

Building libraries for African children

There are literally millions of orphaned children in Sub-Saharan Africa, largely as a result of the AIDS pandemic, reports Jane Kinney Meyers, president of the Lubuto Library Project, Inc. Lubuto, a nonprofit corporation established in 2005 to provide libraries for children affected by AIDS in Africa, has as its mission to build libraries, complete with book collections carefully compiled through the book knowledge and volunteer help of librarians, writers, booksellers, and teenage helpers in the United States.

These libraries provide a safe gathering place and an opportunity for an informal education for orphans, street children, and other vulnerable children, Meyers says. Once established, the libraries will hold events with traditional storytellers, giving the children the opportunity to transcribe stories and create their own library books.

The Lubuto Project focuses especially on those children and teenagers in Africa who have lost nearly everything, Meyers says. The devastation wrought by AIDS in Africa has left even very young children orphaned and on their own on the street. The Lubuto Project is a way of acknowledging that along with the need for food, shelter, and clothing, there is always a need for hope—and books can be an essential ingredient in fostering that hope.

To raise awareness and mobilize support of high school students, Lubuto produced a film titled *Kids Just Like You*, which made its debut in May. Narrated by



The foundations for the structures of the first Lubuto Library in Zambia are taking shape.

Julian Bond, the film aims to connect U.S. students with their less fortunate counterparts in Africa, increasing their appreciation of their own educational opportunities while showing what they can do to help the street kids—with books.

The walls of the first Lubuto Library began to take shape in June at the Fountain of Hope shelter in Lusaka, Zambia, with construction scheduled for completion by the end of October. The Lubuto Project plans to ship the first collection of 6,000 donated books to fill the shelves of this library before the end of the year.

As of the end of June, appeals had raised two-thirds of the funds needed to construct this first library, with a need for some US\$15,000 remaining. Every penny donated to the project goes for this purpose, Meyers says, and the project seeks support from all people who understand the value of books and reading in order to help the children in Zambia who need books to nurture their imaginations and hope.

To learn more about the Lubuto Library Project, including information on making a tax-deductible donation, please visit the project's website at www.Lubuto.org. ❖