

## Vital Partnerships Fueling the Dynamic Development of Libraries for Young People in Zambia

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### Abstract:

*Partnerships are so fundamental to Lubuto Library organization that this year our name was changed to Lubuto Library Partners. The new name underscores the fundamental importance of the partnership between libraries and the communities they serve.*

*Since Lubuto was established 10 years ago, partnerships helped define and animate our work. Lubuto's partnerships with others in the library profession ensure sustainability and effectiveness. It has been especially important in an environment that previously offered no children and youth library services or training that, through cooperation and partnership, youth services be understood, owned and sustained.*

*Private and public sector partnerships are needed, in tandem, with Lubuto's organization in Zambia and the U.S., as well as with each individual library Lubuto creates. Major partnerships finance the creation of libraries and the operations of our organization. Partnerships with local businesses and community members, especially through library committees, help sustain the libraries. Partnerships with arts, health, ICT and other organizations enrich libraries through development of new programs, services and resources. In turn, those agencies gain by using the library as a platform to reach their intended audiences. Everyone wins in an effective partnership.*

*Lubuto's activities beyond the libraries' walls, such as preservation and promotion of the creation of local language children's literature, are also nurtured by partnerships. One example is a unique partnership with the Zambian Education Publishing House that shows how a digitization project is forging a new partnership between a publishing house and a library, to the benefit of all.*

*This paper describes a wide array and variety of partnerships that brought the Lubuto Library Partners into existence and expanded its scope and activities, along with partnerships that make Lubuto Libraries rich places that play a central role in the lives of their users.*

**Keywords:** Africa; Libraries; children; youth; partnership

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In its call for papers for this session, IFLA's Children and Young Adults section rightly recognized that partners seem more important for libraries than ever. In fact, partnerships have been so central to the founding and growth of the Lubuto Library organization and its libraries that in 2014 we officially changed our name to Lubuto Library Partners (LLP). The new name underscores the fundamental importance of the partnership between libraries and the communities they serve, and how support partnerships can guide libraries in remaining relevant and vital in their communities.

Since LLP was established 10 years ago, partnerships have helped define and animate our work, objectives and growth strategies. Lubuto Library Partners ([www.Lubuto.org](http://www.Lubuto.org)) is an innovative development organization that builds the capacity of public libraries to create opportunities for equitable education and poverty reduction. Its mission is to enlighten and enrich the lives of children and youth in sub-Saharan Africa, especially those not in school and highly vulnerable. To guide and inform our library colleagues, other stakeholders and society at large in the role that public library youth services can play in national development, Lubuto constructs enduring, indigenously-styled open-access libraries stocked with comprehensive collections of well-chosen books and appropriate technology. Featuring effective outreach programs, these libraries serve as safe havens and are the center for programs that offer education, psychosocial support and self-expression through reading, music, art, drama, computers, mentoring and other activities.

In other words, LLP promotes high-quality, impactful library services by creating libraries—that are completely owned by partner organizations—and educating staff to know how to develop and offer services and programs that best serve their users. We do this in order to advocate for support for libraries and the role they can play, particularly in serving young people in Africa, a continent whose population is overwhelmingly young, yet whose libraries and library schools in recent decades generally have not focused on youth services. This paper will describe a variety of partnerships that brought the Lubuto Library Partners into existence and expanded its scope and activities, along with interesting and exciting partnerships that can guide libraries in becoming rich places that play a central role in the lives of their users. Everyone wins in an effective partnership.

## **PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN THE LIBRARY PROFESSION**

Partnership is fundamental to the Lubuto model, and since our focus is on strengthening the library profession's capacity to serve children and youth in their country, our ongoing partnership with members of the library profession has been, perhaps, our most important one. Leaders in the library profession worldwide have guided our activities since inception, but the first implementations and development of our model began in Zambia. Thus, with Lubuto's fundamental emphasis on local ownership, Zambia's library establishment has always been understood as the ultimate "owners" of Lubuto Libraries, and recognition of that has underpinned a strong partnership relationship. Our activities draw strength from the shared aims and long history of collaboration among the partners.

