



**Report of the 13th Annual Conference and Meeting
Of the
Association of Parliamentary Libraries for Eastern and Southern
Africa
(APLESA)**

**07 -11 May 2012
Swakopmund Hotel and Entertainment Centre
Swakopmund, Namibia**

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1. Introduction

The 13th Annual Conference of the Association of Parliamentary Libraries in Eastern and Southern Africa (APLESA) took place at Swakopmund Hotel and Entertainment Centre, Swakopmund, Namibia from 07th to 11th May 2012. The theme of the Conference was: "Innovation: The pathway linking information services to legislators"

APLESA was established to serve as a forum for professional networking and resource sharing amongst parliamentary Libraries in Eastern and Southern Africa Sub region. The main objectives of APLESA are to promote cooperation and resource sharing, communication and networking among member countries, and to establish an effective and efficient information delivery service for the benefit of APLESA stakeholders. The 13th APLESA Conference was officially opened by National Council Member of Parliament and Swakopmund Constituency Councilor, Honourable Jermina Shitaleni.

Delegates to the conference came from ten (10) member countries, namely: Angola, Botswana, East Africa Legislative Assembly (EALA), Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

However, the current APLESA membership stands at seventeen (17) countries namely: Angola, Botswana, East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Out of a membership of 17 countries only 10 managed to attend the 13th APLESA conference. There are a few countries which have not been active such as South Africa, Lesotho and Ethiopia. Participants raised concern with the inability of some countries to attend APLESA conferences and urged the Executive Committee to employ all possible means available to ensure that those countries come onboard or cite reasons for their absence. With the exception of South Africa and Ethiopia all the other countries sent apologies citing reasons for their absence. Participants felt that concerted efforts should be made to invite South Africa or have them

respond to invitation officially, as it was reported during the meeting that some South Africa officials have commented unofficially that attendance of APLESA conferences is not a priority for them currently. This non-attendance of member countries is a concern that was also noted in the keynote speech by Professor Peter Kajavivi.

2. 13th APLESA Conference Proceedings

2.1 Official Opening

The 13th APLESA Conference was officially opened by Honourable Germina Shitaleni, Member of Parliament of Namibia and Councilor for the Swakopmund Constituency in the Erongo Region. Honourable Shitaleni, also Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Gender, Youth and Information of Parliament of Namibia's second chamber, the National Council, described parliament libraries as "storehouses of knowledge" that play an important role in promoting knowledge in society. She felt that the theme of the conference "Innovation: the pathway linking information services to Legislators" was timely as advances in technology had affected the traditional function of libraries. According to Hon. Shitaleni, library and research services needed to change to serve the changing needs of their clients in light of new technological developments. Hon. Shitaleni maintained that access to reliable and timely information was essential to the proper functioning of democratic legislatures. She said parliamentarians needed information to monitor issues, develop policy solutions, predict consequences and influence government decision making. In overseeing the executive, parliamentarians needed information to monitor the success of programmes and to identify areas of weaknesses. In her view, there was growing recognition that parliamentary libraries and research services needed to adapt service models to reflect a shift from traditional function of information providers to a new role of facilitators and synthesizers of knowledge and information. She said with greater access comes the need for more filtering and fact-checking as some information on public websites were often not accurate. Thus, parliamentarians relied on library and research services to compile information in a reader friendly format.

2.2 Paper Presentations on theme and subthemes

2.2.1 Keynote Speech: Innovation: The Pathway Linking Information Services to Legislators

A number of papers were presented and notable among them was the Key note address presented by Professor Peter Katjavivi, a Member of Parliament. He said the theme of the conference "Innovation: The Pathway Linking Information Services to Legislators" is very timely and carefully crafted as it conveys a very strong message which reinforces the virtues of parliamentary libraries worldwide in this information age. Professor Katjavivi said that Parliamentary library and research services close the gap between research and policy thereby demonstrating the power of information. The information needs of policymakers have grown along with their responsibilities for formulating policy. Many organizations around the world have shifted their emphasis from print to electronic media via web sites, electronic mail, electronic mailing lists, and other means. Honourable Katjavivi highlighted the following key questions that needed to be considered:

- How useful is policy research in making policy decisions?
- Is research information getting to policymakers in a timely and useful manner?
- How can the needs of researchers and policymakers be better aligned?

