

LIBRARY SERVICES DELIVERY IN AFRICA DURING & AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC: CALL TO ACTION & GUIDE FOR AFRICAN LIBRARIES & LIBRARIANS

ADOPT, ADAPT AND ENGAGE!

A call to action for African libraries
to re-invent library services delivery
in Africa, during and after the
global pandemic

#LibrariesAreReady



Introduction: Access to information for Africa's sustainable development

Library Aid Africa is a not-for-profit organization that focuses on access to information through functional libraries in schools and communities. We harness advocacy and also support for the creation of libraries in schools and communities – leveraging digital technology and citizen engagement approaches to drive projects and policy reforms for libraries in 10 African countries.

At Library Aid Africa we believe that access to information is essential to develop an informed literate citizen. It does this by equipping the mind of the citizenry with adequate information and knowledge that will enable them to contribute meaningfully to the socioeconomic development of the society around them.

We do this by engaging in innovative programmatic activities, multi stakeholder partnerships and collaborations, advocacy, and projects targeted at improving library services delivery

Our Strategy:



Libraries' roles are changing globally, and innovative approaches and re-inventing library services to meet the needs of their immediate community is imperative. To this end, at Library Aid Africa, our strategy focuses on equitable access to information for all through library developmental projects (physical and e-library), thereby providing support for the creation of libraries in schools and communities, as well as advocacy and capacity development programs. These over the years have positioned us strategically at the forefront of library support in Africa.

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How to use the Call to Action

Mobilize your in-country library stakeholders to use the content to guide your activities and engagement as you prepare for the new normal, post-COVID-19.

Organize in-country training and awareness-raising for libraries and librarians in your country
Adapt and integrate the actions based on your country's demographics.

Library Aid Africa wishes to thank the following individuals for their expertise and assistance in the course of developing this call to Action:

Professor (Mrs) Aniebiet I. Ntui, Adedeji Ayansewa, Elizabeth Matheus, Stephen Wyber, Sarah Negumbo, and Victor Ejechi.

This is a powerful and relevant call, distilling the lessons learned from across the continent into three key areas for action. It will, I hope, not only provide energy and structure for African libraries in their planning for a post-COVID world, but also serve as a reference and inspiration for others. Libraries – with the right infrastructure, support for staff, and ambition – can help Africa and the world build back better.

Stephen Wyber
Manager, Policy and Advocacy,
International Federation of Library
Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

The Call to Action is a powerful tool, ensuring that the African libraries and the Librarians are engaged, they are taking charge of their goals, they are passionate in delivering their delegated tasks efficiently, with the aim to enrich the continent. It is an opportunity that warrants the voices of the Librarians to be heard, and most importantly an opportunity for the Librarians to demonstrate their relevancy to the world, by ensuring that the library-users are served systematically. The Librarians should advocate to make use of all modes of communications, to provide information at various platforms that are convenient to the users. .

Ms. Sarah Iyaloo Negumbo,
Director, Namibia Library & Archives Service

The call to action should be used by African libraries and librarians because data is fast becoming a resource of the elite. We have individual autonomy and a mandate towards democratizing data and making it accessible to everyone, regardless of the form or platform. A lot of young Africans have been collectively marginalized from accessing research and informative data and it's up to us to bridge the gap sooner than later

Sally Boyani
BBC Journalist and Policy Candidate

The African framework is unique. Lessons learnt in other countries are extremely valuable.

Professor Aniebiet I. Ntui

This tool provides a step by step guide for African Libraries and Librarians as they prepare to build back better. It highlights how Libraries and Librarians in Africa communities can re-invent their approaches, facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement through collaboration and partnerships that will drive progress towards providing equitable access to information for all. #LibrariesAreReady

Damilare Oyedele
Co-Founder and Chief Executive
Library Aid Africa

A Call to Action: Adopt, adapt and engage! A call to action for African libraries to re-invent library services delivery in Africa, during and after the global pandemic.

In June 2020, Library Aid Africa commenced the Virtual Consultation on Post COVID – 19 Library Services Delivery in Africa with the view to connect librarians to learn and share experience and best practices on how to address concerns and emerging issues being faced by libraries, librarians and library users, due to the global pandemic.

The virtual consultation focused on 3 major objectives:

To educate librarians on post COVID-19 measures for library and information services delivery.

To collate data and experience sharing about post COVID-19 challenges and possible solutions.

To develop and publish a Call to Action that will serve as a guide for libraries and librarians in Africa as they prepare for the new normal.

With growing concerns on how libraries in African countries can better serve their communities, the standard of library

services in Africa seems to have moved from bad to worse because of the COVID-19 which caused closure of physical library spaces, as the majority of African libraries cannot operate remotely.

However, findings from the virtual consultation have shown that library professionals have various roles to play to re-invent library services and reach more users during and after the global pandemic. These have been categorised into 3 strategic directions; library Leadership roles, going “Digital”, and ensuring that librarians acquire the emerging skills and training to do so.

