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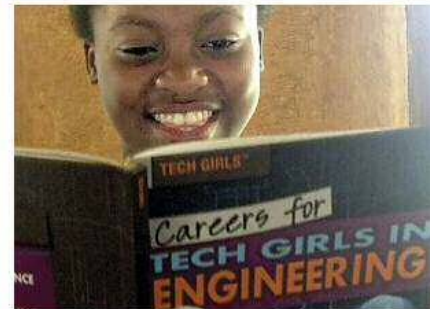
**TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION
the Africa we need by 2030**

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PUBLIC LIBRARIES AS DRIVERS TOWARDS AGENDA 2030: A case study of Lubuto Library Partners

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Introduction

Public libraries are flexible institutions well-positioned to respond to community needs and societal goals, and they have a broad role to play in ending poverty, promoting social justice, and protecting the earth. Lubuto Library Partners (LLP) is an innovative development organisation that builds public libraries' capacity to create opportunities for equitable education and poverty alleviation. This case study examines how Lubuto Libraries drive progress towards the achievement of Agenda 2030 in Zambia and beyond, serving as a model for the region in the provision of open-access, inclusive educational spaces targeting the most vulnerable children and youths. After nearly four years of funding through the Education Programme of the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) to support advocacy for the Lubuto model, LLP was selected as a DREAMS Innovation Challenge winner, working over the next two years to empower adolescent girls to live HIV-free by keeping them in secondary school.

Public libraries can be key drivers of Agenda 2030 by serving as versatile platforms that connect communities with information, programmes and services directed towards ending poverty, promoting social justice, protecting the environment, and improving health and education. LLP (2016) is an innovative development organisation that "builds the capacity of public libraries to create opportunities for equitable education and poverty reduction." LLP offers a model for public libraries that serve as places of connected learning through a holistic process that is "interest driven, socially connected, and tied to school achievement and real-world opportunity" (Ito & Martin, 2013, p. 29). Children and youths in Lubuto Libraries develop educational goals, a sense of community, an outlet for self-expression, and knowledge and skills that empower them both personally and economically.

The OSISA Education Programme, in collaboration with Comic Relief, has supported LLP in Zambia to implement a three-year project advocating the Lubuto model, an investment that has led to a

much-strengthened partnership with government, increased stakeholder involvement, and new funding sources that recognise the critical roles libraries play beyond the education sector. One such source is the DREAMS Innovation Challenge grant to reduce the incidence of HIV infection among adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), which LLP was a winner of. Lubuto Libraries offer a uniquely accessible gateway for linking high-risk girls to the type of empowering information and services which enable them to develop life skills, prevent HIV and stay in school, all key to the realisation of DREAMS objectives in the region and deeply connected to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 and 5 of Agenda 2030. LLP's programmes and services under DREAMS are designed to be adaptable to other libraries in the region, enabling the library profession in Southern Africa to collaboratively champion girls' health and access to educational opportunities.

About Lubuto Library Partners

The mission of LLP is to:

empower African children and youth and help them develop the knowledge and skills to reconnect with their culture and community and participate fully in society. Lubuto constructs enduring, indigenously-styled open-access libraries stocked with comprehensive collections of books and appropriate technology (LLP, 2017).

These libraries serve as the centre for Lubuto's programmes, which offer education, information and psychosocial support. LLP programmes also encourage self-expression through reading, music, art, drama, IT, mentoring and other activities. Rather than regimented programming, the Lubuto Library model uses innovative professional library services as adaptable and inclusive tools to support children and youths (LLP, 2016a).

LLP is based in Zambia and opened its first library at the Fountain of Hope Drop-In Centre in Kamwala, Lusaka, in September 2007. A second library was opened at Ngwerere Basic School in Garden Compound, Lusaka, in November 2010; and a third library in the village of Nabukuyu in the Southern Province in November 2015. These libraries have received well over 700 000 visits and reached some 75 000 young people. Over 10 000 children have participated in Lubuto programmes, over 70 percent are orphans, more than a quarter are out of school, and one in ten comes from the streets. A fourth Lubuto Library is currently being constructed at the Mthunzi Center in peri-urban Lusaka West, with a fifth library slated to open in Choma in 2018.

