TRACKING THE RESPONSES OF AFRICAN LIBRARIES

TO COVID-19 CRISIS

Survey results of the emergency preparedness level of African libraries to the crisis, their roles in dissemination of information on preventative measures and plans for post-covid-19 era

Introduction

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, AfLIA sought to find out the emergency preparedness level of African libraries to the crisis, their roles in dissemination of information on preventative measures and plans for post-covid-19 era. One hundred and fifty-one (153) libraries from twenty-four (24) countries across the five (5) regions of the continent responded. The survey was conducted between March and May, 2020.

Survey Process

SURVEY

Run through Survey Monkey.

19 questions including library identifier query

DISTRIBUTION

Survey link was distributed through AfLIA's mailing lists, newsletter and social media handles.

ANALYTICS

Data sieved to remove incomplete and duplicate entries.

Survey Results

Demographics

RESPONSES

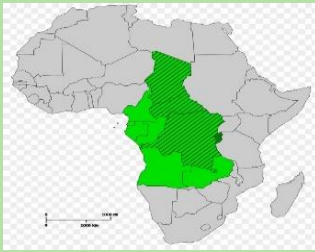153 responses from **24 African countries.**

RESPONSE RATE

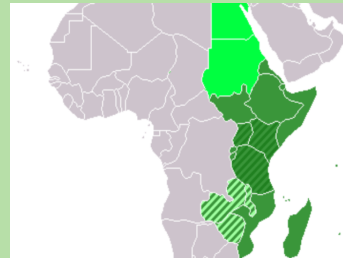24 out of 54 African countries is 44.4% response rate

Library Type

Academic – 51%
Public – 24%
Community - 7.5%
National – 7.5%
School – 6.5%
Research/Special – 2.5%

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DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY REGIONS/COUNTRIES

Central Africa
Cameroon – 5
D.R. Congo – 1
Total = 6 (4%)

East Africa
Burundi – 1	Ethiopia - 1
South Sudan – 1	Tanzania - 7
Kenya – 18	Uganda -5

Total = 33 (22%)

North Africa
Egypt – 2
Morocco – 1
Total = 3 (2%)

Southern Africa
Malawi – 1	Namibia -7
Seychelles – 1	South Africa – 9
Zambia – 13	Zimbabwe -6
Botswana -2	

Total = 39 (26%)

West Africa
Benin Republic – 1	Cote D'Ivoire - 1
Ghana – 13	Nigeria – 52
Senegal – 1	Sierra Leone – 1
Gambia - 1	

Total = 70 (46%)

*Unless otherwise indicated, n=153 when calculating responses.
**Two respondents did not indicate their countries of origin.

<u>Emergency preparedness plans</u>

- **A great number of African libraries (52.3%) do not have an emergency preparedness plan** - of the libraries without a disaster management plan, 20% never thought of drawing up such plans while 57.5% never imagined experiencing a health crisis that would affect libraries.

- **Existing disaster management plans / emergency preparedness protocols in African libraries covered outbreak of fire, flood as well as health related crisis including COVID-19 (44.1%).** However, of the libraries with such plans, the protocols that have until recently been activated in some African libraries are **mainly** for;
    - Fire (73.5%)
    - Flood (32.4%)

-Do African libraries have emergency preparedness plans?

Number of Libraries with emergency preparedness plans
No - 52.3%   Yes – 47.7%

Library types with emergency preparedness plans
Academic - 50.3%   National - 7.2%   Public – 23.5%   Community – 7.2%   School – 5.9%   Research/Special – 2%   Others – 3.9%

Types of emergency preparedness plans
Fire - 86.8%   Flood - 41.2%   Cholera – 28%   Influenza – 14.71%   Unexpected health issues such as COVID-19 – 44.1%   *68 respondents answered this question, 83 declined.

Rate of use of emergency preparedness plans
Fire – 73.5%   Flood – 32.3%   Cholera – 18%   Influenza – 10%   Unexpected health issues such as COVID-19 – 29%   *68 respondents answered this question, 83 declined.

