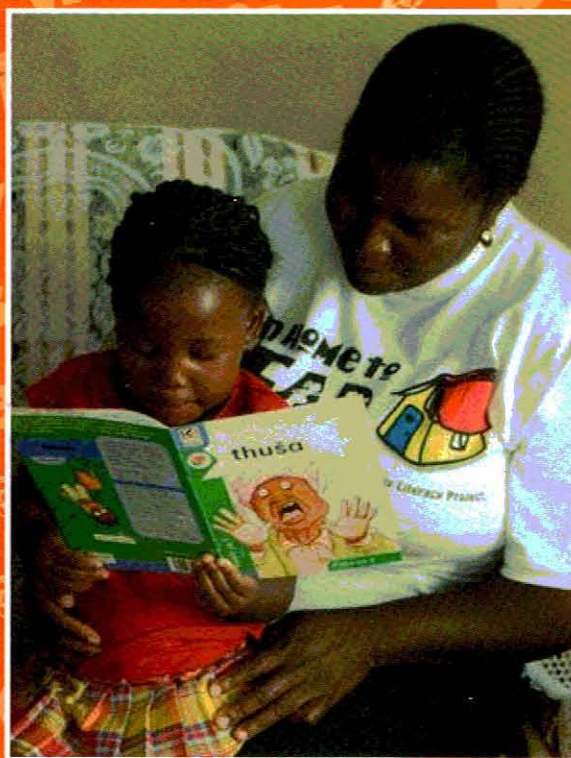




PROMOTING READING!

Factors contributing to the success of reading
development projects in Africa

Erató-Nadia Bizos
and Francis Sampa



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The aim of this publication

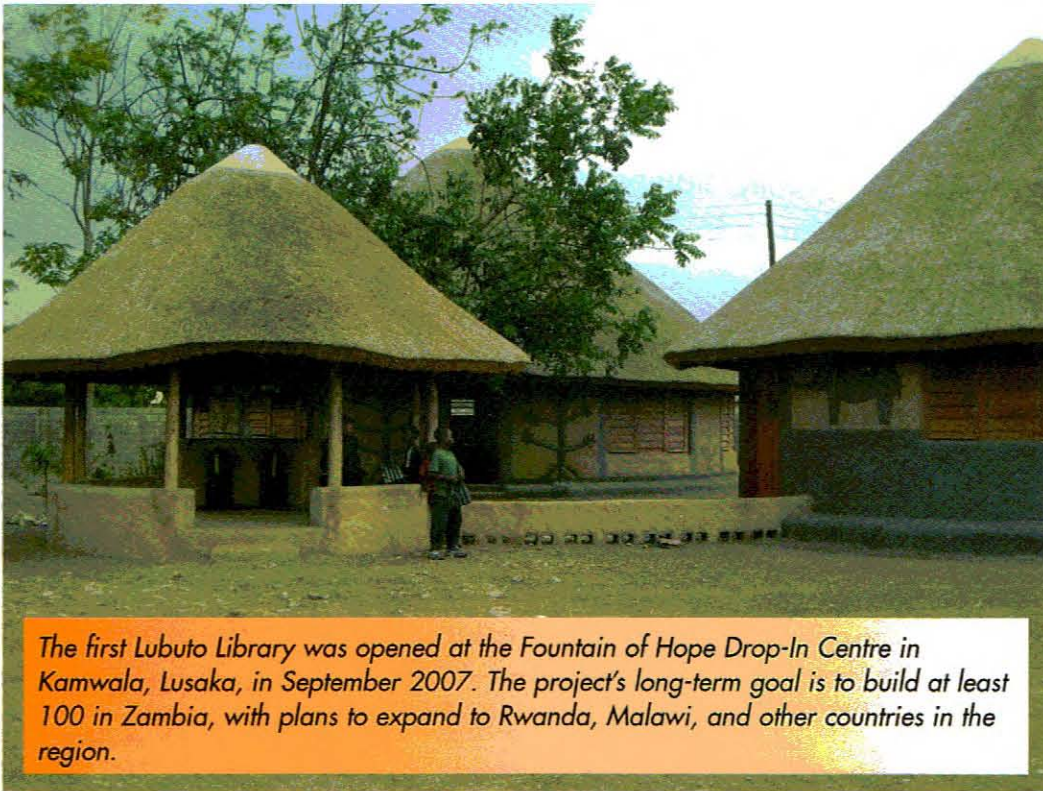
The crisis in the area of literacy education on the African continent has increasingly been acknowledged. For over a decade, many countries and institutions of learning have searched for the best strategies to fight and eradicate illiteracy. The ability to read and write is regarded as being a necessary condition for active participation in society, with UNESCO defining literacy as 'a tool for learning, as well as a social practice, whose use can increase the voice and participation of communities and individuals in society'.