Lubuto Libraries offer holistic programming in which young people and adults from every level of society can participate. Key programmes include Lubuto *Mentoring*, a programme providing psychosocial support, life skills, and positive peer interaction; Lubuto *Drama*, a performing arts programme; Lubuto *Arts*, a visual arts programme; and Lubuto *Literacy*, a computer-based literacy programme offered in seven Zambian languages. Other activities include chess, movies, story times and book clubs. New programmes are continually being developed in response to community needs, including early childhood programming, programming for deaf children, and a sustainable agriculture programme.

In 2008, LLP and the Ministry of General Education signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which named LLP as a:

national partner in providing literacy and library services to Zambia's orphans and vulnerable children. This MOU complements national plans to ensure equitable access to educational resources and mandates LLP to "provide leadership in establishing standards of good library practice" in order to improve the quality of education in Zambia (Meyers, 2012, p. 2)

Since mid-2011, LLP has worked extensively with the Zambia Library Service in the detailed planning of the scale-up of Lubuto Libraries across the country. On 15 May 2014, a new MOU was signed with the Ministry that confirmed their commitment to provide, to the maximum extent possible, the necessary financial support for the building of libraries that meet the needs of orphans, vulnerable children and youths in Zambia. These libraries have a significant role to play in addressing the Agenda 2030 goals on a national level, offering a sustainable and scalable model for holistic and inclusive informal education that includes access to critical information supporting health, human rights and social justice, environmental protection and economic development.

Public libraries as drivers of Agenda 2030

Public libraries are open institutions that provide inclusive opportunities for informal education to the most vulnerable members of society. They are also highly valuable gateways to formal education for children

and youths who have been excluded from the education system by building vital connections to community resources (i.e., schools, scholarships, etc.) (SDG 4). However, public libraries have a broad role to play beyond the educational sphere and are able to act as key drivers in virtually all of the Agenda 2030 goals by setting and achieving targets that respond directly to the needs of their communities. Public libraries are uniquely equipped to respond to the SDGs by:

- Providing equality of access, especially to the most socially and economically marginalised;
- Connecting users with other services and institutions that meet their economic, educational, psychosocial and other needs;
- Providing a range of resources on varied topics, and in varied formats, to ensure maximum access to essential information; and
- Constantly seeking to address the unmet needs of the community through dynamic and innovative programmes and services.

Some examples of ways in which these functions of public libraries offer direct support to the achievement of the SDGs are offered below.

Public libraries provide equality of access

Public libraries offer equitable access to resources, services, programmes and technology (SDG 1). In many countries, they are among the only truly free educational institutions and, consequently, are able to reach members of society who have been excluded from other institutions, such as schools. Public libraries provide information access and services to people irrespective of age, socioeconomic status, gender and ability (SDGs 4, 5 and 10), including access to resources that are prohibitively expensive to individuals, such as Internet access (SDG 9) and other new technologies. Lubuto Libraries conduct extensive, targeted outreaches to vulnerable groups of children and youths, such as orphans, children living on the streets, children with disabilities and adolescent mothers.

Public libraries connect youths with other institutions, services and opportunities

Public libraries are community information hubs with wide referral networks that can connect the most disenfranchised members of society with information about and connections to basic services (SDG 1), educational opportunities such as scholarships (SDG 4), employment (SDG 8), and community organisations and social service providers dealing with issues such as gender-based violence (GBV) (SDG 5) and child abuse (SDG 16). Lubuto Libraries routinely provide children and youths with connections to scholarship opportunities, social service providers, and NGOs dealing with issues of child welfare. Lubuto Libraries also assist with employment-seeking, along with providing innovative opportunities for the youth to acquire skills in areas such as computer programming, drama and visual arts which are often translated into formal employment.