*Respondents provided open-ended additions clarifying that some libraries do not have individual emergency plans as they rely on the plans of their municipalities and parent institutions to manage emergencies/disasters.
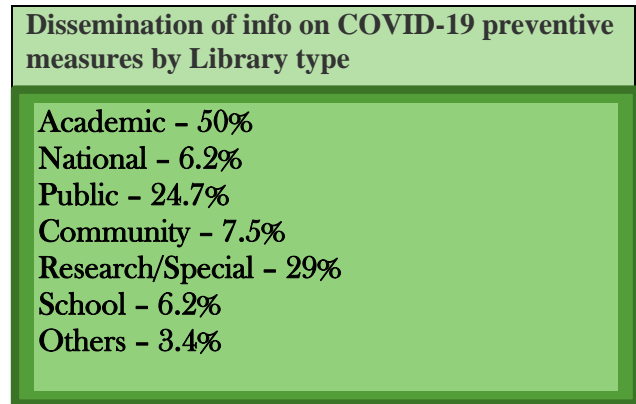
<u>Information dissemination on preventive measures to stop the spread of COVID-19</u>

a. Do African libraries disseminate information on preventive measures to stop the spread of COVID-19?

Majority (78%) of African libraries disseminated information on preventative measures to stop the spread of the virus.

YES 78%

NO 22%

Dissemination of info on COVID-19 preventive measures by Library type

Academic – 50%
National – 6.2%
Public – 24.7%
Community – 7.5%
Research/Special – 29%
School – 6.2%
Others – 3.4%
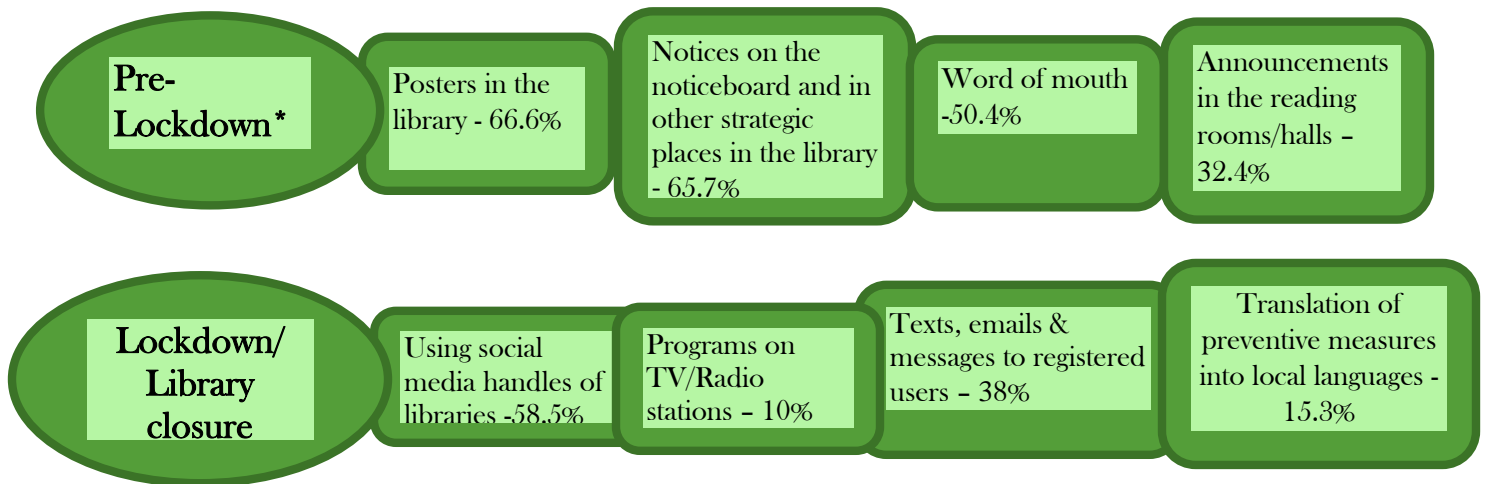
*5 respondents skipped providing answers to this enquiry.
**The respondents indicated that their libraries disseminate information on preventative measures to stop the spread of the virus before they were closed and during the general lockdown in different African countries.

