

Research Institute of Swahili Studies of Eastern Africa (RISS-EA)

The Research Institute of Swahili Studies of Eastern Africa was mooted way back in the year 2000. It took shape in the year 2004 and in 2007 a fully fledged director was appointed to head the institution. Its headquarters is in Mombasa and has a campus in Lamu. More satellite campuses will be established in Nairobi and Malindi.

The Research institute of Swahili Studies of Eastern Africa (RISSEA) was borne out of a felt need and desire to coordinate Swahili scholarships. Currently there is no Institution in Kenya and the Region that has assumed such a mandate even though great strides have been made by public universities and other institutions in the development of Kiswahili.

Similarly it is an established fact that the cradle of Kiswahili is in the Coast of Kenya, which as a Nation, Kenya should ideally be in the forefront in Swahili scholarship.

Please visit the website on <http://rissea.org>

Furthermore, NMK as the host Institution is ideally placed as it is the custodian of Kenya's cultural heritage.

In spite of the above credentials, there has been no full fledged Institution in Kenya and the region to function as the focal point of Swahili studies. RISSEA was therefore established to fill the conspicuous gap and need of Swahili experts and students.

With the spread and development of Kiswahili as the lingua franca of the region, the institute will be the reference point for governments, schools and institutions of higher learning. In Kenya for example there are moves to entrench Kiswahili to be the second official language in addition to English in the new constitutional dispensation (bilingualism).

In the region, the institute should serve as one of the reference platform for the proposed East African Swahili council. In a wider East African region kiswahili has the potential to serve as a medium of economical, political and social integration. This will have the effect of enhancing harmony and understanding among people of the region and beyond as envisaged in our vision 2030 and other planning documents.

Challenges

To ensure well coordinated, integrated and holistic research and studies on Swahili society.

There is a conspicuous gap of an institution that holistically coordinates Swahili studies in the region. Many researchers and students have problems in working among the swahili society. Hence RISSEA was established out of a felt need and desire to coordinate Swahili scholarship and act as a focal point for institutions with related interest.

Revitalizing Swahili art and craft through training

Due to modern and rapid forces of globalization and modernization authentic and traditional Swahili arts and craft are fast disappearing to the detriment of the pride and history of the Swahili. In order to counter this we need to revitalize Swahili arts and craft through training and employment creation.

Developing and operationalizing proper marketing strategies for our products and services.

The directorate will develop and launch authentic Swahili arts and craft products training and research programmes as well as Swahili cultural events/themes.

Lobbying and advocacy for formulation and implementation of appropriate RISSEA policies aimed at improving the directorate efficiency and effectiveness in research.

The institute will facilitate the development of appropriate policies and guidelines in the recognition and use of Swahili (including all the dialects) for educational, economical, political and social purposes. Kiswahili is poised to be a lingua franca of the region. The institute will also undertake translation services.

Promotion of partnership and collaboration with the local and international institutions on Swahili research and training.

RISSEA will strive to develop and enhance partnership and collaboration in programmes development on Swahili research and training, technology and innovations, policy guidelines, synergies and capacity building.

The strategic focus

- Development and operationalization of effective research and training.

- Development and operationalization of an efficient and effective resource centre and special programmes.
- Development and operationalization of Swahili arts and craft unit.

RISSEA staff work in Swahili and English, primarily with local and international students and researchers, but also with other groups such as diplomats and UN staff, and people working for governments and public service institutions. Time will be spent living with a Swahili family, and or within Swahili people's environment.

VISION

To be a world class institution that undertakes Research and Training on Swahili society.

MISSION

To conduct research and training on the history, culture and language of the Swahili so as to enhance Swahili scholarship.

{mospagebreak title=Intervention Strategies&heading=RISSEA Introduction}

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Development and Operationalization of effective research and training.

The Rationale and Justification

The institute has made the mandate of undertaking research and training on Swahili language, history and culture. The research work will later be used by both local and international researchers particularly when they come to do their research in the institute. Swahili language and culture has gained international recognition and therefore people from different parts of the world are interested in learning Swahili.

Achievements

The Research Institute of Swahili Studies has signed a memorandum of understanding with the University of London, where students take their semester abroad with RISSEA. The university is happy with RISSEA programme offered to the SOAS students during their training in the institute. More researchers have found out about RISSEA and they make it their first choice and the number is growing by the year.

