

The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award  
The Swedish Arts Council  
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Dear members of the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award Committee:

The Lubuto Library Project provides library services to impoverished street kids, orphans, and other vulnerable children and adolescents in Zambia and in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Many of these young people have been orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and all of them come from poor communities with limited access to books and educational services.

The first Lubuto Library opened in Zambia on September 21, 2007. Designed by architect Eleni Coromvli, each Lubuto Library is a three-building complex featuring traditional thatched roofs, an entrance structure with a sink, a sunken African “talking circle” for read-alouds and traditional storytelling events, space for the collection, and an arts and activities center. Jane Meyers, Lubuto Library Project President and Chairman of the Board, plans to build at least one hundred Lubuto Libraries across Africa over the coming years. These plans are contingent on fund-raising and on support from philanthropic foundations and awards like the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

I am writing to offer my support for the Lubuto Library Project’s nomination for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. As explained on the award webpage, “The purpose of the prize is to strengthen and increase interest in children’s and youth literature around the world. The award also aims to strengthen children’s rights on a global level.” The Lubuto Project is a worthy nominee, as its goals and activities are closely linked to these two purposes.

The core of Lubuto’s mission is to “strengthen and increase interest in children’s and youth literature around the world.” Each Lubuto Library collection contains four thousand hardcover books, most of which are donations from U.S. and U.K. publishers, librarians, teachers, and members of the general public. Lubuto helps to organize book drives in U.S. schools and community organizations, and the Lubuto staff members purchase additional



local materials for the libraries. U.S. and Zambian volunteers help with materials selection, technical processing, cataloging, and preparation for shipment to Africa.

As a result of the AIDS pandemic, thousands of Zambian children and teens have been left homeless, and many of them do not attend school. Lubuto Libraries provide secure environments where homeless children and teens can keep off of the streets during the day while reading and learning about the world's youth literature. Lubuto has had great success in helping impoverished and often illiterate young people become excited about reading and learning. Lubuto's work in promoting high quality children's and youth literature shows us that even the poorest and most disadvantaged youth in the world need and deserve access to good books.

Lubuto provides literacy services to complement its book collections. These services include read-aloud programs, one-on-one tutoring, storytelling programs, and more. Each of these services further increases the children's and teens' interest in and knowledge of the world's literature for youth.

Although most of the book donations come from the U.S. and the U.K., Lubuto staff are careful to include books from as many of the world's cultures as possible when selecting titles for the Lubuto collections. The Lubuto Project and the Zambia Library Association have also recently teamed together to create the Zambia Board on Books for Young People. The Board will publish bilingual children's books based on traditional Zambian stories, and these books will be included in Lubuto collections.

Not only does Lubuto work to promote children's and youth literature with some of the poorest and most deserving children of the world, it also "aims to strengthen children's rights on a global level." Lubuto President Jane Meyers lectures at every possible opportunity to librarians, teachers, professors, service organization members, and others about the dire situations in which Lubuto's youth live, and about the importance of using our global community of concerned citizens to fight for these children's rights.

Lubuto also sees cultural preservation as a children's right. Toward this end, Lubuto offers its children and teens programs featuring the local culture, including traditional dance programs, displays of traditional African arts, and stories told by traditional African storytellers.

Lubuto also sees age-appropriate social and entertainment opportunities as a basic children's right. To create these kinds of opportunities for Lubuto's youth, each Lubuto Library complex includes an open-air entrance building called an "insaka," which is a traditional African village meeting place. Children, teens, and adults gather there for

social interaction and community building within a traditional African environment. For many of Lubuto's children, Lubuto libraries provide the only safe environment where they can get off the streets and engage in social and entertainment activities—where they can just be normal kids.

For all of these reasons, I heartily endorse the Lubuto Project's nomination for this important award. The prestige and the monetary assistance that come with the Award would be an enormous boon to Lubuto's efforts to help its children and teen populations.

Sincerely,



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