW	OKE
1. COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT			
1.1 Conducting community information needs assessment	4	4	3
1.2 Using community needs assessments in service design	3	3	1.5
2. IT & EQUIPMENT			
2.1 Purchasing and installing computers (hardware, software, peripherals) and Internet connectivity	5	5	4
2.2 Purchasing and, installing audio-visual equipment, copiers, and other office equipment	4.5	5	4
3. STAFFING			
3.1 Developing RSRC staffing plan	5	5	5
3.2 Hiring of RSRC chief librarians	4	4	5
3.3 Hiring of RSRC staff	3	4	3
3.4 Providing training to staff at each RSRC	4	4	3
4. FACILITIES			
4.1 Designing RSRC facilities and grounds	5	5	5
4.2 Constructing the RSRC buildings	5	5	5
4.3 Furnishing RSRC facilities and grounds	5	5	5
4.4 Maintaining RSRC facilities	4	4	3
5. COLLECTIONS			
5.1 Developing, acquiring, and managing collections	4	4	3.5
5.2 Purchasing, installing and configuring Integrated Library Management System (ILMS)	4	4	3
6. RELATIONSHIPS			
6.1 Building relationships with education partners	4	4	3
6.2 Building relationships with private partners	3	3	2
6.3 Building relationships with nonprofit partners	2	2	2
6.4 Building relationships with community libraries	4	4	3
6.5 Building relationships with (MCA-supported) vocational projects	2	2	1
6.6 Building relationships with Central Government partners	3	3	2.5
6.7 Building relationships with Regional Government partners	3	3	2.5
6.8 Building relationships with Local Government partners	3	3	3
7. MANAGEMENT			
7.1 Developing and updating RSRC operational plan and internal policies	3	3	2
7.2 Gathering, assessing and using information for decision-making and ongoing improvements	3	3.5	2.5
8. MOBILE LIBRARY UNITS			
8.1 Designing and purchasing mobile library units	4.5	4	5
8.2 Developing operational plan and internal policies for mobile library units	4	4	4
9. SERVICE DELIVERY			
9.1 Developing business services and resources	3	3	2.5
9.2 Developing student services and resources	3	4	3
9.3 Developing services and resources for other patrons	3	3	3

5.2   Task Details

5.2.1   Task 1: Community Needs Assessment

Based on IREX reports and key informant interviews, the plan for Community Needs Assessment (CNA) was twofold: 1) Program management were expected to consult with various local stakeholders during the design of

the RSRC facilities and services and 2) Two community information needs assessments would be conducted by IREX using a training of trainers approach.

5.2.1.1 Subtask 1.1 Conducting community needs assessment

Completion of subtask
By the end of the Compact this subtask was incomplete: stakeholder consultations had occurred in all three regions and pilot community needs assessments had been conducted in two regions. Most key informants rated this subtask as having "a lot of progress" made by the end of the Compact.

Degree of completion
It should be noted that the Namibian government conducted a high-level needs assessment before the Compact; the subsequent CNAs were expected to focus more narrowly on the surrounding communities of each RSRC. Key informants indicated that there was extensive outreach and consultation to gather information and input from communities in the immediate vicinity of the RSRCs, for example: "*we had outreach programs, which we sponsored from the Regional Budget to specific communities.*" At least five respondents highlighted the consultative process as one of the key achievements of the RSRC Activity.

The results were less strong for the community information needs assessments. Based on IREX reports it is confirmed that RSRC staff at Oshana and Ohangwena received training on how to conduct community information needs assessments in mid-August 2014. There was only one relevant staff member at post at the Omaheke RSRC so no training was conducted there; however the staff person attended the training sessions at the other RSRCs. The Omaheke RSRC was not able to conduct a CNA before the Compact ended, but at the time of data collection (March 2015), Omaheke RSRC staff had collected some CNA data and were beginning their analyses.

Due to the short timeframe between the training and the opening of the RSRCs it was not possible to implement two rounds of CNA as planned. However, pilot CNAs were carried out in Oshana and Ohangwena, although it became apparent from the key informant interviews that there were varying notions among key informants about what constituted a CNA. While some respondents stated that community needs assessments had been done, others perceived those activities as practice exercises embedded into the training program. One respondent observed that community needs assessment was seen as a "*staff development exercise as much as it was a needs assessment*" preparing staff for routine CNA rather than a single activity to precede RSRC service development, while another stated CNAs were not conducted, as "*people were trained from my understanding but nothing was done.*" Although the IREX training report (2014, p. 30) considered that the time allocated for the training (two days) was ultimately insufficient to provide staff with all the tools they would need to conduct a CNA, key informants generally expressed appreciation of the skills obtained: "*I'm saying that having been given the skill … you cannot say nothing has been done when you see a person equipped and enthusiastic to go and do the work*.

Inhibiting factors
Full completion of the community information needs assessment subtask was constrained by the following:

Late introduction of this task – There was limited time for IREX to train staff and for staff to carry out CNA before the RSRCs opened to the public.

Staffing delays – Staff was not in place to adequately carry out this subtask.

Time and resource constraints (for outreach activities) – Both staff and financial resources for this subtask were limited.

Need for guidance – There may have been more progress if staff had prior familiarity or expertise with doing community needs assessment. This is illustrated by the fact that in anticipation of the new RSRC (and in advance of the training provided by IREX), the community library in Oshana independently carried out a needs assessment in nearby communities. According to the key respondent who performed this activity, he decided to do this after attending a conference of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA).

Summary

In terms of consulting with relevant stakeholders, this was a successful subtask for the RSRC Activity, as the planning process included multiple opportunities for national, regional and municipal representatives to provide input. In terms of systematic data collection and analysis to determine community information needs, it can be concluded that the original vision of the subtask as anticipated by IREX was not achieved.

This subtask was affected by the following changes in the program:

- Changes in program tasks – Community information needs assessment was not explicitly called for in the original plan. Of the planning documents reviewed, CNA was first mentioned in the RFP for technical assistance, circa March 2012.
- Changes in the program timeline – and delays in hiring staff for all three RSRCs meant that CNA training was also delayed and in the case of Omaheke was not possible before the end of the Compact.

The goal post for this subtask may also have shifted with time, transforming to a focus on training rather than execution – in that respect, although the CNA was not fully implemented, it appears that RSRC staff were somewhat positioned to start integrating CNA into their work routines using the knowledge acquired through the training program.

5.2.1.2   Subtask 1.2 Using community needs assessment in service design

Completion of subtask

The information provided on this subtask is inconclusive – there were diverse and mostly ambiguous views about the role of CNA in the design of the RSRCs' services. Most key informants rated this subtask as having "some progress" made by the end of the Compact.

Degree of completion

The extent to which CNA factored into service design was unclear.[1] A few respondents (2 out of 29 valid responses) rated this subtask as complete, one of them explaining:

> *I think all of those are a "5" because they were done and that everything is there... In terms of the stakeholder meetings that we had, they already had something to present and what they had to present was created out of the community needs assessment. And also IREX, during construction and prior to opening, the IREX also did a lot of community needs work as well. They did training for the librarians but they also did their own community needs assessments.*

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[1] Key informants' responses may have been muddied by some respondents thinking about CNA in terms of the consultation associated with the RSRC design and construction process, and others thinking more specifically about the process managed by IREX.

On the other hand, the majority of key informants indicated only that "some progress" had been made with this subtask. Several respondents suggested that this was probably because no unique needs were identified, or that the needs expressed by community members were already on the radar of program management. For example:

> *Most of the programs or the activities ... each, every activity we conduct is not like based on the need, the assessment done... they were only asking for things like internet service, books and also photocopy services, just basic things that they were asking. Even the ones now called learners or tertiary students were only looking on the books that will support their studies... we had already planned to provide them*.

A similar view acknowledged that information was obtained about community needs but,

> *...It's the same for everybody. You've got a children's section, the training, the computer lab, cater for the readers, different readers, cater for businesses. ... I think the template and the model have already been determined. It is not something that we say, okay, this is especially for Ohangwena or especially for Omaheke. So it was already, I would say, pre-designed... centers are catered very, very well for entrepreneurs, for the learners, for the children, study resources for everybody, and then the computers*.

Yet another respondent indicated that the data from the pilot CNA was used to "*represent services and map out a service needs and user needs*" for Oshana and Ohangwena RSRCs while noting that these two areas were "*to an extent, similar.*" The Omaheke RSRC had not yet conducted a CNA, and so key informants could not speak about services desired by the community.

Inhibiting factors
Staffing delays – Staff was not in place to carry out this subtask.

Perception of generic user needs – As noted above, there may have been a perception (possibly backed by pilot CNA data) that community needs were similar, leading to development of generic service offerings.

Summary
The suite of services provided at each RSRC are virtually identical, suggesting either that assessment of community needs (where it occurred) did not play a significant role in the design of RSRC services or alternatively that the CNA surfaced the same needs for all three RSRCs. Based on the Evaluator's observations at the three RSRC sites, descriptions of the facilities and resources provided at each venue, and comments from key informant interviews, RSRC staff and management seem confident that the services provided are catering to the needs of their respective communities.

5.2.2   Task 2: IT and Equipment
Based on the MCC Project Design Plan (2008), the primary target for IT and Equipment was to have all three venues simultaneously equipped with computers, internet connectivity, audio-visual and other office equipment before the grand openings.

5.2.2.1   *Subtasks 2.1 and 2.2: Purchasing and installing computers, internet and office equipment*
The two IT and Equipment subtasks are discussed jointly below, since the results were almost identical for both.

- 2.1: Purchasing and installing computers (hardware, software, peripherals) and Internet connectivity
- 2.2: Purchasing and, installing Audio-Visual equipment, copiers, and other office equipment

Completion of subtasks

The targets of the purchasing and installing IT and office equipment subtasks were essentially complete by the end of the Compact. Completion was ranked highly by most key informants with scores of "a lot of progress" or "implementation complete," even for Omaheke, which was launched after close of the Compact.

Degree of completion

On their respective grand opening days, each RSRC had to all intents and purposes purchased and installed their essential computer equipment, internet connection, and audiovisual and other office equipment. However, completion of some elements, particularly internet access, "*was truly towards the eleventh hour of the inauguration,*" in some cases being finalized on the actual day of the opening. Also, one venue did not have its generator installed until after the Compact closed, and another never received a generator. Thus, while technically the task was complete, full functionality of the equipment and systems was not put to the test until later. Issues the venues had to deal with subsequently included working out bugs, resolving connectivity problems, incompatibility between some systems, realization that there was insufficient bandwidth for teleconferencing, and staff not knowing how to operate equipment.

Facilitating factors

Effective vendors – This task appears to have proceeded fairly well although most respondents could not really point to specific facilitating factors. It is safe to assume from the few specific comments made by stakeholders as well as assessment of the status of the task in general, that the consultants and contractors assigned to work on this component carried out their responsibilities effectively. The only exception is related to securing internet connectivity, where there were significant challenges.

Procurement guidance from IREX – Input from IREX (to redirect the procurement plan to focus on appropriate rather than the latest technology and equipment) may have helped avoid technical and other complications.

Inhibiting factors

Construction delays – Equipment may have been ready but un-installable until the RSRC buildings were in place.

Staffing delays – The late openings as well as late hiring of staff meant that training could not be provided to ensure staff members were proficient in operating the equipment. Also, not all IT staff were hired early enough to receive training on the new systems directly from the contractors (with hiring delays caused in part by the national-level negotiations required to create IT positions).

Abrupt Compact handover process – This left gaps in institutional knowledge about the equipment.

Relationships with vendors – Timely decision-making was hampered by apparent confusion about national policies on competitive bidding, and uncertainty on whether the parastatal telecom company was obliged to extend service to the RSRCs (when it was discovered that a fiber-optic cable would need to be extended to the RSRCs to meet their high capacity needs). Negotiations over the type, quality and cost of internet connection led to significant delays in network installation.

Summary

Otherwise, of all the tasks under evaluation, IT and Equipment was possibly one of the least complex in terms of execution. Much of the work was assigned to private vendors who met their contractual obligations and delivered outputs largely to schedule. The most serious complications were associated with navigating government bureaucracy, and holdups in this task tended to originate from delays in other tasks (e.g. construction). Overall, procurement and installation of IT and equipment were affected by the changes in the RSRC program, including:

- Change in program timelines – Construction and staffing delays constrained ability to install equipment and also to test them in real world conditions.
- Change in role of key stakeholders – Though not necessarily role changes, there were instances where key stakeholders took on additional responsibilities or faced challenges fulfilling their assigned role. In the former instance it was a positive contribution to the IT and Equipment plan, while the latter instances led to implementation delays.

5.2.3   Task 3: Staffing

Early project documentation stipulates that the MoE would be responsible for "*[ensuring] that RSRCs are adequately staffed with well qualified staff*" (IPA, p. 23). Expected outputs were as follows.

- A staffing plan
    - A staffing plan developed before construction begins (IPA, p. 24).
- Staff hired
    - 60% of staff hired by September 2013 (MCA M&E Plan Annex 2, p. 6)
    - 100% of staff hired by September 2014 (MCA M&E Plan Annex 2, p. 6, IREX Training Report)
    - IT staff hired to maintain ICT equipment (number of staff not specified) (IPA, p. 23)
    - An adult education officer hired for each RSRC to provide programs based on community needs (IPA, p. 25; Evaluation RFQ, C.2.4, and MCC Project Design Plan, p. 3)
- Staff trained
    - At least 6 staff members from the three RSRCs are trained in administering quality programs and resource acquisition (IPA, p. 26)
    - At least 3 staff members from the three RSRCs are trained in income generation for rural communities (IPA, p. 26)

5.2.3.1   *Subtask 3.1 Developing RSRC staffing plan*

Completion of subtask

The staffing plan was fully completed, as confirmed by a majority of respondents.

Degree of completion

The process of developing, revising, and securing approval for the staffing plan was challenging, time-consuming, and contributed to hiring delays, according to key informants. Ultimately, most were satisfied with the final staffing plan.

The MoE, with help from IREX, was responsible for submitting a provisional staffing plan six months before construction could start. According to one respondent, the provisional staffing plan was not produced at the time, but MCA-N decided to move forward building the facilities to prevent infrastructural delays.

The provisional staffing plan was submitted to the Public Service Commission for approval in March 2012 (four months after the cornerstones were laid for construction in the north) and approved in August 2012 . The plan was revised in the following year to increase the total number of staff positions at each RSRC (necessitated by the size of the facilities and their projected popularity), to create new staff positions (including an IT systems administrator), and to secure higher grades and wages for some RSRC staff positions (subsequently improving the quality of their applicant pool).