In summary, we are calling on library leaders to provide vision and develop the partnerships that will enable African libraries to realise their potential, on libraries and those that support them to ensure that there is the right infrastructure, equipment laws to deliver services digitally, and finally to ensure that with this come the skills needed for librarians to realise their potential to support their communities.

Strategic Direction 1

Library Leadership Role

Library Leadership plays a fundamental role in energizing and coordinating library associations and institutions, staff and stakeholders to prepare libraries and librarians for the new normal. Activities to drive progress for, and by, library services provision during and after the global pandemic are dependent on the actions implemented by library leaders in Africa.

Key Initiatives

- » Engage in-country COVID-19 Response task force committees to develop guidelines and policy that will drive and enable the gradual re-opening of physical library spaces.
- » Library leaders should prioritize leveraging technology to drive library service delivery.
- » Library leadership should advocate for improved library funding and infra-structural development from the Government and other stakeholders.
- » Collaboration and partnerships with relevant authorities to provide training, sensitization and awareness-raising programmes and campaigns on COVID 19 prevention and precautionary measures for libraries, librarians and library users.

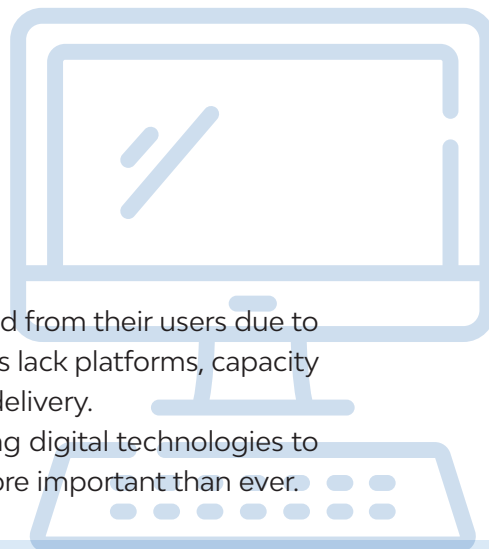


Strategic Direction 2

Moving Libraries Digital

Presently, a lot of libraries in Africa are disconnected from their users due to the closure of physical library spaces. These libraries lack platforms, capacity and infrastructures to drive online library services delivery.

As #LibrariesPrepare for the new normal, leveraging digital technologies to offer library and information services delivery is more important than ever.



Key Initiatives

- » Provision of ICT facilities - both onsite and around buildings - and infrastructure development that will drive electronic library services.
- » Working with governments in order to ensure that libraries are at the heart of national broadband and connectivity strategies, including support both for ongoing connectivity, hardware and skills.
- » Librarians should be at the frontlines in the establishment and utilization of e-learning platforms, Intuitional Repository (IR), Integrated Library Management Systems Open Educational Resources (OER) platforms.
- » Identity and engage relevant stakeholders and partners to understand policies and drive copyright reforms appropriate for libraries in a digital age

Strategic Direction 3

Emerging Skills and Training for Library Professionals

As #LibrariesPrepare for the new normal, Emerging Skills and Training for Library Professionals to drive progress for Post COVID-19 Library Services are essential. What are the skills needed by libraries and librarians to engage with their community? How can libraries facilitate capacity development programs that will equip professionals with the skill set needed to drive progress in the new normal?

Libraries have already been taking on new and changed roles in their communities, and the global pandemic has made this more pressing than ever. This also demands improved skills, capacity and confidence from library professionals in order to meet the needs of their community

Key Initiatives

- » Digital literacy skills development, including digital resource sharing among libraries with similar user characteristics, digital storytelling, competence and knowledge to interact with Learning Management System (LMS) tools, Integrated Library Management Systems, on online retrieval and dissemination of information etc.
- » Training on innovative skills and ways of adaptation to the new normal
- » Capacity development and training of library professionals on digital skills and ICT knowledge, including leveraging social media platforms, that will improve functionality and library services delivery.
- » Use of Open source & social media, Computer appreciation, application of open source in libraries & use of social media in service delivery
- » Training in advocacy, communication skills, programme development & management, policy and stakeholder engagement, data analysis and interpretation.

CONCLUSION

Re-opening library spaces safely needs an adequate guide and plan of actions to provide instructions and measures for libraries, and library users. This in extension will further engage government and policy makers on formulating policies that will support libraries' post COVID-19 mission – thereby preparing libraries on how to better serve their community and in the case of an eventuality of pandemics in the future.

Responsibility lies with library leaders at all levels to advocate for e-library support, work on ICT policies, and harness ICT tools and infrastructures. Librarians should be given continuous training and embrace technology to deliver services to clients in the digital space. Operating in physical libraries, preventative measures should be taken into consideration. This can be achieved through collaboration with different stakeholders and close engagement with policy makers.





You have been part of the process of developing this call to action– and your engagement to drive progress in your country is essential to its success.

Adopt, adapt and engage!

Take action!

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