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RURAL LIBRARY SERVICES IN ZAMBIA:
THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPECTS

AFRICA LIBRARY
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Abstract

Libraries have a potential to contribute to rural development in developing countries. Their role as providers and facilitators for the use of information is an important element in rural development. This potential has not been fully utilised. Using the above assumptions as a starting point, this study will discuss the growth, contribution and the potential of rural libraries in Zambia.

An outline of the aims of the study, the methods used in data gathering and a description of the study area serve to introduce the study.

The concepts and issues which are fundamental to any library in society are examined. The concepts of development and that of information as a national resource are discussed. The role of rural libraries as providers of development information is sketched. These concepts provide the theoretical basis for an assessment of the role of rural libraries in society.

The provision of information in rural Zambia with particular reference to the role of Zambia Library Service is discussed. This includes an analysis of the historical foundations of rural libraries in Zambia with a view of putting in proper perspective the current rural library scene. Furthermore, other providers of information in rural Zambia are described. Problems associated with the provision of rural

library services in developing countries, with particular reference to Zambia are discussed. Problems include illiteracy, lack of financial support, non-existence of a legal framework, retrogressive social and cultural norms, underdeveloped publishing industry, lack of co-operation between rural information providers, marginalisation of library services and the conflicts inherent in Zambian librarianship.

A strategy for running a viable rural library service in a predominantly illiterate society is proposed. The role of a library in a rural setting in terms of combating illiteracy, preservation of indigenous knowledge and provision of information in the right formats is outlined. The opportunities which information technology provide in light of the Zambian experience and the role of community information centres are discussed.

A concluding section summarises the issues which have been raised by the study and briefly discuss the future of rural libraries in Zambia. Furthermore, possible themes for further study is given.

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Abbreviations

- CIDA Canadian International Development Agency
- CODE..... Canadian Organisation for Development through
Education
- GDP Gross Domestic Product
- IK..... Indigenous knowledge
- IT Information technology
- MMD Movement for Multi-party Democracy
- NGO Nongovernmental organisation
- UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organisation
- UNIP United National Independence Party
- ZLS Zambia Library Service

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1. Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Preamble

Before discussing rural library services in Zambia, it is necessary to clarify in broad terms the aims of this study and to describe in general terms the study area. This chapter will therefore deal with the following issues:

- The aims of the study
- Discussion of the methods used in data gathering
- Description of the study area

1.2 The Study

Libraries in most parts of developing countries have been established on the lines of library tradition of the developed world. This influence can be attributed to the fact that the pioneers of librarianship in developing countries were expatriate staff who were given the responsibility to assist the newly independent countries to establish libraries (Raseroka, 1994: 153). By following the western tradition, which is based on the assumption that library users should by necessity be literate, we find that most libraries have been established in urban areas where there was a concentration of literates

who were able to utilise books. Attempts were made in Africa to provide services to rural communities. Book boxes and other different kinds of mobile libraries ranging from bicycles in some parts of Kenya to a railway car in Mali were tried (Raseroka, 1994: 155). These services were established mainly to cater for the small pockets of literate individuals in rural areas, such as civil servants and small time businessmen. The needs of the majority rural poor were ignored.

The failure of rural libraries to cater for the rural illiterate poor has in some way contributed to the stagnation of the rural areas. Libraries have the capacity to contribute to rural development. Apart from their major role as providers of information within government circles, libraries should also play a major role in the provision and use of information in the rural communities. Every decision making process is based on information and involves the weighing up of different ideas. There is a need to have relevant information before a decision can be made, be it at the personal, community or government level. Furthermore, like any other public sponsored service, libraries, especially those which profess to serve the public, have an obligation to justify their existence by demonstrating that they provide a service which is beneficial to the community which they serve. In rural areas, the main function of libraries should be to find ways and means in which they would help the rural dweller advance his/her life.

This study examines the establishment and development of rural library services in Zambia, in the light of experiences in other developing countries. It will try to evaluate the benefits (or the lack of benefits) which the country has gained from its network of rural libraries. Reasons as to why rural libraries in Zambia have benefited the country will be sought. Furthermore, with reference to developments in rural librarianship in other parts of the world, an attempt will be made to suggest the direction which rural libraries should go in Zambia.

