CENTRALITY OF LIBRARIES IN THE ACTUALIZATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN ZAMBIA

Pailet Chewe[i],
Inonge Imasiku
University of Zambia Library,
Zambia

Abstract:

The UN 2030 Agenda is a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that everyone everywhere enjoys peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs, also known as the UN 2030 Agenda, provide a comprehensive list of the issues that world leaders care about. The UN's 193 Member States adopted them in September 2015, and they came into force on 1 January 2016. This paper investigates the centrality of libraries in the actualisation of the SDGs in Zambia by 2030. A survey design was adopted for this study. Purposive sampling was used to select 30 respondents from six libraries within Lusaka, Zambia. The study found no evidence of specific programming for SDGs by the surveyed libraries. The paper posits that without the input from libraries it will be difficult for Zambia to achieve the SDGs. The study has therefore proffered recommendations on how libraries can be more proactive in initiating and implementing programs that would enhance their visibility in the realization of UN 2030 Agenda by 2030. The findings of this study would inform policy and practice direction on how best to leverage libraries in the actualization of SDGs. The study concludes that libraries are critical in the full actualization of SDGs in Zambia.

Keywords: sustainable development goals, sustainable development, UN 2030 agenda, libraries, Zambia

1. Introduction

Dada (2016) argues that the success of any country cannot be divorced from the adequacy and quality of its library and information services. He further opines that the library is seen as an agency for findings, discovery, innovation, vocational skills repository, scholarship and research.

Libraries world over are in the business of providing information for sustainable development. From promoting literacy, to offering free access to information, libraries

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[i] Correspondence: email pchewe@unza.zm

are safe, welcoming spaces, at the heart of communities. They come with the requisite support of a dedicated staff with a deep understanding of local needs. They advance digital inclusion through access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT), internet connection and skills. They promote innovation, creativity and access to the world's knowledge for current and future generations.

Bradley (2016) stated that in the attainment of the SDGs, libraries have a critical role to play in helping to meet this grand challenge by promoting access to information. Information is an essential tool that can support holistic developmental efforts. Libraries as information disseminating institutions have the potentials to propagate information needed to promote the actualisation of SDGs. Therefore, deliberate efforts should be made to disseminate pertinent and timely information to the citizenry.

This study investigates the centrality of libraries in the realisation of SDGs in Zambia and proffers a blue print on how the country can leverage the power of library services for sustainable development. The paper highlights the potential roles of libraries in creating access to information to support the attainment of all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

1.1 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Global Development Agenda commonly known as "the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the new global development framework anchored around 17 SDGs adopted in 2015 by heads of states and governments at a special United Nations summit building on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to include issues such as natural resources management, sustainable consumption and production, effective institutions, good governance, the rule of law and peaceful societies (United Nations, 2015). The SDGs are global in nature, universally applicable and all countries have a shared responsibility to achieve them. These goals are shown below:

The 17 SDGs for the period 2015-2030

Goal 1: No Poverty
Goal 2: Zero Hunger
Goal 3: Good health and well-being
Goal 4: Quality Education
Goal 5: Gender Equality
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
Goal 10: Reducing Inequalities
Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
Goal 13: Climate Action
Goal 14: Life Below Water
Goal 15: Life on Land
Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

To attain the above agenda, it was recognized that access to information was key (IFLA, 2018).

As stated in target 16.10: a well-informed society contributes significantly to the development of the nation as the availability of information resources would promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (Bradley, 2014). Library and society are inter-linked with and inter-dependent on each other. According to IFLA (2018), society without libraries has no significance, and libraries without society have no origin.

White (2012) opines that as gateways to knowledge and culture, libraries play a fundamental role in society. He argues that the resources and services libraries offer create opportunities for learning, support literacy and education, and help shape the new ideas and perspectives that are fundamental to a creative and innovative society. They also help ensure an authentic record of knowledge created and accumulated by past generations. He further observes that in a world without libraries, it would be difficult to advance research and human knowledge or preserve the world's cumulative knowledge and heritage for future generations.

