

Lubuto Library project realises education vision

By JOWIT SALUSEKI

SUB-SAHARAN Africa faces serious social and economic challenges, yet none is greater than the devastation that the HIV/AIDS pandemic brings to the continent's children.

As adults become sick and many die, vast

numbers of young people are left without able caretakers, resources and without hope.

But in the heart of Lusaka is the Fountain of Hope where the Lubuto Library projects are providing safe and beautiful refuge that opens the world of learning to Africa and to some of Zambia's vulnerable yet valuable children.

In buildings that faithfully reflect indigenous design, the Lubuto Library is a refuge of literacy, learning, self-expression and cultural enlightenment for the

orphans and vulnerable children left out of schools.

June 2, will forever be remembered with fond memories by the less privileged lads at Lusaka's Fountain of Hope, as the day was significant to them because the Lubuto Library project president Jane Meyers launched the 'New literacy Tools for Zambia' at the centre.

The project would definitely open many doors for the orphans and other vulnerable children whose single door was closed.

Located in Kamwala Township, Lubuto Libraries offers young people educational opportunities,

fostering their intellectual and emotional development and participation in society.

At the first library opening ceremony in Lusaka, first republican president Kenneth Kaunda declared the initiative as "a brilliant idea," a place to help vulnerable children "grow in knowledge and power."

He described the library as a place where "we are still holding on to humanity." Lubuto made significant progress in 2009 towards realising its vision for the libraries projects as centres for a range of educational

enrichment opportunities for vulnerable children and youths in sub Saharan Africa, in enhancing knowledge.

The first library was opened at the Kamwala Fountain of Hope Foundation while construction of the second facility at the Ngwerere School in Lusaka's Garden Township was completed in November 2010.

Speaking at the official opening and subsequent hand over of the Lubuto projects libraries to Fountain of Hope Centre, Ms Meyers said libraries were not just a collection of books but a reservoir of hidden knowledge.

She hopes that a third library would be constructed in Nabukuyu and the initiators of the project are busy cataloging the collection of books

earmarked for the facility.

"We are especially grateful for the very generous support of Dow Jones and Company and its employees, Oprah Angel Network, Marlin Hollinshead, and other loyal donors, such as the National Geographic Society as well as the International Mailing Solutions," said Meyers.

She is cognizance of the fact that that books open a world of ideas to the children living in poverty and despair but thanks to the libraries that hold a collection of excellent books with an emphasis on accessible works of non-fiction plus classic stories, folktales and poetry among other learning material.

She stresses the OVC's at the Fountain of Hope are guaranteed of a better future.

The books are carefully selected and organised with a unique classification system to be easily accessed by the learners.

In partnership with African Librarians and writers, Lubuto embarked on the collection and publication of stories in local Zambian languages to preserve culture and diverse traditions.

The first translations of lessons were from English to Bemba and Nyanja dialects and they were done by Ireen Chisala and Miriam Banda respectively.

Kikaonde was translated by Hilda Kachaka and Given Kambita-Mumba while Luvale and Lunda dialects were done by Harriet Mbimbi and Siloz by Janepher Njansi.

Moses Zyambo and Joe Tembo helped in the creation of the Zambian language lessons into computer E-toys and graphical applications for the young learners.

With the perception among certain quarters of the society that Zambians and children to be precise are alien to the culture of utilising libraries to read and research, Cain Hull is in charge of advising children and encouraging them to go to Lubuto centre to use the educational tools that include computers which they can access for free. Peggy chilumba who is the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) for Monze, but was the time working at the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) in Lusaka helped tirelessly to ensure that the 'New Literacy Tools For Zambia' were incorporated in the Ministry of Education Syllabus.

The Information Technology Communication Centre, which started operating in 2009 was funded through a grant by the Education International for Learners (EIFL).

Financial constraints were highlighted to be some of the impediments to the success in the building of more Lubuto libraries in Zambia.

Mundia Mwendende is acting curriculum specialist at the Ministry of Education was elated to learn that children at the institution were learning academic skills in their various local languages.

"Initial literacy must be done in local languages, for the growing kids just like internet giant search Google has been made accessible in Nyanja and Bemba, among other Zambian dialects," Mr Mwendende said.

The educationalist notes the Ministry of Education values partnerships with the Lubuto projects and expresses hope that the initiative would be sustained to embrace new technological advancements and preserve cultural beliefs.

Similar sentiments were echoed by US envoy to Zambia Mark Storella who prayed for the spreading of Lubuto Library centres to all regions of the nation.

Director of the Fountain of Hope Lubuto projects, Priscilla Locha bemoaned the financial constraints the school is facing.

Ms Locha outlined challenges among them pupils sitting on the floors due to lack of adequate desks and lack of money to pay the six teachers who are employed on a full time basis.

"The teachers are supposed to be fully paid each month end, but it is not easy to find enough money to pay them on time," said Ms Locha.

She appeals to the Government and other well wishers to come to the aid of the institution which has been over whelmed by the number of orphans and vulnerable children that the centre receives on daily basis, which she said is close to a population of thousand.

"We get some funding from the Ministry of Youth Sport and Child Development as well as from Mission Direct of the United Kingdom and the



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Fire Light Foundation of United State of America US but it is not enough to meet all our expenses," Ms Locha said.

Due to the recognition that the Lubuto project continues

to get, there been an increase in interest from various organisations and individuals around the world.

Last year Anne Sinclair, a renowned French television

journalist and wife of former managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Dominique Strauss-Kahn visited the centre, while in April 2010 actor and humanitarian Danny Glover and advisory board member for Lubuto Library Mulenga Kapwepwe joined the special programme of elementary and middle school children at the Benning Neighbourhood Library in Washington DC, in honour of the National Library week as well to have the creation of the film our *Time to Bring Change*, based on Martin Luther King's big words, an award winning children's book about the life of King, the play depicts art, drama and creative life skills for children.

The first round of books have been scanned and uploaded on to the website: www.Lubutocollections.org.

The onus is for every family to revert to the old traditional ways of caring for extended families as the Lubuto: a Bemba word signifying knowledge, enlightenment and light is leading the way as a shining example, so as to reduce the overwhelming number of vulnerable children who face a somber and desperate future.