



## **Chairman's Half Year Report 1 January to 30 June 2016**

### **Introduction**

This brief report follows and continues my Annual Report for 2015, issued at the end of February 2016, and should if necessary be read in conjunction with that report.

### **Background to the Library**

According to the Harare City Library Act [*Chapter 25.05*] the HCL Management Committee is made up of 10 members, 6 elected by subscribers, 3 appointed by the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education and one by the City of Harare. The HCL activities are managed under a Trust, whose trustees are the Mayor of the City of Harare and the Master of the High Court, or their successors in office. Endeavours are continuing, to obtain the representation of the City of Harare on the Management Committee.

### **Preliminary reflections**

The year 2016 has been marked with many challenges for the economy as a whole, challenges of which also affect our customers (the readers and Library users). However the Harare City Library endeavoured to remain active and even to increase its relevance in the communities it operates in. The main Harare City Library at the Civic Centre, together with the suburban libraries in Mount Pleasant, Highlands and Mabelreign continued to service the community. In addition, Hatfield and Greendale suburban branches were recently re-opened, thanks to refurbishments carried out with the assistance of partners and well-wishers.

### **Funding and Finances**

Funding for the library still remains a major challenge, as it operates on a cash budget from subscriptions and other operations, which do not adequately meet the demanding operational costs. I wish to emphasise here that the Library continues to operate on a stand-alone budget, based on the income it generates from its operations, with neither financial

support from the Central nor the City of Harare, nor any other recurrent funding. As a constitutionally determined institution, the Harare City Library might reasonably expect support from the National Fiscus; as a major City asset and resource, it might be expected that the Library receive support from the Municipality. The Management Committee is exploring ways and means to re-institute such support.

The Library continues to be grateful to partners and well-wishers, such as the Culture Fund of Zimbabwe, the British Council, Book Aid International, and individuals such as Mr Tim Johnson, for funding of maintenance, projects and events, and acquisitions, which remain outside the reach of available funding from operations.

Cash shortages have in particular negatively impacted on the Library, as daily and even monthly subscriptions have dropped significantly this year (compared to previous years, for equivalent periods). Our analysis is that membership and usage has only temporarily been affected, and that indeed our progress in reopening the Greendale and Hatfield Branches, and the new developments in the Main Library, as well as progress towards Internet provision at branches, augur well for increased income from subscriptions and operations in the near future.

Nonetheless, the Management Committee is in the process of discussing and designing a significant Appeal, to assist in providing a more significant financial base for the operations, maintenance and upkeep, and acquisitions requirements of the Library.

### **Major Projects and Achievements**

The period under report saw the Library, under the new Management Committee, carrying out a number of notable projects under a very difficult and challenging environment.

In April 2016, an event supported by the British Council was held, to declare the Doris Lessing Collection open for borrowing (with certain reservations), following the successful completion of the collections cataloguing. The event was attended by members of the diplomatic community, including the European Union and Norwegian Ambassadors, many members of the public, and of the writing and cultural sectors, and the media. Talks were given by Mrs Virginia Phiri, renowned author, and the Director of the National Arts Council, Mr Elvas Mari, who is himself an author.

The Library managed to carry out minor renovations at Hatfield Suburban branch Library, using its own resources and meagre residuals from the Culture Fund of Zimbabwe 2013 grant. The library re-opened to the public in May 2016, having been closed from early 2011. Ongoing work is being done to complete the renovations.

The Library also managed to arrange the renovations of Greendale suburban branch library, which had been closed since 2014. Continuing support from our partner Mr Tim Johnson resulted in the repairs to the damaged roof, floor tiles and the repainting of the interior and

exterior, which were completed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2016. The library reopened to the public on 4 July 2016. We would like to extend our gratitude to Mr Johnson, who also provided extensive assistance for repairs, maintenance and restocking of the Highlands library, in 2014.

The Library also embarked on literary activities including outreaches to Harare South (Hopley) schools for interactive and live literature programmes partnering the Hopley community; moderating the interschool's spelling bee competitions at ZimLibrary in Ruwa; and carrying on our regular story telling sessions at Mount Pleasant, Mabelreign, Greendale and Main Library, with the aid of volunteers that include award winning and renowned author, Mr Ignatius Mabasa.