Lubuto's partnerships with those offering LIS education in Zambia and worldwide ensure that our efforts to strengthen and expand librarianship in the country and region are effective. It has been especially important in an environment that previously offered no children and youth library services or training that, through cooperation and partnership, youth services be understood, owned and sustained. The University of Zambia has been the major educational institution training librarians in Zambia, at the undergraduate level and in a newly developed Master's program – but they have offered no courses in children's or youth services, despite the fact that youth account for nearly 70% of Zambia's population. LLP worked with the LIS department to recruit a children's services professor through the U.S. Fulbright program, but no formal course was added to the curriculum during the professor's one-year tenure at UNZA. Now LLP is working with UNZA's LIS program to develop a short course in children's/Lubuto library services, a partnership activity that is expected to help provide and strengthen the workforce for current and future Lubuto Libraries in Zambia.

An important cornerstone of Lubuto's capacity building plans in Zambia is our underwriting the cost of one of our staff's studies for a Master's degree in Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, USA, with a concentration on children and youth services. This is a fundamental and needed investment in achieving our objectives, and we feel confident that the very talented Thomas Mukonde will be a leader with regional impact. During his studies in 2014-2015 he is forging new partnerships between Lubuto and LIS departments, libraries and librarians in the States.

The Zambia Library Service (ZLS), as a department of Zambia's education ministry, manages the public library network throughout Zambia. In addition to ensuring the establishment and coordination of libraries, ZLS is responsible for assisting other organizations providing library and information services. LLP formalized our partnership with the Ministry and the Zambia Library Service in a 2008 MOU that identified Lubuto as a National Partner in attaining the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), expressing the ministry's recognition of the effectiveness of the Lubuto model in contributing to achievement of the MDGs. ZLS has long recognized the value of their partnership with LLP in strengthening their support within their Ministry and asked us if we could build Lubuto Libraries along with ZLS libraries in each of Zambia's provinces. This plan was approved by the Ministry and formalized (with a schedule of proposed initial Lubuto Libraries) in an amendment to the original MOU which was signed in May, 2014. The amended MOU outlines details of how LLP and the Zambia Library Service would work together to extend high quality library services to youth through Lubuto Libraries at each of the provincial ZLS Libraries.

ZLS, UNZA LIS and the Zambia Library and Information Science Association (LIASA) have seen the benefits of Lubuto's innovations and progress in bringing more libraries, and broader understanding of the value of libraries, to Zambia. Under a three-year grant from the U.K. foundation Comic Relief and the Open Society Initiative South Africa (OSISA), the third Lubuto Library was constructed in partnership with a community organization in Zambia's rural Southern Province. ZLS, LIASA and UNZA LIS colleagues and Ministry officials travelled in large numbers to celebrate the library's opening in November 2014 as a victory for the library profession in Zambia.

### **PARTNERSHIPS FOR CONSTRUCTING AND ESTABLISHING LIBRARIES**

Lubuto Libraries are established in extensive consultation with their community-based host organizations, including library committees and other bodies related to their functioning within the community. Presentations on the libraries' programs and services emphasize the community's role and opportunities for community members to contribute their talents and interests to the libraries' programming. It has been through these means, and publicity of the upcoming library, that individuals desirous of contributing to the libraries and offering programs have been identified for existing Lubuto Libraries. Community members are inspired by the programs and often enthusiastic to participate in and lead programs themselves.

