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Records, Information and Knowledge Management Diary

“Past records are evidence of transactions, and they are the foundation of planning for today and tomorrow”

An organisation will not function effectively in the absence of good record keeping. Efficient management of records is, without doubt, a key element of any well-functioning institution. It is often stated that you cannot manage something if you cannot measure it. To measure performance of an organisation over a specific period, one needs accurate and up to date records. Records are, therefore, recorded information that provide evidence of business transactions. This includes the what, why, who, and when of business activities. Records are thus considered an important element for good governance.

Even in the bible, when things were not going according to plan, it is recorded in Ezra chapter 6 verses 1 and 2, that a king by the name of Darius made a decree for a search to be made in the storage house of the archives, to search for a solution to the problems that engulfed his people at the time. To this end, a solution was indeed found among the materials stored in the archives. This confirms the importance of records over time.

Records are important for an institution to meet its financial obligations and for its survival. Records are also critical for the planning process and they provide information on what was done, why it was done and the outcome thereof.

Just imagine, for example, if there were no documents that provide an analogy of events that led to the creation of the national borders, regional boundaries, or the positioning of the controversial veterinary cordon fence. Should you need to review such maps and placement, you will require old records to start with and collaborate with local historians to get a clear picture to inform future and alternative decisions.

Risk management is another critical component of an organisation. To manage the various risks that are facing an institution, a well-functioning records management programme needs to be in place to manage the creation, use, preservation and the identification and disposal of non-essential documents in a legal and orderly manner.

As an example, the GIPF has a well-developed records management programme that is specifically designed to efficiently manage the creation, maintenance and disposal of records. This is done in line with legislations, international standards and best practice. Commensurate with the programme was the establishment of a Records and Information Management Committee, which oversees the implementation of the records management programme across all business divisions. The Committee is also assisting the Fund to remain compliant with relevant legislation and best practices as outlined in the international standards bulletins.

To conclude, I want to highlight some of the benefits of a good records management programme in an organisation. A well-crafted and executed records management programme:

- a) Reduces records volume and storage costs by keeping only required records,
- b) Enables delivery of service in an efficient and timely manner,
- c) Enables timely & cost-effective retrieval of critical information for decision making,
- d) Enables regulatory compliance, and
- e) Protects and supports an institution against legal and other challenges.

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