Challenges

Developing and enhancing proper marketing systems for effective and efficient research and training unit. Developing and promoting of partnership and collaboration network with other institutes for effective research and training on Swahili studies.

Strategic Focus

The strategic focus for RISSEA is to partner with other organizations nationally and internationally so that more students come to learn and affiliate with RISSEA in their research work on Swahili studies. The introduction of summer field school is to attract Swahili students to the institute. The institute is focused to be self sustaining in coming years and even gradually grow into a model institute in the wide region of East Africa.

Activities

Development and sustaining of Swahili training programmes including field schools, school based and outreach programmes.

Preparation, documentation and dissemination of Swahili research materials for researchers, students and the public. This can be done through journals, directories, dictionaries, catalogues e.t.c.

Development and operationalization of a sustainable resource centre and special programmes

The Rationale and Justification

The Swahili resource centre will be composed of a library, an archive, offices, conference facilities, language laboratory and teaching space. The resource centre once fully furnished will attract both local and foreign researchers and students. The conference hall will be hired to the community and other interest groups for meetings and other special occasions. This will tend to increase revenue for the institute which is aiming to be self sustaining in the near future.

Achievements

The construction of the complex is a major achievement for the directorate. It will attract knowledge seekers on Swahili studies to come and do their research work and learn more about

the language and Swahili culture. The institute has launched its annual Swahili cultural festival last year and hopes to continue with the same and even improve in the coming years.

Challenges

Acquire and operationalize the resource centre for the use and accessibility by researchers, students and the general public. Generating, developing and disseminating of Swahili materials. Establish and operationalize Swahili Culture Museum to showcase various aspects of Swahili History, Culture and Language. Strengthening and enhancing of Swahili cultural festival.

Strategic Focus

The strategic focus for the directorate is to see the resource centre functioning so that the institute is able to implement its research agenda as well as accrue financial gains. The institute will initiate a desktop publication unit, translation services and a language laboratory. The Swahili Culture Museum once constructed will be a teaching museum and revenue generating project. This will attract a lot of tourists, researchers and students. The conference hall will be hired to the community and others as part of our corporate social responsibility. Activities Development and strengthening of a scientific and cultural library for researchers, students and the public.

Development and operationalization of an effective Swahili special collections and archive (Books, manuscripts CDs, photos, tapes and other digitized forms.)Operationalization and commercialization of an effective conference/ seminar halls equipped with modern soundproof systems and audiovisual facilities. Development and strengthening of community outreach programmes on specific Swahili themes eg Annual Swahili cultural festivals, Swahili cuisine, Swahili attire, Swahili building traditions, maritime tradition and other live aspects of the Swahili. Development and operationalization of Swahili Arts and Craft Unit.

Rationale and Justification

The directorate runs a Swahili arts and craft unit which has a production unit of Swahili furniture and trains Swahili carpentry for boys and tailoring for girls. The production unit is an income generating project while the training section is aimed at offering job opportunities to the surrounding community youth.

Achievements

After the post election violence the production unit and students intake was heavily affected. But now the situation is coming back to normal. This year there was a significant increase in the enrollment of students' intake and the production unit.

Challenges

Develop marketing tools for the Swahili art and craft unit. Develop and operationalize a showroom for showcasing Swahili art and craft. Enhancing efficient and quality training in arts and craft. Strategic Focus in order to improve and attract a big clientele to the institute the following activities will be implemented:

- Construction of a showroom to showcase the beauty of the Swahili furniture
- Employ more carpenters to work at the production unit
- Offering job opportunities to the graduate of the training unit, as we have already started with the first batch going to work in Sharjah.
- Increase revenue from the production unit to sustain the institute.

Activities

Enhance quality and sustainable training programmes in Swahili art and craft. Ensure consistency and added value in the production of Swahili art and craft. Develop a mechanism of commercializing our products and services.

{mospagebreak title=Swahili Arts and Craft Department}

Swahili Arts and Craft Department

Swahili Arts and Craft Department was established to revitalize and promote Swahili material culture and alleviate

unemployment challenges among the youths through training. The Department admits young Men and Women to train in Swahili Carvings, Joinery, Building restoration, Swahili Kofia making, Dress making and Embroidery. The course duration varies from one to two years depending on the specialization.

The Department has a production unit in the respective specialization areas:-

- Woodwork Building restoration Dressmaking and Embroidery
- The production unit is an income generating project whereby we accept orders from individuals and cooperates clientele, while the training section is aimed at offering job opportunities to the surrounding community youths.