Channels for dissemination of information about COVID-19 by African libraries*

Pre-Lockdown*

Posters in the library - 66.6%

Notices on the noticeboard and in other strategic places in the library - 65.7%

Word of mouth -50.4%

Announcements in the reading rooms/halls – 32.4%

Lockdown/ Library closure

Using social media handles of libraries -58.5%

Programs on TV/Radio stations – 10%

Texts, emails & messages to registered users – 38%

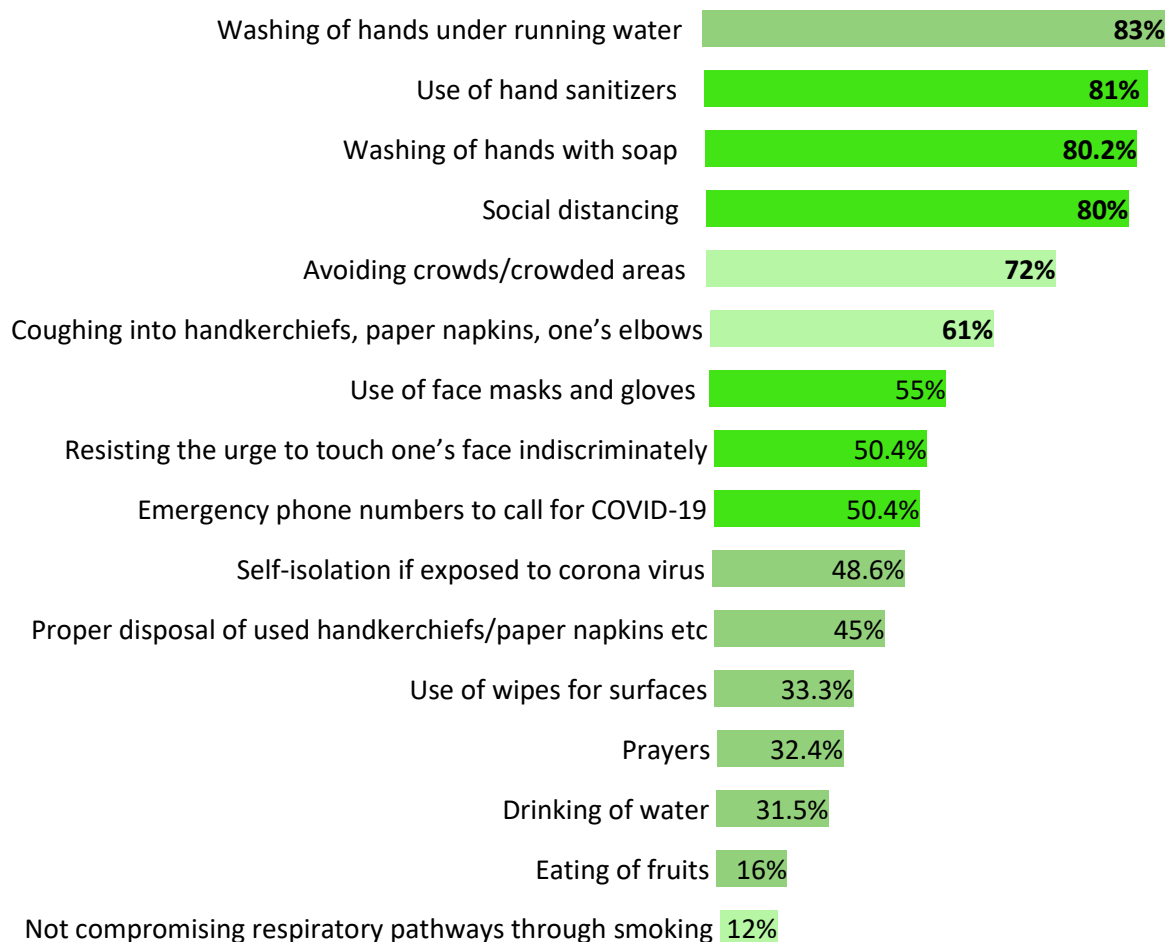Translation of preventive measures into local languages - 15.3%

*111 respondents provided this information
**Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents chose as many options as were applicable

What information was disseminated about the prevention of COVID-19?

Washing of hands under running water (82.9%), with soap (81.1%), use of hand sanitizers (81.1%) and the practice of social distancing (80.2%) were the preventative measures most shared by African librarians. Information on other measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 was also shared -

Measure	Percentage
Washing of hands under running water	83%
Use of hand sanitizers	81%
Washing of hands with soap	80.2%
Social distancing	80%
Avoiding crowds/crowded areas	72%
Coughing into handkerchiefs, paper napkins, one's elbows	61%
Use of face masks and gloves	55%
Resisting the urge to touch one's face indiscriminately	50.4%
Emergency phone numbers to call for COVID-19	50.4%
Self-isolation if exposed to corona virus	48.6%
Proper disposal of used handkerchiefs/paper napkins etc	45%
Use of wipes for surfaces	33.3%
Prayers	32.4%
Drinking of water	31.5%
Eating of fruits	16%
Not compromising respiratory pathways through smoking	12%