Although respondents acknowledged NLAS, MCA-N, IREX, and the architect stressed the importance of creating a high-level facilities maintenance position for the RSRCs, the position was not included in the staffing plan. This

was due to a general policy across all Government Ministries that the Ministry of Works will be generally responsible for such matters.

Facilitating factors

Successful lobbying – The process of obtaining approvals for the creation of new positions with attached funding took a great amount of effort from the MoE and MCA-N. Key informants credited project partners for securing a solid staffing plan by obtaining support from various public officials, such as the Public Service Commission and the Prime Minister's office. As one participant stated, "*The MoE definitely understood and championed for an adequate amount of staffing and resources required to run the RSRC.*" Another explained:

> [The officials were] quite resistant, so [MCA-N] had to take some extraordinary measures… to charter a plane in some instances and fly all the commissioners from the Public Service Commission to tour the facilities and look at them and have them realize what's happening.

Inhibiting factors

Resistance from central government – Key informants disagreed as to whether the central government facilitated or impeded the development of the staffing plan. Some respondents speculated that the Office of the Prime Minister was reluctant to create more RSRC positions because it had been trying to make the government smaller, as "*civil services are bloated,*" while another believed the Office was weary of making allowances for one ministry that it could not make for the others – such as dedicated IT and facilities staff. However, at least one respondent insisted the Public Works Commission and Office of the Prime Minister were entirely cooperative and smoothed the process of obtaining the necessary approvals.

Summary

The staffing plan was fully completed, albeit behind schedule. The implementing partners successfully secured the necessary approvals to increase the number and pay-grades of RSRC staff. In particular, the creation of three IT positions per RSRC was viewed as an important accomplishment, whereas failure to create a high-level facilities maintenance position was seen as an area likely to bring future challenges.

5.2.3.2   Subtasks 3.2 and 3.3: Hiring of RSRC chief librarians and staff

These two subtasks are discussed jointly below because the challenges were similar:

- Subtask 3.2 Hiring of RSRC chief librarians
- Subtask 3.3 Hiring of RSRC staff

Completion of subtasks

Hiring targets had not been met by the Compact's closing date. Key informants indicated "some progress" had been made in hiring RSRC staff. The Ohangwena RSRC was rated higher, with "a lot of progress" having been made. Respondents also said that "a lot of progress" had been made with hiring the chief librarians.

Degree of completion

Staffing levels for the RSRCs much lower than the planned "100%":
- 63% at Ohangwena (20 out of 32 positions filled)
- 48% at Oshana (14 out of 32)
- 15% at Omaheke

By the end of September 2014, none of the three RSRCs were staffed with a chief librarian. Chief librarians for Ohangwena and Omaheke had been hired but would start work in October 2014. The chief librarian for Oshana had not yet been hired and would only begin working in January 2015. Some of the delays were due to visa issues – after several attempts at hiring within the country, NLAS recruited from other African countries. The

chief librarians were ultimately hired from Zimbabwe and Tanzania. Other senior positions at the RSRC (e.g., senior librarians and IT systems administrator) were filled late, if filled at all by the end of the Compact. The venues had more success hiring library assistants, cleaners, and drivers.

The staffing rates had improved by the time of data collection, with all RSRCs at least two-thirds staffed: Ohangwena at 72%, Oshana at 68%, and Omaheke at 74%. Most senior librarian positions had been filled or were expected to soon be filled.[2] No RSRC had employed a senior systems administrator. (Table 3 shows the number of positions filled as of March 2015.)

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[2] Three senior librarians were in process of being hired in Omaheke (applying for work permits).

Table 3. Staffing levels as of March 2015

Position	OKE Filled	OKE Vacant	OSH Filled	OSH Vacant	OGW Filled	OGW Vacant
Head of the Center	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senior Librarian	1	3	4	0	3	1
Librarian	7	0	0	7	3	3
Senior Systems Administrator	0	1	0	1	0	1
System Administrator	1	0	0	1	1	0
Computer Technician	1	0	1	0	1	0
Librarian Assistant	5	2	6	1	4	4
Administrative Assistant Office	1	0	1	0	1	0
Cleaners	3	1	4	0	4	0
Watchman	4	0	4	0	4	0
Driver	0	1	1	0	1	0
Total	**23**	**8**	**22**	**10**	**23**	**9**

Source: NLAS. (March 31, 2015). "RSRCs March staffing update" from the Ohangwena (OGW), Oshana (OSH), and Omaheke (OKE) RSRCs.

Facilitating factors

Had a back-up plan – Implementing partners anticipated staffing levels would fall short of 100%: "*The Ministry knew they didn't have the capacity for staffing... and they informed us. We foresaw that delay but they informed us that they had plan B.*" Plan B included temporarily releasing NLAS staff from Windhoek to prepare for the inauguration and get the RSRCs running. This proved to be an adequate temporary fix, but the larger challenge of filling library positions remained.

Pro-active hiring in Ohangwena – The Education Directorate in Ohangwena started hiring early. As such, they had larger staffing rates than the other RSRCs, despite not having a nearby community library to absorb staff from.

Inhibiting factors

National shortage of qualified library professionals – Some attributed this shortage to UNAM only graduating around ten library science students per year. The shortage appears to be nothing new. One key informant provided context on the extent of the problem:

> *[An] initial literature review and baseline assessment of the library industry [showed] over two-thirds of the professional library positions in the country were currently vacant.... That was before the regional libraries opened. So this then now you've doubled the number of professional library positions so now that rate has*

gone even lower…. you can see that assessments, even back in the year 2000, or even late '90s, identified this as a key thing that's holding back library services in Namibia, it's staffing.

Additionally, a respondent noted that those who graduate from UNAM's program may still lack required skills, as "*The Library Science program does not offer the extensive level of professionalism and specialization that most countries would expect.*" NLAS and IREX met with UNAM to discuss the possibility of extending the program by a year to allow students to acquire greater competences, but UNAM has been unable to implement the recommendations, as they lack sufficient personnel to carry out a longer program.

Unprecedented size of RSRCs – Aside from the Windhoek Public Library Namibia lacked any large public libraries prior to the RSRCs, and had no existing libraries operated with the community-orientation and scope of services anticipated by the RSRCs. With the exception of perhaps a few individuals working in university libraries and the national library system, the number of individuals in the country with adequate experience to lead an RSRC was very limited, and candidates were recruited from other countries.

Slow hiring, particularly for foreign hires – Approvals must go through the Office of the Prime Minister, the Permanent Secretary of Education, and the Ministry of Home Affairs, a process that can take up to a year. The MoE had to seek exemptions for the three chief librarian hires, which took a lot of lobbying and convincing. "*You get into the geopolitical battles at a regional directorate level that people don't want foreigners coming in and taking jobs from Namibians.*"

Staff turnover – For instance, Ohangwena lost five staff just before the opening, and another four who left within the following month

Summary

When the RSRCs in Ohangwena and Oshana officially opened in September 2014, just days before the Compact closed, they were short staffed, with about one-third and one-half of positions vacant, respectively. Both had enough staff to open during the day, five days a week, and sometimes found opportunities to stay open in the evening and/or on Saturday, at the risk of overextending staff. The opening for the RSRC in Omaheke was delayed by two months, largely due to staff shortages. Due to an ongoing shortage of experienced librarians in the country, chief librarian positions and several higher-level positions remained unfilled at the end of the Compact, but recruiting efforts from outside Namibia were underway, ensuring that at least the chief librarian positions would be filled within five months of the RSRCs' public openings.

5.2.3.3   Subtask 3.4 Providing training to staff at each RSRC

Completion of subtask

Key informants indicated "a lot of progress" had been made with conducting RSRC staff training. Training at the Omaheke RSRC was rated lower than the others, as "some progress," because the venue had few staff members when the trainings occurred and did not receive core modules training.

Degree of completion

The objectives for the training subtask evolved substantially over time. Operations training for staff was not highly prioritized in the earliest project plans. The design plan states only that "*some amount of budget [would be] set aside [for staff to] attend the training program being designed for teacher colleges and UNAM*" (MCC Project Design Plan, p. 5). Instead, the design plan focused on the creation of an income-generation training program that would provide key business skills to rural communities. But by 2009, program partners understood RSRC staff would need RSRC-specific training developed and implemented by a consultant (IPA p. 25). And by 2012, it was

clear the objectives of those staff trainings should be determined only after the technical advisors could conduct training needs assessments (RFP for Technical Assistance, p. 112).

Ultimately the results of training activities exceeded one target set in the Implementing Partner Agreement (i.e., approximately 47 staff members received training in administering library programs, far more than the target of six) and fell short of the other (i.e., no training was conducted on income-generation for rural communities). However, two RSRC staff learned about SME practices through the Ministry of Trade in Oshana and a section on business services was included in the Operations Training, attended by 47 staff. It is not clear if the staff members who attended the trainings were the appropriate persons. However, the chief librarians and some higher-ranking librarians did not participate in the trainings because they had not yet been hired.

An overview of training activities, completed or anticipated as of September 2014, is shown in Table 4. Most but not all training activities were completed before the Compact closed. Universal Knowledge Software (UKS) and the Mortensen Center Trainings had begun by the time of data collection, but those provided by the Information Training and Outreach Center for Africa (ITOCA) had not.

Table 4: Overview of training activities (Source: IREX Training Report, 2014)

Type of training	Level of completion	Number of participants	Notes
RSRC master trainers training of trainer workshop (IREX)	Completed	Oshana: 3 Ohangwena: 3 Omaheke: 2	Staff members from all RSRCs were present for the training in March 2014
Operations training (IREX)	Completed	Oshana: 13 Ohangwena: 20 Omaheke: 13*	Training conducted in April 2014 (Oshana and Ohangwena) and August 2014 (Omaheke); the Operations Toolkit was used as a guide
Community information needs assessment training (IREX)	Incomplete	Oshana: 10 Ohangwena: 14 Omaheke: 1	Training conducted in August 2014 in northern regions only. [See CNA, Task #1]
Customer service training (IREX)	Incomplete	Oshana: 15 Ohangwena: 19 Omaheke: Unknown	Training conducted in June 2014 in the North only
IT training (IREX)	Cancelled	N/A	Not possible during Compact period due to late internet installation. Training for all RSRC staff was replaced by conversations with a few IT staff, post-Compact, on how to guide and mentor the rest of the staff
Facilities and equipment training	Incomplete	Unknown	One single-day training provided in Ohangwena, plus orientations conducted by individual vendors
ILMS training (UKS)	Ongoing	TBD	Training began after the Compact [See Collections, Task #5]
Leadership training (Mortensen Center)	Ongoing	TBD	Vision workshops completed in July 2014; trainings scheduled for 2015
Core competencies training (ITOCA)	Future	TBD	Unknown

* There is a discrepancy between the staffing levels provided by key informants, and what is reported in IREX reports. Whereas IREX reports indicate that 13 staff had been hired at Omaheke, key informants suggested the number was much lower (roughly 5 staff). It is not clear which figures are accurate at this time.

Facilitating factors

Effective development and execution of training – Nearly all key informants held positive views of the IREX trainings. Respondents said the workshops were effective, and that RSRC staff were appreciative and enthusiastic. One key informant explained how the post-training survey results indicated RSRC staff enjoyed the participatory approach to training, with its focus on sharing and "*departure from the traditional method of speaking and sort of consuming information.*" It was also participatory in that all RSRC staff, regardless of their role at the venue, completed the operations training together, which helped them "*speak with confidence*" about a variety of services at the RSRC public launches and feel they were "*all part of one team.*" Additionally, one participant said although IREX brought international training experience, they localized their methods well, that IREX "*Namibianized it*" very well and "*understood the rural areas [are] all kind of different.*"

Inhibiting factors

Low staffing levels – Delays in staff hiring led to delays in training, as "*only those hired could be trained.*" Training activities were delayed to ensure an adequate number of staff could participate. If staffing and construction had been on schedule (completed by mid-2013), Compact-supported training could have continued into the first year of the RSRC operations. In particular, the IREX-trainer master trainers could have had more guidance as they got started organizing RSRC training workshops.

In addition, fewer training workshops were offered in Omaheke because it was behind in hiring. Higher-level staff with community-liaison roles, including the business librarian and school librarian, had not yet been hired and so missed relevant trainings, leading another respondent to wonder if the Omaheke trainings were effective when so few could attend.

And with no chief librarians hired and only a few librarian positions filled at the time of IREX's trainings, training participants lacked mentors. Some informants said IREX's trainings could have benefited from a chief librarian's guidance, mentorship, and practical perspective and that lower-level staff could have used mentoring from senior librarians: "*A lot of our staff are new. This is their first job so there's that gap where you need experienced people who'll guide them.*"

Internet and IT installation delays – IREX's training assessment had established IT training as a core need for all RSRC staff, but the training was not offered because the internet was only connected days before the Compact ended, leaving staff unsure how to use the audio-visual equipment and IT network, in particular. Likewise, the ILMS system was not operational in time for the training, and so ILMS training had to continue post-Compact.

Time constraints before the public opening – Many respondents noted that the amount of training provided for the solar panels, air-conditioning, security system, sprinkler system, and other facilities equipment was inadequate. Facilities training was curtailed to one day-long event offered at the Ohangwena RSRC for staff across the three RSRCs.

Disjointed contractor orientations – This approach to equipment training wasn't conducive to staff learning. As described by one respondent: "What you ended up having was a handful, 15 different contractors delivering their own orientation on their own specific system without a lot of coordination or combining the component parts to a bigger picture...."

Summary

Omaheke RSRC staff were provided with fewer training opportunities than in the North, IT training was not offered at any RSRC, maintenance training plans were curtailed, and the master trainers did not get to practice their new skills under IREX's supervision. Moving forward, new and ongoing trainings may be provided by RSRC master trainers, ITOCA, Mortensen Center, and other MoE partners.

5.2.4   Task 4: Facilities

Based on early program documentation, plans for the RSRC facilities did not change significantly over time, although they were developed in more detail by the program's implementation partners. Expected outputs can be grouped into four areas:

1. Three RSRCs would be constructed in underserved areas (Compact, 2008).
2. Each RSRC would include the following features (IPA, 2009; RFQ for a Performance Evaluation, 2013):
   o Two-room study area (100-200 study places)
   o Library hall
   o Computer training room
   o TV and media room
   o Research rooms
   o Two community meeting rooms
   o Librarian office
   o Full equipment and furnishings
   o Solar panels
   o Environmentally friendly design
3. The RSRCs would be open to the public by the end of the Compact (M&E plan, 2013, Annex 2-p. 6).
4. The MoE will ensure that the RSRCs are properly maintained (IPA, 2009, p. 24)

5.2.4.1   *Subtasks 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3: Designing, constructing and furnishing RSRC facilities and grounds*

The following tasks are discussed together because they had similar results:

- Subtask 4.1 Designing RSRC facilities and grounds
- Subtask 4.2 Constructing the RSRC buildings
- Subtask 4.3 Furnishing RSRC facilities and grounds

Completion of subtasks

The three RSRC facilities were designed, constructed, and furnished before the end of the Compact. Over four-fifths of respondents rated these subtasks as "fully completed."

