

Integration of the IFLA Code of Ethics in Attaining Sustainable Development Goals: A Strategy for Improved Information Access and Attainment of SDGs

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Abstract

The United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals are a worldwide call for action to eradicate poverty, to eliminate inequalities, to protect the planet, to achieve sustainable economic growth, and to warrant that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. However, there is ethical disquiet in achieving these goals. Yet, there is not much deliberation over the role of information ethics in achieving these goals. This study sought to examine the relevance of IFLA Code of Ethics for librarians and other information workers in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. A pragmatism paradigm was adopted by which 71 responses were attained through the use of an online survey tool (Google forms). The data collected were both qualitative and quantitative. The study findings revealed that librarians conduct various activities in an effort to uphold the IFLA Code of Ethics to enhance attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. These activities include non-censorship, training in ICTs and copyright issues, cooking and reading clubs, tutoring services, gender equality in duty allocation and remuneration, pen data repositories or databases, dissemination of social media information, health awareness programmes, non-discrimination against library users, and inclusive access by catering for people with disabilities. The study recommends that libraries implement the appropriate infrastructure and monitor the adherence to the professional code of conduct to create a productive workforce and an environment that promote achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: information professionals, information access, ethics, sustainable development goals, librarians, IFLA Code of Ethics, SDGs

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the post-2015 development agenda on 25 September 2015, termed “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, as a plan of action for the people, the planet and prosperity. Agenda 2030 includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets (UN 2015). The Agenda aims to build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to realise the human rights, gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. By spanning the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, the economic, social and environmental dimensions, the SDGs deal with critical areas for humanity and the planet (UN 2015). Librarians and library associations have recognised the importance of SDGs; hence, all types of library around the world are working towards realising these goals.

Access to timely information and knowledge in the right format is the key to sustainable development. The Agenda 2030 recognises the access to information as a target under SDG 16. It was also stated by the former IFLA President, Donna Scheeder, “there is no truly sustainable development without access to information, and no meaningful, inclusive access to information without libraries” (Library News 2017). The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users, is a global voice of the library and information profession. “IFLA has been actively involved with the creation of the UN 2030 Agenda, advocating for the inclusion of access to information, safeguarding of cultural heritage, universal literacy, and access to information and communication technologies (ICT) in the framework” (IFLA n.d.). In 2016, IFLA (2018) launched the International Advocacy Programme (IAP) to promote and support the role of libraries in the planning and implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and SDGs. IFLA has initiated a Library Map of the World (LMW), a digital space to share libraries’ contributing stories to achieving the SDGs. The LMW published “Libraries and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Storytelling Manual” to support librarians and library advocates in their advocacy efforts (IFLA 2018).

This study aims to analyse and explore the way in which the IFLA Code of Ethics supports SDGs. Each goal has a different focus, for example, equal rights, safety, justice, education, and health. Nevertheless, there is not much deliberation over the role of information ethics in achieving the SDGs. This study examines the relevance of the IFLA Code of Ethics for librarians and other information workers in attaining selected SDGs. The IFLA Code of Ethics has 6 principles, which guide librarians and other information professionals in their professional conduct and improve their professional self-awareness. On the one hand, access to information is the key to sustainable development and the core mandate of libraries and other information professions. Target 16.10 under SDG 16 focuses on access to information. On the other hand, unauthorised access to someone’s information is unethical. There are issues such as privacy, secrecy, confidentiality and intellectual property that may cause ethical problems. This study

therefore, correlates the IFLA Code of Ethics and SDGs and analyses the role of the IFLA Code of Ethics in realising the SDGs.

IFLA Code of Ethics

Library associations in more than 60 countries had developed and approved the Code of Ethics for Librarians. However, nothing existed in an international context. Therefore, the IFLA found it necessary to develop an international code of conduct that can be used to guide information workers internationally. The IFLA Committee on Freedom of Access to Information and Free Expression (FAIFE) started drafting the international Code of Ethics for librarians and other information workers in 2010. Comments were solicited from both IFLA members and non-members internationally. Later in 2012, the final version of the “IFLA Code of Ethics for librarians and other information workers” was approved and endorsed by the IFLA governing board (IFLA/FAIFE 2017). Garcia-Febo et al. (2016) outline the function of the Code of Ethics as follows: (a) encouraging reflection on principles on which librarians and other information workers can form policies and handle dilemmas; (b) improving professional self-awareness; and (c) providing transparency to users and society in general. The IFLA Code of Ethics covers the following aspects: (1) access to information; (2) responsibilities towards individuals and society; (3) privacy, secrecy and transparency; (4) open access and intellectual property; (5) neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills; and (6) colleague and employer or employee relationships.

Sustainable Development Goals

The UN overtly stated that the agenda is a plan of action for the people, the planet and prosperity aiming at strengthening universal peace and completing what MDGs could not achieve. As mentioned earlier, the 17 SDGs are integrated into the three facets of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental development. According to the UN (n.d.a, para 1), “the Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.” These goals and targets will continue to stimulate the action plans in critical areas for humanity and the planet in the remaining 10 years to accomplish SDGs. Each goal underscores a different aspect of sustainable development.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the interconnection between the IFLA Code of Ethics for librarians and other information workers and the SDGs as conceptualised by the researchers. The relevancy of the IFLA Code of Ethics as displayed in Figure 1 is further discussed below.

