

Remarks of U.S. Ambassador Carmen Martinez at November 22nd 2006 Zambia premiere of Lubuto Library Project film *Kids Just Like You* at American Centre, Lusaka, Zambia

- Ms. Jane Kinney Meyers, Lubuto Library Project President
- Ms. Mulenga Kapwepwe, Chairman, National Arts Council and Lubuto Library Project Advisory Board member
- Members of the Lubuto Library Project
- Members of the press

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to our American Center for this screening of Jane Meyers' wonderful short documentary film *Kids Just Like You*. This film was produced by the Lubuto Library Project and, after watching it, I know you will better understand the urgent need for this project. You will also appreciate the efforts of the people here today who have made it their mission to help provide street kids, orphans and other vulnerable children with access to libraries—giving them opportunities for non-formal education, improving literacy, language skills, general knowledge, artistic expression and their participation in society.

The concept of Lubuto Libraries includes the same standards of library services for children in the United States, and reflects the American tradition of free access to information and learning. Libraries in America have, for generations, been sacred places where people from all backgrounds can gather and improve themselves. Likewise, beginning here in Zambia, Lubuto Libraries will provide an opening into the world, making available education and information and, most importantly, giving children hope by offering them a window from which to look at a great big world outside.

A significant number of individuals and institutions have supported the launch of this project, by donating funds and/or expertise in developing its programs. Professional library communities in the U.S. and Zambia, along with top international children's books and literacy organizations and leaders, have joined in this groundbreaking effort with great enthusiasm. The world-famous National Geographic Society, for instance, has contributed its support. Our Public Affairs Section has offered these facilities for future trainings and we're looking at ways the U.S. Mission here can offer support. I am convinced that Lubuto Libraries in Zambia will be a model for the spread of this concept to other countries in the region.

This gathering today is a unique opportunity to learn about this approach to improving the lives of orphans and vulnerable children. I invite you to enjoy the film, and to think about the ways that you can help improve the lives of orphans and vulnerable children—here in Zambia and anywhere in the world.

Thank you.