1.3 Methodology

It is generally agreed that the nature and limitations of a problem determines the method of approach. This study is exploratory and aims at examining the growth and prospects of rural libraries in Zambia. The study was faced with two major constraints in the form of a narrow time frame and lack of adequate funding. In view of the above, the methods used in collecting data for the study were mainly based on documentary sources and interviews with people associated with the provision of information in rural Zambia. To a certain extent the above methods were supplemented by the investigator's own experience with the environment in question.

A literature search revealed that very little information is available on Zambian librarianship and about rural libraries in particular. The

most important source of information on the library situation in Zambia is perhaps the Zambia Library Association Journal. Although this publication has become an irregular series recently, the sources which are available and pertinent to this study have been fully utilised. The literature dealing with rural library services, particularly from developing countries, is reviewed and the position of rural library services in Zambia is discussed against the background provided by this literature. Other sources of information include government documents, annual reports, conference papers, and unpublished reports.

To gain a further insight of the rural library scene in Zambia and as a means of updating the information from documentary sources, qualitative interviews were carried out with specific individuals who are involved with rural libraries or are in one way or another connected to the provision of information in rural Zambia. Qualitative interviewing, which is basically to listen to people as they describe how they understand the world in which they live and work (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 3) was found to be a versatile approach of exploring specific topics and events from particular individuals. The method is explicitly qualitative rather than quantitative and to some extent, is in line with the Rapid Rural Appraisal approach. This approach is more directed at exploring people's opinions and experience with a view to producing useful conclusions and implementable recommendations as quickly as possible (Sturges, 1997: 3).

To maximise the opportunities of acquiring usable data in the shortest possible times, purposive or what is sometimes known as discriminate sampling technique was used (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 187). With this technique, the researcher is free to choose and interview only those individuals who are most likely to have access to the information which is of value. Priority, in this study, was given to the management staff of Zambia Library Service, where the Acting Chief Libraries Officer and her immediate subordinate staff offered valuable information. Interviews were also conducted with staff in other government departments especially those dealing with extension services in rural areas, notably those under the Ministry of Agriculture. As a result of this, 18 people were interviewed. These came from Zambia Library Service, Ministries of Agriculture and Education and the Department of Wildlife. It should be noted that as a way of checking the unnecessary expansion of the study's reference sources, only the most senior interviewee is quoted where there was general consensus of opinion.

1.4 Study Area

In order to understand the operations of rural libraries in Zambia, it is necessary to give a brief outline of the country's geography and history. Furthermore, a discussion of the prevailing socio-economic conditions will be given.

1.4.1 Geography

Zambia is a landlocked country which is situated on the great Central African plateau, with altitudes ranging from 1000 to 1 300 metres. The country shares boundaries with eight countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, (formerly Zaire) and Tanzania in the north, Malawi and Mozambique in the east, Zimbabwe and Botswana in the South, Namibia in the South West and Angola in the west. It covers an area of 752 500 square kilometers. It has a tropical climate and vegetation. There are three distinct seasons. The cool and dry winter season lasts from May to August with mean temperatures between 14 and 30 C. The hot and dry season lasts from September to October and the warm and wet season from November to April.

Zambia has some areas with high rainfall and some with medium rainfall. The annual precipitation ranges from 60mm to 1 400mm. The eastern, southern and western parts of the country receive between 600mm and 1 100mm of rain. The northern and north-western receive between 1 100mm and over 1 500mm of rain. The vegetation is a mixture of trees, tall grass and other woodlands, which are mainly of the deciduous type. The deciduous type woodlands are mainly found on the main plateau of the country. The tropical forests are found mainly in the northern and north-western parts of the country.

1.4.2 History

The administration of various parts of what eventually became Northern Rhodesia in the late nineteenth century was in the hands of the British South African Company. The British Colonial Office assumed responsibility for the administration of Northern Rhodesia in 1924. In 1953, the Central African Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was formed when Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) joined Nyasaland (Malawi). In 1963, this federation was dissolved and Zambia gained her political independence from Britain in October 1964.