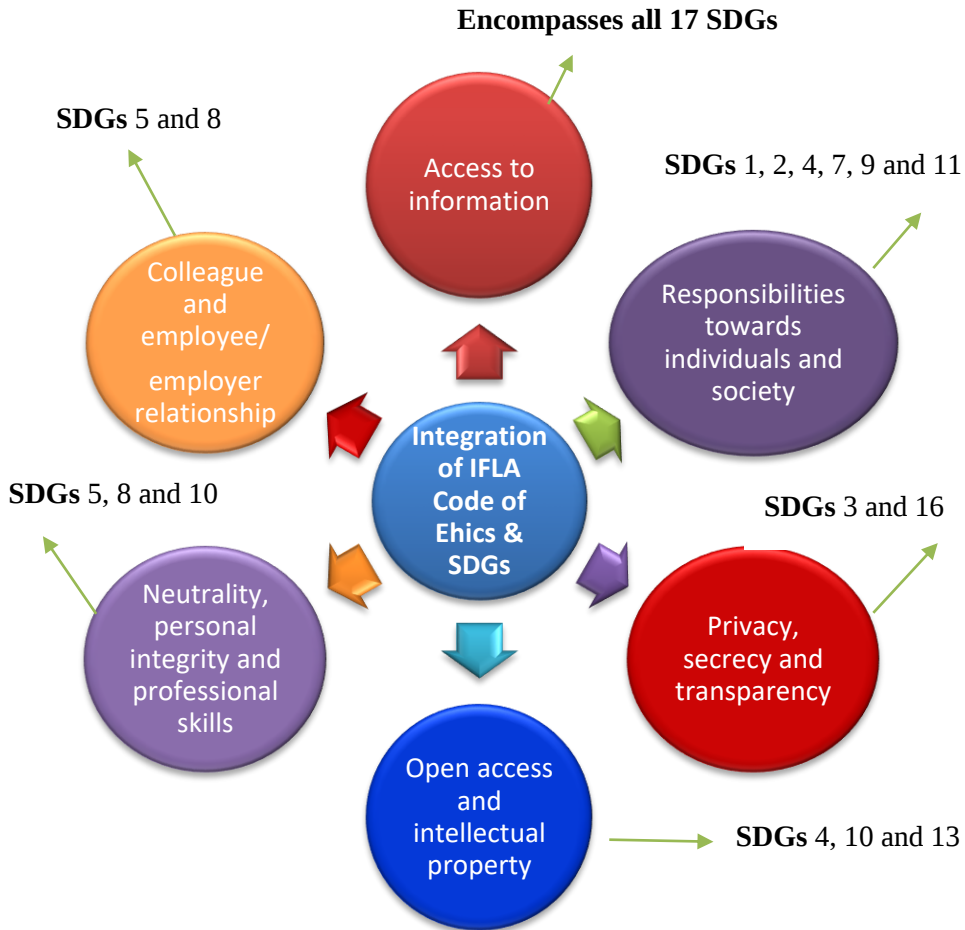


Figure 1: IFLA Code of Ethics versus SDGs

IFLA Code of Ethics 1: Access to Information

This Code of Ethics mandates librarians and other information workers to ensure access to information to everyone for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, leisure, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy (Garcia-Febo et al. 2016). Sometimes access to information is denied through censorship by governments, religious or civil society institutions. According to the IFLA Code of Ethics, librarians and other information workers should make every effort to offer access to their collections and services free of charge to the users. Membership fees and administrative charges should be kept as low as possible for everyone including disadvantaged people. The IFLA Code of Ethics covers and supports all 17 SDGs because access to quality information is crucial to reduce ignorance and uncertainty, to

make informed decisions, to gain and sustain the competitive edge, to boost productivity, and consequently, to lead towards realisation of the SDGs. In all sectors of the world and all spheres of life, information access is critical as the action taken is based on the information and knowledge one acquired. Thus, the IFLA Code of Ethics 1 supports all 17 SDGs; if there is access to adequate, relevant and up-to-date information at the right time, in the right format and to the right people, then only can SDGs be achieved effectively.

IFLA Code of Ethics 2: Responsibilities towards Individuals and Society

In order to promote inclusion and to eliminate discrimination, librarians and other information workers ensure that the right of access to information is not denied to anyone and that equitable services are provided for everyone irrespective of their age, citizenship, political belief, physical or mental ability, gender identity, heritage, education, income, immigration and asylum-seeking status, marital status, origin, race, religion or sex. Information workers respect the language minorities of a country and their right to access information in their own language, and support users in their information searching. They offer services to increase reading skills and to promote information literacy including the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organise, create, use and communicate information, and promote the ethical use of information (Garcia-Febo et al. 2016). This IFLA Code of Ethics supports the following specific SDGs:

SDG 1: No poverty: Target 1.A states to “ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions” (UN n.d.b). Hence, libraries across the globe are actively involved in achieving SDG 1. For example, ICT training is offered in public libraries in Botswana through a project called “Sesigo” (Sunday Standard Botswana 2009). Similarly, the e-Library Nenasala Programme in Sri Lanka is a government-sponsored initiative to increase the digital literacy and access to technology among the nation’s poorest residents, who often live in remote rural areas (IFLA n.d.). Many community members who have gone through this training initiative have achieved employment promotion; they can look for job vacancies and apply online for jobs. Some who were not employed have now improved their employment potential for the job market. In Slovenia, the Ljubljana City Library hosts an employment information service which helps around 1 200 people a year, many of whom are homeless or receiving social benefits, to find jobs (IFLA n.d.).

SDG 2: Zero hunger: Target 2.2 states to “address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons”. Libraries play an essential role in providing crucial information in all formats and languages to the public (White 2012). Furthermore, librarians are tasked with capturing indigenous knowledge and managing agricultural indigenous knowledge systems to facilitate access to information and promoting the ethical use of indigenous knowledge (Mugwisi, Jiyane, and Fombad

2018). Therefore, by following their Code of Ethics, librarians promote sustainable agriculture and facilitate information access to marginalised groups. Librarians promote literacy in agricultural libraries by training communities in information literacy skills that help farmers to access the relevant information (Mashroofa and Senevirathne 2014). Also, they are able to share their agricultural data for research purposes. This improves the agricultural sector as farmers, agribusiness entrepreneurs and consumers have instant access to reliable information. As a result, it facilitates increasing agricultural productivity and sustainable food production systems to alleviate hunger and ensure the security of nutritious and sufficient food for all.

SDG 4: Quality education: Point 7 of this goal highlights, to “ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development”. Two of the responsibilities of librarians towards individuals and the community are to support learning and to improve education (Ajegbomogun and Ajegbomogun 2015). University and college librarians often conduct research training sessions and promote information literacy and the ethical use of information to equip learners with the necessary skills and knowledge to promote sustainable development (Wilkes, Godwin, and Gurney 2015). In adherence to the IFLA Code of Ethics, public libraries often conduct “after-school” support to children by providing extra lessons on specific subjects, such as conducting educational games and cultural exhibits to supplement what pupils are taught in class.

SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy: In some rural areas, institutions such as libraries are some of the places in which there are reliable access to light and electricity (Chukwusa 2015). Thus, librarians have an obligation to allow clients to charge their electronic devices such as laptops and cell phones as clients use them for information access and communication. A library is the most convenient place for students to study, do research and prepare for their final exams. In this way, librarians fulfil their responsibility towards the community by ensuring that they have back-up generators for power supply.

SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure: According to IFLA LMW (2018, 6), libraries “provide access to research infrastructure, data and quality information to foster innovation and competitiveness. Some libraries operate business centers that offer entrepreneurship training as well as legal and financial advice to help entrepreneurs start-up their businesses.” This means that librarians fulfil their responsibility towards the community by advocating the implementation of ICT infrastructure in information repositories and community centres. They do so by advocating the purpose-built and state-of-the-art infrastructures. For example; the library building should have state-of-the-art conference facilities, a coffee shop and community information exchange hubs (Deng et al. 2019).

SDG 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable: This goal promotes sustainable business, and safe spaces for youngsters to allow them to “freely express their views” and “pursue their dreams”. Ensuring the principle of inclusiveness, by

providing information and knowledge without any kind of inequity is key to development. Cities are hubs for ideas, commerce, culture, science, productivity, social development and cannot develop socially, politically and economically without access to information.

IFLA Code of Ethics 3: Privacy, Secrecy and Transparency

According to this Code, librarians and other information workers respect personal privacy, and the protection of personal data, shared between individuals and institutions. The relationship between the library and the user is one of confidentiality and user data are not shared with anyone. They support the fullest possible transparency for information relating to public bodies, private sector companies and all other institutions whose activities affect the lives of individuals and society as a whole (Garcia-Febo et al. 2016). This IFLA Code of Ethics supports the following SDGs:

SDG 3: Good health and well-being: Point number 7 of SDG 3 states that “By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes”. This is supported by the IFLA Code of Ethics 3 in the sense that information workers respect personal privacy in the same way as doctors and nurses. Libraries can ensure access to such information by creating private rooms or information corners in which the public can enquire and receive information on sexual and health reproductive issues without fear of others. Medical and hospital libraries are responsible for ensuring quality access to health information and providing access to medical research. In doing so, librarians adhere to the privacy and secrecy oath by protecting the health data of patients from third parties. They facilitate access to open health data for research purposes and to foster transparency within proper legislation regimes.

SDG 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies: A just, peaceful and inclusive society can be possible when there are transparency in government activities and processes. Transparency is achievable when there is sharing and access to quality and timely information. Point 10 of SDG 16 mandates to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements”. Librarians, especially records managers, have the mandate to ensure that every citizen has access to all government information but with restrictions placed on confidential information. Goal 16 also mandates that there should be the promotion of “the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all”. Records managers and other information workers manage records adhering to the principles of privacy, secrecy and transparency (International Council on Archives 1996) and provide access to the relevant information to the right person at the right time, so that it can be used in a court of law to attain justice. This is in alignment with the protection of fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

IFLA Code of Ethics 4: Open Access and Intellectual Property

Librarians' interest is to provide the best possible access to information and ideas for library users in any media using open access, open source, and open licenses. Librarians' aim is to provide fair, swift, economical and effective access to information for users. They also have a professional duty to advocate exceptions and limitations to copyright restrictions for libraries. Information workers recognise the intellectual property right of authors and other creators and ensure that their rights are respected (IFLA/FAIFE 2017). They also advocate that copyright terms should be limited and information in the public domain should remain public and free. This Code supports the following SDGs:

SDG 4: Quality education: Point 7 of Goal 4 requires that “By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development”. Librarians promote the achievement of quality education by providing fair, swift, economical and effective access to information (Jain and Jibril 2018). Without this, the quality of education is compromised. Information workers negotiate the most favourable terms for access to information and knowledge on behalf of their users and ensure that access is not prevented or hindered (IFLA/FAIFE 2017). Thus, learners can gain understanding from all sources of information without any restrictions or hindrances. Open access results in information access by all and ensures that all youths and adults achieve literacy and numeracy. For example, in Botswana, the Botswana National Library Services and the Ramotswa public library offer various programmes that support quality education. These programmes include a reading club, homework assistance programme, storytelling, and computer training (Radijeng 2013).

SDG 10: Reduced inequalities: Points 2 and 3 of SDG 10 call for “By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all and ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome”. According to the IFLA LMW (2018), libraries help to reduce inequality by providing safe, civic spaces open to all, in both urban and rural areas across the world. Through the promotion of open access to information and the protection of intellectual properties, the marginalised groups do not struggle to access information (IFLA/FAIFE 2017).

SDG 13: Climate change and its impacts: This goal is also supported by the IFLA Code of Ethics 4 by providing the best possible access to information and ideas in any media supporting the principles of open access and open licenses. Librarians are responsible for providing access to reliable data that support informed research and public access to information about climate change (IFLA n.d.). Librarians are mandated to promote the publishing of open data on climate change to facilitate research practices that will influence decision-making in various sectors affected by weather changes. For example, the agriculture sector depends on data from climate change research. Without sharing these data for access by all, farmers may suffer tremendously and this would increase poverty and hunger rates.

IFLA Code of Ethics 5: Neutrality, Personal Integrity and Professional Skills

According to this Code, librarians are committed to neutrality and impartiality to have a balanced collection (IFLA/FAIFE 2017). They apply fair service policies to provide access to information and prioritise professional duties over personal interests (Andrew 2016). They strive to achieve the highest professional excellence with enhanced knowledge and skills. Librarians have the right to free speech in the workplace if it does not invade the principle of neutrality to their users. This Code of Ethics supports the following SDGs:

SDG 5: Gender equality: According to points 5 and 8 of SDG 5, “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities in everything and enhance the use of enabling technology to promote women empowerment.” Library management adheres to neutrality when selecting library resources by employing their professional skills to meet the needs of all genders, all local cultures and interests of all members of the community. The IFLA LMW (2018) concurs that neutrality enables the most balanced library collection and achieves the most balanced access to information. Thus, the IFLA Code of Ethics supports the realisation of SDG 5 as all libraries adhere to the principle of neutrality in collection development to serve the community with their high professional standards.

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth: Library management strives to foster an environment that is conducive to working by promoting equal rights and freedom to speech to employees. A decent workplace is one in which library staff practice integrity and neutrality in all their work activities. Such a decent workplace will lead towards high productivity, job satisfaction and efficiency, thus resulting in quality information services to the community.

SDG 10: Reduce inequality: It is increasingly being recognised that economic growth cannot reduce poverty without economic, social and environmental equality. As discussed above, librarians are pledged to the unbiased library collection, access to information and services to communities by disregarding any type of discrimination when providing information. When people are well-informed economically, socially and environmentally through the right information and knowledge, inequality in and among countries will be reduced.

