



Library and Information Association of Zambia

(LIAZ)

“Linking People with Information”

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LIBRARY AND INFORMATION ASSOCIATION OF ZAMBIA (LIAZ) PRESS STATEMENT ON COVID-19

The Library and Information Association of Zambia (LIAZ), the representative body of Librarians, records officers and other allied professionals in the country, has keenly been monitoring the development of the Coronavirus pandemic, also known as COVID-19. To fight this common enemy that our nation and the entire world is grappling with, LIAZ would like to join hands with the Government of Zambia, in ensuring that the spread of the pandemic is curtailed. As information professionals, LIAZ agrees with the World Health Organization (WHO) that the issue of infodemic, which is the “spread of disinformation on the virus” largely due to information explosion, makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources of information and reliable guidance. This is an area of concern to LIAZ.

In this regard, LIAZ wishes to commend the Government, particularly the Ministry of Health, for keeping the nation informed regarding COVID-19. However, we have also observed with dismay that some people are taking advantage of the situation by peddling fake news. One critical component that our Association promotes is the free flow of timely and accurate information to all citizens regardless of their social standing. Librarians and all allied information professionals, therefore, have over time been relied upon in terms of providing accurate information.

It is against this background that our Association is stepping up the aspect of information dissemination in relation to COVID-19. As you may be aware, most libraries and information centres are already closed and cannot be accessed by the general public. However, as LIAZ, we would like to assure the Government and the citizens in general, that we will play our role in sharing accurate information from reliable sources to curb the growing trend of misinformation and the spread of fake news, especially during this critical time. As a matter of fact, Information professionals are already sharing information in

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various electronic formats that include posters, brochures and flyers. We are also mobilizing ourselves and working out modalities that will help us reach those who may not access this important information electronically. The advantage we have as LIAZ is that our members are spread out throughout the country.

We would also take this opportunity to urge various institutions where our members are operating from, that have not yet closed their institutions to the general public, to do so. This is in line with the guidance given by the Ministry of Health to ensure that gatherings are reduced to a bare minimum. It is detrimental to leave libraries and other information centres open in these times as it has been proved that the virus can survive on paper. Materials in form of books, pamphlets found in libraries have the potential to spread the virus to the next user. We, therefore, reiterate that such institutions should adhere to the guidelines that have been given by the Government, and possibly STAY AT HOME.

In addition, LIAZ wishes to advise various Book Clubs across the country to avoid physical meetings and instead, use online platforms. This will ensure that we keep the momentum during these trying moments. Further, we would like to make an earnest appeal to Internet Service Providers in our country, to consider reducing their tariffs to enable us disseminate this important information efficiently and effectively, as well as enable citizens to access the same at affordable rates .

We are optimistic that the Covid-19 pandemic will be fought through such concerted efforts.

I thank you.



Charles Banda (PhD)

President – Library and Information Association of Zambia