SUMMARY OF PAPERS PRESENTED DURING THE 20TH CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIES OF EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (APLESA) HELD AT ELEPHANT HILLS, VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE FROM 27 TO 31 MAY 2023

1.0   Pre-conference Training

Pre-conference training was held on Saturday 26th May 2023, where a number of topics were shared that addressed the participants' needs. Facilitators, ranging from scholars from universities and senior librarians from universities and various parliaments were the main trainers they included Prof Ngulube, Dr N Pasipamire, Dr Isaiah Munyoro, Ms Mercilyne Chikomo, Mr Ndhlovu, Mr L. Chikwanha, made their presentation on pertinent topics. The presentations were as follows;

a) On the paper ***Post Academic Life and Production of Quality Research,*** and from what he termed 'VUCA-volatility, uncertainty, complex, and ambiguity' Prof Ngulube emphasized the need for research based on ethics to generate knowledge and transform the world and peoples' livelihoods. He stressed the need to use research to disrupt and be disrupted in order to navigate through the complexities and reach the desired future. The professor also emphasized the importance of aligning research with the Sustainable Development Goals and incorporating innovation into the research process. He emphasized the value of building strategic relationships, embracing diverse perspectives, and maintaining flexibility in research. Additionally, he discussed the essentials of effective academic writing, including the importance of a strong title, a comprehensive abstract, an engaging introduction, a thorough discussion of findings, a conclusive conclusion, and the significance of the review process and journal selection.

b) Dr Munyoro presented a paper on: ***Role of Library in Societies: Theme Parliament Library and Research Services - An interface for knowledge driven macro-economic growth*** in which reference was made to the fact that the 20th APLESA Conference, Zimbabwe edition, made history as the first to implement the APLESA concept of social responsibility (CSR) targeting local disadvantages communities. In this case Chinotimba Old People's Home and Rose of Charity Children's Home were identified as the beneficiaries of the CSR. With regards to the roles of library in society, the following were noted, among others:

(i)   That library have a role to provide access to information because information is fundamental to human rights that can break cycle of poverty and support sustainable development;

(ii)   Libraries to act as intermediary to Development partners by providing access to information for legislators etc.;

(iii)   Libraries to Support all SDGs by promoting universal literacy, advance digital inclusion through access to ICTs and serving as at the heart of the research and academic community.

2.0   Conference presentations

During the Conference, the following papers were presented.

c) Dr. N. PASIPAMIRE presented on**: The role of ICTs in the provision of information for sustainable development in informal settlements in Zimbabwe.** In his presentation, focus was on achieving sustainable development in the informal settlements through the use of ICTs, using Hopley Informal Settlement in Zimbabwe as a case study.

The aim of the study was to address the fact that information plays a crucial role in the development of informal settlements, and without it, sustainable development cannot be achieved. With access to timely and relevant information, communities can sustain the ecology of their land and create a liveable environment. However, there were concerns about unequal access, lack of proper infrastructure and slow adoption of ICTs in these areas. With UNDP having recognized the importance of mainstreaming ICTs in sustainable development, LIS professionals were called upon to provide access to information to disadvantaged areas of the country, which fulfills SDG Goal 16 on Access to Information. The study used the theoretical framework of Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) introduced by Everett Rogers (1983). The spread of ICTs has the potential to accelerate human progress and sustainable development. The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

   o   Identify the technologies that have been adopted in informal settlements such as Hopley for sustainable development;

   o   Establish how the ICTs facilitate access to information sustainable development at Hopley informal settlement;

- o Determine the ICTs related challenges faced by Hopley informal settlers;
- o Explore how information practitioners can foster information accessibility/provision through ICTs.

The study adopted a qualitative approach and focuses on a single case study. A qualitative methodology enabled the participants to make meanings of their own realities and come to appreciate their own practice. The reason for choosing a qualitative research methodology was that it is exploratory and helps to explain the 'how', 'what' and 'why' of a particular social phenomenon. The study used interviews and observations primary methods of data collection.