IFLA Code of Ethics 6: Colleague and Employer/Employee Relationship

According to this Code, librarians treat each other with fairness and respect without any type of discrimination. They earn equal salaries and benefits, contribute to their professional association’ activities, and participate in research and publications (IFLA/FAIFE 2017). They attempt to earn a reputation and status based on their professionalism and ethical behaviour and do not use unfair means to compete with their colleagues (Garcia-Febo et al. 2016). This Code of Ethics is relevant specifically to the following SDGs:

SDG 5: Gender equality: This goal states that librarians do not support any type of discrimination. This also promotes good working relationships between colleagues and employer–employee relationships. Where there is fairness and respect, there will be peace and justice (Schroeder et al. 2019). This creates a positive atmosphere in the library in which users receive high-quality services and access to information because workers operate in an environment that is conducive to work. By observing the IFLA Code of Ethics, information workers disapprove of a lack of discernment and provide equal information to everyone without any bias.

SDG 8: Economic growth for all: As noted above, when workers operate in a decent environment that is conducive to work, they can provide quality library services and access to information to library users. This in return, develops the national economy as information is a vital resource for the development and prosperity of any nation. Information provides an impetus to a nation’s social, cultural, economic, scientific and technological development.

It is apparent from the above discussion that the importance of the IFLA Code of Ethics in the attainment of the SDGs cannot be overemphasised; several SDGs are accomplished and sustained by it. Numerous countries have started appreciating the role of the IFLA Code of Ethics and some have already endorsed it. For example, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA 2018) endorsed this Code of Ethics in 2012. It is also evident that some of the SDGs overlap in the Code of Ethics. This shows that various information repositories can merge with or correlate any of these SDGs with the Code of Ethics for librarians and other information workers to achieve better results in serving their customers and facilitating the accomplishment of SDGs. Observing the IFLA Code of Ethics to achieve the SDGs results in inclusive information access. Various mechanisms can be adopted and implemented to achieve the SDGs, but the core strategy to meeting all the SDGs is through quality and timely information access. Information access in all spheres of life can be achieved through the implementation of efficient and effective technologies. On the other hand, these technologies require professionals who adhere to professional ethical conduct to achieve their goals. For example, the Danish Library Association (2015, para 1) stated that

The rapid advancement of technology has resulted in increasing privacy implications for library and information services, their users, and society. Commercial Internet services, including those used to deliver library and information services, collect extensive data on users and their behaviour. They may also sell data about their users to third parties who then act on the data to deliver, monitor or withhold services. Using identification and location technology, governments and third parties can analyze a library user’s communication and activities for surveillance purposes or to control access to spaces, devices and services.

The above quote shows that without the Code of Ethics for information professionals, it would be very difficult to hold employees accountable for their actions and this may affect the attainment of the SDGs and information access.

Research Methodology

The main aim of this study was to explore the way in which the IFLA Code of Ethics supports SDGs. As a result, a pragmatism paradigm complemented by a mixed-methods approach was adopted to guide the study. The target population consisted of librarians in different types of library. Owing to the need to have a wider perspective from different librarians, an online survey technique was employed. A survey questionnaire containing both qualitative and quantitative questions was designed on google forms and distributed through emails and Facebook platforms. A snowballing sampling technique was employed and found to be more convenient as friends of the researchers were first sent the link and this was further circulated to their friends through the share or forward mechanism in different social media platforms. The link was opened for sharing on 8 June to 15 August 2020. Getting online responses was a bit difficult as the study respondents were more relaxed, hence the researchers had to keep sending reminders to the first contact group of friends, and they were asked to also send reminders to their own friends. By the end of 10 weeks, the survey link had recorded 71 responses and the link was closed. Thus, the sample size for this study is 71 librarians from different countries and different libraries. The quantitative data were exported from google forms to Microsoft Excel to formulate charts, whereas the qualitative data were analysed manually and more relevant responses were selected and presented. As a way of maintaining anonymity, the respondents' comments were identified through numerical coding (for example, #5, #30 or #71).

Empirical Findings and Discussion

Demographic Details

As shown in Figure 2, the majority of the study respondents were mainly residing in Botswana ($n = 25$, 35%) and Nigeria ($n = 28$, 39%) at the time when the study was conducted. These numbers were then followed by an equal number ($n = 5$, 7%) of participants from India and Zambia, and Eswatini with three ($n = 3$, 4%) participants. The rest of the respondents were from Kenya and Namibia both with two ($n = 2$, 3%) participants and Tanzania with only one ($n = 1$, 1%) participant. This geographical representation is as an outcome of the social network connections of the researchers. Thus, the opinions presented in the discussion section and the conclusions made from this study may be applicable to and generalised in the countries represented here, and more specifically, applicable to developing countries. In addition, having Botswana and Nigeria dominating in this study, tempts one to assume that these two countries form

the basic context of this study. However, other developing countries may also benefit from the findings of this study.

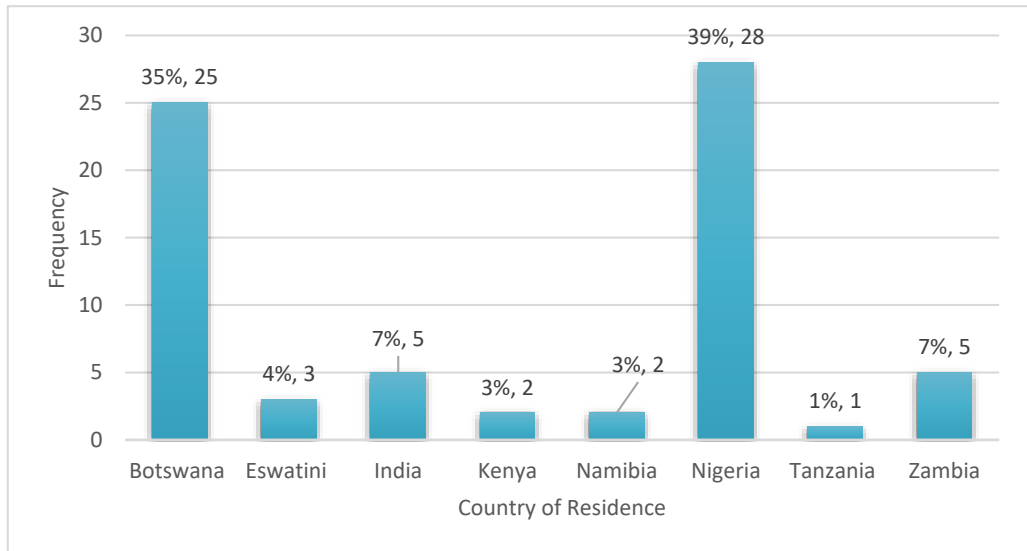


Figure 2: Respondents' country of residence ($n = 71$) (Source: Field data 2020)