Literacy is subsequently the right of every child. For the development of the African continent to continue, literacy must remain a priority.

This publication has been written to further ADEA's aim of sharing good practice across Africa. More specifically, the publication highlights five crucial factors that have been identified as contributing to the success of reader development projects in Africa. In so doing, ADEA hopes to help all those involved with reading development to strengthen their existing projects and perhaps begin new ones.

b. Lubuto Library Project

The *Lubuto Library Project's* mission is to create educational opportunities and a better life for street kids, orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC) affected by HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. Lubuto creates open-access, free libraries that serve as safe havens for these hard-to-reach children, and provide them with access to informal education, thereby improving literacy, language skills, children's sense of self-worth and general knowledge of the world.



The first Lubuto Library was opened at the Fountain of Hope Drop-In Centre in Kamwala, Lusaka, in September 2007. The project's long-term goal is to build at least 100 in Zambia, with plans to expand to Rwanda, Malawi, and other countries in the region.

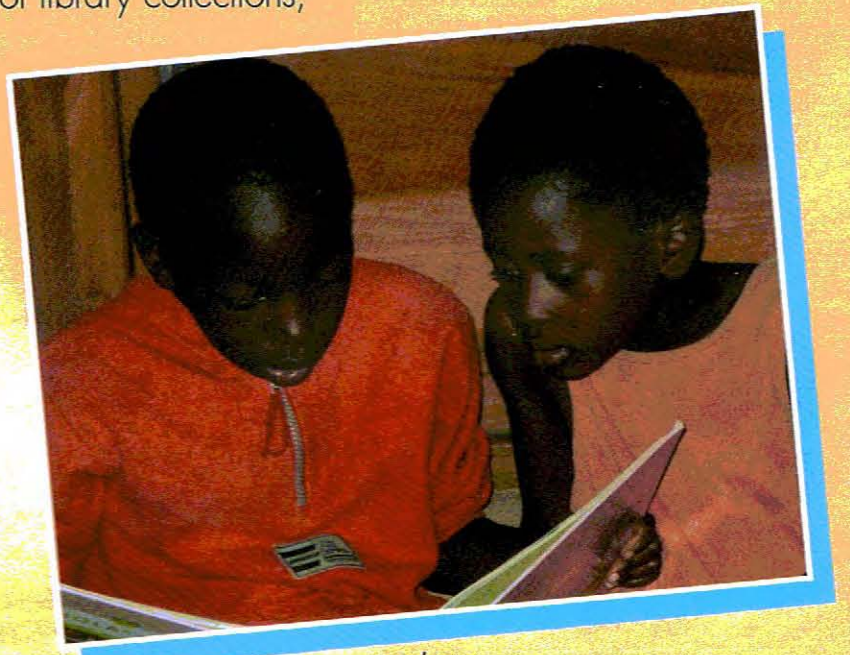
Lubuto Libraries target vulnerable boys and girls from ages 5 to 18, in both rural and urban areas, and are hosted by existing community-based social service organisations or educational agencies. Working through established organisations and networks adds an element of sustainability and efficiency that would be significantly diminished if Lubuto started from scratch with the building of each new library.

Lubuto Libraries are places where children can read for themselves, look at books or have books read to them. Carefully selected book collections of 4 000 volumes, gathered in the United States, are supplemented by local language materials and books made by the children themselves. HIV/AIDS and other health materials geared for this target group are included in Lubuto collections.