Public libraries provide essential information in appropriate formats

Public libraries are deeply responsive institutions that provide information resources in accordance with the needs of their communities. Libraries elicit community requests for information through reference interviews, surveys, focus groups and other means, focused not only on subject areas of interest but issues such as level, language, target audience and format to ensure maximum usability. For example, the Mumuni Library collects and provides essential information in various formats (including information in local languages and multimedia content) on topics such as agriculture (SDG 2) to meet the needs of small-holder farmers and promote sustainability. Lubuto Libraries also collect and provide information on topics such as sexual and reproductive health (SRH) (SDG 5), cultural heritage (SDG 11), children's rights (SDG 16), climate change, and sustainable use of the environment (SDGs 13, 14 and 15).

Public libraries are responsive to the critical needs of their communities

Public libraries are not static information providers. They are dynamic institutions that constantly seek to understand the situations of the communities they serve and to respond appropriately. The most pressing needs of the community are the most pressing concerns of the public library. This extends far beyond education to include needs related to social welfare, poverty and economic inclusion, social justice, and health. For instance, in Southern Africa, 75 percent of all new HIV infections occur among AGYW (DREAMS Innovation Challenge, n.d.).

The need for information, programmes and services to address the sexual health information needs of girls and young women as a key component of promoting gender equality is clear (SDG 5), and libraries serving children and the youth have a responsibility to respond in innovative ways.

The need for information, programmes and services to address the sexual health information needs of girls and young women as a key component of promoting gender equality is clear (SDG 5), and libraries serving children and the youth have a responsibility to respond in innovative ways. It is through this ongoing cycle of evaluating community needs, setting goals for service and information provision, and implementing new services and programmes that public libraries are able to advance the goals of Agenda 2030 in ways that are uniquely efficient, inclusive and locally responsive.

The Lubuto Library model advancing SDGs 3 and 5 through DREAMS

In Zambia, the prevalence of HIV infection is 14.3 percent, with women disproportionately infected (16.1 percent versus 12.3 percent) (UNICEF Zambia, n.d.). These rates are climbing most dramatically among girls and women between the ages of 15 and 24 (DREAMS Innovation Challenge, n.d.). Yet, HIV/AIDS is as much a social condition as it is a biomedical one. Research in the region has shown that each additional year of formal education has a protective effect against HIV risk, especially for young women, with the likelihood of contracting HIV dropping by 3.9 percent for each additional year of education completed after Grade 9 (De Neve *et al.*, 2015).

However, there are many barriers to education for AGYW in Zambia. LLP's focus groups have shown that many AGYW in the libraries' service areas drop out of secondary school due to a lack of financial resources and/or pressure from families, peers or sexual partners into early marriage or transactional sex as forms of financial support, greatly increasing their risk of contracting HIV. Others face negative familial attitudes that restrict their educational possibilities by requiring them to work, perform household chores, or provide childcare for their children and siblings instead of attending school. Many girls in the focus groups also report abuse by parents and caregivers which affects their ability to attend or perform well in school and, ultimately, their health, as research has shown links between GBV and HIV rates among AGYW (Durevall & Lindskog, 2015). Ending discrimination against women, eliminating violence and exploitation, and preventing early marriages by changing social mindsets and keeping girls in school all contribute to achieving gender equality and controlling the spread of HIV. It is in response to these interconnected needs that LLP is offering a series of programmes and services aimed at empowering young women with a support system, SRH knowledge, and determination for education.

The DREAMS Challenge is a global partnership between the US President's Emergency Funds for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Gates Foundation, Girl Effect, Johnson & Johnson, HIV Healthcare and Gilead Sciences Inc. (DREAMS Innovation Challenge, n.d.). Working with partners in ten sub-Saharan African countries, including Zambia, the DREAMS partnership has been delivering a core package of innovations for empowering girls and young women, reducing the risk of early sexual initiation, strengthening families, and mobilising communities for change (DREAMS Innovation Challenge, n.d.). In 2016, three partners in the DREAMS partnership decided to launch the DREAMS Innovation Challenge to provide rapid interventions not covered in the core package (*ibid*). These include keeping girls in secondary school as well as linking men to services. The DREAMS Challenge directly addresses SDG 3, "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages," and particularly target 3.3 which aims to eradicate AIDS and other communicable diseases by 2030



(UN-DESA, 2016a). Additionally, the DREAMS Challenge directly addresses SDG 5 (achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls).