To further establish the respondent' demographic details, the study participants were asked to indicate the type of library in which they work. Figure 3 shows the distribution of respondents among the different types of library. The respondents from academic libraries ($n = 45$, 63%) dominated the study. They were followed by those from public libraries ($n = 14$, 20%), special libraries ($n = 7$, 10%), and school libraries ($n = 5$, 7%). Although the distribution is not equal, it is praiseworthy that the study respondents are representative of all types of library. As a result, the opinions presented and the conclusions of this study are applicable to and cover all types of library.

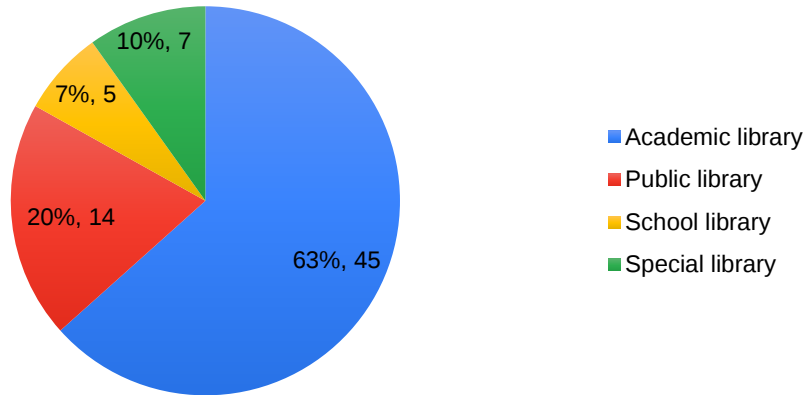


Figure 3: Type of library ($n = 71$) (Source: Field data 2020)

Question three of the survey questionnaire requested the study participants to indicate if their library has endorsed the IFLA Code of Ethics for librarians and other information workers. Figure 4 represents the responses to this question. It is worthy to note that 41 (58%) respondents indicated that their libraries have endorsed the IFLA Code of Ethics for librarians and other information workers, whereas 30 (42%) respondents gave a negative response. These findings imply that the libraries that have endorsed the Code of Ethics recognise the presence and importance of the IFLA as an international guiding body. They therefore adhere to international standards resulting in their libraries performing well and helping to achieve the SDGs in their respective communities. However, those that have not considered implementing the international Code of Ethics are likely to lag behind in their library services and practices.

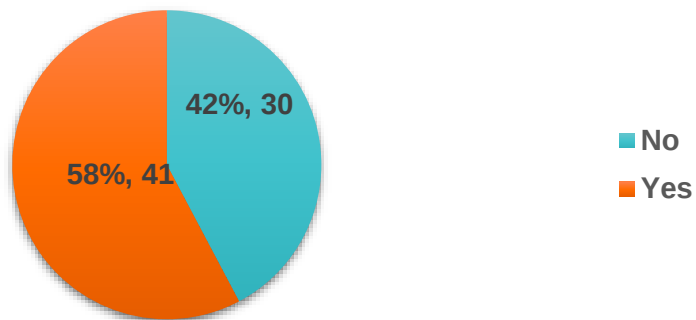


Figure 4: Endorsement of IFLA Code of Ethics by librarians ($n = 71$) (Source: Field data 2020)

Lastly, in the demographic section, the respondents were given an open-ended question which required them to mention any other code of ethics for librarians that their library adhered to, if any. Only 48 participants responded to this question. Their responses indicated a lack of understanding of the code of ethics as most of the responses were not specific to any code of ethics. A total of 15 participants indicated that there is no specific code of ethics implemented in their library whereas five participants mentioned that they were not aware of any. Only one respondent mentioned the “Botswana Library Association code of ethics”. These findings imply that there is a need for the IFLA and library associations to raise awareness about the code of ethics among information workers and teach them its importance. This will enhance the way in which libraries operate, and the way in which workers behave and conduct their daily duties.

Integration of SDGs and the IFLA Code of Ethics

The second section of the survey tool consisted of one quantitative question and six qualitative questions which required the participants to express the way in which the identified code of ethics supports the correlated SDGs. The first question was in a table format and required the study participants to indicate “which code of ethics correlates with each SDG?” As can be seen in Table 1, Codes of ethics 1 and 2 had the highest responses on all 17 SDGs. This implies that the respondents are of the opinion that these two codes of ethics have a high impact on all SDGs as compared to the other four codes of ethics. This is indicated by the high response rates under code of ethics 1 (access to information) and code of ethics 2 (responsibilities towards individuals and society). More specifically, code of ethics 1 was highly associated with Goal 4 (quality education = 69), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth = 67) and Goal 1 (no poverty = 65), whereas code of ethics 2 was highly associated with Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy = 60), Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation = 59) and Goal 17 (partnerships to achieve the goal = 55).

These findings therefore imply that the study participants are of the opinion that the IFLA Code of Ethics 1, which is access to information, is significant for achieving quality education, decent work and economic growth and has the ability to end poverty. Overall, the IFLA Code of Ethics 1 is essential to the achievement of all SDGs. This was evidenced by respondent #14 who noted that “access to information is key to sustainable development. Without which no sustainable development goal can be achieved, so IFLA Code of Ethics (1) supports all 17 SDGs”, and respondent #20 who highlighted, “The main mandate of the library is to ensure access to information by all. Hence, all library activities are carried out with the aim to ensure quality and timely access to information. Thus, the first code of ethics supports all the 17 SDGs. Overall economic sustainable development can be achieved if societies have access to timely and quality information.”

This indicates the power of information and the need for librarians to be more proactive in their information services practices. This was also echoed by respondent #3 who underscored that “access to information supports all SDGs, but in the case of the first

goal of ending poverty in all its forms it is more appropriate. With access to information one is empowered to find opportunities that enable them to better their lives”, and respondent #10 who concurred that “any person who has access to information stands a chance of getting job opportunities to better their lives . . . thus reducing poverty”. Similarly, the study participants were of the opinion that realising one’s responsibility towards individuals and society (IFLA Code of Ethics 2) is crucial to the provision of affordable and clean energy, clean water and a clean environment and thus there is a need to form partnerships to achieve all the SDGs as part of one’s responsibility towards society.