Dada (2016) posits that the library is seen as an agency for findings, discovery, innovation, vocational skills repository, scholarship and research. The author has further stated that libraries and information professionals help to leverage knowledge assets through the provision of world class information, manpower training and capacity building all of which can impact on realization of SDGs. Similarly, Chigbu and Nkechi (2013) reveal that, the realization of a country's vision is knowledge driven and librarians are active players in identifying, maintaining and making available knowledge assets.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Zambian Government recognises that to deliver inclusive and equitable development to its citizens, it requires concerted efforts and commitment of all stakeholders, libraries inclusive. Over the years, Zambia has come up with various programmes and initiatives aimed at sustainable development. In some of these cases, the Government has aligned itself with global initiatives that originate from the United Nations. Whilst multi sectoral interventionist strategies have served to improve the people's plight, to date no documentation of explicit contribution by libraries to the attainment of the SDGs exists. From the review of literature, it has been noted that, in Zambia, the role of libraries in the actualisation of the SDGs has not been reported or is not known. This study therefore investigates the centrality of libraries in the realisation of SDGs in Zambia.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The core objective of this paper was to explore the centrality of libraries in the provision of information for the attainment of SDGs in Zambia. Specific objectives were to:

1. Investigate awareness of SDGs by Librarians in Zambia
2. Examine the contribution of libraries in the achievement of SDGs
3. Explore the challenges libraries face in the provision of information for development.
4. Proffer ways libraries could contribute to the attainment of the SDGs.

2. Literature review

It is argued that the purpose of development is to improve people's lives by expanding their choices, freedom and dignity (Igbuzor, 2006). The SDGs are seventeen goals and 169 targets that show the eagerness of governments globally to reduce poverty and hunger and to tackle poor quality education, ill-health, gender inequality, environmental degradation and empowerment for peoples of the world. These goals respond to the world's most development challenge. Oshborn, Cutter & Ullah (2015) opines that the SDGs are intended to be universal in the sense of embodying a universally shared common global vision of progress towards a safe, just and sustainable space for all human beings to thrive on the planet

Several works have discussed the pivotal role of libraries in the global development agenda and ultimately the actualisation of the SDGs (Jain & Nfila, 2011; Chigbu & Nkechi, 2013; Bradley, 2016; Dada, 2016; Fourie & Meyer, 2016, Igbinovia, 2016, Stilwell, 2016).

IFLA is consistent in its position that access to information is essential in achieving the SDGs, and that, libraries are not only key partners for governments but are already contributing to progress towards the achievement of the 17 Goals. For instance, library services contribute to improved outcomes across the SDGs by supporting their implementation in regards to providing access to information, literacy and ICT skills and access to community space (Namhila & Niskala, 2013).

At the international front, information professional organizations such as, IFLA and EIFL have for some time funded libraries in developing countries especially Africa to conduct ICT skills trainings and access to electronic resources. For instance (Elbert, Fuegi, & Lipeikaite, 2012) reveal that EIFL Public Library Innovation Program awards grants to public libraries globally to address a range of social economic issues facing their communities including projects in Kenya, Ghana and Zambia among others.

In Singapore, the nation's libraries came up with new ways serve the needs of their communities through library innovations paying particular attention to digital products and services that include library management systems, e-resources, digital devices as well as the utilization of social media to engage users (Sabaratnam & Ong, 2016). Many librarians across the globe are currently leveraging social networking and social media to provide dynamic library services (Mabweazara & Zinn, 2016).

In the Nigerian context, (Chigbu & Nkechi, 2013) reveals that the realization of a country's vision is knowledge driven and librarians are active players in identifying, maintaining and making available knowledge assets. The library is seen as an agency

for findings, discovery, innovation, vocational skills repository, scholarship and research (Adeleke, Okusaga & Lateef, 2002; Dada, 2016). Libraries and information professionals help to leverage knowledge assets through the provision of world class information, manpower training and capacity building all of which can impact on realization of SDGs.

