

## **A Brief History**

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The origins of APLESA date back to 1986. It arose as a need for an interest group for parliamentary librarians to be established to stand as an organ of the Standing Conference of Eastern and Southern Africa Librarians (SCECSAL). Members of the Interim Committee formed then were supposed to be those who were able to attend SCECSAL conferences and meet as distinct group in order to share experiences and compare notes on parliamentary aspects. It took a little bit of time for this noble idea to take off due to a variety of reasons among which was the inability of the people concerned to attend SCECSAL conferences as they were not funded by the parent institutions (parliaments).

In March 1990, Mr. Winford Gurure- a librarian to Parliament of Zimbabwe revived the idea and sent circulars inviting colleagues in the eastern and southern Africa region about it. The idea was given support in August 1990 when it was introduced at the Satellite meeting of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) section on Libraries and Research services for parliaments and at the main meetings of IFLA in Oslo and Stockholm respectively.

Hence, in 1990 and 1991 IFLA conferences, Mr. Gurure got a lot of encouragement to spearhead the formation of a regional organ of parliamentary librarians from members of other regional associations in Canada, Australia, Asia and the Pacific where similar association exist namely;

- Association of Parliamentary Librarians in Canada (APLIC)
- Association of Parliamentary Librarians in Australasia (APLA)
- Association of Parliamentary Librarians in Asia and the Pacific (APLAP)

This was done with a strong conviction that in every profession, practitioners do have tendencies to network and always be in contact with each other whether nationally, trans-border or internationally. It is against this background that the Eastern and southern Africa regional librarians took credence to this practice by a visit to some countries within the region including Kenya in 1991 by the late Jario G, then the Parliament Librarian of Namibia. In July 1991, a proposal for financial assistance was written to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) regional office in Nairobi to help in the feasibility study into a possibility of the formation of a network of Parliamentary librarians in the region. This study was hence carried out in March 1992 when Mr. Gurure visited the parliament of Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia where therefore it was agreed that;

- a) A steering committee be immediately established to plan the establishment of the network of parliamentary librarians in eastern and southern Africa. The committee members that were eventually put in place included:
  - R.R Mwale of Zambia- Chairman
  - P.A Ntomola of Tanzania Vice Chairman
  - W.H.C Gurure- Co-ordinator
  - B.B Liyawo of Malawi- Vice Co-ordinator.
- b) The name of the grouping be called the Association of Parliamentary Librarians in Eastern and Southern Africa (APLESA). Later, the name was changed to include the word Libraries instead of Librarians because there are other

professionals providing information services in Parliamentary libraries other than Librarians.

- c) Bilateral exchange of newspapers be arranged as soon as is practicable and that inaugural meeting of APLESA should be convened after all the necessary ground work had been completed and the funds secured for the meeting.

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Between October 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> 1994, Parliament of Zimbabwe hosted the APLESA inaugural meeting that was attended by the following eleven countries; Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This 3-day meeting managed to come up with a draft APLESA constitution. However, a number of challenges were identified. All the challenges identified were related to inadequate funding and poor resource allocation for parliamentary libraries, roles of librarians, qualifications of librarians and staffing levels in libraries of parliament. Hence members came up with a number of recommendations among which included a need to provide sufficient funds to enable parliamentary libraries to function effectively in terms of collection development and on capacity development activities like attachments, study visits and training, all of which were lacking in most of the parliamentary libraries then. It was also suggested that APLESA should maintain a regular newsletter.

During the inaugural meeting in Harare, elections were held to fill the vacant positions of the APLESA Executive. The following were elected;

- |                                      |                   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| • Ms Tembi Chalabase Mtine (Zambia)- | Chairperson       |
| • Mr. Ntoloma P.A (Tanzania)-        | Vice Chairperson  |
| • Mr. Liyawo B.B (Malawi)-           | Secretary         |
| • Ms Molebatsi (Botswana)-           | Vice Secretary    |
| • Mr. Songoro (Kenya)-               | Committee Member  |
| • Mr. Masawi (Zimbabwe)              | Committee Member. |

Members were strongly urged to implement what had been discussed and that was resolved at the inaugural meeting. Members were called to cooperate fully. These words were echoed by the Deputy Chairman of committees Ode G.W. Marange on behalf of Parliament of Zimbabwe.

Since its inauguration in 1994 in Harare, Zimbabwe, APLESA has had the following Chairperson namely;

- |                           |             |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| • Ms Tembi Mtine          | 1994/98     |
| • Ms Ellen Ndeshi Namhila | 1998/2000   |
| • Mr. Raliile Donovan T   | 2000/02     |
| • Ms. Butale Florence     | 2002/03     |
| • Ms Mwakio Grace         | 2003/09     |
| • Mr. Simon Engitu        | 2009/13     |
| • Ms Esther Kamau         | 2013/17     |
| • Mr. Geraldo Cambiete    | 2017 todote |

### **Current status of APLESA**

To date The APLESA membership comprises of 15 parliaments which are;

1. Angola
2. Botswana,

3. East African Legislative Assembly (EALA),
4. Kenya,
5. Malawi,
6. Mozambique.
7. Namibia,
8. Seychelles
9. South Africa,
10. Swaziland,
11. Uganda,
12. Zambia, and
13. Zimbabwe,

The following were once members but have gone into abeyance and are no longer active in APLESA activities. They are

1. Ethiopia,
2. Lesotho,
3. Rwanda
4. Tanzania,

We are doing our best to attract them back to APLESA

Other parliaments have shown interest to join APLESA and we are waiting to receive a communication from anyone of them indicating intentions to join us. We have interacted with the representatives of the;

1. Democratic Republic of Congo Parliament of the (DRC).
2. Pan African Parliament (PAP)

However, there are others that are eligible to join APLESA as members. They include;

1. Burundi
2. Djibouti,
3. Eritrea,
4. Madagascar and
5. Mauritius,
6. Reunion
7. Somalia
8. South Sudan

To become an APLESA member, the constitutional provisions state as follows;

- a) The membership of the Association shall comprise of APLESA Member Parliaments.
- b) Associate membership shall be open to other Parliaments.
- c) Observer status may be accorded to libraries of legislatures on the invitation of the APLESA Executive Committee.