The relationship between LLP and the host organization is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding that clearly identifies the responsibilities of each organization. The host organization owns the library and its collection and other resources after it is constructed and stocked by LLP. The host takes responsibility for staffing and maintaining the library facility and services, and commits to keeping the library open a minimum of 40 hours per week. LLP's main role after the initial creation of the facility and provision of an opening-day collection is in training, which begins during construction and continues long after the library opens. LLP has maintained a close training and support relationship with all of the libraries it has created to date: the Fountain of Hope Lubuto Library, hosted by a drop-in shelter for street children; Ngwerere Lubuto Library, hosted by the Ministry of Education and sited on the grounds of a government school; and the Mumuni Library, hosted by the Matantala Rural Integrated Development Enterprise (MRIDE) and the Nabukuyu community in the rural Southern Province.

LLP negotiates private and public sector partnerships in tandem through their regional office in Zambia and the U.S. headquarters, as well as with each individual library Lubuto creates. Major

partnerships finance the establishment of libraries and the operations of the Lubuto organization, which not only creates the libraries but carries out extensive projects that reach beyond library walls. Partnerships with local businesses and community members, especially through library committees, help sustain the libraries.

The first Lubuto Library at the Fountain of Hope Drop-in Centre was constructed completely with funding mobilized from individuals, primarily those involved in the children's literature world through the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), and library colleagues through library associations. The funding partner for construction and stocking of the Ngwerere Library was the international business information company Dow Jones & Co. (with some Zambian Government contribution), but significant additional funding was needed through small grants and individual donations to support the ancillary activities that made the library operational. The cost of creating the Mumuni Library was completely underwritten by Comic Relief through and with OSISA, with OSISA the recipient of the three-year Comic Relief grant and supplementing it with additional funds in annual grants to Lubuto.

At the end of 2014, Lubuto received a grant from a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program, American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA), which, along with a significant financial contribution from a private citizen, will finance the construction, stocking, community mobilization and training for the fourth Lubuto Library, to be hosted by the Mthunzi Centre in a peri-urban area of Lusaka, Zambia. The ASHA program is unique in USAID in that it only funds construction and rehabilitation of buildings and purchase of commodities. In fact, funding construction is unusual in most international aid programs, and ASHA's significant support and interest in environmental impacts will allow us to include a solar power installation with this construction. Also, the library established at the Mthunzi Centre will be Lubuto's first with funding (from ASHA) to purchase the entire 4,000-volume opening-day collection. ASHA has very strict criteria for selection of the host organization that Lubuto will use, along with Government and leveraging partner interests and relationships, for selecting future library hosts. The criteria, developed over ASHA's 50+ year existence, provide a solid basis for partnerships and ensure local ownership and sustainability.

Such major funding partnerships must always further the objectives of the financing organization. ASHA is a bilateral aid donor interested in being understood as promoting values of democracy and inclusion. Dow Jones & Co., as a print, online and digital publisher, stated that their objective in supporting Lubuto's work was to illustrate "the power of words to inform and educate." The individuals who supported building the Fountain of Hope Library wanted to further understanding of children's literature and library services in an environment where little such knowledge existed, and to meet the needs of the unserved. As the first development project in Zambia financed through traditional authorities, MRIDE's interest was to meet the expressed needs of a rural community that fully reflected and served their culture. Comic Relief's and OSISA's interests are to improve access to quality education in Zambia and to advocate for Lubuto's model of high-quality, impactful library services for young people.

As Lubuto moves forward in constructing the buildings and collection of the Mthunzi Library, we are laying plans for what we hope will be future ASHA-supported libraries, leveraged by other partnerships. The search for new partners focuses on identifying organizations with shared interests and goals. World Vision has assisted Lubuto in collection shipping in the past, and is interested in Lubuto libraries' holistic approach to improving the lives of children, so we are exploring support possibilities with their international and national offices. International and local agribusinesses in Zambia share concern for health and education of local populations that Lubuto Libraries can effectively promote. A major international bank in Zambia had an interest in supporting Lubuto's development alongside a "banking for the people" program because of the community commitment that the libraries represented, which was something that they felt would engender trust in the bank. The library could also offer programs on financial literacy.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