The political changes in Zambia since independence in 1964 have gone through three phases. The first phase (1964-1972) is generally known as the First Republic when Zambia was a multi-party democracy. This was followed by the Second Republic (1972-91) when the constitution of the country was changed to allow for the formation of a single party state. This marked 19 years of socialist inspired government led by Kenneth Kaunda and the United National Independence Party (UNIP). In 1991, multi-party politics were reintroduced in the country. UNIP lost the general elections in 1991 when the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD), led by Frederick Chiluba, got the majority vote. The party was given its second five-year mandate when it won for the second time in 1996 (Roberts, 1996: 1067).

Administratively, the country is divided into nine provinces and fifty-nine districts. The provinces are Central, Copperbelt, Eastern, Luapula, Lusaka, Northern, North-Western, Southern and Western. The provinces are governed by Deputy Ministers but real power lies with the central government.

1.4.3 Characteristics of the economy

Until 1975, Zambia was one of the most prosperous countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The wealth and development of the infrastructure and public services which went with it, was however mainly founded on copper exports. The slump of the world copper price in 1975 resulted in Zambia being left with a legacy of debt, foreign exchange shortages and falling output. Moreover, copper reserves are declining rapidly and a number of mines are closing down and it is estimated that the economic mining of copper may only last up to 2010 (Van Buren, 1996: 1071).

The Zambian economy grew rapidly during the late 1960's and early 1970's because of the high copper prices on the world market. During this time, massive investments were made in physical and social infrastructure. Ambitious programmes for the expansion of educational and health services were embarked on as well as the upgrading of roads and other physical infrastructure. But in 1974-75, copper prices began to fall and this affected the economy. In addition to the falling copper revenue, there are other factors which have

contributed to the poor state of the economy. Such factors include participation in the liberation struggle in the region, world recession, high oil prices, the landlocked position of the country which tended to increase the costs of imports and exports due to transportation difficulties, floods and drought.

The government revenues were an instant and major casualty of the slump in world copper prices after 1975. The adjustments between 1975 and 1979 hit capital expenditure hard and set the tone for the budgetary policies of the 1980's. Subsidies were cut, civil service staffing levels were reduced and capital projects were delayed or abandoned altogether. There were large public sector budget deficits averaging 12,4% of GDP in the 1981-90 period (Zambia, 1995: 3). The general high cost of living reached its highest in 1986, following the deregulation of prices, scarcity of foreign exchange and the continued devaluation of the Kwacha (the local currency). In 1985, in the hope of reviving the economy, the government introduced the auction of foreign currency. The frequent fluctuation of the rate of the Kwacha to the United States Dollar which came with the auctioning system adversely affected budgeting and planning in all the sectors of the economy (Fundanga, 1989: 145). The system was a failure and it eroded the power of the Kwacha to an extent where it never recovered and at present (June 1997) it stands at its September 1996 rate of 1 200 Kwacha to one American Dollar (Africa South of the Sahara, 1996: 1074).

The new government in Zambia since 1991 is committed to an open market economy in which private initiative is encouraged. This is yet to be realised since the public sector dependency syndrome seems to be still lingering on.

The above economic scenario has been given so as to put in perspective the circumstances under which the Zambia Library Service, which is the umbrella body for rural libraries in the country, operates since the organisation depends solely on government grants.

1.4.4 The people

The 1990 population census indicate that Zambia's population now stands at 8.09 million persons. There has been an increase of 92% since the 1969 census when the population was only 4.06 million. The growth rate was 3.2% per annum for the period 1980-1990 and this is mainly due to natural increase. Urban population is estimated at 42% and the rural population counts for 58%. It is also important to note that the population of Zambia is composed of 72 ethnic groups. The biggest ethnic group is the Bemba, followed by the Ngoni-Chewa, Tonga, Lozi and the Lunda-Luvale (Zambia, 1995: 32).

The literacy rate at Zambia is currently at 56%. This means on average for every two persons in the country over the age of five, at least one can read and write. The situation in the urban areas is more favourable than that in the rural areas. Of the total population above

five, 73% in the urban areas and 45% in the rural areas can read and write (Zambia, 1995: 42). The privileged position of the urban areas may be explained by the fact that urban areas have more schools and that many of the young people educated in rural areas migrate to urban areas in search of employment opportunities and further education.