In Uganda, the National Library of Uganda (NLU) provides ICT training to female farmers to access weather forecast, crop prices and online markets in their local languages which increase the economic wellbeing of women through technology skills (IFLA, 2015). NLU is also developing a programme to *"help pregnant teenagers learn to use technology to access information that will help them improve their health and livelihoods"*.

In Zambia, Lubuto libraries are built upon the concept of sustainable ownership of the libraries by the community and these libraries are designed to address the SDGs. As information providers, Lubuto Libraries plays a crucial role in building strong and inclusive democracy through library services to children. Mukonde (2017) observes that while libraries alone cannot achieve Agenda 2030, their role in achieving the *SDGs cannot be ignored*. This assertion is further supported by Jain and Nfila (2011) who argues that community libraries provide essential platforms for all residents "to actively participate in economic, social and political development resulting in sustained national development of various countries.

With regard to awareness of SDGs by librarians, a more recent study by Okunlola, Oluwaniyi and Oyedapo (2018) found that many library personnel were aware of the SDGs but were not conversant with the details and modalities for their attainment.

With regard to problems and challenges, Oyemike et al (2016) posits that constraints to effective contribution of libraries towards realization of SDGs include lack of reliable and accurate data, negligence of libraries by governments, poor perceptions of the library profession, low level of private sector interest in library services, poor lobbying and advocacy skills amongst librarians, paying lip services to library development programmes by government and low level of partnership drive among librarians. A study conducted by Onah, Urom and Amanze-Unagha (2015) shows that unhindered access to information in libraries is required for the actualization of all the SDGs.

Literature reviewed shows that libraries play a pivotal role in the realization of the SDGs. Nevertheless, the present digital atmosphere has brought a lot of changes and challenges not only on the library and information services but also on the roles and expectations of information practitioners.

3. Material and Methods

A survey method of research was employed to conduct the study. An online questionnaire was used to elicit data from 34 librarians in Lusaka, Zambia. The population of the study comprised 83 librarians from six different libraries in based

Lusaka, namely; the University of Zambia (UNZA) Library, University of Lusaka (UNILUS) Library, Lusaka Apex Medical University (LAMU) Library, National Institute for Public Administration (NIPA) Library, Evelyn Hone College Library and the Lusaka City Council Library. The sample size comprised 34 respondents who were picked through purposive sampling. This is a type of nonprobability or nonrandom sampling technique in which a researcher relies on his/her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study. Data was collected by means of semi-structured questionnaires and was analysed using SPSS version 20.0. This study was conducted between July and September, 2018.

	UNZA Library	UNILUS Library	LAMU Library	NIPA Library	EHC Library	LCC Library
Sample	20	4	2	2	2	4
No. of librarians	51	7	5	6	5	9
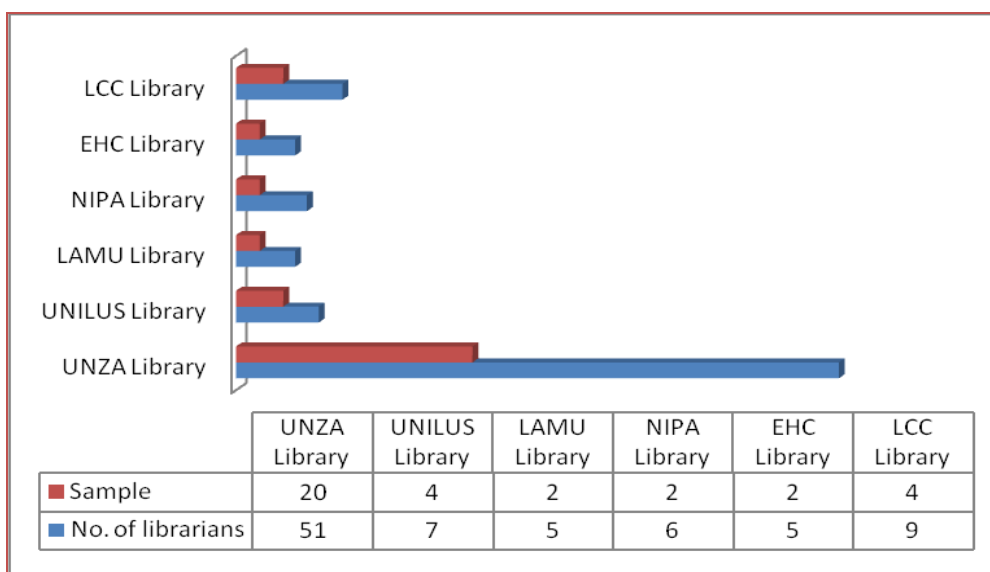
Figure 1: Population and sample of respondents