Outside of the impact for the target group, Lubuto Libraries will play an important role in the development of library services and a reading and knowledge culture in the greater society. Adults and youth from intact families who are able to attend school are also welcome at Lubuto Libraries. In this way it is envisioned that beyond the current orphan crisis faced by sub-Saharan African societies, Lubuto Libraries will continue as vital community-based contributors to the establishment of a 'knowledge society'.

The goals and objectives of the *Lubuto Library Project* are realised through a five-step approach that includes:

- careful identification of library sites
- timely construction of libraries
- establishment of library collections
- staff training and development of library services
- monitoring and evaluation of library collections, services and impact.

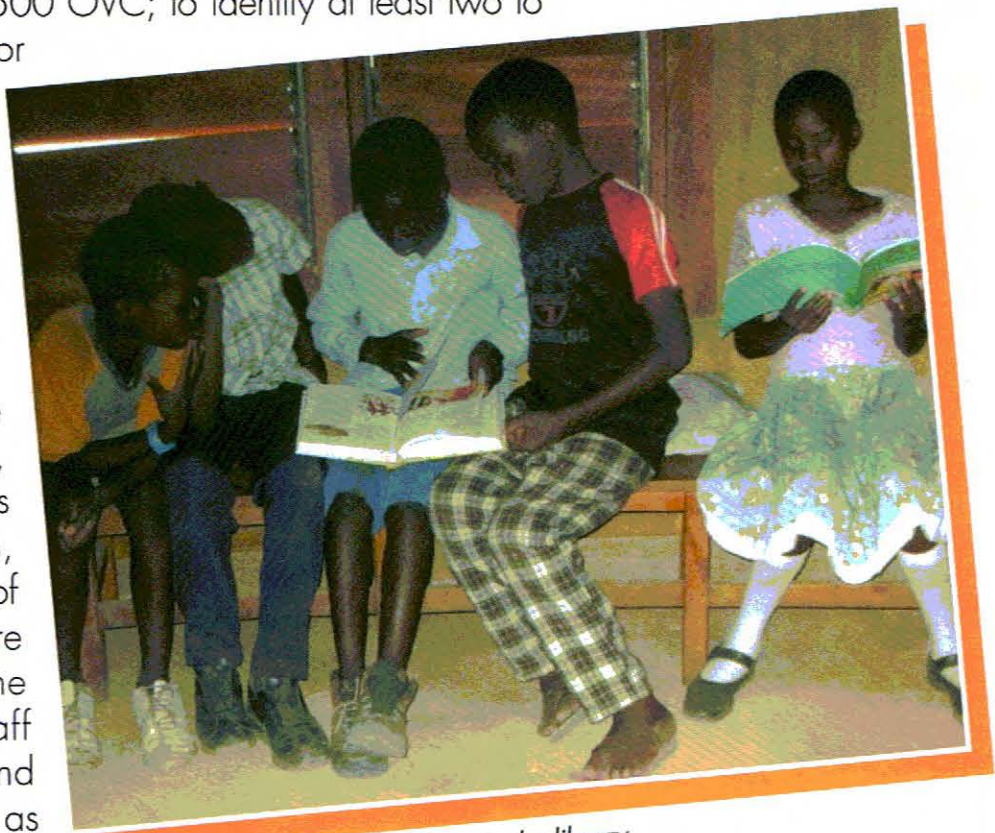


Children enjoy sharing a book.

