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# Library's ICT-based literacy lessons for children
## Lubuto Library Project, Zambia

School drop-out and illiteracy rates have soared in Zambia in the wake of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and there are thousands of orphans who are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The Fountain of Hope Lubuto Library in Lusaka serves vulnerable children, providing a safe place where orphans can find shelter and support. Librarians read aloud to the children, but they realized that reading aloud, although valuable, would not teach the children to read and write. This realization, coupled with education research that has



Lubuto Library has created computer-based literacy lessons to teach vulnerable children to read and write in mother-tongue.

shown that children who learn to read in mother tongue become more confident learners, led to creation of the OLPC Zambian Language Literacy Programming Project and the launch of LubutoLiteracy.

## LubutoLiteracy – learning on computers

With a grant (US$30,000) from EIFL-PLIP, the Lubuto Library Project brought international expertise, local knowledge and technology together to develop computer programming that would teach children literacy in their own languages. They used the open source software, Etoys, to develop literacy lessons in local Zambian languages, and have installed the lessons on One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) computers for use in Lubuto libraries and in schools. The lessons follow the government education curriculum. They are fun, with lively drawings and the children learn through 'playing' on the OLPC computers.

## Achievements and impact

• The project has created 100 lessons in each of the seven major Zambian languages – a total of 700 lessons.

• Preliminary testing of the lessons at Lubuto's two libraries in Lusaka has been completed. Although at an early stage, testing already demonstrates the lessons' potential in the classroom. [Evidence of literacy learning will take several months of testing and was not available at the time of writing.]

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• Lubuto Libraries have developed a strong partnership with the Ministry of Education, who employed a lesson evaluator to work on the project.

• Teachers and students are working together in lesson design teams: the students bring computer skills to the teams; the teachers bring educational knowledge and experience.

**Moses Zyambo** is 16 years old, a grade 8 student at Jacaranda Basic School in Lusaka. Because of his excellent computer skills, he was one of the three students engaged to design lessons. He quickly learned Etoys and completed programming for 80% of the lessons in Cinyanja. Moses said he learnt a lot from the project. He learnt more Chinyanja – his mother tongue – including new words, grammar and pronunciation. His relationship with his teachers improved. 'Working in a team is far better than working alone. In team work one can get advice and learn from asking the other team members,' he said.

**Betty Cocha** is a primary school teacher at Kalingalinga Basic School in Lusaka. She was one of the two teachers who created the 100 literacy lessons in Chinyanja. 'Because of this project I learned to use computers. I have been teaching for a long time (13 years) but when we were making these lessons I learnt a lot about how to teach. We had to change the lesson content from the Zambian curriculum to make it easy for the children to understand.'

## The future

Strong partnerships and good potential will secure the future of the project. The Zambian Ministry of Education has shown keen interest in the lessons, and employed a lesson evaluator to work with the project team.

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