3.1 Profile of respondents

For the purposes of collecting data on the centrality of libraries in the attainment of SDGs in Zambia, an online questionnaire was emailed to 34 librarians. Out of the 34 questionnaires distributed to the respondents 30 (88.2%) were completed and returned representing a response rate of 88.2%. Of the 30 respondents, 17 (56.7%) were males while 13 (43.3%) were females.

With regard to age distribution, one (3.3%) out of 30 respondent was aged between 21and 30 years, six (20%) were aged between 31 and 40 years and 23(76.7%) were above 41years. Therefore, majority of the respondents were above 41 years of age. In terms of their academic and professional qualifications, the analysis showed that 26 (86.7%) were first degree holders in Library and Information Science while four (13.3%) were holders of a masters degree in Library and Information Science. *See table 2 below.*

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Age of respondent	Frequency	Percent
21-30 yrs	1	3.3
31-40 yrs	6	20.0
41+	23	76.7
Gender of respondent		
Male	17	56.7
Female	13	43.3
Total	30	100.0
Academic qualifications		
First degree holder	26	86.7
Masters degree holder	4	13.3

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Awareness of Sustainable Development Goals by Librarians

Respondents were asked to state their level of awareness of SDGs. Results in Table 3 indicate that 20 (66.7%) of the 30 respondents were aware of the SDGs while 10 (33.3%) were not aware. This finding shows that awareness of SDGs was quite high. This encouraging outcome could be attributed to the nature of their profession which compels them to be current with global events.

With regard to the respondents' sources of awareness of the SDGs, it was established that mass media channel is the main source with 14 (46.7%), followed by Internet and friends at 6 (20%). Workshops/conferences accounted for 4 (13.3%). This finding is confirmed by Ejechi (2018) who posits that though many librarians were aware of the SDGs, they were not however conversant with the details and modalities for their attainment. It should be noted that building public awareness and engaging local stakeholders is critical in the initial and ongoing step in successful implementation. This means reaching out to all levels and sectors with information that is tailored to their specific functions, roles, and responsibilities. It is anticipated that creating awareness among community members and concerned government stakeholders will improve and sustain interactions between government and the people, thereby setting a platform towards achieving the SDGs by 2030 through increased demand for improved service delivery.

4.2 Contribution of libraries

Regarding the perception of librarians, the results in figure 3 indicate that: 25 (83.3%) out of 30 respondents were not sure of their libraries role with regard to SDGs. Three (10%) indicated that their libraries have not yet started providing information related to *SDGs* while 2 (7%) noted with certainty that their libraries were actively disseminating SDGs Goals related information. This finding seemingly shows that at the moment there is minimal contribution to the actualisation of SDGs by libraries in Zambia.

It should be noted that worldwide, libraries ensure that information and the skills to use it are available to everyone and thereby making them critical institutions for all in the digital age. Aida Opoku-Mensah (2016) in her article, African Libraries and the implementation of SDGs: public institutions and Development agent, is of the view that libraries can be directly linked to the implementation of the SDGs, particularly in challenging development environments. The provision of vital information or knowledge should be a starting point in the transformative agenda of the SDGs and must be harnessed to its fullest. On the other hand, librarians must show a consciousness in their role as SDGs are implemented and must become key agents in supporting the national implementation processes.