Degree of completion

The facilities were constructed before the end of Compact, but still a year behind schedule. Construction in the North (Oshana and Ohangwena) was finished about a year before the end of the Compact, and in the East (Gobabis), about six months before the Compact closed. Early plans showed the RSRCs opening in March 2013, but they officially opened to the public over a year later: Two RSRCs – the Oshana RSRC on Sept 17, the Ohangwena RSRC on September 18, and the Omaheke RSRC on November 25, 2014.

Project management – Key informants indicated that MCA-N did well to begin planning RSRC infrastructure early, expect delays, and utilize a flexible work plan. Others noted MCA-N managed contractors well using a strong system of environmental and social controls, reporting requirements, and contractor incentives.

Inhibiting factors
Cumulative delays – The twelve-month construction delays were cumulative. To start, the bidding process took longer than expected because the firms that responded to the initial bid lacked adequate capacity to complete the project, a problem respondents attributed to a lack of available contractors in the country. The timeline could not be extended to accommodate rebidding because the length of the Compact itself could not be extended. As one person explained: "*It was difficult to say, 'Increase the time,' because you only have five years, you cannot increase the time.*" The design process moved quickly and was only slightly behind schedule. More substantial delays accumulated during construction. The contractors had 15-month contracts but built for almost a year longer than that.

The Compact's firm deadline and construction delays may have negatively affected quality of subcontractors' work. One well-informed respondent suspected that the quality of some work was compromised: "*I think some of the work was rushed away and the quality wasn't there and everybody was desperate to get it finished and signed off.*" Part of the problem was that the contractors finished their work very close to the MCA-N deadline, such that MCA-N could not request changes during the agreed-upon twelve-month defect notification period:

> *You have issues, snags and defects that were never addressed by the contractors. You know, latent defects.... Those things on the snag list, some the contractors attended to them, [but] some [of the contractors] just sort of tried to wait it out until pretty much [MCA-N was] out, and they never got around to them.... We didn't have a year to observe everything... you're supposed to go through at least one rainy season.*

Indeed, all three RSRCs leaked during the first rainy season, as indicated by interviews and media coverage (See Annex 3 for the media analysis summary). However, MoE inherited the contracts from MCA-N and respondents stressed that they have been working with the contractors on repairs as needed.

Disagreement about RSRC features – The architect and MoE often disagreed on aesthetic and functional design for the RSRCs. MCA-N became something of an arbiter, albeit MCA-N staff often had differing opinions, as well. The debates and change requests likely slowed construction. One participant explained, "*We were pretty much designing up until the end of the construction.*" Key informants spoke of sizeable disagreements about the following RSRC features:

- Resolved satisfactorily
    - Balustrade design
    - Pillar design – cement vs. color finish
    - Exposed AC ducts vs. a ceiling
    - Quality of bricks used
    - Unisex children's restroom vs. two separate restrooms
    - Sliding door with glass for children's section vs. open
    - Location of public computers
- Not resolved satisfactorily, for at least one key informant
    - Floor finish – cement vs. dust-avoidant/decorative

- o Locker size
- o Windows that can vs. cannot be closed
- o Business section location, layout, and furniture
- o Immoveable book shelves and office furniture

Challenging consultation process – Key informants noted that the MoE did not attend site visits during the first three months of construction or provide feedback on design plans early enough, instead waiting until features had been installed before expressing disapproval and asking they be changed. However, others described how the architect's consultation style was not suited for their client, the MoE, explaining that the design reports and drawings were too technical. "*We're not engineers, we're librarians*," one respondent said. Another said the site meetings were conducted in a way that "*[bamboozled] people with technical information*" such that the architect "*assumed a lot and went ahead quite quickly.*" Some key informants felt too many of MoE's concerns were brushed aside and the architect made too many assumptions about library operations. In the words of one respondent: "*Now, the inside of the building, and what goes inside, and what has to be done inside, the architects should trust librarians' opinions about that.*"

Summary

The RSRCs were fully designed, constructed, and furnished during the Compact period. These subtasks were not significantly affected by changes in the RSRC program timeline. However, the twelve-month construction delay ultimately delayed other RSRC tasks, such as installing IT equipment and training staff.

Additionally, some key informants expressed dissatisfaction with the RSRCs' design, construction, or materials choices, mentioning the following concerns:

- RSRCs leaked heavily during the rainy season (See Annex 3 for media analysis summary)
- The Oshana RSRC does not have a defined business space conducive to business users
- The cement floors get too dusty
- Too much sound carries at the Omaheke RSRC
- The wood bookshelves are being "*eaten away*" (presumably by termites)
- Lockers are too small to hold bags; magazine shelves were repurposed as lockers at one RSRC
- The RSRC offices get too much sun

5.2.4.2   Subtask 4.4 Maintaining RSRC facilities

Completion of subtask

This subtask was not completed, as program partners had not produced a clear and sustainable plan to maintain the facilities after September 2014. However, key informants generally indicate that "a lot of progress" had been made.

Degree of completion

Beyond basic grounds-keeping and cleaning, maintenance activities are less subject to evaluation since the RSRCs were hardly in use by the end of the Compact period. Maintenance is therefore considered in terms of the existence of a coherent maintenance plan. To some key informants, it was not clear who would perform routine maintenance and repairs or where the funds for such services would come from. Respondents were not aware of a process for dealing with facilities issues at the RSRCs or a long-term maintenance strategy as of September 2014.

Several key informants felt that a dedicated staff person would be needed for maintenance given the sheer size of the facility, yet this was not possible given government policies and staffing structures. Key informants stated that the Ministry of Works would be technically responsible for the maintenance and renovation of the RSRCs, as well as all government installations, yet practically they believed that the Ministry would be too overburdened to respond reliably. One informant explained that MoE maintenance funds are usually targeted towards the construction (or re-construction) of schools and not minor rehab works, and that "*libraries... were at the bottom of the priority list*." Some respondents expected that NLAS would need to secure maintenance contracts with private firms, which would be too costly to sustain. (The evaluators did not confirm whether or not NLAS had a dedicated maintenance budget.)

There was also some ambiguity about who would cover the costs of future repairs. For example, an article in *New Era* on Oshana's leaking roof showed that covering costs may require negotiation across government departments:

> *The Deputy Director of Education in Oshana Region, Immanuel Aipanda... concurred that the contractor was called in to rectify the leaks shortly before the inauguration. However, at the moment, his office is negotiating with the education head office in Windhoek in partnership with the Ministry of Works and Transport to find an interim solution to seal the roof. "We are in negotiation with the head office to see where we can secure funds to seal the roof," said Aipanda* ["N$54-million library leaking...six months after it opened," 2015].

Given the media attention, it appears the contractor came back to fix the problem in order to maintain their business reputation ["N$54-million library leaking...six months after it opened," 2015].

Also, some respondents doubted that regular RSRC staff would be prepared to troubleshoot facility maintenance issues. Although some RSRC staff received about six hours of training on facilities maintenance, several key informants felt the duration of the training was not sufficient or staff did not have the requisite skills and experience to absorb the material. Likewise, individual vendors provided short trainings on their own equipment, but the piecemeal approach wasn't conducive to staff comprehension. As stated by one key informant:

> *We were supposed to get training on how to use the solar energy, but because the building was delayed there wasn't enough time. They didn't have proper training. It was just a quick walk through. And also we were supposed to have very clear guidelines left behind after the training.... Staff members were also supposed to be trained on... how to use the generator... someone has to know how to operate it. So that training, I think fell between the cracks.*

Facilitating factors
Low-maintenance design – From the outset, the RSRCs were designed and furnished to minimize future cleaning and maintenance needs.

Inhibiting factors
Reduced contractor defect notification period – Due to construction delays and MCA-N dissolving at the end of the Compact, it was unclear to what extent contractors would continue supporting their work after September 2014, despite the fact that some were only six months in to 12-month and 18-month contracts.

Facilities maintenance position not created – As such, to fix problems as they arise, the MoE will need to work with their single maintenance staff person or the decentralizing Ministry of Works [see also Subtask 3.1].

Summary

The maintenance subtask was not complete by the end of the Compact. The subtask was affected by changes in the RSRC program, including changes in the program timeline (the result of construction, staffing, and training delays) and a change in staffing plans and recruitment (the MoE was unable to secure maintenance staff personnel).

5.2.5   Task 5: Collections

The Implementing Partner Agreement indicated that the MoE would provide "*all necessary study resources (e.g., books, CDs, DVDs)*" prior to the planned completion of the RSRCs (IPA, p. 23). Desired materials included:

- Non-fiction sensitive to community needs and languages (MCC Project Design Plan, p. 3).
- Study materials for all levels, all documentation published in and about Namibia and the region [including] policies, consultancy reports, legislation, statistics, monographs and periodicals), (MCC Project Design Plan, p. 4).
- Materials for self-help skills development and micro-enterprise development

This task also includes the procurement of an Integrated Library Management System (ILMS), a system used to track library items and maintain patron records, among other functions. Plans to procure, install, and train staff on the ILMS were not a part of the initial RSRC project plans, but emerged later in the RFP for Technical Assistance (2012).

5.2.5.1   *Subtask 5.1 Developing, acquiring, and managing collections*

Completion of subtask

Key informants observed that "a lot of progress" had been made by the implementing partners in their efforts to develop, acquire, and manage a collection for the RSRCs. Although almost half of respondents provided a lower rating, indicating "some progress" had been made.

Degree of completion

Early project documents did not specify a target number of library materials (e.g., books, ebooks, DVDs, games, etc.), and opinions varied on how much of the collection should be purchased up front versus overtime, making it hard to determine the level of completion for this subtask. Results were as follows:

- By the time the Compact closed, MCA-N had purchased a core collection of about 4,000 items for each RSRC. MCA-N estimated an RSRC could hold roughly 30,000-35,000 books.
- Books and other materials were successfully sourced from several entities. Items in the core collection were purchased from international booksellers (obtained by MoE with selection help from IREX and funds from MCA-N). Digital collections were purchased or identified for no cost. The MoE's more limited collections budget provided various materials, including children's books, educational software, DVDs on school subjects, toys, and games. Also, at two of the RSRCs, collections from nearby, closed community libraries were transferred into the new RSRC buildings.
- NLAS developed a collection development policy for the RSRCs with IREX's support. However, there was some disagreement as to whether NLAS had adequate time and capacity to complete every step involved with book selection and procurement before the RSRCs opened.
- At the time of the interviews, at least two key informants felt a shortage of books would hamper library outreach efforts to the schools and community centers visited by an MLU. Additionally, the RSRCs

reportedly lacked important materials, including resources in local languages and resources for distance learners and professionals (e.g., medical books).

- The RSRC collections continued to grow after the Compact closed. According to some, DVDs and books purchased by MCA-N arrived into November and December, respectively, and thousands of books transferred from two closed community libraries were still being processed for circulation.

Facilitating factors

MCA-N surplus funds allocated to collection development – At the outset, MCA-N had not planned to purchase books, but with a surplus of funds (due to favorable exchange rate fluctuations) and concern about possibly empty book shelves at the new RSRCs, MCA-N agreed to a N$2 million collection top up, which was expanded to US$3.5 million [respondent's estimate] via two tenders.

Diversification of sources for collection development – Items in the core collection were purchased from international booksellers, transferred to the RSRCs from two community libraries the RSRCs were replacing, purchased with limited MoE funds, or obtained for free (such as digital collections identified by IREX).

Inhibiting factors

Largest book tender canceled – An order for 12,000 volumes, totaling N$6 million, was not delivered before the Compact's deadline of September 16, 2014. Just 400 titles were delivered on time. Key informants held the vendor responsible for the failed purchase, speculating that the vendor had a difficult time procuring books from different publishers, did not understand that conditions of their contract, and/or had realized too late that the books needed to be processed with labels before delivery. (See Annex 3: media analysis summary.)

Potential political obstacles in the book tender process – One source asserted that NLAS came under outside pressure to select a particular book vendor and/or specific book titles. The contractor was not ultimately selected, but the politicking process may have caused a delay that shortened the timeline for the aforementioned failed procurement.

Book processing delay – Although a significant proportion of the books, videos, and other reading/learning materials the RSRC's had received were on the shelves by opening day, some of the books transferred from defunct community libraries remained in RSRC storage rooms because the RSRCs lacked staff, training, and equipment to process them. For instance, bar codes were only delivered at the beginning of 2015.

Summary

Project documentation did not establish a target number of volumes for the RSRCs, making it difficult to assess the extent to which a "necessary" amount of books, DVDs, and other items were procured. Although a core collection is in place and the collection has room to expand, the limited availability of specialized materials may hinder outreach programs, school library programs, and distance education programs, and the experiences of RSRC visitors looking for just the right resource. MCA-N dedicated substantially more funds to collection development than was initially planned, but a setback from a failed book order left major gaps within the collection.

The subtask was affected by the changes in the RSRC program, including changes in duties and responsibilities and changes in the program budget. Specifically, MCA-N (and, by extension, IREX) stepped in to help when NLAS lacked personnel to select titles and manage book tenders, and when MCA-N contributed funds for collection development after locating additional project funds when the RSRC Activity ran under-budget.

5.2.5.2   Subtask 5.2 Purchasing, installing, and configuring the ILMS

Completion of subtask

Universal Knowledge Software (UKS) delivered the Integrated Library Management System (ILMS) by the end of the Compact. Key informants provided a median rating of "a lot of progress" for implementing the ILMS system, while the most common rating was somewhat lower, at "some progress."

Degree of completion

MCA-N was able to compensate for shortages of IT capabilities within the MoE directorate by purchasing a commercial system that wouldn't need as much on-site support; however, the MoE will bear the annual costs of the subscription post-Compact. Prior to September 16 2014, UKS had successfully established a secure hosting environment with a partner organization in Windhoek, configured the ILMS software, and was ready to deploy the ILMS system at the three regional libraries. However, staff training on the system was incomplete and problems with RSRC internet connections, circulation equipment prevented the system from being reliably used until months after the Compact closed. Respondents indicated that several ILMS trainings occurred after September 2014.