The public library, as a platform for health information, programming and services, is the central innovation proposed by LLP in the DREAMS Innovation Challenge. It is the libraries' reach to out-of-school and otherwise extremely marginalised girls and young women that set them apart from clinics, schools and other institutional frameworks through which health interventions are traditionally delivered. Under DREAMS, Lubuto Libraries will offer:

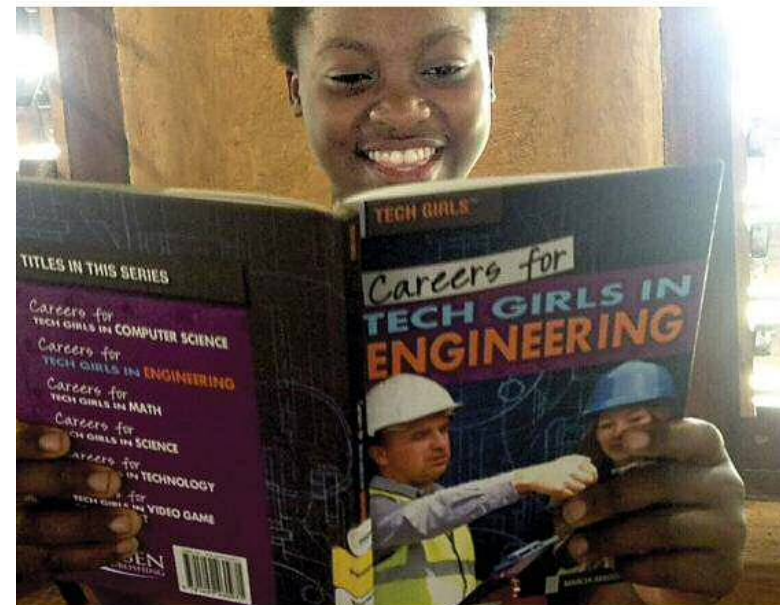
1. Sustainable scholarship support;
2. Role models, peer-to-peer all-male mentoring, and family mentoring;
3. Comprehensive and proactive health information and referral services;
4. Family literacy programmes for adolescent mothers and their young children; and
5. A platform for SRH programming and research.

LLP's DREAMS solutions will be available through all Lubuto Libraries, and are designed to be adopted by other libraries as well as other community, health and education centres in the region. These LLP solutions are described in more detail below.

Solution: Sustainably providing complete scholarship support to AGYW

Poverty presents a fundamental barrier to secondary school enrolment in Zambia, where secondary schools require tuition, uniforms, books and supplies at an average cost of approximately US\$ 200 annually, according to costs calculated from LLP scholarship recipients. These fees are out of reach for many families, and girls from LLP focus groups also report that sudden crises (such as the death of a parent, unemployment or divorce) and unanticipated financial hardships often force families to withdraw their daughters from school. Many girls drop out of school for several years at a time in order to raise the money needed to return to school, face increasing pressure to drop out permanently, marry early, or engage in transactional sex. The financial resources to stay in school are critical to the success of other interventions intended to strengthen girls' resilience and determination for education.

Access to education through scholarships is a target under SDG 4, "Ensure inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning for all" (UN-DESA, 2016b). LLP's crowdsourced scholarship programme will provide financial support for tuition, uniforms and textbooks that will enable girls who would otherwise drop out of school to stay enrolled, and to re-enrol girls who have dropped out due to financial



hardships. The libraries already act as gateways for children and youths seeking health, education or social service referrals, and the increasing number of scholarship requests received from out-of-school girls have demonstrated the need for the development of a formalised scholarship programme to manage the complex logistics of securing school placements. The scholarship opportunities will be advertised to girls through library programmes and extensive community outreach and will be granted on the basis of need. Overcoming the financial barriers will enable hundreds of girls to stay in, or return to, secondary school, protecting them from destructive pressures (i.e., early marriage and pregnancy, and transactional and intergenerational sex) that threaten their health and safety as drop-outs.