The finding of this study shows that currently there is minimal contribution to the actualisation of *SDGs* by libraries in Zambia. This result contradicts that of (Dada, 2016; IFLA, 2018) who posits that the library is a significant institution in the realization of *SDGs*. This dismal contribution could be attributed to the unfavourable conditions under which libraries operate. Libraries have to be appropriately supported financially and policy wise if they are to be effective and relevant in the communities they are operating.
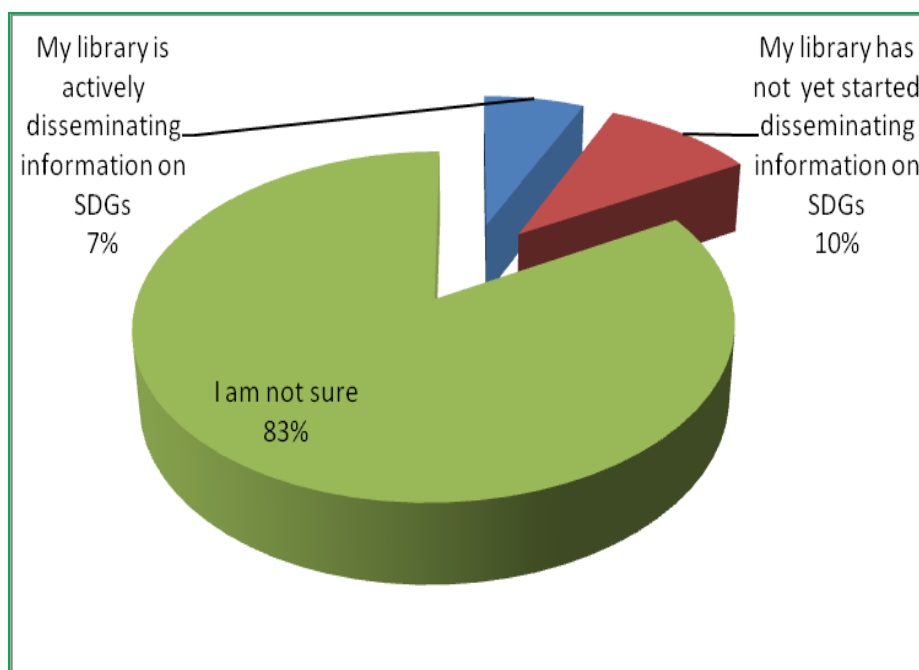

Figure 2: Contribution of libraries to SDGs

4.3 Constraints faced by libraries

In order to find out the challenges faced by libraries, respondents were asked to indicate challenges that could militate against the actualisation of SDGs. The results in figure 4 above indicate that 12 (40%) out of the 30 respondents bemoaned poor funding of libraries, 9 (30%) blamed government inertia toward libraries (lack of a library policy), 3 (10%) noted that the ICT infrastructure in libraries was poor, 3 (10%) stated the problem

of out dated library materials, 2 (6.7%) mentioned poor lobbying skills among librarians and one (3.3%) respondent observed that libraries were understaffed.

Full participation of libraries in the actualization of SDGs is characterised by myriad challenges. The main challenges identified include: lack of financial resources, human capacity, technology shortages and the lack of legal frameworks. These challenges have also negatively impacted on service delivery. This finding corroborates that of Oyemike et al (2016) who identified negligence of libraries by governments, poor perceptions of the library profession and low level of private sector interest in library services as some barriers to the effectiveness of libraries in the actualisation of SDGs. Other barriers include were poor lobbying and advocacy skills amongst librarians and low level of partnership drive among librarians. There is therefore an urgent need for all stakeholders in Zambia to work collectively in order to address some of these challenges.