He said the goal, therefore, was to ensure that research is rigorous, timely and relevant. To assist researchers in accomplishing this goal, he said it was important to identify the pathways and factors that could assist in communicating their policy findings to policymakers. These were identified as the following:

- Reading habits, usefulness of information and use of electronic information among MPs
- Trusted sources of information by information and research services
- Translating research findings into policy decisions

Professor Katjavivi further mentioned that many African Parliaments are faced with a number of challenges even as they are trying to "achieve the objective of building, upgrading and

transforming our parliamentary libraries to high degree of modernity..." and concluded by calling for a greater degree of cooperation among APL/ESA.

2.2.2 Presentations on subthemes

2.2.2.1 Subtheme 1: Library and Research services meeting the strategic objectives of Parliaments

The paper on "*Library and Research services meeting the strategic objectives of Parliaments*" was presented by Mr. Tsudao Gurirab, former Member of the National Assembly of Namibia. According to Mr Gurirab, libraries and related research services were critical support services for the work of parliamentarians for two reasons: firstly, parliamentarians were expected to legislate on the broadest possible range of issues such as childcare, education, health, national budget, the environment and bio-technology. In addition, parliamentarians debate and approve international treaties, national security legislation and war against enemies. Reflecting on own experience, Mr. Gurirab said parliamentarians worked on mountains of documents and bills relating to matters they have little or no expertise on. Unlike parliamentarians of the developed world, our parliamentarians had virtually no professional staff to assist with research. He noted that, after serving 10 years as MP, the Namibian Parliament library was not frequented as often as the cafeteria by the Members of Parliament.

He suggested the following ideas for Parliament Libraries which could be helpful during the discussion:

- Parliamentary libraries should provide summaries of bills tabled before any debate starts on the floor of the house;
- Parliamentary libraries may consider circulating lists of new books, journals and magazines to stimulate the interests of Members of Parliament;
- Parliamentary libraries should provide a complete list of materials stocked in the library via e-mail to MPs for them to know what knowledge sources they can draw on for their debates and work;
- Parliamentary libraries should provide information on other sources of information that are not necessarily available at libraries.

2.2.2.2 *Subtheme 2: Evidence-based policymaking in a parliamentary context*

The paper on “*Evidence-based policymaking in a parliamentary context*” by Prof Bill Lindeke, from the Institute of Public Policy Research covered empirical evidence focusing on the Mo Ibrahim Foundation index and the Afrobarometer. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation Index is Africa’s leading assessment of governance which provides a framework and tools for citizens, public authorities and partners to assess progress in governance. It compiles 86 indicators grouped into 4 sub-categories and four overarching categories namely safety and rule of law; participation and human rights; sustainable economic opportunity and human development to measure the effective delivery of public goods and services to African citizens.

Professor Lindeke also introduced the Afrobarometer. It is an independent, non-partisan research project that measures the social, political and economic atmosphere in more than a dozen African countries through surveys and the surveys are repeated on a regular cycle. The surveys aim to provide comparative series of national public attitude on Democracy, Markets and Civil Society. The participants learnt that the Afrobarometer does scientifically accurate and precise measurements of national representatives. The instruments ask a standard set of questions upon which countries can be compared and trends in public attitudes can be tracked over time. The results are shared with decision makers, policy advocates, civil educators, journalists, researchers, donors and investors as well as average Africans who wish to become more informed and active citizens.

The session concluded that the Afrobarometer is a useful instrument as a policy advisor, comparative assessment, trend analysis, legislative feedback and problem identification. The Afrobarometer usage was also demonstrated and the participants had an opportunity to experience the Afrobarometer firsthand through hands-on exercises.