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Solution: Role model, peer-to-peer, all-male and family mentoring

While financial support is a crucial starting point, alone it is not enough to overcome the many factors that mitigate against the successful completion of secondary school for AGYW. In LLP focus groups, one girl

expressed the need for “encouragement... from all angles”, and stated that “Then you find that one will be able to make it in their studies because there is no one discouraging you.” In particular, girls stressed the importance of support from peers, parents and other supportive adults. Another girl emphasised the centrality of “examples of people that have made it in life so that we get motivated.”

To offer girls a comprehensive support system and develop their potential as leaders (SDG 5), LLP will build on its existing mentoring and outreach programmes to empower girls with the necessary life skills to make healthy choices, and develop resilience, self-confidence and determination. The mentoring programme will strengthen adolescent girls’ social safety net by providing small-group mentoring led by female role models and horizon-broadening field trips to visit successful women and inspire determination for education. Exposure to female leaders is central to the mentoring programme as it raises the career aspirations of adolescent girls and fosters increased educational attainment (Beaman *et al.*, 2012). In preliminary focus groups, only one out of 31 participants was able to name a single organisation (besides LLP) helping girls in Lusaka. Community field trips, presentations and programming from other organisations will build awareness of opportunities, services and programmes available to girls in the wider community. Peer-to-peer mentoring and training is built into the all-girls cohort in order to facilitate the development of future leaders, who will ensure programme sustainability by co-leading small groups alongside a role model mentor in subsequent sessions.

Sexual health interventions focusing exclusively on girls and women are less effective than those recognising the significance of reshaping men’s attitudes towards safer sex at the same time (Silberschmidt, 2001; Dworkin *et al.*, 2011). A boys’ mentoring cohort will cover SRH, GBV prevention, progressive gender norms and related topics (LLB, 2016b). The programme will also incorporate participation in field trips that place a particular emphasis on exposure to men working towards egalitarian gender norms and women in leadership positions, as exposure to female leaders has been shown to change men’s stereotyped views on gender roles (Beaman *et al.*, 2009).

To extend the content of mentoring sessions to the home, parents and caregivers of participants in the all-girls and all-boys cohort will attend monthly family mentoring sessions alongside their children. The mobilisation of parental and caregiver support for education is crucial to the academic success and emotional well-being of girls, who, in LLP focus groups, have asserted their need for their parents “to show love and care” in order to remain motivated in their educational pursuits.

Solution: Holistic and proactive health information and referral services

There are few safe spaces in Zambia where adolescents can access unbiased SRH information for free (Mburu *et al.*, 2013). While a national sexual health curriculum exists, it is rarely implemented in schools,

and many girls primarily receive information that is inaccurate, moralising, or intended to frighten them (ibid). Lubuto Libraries will offer privacy to youth seeking sensitive information on SRH and GBV by means of books, online resources, film screenings, and presentations by health organisations. They will also provide crucial connections to services and support (including HIV testing and post-GBV care) through referrals and partnerships.

Solution: Family literacy programme

In Zambia, 16 000 adolescent girls fall pregnant every year (World Bank, 2015). Almost all of these girls subsequently drop out of school, and the majority never re-enter (Save the Children, 2010). Educational support services to facilitate school re-entry for young mothers are rare but greatly needed, particularly for girls who drop out while still in basic school and have limited literacy skills.

Daily family literacy programming will offer young mothers a chance to further their literacy skills in supportive small groups. Research demonstrates that parents persist longer in family literacy programmes than in traditional literacy programmes (Handel & Goldsmith, 1988), develop positive attitudes towards education (Duff & Adams, 1981; Philliber, Spillman & King, 1996), and improve their reading achievement (Darling & Hayes, 1989; Handel & Goldsmith, 1988). In conjunction with adult literacy instruction, the family literacy programme teaches young mothers how to engage their children through shared reading and songs, rhymes, and games drawn from oral traditions in Zambia. This programme, linked with scholarship provisions, empowers young mothers to return to school with increased determination for education in their own lives and the lives of their children.