### **Library-based partnerships**

Partnerships with arts, health, ICT and other organizations enrich libraries through development of new programs, services and resources. In turn, partner agencies gain by using the library as a platform to reach their intended audiences. The programs are developed by LLP to show that relevant programming, integrated with a library's collection, services and outreach, are what makes a successful and impactful library. Lubuto's established programs, most founded through partnerships, were detailed in a presentation by this author at the IFLA Annual Conference in Helsinki, Finland in 2012<sup>1</sup> and include: Lubuto*Mentoring* (psychosocial support, values and life skills); Lubuto*Arts* (visual arts education); Lubuto*Drama* (performances based on library books); Lubuto*Storytime* (daily read-alouds); Lubuto*Laptops* (guided computer use); Lubuto*Literacy* (computer-based literacy education); Lubuto*Movietime* (film screenings) and Lubuto*Beats* (music). Programs in development include: Lubuto*Health* (health and HIV prevention); Lubuto*Littleones* (early childhood education); Lubuto*Rights* (legal and social empowerment); and programming in nature and the environment, science and math, story-sharing and poetry recitation, and other activities as inspired by community members, partner organization interests and library users.

### **Partnerships for professional activities beyond the libraries**

Lubuto's activities beyond the libraries' walls, such as preservation and promotion of the creation of local language children's literature, are also nurtured by partnerships. Following are a few examples of how partnerships inspired by valuable mutual interests lead to innovation with wide benefits to society.

***Innovation awards:*** Lubuto's staff had long recognized that many of its most marginalized users had very poor and even non-existent reading abilities. We were also aware that to learn to read effectively children need to initially learn to read in their mother tongue. Inspired by a small grant from EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme, LLP created a set of 700 computer-based lessons (100 in each of seven Zambian languages) to teach children to read. Then USAID offered a much larger challenge grant to organizations with innovative approaches to improving early grade reading. Lubuto winning this "All Children Reading" (ACR) award provided the opportunity to create a new and dramatically improved set of lessons, with the generous support of the ACR partners: USAID, World Vision and AusAID. The new lessons were designed by a University of Zambia reading expert who had also designed the new reading curriculum recently introduced by the Zambian government. The lessons thus extend the school curriculum to computer and mobile platforms, reaching beyond the classroom to computers and mobile devices everywhere these languages are spoken as the mother tongue.

***Research partnerships:*** Lubuto's partner Comic Relief was interested in funding a "learning research" project as part of its three-year grant to Lubuto that would help us address and clarify aspects of the Lubuto Library model. CR supports research as part of their grants because they want to promote learning that can be applied broadly, for their other grant-making and by other organizations. We developed and presented several different research questions and eventually settled on examination of our library collections as a critical issue with wider relevance to other libraries potentially serving young people in the region. It was intended to empower Lubuto Library staff to actively manage library collections to make them responsive to changing community needs.

The research project ("Evaluating Lubuto Library Collections") has benefited Lubuto libraries in many ways, including new collaborations and systems development in addition to better information about the composition of an effective collection. Its preliminary results will be presented by the lead researcher, Elizabeth Giles, at the 2015 IFLA Conference in Cape Town. In addressing the longstanding concerns about book donation programs of IFLA's children and youth section, it is our hope that African libraries may have strengthened collection development and acquisitions functions that will lead (rather than follow) book donation efforts that may continue into the future. Additionally, we hope that a well-defined core collection for African children and youth will provide

a valuable guide for collection development throughout the region and strengthen the case for increased investment in improving the quality and impact of library services for young people.

***Publisher-library partnership:*** A preservation effort Lubuto embarked upon several years ago has led us to pursue a unique partnership with the Zambian Education Publishing House (ZEPH) that will support their sales of reprinted Zambian literature. While Lubuto libraries' policy is to include 100% of what is published for young people in Zambia, that literature is scarcely in print in Zambian languages—but that wasn't always the case. A large body of high-quality literature for young people in many Zambian languages, available in hundreds of community libraries, was dispersed or destroyed after Zambia's independence as a result of political considerations and official indifference. Thus Lubuto spearheaded a major preservation effort, identifying and digitizing those materials which have been preserved in libraries worldwide and in private collections in Zambia and elsewhere.