At the time of data collection, the extent to which staff had adopted the ILMS system was unknown. Some key informants doubted the system was being fully utilized yet. One respondent emphasized the role NLAS management or RSRC leadership could have in driving adoption:

> *There needs to be a strategic kind of pressure to say okay, now its April. How many people are using it, and what's the functionality of the ILMS? Are we using this component and this component? Because we don't want things to be redundant.*

Facilitating factors

MCA-N surplus funds allocated to ILMS– MCA-N did not initially intend to support the development of an ILMS system, but after consultations with NLAS and IREX, and finding surplus funds due to a favorable exchange rate, MCA-N committed to funding the procurement of a commercial system and technical assistance from IREX. The implementation partners agreed this was imperative: "*It likely is impossible to manage something on the size of an RSRC at the service that was envisioned without an automated library digitized catalogue library management lending system."* It was perceived at the time that NLAS would not have adequate IT support within the Ministry of Education to operate an open source system.

Contractor expertise and relationships – Key informants indicated IREX and UKS performed their responsibilities well. IREX helped to look realistically at the operating environment, choose a system, and work out desired features. UKS and NLAS had a good working relationship, and shortly after the Compact closed, UKS had signed on to continue providing training and systems support to NLAS.

Inhibiting factors

Late configuration in Omaheke – The Omaheke RSRC was not ready for ILMS installation until after the Compact closed. However, the ILMS was working in Omaheke by the time of the RSRC's grand opening.

Late internet installation – The internet had been connected operational in Oshana and Ohangwena shortly before the public launches and was not yet functioning smoothly.

Peripherals not operational – A few key informants stated that the RSRCs were unable to integrate the peripherals (e.g., receipt printers and card machines) with the ILMS system by the time of the public launches and were still having challenges six months later.

Staffing delays – Delays hampered training and adoption. In the words of one respondent, "*The ILMS was ready before there were librarians to use it....*" Several staff hired in the months between the ILMS training and the public launches in September 2014 were not trained before the Compact ended. One respondent noted senior staff with more advanced computer skills could have facilitated day-to-day ILMS use and adoption had they been hired at the time. Ultimately, even those who had been trained early required more training.

Ongoing costs – NLAS has concerns about paying for the commercial system into the future, but also saw the ILMS system as integral to operations.

Summary
Interview data indicates that ILMS development and installation went smoothly from the side of UKS. Nevertheless, full utilization of the ILMS ran behind schedule due to project delays with the following activities: internet installation, computer installation, and staffing – particularly in Omaheke, where the system was not available until after the Compact closed.

5.2.6   Task 6: Relationships

For the most part, expectations about relationship-building can be found in operational manuals and reports that describe the service development, service delivery, outreach, and marketing duties of RSRC staff. At the RSRC Activity management level the only indications of relationship building expectations are found in two sections of the IPA between MoE and MCA-N, and they focus on technical issues related to procurement and contract management for construction and technical assistance:

- Section 5.3.2.11 states that for each RSRC, the MoE would "*facilitate the participation in the quarterly construction site consultative meetings*" of representatives from the regional Education Directorate, regional government, Ministry of Works and Transportation, municipal council, and traditional authority.
- Section 5.4.1.1 states that MCA-N would handle procurement and contract management for the technical consultants. [IPA, 2009]

With the exception of education partners and community libraries, there is no clearly stated requirement for program management or RSRC staff to build specific types of relationships with the eight specific types of partners identified in the pre-interview questionnaire. The clearest targets are associated with education: "*RSRC outreach will focus on connecting with local schools, distance learning programs, and community libraries to meet the information needs of patrons without access to resources for their education*" (IREX, Strategic Plan for Regional Library Service, June 2013, p. 30). In the other areas the expectations are fairly generic and contextual in nature, e.g.:

- **Relationships with education and business institutions**: "*RSRC staff create partnerships with relevant agencies and organizations to provide targeted support*" (for distance learning, employment information, business development services; IREX, Strategic Objective Implementation Plan, April 2013, p. 9)
- **Relationships with government departments**: "*RSRC staff will provide direct access in coordination with relevant stakeholders [e.g. Ministry of Agriculture] to programs and services for community members interested in topics covering agriculture...*" (Strategic Plan for Regional Library Service, June 2013, p. 9)

Relationships with business: *"in cooperation with relevant stakeholders (e.g. Ministry of Trade and Industry, Namibian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, etc.), the section staff organizes and assists with training, career workshops, and business education and information skills"* (Strategic Plan for Regional Library Service [Section on business and research services], June 2013, p. 10). For simplicity, the relationships are grouped into three categories for the discussion below – relationships with education-oriented organizations, relationships with business and non-profit organizations and relationships with government.

5.2.6.1   Subtasks 6.1, 6.4 and 6.5: Relationships with education-oriented partners
- Subtask 6.1 Building relationships with education partners
- Subtask 6.4 Building relationships with community libraries
- Subtask 6.5 Building relationships with (MCA-supported) vocational projects

Completion of subtasks
By the end of the Compact, significant efforts had been expended on connecting with education-oriented partners, according to key informants, most of whom rated progress either as "a lot" or "some." Each RSRC (with the possible exception of Omaheke) had a functioning staff position devoted to working with libraries and teachers in schools across the region (although by the time of data collection, their efforts were focused on working with school libraries).

Degree of completion
Relationships with education partners and community libraries were relatively well advanced and strong. Links had been established with local schools through the RSRCs' school library engagement. Planning processes automatically involved community libraries because most of the staff from the local community library was going to be transferred to the RSRC. The routes for the mobile library units were also developed in association with community libraries since they were meant to be stopping points for the MLUs. Strategies employed were both targeted (e.g. participation in groundbreaking ceremonies, inclusion of partners on stakeholder committees, user needs assessment, school visits and other outreach events) and opportunistic (e.g. discussing the RSRC at regional meetings organized to review school exam results, participation in trade fairs).

Some respondents did suggest there was still room for improvement, for example in their geographic reach: *"this is a regional library—it's not a library only serving... this whole area down there... so in my view we could have done much more, in linking up with schools even in the Far East."*

Less progress had been made building relationships with MCA-supported projects, such as the Community Skills Development Centers (COSDECs), and UNAM's Continuing Professional Development office (CPD). Most respondents considered that "very little" or "no" progress had been made by the end of September 2014. It does appear that a variety of relationships were in the works but had not been formalized or documented. For instance a key informant highlighted that: *"a close relationship also with the College of Open Learning, because of distance education and their students are already using [RSRCs] facilities... their students can easily find their study materials in [RSRC] facilities."*

Facilitating factors
Assignment of dedicated staff – Having a staff position dedicated to working with school libraries may have been the most important factor enabling observable progress to be made in this area. Several key informants commented positively on the level of effort put into this subtask by the school library staff.

Continuity – Continuity of staff (transferring from community libraries) and pre-existing associations with educational institutions and the Ministry of Education significantly facilitated progress in building relationships with education-oriented partners.

Explicit facilitation by MCA-N – There seems to have been more direct intervention by MCA-N in supporting the building of relationships with schools, since the RSRC Activity tied in well with other Compact activities in the Education Project.

General enthusiasm for the RSRC Activity – The high levels of enthusiasm for the RSRCs and the value they would bring gave RSRC staff and management an advantage when doing outreach (See Annex 3 for examples of positive media coverage).

Inhibiting factors

Despite the overall positive assessment of these subtasks, several challenges were also noted, some specific to the education target, others related to the relationship-building task in general.

Staffing delays – This overarching constraint limited the ability to carry out outreach in advance of opening the RSRCs, especially in Omaheke.

Inexperienced staff – Another overarching constraint, the relatively low levels of experience and training existing and newly hired staff had in strategic management made the relationship-building task a challenging proposition. For example, one respondent explained why RSRC staff did not exhibit certain types of initiative:

> *You have the facilities and the resources... for those kinds of activities but they hadn't really thought about doing those kinds of things. Even though we suggested it to them, the people over there were pretty junior and didn't feel maybe confident enough in going to the director of education in the region and trying to work out something like that... they just didn't have the person that was able to try to forge those relationships... this goes back again to the leadership and not having a chief librarian because that's their role, being able to identify stakeholders and different partners and forge some sort of relationship with them. And because they were not able to do that, there were not really concrete formalized relationships and they hadn't done much outreach.*

Unclear plans and assignment of responsibilities – There was some lack of clarity about the precise nature of expectations about relationship-building. In the case of relationships with organizations like the MCA-N funded COSDECs, an interest in bridging projects emerged from MCA-N. One respondent noted that this expectation was new: "*normally as a center we don't have any relationship with COSDEC and others... It wasn't part of the plan.*" Another believed that it was a low priority goal: "*I don't think it was ever prioritized, you know, to reach out... we're still not clear for the center, in my view, that they would fulfill with these, with the community skills development centers, with the vocational training institutions.*" More generally another key informant stated, "*there's a bit of a grey area of who's responsible for what admittedly but I guess... the hierarchy should be the regions promote it in the region and the directorate makes sure that they've got the capacity to deliver what services they say they're going to deliver.*"

Challenges working with some partners – Some key informants indicated that there was misalignment between the goals, priorities and capacity of the RSRC program management and those of the original local university partners the program was working with on training possibilities. This led to loss of time trying to navigate the system. A change in strategy to work with specific departments rather than central administrative bodies improved efficiency.

Potential unintended consequences – An important consideration mentioned by one key informant was the possibility that the availability of free RSRC services might have undesirable financial outcomes for potential partners, like the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL): "*they generate funds from their computer internet access. In their centers, when people access the internet, they charge for it, whereas [RSRCs]… don't charge. So that is now where the tricky thing is. If [NAMCOL] are using [RSRC] facilities, it means they won't be charging, so they won't have an income.*" This could present conflict of interest issues and inhibit potential partners' desire to collaborate with the RSRCs.

5.2.6.2   Subtasks 6.2 and 6.3: Relationships with private and nonprofit partners
- Subtask 6.2 Building relationships with private partners
- Subtask 6.3 Building relationships with nonprofit partners

Completion of subtasks
Most key informants rated "very little" or "some" progress made in this area by the end of the Compact.

Degree of completion
There are no clear indicators for measuring the subtasks. In general, it appears that efforts were on-going or to be included in future operations. For example, one respondent referred to discussions about "*connecting with business associations, universities, others to use the large conference facilities.*" Those relationships that had been made were largely achieved through outreach efforts such as invitations to opening ceremonies and related events, inclusion of representatives on stakeholder committees, seeking donations from business community and collaborating for the development of training programs.

One potential revenue-generating venture planned by the implementing partners – renting out kiosks to small business owners – had not yet taken hold. However, the RSRCs had begun renting their conference facilities to large groups, indicating that some degree of outreach was going on to create awareness and uptake of the conference facilities.

Facilitating factors
General enthusiasm for the RSRC Activity – The high levels of enthusiasm for the RSRCs and the value they would bring gave RSRC staff and management an advantage when doing outreach.

Inhibiting factors
Program delays – Delays in construction and staffing limited the ability to carry out outreach in advance of opening the RSRCs, especially in Omaheke.

Inexperienced staff – As mentioned in the discussion of education-oriented partners, the low management experience of staff led to limited strategic activities such as relationship building. Specifically in relation to private partners, one key informant noted that, "*that's a very new thing for any librarian or any library in Namibia… there wasn't enough … time or expertise in engaging with the private sector.*" And referring to working with nonprofit partners, another said, "*the culture of librarians seems to be to stay where they are in that building … librarians are used to sitting there and waiting for customers.*"

Lack of relevant institutions – Building relationships with NGOs was hampered by the simple fact that not many such organizations exist in the RSRC catchment areas. A number of key informants raised this as a significant issue. For example: "*Likewise with non-profit partners, community-based organizations and NGOs… there isn't a rich civil society or community-based organization landscape in many of the rural regions. It's kind of seen as it's the government's job to provide services.*"

5.2.6.3   Relationships with government
- Subtask 6.6 Building relationships with Central Government partners
- Subtask 6.7 Building relationships with Regional Government partners
- Subtask 6.8 Building relationships with Local Government partners

Completion of subtasks
Most key informants rated "very little" or "some" progress made in relationship-building by the end of the Compact. Relationships with government were primarily in form of including government officials on stakeholder committees.

Degree of completion
Although, "*this new RSRC concept would require some change process at all levels to absorb it into NLAS' operations*," as one informant explained, "*expectations for this* [building relationships with government] *were not clearly stated.*" Since the RSRC Activity was hosted by the Ministry of Education and was part of the broader Namibia Compact, there was already a built-in relationship with government as a whole. The extent of specific relationships at central, regional and local levels was less clear; however at least one key informant discussed positive outcomes resulting from solid relationships with the Ministry of IT and the Public Service Commission, which helped speed up the processes of internet installation and staffing plan revisions.

Facilitating factors
Continuity – Pre-existing relationships between the Ministry of Education and management of the RSRC Activity created strong links at least at that level.

General enthusiasm for the RSRC Activity – The high levels of enthusiasm for the RSRCs and the value they would bring gave RSRC staff and management an advantage when doing outreach.

Inhibiting factors
Possible unintended consequences – As with educational partners, the potential for unintended consequences was raised as territorial issues with another government department:

> *Ministry of Trade and Industry… are creating, also, information centers for trade information. Again, we spoke to them about this … in every library you can easily create a business corner, or a trade corner… Obviously, the problem becomes that people have created positions to do those things, and when you tell them that we are duplicating their services, it becomes a problem that we are cutting their positions. So it has to come from higher up… how can we merge these services to complement one another…. instead of competing.*

Summary
This summary relates to all three categories of relations-building. There was clearly some degree of relationship building going on throughout the Compact period; however, expectations were not precisely stated. Although most key informants stressed the importance of building strategic relationships, no reference is made to relationship building in the M&E plan for RSRCs, suggesting that relative to other measures of performance, this may in practice be seen as lower priority.

This task was affected by changes in the RSRC program timeline. Since most of the relationship-building expectations are linked to routine library operations to be performed by specified staff members, the delays in construction, opening the venues and securing staff constrained this task significantly.

5.2.7   Task 7: Management

At the Compact level there was no specific plan for the two Management activities examined in this evaluation other than what can be implied from the two Compact sub-activities. Under Sub-activity 2 the MoE was expected to ensure that the venues were operational and staff members were trained in service delivery (IPA, pp. 12, 25-26). Much later, in 2012, the RFP for Technical Assistance (p. 110) called for an operations management manual to be developed. These can be connected to subtask 7.1. Under Sub-activity 1 the MoE was expected to ensure "broad effective participation in the construction site consultative meetings" (IPA, p. 25) – this can be connected to subtask 7.2.

5.2.7.1   *Subtasks 7.1 & 7.2: Developing operational plans & policies, using information for decision-making*

The two subtasks are discussed jointly below as the results are applicable to both.

- Subtask 7.1: Developing and updating RSRC operational plan and internal policies
- Subtask 7.2: Gathering, assessing and using information for decision-making and ongoing improvements

Completion of subtasks

These subtasks were essentially complete by the end of the Compact, although key informants mostly rated it as "some progress" made. The specifics of developing operational plans and policies were introduced after 2012 and there is no evidence of there being an expected updating schedule, therefore it is understandable that gauging completion would be tricky.