Careful identification of library sites

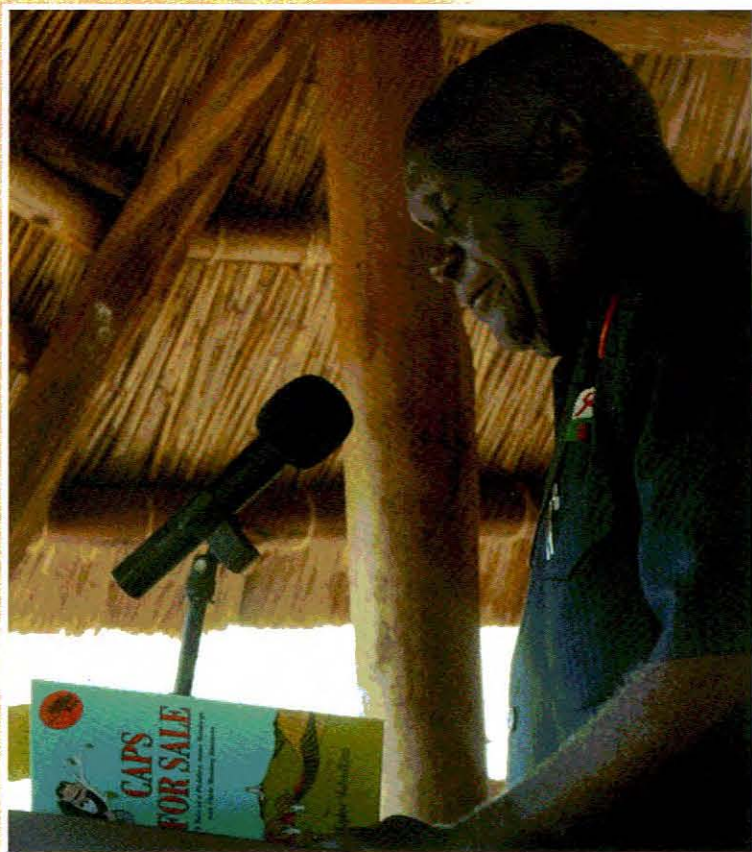
Lubuto Libraries are hosted by existing community-based social-service organisations or educational agencies. Lubuto's partnership with each host organisation is solidified through the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). In signing, host organisations agree to maintain the non-circulating book collection and organisation scheme provided by the *Lubuto Library Project*, to allow all vulnerable children, whether or not they are part of their own organization, to use the library; to make the library and its services available for a minimum of 40 hours per week to a minimum of 500 OVC; to identify at least two to three officers or teachers who will staff the library and to manage and supervise those library staff.

In return for the host commitment, Lubuto provides the buildings, initial collection of books and future updates to the collection; staff orientation and ongoing training as appropriate; assistance with measuring the use and impact of the library; support in library programme development and general library maintenance.



Reading becomes a social activity in the library.

Timely construction of libraries



Barefeet Theatre illustrates "Caps for Sale" read by President Kaunda.

A Lubuto Library consists of three round thatched structures: a reading room to house the books, an arts/activities building, and a transition/ entrance (insaka) structure where children can wash their hands. A sunken round central area of the reading room is perfect for read-alouds and storytelling. Zambian contractors, suppliers, and other professionals are competitively selected and overseen to ensure the quality of the final product. Host organisations are intimately involved in all aspects of Lubuto Library design and construction.

Establishment of library collections

The project relies on a broad volunteer network of skilled librarians to determine the appropriate types of books for the 4 000 volume collections, to acquire and classify them and to prepare them for shipment. The initial collection is supplemented by books in Zambian languages, and new books, based on traditional Zambian stories, will be created by a new Zambia Board on Books for Young People that is being established jointly by the Lubuto project and the Zambia Library Association. Collections include stories and informational books of all levels. Host organisations are encouraged to expand collections on an ongoing basis.

Staff training and development of library services

The *Lubuto Library Project* works closely with consulting librarians to develop and deliver training to Lubuto librarians. A manual on Lubuto Library management and services is currently being developed and will be used in training library staff. Prior to training delivery, a rapid needs assessment of host organisation staff will be conducted to determine their specific needs. All training materials will be adapted to fit the needs of the staff and the context in which the library is operating.

Monitoring and evaluation of library collections, services and impact

Ongoing feedback on the content of collections and impact of programs is essential to maintaining targeted and effective services in any library environment. The *Lubuto Library Project* has developed mechanisms for measuring the use and impact of Lubuto Libraries which are a significant part of the training provided to library staff. Staff members are asked to measure the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability in both quantitative and qualitative terms.



Lubuto recognises the importance of using existing networks and expertise. Here, Naomi Mtanga, a lecturer in the department of library studies at the University of Zambia, talks to her students about the concept of Lubuto Libraries. She is a training consultant with the project.