Table 1: SDGs and associated IFLA Code of Ethics from the respondents’ perspectives ($n = 71$)

SDGs	IFLA Code of Ethics					
	1. Access to information	2. Responsibilities towards individuals and society	3. Privacy, secrecy and transparency	4. Open access and intellectual property	5. Neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills	6. Colleague and employer/employee relationships
Goal 1: No poverty	65	49	3	17	9	5
Goal 2: Zero hunger	44	50	6	7	6	4
Goal 3: Good health and well-being	51	39	22	6	8	6
Goal 4: Quality education	69	44	4	26	11	5
Goal 5: Gender equality	40	45	12	9	18	12
Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation	40	59	8	7	4	1
Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy	45	60	4	10	4	6
Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth	67	44	8	11	14	14
Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure	50	46	6	16	11	8
Goal 10: Reduced inequality	49	41	9	17	14	6
Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities	57	53	5	11	6	6

SDGs	IFLA Code of Ethics					
	1. Access to information	2. Responsibilities towards individuals and society	3. Privacy, secrecy and transparency	4. Open access and intellectual property	5. Neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills	6. Colleague and employer/employee relationships
Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production	55	48	6	7	7	4
Goal 13: Climate action	55	42	4	15	2	4
Goal 14: Life below water	45	44	5	8	5	1
Goal 15: Life on land	49	39	4	9	1	5
Goal 16: Peace and justice strong institutions	51	41	15	15	8	11
Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the goal	55	55	7	10	8	10

Source: Field data (2020).

The study participants further provided some explanations on the way in which the Code of Ethics supports the indicated SDGs as shown in Table 1. Some of the qualitative responses are presented under each IFLA Code of Ethic below.

Access to information

Access to information was identified to be relevant and associated with all 17 SDGs as initially perceived by the researchers. The following selected responses indicate the way in which librarians honour this Code of Ethics to support the SDGs:

We do our best to facilitate provision of services free of cost to our clients and increase collections and services to potential users who are children and young adults. (Respondent #21)

Through sharing of information for example conducting database trainings to our customers and the community. (Respondent #28)

My library is a college library which is supposed to cater for students and lectures but, we allow the general public to use our library resources for any kind of information. Also, our resources are not only based on our courses offered, we have all round information resources. (Respondent #40)

The library always searches and employs technologies that ease access to its information resources. (Respondent #70)

The main objective of academic library is supporting the teaching, learning and research activities of the university. This is implemented by facilitating access to knowledge and information. This can improve the quality of education at the university and national level. Apart from this, our library services and resources are supporting the university's research activities. The main intention of research is to generate new knowledge and to solve some socioeconomic problems of the society. Most of the socioeconomic problems are interrelated with the UN sustainable development goals. (Respondent #65)

Every industry in the country can only succeed when there is provision of relevant, quality and timely information. Therefore, code of ethic one in our library support all SDGs as we try by all mean to always provide current information to all patrons. We even do inter-library loans so as to ensure that everyone has access to information as it is key for decision making. (Respondent #44)

One of our key performance indicators is promoting information literacy among the academic community. As an information professional, our primary mandates make the educational community information literate. We provide information literacy training to the academic community to enable to locate, identify and evaluate information resource. Information literacy can empower community thought the lifelong learning process. Thought our community outreach service, we are providing our expertise, and resource support to make a significant contribution to society. Our library provides information literacy and ICT training to school libraries, public libraries and community libraries. Additionally, we are donating books and computers to rural school libraries annually.

An analysis of all 50 responses under Code of Ethics 1 revealed that the majority of the librarians support the achievement of all SDGs by (1) offering free access to information, (2) adopting current technology to enhance access, (3) increasing and updating library collections, (4) providing training on ICTs and information literacy skills, (5) providing information materials that support research development and innovation, (6) providing information in all formats, (7) donating books and computers, and (8) providing interlibrary loan services.

Responsibilities towards individuals and society

Responsibilities towards individuals and society were also identified to be key for achieving all 17 SDGs. The following statements indicate the activities conducted by librarians in honouring Code of Ethics 2 in support of achieving the SDGs:

Public libraries services are accessible to all whatever their age, gender or education. Information access has no discrimination. (Respondent #44)

Our library [school library] services are made available to every child in or out of school, poor or rich, and from public or private school, regardless of their status, citizenship, physical or mental ability, gender identity, heritage, education, in-come, immigration and asylum-seeking status, origin, race, or religion. (Respondent #35)

The library has adopted the primary school in its community. It helped that school to establish a school library. (Respondent #45)

IFLA Code of Ethics 2 supports SDG 1 (no poverty). For example, Werda public library in Botswana imparts cooking skills to community members and this helps to reduce poverty for some families as community members have acquired cooking skills and can start their fast-food businesses to earn a living. (Respondent #12)

To achieve SDG 4, which is quality education, public libraries adhere to IFLA Code of Ethics 2. For instance, our library provides extra lessons to children to support their education and we provide computer training through the 'Sesigo' project. We also offer reading lessons to disabled kids, and tutoring services to primary school pupils. (Respondent #18)

SDG 1: Business hub – we have a programme for teaching women how to sew beads and how to market their small businesses online. **SDG 2:** Selective information dissemination – especially for agricultural information which is key for our local farmers. For example, when new books on pests control or farming techniques come into our library we immediately send an announcement on the farmers' WhatsApp group. The same goes if there is any news on farmers workshops or training, the news is relayed to the group. **SDG 4:** We have subject librarians who focus on specific subjects and help students to access specialised research information. **SDG 7:** The village usually does not have electricity; hence researchers, students and entrepreneurs depend on our library generator to power their laptops and smartphones to complete their projects and business transactions online. **SDG 11:** Our public library is committed to our responsibility towards our community by ensuring that we capture indigenous knowledge, preserve it and share it with researchers. (Respondent #31)

In terms of SDG 2 – our library supports zero hunger by providing a meeting place for local farmers to hold video conference meetings with experts outside the country. Thus, by providing internet and communication facilities to farmers who produce food for our community, we are equipping these farmers with information that aids in innovation and gives them new strategies on how to avert hunger in our community. (Respondent #70)