With the aim of becoming more relevant to our users with busy schedules we also **extended our opening times** to closing at 8pm during weekdays and 4pm on Saturdays, on a regular basis and not merely during examination times.

The Library Atrium area was used for a successful exhibition of artwork for a student from the Chinhoyi University of Technology, Ms Cynthia Chimanda.

Publicity for the Library was enhanced by the provision of a Billboard presenting the Library to the Public, at the corner of Rotten Row and Pennefather Avenue, as well as two umbrellas for the outside seating areas, which are endorsed with the Library's Logo and emblems. Financing of these came from the reliquant of the Culture Fund of Zimbabwe grant

The Library further managed to relaunch its website, which, while still rudimentary, will increasingly carry current information and news about the Library and its activities.

Significant negotiations occurred during the period, including the conclusion of a new contract between the Library, and its tenant, the Zimbabwe Open University, for the continuing occupation of a portion of the Library for its own Library operations. In addition, negotiations were conducted with ZARNet, the State-owned Internet Access Provider established under the Research Act of 1997, for the eventual provision of internet services to the Suburban branch Libraries.

Negotiation with a number of tenders resulted in the opening of a small tuck shop within the Library external premises, for the more convenient access to such services by Library users, and for the minor income it provides the Library.

Visits to the Library included that of officials of the Book Aid International organisation, which dealt with future book donations, and for the planning of training of Childrens Librarians for the Childrens sections in the Main Library, suburban Branches within our compass, and for the suburban Libraries managed by the City of Harare, which is likely to be held during the period 24-25 August 2016.

Further contacts were held with members of the Africa Poetry Fund, about the possible establishment of a Poetry collection of the Library, to be assisted by this fund, coordinated by the renowned Jamaican poet Kwame Dawes. Contacts are ongoing.

Library activities included good progress in the re-cataloguing and automation of books in many sections of the Library.

## Challenges

Challenges that still remain to be addressed, other than those identified above, include

- The need for stable and additional revenue sources apart from reading subscription, which it is hoped that our forthcoming Appeal will achieve.
- The need for continuous improvement and up-dating of our reading and references stock, both through donations and through the re-establishment of an Acquisitions Fund and overseeing Committee. Need is also identified for the funding for subscriptions to online Libraries, for access by our subscribers.
- For both of the above, there is the need for both **central and local governments** to take a leading role in supporting the library services, financially and materially.
- **A particular and immediate need for furniture for both the recently reopened branches, as well as those which were operational already.** We are in dire need of furniture, chairs and tables for adults and small children, as Library users are forced to make do without chairs, especially at branches. [The closure of the Hatfield Branch Library in 2011 was occasioned by a break-in and the theft of furniture (but not books!)]
- **Staffing has been put under significant additional pressure due to the reopening of the two suburban branches.** This needs to be seen as a particular challenge to the raising of the funds for the operations budget for the Library.

## Prospects and future plans

During the second half of the year the Library already has a number of planned activities.

In August, the Library will be hosting an event to rename the Children's Section of the Main Library the Petina Gappah Children's Library, in recognition of Ms Gappah's sterling efforts, as then Chair of the Management Committee of the Library, to raise money and support for the refurbishment of the Main Library in 2011 and 2012.

The training of Children's Librarians will take place in the Main Library from 24-25 August 2016.

Negotiations have been held with the annual Shoko Festival, regarding the possible use of the Library for its workshop during the Festival from 23-24 September 2016.

## **Conclusion**

I would like to thank the current committee members for their good work and dedication up to the middle of the year namely;

- Mr Kudzayi Munyavi– The treasurer;
- Mrs Nobuhle Msimanga
- Mr Joe Muzurura
- Mr Josphat Makandigona
- Mr Nicholas Shuva
- Mr Shandirai Mugari
- Mr Daniel Sibanda

I would also like to thank the Library staff headed by the Librarian Mr Tariro Dube for working hard throughout these challenging times.

Our thanks are also addressed to our partners, supporters and friends, with whom we hope to maintain, and even increase, our relationships and interactions.

John Stewart  
Chair, Management Committee

3 August, 2016