The eligible member countries are those within the SADC<sup>1</sup> region, the East African Community and those in the Horn of Africa including among others; Djibouti, Eritrea. In addition, the islands of Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Reunion are also eligible.

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<sup>1</sup> SADC is abbreviation for Southern Africa Development Cooperation.

### **APLESA Organisational Structure**

APLESA’s organizational structure is set out in the APLESA Constitution which spells out the internal organizational structure of APLESA. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the supreme body of the APLESA structure.

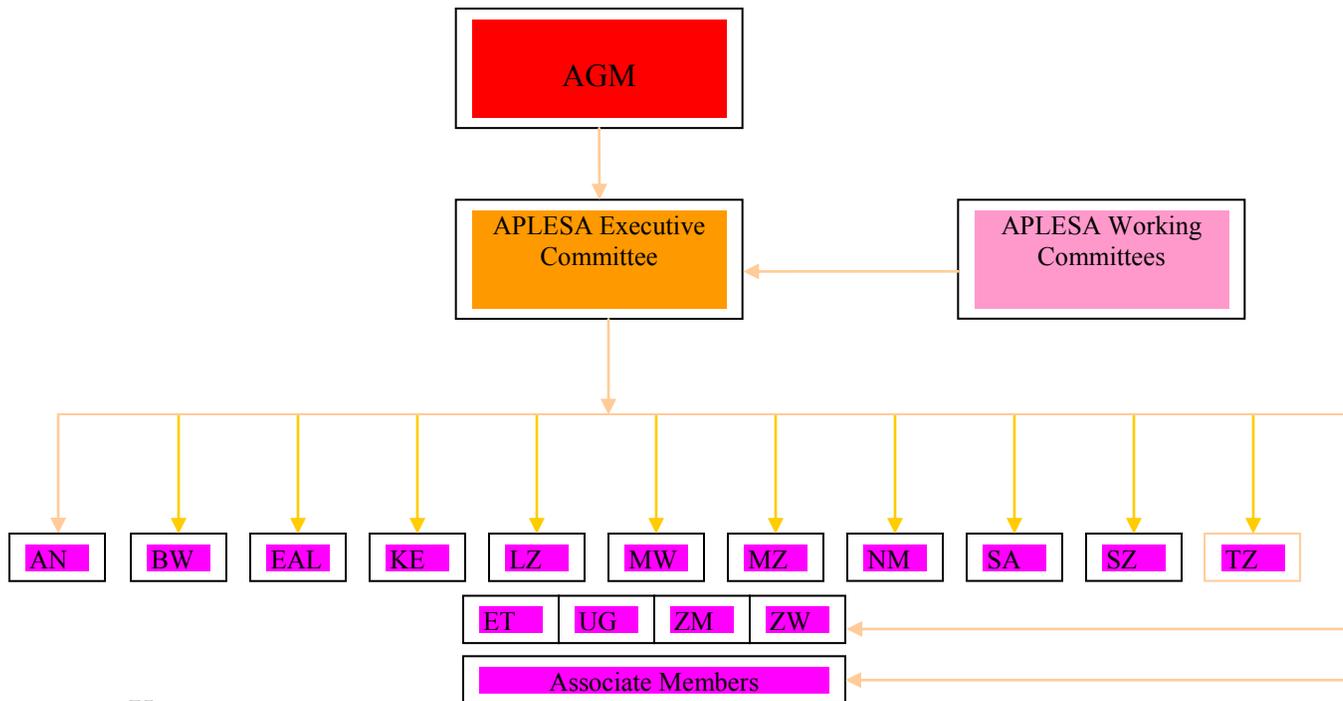
The APLESA Executive Committee is composed of 7 members including the Chairman, the Vice chairman, the Secretary the ex-officio member and three other members elected from various member parliaments in addition to the Treasurer who is appointed. This Committee is responsible for the strategic direction of the Association.

Working Committees are set up to assist the Executive Committee with specific assignments. They report to the Executive itself. There are can be various committee depending on the specific issue at hand that needs to ne addressed. At one time the following were Working committees in place namely;

- Constitution Committee
- Training and Capacity Development Committee
- Marketing and Communication Committee

The Marketing and Communication committee came up after a suggestion to improve the image of APLESA. Initially there were four working committees.

Diagrammatically, APLESA organisational structure can be represents as follows;



**Key**  
1 AN Angola

2	BW	Botswana	
3	EAL	East African Assembly	Legislative
4	KE	Kenya	
5	LS	Lesotho	
6	MW	Malawi	
7	MZ	Mozambique	
8	NM	Namibia	
9	SA	South Africa	
10	SZ	Swaziland	
11	TZ	Tanzania	
12	ET	Ethiopia	
13	UG	Uganda	
14	ZM	Zambia	
15	ZW	Zimbabwe	

The decisions of the Annual General Meetings are communicated to the Clerks of Parliament or the Secretary Generals of member parliaments by the President of APLESA. This is because some of the issues have financial connotations and hence require support from the member parliaments.

However, on issues of general concern to APLESA, and on issues of information sharing, members communicate directly to each other unless otherwise the information is treated confidential, member staff seek clarification and permission from the offices of the Secretary Generals so as to share that information.