In response to Professor Lindeke, Mr Ibrahim Inusah from the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS) shared the Ghanaian experience on evidence-based informed policy programme which they have been implementing in Ghana with the assistance of the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP). The programme

involved District Assembly Women, Journalists and Scientist; and included training on Information literacy training. Evidence-based informed policy and training on e-resources.

2.2.2.3 *Subtheme 3: The Future of Library Management*

In her presentation on “*The Future of Library Management*”, Ms Ellen Namhila, University Librarian from the University of Namibia, highlighted major issues emanating from Prof Katjavivi’s paper and identified the issues which the leadership and management of Parliamentary Libraries need to take speedy strategic direction on. These were:

- Anticipatory and strategic research that reduces pressure on parliamentary staff and ensure that parliamentarians have ready access to needed resources.
- Strengthen e-library services and rethink old-fashioned way of delivering library services through hardcopy print media.
- Collaboration and partnership to facilitate speedy sharing of knowledge, and skills to establish e-library services in our parliamentary libraries.

The participants were divided in five (5) groups to discuss and report back with recommendations on the following:

- Strategic frameworks
- Under-funding
- Reading culture
- E-resources
- Collaboration and Partnerships

2.3 **Training on Evidence-based electronic resources**

The International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) is a longtime partner of APLESA, funding training during APLESA conferences. The resource person for the training was Ibrahim Inusah from the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS). The presentation covered the definition of e-resource which is any resource that can be accessed via computer and this includes electronic journals and scholarly databases. The

training described the various types of e-resources and contrasted their features and functionalities. Access points for various e-resources were also described and identified. Furthermore, he outlined the advantages and disadvantages of e-resources and gave examples of various e-resources such as electronic journals, scholarly databases and information gateways and internet search engines such as Google. The training was practical and after a brief lecture on e-resources the participants who were provided with laptops were divided into groups according to the countries and given an exercise on how to access information using the internet.

To test their understanding each group was given a list of questions to answer from the website, for example how they navigated the site to arrive at the answer. The groups presented their experiences on navigating the following websites. Eldis Community, ODI (Overseas Development Institute) and UNdata. Additionally, Professor Bill Lindeke had an opportunity to practically demonstrate how to do online data analysis on the Afrobarometer.

The training was very practical and educational as the participants had the opportunity to browse the various e-resources, discovering a wealth of evidence-based resources they can provide to Members of Parliament.

3. Excursion

At the end of the three day conference, the delegates had an opportunity to visit the beautiful sceneries of the city of Swakopmund and Walvis Bay. They were taken on a 2 hour boat ride of the Atlantic Ocean where they were able to feed the seals and see the oyster farming at Walvis Bay. This was a very exciting moment for delegates to share the ride with a seal that joined the team and at some point even escorted the boat from the back. Delegates were also able to see birds like the seagulls and pelicans, and feed them while taking pictures for the posterity. From the Atlantic Ocean in Walvis Bay delegates visited the famous Dune 7 where they attempted to climb and conquer the height. Many of them did not manage to make it to the peak of Dune 7 as the sand was already blazing hot and at the same time some of them did not come prepared for the challenge that awaited them. However, there were a few who managed to make it to the top of the mountain to the cheer of the spectator delegates waiting for them at the foot. After the

experience with the Dune 7 the delegates were taken to the DRC informal settlement to experience the other side of Namibian community of the less fortunate. DRC informal settlement was established ten years ago as an alternative place to erect temporary structures, when households were left homeless as a result of the single quarters upgrading in Mondesa. The excursion was extremely revitalizing after three days of engaging conference activities.

4. 13th APLESA Annual General Meeting (AGM)

4.1 Agenda

- i. Communication from the APLESA President
- ii. Treasurer's Report
- iii. Presentation of the 12th APLESA report and Matters arising
- iv. Amendment of the APLESA Constitution
- v. Elections
- vi. AOB
- vii. Official closing of the Conference

The president called the house to order shortly after 9.00 and asked for the amendment of the Agenda. The Agenda was agreed upon and adopted as it was. Before the Annual General Meeting (AGM) began the delegate from Zimbabwe was given an opportunity to present his country report. The AGM started with a word of prayer from delegate from Tanzania Rehema Kazimoto in accordance with Muslim religion. Members were called to fully participate in the discussions and come up with ideas to run the Association.

