

# Mumuni Library offers world of books to rural children

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A WHOLE world can be captured in a book and an entire universe in a library. For centuries, libraries of different kinds have served as repositories of knowledge and passages to the eradication of ignorance.

In some communities, libraries are serving a greater purpose by the provision of social welfare services beyond being merely sources of knowledge.

This is evident at the libraries set up by Lubuto Library Partners, who recently opened a library on the grounds of Nabukuyu Primary School, about 23 km east of Monze in Southern Province.

The Mumuni Library is the third to be constructed by the organisation in Zambia and it is the first rural public library.

The Lubuto libraries are the brainchild of President and Founder, Jane Kinney Meyers, who herself was a librarian for many years and now uses her expertise and passion for libraries to help improve library systems in developing countries like Zambia.

They are not just ordinary libraries. They

are meant to be enriching safe havens for African orphans, street children and the youth.

Since the opening of the Mumuni Library by the Lubuto Library Partners last month, the minds of children at Nabukuyu Primary School in Monze

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have been evidently enriched.

“When the reading room of the Mumuni Library opened its doors, children poured in. Like breathing air, there was no need to urge them to read,” Mrs Meyers shared.

“The need and desire was already deep within them. As the library begins offering its other programmes in art, drama, literacy, computers, story time and mentoring, the children’s love for this

place will grow and grow.”

Mrs Meyers, in a rather poetic tone, further likened the Mumuni Library to the multi serving purposes of air.

Veteran politician Mark Chona, himself a son of Monze soil, had persistently requested the establishment of a library in the area to cater for the needs of the children and youths found there.

Six chiefs and 22 headmen from Monze were in attendance at the landmark opening of the library and an excited gathering comprising people of different age groups was also drawn to the event. Finally, the people had received what they were yearning for!

The rural library, which is the only one of its kind in the area, is indigenously designed and matches the appearance of traditional homesteads.

The interesting library structure is the result of the hard work and expertise of architect Eleni Coromvli.

Ms Coromvli shared that Lubuto libraries are always uniquely designed with users in mind.

“A library has different functions, not just

book collection, so we use the traditional pattern of a Zambian homestead which is made up of different buildings in different sizes,” she explained.

The libraries typically consist of three buildings, with the biggest one housing a collection of around 4,000 books. They also have talking circles as well as art and activity rooms containing computers.

“The second building is the *Insaka* where the children can play football and other interactive games,” she said.

Part of the Mumuni Library is specifically designed as a special space for teenagers and the youth of the Nabukuyu area. The design is deliberate to cater for the needs of the youth who may wish to interact separately from younger children.

“If you want to sustain a discussion with them on certain issues, you need to provide them their own space where they can be comfortable. They can also use the space to play games such as chess,” she shared.

The Mumuni Library also comprises a large open space where performances by children can take place.

A collection of more than 4,000 books can be found at the indigenously designed Mumuni Library buildings on a wide variety of subjects that have been carefully selected by



Part of the audience during the opening of the Mumuni Library in Monze last month.

expert librarians to meet the needs of users.

As the Mumuni Library is multi-purpose, it will offer wholesome learning to all its users, including programmes of story-telling and drama. This is a feature of the rural library that Lubuto Library Partners founder, Mrs Meyers, is particularly proud of.

“Beyond the pleasure of reading, the Mumuni Library gives Nabukuyu’s children a door to the science, art, computers, language and social science that are the shared heritage of all humanity,” she said.

The overall objective of all Lubuto libraries is to provide education, psychosocial support and self-expression through reading, music, art, drama, mentoring and other programmes.

A pioneering programmed called Lubuto Literacy aimed at creating high quality mother tongue materials to teach children to read through a low-cost digital platform is also being developed.

In Mrs Meyers’ words, the Mumuni Library looks not only to the present but also the future. “A future in which the enriched minds and skillful hands of today’s children contribute through the application of what they have learned to a brighter, richer future for Nabukuyu and tomorrow’s children.

Each morning when the children of Nabukuyu wake up, they now have one extra reason to smile. The library will also likely give them the pleasure of visiting places beyond Nabukuyu without them ever having to physically travel.