	Lack of a library policy	Poor lobbying & advocacy skills among librarians	Inadequate funding	Poor ICT infrastructure	Inadequate staffing	Out dated library materials
■ Percent	30	6.7	40	10	3.3	10
■ Frequency	9	2	12	3	1	3
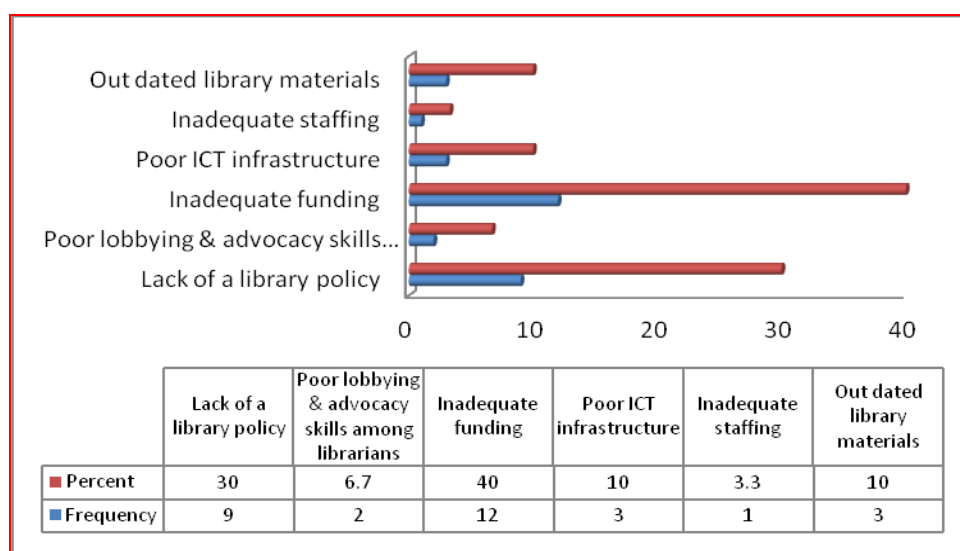
Figure 3: Constraints faced by libraries

4.4 Proposed library strategies

An open ended question was given to respondents to elicit their opinions on how libraries can strategise to enhance actualization of SDGs:

Views from respondents are indicated below:

1. Need for sensitization of librarians through workshops was the highest 11 (36.7%)
2. Mount vigorous public awareness campaigns 10 (33.3%)
3. Use of websites and social media tools 6 (20%)
4. Engaging the media to publicise Sustainable Development Goals 3 (10%)

Strategy is a plan designed to bring about a desired future, such as achievement of a goal or solution to a problem. According to the results of the study, sensitization of librarians at 11 (36.7%) topped the list of strategies to support actualization of SDGs. This was closely followed by public awareness campaigns at10 (33.3%). Use of websites and social media tools was at 6 (20%) and engaging the media to publicise SDGs was at

3 (10%). The implication for this result is that since librarians are key players in the information industry, there is need to adequately sensitise and empower them first with practical knowledge if they are to be effective 'ambassadors' for the UN 2030 Agenda in their respective communities. The success of the library in the fight against poverty, for instance, is directly or indirectly dependent on the level of awareness, knowledge of, and perceptions towards the SDGs among librarians. Libraries can only rise to the occasion of raising awareness in the community and beyond and advocate with government decision-makers if the librarians themselves are empowered with knowledge about SDGs.

5. Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proffered.
1. Libraries should be supported by specific legislation and must be adequately financed by national and local governments;
2. Libraries should strive to acquire information materials on the SDGs and bring the materials to the awareness of library users.
3. Librarians should acquaint themselves with the SDGs as well as the various strategies available to disseminate information about SDGs.

6. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the centrality of libraries in the actualisation of all the SDGs in the context of Zambia. The study has shown that by providing equitable access to information for all, libraries can empower the general citizenry with information for sustainable development. The findings further point to the fact that lack of adequate financial and institutional support has had a negative impact on library service delivery in Zambia. Consequently, there is need for library practitioners to gain advocacy skills that can help them showcase library services vis-à-vis their centrality in the actualisation of the SDGs by 2030 and beyond. But for libraries to rise to the occasion there is need for policy makers to channel part of the country's financial resources towards the running of library services.

      The study concludes that libraries are critical in the full actualization of SDGs in Zambia.

About the Author(s)

Pailet Chewe is the acting Head of Collection Development at the University of Zambia. His research interests include; online information Literacy and bibliographic instruction, application of social media tools in libraries and EGovernment to name but a few.

Inonge Imasiku is the acting Systems Librarian for the University of Zambia Libraries. Her major research interest lies in the area of using ICTs to enhance services and access to library resources, specifically for distance education and students with disabilities and digital literacy.

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