Our library staff have time and again exhibited their responsibility towards our society by ensuring that all students get equal opportunity to access educational information in the library. Thus, supporting SDG4. In addition, our library has been involved in distributing and displaying health adverts on our information corner, especially information on HIV/AIDS, cancer and sugar diabetes. Thus, supporting SDG3. In support of goal 8 (decent work and economic growth) our library often organizes and hosts various training workshops for small and medium-sized entrepreneurs in our community. However, our efforts have currently been thwarted due to COVID-19. (Respondent #21)

Based on the above excerpts, it is evident that libraries in a quest to honour the Code of Ethics 2 are conducting various activities to support achieving the SDGs. This includes, (1) not discriminating when providing information services, (2) providing an

environment that is conducive to studying, (3) adopting a school initiative, (4) offering cooking programmes, (5) providing tutoring services and student engagement activities, (6) providing selective information dissemination, (7) capturing and preserving indigenous knowledge, (8) presenting training workshops, and (9) providing health awareness programmes.

Privacy, secrecy and transparency

In relation to the Code of Ethics 3, the following extracts are presented from the study participants' responses:

Ethic 3 supports SDG 3 in the sense that in our library we have patrons who come to inquire on certain health issues. Thus, they borrow books on various health issues. Our staff have been trained to respect their choice of books and not to discuss such issues with other patrons or even other staff members as we do not know the purpose of borrowing that particular book. (Respondent #28)

IFLA Code of Ethics 3 supports SDG 3 (good health and well-being) in Botswana public libraries. For example, Ramotswa, Moreomaoto and the National Reference Library run a health talk program. (Respondent #38)

Once individuals have registered as borrowers and are empowered with necessary skills to access information, they have the freedom to access what they want. However, there are certain restrictions with regards to access information considered immoral. Otherwise, their personal privacy, secrecy and transparency are respected. (Respondent #9)

The above responses indicate that librarians are ensuring that they support access to health information by upholding the principle of privacy and confidentiality, thus, enhancing the achievement of SDG 3.

Open access and intellectual property

The following responses explain the way in which librarians are striving to ensure open access activities as a way of supporting access to information that will enhance the achievement of the SDGs:

In support of SDG13, we have created a simple database where researchers and famers' data is captured in our community. We have also created a Facebook page where we give climate change updates to our famers' community. That way we push information to the famers at the same time capturing researchers' data as open data ensures that future researchers have easy access to such data thereby enhancing research and development. (Respondent #13)

The library has developed an institutional repository, which houses and proffers open access to the university intellectual output. (Respondent #71)

Our library is in support of researchers who agree to deposit their research data sets in our database for other to access and reuse their data. Therefore, our initiative of creating a database for data sets supports SDG4 by ensuring quality education through provision of open data to research. (Respondent #14)

We provide trainings copyright laws and on open access databases and open access referencing softwares. This help s our users to be aware of the free data they can use for their research and how to duly acknowledge it in their research work. As a result, we somehow support SDG4. (Respondent #20)

Our library discourages photo copy of whole textbook in the library to protect intellectual property of the author. Hence ensuring the owner is able to make some income from their literary works. Accordingly, we promote SDG10 by ensuring balanced access to copyrighted sources and also reducing inequalities of denying the creators of their work to fully benefits from their work and denying total access to our users. (Respondent #35)

It is evident from the above excerpts that open access to data is key for the achievement of SDGs as it is a necessity for access to information to allow for decision-making. Thus, librarians are making an effort in the following ways: (1) establishing open-data repositories or databases; (2) giving social media updates on climate change; (3) providing awareness training on copyright and IPR issues; (4) providing training on open database usage; and (5) enforcing photocopying regulations to adhere to copyright laws.

Neutrality, personal integrity and professional skills

Similar to the above Code of Ethics, librarians concurred that Code of Ethics 5 also supports the achievement of SDGs to some extent. The following are their responses:

We seek to acquire balanced collections, apply fair service policies, avoid allowing personal convictions to hinder our resolve to carry out our professional duties diligently, combat corruption and seek the highest standards of professional excellence. (Respondent #40)

SDG 10: Our library ensures that there are reduced inequalities and ensure equal opportunity to information access in the library. For example; women are given the same time limit to use computers as men do. There is no form of gender discrimination. (Respondent #31)

Botho university library its collection, service and management are free from biased. Our collection development policy is an example of this; the collection development policy is demand driven, we acquired library resources based on customer request. The library acquisition process is very transparent and participatory. (Respondent #12)

The library is neutral in its quest to provide library resources as it ensures non censorship to materials and promotes personal integrity and professional support. (Respondent #15)

Neutrality and personal integrity are qualities each librarian must have. Thus, in supporting SDG10 (reduced inequalities) our library staff tries by all means to being neutral and fair in our service provision. We have programs for the disabled, that is visually impaired and those with hearing problems. Therefore, ensuring inclusive access to information and no one is left behind. (Respondent #20)

Our library maintains its neutrality in terms of political stance. Though as individual librarians we have the freedom to express our opinions, however we do not encourage political discussions in the workplace or condone expression of political stance by acquiring biased collection or exhibition that reflects the librarian's political interests. (Respondent #18)

Our library has introduced a culinary club where members of the club use library materials, such as, cooking books to choose the recipe for cooking and the club members contribute to buy the ingredients, cook and share amongst members. Most members in the group have a hearing impairment and by interacting, they get to exchange cooking and communication through sign language. This is in line with this particular SDG 10: reduced inequalities, as it calls for inclusiveness and our library has embraced and demonstrated this by involving people living with disability and also IFLA Code of Ethics 5: neutrality and personal integrity. (Respondent #16)

The above responses indicate that, in the quest for achieving the SDGs, librarians are adhering to the Code of Ethics 5 through the following activities: (1) acquiring collections that cover all knowledge and aspects of society; (2) ensuring equal opportunities to information access by not allowing gender discrimination; (3) ensuring no censorship; (4) ensuring inclusive access by implementing programmes to cater for people with disabilities; and (5) maintaining neutrality in a political stance.