Degree of completion

At least five manuals addressing different aspects of RSRC operations had been submitted by IREX. However key informants suggested there were some gaps such as an absence of policies on financial management and sustainability. While plans and policies could not be updated until after the RSRCs had some operational experience, it could be said that the original operational plans were subjected to review processes that included updating them as necessary in response to stakeholder feedback.

At the RSRC Activity management level, the strong consultative process arguably fulfills the goal to gather and use information for decision-making and on-going improvements, at least to the high level plans. Little could be done in terms of RSRC operations since the venues were not opened until close to the end of the Compact.

Facilitating factors

Effective vendors – The vendor contracted to produce operational manuals delivered them within schedule.

Commitment to consultative process – There was wide consultation for the RSRC design and construction.

Inhibiting factors

Construction delays – Late openings of the venues prevented action on subtasks that required an operating venue.

Staffing delays – Certain management functions could not be carried out at the RSRC venues since senior staff had not been recruited.

Inexperienced staff – Junior staff did not have the experience or confidence to take on management responsibilities.

Overworked staff – Existing staff was preoccupied with operational duties and had little time to devote to strategic management.

Summary

When viewed at the RSRC Activity management level, this task had been completed. However at the RSRC venue level there was limited movement due to delays in the program timeline and the absence of senior staff to take on these duties.

This task was affected by the changes in the RSRC program's timeline. Construction delays and associated delays in opening and hiring senior staff for the RSRCs made some activities, such as updating operational plans or using information for ongoing improvements, impractical.

5.2.8   Task 8: Mobile Library Units

The RFP for Technical Assistance (p. 111) calls for development of an "Operationalization of Out-Reach Services Framework" which was to include specifications for the mobile units (subtask 8.1) and an implementation plan describing types of services, routes and schedules amongst other things (subtask 8.2).

5.2.8.1   *Subtasks 8.1 and 8.2: Designing, purchasing and developing operation plans for mobile library units*

The two subtasks are discussed jointly below, as most of the gathered material relates to subtask 8.1.

- Subtask 8.1 Designing and purchasing mobile library units
- Subtask 8.2 Developing operational plan and internal policies for mobile library units

Completion of subtasks

By the end of the Compact, these two subtasks were complete. Most key informants gave ratings of "a lot of progress" made.

Degree of completion

The mobile library units had been designed and purchased, and travel routes, schedules and other operational modalities had been developed. Although the subtasks were complete, purchase of the vehicles was finalized with little time to spare, and the units were actually delivered after the Compact had ended. It is also possible that the vehicles did not come with all expected components, amongst which were satellite connectivity and training manuals. There were some suggestions that the vehicles chosen may have been more sophisticated than appropriate for the RSRC and Namibian context.

Facilitating factors

Adaptability of management team – When it became clear that the vehicles could not be transported back to Namibia in time, the decision was made to send MCA-N officers to South Africa to essentially take possession of the vehicles there. Certain provisions in the contract were also amended to eliminate any tasks that were likely to hold up the delivery process. These actions made it possible for this subtask to meet the Compact deadline.

Inhibiting factors

Change in mobile library concept – There was an apparent shift in the idea for the mobile library from a simple book delivery mechanism to a more of a full-service model. This meant a longer design process and also some

instances of mismatch between the stationary library infrastructure and the mobile units (such as garages that were too small).

Vehicle design and assembly process – Developing a mobile library unit to meet the RSRC Activity objectives was a new experience and so took some time to complete. After the vehicle chassis had been acquired in Namibia, they had to be sent to South Africa to be refurbished per the mobile library unit design and then returned to Namibia, which had further time implications. The subcontractors working on the refurbishment also had capacity and operational challenges that resulted in delayed delivery of the finished product.

Government bureaucracy – The process of getting the vehicles registered as government vehicles was complicated and took a long time.

Summary

Reconceptualization of the mobile library units and the associated process of procuring and outfitting them considerably delayed this task. Compromises made by program management enabled the task to be technically complete; however the operations of the mobile units could not be properly tested in real life conditions, and their sustainability is in question.

This task was affected by the changes in the RSRC program, including the program timeline and program activities. Delays in procurement processes affected completion, and the original concept for the mobile libraries unit was much simpler than the eventual conceptualization of their design and function.

5.2.9   Task 9: Service Delivery

From the description of the RSRC Activity as well as the target outcomes in the Compact document (2008, p. Annexes I-5 and III-6), the RSRCs were expected to generate "*increased use of information for formal education, informal learning, business and research.*" This implies that services would need to be developed for the business community (business, research), students (formal education, research), and general community members (informal learning). These correspond to subtasks 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3. Other documents (e.g. RFP for Technical Assistance, p. 102, Evaluation RFQ, pp. 4-5) identify several populations of strategic interest: workers, unemployed, students and learners, entrepreneurs, disadvantaged groups, and specifically mention study facilities, book collections, information and communication technologies and self-employment training programs as services/resources to be provided by the RSRCs.

Bearing in mind that the task under evaluation here is development of the services and resources, not actual delivery, there is no explicit scenario for how the services would be developed, what types of service they would be, when they would be functional, or whether they were to exist as distinct products above and beyond what was already being built into the RSRC infrastructure.

5.2.9.1   *Subtasks 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3: Developing services & resources for business, students and other patrons*

The three subtasks are discussed jointly since the data collected mostly cuts across.

- Subtask 9.1 Developing business services and resources
- Subtask 9.2 Developing student services and resources
- Subtask 9.3 Developing services and resources for other patrons

By the end of the Compact, these subtasks could be considered complete. Most key informants rated them as "some progress" made.

Degree of completion

Although key informants did not overwhelmingly classify these subtasks as complete, it is clear that by the end of the Compact, the RSRCs all had features that were targeted at each of the three populations – such as study areas, educational books, internet connection for students; a business section (some with dedicated staff in place) and training programs for people with income generation objectives; and a children's section, space for social events, general book collections and internet access for other patrons. Ideas for additional specialized services were being discussed and even explored, however these were lower priority in the push to get the facilities constructed, equipped and staffed.

Facilitating factors

Facility design – At a basic level, services for the three populations had been built into the physical infrastructure of the RSRCs.

Development of operational manuals by IREX – The manuals provided by IREX were good guiding tools for RSRC program and venue management, giving them a sense of what types of services their patrons might want.

Inhibiting factors

Construction delays – Managing the construction process was a major preoccupation for the program, making service development lower in priority.

Staffing delays – Staff was either yet to be hired or had too much work to do to focus much on developing targeted services.

Summary

By and large, the development of basic services for business, students and other populations was completed by the end of the Compact, to the extent that there was at least one section of the RSRC facilities that was targeted at or had resources relevant to the three populations (e.g. books and study areas for students, business section and training for business, and general stacks and children's section for others). Whether or not these RSRC features will be enhanced with new services remains to be seen, especially in view of the general sense amongst key informants that most community needs relate to basic access to information resources.

The service delivery task was affected by the changes in the RSRC program's timeline: construction and staffing delays affected the ability to devote much time to targeted service development.

6   Conclusions & Lessons Learned

6.1   Conclusions

The Evaluation Question for Component 1 was: *To what extent were the RSRC implementation activities completed by the end of the Namibia Compact (September 2014) and what factors facilitated or inhibited completion?*

To examine this question, the Evaluators focused on nine tasks and 29 subtasks and did not include budgetary analysis. Completion of the tasks was assessed by conducting key informant interviews, reviewing project documents, and making observations in the field. This section draws conclusions on overall project as well as implementation task completion.

6.1.1   Activity completion

From the outset, the RSRC Activity was comprised of two sub-activities (IPA, 2009, p. 22):

- Construction of 3 Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRCs)
- Technical assistance and training for RSRCs

At a high-level, both sub-activities were completed: RSRC construction finished before the Compact closed, overcoming substantial construction delays, and MCA-N and its contractors provided assorted technical assistance and training, the scope of which grew in response to the increasingly apparent needs of the MoE. To this extent, it can be said that the RSRC Activity met its high-level implementation goals.

6.1.2   Task completion

Nevertheless, at the task- and subtask-levels, by the end of the Compact there were several items that had not been completed or still needed to be resolved. Based on the analysis presented in Section 5, five implementation tasks were incomplete while four implementation tasks were complete. Notably each of the four complete tasks also either had some unresolved issues that needed attention (IT & Equipment, Mobile Library Units) or the task was so loosely defined[3] that a minimal effort qualified as completion (Management, Services).

As opposed to the binary complete/incomplete used in Section 5, the conclusion on task completion is presented in relation to five possible categories of completion (Table 5). This approach is used to aid simplification of assessing a large number of subtasks, as well as to acknowledge the numerous forces that complicated completion of various tasks and subtasks.

Table 5: Overall task completion status definitions

Degree of Completion	Definition
Complete	All parts of all nine tasks complete, and necessary peripheral aspects (e.g. confirming interoperability of equipment) in place for all tasks.
Mostly Complete	All parts of all nine tasks technically complete but necessary peripheral aspects not in place, or quality of work compromised for some or all tasks (e.g. ILMS installed but no hands-on training for staff due to lack of internet access).
Partially Complete	At least four tasks technically complete; some parts of remaining tasks complete or close to completion.

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[3] The Evaluator defined these tasks loosely because it did not seem reasonable to have higher expectations for the tasks given the absence of a clear formal statement of expectations.

Degree of Completion	Definition
Mostly Incomplete	Less than four tasks complete; most parts of remaining tasks not close to completion
Incomplete	No tasks completed.

Applying these criteria to the overall RSRC Activity, it is concluded that the RSRC implementation tasks were *Partially Complete* by the end of the Compact because four out of the nine tasks were complete (Table 6).

This finding should be interpreted in context of the complexity of the RSRC Activity. As Table 6 shows, every single task and subtask came up against one or more inhibiting factors, even as most also benefited from some facilitating factors. The inhibiting factors ran the gamut from basic construction and hiring delays to delicate political relationships. Certain critical tasks, specifically staffing and collections, seemed to have been particularly hard hit by inhibitors that were out of their control (such as systemic talent shortage or political interference). Others, such as relationship-building, may have suffered from some vagueness of definition as well as general low capacity and skill of staff.

Task completion was most facilitated by continuity of relationships between the RSRC Activity and other stakeholders, such as the MoE and educational institutions, persistent lobbying of implementing partners to gain various concessions needed to keep the project moving (e.g. improved salary structure for library staff), the allocation of additional tasks to IREX for implementation (contracted to provide technical assistance), and the general public and official goodwill towards the RSRC concept.

The issues that most greatly inhibited task completion were changes in the program timeline and changes in staffing plans and recruitment. These two issues were interrelated, with timeline changes (mostly construction-related) leading to holding up of the staffing process, and delays in the staffing process contributing to lags in the timeline.

Table 6: Completion status of tasks and subtasks (Evaluator ratings)

Implementation Task	Status (Evaluator's conclusion)	Facilitating Factors	Inhibiting Factors
1. COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT	**Incomplete**		
1.1 Conducting community information needs assessment	Incomplete	N/A	Late introduction of this task Staffing delays Time and resource constraints Need for guidance
1.2 Using community needs assessments in service design	Inconclusive – Unclear the extent to which results of CNAs were used in service design	N/A	Staffing delays Perception of generic user needs
2. IT & EQUIPMENT	**Complete**		
2.1 Purchasing and installing computers and Internet connectivity	Completed	Effective vendors Procurement guidance from IREX	Construction delays Staffing delays Abrupt Compact handover process Relationships with vendors
2.2 Purchasing and, installing Audio-Visual equipment, copiers, and other office equipment	Completed	Same as above	Same as above
3. STAFFING	**Incomplete**		
3.1 Developing RSRC staffing plan	Completed	Successful lobbying	Resistance from the Office of the Prime Minister

Implementation Task	Status (Evaluator's conclusion)	Facilitating Factors	Inhibiting Factors
3.2 Hiring of RSRC chief librarians	Incomplete	N/A	National shortage of experienced librarians Slow hiring, especially for foreign hires
3.3 Hiring of RSRC staff	Incomplete	Had a back-up plan Pro-active hiring in Ohangwena	National shortage of experienced librarians Unprecedented size of RSRCs Staff turnover
3.4 Providing training to staff at each RSRC	Incomplete	Effective training workshops	Low staffing levels Internet and IT installation delays Time constraints before the public opening Disjointed contractor orientations
4. FACILITIES	**Incomplete**		
4.1 Designing RSRC facilities and grounds	Completed	Project management	Challenging consultation process
4.2 Constructing the RSRC buildings	Completed	Same as above	Cumulative delays Disagreement about RSRC features
4.3 Furnishing RSRC facilities and grounds	Completed	Same as above	Disagreement about RSRC features
4.4 Maintaining RSRC facilities	Incomplete	Low-maintenance design	Reduced contractor defect notification period Facilities maintenance position not created
5. COLLECTIONS	**Incomplete**		
5.1 Developing, acquiring, and managing collections	Incomplete	MCA-N surplus funds allocated to collection development Diversification of procurement sources	Largest book tender canceled Political obstacles in the book tender process Book processing delay
5.2 Purchasing, installing and configuring Integrated Library Management System (ILMS)	Completed	MCA-N surplus funds allocation to ILMS Contractor expertise and relationships	Late internet installation Peripherals not operational Staffing delays Ongoing costs
6. RELATIONSHIPS	**Incomplete**		
6.1 Building relationships with education partners	Completed	Assignment of dedicated staff Continuity of staff Explicit facilitation by MCA-N General enthusiasm for the RSRC Activity	Staffing delays Inexperienced staff Unclear plans and assignment of responsibilities Challenges working with some partners Potential unintended consequences
6.2 Building relationships with private partners	Incomplete	General enthusiasm for the RSRC Activity	Program delays Inexperienced staff
6.3 Building relationships with nonprofit partners	Incomplete	Same as above	Program delays Inexperienced staff Lack of relevant institutions
6.4 Building relationships with community libraries	Complete	See 6.1	See 6.1
6.5 Building relationships with (MCA-supported) vocational projects	Incomplete	See 6.1	See 6.1
6.6 Building relationships with Central Government partners	Incomplete	Continuity General enthusiasm for the RSRC Activity	Possible unintended consequences
6.7 Building relationships with Regional Government partners	Incomplete	Same as above	Same as above
6.8 Building relationships with Local Government partners	Incomplete	Same as above	Same as above
7. MANAGEMENT	**Complete**		
7.1 Developing and updating RSRC operational plan and internal policies	Completed	Effective vendors Commitment to consultative process	Construction delays Staffing delays Inexperienced staff

Implementation Task	Status (Evaluator's conclusion)	Facilitating Factors	Inhibiting Factors
			Overworked staff
7.2 Gathering, assessing and using information for decision-making and ongoing improvements	Completed	Same as above	Same as above
8. MOBILE LIBRARY UNITS	**Complete**		
8.1 Designing and purchasing mobile library units	Completed	Adaptability of management team	Change in mobile library concept Vehicle design and assembly process Government bureaucracy
8.2 Developing operational plan and internal policies for mobile library units	Completed	Same as above	Same as above
9. SERVICE DELIVERY	**Complete**		
9.1 Developing business services and resources	Completed	Facility design Development of operational manuals by IREX	Construction delays Staffing delays
9.2 Developing student services and resources	Completed	Same as above	Same as above
9.3 Developing services and resources for other patrons	Completed	Same as above	Same as above

6.1.3   Major Successes

Rallying support for the RSRC Activity: RSRC Activity management was particularly successful in generating an inclusive consultative process (even though important partners could not always participate). Key informants communicated a clear sense of value attached to the RSRC concept at community, regional and national levels (See Annex 5: Stakeholder Perceptions).