4.2 Communication from the APLESA President

The President of APLESA, Mr Simon Engitu, informed the meeting that according to the constitution the next general election will be next year, 2013. He called upon those who wish to be in the APLESA leadership to show interest by giving ideas on how the Association should be managed via email. He reiterated that communication within APLESA members will make it easier to know members interested in leadership instead of vying for the vote the last minute

While very little is known about the prospective candidate. He encouraged members to be ambitious and not to fear to indicate interest in APLESA leadership. He also mentioned the importance of reorganizing and rearranging the present Working Committees. The President said Working Committees are supposed to be helping with the implementation of the Strategic Plan but without vibrant Working Committees APLESA will not be able to proceed very well. The President invited the Secretary General to read the APLESA report 2011.

4.3 Tabling of the 12th APLESA Conference 2011 Report

The Secretary General of APLESA, Mr. Fanwell Banda, presented the report on the 12th APLESA Conference and Meeting 2011, which took place in Maputo, Mozambique.

4.3.1 Annual Report 2012

In tabling the annual report 2012, the President started by thanking God for the opportunity and thanked the delegates for the support, encouragement and advice. He thanked the clerk and staff of Mozambique parliament for hosting a successful Conference in 2011 at Joachim Chissano Conference Centre. He further said that as member countries, members should strive to establish an association of excellence, advancing inter-parliamentary corporation within Eastern and Southern Africa in order to enable parliaments through networking and information sharing and making informed decisions. He thanked the delegates for support and encouragement he received when he needed it most. He cited communication challenges as an enduring challenge and encouraged members to respond to the enquiries forwarded to them through email or otherwise. He said the momentum should continue even in the midst of challenges. The President extended his condolences on behalf of APLESA members to the people of Malawi for the loss of their president who passed away during Easter time and asked members to stand for a moment of silence in honour of the departed president.

He further thanked INASP for the assistance, for the various training programs they have funded over the years. He also informed members that INASP has a program to fund some of their activities.

In addition, the president reported that a number of APLESA members who attended IFLA conference in Puerto Rico participated in a meeting organized for the members of African Parliamentary Knowledge Network (APKN) by the IFLA Section for Library and Research where they were given opportunity to discuss APKN activities. It was noted that most African parliaments face challenges in regard to skills and IT infrastructure. At that platform it was also resolved that there was a need for teamwork on issues facing African parliaments which should be stepped up and it was resolved that African countries be assisted to build capacity. In this regard, the President said a pilot project to assist African parliamentary libraries was suggested in which few countries were to kick start the project. In effect consultation were agreed to commence with the APKN Secretariat.

The president said that APLESA has overcome challenges experienced during 2003 – 2009 when payment of membership fees and implementing of constitution started. The president reminisced how he had to work hard to keep APLESA running and since then it has improved even more with the new Executive Committee. Members were asked to start identifying possible leaders to hold the office in the next election for the new APLESA Executive Committee, members who can ensure the Association's sustainability.

4.3.2 Report on the 2011/2012 tasks

Resolutions adopted during APLESA 2011 were upheld from those agreed on in 2010 in Blantyre Malawi with few amendments:

- Capacity building
- Networking
- Support for research and information services
- Management for parliamentary websites
- And harmonization of information departments

Others were

- APLESA flags;
- Payment of honorarium;
- Certificates of acknowledgements to be made:

- Capacity programs attachments for the members to be written;
- IFLA subscription; and
- Summaries for country reports should be posted on the APLESA website.

The President reported that the overall performance 2011/2012 for the tasks has not been very impressive mostly arising from challenges mentioned above.