Beyond sharing information on generally known preventative measures, 103 libraries (72.5%) responded that they were implementing some measures on their own which include

33% Collation/dissemination of research information/papers/articles on COVID-19 online & offline

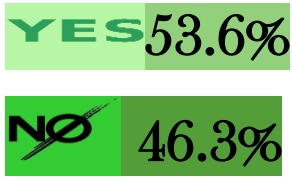**18%** Checking out and correcting misinformation on the pandemic in the user communities

*111 respondents provided this information, 42 declined.
*Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to mark more than an option as is applicable.
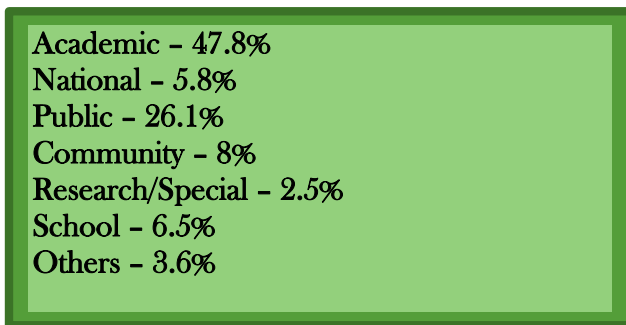
Online services
The doors of African libraries were closed but 53.6% were able to offer information services online.

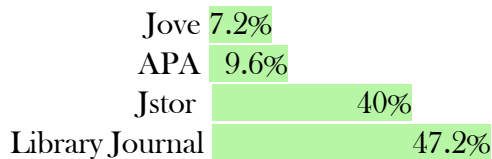a. Ability of Libraries to offer online services during COVID-19 pandemic

YES 53.6%

NO 46.3%

*138 respondents answered this enquiry, 15 declined.

b. Ability to offer online services when Library closed by Library type

Academic – 47.8%
National – 5.8%
Public – 26.1%
Community – 8%
Research/Special – 2.5%
School – 6.5%
Others – 3.6%

c. Awareness of resources for online services that were previously behind paywalls but opened due to the pandemic

Jove 7.2%
APA 9.6%
Jstor 40%
Library Journal 47.2%

*125 respondents answered to this enquiry, 28 abstained.
*Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents chose as many options as were applicable.

d. Types of online services offered -

69% provided information services through social media.

55.4% - Opened online portals for easy access to resources of the library.

45% - supported remote teaching, learning and research

38% - Provided e-reference services

23% used mobile apps for provision of services

20.2% provided audio books, e-magazines and video streaming services.

9.4% uploaded tutorials on YouTube

Importantly,

34% of the respondents were aware of possible copyright infringements in sharing resources online.

*79 respondents provided answers to this enquiry, 74 declined.
*Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents chose as many options as were applicable

e. Reasons for not offering online services -

29.3% shut down all their facilities and services due to the pandemic,

29.3% posited that their libraries cannot support remote teaching and learning,

11% revealed that their libraries do not have social media handles,

11% indicated that the library staff do not have enough skills to provide services online.

*65 respondents provided answers to this enquiry, 88 declined.

5.   Post COVID-19 era and libraries

a. Looking into the future after COVID-19 -

83.2% opined that there will be need for increased resources and services for distance education, home-schooling and those working remotely.

81.6% posited that libraries must understand the need for emergency preparedness plans.

68.8% agreed that libraries ought to work more towards raising social consciousness about issues that affect the world – climate change, health and environmental issues.

68.8% think that libraries should engage in stronger advocacy for stable internet in Africa.

60% were of the view that advocacy needs to be heighten for Openness and sharing of knowledge for a better world.

54.4% believe that the global economic downturn brought on by the pandemic will push libraries towards reconfiguring services for the jobless, homeless and home-bound people

*Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents chose as many options as were applicable

b. Furthermore, librarians provided open-ended responses on important next steps for post COVID-19 era –

- African librarians need to have emergency preparedness plans which can be easily activated so that no matter the type of disaster that brings on emergencies, library services can go on even if library doors are closed.

- Upskilling the digital and advocacy competencies of librarians is a must so that they can provide information services efficiently online in the post-COVID-19 era as well as know how to push for better facilities, Internet infrastructure and legal provisions to enable them use resources optimally.

- All librarians should understand the need for collaborations and networking so as to enhance use of e-resources and e-learning for quality education.

- The adoption of policies that encourage Open science and the creation of Open Educational resources is a necessity that would ensure greater availability of e-resources for the academia.