Persistence and responsiveness to emerging gaps and limitations: As several key informants stated, simply "getting it done" was a significant achievement of the RSRC Activity (see Annex 5: Stakeholder Perceptions). While it is not clear whether some challenges could have been avoided, or if the rate of response could have been faster, management did react to the numerous challenges the Activity faced and took action to mitigate them – e.g., bringing IREX on board to address capacity issues, lobbying for better compensation rates for librarians to improve recruitment prospects.

Influencing policy: MCA-N, the MoE, and IREX pushed to make sure the central government understood that obtaining quality RSRC staff was critical to the MoE and MCA-N achieving the Compact's objectives. MCA-N's lobbying on behalf of the libraries may also have helped institute long sought changes that may help make public librarianship a more attractive profession in Namibia. In this sense, staffing was one of the biggest challenges faced by the RSRC Activity, but also one of the areas of most significant achievement.

Planning for foreign exchange fluctuations: The provisions made by MCA-N to hedge against foreign exchange losses instead led to budget gains – when currency fluctuations worked to the advantage of the RSRC Activity. This was mostly an unintended positive outcome but is worth noting nevertheless, since it represented a significant boon to the Activity.

6.1.4   Major Challenges

Low capacity of local industry and workforce – Some of the most critical aspects of the RSRC Activity were impacted by the dearth of qualified or experienced professionals. First the construction industry did not have the

capacity to carry out the volume of work required to build the facilities, leading to delays for rebidding processes. Second was the staffing challenge – this challenge (especially for chief librarians) was no surprise, since it was recognized as a high risk area from the start (MCA-N Proposal, p. 83), with the likelihood of this occurring rated as "somewhat high" and the potential impact rated as "high" (M&E Plan, p. 37). An insufficient pool of library professionals, particularly for junior and mid-level professionals, has remained the critical issue. The MoE was only able to fill the chief librarian positions by recruiting individuals from outside Namibia, as those with both library and strategic management expertise within the country were in very short supply.

Construction delays: As happens with most building projects, the construction process was significantly delayed, in this case for over one year for each RSRC. However the challenge was exacerbated by the impending closure of the Compact, which led to the rush to the finish line in September 2014, meaning a compressed timeline for other activities such as staffing, training, community needs assessment, and equipment-testing.

Proportionately limited personnel resources: Despite significant effort and dedication to this Activity, the MoE did not have the capacity to administer the RSRC Activity at the level expected by MCA-N, mostly due to a shortage of personnel at NLAS. Thus, as several key informants noted, MCA-N had to take a major role in providing tactical leadership for the RSRC Activity, which had not been the original vision.

6.2   Recommendations

6.2.1   For NLAS

Implement full-scale community needs assessment: The current services of the RSRCs are based on the results of needs assessments conducted in communities proximal to Oshakati and Helao Nafidi. Those assessments were essentially part of the staff training program at these locations rather than the full-scale, farther-reaching activities CNA planned by IREX. By the Compact's close, the Omaheke RSRC had not conducted a CNA because it had not yet opened and had hired few staff people. It may be worth following up as soon as possible with a full-scale CNA at all three RSRCs. Doing so would allow for a more complete assessment of the information needs of community members or, at the very least, to verify that the current body of services provided at the RSRCs is adequate.

Explore options for meeting the goal of extended opening hours: The planning documents reviewed express consistently and clearly the expectation that the venues would have extended hours of operation (evenings and weekends) to facilitate convenient access for different populations. This goal remains unfulfilled due to staff shortages and national policy that limits the amount of overtime public employees can work. It is not clear whether this has resulted in any significant populations being systematically excluded from use of the venues – the results of Component 2 of this evaluation may shed some light on this to ascertain whether or not action is needed.

Closely monitor status of RSRC infrastructure, especially facilities and mobile library units: Maintenance is likely to be a recurring challenge, despite the low-maintenance goals built into the RSRC design. The assignment of a full-time person to be in charge of managing and maintaining each facility should be seriously considered to pre-empt avoidable long-term maintenance problems.

Strategize on best approach to collaborating with organizations with which conflicts of interest may arise: There is a potential for duplication of effort by RSRCs and other organizations with similar information access objectives. Some such as fee-based information centers may have different (commercial or profit-oriented)

business models, whilst others, such as other government agencies, may have the same model. Care will need to be taken if RSRCs seek to develop public/private partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

Revive the mobile library units: These units are essential to accomplishing outreach goals, which are strongly tied to the RSRCs' effectiveness in meeting broader objectives of the Activity. However, their sustainability is questionable considering that at the time of this evaluation the MLU at each RSRC had broken down after, in most cases, only a single trip and was awaiting replacement parts and repair. Additionally, ongoing, scheduled maintenance work and petrol could prove to be prohibitively expensive.

Allow time to observe and learn from pilot RSRCs: It would be advisable to monitor the three RSRCs for a period of time to learn from their operational experiences as well as users' experiences before embarking on significant upscaling of the concept.

6.2.2   For MCC/MCA

Develop a clear vision of success and set more distinctive targets toward its achievement: The specific tasks associated with project implementation should be explicitly identified, there should be a clear articulation of what success would look like, and appropriate indicators should be agreed on to measure success. Although broad goals were set for the RSRC Activity, there was limited specificity associated with several tasks. Looking at the relationship-building task for example, this is not a discrete task and it is likely that staff and management will do some degree of relationship-building in the normal course of their duties. However, establishing more concrete and explicit goals about relationship-building would be necessary to elevate this from an incidental activity to a task of more critical significance. It will also make it easier to monitor and evaluate, if indeed that is desirable.

Identify critical success factors and ensure measures are in place to facilitate execution: In the case of the Namibia RSRC Activity, critical success factors could be said to have been the completion of construction and the availability of suitably qualified library management staff.

Set clear milestones and roles, and be ready to change the program oversight structure if needed: The roles, responsibilities, and rights of partners and vested interests need to be clear from the beginning. For example, it was not clear whether the relationship-building task was considered a strategic activity (to be implemented by MCA-N and RSRC top management) or a practical activity (to be implemented by RSRC staff), or both. The capabilities of partners would ideally be well understood from the outset, but programs should be prepared to amend Implementing Partner Agreements if it becomes apparent that established plans are not feasible given the reality of implementation.

Bring program management consultants into the project earlier: Technical assistance, such as that provided by IREX, should begin early in the project to ensure activities like strategic planning, policy development, and staff training plans are incorporated into facilities design and are not derailed if construction runs behind schedule. Additionally, such consultants could provide ad hoc assistance to the implementing partner organization (e.g., MoE) should help be needed. It is possible that NLAS' technical capacity was not well understood before the oversight structure was determined, hence the late realization of the need for additional support.

Ensure local partner is provided with adequate autonomy, authority and capacity resources for critical decision-making: Given the Compact's fixed end date, project management needs the ability to make critical decisions to avoid unnecessary delays. This can be challenging in a project that seeks to be participatory and collaborative in nature because it could require, for example, granting managers the authority to move forward

with action, even if a full consultation process cannot be completed (e.g. because stakeholder feedback is not forthcoming). Additionally, the implementing partner organization (e.g., NLAS) needs to have the appropriate resources (personnel in this case) to be able to focus on high-level management tasks. In some instances, this may require hiring a specialized and dedicated person to serve as a counterpart to MCA-N's project manager.

Consider possible modifications to Compact closure procedures and policies: A more phased out process for closing out Compacts may be beneficial to support adequate handover of facilities and knowledge, make it possible for pending sub-contract obligations to be met, and prevent an excessive rush to complete tasks, potentially compromising quality.

In addition, key informants also highlighted the following in their recommendations for future RSRCs (See Annex 5 for details):

1. If RSRCs are used as a template for future venues, tailor them to community specificities
2. Build smaller and more durable facilities
3. Improve design consultation process to promote clearer understanding of technical design details
4. Engage with local community for community needs assessment and RSRC awareness creation
5. Improve staffing situation by beginning hiring process before construction work starts, and investing in building capacity of existing staff members
6. Change Compact agreements to require earlier declaration of maintenance strategies, and to facilitate smoother transition after closing

6.3   Next steps

The next phase of this evaluation, Component 2, will examine the RSRCs in their first few years of operation to answer the following questions:

- *What types of resources and programming are RSRCs providing?*
- *Who uses the RSRCs and what do they do?*
- *Do students, job seekers and business people report outcomes such as improved test scores, job seeking and acquisition, and business creation and enhancement as a result of using the resources provided by RSRCs?*
- *How sustainable are the RSRCs?*
- *How active is leadership in promoting and achieving the vision of the RSRCs?*
- *What is the influence of the RSRCs beyond their walls?*

To a more limited extent, Component 2 will also carry out some basic follow-ups on issues surfaced during Component 1, such as staffing levels and facility maintenance.

Examining these areas requires a mixed-methods approach. The evaluators will employ a variety of research methods, including surveys, panel studies, focus group discussions, interviews, direct observations, media analysis, and administrative data. Participants will include RSRC patrons (secondary students, business people, and general adult users), RSRC staff, local educators, and key informants.

Research activities will continue through 2018. Forthcoming evaluation reports will be made available in in 2017 and 2018.

7 Annex 1 – Planning documents

IREX. *Advisory Services to the RSRCs: Inception Report*, Sept 2012

IREX. *Final Report and M&E Report*, Aug 2014

IREX. *Namibia Library and Archive Services Job Descriptions*, Oct 2012

IREX. *Namibia Library and Archive Services Performance Standards*, Nov 2012

IREX. *Namibian Library Strategic Plan for Regional Library Services*, June 2013

IREX. *Outreach Services Operationalization Report*, Aug 2014

IREX. *Strategic Objectives Implementation Plan*, May 2013

IREX. *Training Report*, Aug 2014

MCA-N. *Implementing Partner Agreement Between MoE and MCA-N* (IPA), 2009

MCA-N. *Millennium Challenge Account Namibia Monitoring and Evaluation Plan* (M&E Plan), July 2013

MCA-N. *RFP for Technical Assistance to RSRCs - Advisory Services to Establish the RSRCs and Develop Capacity* (MCAN/COM/RFP/1D02001), March 12, 2012 (pp. 102-119)

MCC. *Compact Namibia*, July 2008 (p. 24 & Annex 2-6)

MCC. *Education Infrastructure Assessment*, May 2008 (pp. 75-80)

MCC. *RFQ for a Performance Evaluation* (MCC-13-RFQ-0122), 2013-7 (pp. 4-5)

Ministry of Works, Transport, and Communication (MWTC). *Feasibility Study for the New Regional Study and Resource Center*, Feb 2008 [Note: Separate reports for each site]

MoE. *Education and Training Sector Improvement Program* (ETSIP), 2007 (pp. 62-63)

MoE and MCA-N. *MCC Project Design and Implementation Documentation Activity Plan for RSRCs* (MCC Project Design Plan*)*, March 2008 [Note: Incomplete draft]

NLAS. *RSRC Concept Brief*, 2009 (with 2013 updates)

NLAS. *RSRC Design Brief*, April 2007

Republic of Namibia. *Proposal to MCA-N Programme*, 2006 (pp. 80-83)

8   Annex 2 – List of tasks and implementation goals

Table 7: Main tasks and implementation goals

Task	Goals
Community needs assessment	Obtain technical assistance for operationa
IT and equipment	3 RSRCs to be constructed and equipped c
Staffing	100% positions staffed by end of Compact
	Obtain technical assistance for training of
Facilities	3 RSRCs fully constructed in principal town
	3 RSRCs to be constructed and equipped c
	RSRCs to use environmentally friendly des
	RSRCs to be operated sustainably
	3 RSCs opened to the public by year 5, end
	The MoE will ensure that the RSRCs are pr
Collections	Necessary study resources (books, CDs, DV
	planned completion of the RSRCs
	Obtain technical assistance for implement
Relationships	Obtain technical assistance for strategic pl
	Facilitate the participation in the quarterly
Management	Obtain technical assistance for strategic pl
Mobile library units	Procure mobile units to accompany each o
Service delivery	Venues to have extended opening hours
	Venues to be accessible to community me
	RSRCs to provide range of resources (stud
	equipment, etc.)
	and programs (self-employment training p
	Venues to be operated sustainably
	Obtain technical assistance for operationa

9   Annex 3 – Media analysis summary

Summary:

A search for articles about the RSRCs returned 12 articles dated between November 2011 and March 2015. Most publicized events while providing basic information about the RSRCs. Two addressed Compact related issues – a book tender that was cancelled and rain damage at the Oshana RSRC.

Overview of the articles:

Searches for articles that mentioned RSRCs or regional libraries returned twelve articles from four newspapers.

- Informante – 1
- New Era – 5
- Namibian – 3
- Namibia Economist – 3

Topics included the following:

- Bricklaying ceremony – 2 articles
- RSRC inaugurations – 4 articles
- Mobile library unit launched – 1 article
- RSRC leaking during heavy rains – 1 article
- MCA-N cancels $6 million book tender – 1 article
- Mentioned among MCA-Namibia projects – 3 articles
- Receiving Peace Corps volunteers – 1 article

The Oshana and Omaheke RSRCs received a similar amount of coverage. The Ohangwena RSRC was mentioned in three more articles than the other RSRCs, receiving positive press for the brick laying ceremony and the launch of its mobile library unit.

