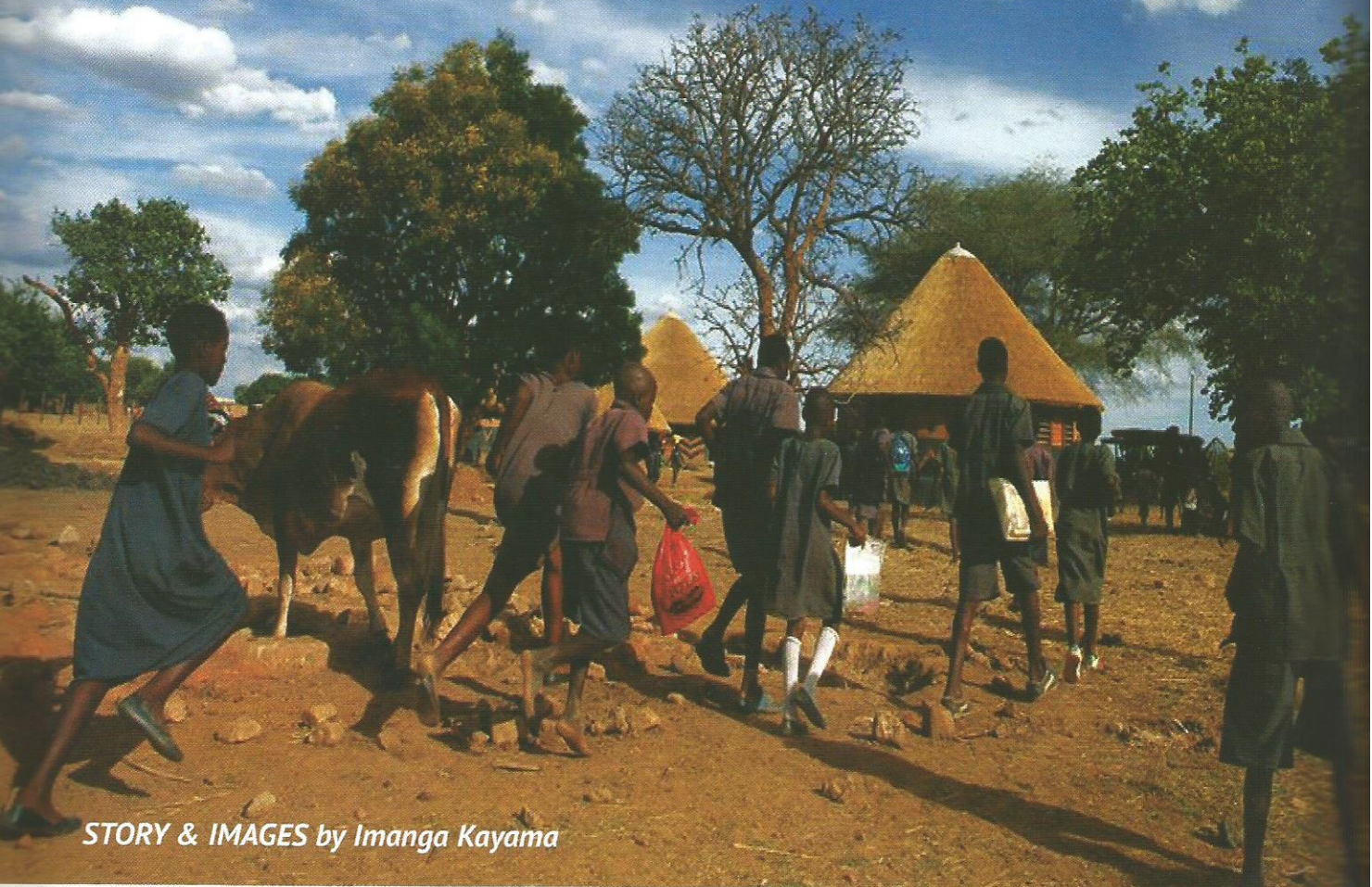


ENLIGHTENMENT TO LUBUTO'S CHILDREN THROUGH READING AND CULTURE



STORY & IMAGES by Imanga Kayama

The essence of a Lubuto Library is that it is a public library, open to all and welcoming to many. Walking through the aisles of shelves of books upon books, it is hard to put down a book once you lift it. The books are classic favourites and recent publications both in English and local languages. The collection is so well classified and organised that you'd find it hard to believe Lubuto Libraries are free of charge to anybody although first and foremost to children.

The Lubuto book collection is perhaps the most powerful tool which the libraries possess while the classification system leaves most librarians in awe of Jane Meyer's work. This is easily evidenced by the number

of children who are found at the libraries on any given day it is open.

During the school term it is not strange to observe children in uniforms sharing a book with other children in plain clothes or vice-versa pointing at illustrations or trying to pronounce a word together. The Lubuto book collection is carefully selected by experts and professionals in the library field and is replicated in every Lubuto Library that is opened. A simplified but elaborate colour-coded classification system was also developed to make it easier for children to find the books they are looking for.

According to the organisation's data, the Lubuto Libraries receive over 100,000 visitors annually. With three

operating locations and one currently under construction, the mission is to provide an open system of accessible services to vulnerable African children and youth through Lubuto libraries, enabling them to develop the knowledge and skills to reconnect with their culture and community and participate fully in society.

The innovation of the Lubuto Library is the creation of a safe environment where children can visit without feeling discriminated against. To this effect, the buildings of Lubuto Libraries are indigenously designed to offer a welcoming atmosphere utilizing a circle as the meeting point.



Origins

Lubuto Library Partners (LLP), formerly the Lubuto Library Project, was founded by Jane Meyers, a professional librarian with over 35 years of experience working in and with the countries of Malawi and Zambia. The idea for Lubuto libraries grew from her work at the Fountain of Hope (FOH) drop-in-shelter in Lusaka, Zambia, where hundreds of Zambian children who were orphaned and vulnerable as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic came daily for support. Through establishing a read-aloud program and small collection of books at FOH, Jane realized the positive, long-term impact a real, comprehensive and relevant public library could have on marginalized youth.

Networking

With the help of an extensive network of community and professional contacts in Zambia and around the world, she established LLP as a functioning organization in 2005, and opened the first Lubuto library in partnership with Fountain of Hope in 2007. The second and third Lubuto libraries were opened in partnership with Zambia's Ministry of Education in 2010 and 2014 respectively.

Notable Zambian movers and shakers supporting the Lubuto libraries initiative include Board Members such as, Mulenga Kapwepwe, Mark Chona, Mark O'Donnell, and others.

"My satisfaction is in seeing the children having a safe space, a space where their minds can explore the world through books, computers, art, games, and each other. One Lubuto Library is able to do this more than 2,000 times a week multiplied by three locations through child visitations. This is deeply satisfying," said Mulenga Kapwepwe.

For more information: www.lubuto.org or find their offices Off Roan Road, in Kabulonga, Lusaka, Zambia. ✍