Training and Capacity Committee had been challenged to design programmes for which APLESA could partner with other funding organizations. Suggestions for the program design included open access to knowledge, access to information, freedom of information, information literacy and management of legislative records. Training by INASP is the only training that has been had this year. Other issues mentioned above needed to be captured by the respective country reports such as harmonization of library and information services. The President said the implementation of the resolutions agreed upon for 2011/2012 has started. He expressed his wish that when his term expires in 2012/2013 he leaves a legacy where expenditures should be based on planned activities.

Some of the resolutions that have been implemented include:

- Purchasing of the APLESA flag.
- Designing certificates for paid up members and the host country for the successful conference.
- Payment of honorarium (Motive of payment is to thank those presenting papers and to motivate them for their intellectual property)

The President expressed his hope that the host country will commence the activities in a way of implementing the proposals by paying the honorarium like it happened in 2009 in Malawi. He advised those willing to host APLESA to make appeals to any organization that has interest in the work of parliaments on funding presentation of papers among others.

Members were urged to send information for the website to the office of the Secretary General to coordinate these activities. He said absenteeism of members from APLESA activities is still a concern and said members should continue luring dormant members back to the Association.

4.4 Treasurer's Report

In tabling his report, the Treasurer, Mr Innocent Rugambwa, explained how the account was opened. He said the a bank account was opened by the name of APLESA with Barclays bank of Uganda in 2009 and this was in accordance with the fulfillment of AGM of APLESA that convened in Kampala on 29 May 2009. The account was opened in local currency as it was going to be expensive to manage foreign account for a young association. The Treasurer expressed his happiness in reporting that member parliaments deposited funds in the account after sending emails and subsequent remainders as indicated in the bank statement attached, apart from a few cases who had not complied. The treasurer registered a few other complaints as far as honoring the dues are concerned.

4.4.1 Expenses incurred since opening APLESA account

The treasurer further explained that after inviting tenders for the website design in accordance with the resolution reached at the 11th AGM that APLESA website should be restored. Dannsites Uganda Limited was awarded the tender on the basis of experience. UShs.2,870,000 was withdrawn and paid to Dannsites for website design, development and hosting, the domain name was set up, email facility running and the website is fully operational. Since it is an annual exercise, in 2011 and 2012 the same company was paid an amount of UShs902,700 and UShs.1,138,700 respectively as annual renewal for the site. The Treasurer also reported that as unanimously agreed in 2011 APLESA conference to have an APLESA flag, two flags were designed at a cost of US\$346. He urged member parliaments to contribute toward contents of the APLESA website as the onus is theirs ours to update it with information as to what is happening in their library and research services. The opening balance of the APLESA account showed the status of the account as of 3 May 2012 and closing balance 18,786,389 which is approximately US\$7,513. This amount excluded what had been collected on site in Namibia

4.4.2 Membership and Subscription Payment

The treasurer expressed concern over membership and subscription as few members if any are paying on time. In addition he asked members to indicate during Telegraphic Transfer (TT) which parliament the money is coming from otherwise he has been left guessing fruitlessly as to

where the funds are coming from as the receiving bank does not get full particulars of which parliament sent the money. The member parliaments should make a follow-up with the treasurer to alert him that funds have been transferred to the APLESA account. The treasurer mentioned the countries that have paid their 2011 subscription as Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, and Namibia. The case of Zimbabwe who has not been paying since 2009 was decided that they will start afresh with this year's APLESA and receive amnesty for what was owed previously.

