**Libraries Respond to Children in Need: Two Model Programs**

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*Abstract:*

*This paper will examine two innovative programs to bring library services and literacy to children in developing countries. The Lubuto Project is building libraries for children of the streets who have been orphaned by AIDS, or are homeless for other reasons. the Lubuto Project provides a safe haven from the streets where children can read and learn and take part in cultural experiences. Room to Read is a multi-faceted program that includes building and furnishing libraries, schools, publishing children's books in local languages, and providing computers.*

Paper:

Responding to Children in Need: Two Model Programs

Children throughout the world have the same needs--for shelter, food, love, a caring environment, health care, and education. This paper will examine two projects that are bringing hope to the most needy of Africa's children through education and literacy, and by showing them that people do care about their current well being and future success.

One project that is helping children in need is the Lubuto project which is currently

operating in Lusaka, Zambia.  Lubuto is a word that means knowledge, enlightenment, and light in the Bemba language.  The Lubuto library project was founded by Jane Meyers in Lusaka Zambia in 2001 with a makeshift library called Fountain of Hope.

A shipping crate was used as the place for this library.  Ms. Meyers is a professional librarian based in Washington DC.  She has lived for many years in Africa.  Ms. Meyers manages the fund raising for the project, and builds partnerships with local schools to collect and ship books for the libraries.  There is also a  field director in Zambia, who  works with the local community to find partners and build libraries.

The goal of the Lubuto project is to improve the lives and future prospects of street kids, orphans, and other vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.  It also seeks to educate students in the United States about the impact of AIDS on their peers in Africa, and to build a compassionate activism by involving them in collecting and sorting books to be sent to Zambia.

Thus the mission of the Lubuto Library Project is twofold:  In Africa, to provide these vulnerable children with a safe haven and an excellent and varied collection of appropriate books and enrichment programs, aimed at educating and reconnecting them with their culture and with society at large; and  in the U. S. to enlighten students about the impact of HIV/AIDSon their peers in Africa, and to give them the opportunity to help them in a meaningful way.

The Lubuto project builds libraries and stocks them with books.  These are not just collections of donated books, but high quality libraries organized according to library principles, with titles that are carefully selected to appeal to the young patrons.

Lubuto works with African community-based organizations to construct library buildings based on local, indigenous African architecture.  This results in a building that is familiar and welcoming to the children.  The host organization assigns staff who are trained by Lubuto librarians to run the libraries.

Although many governmental and private organizations are helping to meet basic needs such as food and shelter,  there is a gap in trying to provide educational and literacy services to children in the streets who are outside the local school systems.  The Lubuto project tries to fill that gap.

The Lubuto libraries provide a safe and welcoming place where children can read, look at books, have books read to them, and learn about practical skills, health and safety issues, and many other topics.  The books are in English and in many local languages as well.

Each library has a carefully selected collection of 5000 books, collected in the United States, and supplemented by local language materials.  They are selected to appeal to boys and girls from ages 5 to 18 in both rural and urban areas.

Librarians know that books have the power to inspire and transform, taking children out of their difficult lives and offering them a look into the world of possibilities.  Lubuto libraries do this by also offer storytelling, writing, art, music, and drama in

addition to traditional library services.  Not only do the children have a safe place to go away from the streets, they also have the opportunity for companionship with others like themselves, and guidance from caring adults.

The first permanent Lubuto library was completed in February 2007.  Three libraries will be finished in this year, with plans to build 100 total in Zambia and expand to other countries in the region.

Another project that is meeting the needs of children in developing countries is Room to Read.  Room to Read is based on the belief, which the organization has adopted as its slogan that "World Change Starts with Educated Children."  Room to Read was started by John Wood, a former executive with Microsoft, in 2000.  While on a trek in Nepal, he stopped at several local villages where he experienced the enthusiasm of the children for learning and also shock at the lack for resources, including books, for them.   John quit his job as a senior executive with Microsoft to found Room to Read. He returned one year later to Nepal with 3000 books and Room to Read was born.

Room to Read is unique in that Mr. Wood used corporate business practices to build an inspiring vision for the group.  This vision is based on 4 principles:

> Scalable, measured, and sustainable results
> Low overhead for maximum investment in the educational outcomes
> Challenge grants to local communities that foster ownership and sustainability
> Strong local staff and partnerships so that programs are culturally relevant

This model has led to great success for Room to Read, and they now operate five core programs:  the Reading Room (Library), Local language Publishing, School Room, Room to Grow Girls Scholarship, and computer and Language Room Programs.  At the end of 2006 they had opened 287 schools and established over 3600 bi-lingual libraries and 110 new computer and language rooms.  They had put more than 2.8 million books into the hands of eager young readers, and were funding long-term scholarships for 2336 girls.

The successful outcome of each project is dependent on community involvement and co-investment through the challenge grants.  This increases the likelihood that the project will be self-sustaining after the initial investment and assistance from Room to Read.
In order to develop partnerships with communities, Room to Read employs local teams led by a local director in each country, who are empowered to make key decisions, based on their knowledge of their country and its customs.

From its beginnings in Nepal, Room to Read has offices and programs in give other Asian countries---Cambodia, India, Laos, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and India.  In 2006, they began working in Africa.

Vatiswa Motaung is the Country Director of Room to Read in South Africa.  She spearheaded the launch of Room to Read in South Africa in 2006 has assembled a talented team of experienced and motivated local employees.  Room ot Read opened offices in Lusaka, Zambia in 2007.  Lovemore Nkhoma, the new Country Director, is

currently in the process of needs assessment and strategic planning.

Room to Read is dedicated to forever altering the lives of the children of the world by providing them with access to quality educational infrastructure.   Through the opportunities that only an education can provide, they strive to break the cycle of poverty one child at a time.

Additional information about the Lubuto Project is at their website, www.lubuto.org. For additional information about Room to Read, see their website at www.roomtoread.org.