ZEPH, whose predecessor NECZAM published most of the old materials, has been strengthened in recent years and is now reprinting some of the old titles. A few of the authors and works being reprinted were very popular and in strong demand, and ZEPH is selling the republished books at a very reasonable cost, with new computer-designed cover art. Commercial bookstores in Zambia are not allowed to raise the sale price and thus it is not profitable for them to carry the ZEPH titles, so discovery and sale of these materials has been limited. In discussion with ZEPH's publishing and marketing officials we established that the digital editions Lubuto is working to preserve not only would not hurt sales of the reprinted books but, along with stocking them in non-circulating Lubuto libraries, would actually promote knowledge of and sales of the books. Lubuto proposed constructing a special ZEPH sales kiosk as part of a Lubuto Library compound, which would be staffed by ZEPH, so that people encountering the books in the library or online (on [LubutoCollections.org](http://LubutoCollections.org)) could then purchase the books inexpensively from ZEPH if they would like to own copies.

While librarians and publishers have traditionally been natural partners, the advent of ebooks has strained the traditional relationship in some areas. We are happy to present an example of how a digitization project actually forged a new partnership between a publishing house and a library, to the benefit of all.

***Literary and arts partnerships:*** As has been presented previously at IFLA, Lubuto has carried out a number of activities to promote the writing and publishing of quality children's literature in Zambia, with sponsorship from interested international organization and individual partners. Lubuto was instrumental in establishing the Zambian Board on Books for Young People (ZBBY), a national chapter of IBBY, whose dues have been paid annually on ZBBY's behalf by the USBBY. With support from IBBY, Lubuto and ZBBY organized and hosted two workshops in October 2010 that underscored the importance of preserving traditional stories and making cloth books for children in local languages. With support from a member of the African Studies Association, in 2012 Lubuto organized a week-long "Writing for Children" workshop taught by award-winning Zambian (but resident in South Africa) children's writer Ellen Banda-Aaku. Finally, the digitization project not only involves partnership with ZEPH but with partners around Zambia and worldwide who volunteer their time and access to materials to support our shared goal of preserving Zambia's literary heritage for future generations.

LubutoArts, a visual arts education program, has been offered in Lubuto libraries by volunteer art teachers since the first library opened in 2007. The Visual Arts Council of Zambia sponsored an exhibition of the participants' work at Lusaka's private Henry Tayali Gallery in February 2009. Diplomats and members of Zambia's arts community attended its opening and most of the paintings were sold. This led to a June 2011 Lubuto's LubutoArts exhibition at the prestigious Stella Jones Gallery in New Orleans, USA and other shows. While volunteer art teachers still teach weekly classes in the libraries, a new partnership with Lusaka-based stArt Foundation (a small, private charitable trust dedicated to the generation and promotion of visual arts practice and arts education in Zambia) has resulted in ongoing art workshops held in the libraries with exhibitions at the Foundation's gallery.

### **The Strength of Partnerships**

In summary, the Lubuto model has adapted and innovated during the organization's 10-year history to meet priority needs that have generally been identified through partnerships with organizations and individuals with shared objectives. LLP owes its very existence and growth to partnerships, which have in turn have strengthened and helped define the Lubuto model. This responsiveness to needs and partnership opportunities as they are identified has made innovation a natural and regular feature of Lubuto's work. But throughout, the Lubuto Library Partners have maintained the perspective that our most important partners of all are the vulnerable children and youth we strive to serve.

### **References**

<sup>1</sup> Meyers, Jane Kinney. Outreach to Vulnerable Youth in Africa through Partnerships for Innovative Programming: The Lubuto Library Project. IFLA Annual Conference Joint Session of Children and Youth, Public Libraries and School Libraries Sections at Sello Library in Espoo, Finland, 15 August 2012.