This section gives chances to our trainees to engage with real day to day activities that give them opportunity to acquire a practical training while revenue generated by the unit strengthen and supports institutional objectives and goals.

{mospagebreak title=Curriculum}

CURRICULUM

There are 3 semesters in a year:

- 1st Semester From Jan- March
- 2nd Semester From June- August
- 3rd Semester From October -December.

In each semester a major swahili cultural event will be planned, these include the Maulidi (marking the birthday of Prophet Muhammad) and Cultural events.

Each Semester will last eleven weeks, with a break of one week in between; each semester offers four modules, but is optional and changes can be made to suit one's need.

Charges for the four modules are:

- Administration fees US\$ 600
- Tuition fees US\$ 1400
- Total US\$ 2000

For a single module the cost is:

- Administration fees US\$ 600
- Tuition fees US\$ 400 Total US\$ 1000

NOTE: Tailor made programmes are also available through out the year for those who have basic or no knowledge at all in Swahili from a period of one week, up to 4 weeks. Tuition fees for one week is US\$200. A formal certificate will be issued to each participant after successful completion of a module.

Swahili Lesson Schedule

{mospagebreak title=Modules Offered}

MODULES OFFERED INCLUDE

Swahili Literature and Performance Contemporary Swahili novel and play: In-depth analysis of the two genre of Literature that is play and novel in terms of-The plot, characters, themes and language used. Short story in Kiswahili literature. Swahili poetry. Classical Swahili poetry and contemporary Swahili poetry. Types of Swahili poetry. How to write Swahili poetry Language use in Swahili poetry. Swahili epic Oral Literature Swahili songs, dances and music, Swahili History and Identity.

The study of the origins and history of the Swahili, Swahili economy and international relations Spread and development of Kiswahili in East Africa and the Diaspora. Dialects of Kiswahili. Swahili and her neighbors Anthropology of the Swahili Economic activities of the Swahili eg. Fishing, farming, weaving, dhow making, stone house building, wood carving etc.

The Swahili way of life, (birth, marriage and death) Art, dressing, adornments, and other forms of creativity and personal beauty. Religion Beliefs and forms of worship. Swahili songs and dances. Swahili Language will include Swahili basic (beginners) and advanced.

Teaching will be conducted on Swahili grammar and phonetics depending on one's level of proficiency in Swahili. An entry examination will be conducted to determine the student's level of proficiency in Swahili. A part from the four modules, the Institute will also offer where appropriate; Trips/excursions will be arranged: while in Lamu a visit to Matondoni village and Takwa ruins, while in Mombasa will visit Fort Jesus Museums, Mnarani, Jumba and Gede ruins.

Resource persons: will be invited to talk to students/ researchers on different Swahili cultural topics. Panel discussions male and female panel discussion will be organized where students /researchers will get the opportunity to ask questions /inquire on any issue that they would like to know or clarified about the Swahili. Hence there will be interactions between the students/ researchers and selected members of the Swahili community that constitutes the panel.

SPECIAL SUMMER FIELD SCHOOL (JULY - 4 weeks and AUGUST -4 weeks) Topics to be covered:

- Swahili identity and the neighboring communities
- Spread and development of Kiswahili
- Learning basic Swahili
- Swahili Economy
- Rites of passage & birth, marriage and death
- Religion Art & Dressing, songs, dances, adornments and other forms of creativity and personal beauty

Charges: US \$ 1000: The charges include; administration fees, tuition fees, excursions and a visit to Swahili villages, sites and monuments.

At the end of the semester the course will be assessed using the following modes:

An independent Research topic chosen by the students; any of the Lecturers can assist in identifying the topic if requested, or A written exam; set by the course tutors.

The administrative and teaching staffs of the institute are mostly drawn from the National Museums of Kenya and those from the community who possess a strong background in Swahili studies and related disciplines. Native Swahili speakers form most of the teaching staff.

The following are some of our staff:

- Mr. Kassim Omar :Director RISSEA,
- Sheikh Ahmed Nabahany:Authority and consultant in Kiswahili language, culture, history and poetry.
- Ms. Rukiya Harith:M.A in Swahili studies from Nairobi University.
- Mr. Mohamed Karama:M.A in Swahili Studies from Kenyatta University.

RISSEA application form

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