Solution: Providing a platform for SRH programming and research

Research organisations struggle to reach out-of-school children and other vulnerable children in studies that take place through schools and clinics. There is a demonstrated need for research sites that allow SRH researchers access to the most vulnerable groups of AGYW, just as there is value in connecting AGYW to new, research-driven programmes and informational services. Lubuto Libraries provide such organisations with a more neutral environment that schools and clinics cannot while providing direct informational and self-esteem-raising benefits to girls who participate in research activities and programmes.

Conclusion

Public libraries are well-positioned to respond to community needs and societal aims in a flexible and timely manner. They have a broad role to play in Agenda 2030 and meeting the SDGs of ending poverty, promoting education and social justice, and protecting the earth. The Lubuto

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Library model proactively demonstrates the ways in which public libraries serving children and youths can comprehensively address the SDGs through access to information resources, equitable services and inclusive programming for the general public as well as targeted outreach to the most vulnerable. This model – developed and sustained through OSISA funding which supported advocacy and the creation of meaningful partnerships at the community, national, regional, and international levels – is designed for regional scalability. As a DREAMS Innovation Challenge winner, LLP will build on more than 10 years of experience bringing dynamic library services to children and the youth in Zambia. By designing programmes and services through the DREAMS partnership to keep girls in secondary school – programmes and services that are adaptable to other libraries, educational institutions and NGOs in the region – LLP is facilitating collaboration within and beyond the library profession in the pursuit of health, equitable educational access, and empowerment for girls across Southern Africa.

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ABOUT BUWA!

Guided by the feminist principle that 'the personal is political', BUWA! is a journal published by the OSISA Women's Rights Programme annually. BUWA! services as a tool and platform to explore a variety of themes and topics that are pertinent to African women today. The journal receives both commissioned and unsolicited articles primarily from women on the African continent.

An editorial team decides on the themes and topics, and participates in the editorial process.

The publication seeks to promote open society ideals through providing a platform for women's voices, amplifying these across the continent and beyond. BUWA! also explores African women's experiences through a policy lens, to shed light on international, regional, national, and local debates and policies that shape women's choices and lived experiences.

BUWA! ONLINE

BUWA! is published by the Women's Rights programme of the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA). The title BUWA! is an adaptation of the SeSotho word 'bua' meaning 'speak'.

We would appreciate feedback on this publication using the #Buwa7 tag on any of the following platforms:

Email the Editor at alicek@osisa.org
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Comment on the OSISA facebook page at www.facebook.com/OpenSocietyInitiative.SouthernAfrica
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OSISA

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for Southern Africa



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The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) is a growing African institution committed to deepening democracy, protecting human rights and enhancing good governance in the region. OSISA's vision is to promote and sustain the ideals, values, institutions and practices of open society, with the aim of establishing vibrant and tolerant southern African democracies in which people, free from material and other deprivation, understand their rights and responsibilities and participate actively in all spheres of life.

In pursuance of this vision, OSISA's mission is to initiate and support programmes working towards open society ideals, and to advocate for these ideals in southern Africa. This approach involves looking beyond immediate symptoms, in order to address the deeper problems - focusing on changing underlying policy, legislation and practice, rather than on short-term welfarist interventions. Given the enormity of the needs and challenges in the region it operates in - and acknowledging that it cannot possibly meet all of these needs - OSISA, where appropriate, supports advocacy work by its partners in the respective countries, or joins partners in advocacy on shared objectives and goals.

In other situations, OSISA directly initiates and leads in advocacy interventions, along the key thematic programmes that guide its work. OSISA also intervenes through the facilitation of new and innovative initiatives and partnerships, through capacity-building initiatives as well as through grant making.

Established in 1997, OSISA works in 10 southern Africa countries: Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. OSISA works differently in each of these 10 countries, according to local conditions. OSISA is part of a network of autonomous Open Society Foundations, established by George Soros, located in Eastern and Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and the US.



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