Mostly for promotional purposes – providing information on the RSRCs' purpose and available resources, the nature of MCA-N's investment while covering public ceremonies. Many comments were quite glowing. Some mentioned strong relations between the United States and Namibia. Most stressed the RSRCs' potential to positively impact people in the region. For instance:

> *"We want all the citizens of this region to be able to read, write, converse and value ideas and thoughts. Therefore, it is our aim to propagate libraries and the value they have to offer to all the citizens of this region. I am hopeful that this beautiful library, which is the biggest library in Omaheke, will educate the people of Omaheke for decades to come," said Governor Ueitele [of Omaheke].* ("MCA Namibia Draws Final Curtain, 2014)

Two of these promotional articles put more focus on educational needs in Namibia than RSRC ceremonies themselves. Their headlines and contents spoke of the importance of developing a reading culture to increase literacy, as literacy expands individuals' learning opportunities. For example:

"One of the easiest ways to gain knowledge is by reading. Unfortunately, Namibia does not have a strong reading culture," [Former Minister of Education, Dr. Abraham] Iyambo stressed…. Iyambo said research has identified that inability to read is a major stumbling block to learning. Therefore, the center will introduce reading hours, story-telling sessions and computer games for infants, toddlers and pre-school children. It will also offer after-school programs to develop early literacy and ICT literacy skills." (Xoagub, 2011)

Many articles quoted public officials and MCA-N directors. Two cited RSRC heads: Jacob Muleka, the Acting Head of the Oshana RSRC as of September 2014, whom commented on youth reading habits, and Oshana RSRC Chief Librarian Sam Kasulwa, quoted in March 2015 on water damage at the Oshana RSRC after heavy rains.

Two articles described issues the RSRCs were facing. One could say they served an accountability purpose, although in both instances – the failed book procurement and the leaking RSRC facilities – the fault was placed with contractors rather than MCA-N or MoE.

10 Annex 4 – Media analysis articles

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N.A. (3/26/2015). N$54-million library leaking...six months after it opened. *New Era.* Retrieved from:
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    https://www.newera.com.na/2014/11/19/ohangwena-mobile-community-library-unit/

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    http://www.namibian.com.na/indexx.php?archive_id=130374&page_type=archive_story_detail&page=1

Waldo. (10/26/2012). MCA Improves Omaheke Facilities. *Namibia Economist.*

Xoagub, Francis. (11/17/2011). Low Reading Culture Worries Iyambo. *New Era.*

11 Annex 5 – Stakeholder Perceptions

Key informants were asked their opinions of the RSRCs, including what they would like to see the RSRCs accomplish, what might hold them back, and what recommendations they would have for RSRCs planned for other regions. A summary of their responses follows.

11.1 Preferred term for venues

"Regional libraries" is simpler. Roughly one-third of the key informants refer to the venues by their original name, "Regional Resource and Study Centers" (or "RSRCs"), whereas half prefer to say "Regional Library." "Regional library" proponents stressed that the term is simple and memorable, with no acronym needed, and that "library" is a more familiar term to visitors, job applicants, and administrators of the community library system.

Differing perceptions of libraries. Otherwise, the disagreement between those who prefer either name hinges on their perceptions of what constitutes modern library services. To those who favor "RSRC," the venue is "*so much more than a library*" because it provides many specialized services, not just books. In addition, some feel that "RSRC" is a fresh concept, whereas "library" carries negative connotations in Namibia. Conversely, those who prefer "library" feel the word encapsulates a wider variety of services than "RSRC," which has been misunderstood by some community members as a facility designed to serve students and educators -- particularly given that Namibia has existing Resource Centers for teachers.

"Super library." Substantiating both interpretations, two respondents had created their own names – "Super library" and "Regional Library and Resource Center" – to show the venues are more than libraries and more than places for studying:

> *What I've encountered is that when you say 'Regional Study and Resource Center,' you get like a blank look, a 'what?'. If you say 'Regional Library,' or as we found the best way to describe them, 'Super Library,' then people say, 'oh, it's a library but it's more than a library.' They say, 'oh, wow, okay,' because they know what a library is historically and this is a library that can do more.*

11.2 Most important achievement

Key informants were asked what they saw as the major achievement of the implementation period. They identified three themes: opening the RSRCs, shifting government policies, and eliciting feelings or price and inclusion in the regionals.

"Getting it done." For many, the chief accomplishment was that the implementing partners had made sufficient progress across all the planning activities to open the RSRCs to the public. As a part of this, participants mentioned hiring and training staff as particularly important accomplishments given the challenges overcome in the process.

Affecting policy. In line with this, a few participants spoke about the significance of having changed the policy environment for libraries in Namibia. Among the changes, participants cited improved pay grades, the approval of new library positions (e.g., IT staffing), working with the University of Namibia toward a solution to produce more librarians in the country, and strengthened support for libraries within the national government.

Regional pride. Finally, one-third of key informants identified the greatest achievement as increased feelings of pride, accomplishment, and inclusion within the regions as the result of constructing the RSRCs. Some participants traced these positive feelings to community engagement activities during the planning process,

crediting the implementing partners for including a wide variety of stakeholders. Other participants indicated that nearby communities saw the RSRCs as encouraging signs of regional development in previously neglected areas.

11.3 Adequacy of facilities

Are the RSRC infrastructure and collections suitable and adequate to meet the needs of staff and patrons? Key informants generally affirm that they are, although not without modifying or cautionary details.

Very nice buildings -- with upkeep concerns. The majority of respondents are satisfied with the RSRC buildings and infrastructure. Several stressed that the facilities are impressive and quite beautiful. Most also think the quality of the buildings are suitable, although some individuals who spend time in the RSRCs expressed concerns about design and furnishing choices that have left the interiors dusty, leaking, noisy, and short of staff desks, with concerns about the durability of the entrance gates and toilets and the fixity of furniture, including office desks and book shelves. Additionally, two people said the children's section is already too small to meet demand. In one respondent's words: "*I wish it were fully adequate. It's a beautiful building.*"

Collections are a work in progress. Key informants are somewhat less satisfied with the current library collection. A few people are very dissatisfied with the number of books in the collection and their suitability for visitors, saying that the shortage of books will prevent the library from accomplishing what it needs to do. Alternatively, others were more confident in the library's core collection and saw the empty shelves as "*room to grow*" as each RSRC learns more about the specific materials needed for its communities. One individual within the Ministry of Education noted that, although the collection is basic, visitors aren't voicing complaints and that more books will become available when the interlibrary loan system is operational.

Lastly, several respondents said the RSRCs would only be suitable under certain conditions, namely that the RSRCs are maintained and well managed, and that the mobile library units are running.

11.4 Expectations of RSRC contributions to communities and the nation

Key informants believe the RSRCs will make positive contributions to society. Although a few indicated it's too soon to say. Why the optimism?

Local-level. A third of respondents explained that the RSRCs seem to already be attracting a lot of users or a good variety of users (especially age-wise). Nearly half said that the RSRC are providing important services, particularly in these areas: education, computer access and training, business, and access to knowledge. Others emphasized the long-term importance of reading on individuals' development and the positive influence this can have on their communities, as well as how the RSRCs will support local schools and other organizations. Also, a few respondents feel that the MLUs will help address gaps in service coverage, bringing these benefits to rural areas.

National-level. There is some ambivalence about the impact the RSRCs can have across Namibia. A few key informants said the RSRCs would only spark national-level changes if more were built, as the existing three venues do not have enough reach and coverage. However, two people indicated they expect national-level changes because these RSRCs will be models for existing libraries to grow and improve the profession.

Also, at the local-level, several respondents stress that the RSRCs must identify community needs and provide appropriate services to make a difference: a few are optimistic that the RSRCs will provide for specific community needs, while two others suggest it is too soon to say -- because don't know if libraries will follow through on assessing needs and providing services or don't know how they would observe/measure a shift in learners' knowledge.

11.5 Concerns and anticipated challenges

What is the most important challenge facing the RSRCs? Three themes emerged: staffing, sustainable funding (including maintenance), and service provision (including outreach).

Staffing. Nearly half of respondents identified staffing as *the* critical challenge, and a full two-thirds expressed some level of concern. Participants see no easy fixes to a shortage of experienced and qualified staff at the RSRCs, **expecting ongoing difficulties with recruitment and retention**. External factors include a shortage of qualified librarians in the country and competition with the private sector. Two individuals noted that the required qualifications may be too high, and that human resource choices should put more weight on ability and potential. A few participants also stressed the need to train staff in a wide range of areas, from using the ILMS system to advocacy.

Funding and maintenance. A majority of key informants expressed concerns about the library's ability to maintain funding. Some of these respondents are nervous about the library leadership's capacity to advocate for itself, secure funding, and manage too-high expectations. However, most focused on the costs required to sustain the centers, particularly the IT services (i.e., price of the internet connection, maintaining and replacing computers), but also to contract out facilities maintenance until a dedicated person can be hired. Some participants stressed that obtaining only enough funding to maintain the status quo would not be sufficient, as the budgets for the RSRCs should keep growing as the population does.

Service delivery. The remaining respondents discussed possible hurdles related to effective service provision. Firstly, some warned that RSRC leadership must be pragmatic about managing expectations, being sure to prioritize some services over others overtime. Secondly, some noted that conducting outreach might prove to be very difficult, including attracting visitors other than students, working with visitors with limited literacy or computer experience, and covering a wide geographic area with the MLUs.

Additionally, each of the following concerns were discussed at length by at least two informants: the challenge of operating the MLUs (e.g., conducting preventative and scheduled maintenance, operating them effectively, and responding to future demand increases), the need to procure more books (particularly books in local languages), and future management decisions related to providing and instilling a vision for the future, developing a maintenance plan, training staff, and marketing services to the community.

11.6 Characteristics of successful venues

According to key informants, a successful RSRC would be a venue that responds to communities' information needs, attracts a wide range of visitor types, and actively reaches out to communities located far from the RSRCs. All of which requires effective staff.

Providing needed services. Most often, a successful venue was described as one that meets the needs of the community by providing the right resources to the region's constituents. Although a few respondents stated that overall high usage was the best measure of success, twice as many said they would like to see all types of users visiting the RSRCs, which this would only happen if the venues accurately identified community information needs, developed appropriate resources and programs, and then promoted their services to attract the people who need them.

Accessible and welcoming. Venue success was also linked to accessibility. A quarter of respondents said a thriving RSRC would be open during the evenings and weekends. Several others emphasized that the venue must be inviting: friendly, a community hub, "*a place for everyone to go*," and in proximity to people. And because so

many people in the regions do not live, work, or study near a venue, outreach was viewed as a critical activity for running a successful RSRC, particularly the MLUs, to several key informants. A few others mentioned that a successful RSRC must support school and community libraries with collections and staff training.

Engaged staff. Successful venues must also have engaged staff. Nearly half of respondents spoke of the importance of staff qualities and capabilities, from being happy about their work and demonstrating a commitment to service, to being trained and experts at what they do. Two key informants also said that, as long as staffing levels remain below 100%, a successful RSRC would need to be staffed by individuals who are flexible in their roles and responsibilities and can jump in wherever needed.

11.7 Key informant recommendations

Key informants provided a variety of recommendations for individuals leading the roll out of future RSRCs in the Namibia. Their recommendations follow.

Use these RSRCs as a template. Respondents noted that some plans might be adapted for the construction of future venues, including specifications for the building, furniture, IT, and equipment. Clearly, given the delays with this RSRC Activity, the project timeline should account for the actual amount of time needed to obtaining approval for any new staffing positions and installing fiber cables. At the same time, most respondents cautioned against replicating these venues, emphasizing that each new RSRC will need to be tailored to its community in size, scope, and design, updated to reflect advancements in technology, and responsive to changes in library service.

Think smaller and longer-lasting. Two respondents strongly recommended that future RSRCs should be built smaller, particularly since they will likely serve smaller populations than in Oshana and Ohangwena. They emphasized that money saved from construction should be set aside for long-term maintenance and repair costs. Similarly, two other key informants suggested reducing the size of future mobile library units in order to reduce the cost and effort involved with maintaining large specialty vehicles. Pickup trucks would be particularly good for targeting rural schools, one respondent said.

Success depends on good relationships across partner organizations. Although not everyone agreed, several respondents felt that the various project teams worked well across organizations. They appreciated MCA-N's level of involvement with stakeholders during planning process, including with government officials, community leaders, and the MCA-N board. They liked that IREX contributed its expertise and helped ameliorate capacity issues at MoE by drafting management plans, among other things. Less complimentarily, several respondents stressed that the MoE deserved to have more input into all stages of facilities design, and that in the future the architect must do their utmost to ensure that design materials and consultation style are appropriate for the client-user's non-engineer audience. A few respondents suggested allowing for enough time for firms to design a few options for the facilities, discuss them with the user-client, model one with a 3D printer before building, provide samples of interior materials, and maybe even hire a firm to help with the consultation process.

Make an effort to get out into the community. Two key informants felt that the community information needs assessment was helpful, both for gathering information used to design services and for spreading awareness and interest in the RSRCs. Two others said that the RSRC opening ceremonies, and promotion activities leading up to them, not only publicized the new library, but also provided additional benefits, like bringing attention to issues around reading (i.e., literacy and reading culture) while tapping into community resources that could be valuable in the future. Three respondents said future RSRCs could do more to engage local residents, like conducting a

community needs assessment that can inform facility design decisions, enhance community ownership, and determine needed services.

Furthermore, nearly half of the key informants suggested changes to hiring practices and training activities in order to circumvent the hiring delays and staff shortages experienced by these RSRCs.

Begin hiring staff before construction starts. At least five respondents stressed the importance of beginning hiring as soon as possible, as applicants may be subjected to six-month hiring delays. Key informants would like to see senior staff hired much earlier so they can help advise on Compact activities, train staff as they are hired, provide functional feedback on facilities design, and attend site visits during the construction phase. With staff in place, "soft skills" trainings (e.g., operational training, customer service) can begin earlier, and in a way that does not fall casualty to equipment installation delays. Given the challenges of approving the staffing plan, one participant suggested that rather than requiring a provisional staffing plan six-months before construction begins, MCC should consider requiring a final staffing plan.

Address the country's librarian shortage by investing in staff members. Although one key informant strongly advised that more RSRCs should only be built after UNAM increases its annual number of library science graduates, others put more emphasis on developing the skills of lower-level staff. Two spoke of opportunities that would be created by promoting staff rather than hiring from the outside and by offering continuing professional development opportunities to incentive staff if and when compensation cannot be sufficiently increased.

Finally, key informants recommended changes to future Compact agreements. Two respondents advised that Compacts in other countries require maintenance strategies from the client-user early in the project to ensure clear lines of responsibility and dedicated funding.

A few key informants would like MCC to update its policies on the Compact closing and subsequent handoff. First, Compact agreements should require contractors to stay involved for some period of time after they deliver, even if the MCA closes during that period, to make sure the client-user is satisfied with the quality of their work.