Colleague and employer/employee relationship

The following excerpts indicate the way in which “colleague and employer/employee relationships” support the achievement of SDGs:

We are treated with fairness and respect. We support equality of gender in schedule of duties, remuneration and we also share professional experience, and contribute towards the work of our professional associations. (Respondent #16)

Democratic leadership style, listening to views of employees. Delegation of authority and ensuring accountability from bottom line to the top. (Respondent #16)

SDG 5: We tolerate every staff in our library and there is no discrimination of any sort. (Respondent #16)

We procure books on interpersonal relationships and host panel discussions on professional ethics and relations. (Respondent #16)

My library seeks for feedback through staff meetings, suggestion box and trade unions. (Respondent #16)

Collegiality is supported through peer reviews, seminars, webinars that promote employee relationships. (Respondent #16)

Librarians absolutely treat one another with respect and fairness. To this end they support equal payment for equal work between men and women. (Respondent #16)

The above responses reveal that librarians create an environment that is conducive to work, which is key for a healthy workforce that contributes to sustainable development. Librarians achieve this by (1) ensuring gender equality in duty allocation and remuneration, (2) ensuring a democratic leadership style, (3) not allowing for gender discrimination, (4) procuring books on interpersonal relationships, (5) hosting panel discussions about professional ethics, (6) supporting staff through trade unions, and (7) providing staff feedback platforms such as a suggestion box.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study analysed the role of the IFLA Code of Ethics in achieving the SDGs. The opinions of both the researchers and the respondents were in concurrence with the IFLA Code of Ethics 1, access to information that cuts across all 17 SDGs, as access to information is key to achieve any sustainable goal. In addition, the Code of Ethics 2 (responsibilities towards individuals and society) was also highly identified as being key in the achievement of SDGs. Generally, all the Codes of ethics were identified as having an impact on or an association with one or more of the SDGs. Hence, none of them should be undermined as context will determine the level of integration and impact on the outcome. Generally, the findings of this study correlate with the conceptual framework provided in Figure 1.

In conclusion, as shown in Figure 5, information access is the key to achieve all SDGs and the sustainable development of any nation. Hence, the IFLA Code of Ethics is relevant and vital to ensure that information is managed and disseminated effectively. In order to benefit from the IFLA Code of Ethics to its fullest potential for attainment of SDGs, librarians must improve infrastructure, and provide continuous training and monitoring of librarians and other library-related activities. Government support is necessary when implementing and adopting the relevant library and information policies. Also, library management should ensure that libraries are equipped with all the necessary resources such as ICT infrastructure, purpose-built libraries and up-to-date library collections. Governments should also consider implementing these resources in rural areas to bridge the digital divide that inhibits access to current information. These resources will create an environment that is conducive to production and dissemination of quality information and that is accessible to all communities. As a result, the SDGs will be accomplished by covering the three types of sustainable development, namely, economic, social and environmental development.

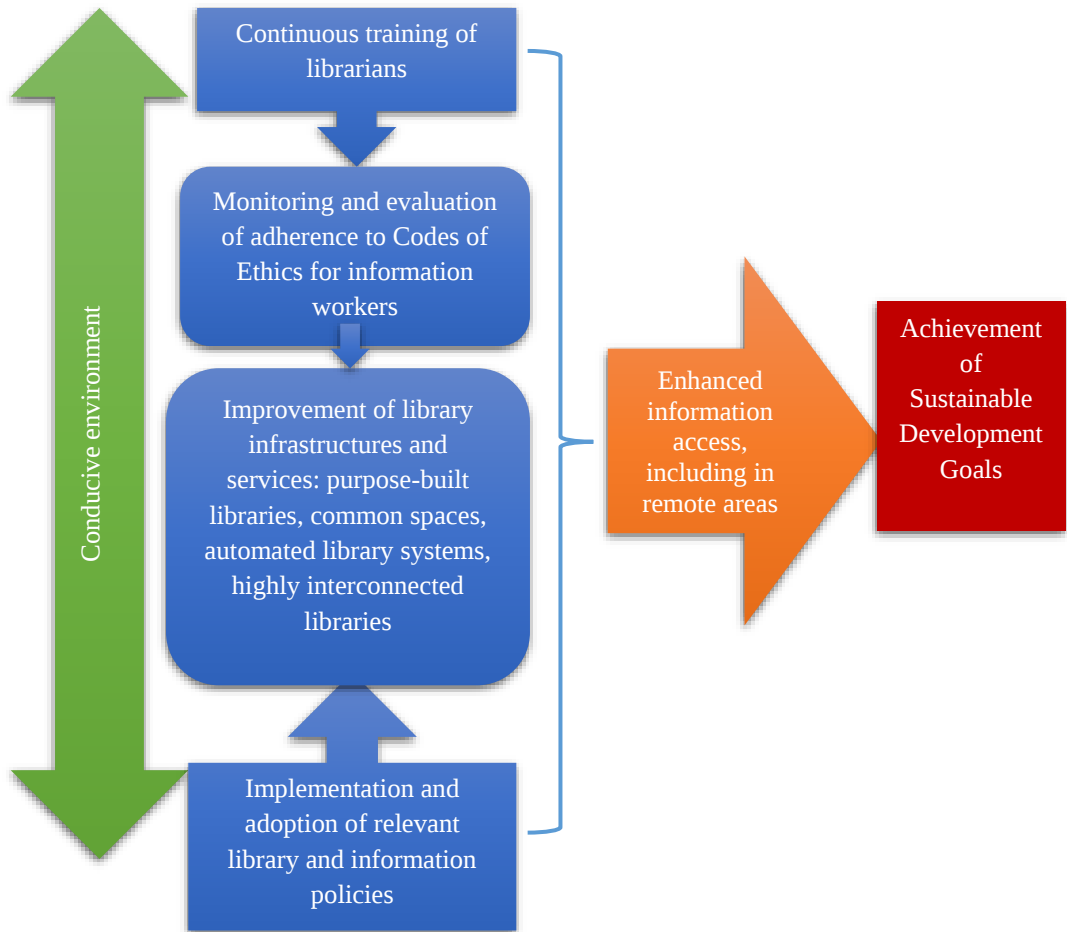


Figure 5: Recommendations for achieving SDGs

Access to information is key to achieving the SDGs, however, access is dependent on the availability of an ideal legislative environment, continuous training of librarians, efficient and effective means of collecting information, and the ability to organise such information for easy retrieval and accessibility. The IFLA Code of Ethics is bound to be an enabler in achieving the SDGs when the above-mentioned contributing factors are present.

Suggestion for Future Research

A correlation analysis needs to be conducted to provide a comprehensive statistical explanation of the relationship between the IFLA Code of Ethics and the attainment of the SDGs.

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