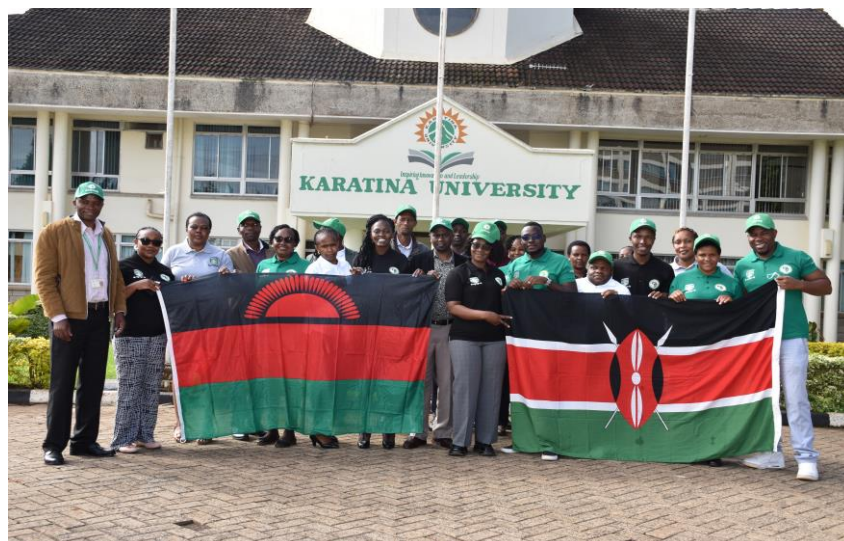# ACENUB STAFF EXCHANGE PROGRAMME BETWEEN MZUZU UNIVERSITY LIBRARY LEARNING RESOURCES CENTRE AND KARATINA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

A recent library exchange visit that mainly focused on the Dspace repository software, research and development opportunities brought together six library staff from Mzuzu University in Malawi and several Library Staff from Karatina University in Kenya to share their experiences and explore best practices in managing digital repositories. The Mzuzu University delegation included, Lomosi Joseph Chinyumba, Ashberry Nyirenda, Mary Phwemula, Yonam Nyirenda, Pempho Ashani and Dumisani Munyenyembe. The exchange visit highlighted how libraries are leveraging DSpace to advance knowledge sharing, open access and digital preservation. Below are the major highlights from the visit

Showcasing DSpace's Repository Software Latest Features

During this visit, participants were introduced to the improved DSpace 8 user interface, designed for a more intuitive and user-friendly experience. The new UI offers better accessibility, streamlined navigation and improved mobile responsiveness, which helps to improve user engagement. In addition, there was a discussion around enhancing metadata standards for better discoverability and searchability. Institutions shared how they are using DSpace's customizable metadata fields to ensure their repositories are more aligned with international standards.

During the exchange visit, participants shared insights into how they are engaging users with the DSpace platform from faculty to students and the wider academic community. Interactive workshops and tutorials were some of the ways institutions are increasing awareness and engagement with digital repositories. Additionally, the two libraries have created communities within their DSpace repositories, where users can participate in discussions, share resources and collaborate on research projects.

DSpace serves as the backbone of many institutional repositories, making it easier for researchers to upload and share their work while ensuring compliance with institutional

Research and Development Opportunities

Both universities deliberated and emphasized on the mutual benefits of postgraduate exchange programs, joint research dissemination, and staff development initiatives. During the discussion, the Ag. Deputy Vice Chancellor (P, F&A) at Karatina University proposed integrating agricultural research and innovation to address food security challenges, highlighting the importance of collaboration in these areas.

In line with the core functions of ACENUB, the meeting also addressed several challenges, including youth unemployment in the agricultural sector and low market prices for agricultural produce. Participants highlighted possible solutions, such as developing industries to add value to agricultural products, which could help overcome these issues.

The discussion finally drew the following key outcomes and action point:

i. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):
    Both universities agreed to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for collaboration and resource sharing, this will enhance formalizing the partnership.

ii. Joint Research Projects:
    The universities proposed the establishment of joint research programs focusing on biodiversity, food security, and innovation.

iii. Technology Adoption:
    Mzuzu University expressed its interest in adopting **JoVE** (Journal of Visualized Experiments) platforms and requested guidance from Karatina University to facilitate this transition.

iv. Capacity Building:
    Both universities agreed to explore staff and student exchange programs as a way to enhance knowledge and skills, contributing to the development of both institutions.

Conclusion

This exchange visit provided a thorough exploration of the potential of DSpace in managing and preserving academic content. The discussions underscored the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing in the digital library community, ensuring that libraries and institutions can continue to improve the accessibility and preservation of scholarly materials.