Second, the Compact should be able to pay for delivery that happens within a certain amount of time of the Compact closing date. In particular, respondents believe someone should have been able to pay for the shipment of books that arrived the day after the Compact closed instead of canceling the entire $6 million Namibian dollar tender. In the words of one key informant:

> *If you've committed, if you've signed a contract to get things delivered, it doesn't mean … that when they are delivered outside the Compact that you tell the company that you're not going to pay for them. I mean nobody's heard of that concept in Namibia nor anywhere. And especially if [it's] a small business, and you're trying to enliven the economy by pumping money in from the States, then why would you penalize people [when] it's not even their fault? A server falls off a dock side in Holland, and therefore it's three weeks late. It just doesn't really make any sense.*

12 Annex 6 – Summary of Stakeholder Feedback on Report

To: Emily Travis (MCC)
From: Araba Sey and Michelle Fellows (TASCHA)
Date: June 3, 2016
Subject: Namibia RSRC Component 1 Report – Stakeholder feedback and TASCHA's responses

12.1 Background

The purpose of this memo is to document all substantive changes made to the Namibia RSRC Component 1 Report in response to feedback received from project stakeholders.

The final Component 1 report incorporates input from seven individuals at four organizations. TASCHA invited over a dozen individuals to review the report, each of whom were involved with implementing the RSRC Activity. Of these, four people provided feedback, including two whom requested changes. The report was then submitted to MCC for review, whereby three individuals provided feedback.

TASCHA remains the independent evaluator for this Activity and has chosen which input to incorporate into the report, with decisions generally informed by a review of interview data and notes from in-country missions.

Substantive feedback received and the resulting actions taken by the Evaluator are discussed below. Please note that comments have been rephrased for concision.

12.2 Changes and revisions

12.2.1 Evaluation scope and design

Request – Include the planned and actual Activity budget somewhere, and break it down by infrastructure, technical assistance, and materials if possible.

> ➢ **Response** – As agreed upon during the evaluation design phase, budget/financial info is outside the scope of the evaluation. That said, various MCC materials indicate that the RSRC Activity was at $20.8 million and multiple sources have confirmed that Activity came in under budget.

Request – Reconsider this evaluation's expectation that the RSRCs would be offering community-focused programs by Compact's end.

> ➢ **Response** – The evaluation is based on the expectation that the RSRCs would begin operating a year before the Compact closed, as was the original plan. Had that happened, it is reasonable to expect that they would have had a full year to understand their communities and start tailoring services.

Request – Clarify that there were no Compact level expectations around certain tasks.

> ➢ **Response** – In absence of a detailed description of Compact-level expectations (there were only two objectives listed in the Compact in relation to the RSRC Activity), we developed the list of implementation tasks and subtasks in consultation with MCC and local stakeholders. That list includes tasks and subtasks around which there were no Compact level expectations. Sometimes the text makes this clear (e.g. relationships with private partners), but to make the point more clearly, the following text was added to the evaluation criteria section:
>> *As described in Section 1, the Compact specified that the RSRC Activity would be comprised of two sub-activities – construction and technical assistance. The Evaluators suggested to MCC that Component 1 of the evaluation should also assess the initial status of tasks considered necessary to*

achieving broader Activity-level goals…. Therefore, the tasks evaluated in this report were not all explicit Compact-level expectations.

Comment – An incremental cost study may have been appropriate. This has been built into more recent Compacts.

➢ **Response** – This was outside the scope of this evaluation, but the comment is included here for documentation purposes.

Request – Emphasize the evaluation serves an accountability function.

➢ Response – Agreed. Amended to say: "The evaluation also [performs] an accountability function for citizens of Namibia and the United States.

Comment – Linking each quote with an interview participant ID number raises concerns about subject confidentiality.

➢ **Response** – Agreed. We included participant ID numbers in draft versions of this report, but removed them from the final report to ensure anonymity.

12.2.2   Changes to report recommendations

Request – Place more emphasis on construction delays in the discussion of major challenges.

➢ **Response** – We edited a sentence, noting that construction delays created a "compressed timeline for other activities such as staffing, training, community needs assessment, and equipment-testing." Otherwise, we think sections 4 and 5 cover the topic well.

Request – In the recommendations to MCC/MCA, consider mentioning that technical assistance "should be involved from the very beginning."

➢ **Response** – We added the following recommendation:
Bring technical consultants into the project earlier: Technical assistance, such as that provided by IREX, should begin early in the project to ensure activities like strategic planning, policy development, and staff training plans are incorporated into facilities design and are not derailed if construction runs behind schedule. Such consultants could also provide ad hoc assistance to the implementing partner organization (e.g., MoE) should support be needed.

Request – Consider stressing the importance of MCA's local partner's autonomy, authority, and capacity to make critical decisions.

➢ **Response** – Checked interview data to see to see if other participants held similar views, then added the following recommendation:
Ensure local partner is provided with adequate autonomy, authority and capacity resources for critical decision-making: Given the Compact's fixed end date, project management needs the ability to make critical decisions to avoid unnecessary delays. This can be challenging in a project that seeks to be participatory and collaborative in nature because it could require, for example, granting managers the authority to move forward with action, even if a full consultation process cannot be completed (e.g., because stakeholder feedback is not forthcoming). Additionally, the implementing partner organization (e.g., NLAS) needs to have the appropriate resources (personnel in this case) to be able to focus on high-level management tasks. In some instances, this may require hiring a specialized and dedicated person to serve as a counterpart to MCA-N's project manager.

Comment – The Implementing Partner Agreement could have been revised if and when MCA-N developed any concerns about NLAS's capacity.

➢ **Response** – This is new information to the Evaluators. In response, we changed a recommendation from "Clearly identify roles, responsibilities and rights" to "Set clear milestones and roles, and be ready to change the program oversight structure if needed." We also added the following sentence to that recommendation:

> *The capabilities of partners would ideally be well understood from the outset, but be prepared to amend Implementing Partner Agreements if it becomes apparent that such plans are not feasible given the reality of implementation.*

12.2.3 Sensitivities

Comment – We disagree with the opinion of an interview participant which was quoted in this report.

➢ **Response** – We anticipated this feedback. When either of two opposing viewpoints could be valid, we incorporated both positions into the text. Also, this note was added in the methodology section of the report:

> *The views and conclusions presented in this report are based primarily on key informant interviews and represent the opinions of the interview participants. The report should therefore be interpreted with the understanding that those opinions may not always be accurate. Since most of the facts in this case cannot be empirically determined, the Evaluators make extensive use of direct quotes to indicate the source of information. Wherever opposing viewpoints are expressed, the Evaluators endeavored to represent both points of view.*

Request – Be sensitive to a reviewer's opinion that, towards the end of the Compact, implementing organizations were trying to shift blame to other implementing organization for tasks that they couldn't manage to finish in time.

➢ **Response** – We reviewed and revised the report to provide more balanced representation between the perspectives received from different organizations, making several adjustments. E.g., in instances where a quote from one organization explicitly or implicitly lays blame on another organization, we added a second quote from the accused organization's perspective or substituted a more neutral quote to speak to the issue at hand.

Request – Recognize that "The Government of Namibia and the MoE really gave priority to this project despite the fact that it was one of many other projects."

➢ **Response** – In a few instances, language was sensitized to better reflect the MoE's effort. E.g., we rephrased this major challenge:

> *Limited local level strategic leadership: Despite what were probably good intentions, the MoE did not have the capacity to administer the RSRC Activity at the level required.*

As such:

> *Proportionately limited personnel resources: Despite significant effort and dedication to this Activity, the MoE did not have the capacity to administer the RSRC Activity at the level expected by MCA-N, mostly due to a shortage of personnel at NLAS.*

Request – Rephrase items referring to capacity problems for MoE/NLAS, as "MoE had capacity, but did not have enough personnel to administer the RSRC Activity at the level required."

➢ **Response** – Availability (or lack thereof) of personnel is a capacity issue. We checked interview data to see if and when capacity issues were explicitly rooted in personnel or budget challenges. When relevant, we specified that the capacity issue was personnel-related.

Request – Take out indications that MoE/NLAS "did not have the political influence to do this or that."

➢ **Response #1** – Given sensitivity reported by stakeholder and changes described above, we deleted this major challenge from the report, as it could no longer be substantiated:
> *Dependence on resources that need Cabinet approval: Dependence on resources that require Cabinet approval leaves the RSRC Activity in a vulnerable position. There were instances where the broad-based national support for the RSRC Activity did not translate into enabling policy, e.g. when Cabinet decided not to approve the creation of a high-level maintenance position for the RSRCs.*

➢ **Response #2** – At least one key informant had said that political influence helped with the internet installation process. We added this to the second draft as an example of positive outcomes from NLAS's relationships with the government.

12.2.4   Contested & revised

Request – Remove the assertion that NLAS requested funds for book procurement from the MoE and the request was denied.

➢ **Response** – Comment incorporated throughout report. After checking the interview data and requesting more information from credible informants, we found our statement could not be verified, and the participant who made the original assertion may have been insufficiently informed.

Request – Remove the assertion that the Cabinet did not approve the creation of a facilities supervisor position.

➢ **Response** – Comment incorporated throughout report. After checking the interview data and following-up with credible informants, we found it's quite possible that the proposal was never presented to the Cabinet (despite having support from NLAS, IREX, and MCA-N) because it contradicted existing government policies.

Comment – We think we know what you mean by "political obstacles in the book tender process" as an inhibiting factor to book procurement. However, we aren't aware of NLAS receiving negative publicity after the fact.

➢ **Response** – We removed the clause, "generated negative publicity for NLAS." One interview participant said there were newspaper articles that unfairly accused NLAS of nepotism and not supporting local businesses, but we could not locate the articles and found no other reference to negative publicity in the interview data.

Request – Take out assertion that the MoE does not know who will provide Mobile Library Unit (MLU) maintenance.

Response – Comment incorporated. Although some participants said they did not know who would maintain the MLUs, there seems to be clarity among MoE leadership on the issue.

12.2.5   Contested and minimally revised, or not revised

Comment – We disagree that internet installation was ever NLAS's responsibility and the implication that when MCA-N paid for it they had been in some way picking up the slack for NLAS.

➢ **Response** – We could not verify who was initially responsible for each component of internet installation. We checked with credible informants and found the situation was complicated, providing different

opinions on who was initially responsible for what. We could not resolve this item, so we updated the report to indicate differing opinions.

Request – Remove the assertion that books in the RSRC collection were transferred from community libraries.

➢ **Response** – We believe there is sufficient evidence to say that collections were moved from nearby community libraries. Several interview participants told us this, including NLAS participants, and it was confirmed by our informal observations at the RSRCs. As such, we modified the phrasing to reflect that books were not diverted from active libraries, but rather from community libraries that had been closed to make way for the new RSRCs, such that the books were transferred to the new buildings.

Request – Take out assertion that some books from NLAS were not on the shelves at the time of the RSRC opening.

➢ **Response** – Again, we found that enough interview participants verified this statement, as did our observations, so we did not incorporate this feedback. However, we qualified the statement to say that *most* books were on the shelves.

Comment – Is it true that MCC and MCA-N were this pro-active in lobbying for amendments to the staffing plan and hiring structure? And they did so because the OPM/Cabinet was resistant to making changes?

➢ **Response** – To our best knowledge, it's true. We made no changes here, as we feel the evidence is sufficient and the sources asserting the actions and perspectives of MCC and MCA-N are knowledgeable and credible.

12.2.6 Clarifications

Request – To avoid confusion, replace the word "janitor" with something like "full-time facilities management representative."

➢ **Response** – Instead of "janitor" or "facilities caretaker," we now refer to this position descriptively, i.e., as "a full-time person to be in charge of managing and maintaining each facility."

Comment – The Library Science program at UNAM does not adequately prepare its students for the profession, and the staffing plan did not take this into account.

➢ **Response** – Given that this opinion was also expressed by other interview participants, we chose to include this perspective into the report, but as a direct quote:
>> *"The Library Science program does not offer the extensive level of professionalism and specialization that most countries would expect…. Librarians are not trained in providing for the operational functions of these new RSRCs – e.g. facilities, IT systems, contractual relationships with other government agencies and for kiosks, revenue generation."*

12.2.7 Questions related to post-Compact developments

The Component 1 Evaluation Report assesses the status of tasks and subtasks at the end of the Compact period (Sept 2014). Only in a few instances, when requested from reviewers, we commented on later developments (below).

Request – Staffing was a serious issue, so we would like to see a breakdown of the types of positions staffed by Compact's end and, if available, staffing rates at the time of data collection.

- ➢ **Response** – Although we didn't collect data on which positions were filled/vacant as of Sept 2014, we did collect such data and the staffing rates as of Spring 2015, so these were added to Section 5.2.3.2. per this statement and Table 3:

  > *The staffing rates had improved by the time of data collection, with all RSRCs at least two-thirds staffed: Ohangwena at 72%, Oshana at 68%, and Omaheke at 74%. Most senior librarian positions had been filled or were expected to soon be filled. No RSRC had employed a senior systems administrator.*

Comment – Did TASCHA learn anything about training activities that occurred after the Compact closed?

- ➢ **Response** – We did. The following text was added to provide more information:
  > *"Most but not all training activities were completed before the Compact closed. Universal Knowledge Software (UKS) and the Mortensen Center Trainings had begun by the time of data collection, but those provided by the Information Training and Outreach Center for Africa (ITOCA) had not."*

Comment – Was TASCHA able to assess whether the "right" people were trained?

- ➢ **Response** – We did not ask about who participated in the training. However, the following text was added to provide more information:
  > *It is not clear if the staff members who attended the trainings were the appropriate persons. However, the chief librarians and some higher-ranking librarians did not participate in the trainings because they had not yet been hired.*

Comment – Although the Omaheke RSRC opened after the Compact closed, we are still interested in the status of tasks there. Was a Community Information Needs Assessment conducted before the RSRC's opening? Was the ILMS installed and functioning at the time of the RSRC's opening?

- ➢ **Response** – The report was edited to specify that, no, a needs assessment was not conducted before the Omaheke RSRC opened, but yes, the ILMS was working at the time of the opening.

12.2.8   Unresolved items

Request – Can TASCHA address the following items during Component 2 data collection, as they were not mentioned in this report:

- Was the Adult Education unit that covers adult literacy and NAMCOL negotiated by Compact's end? Had the Adult Literacy team set up an office in one of the RSRCs?
- Likewise with NAMPOST – had NAMPOST set up services at RSRCs?
- Could TASCHA investigate incentives for maintenance? I think there is something amiss on how donors approach the maintenance issue.
- ➢ **Response** – These are important questions we could not resolve during Component 1 data analysis due to time constraints. As such, these questions will be explored during Component 2 data collection.