The findings revealed that mobile devices and Wi-Fi technologies are the most commonly adopted ICTs for accessing and sharing information in Hopely Informal Settlements. Social media, particularly WhatsApp, played a significant role in disseminating information. However, there was an over-reliance on social media platforms, which sometimes spread fake news. Most people in the community were in the low-income bracket, limiting their frequent use of smartphones due to internet cost, phone loss, theft, and safety concerns. Also, low education levels and poor literacy levels made it challenging for people to engage with new technologies. LIS professionals should advocate for establishing information centers to provide ICT infrastructure in informal settlements like Hopley. They should also advocate for digital citizenship and run ICT literacy training programs to help people develop the capacity to effectively use new ICTs.

The presentation concluded that ICT infrastructure provision should be considered an essential service delivered to informal settlements, as residents are starved of relevant information and other important requirements such as capital and collateral.

d) The paper by Mr. L. Chikwanha on *E-Resources in Parliamentary Libraries: Issues and Best Practices* defined E-Resources as materials that require computer access. Mr. L. Chikwanha further explained that they refer to digital information and materials accessed and utilized through various devices such as computers, smartphones, tablets and e-readers. He further expressed that libraries are important social institutions that help people to access information resources. Mr. Chikwanha further elaborated that there is need for parliamentary libraries to contain factual and current information in order for Members of

Parliament to make well-informed deliberations. He gave the characteristics of E-Resource as the ability to continually deliver instant relevant and factual information which can be easily copied, stored and disseminated. He further stated that Parliamentary libraries should use e-resources in order to exploit the massive power that they have. Mr. Chikwanha elaborated that most of the disadvantages of e-resources are technical. He further supplied the e-resources life cycle as to; acquire, provide access, administer, support, evaluate and monitor. Mr. Chikwanha also stated that acquisition of e-resources is guided by the user needs of the parliamentary library and should be in sync with its collection development policy. He further enunciated that technical support is very important for both the librarians and the end users when using e-resources. He further articulated that evaluation is important for continuity. During plenary reference was made to the need for member parliaments to form national sight licensing initiatives where everyone contributes and that parliaments must have repositories which are accessible remotely. Challenges noted during deliberations included the fact that some users have Information Technology phobia and that e-resources are not cheap.

In conclusion, the paper presentation indicated that Parliamentary Libraries play a very critical role in providing information resources that support decision making in the August House and that in addition to print resources, these parliament libraries should provide access to electronic resources as these can assist greatly in satisfying the information needs of their clients. It also noted that e-resources have advantages and disadvantages which need to be considered when adopting them and that the e-resources cycle informs management issues of e-resources like acquisition, administration, support, cancellation and renewals which parliamentary librarians need to be fully cognizant of when they implement e-resources projects in their libraries.

A lively interaction ensued after the paper presentation and some of the issues noted included the following:

- That there is little say in the selection of databases included in e-resources that library consortia in most APLESA member countries subscribed to. These were biased towards higher education.

- How investing in solar energy can mitigate power challenges cause by load shedding
- Use of MyLOFT in parliamentary libraries
- The importance of licensing and negotiation in acquiring e-resources
- The importance of vendor support in training users in the using e-resources

e) The paper presentation on *Instituting Library Repositories: A Case of D-Space*, by Mr. Ndhlovu positioned parliamentary library as institutional repositories that can be used to store, index, provide access to legislative resources as well as disseminate that information. The paper further noted that several stakeholders should benefit from a parliamentary repository such as the legislators, government agencies, donors, researchers and the general public. Mr. Ndhlovu in his paper further explained that the content of a parliamentary repository can include Bills, Acts of Parliament, Speeches, debates, Committee Reports, unpublished evidence, minutes, undeveloped video files and so on.

Pertaining D-Space, Mr. Ndhlovu explained that it was an open repository platform which has been in existence for over 20 years and is used by libraries. Its main focus was pointed out to be that of making research publications and other documents shareable. For APLESA, it was further noted, D-Space would enable the national Parliaments to network and share information. In essence it was said that d-space would support co-operation between the different legislative libraries. Zambia being one of the few countries in APLESA that makes use of D-Space and it was noted that there was need for national parliaments to come up with a policy on D-Space, to enable Parliament Libraries to effectively coordinate D-Space with other departments within Parliament.