The president added that the constitution was amended in Kampala 2002 with the clause that explained financing of APLESA through three (3) categories of fund raising strategies. These were membership, subscriptions and conference registration. The president cleared the air on the issue of Zimbabwe by saying they should start afresh from the date of the APLESA Namibia onwards without any prejudice and it was going to be remembered and appreciated that APLESA started in Zimbabwe in 1994 to the date of the just concluded conference

4.5 Bidding for APLESA hosting

The Secretary General read through the bidding by Member parliaments from 2012 to 2016. He expressed his delight to report that the APLESA President had received acknowledgement from Swaziland who said that they were going to host APLESA 2013 in Mbabane and asked the Chairperson to read the correspondence just received from Swaziland on their position to host next year's APLESA conference. There was a bit of a concern as Swaziland was not yet paid up but the President dismissed that fear saying since they are ready and it take lots of money to host, there is no reason why APLESA should not accept the offer. If however there were others among the three willing to host at the same time with Swaziland, then it can be decided which country the conference will be hosted in but the constitution is silent on the matter of hosting condition. It was suggested that there be an amendment to address the issue of hosting conditions. It was also agreed that Swaziland be reminded to pay their dues in the ensuing months and before APLESA 2013.

The following countries pledged to host APLESA the coming years as follows:

2014 - Zambia ✓ May 2014

April? Suggestion

2015 - Kenya

2016 - Botswana

2017 - EALA / Botswana

Namibia

4.6 Resolutions of the 13th APLESA Conference

It was resolved that:

1. **Strategic Frameworks:** All Parliamentary Library and Research Services (PLRS) should formulate strategic frameworks to feed into the institutional strategic frameworks to promote innovation and growth
2. **Budgeting:** Parliamentary Library and Research Services should be supported by an adequate budget
3. **Reading Culture:** Parliamentary Library and Research Services should introduce activities aimed at promoting reading and information literacy among Members of Parliament
4. **E-resources:** Realizing the high cost of accessing e-resources, Parliamentary Library and Research Services should consider partnerships through consortia to access e-resources
5. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Parliamentary Library and Research Services should consider collaboration and partnerships with development partners to foster efficient use of resources through training, attachments and outreach.

4.7 Amendment of the APLESA Constitution

The chairperson of the constitution working Committee was asked whether he has received any amendment to the constitution to which he replied in the negative. Members willing to send amendments were advised to start thinking of what to submit starting now so as to reach the Secretary General seven (7) days before the next AGM as per the Constitution.

4.8 Planned pilot activities for 2012/2013 from the Strategic Plan

The President tabled the 2012- 2017 Strategic Plan. The planned pilot activities for 2012/2013 are as follows:

- Operationalize working committees – skilled in implementing strategic plan Secretary General will assign tasks to the Working Committees;
- Draw up work plan for each Working Committee (continuous exchange of ideas and information between members and various Working Committees throughout the process of finalizing work plan. Each committee will inform the Executive Committee of the timeframe for the activities.);
- Produce policy guidelines and develop proposals for strengthening APLESA;
- Monitoring and evaluation of activities. Coordination will be done at the APLESA secretariat with Secretary General taking the lead to send reminders and feedback.

The President ended by inviting members to a discussion.

4.9 AOB

The delegate from Tanzania suggested that there be a Swahili interpreter just like there is for Portuguese and French for which the President said for the sake of cutting costs, if a delegate can speak two languages it will not be necessary to engage an interpreter.

Question of change of name APLESA was referred to constitutional amendment for discussion and consideration.

There being no other business to be transacted in the AGM, the meeting was adjourned to May 2013. The President handed over to the National Council of Namibia Deputy Director for Research and Information, Mr. Fanuel Katshenye, to close the meeting officially on behalf of the secretary to the National Council of the Parliament of Namibia.

5. Official Closing

The conference was officially closed by Mr. Fanuel Katshenye, Deputy Director for Research and Information at the National Council of the Parliament of Namibia on behalf of the Secretary, Ms P Shmutwiken. He appreciated the good spirit in which the Conference took place with useful debates and conclusions. He urged members to follow up on the resolutions arrived at and give feedback in the next meeting. He said the member parliaments hold the key to success or failure of APLESA and emphasized member countries to stick to the resolution as they were adopted. He thanked the facilitators and the staff for a job well done.

6. Conclusion

The Executive Committee and the membership of APLESA commended the Parliament of Namibia, the Speaker and the Secretary of the National Assembly for their hospitality extended to the delegates for hosting the 13th APLESA Conference and Meeting successfully.