Detailed steps of setting up a repository ranged from lobbying for senior management support to marketing and promoting such repositories. The crescendo of the presentation was reached when live preinstalled and customized "Legislative Repository of Zimbabwe" Dspace was demonstrated.

f) The paper on **the APLESA Communication Strategy** was presented. In this paper, Dr. Isaiah Munyoro gave an outline of what a communication strategy covers in general followed by a summary of the draft APLESA communication strategy. The presentation addressed what information APLESA should communicate, how to communicate, the targeted audience and channels to be used to ensure effective information delivery. Further, the presenter highlighted that the strategy will form the bedrock towards forging active partnerships with a wide range of national and international development actors. It will place specific emphasis on building a sustainable relationship with the media, proactively identify key stakeholders and address their information needs. To effectively project a positive image and position of the association as a reliable and trusted partner of choice, it needs to communicate its activities, concrete progress and achievements to its partners internally and externally.

A participatory approach was used to involve participants' input into the communication strategy. Participants were divided into groups for activities that included analysis of the draft communication strategy.

3.0   Parliamentary Country Reports.

The first day of the conference was dedicated to the presentation of the Parliamentary Country Reports. The parliaments and county assemblies that were represented in the conference included Zamiba, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Namibia, Mozambique, , Malawi, Kenya, eSwatini. Botswana, and Angola

The regional assemblies was represented by the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA).

The county assemblies of Kenya were represented by Migori County Assembly and Kericho County Assembly

Common policy issues were covered in these reports including the need for enhanced use of research evidence, development of e-parliament and or e-libraries, and use of software systems, amongst them were; Ndodza, KOHA, MALICO and FIASCO, as well as parliament websites challenges including those experienced during COVID 19 lockdown period. Library services accessibility to people living with disabilities, e-resources, among other administrative issues, were also noted as areas that require further improvement in most members countries.

4.0   Conference Opening Ceremonies

The Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hon. T Gezi, the Clerk of Parliament of Zimbabwe, Mr K.M. Chokuda, the APLESA President, Madam Chama Mpundu Mfula, officiated during the official opening ceremony. In her address, the APLESA President, Madam Chama Mpundu Mfula from Zambia, welcomed all the delegates to the 20th Annual APLESA Conference, Zimbabwe Edition, and stressed the importance of well stocked libraries in information delivery to aid parliamentarians in their legislative, representative and oversight roles.

The Clerk to Parliament Mr Chokuda, expressed gratitude that Parliament of Zimbabwe had been given the opportunity to host 20th APLESA conference. He put emphasis on the centrality of data, information, libraries, and ICT and research departments, to parliament performance in the information age.

The Deputy Speaker, Hon. T Gezi, recommended increased use of research evidence, improved e-parliament facilities, capacity building of legislators and staff, provisions of adequate ICT infrastructure, and full adoption of digital technology by parliaments. This, she noted, will result in improved participation of citizens in parliament business, openness, transparency, and accountability.

5.0   Election of officials

Elections conducted put in place new APLESA Executive Committee comprising of the President, Vice President, Secretary General, and committee members as reflected below. The position of Treasurer is not elective position but a appointed. The new Executive Committee include:

a) President   Dr. Isaiah Munyoro (Zimbabwe)
b) Vice President   Mr. Innocent Rugambwa (Uganda)
c) Secretary General   Mr. Engitu Simon Joseph (Uganda)
d) Committee Members; Ms Charungwa Moreblessing (Zimbabwe)
                            Mr. Nkambule Wilson (eSwatini)
                            Ms Irene Kiruri (Kenya)
e) Treasurer   Mr. Bayunga Andrew (Uganda)

The constitution 2019 Article 8(7) allow co-option of ex-officio members. In this case the following are the ex-officio members namely: (i) Ms Chama Mpundu Mfula of the Parliament of Zambia

6.0   Remarks by the Incoming President

The incoming President, Dr Munyoro Isaiah expressed gratitude to the delegates for the support rendered and pledged his commitment to drive the implementation of APLESA strategic plan during his term of office.

7.0   Closing remarks

The conference was closed by Mrs C Mafoko, Chief Director Information Services Directorate of Parliament of Zimbabwe. In her remarks, she drew the attention of delegates to the challenges facing parliament budgets in the context of post COVID 19 recovery, and advised on the need to prioritize funding of libraries, ICT and research departments to anchor parliament mandate performance.