Chapter Two: Libraries and rural development

2.1 Introduction

This chapter

- (i) outlines the extent of underdevelopment in rural Zambia;
- (ii) discusses the role of information in development;
- (iii) highlights the role of rural libraries in rural development

2.2 Rural underdevelopment

The majority of people in Zambia live in rural areas. According to the 1990 census it was found that 60.6% of the total population are rural dwellers (Zambia, 1995: 27). In spite of the fact that the majority of the people live in rural areas, Zambia's development in almost every sphere has been biased against the rural population. The following salient factors demonstrate the underdevelopment of Zambia's rural areas:

- **Employment status:** statistics show that 66% of the total urban population above the age of twelve are in employment and receive remuneration for their labour. Only 11.3% of the rural population in the same age group receive payment as

compensation for work done. The majority 54.3% are classified as unpaid family workers. The remaining percentage are categorised as self employed and are generally engaged in agriculture, mostly at the subsistence level (Zambia, 1995: 67). The income which the subsistence farmer gets from his / her labour is so insignificant that the International Labour Organisation estimated that about 80% of rural families had incomes below the levels of basic needs (Kelly, 1991: 23).

- **Health facilities:** There are 1024 hospitals and other health facilities run by public funds in urban Zambia. The rural areas have only 661 health centres run by the government and all of them are run by para-medicals (Zambia, 1995: 6). As a result of this only 48% of the rural households are found within a radius of five kilometers from a health centre as compared to 99% of households in urban areas (Zambia, 1995: 124). It is also interesting to note that life expectancy in rural areas stand at 42.3 years while it is over 50 years for urban areas (Zambia, 1995: 141).
- **Educational status:** Zambia has a literacy rate of 56%, but only 45% of the population which live in rural areas can read and write (Zambia, 1995: 42). The provision of education in rural areas is to a large extent uneven as compared to urbanised areas. Most schools in remote areas only provide

education up to grade 4. Because of this it is only children in rural areas who must take an examination to determine who will proceed to grade 5 but there is no such selection in urban schools (Kelly, 1991: 93).

The above factors clearly show that the people who live in rural Zambia are the most disadvantaged segment of the population. The wealth of the country is concentrated in the hands of the minority urban elite. In fact, the richest 5% of all households earned roughly 35% of the entire national household income, while the poorest 40%, which is generally rural, received only 8 percent (Kelly, 1991: 23). The absence of structures which can enhance personal development has led to the migration of able-bodied individuals who flock to urban settlements in search of better opportunities. The better life which the average rural dweller seeks in urban centres normally turns out to be an illusion. He / she is ill-equipped, especially educationally, to be absorbed in urban life and thus normally ends up living in abject poverty in the mushrooming shanty townships surrounding urban areas.

To alleviate the problems caused by rural-urban migration and to show some effort of sharing national wealth as well as to give meaning and significance to the political independence which the nation claims, the country has adopted development plans which act as tools to guide, assist and even "kick-start" economic independence and self-

reliance in rural areas (Neelameghan, 1981: 8). As early as 1972, the Zambian government formulated plans to develop rural areas. The principal objectives of these plans were:

- To improve rural standards of living and to create a self-reliant and progressive rural society;
- To create in the rural areas new employment and income opportunities and to improve those infrastructural services related to increased rural productivity, in order to counteract migration to urban areas;
- To increase the contribution of the rural sector to the national economy and to promote the diversification of the economy;
- To develop self-sufficiency in staple foodstuffs and reduce the growing dependence on imported commodities;
- To improve nutritional standards by means of increased production and consumption of protein and protective foods for local consumption rather than merely cash crops (Zambia, 1971: 61).

Although some efforts have been made throughout the years to develop rural areas, unfortunately, the sum total of rural development programmes have had very little impact on the upward development of rural areas. There are several reasons which have been attributed to

the failure of rural development programmes in Zambia. Among them, the following are notable:

- **Financial:** Zambia's dependence on one major export, copper, has largely contributed to its financial problems. The dramatic fall of copper prices due to world economic recession from 1974 onwards undermined the financial capacity of the country to develop itself. This was compounded by the rise in oil prices that precipitated the world economic crisis in 1973. At a time when the country's income from its exports was falling, it was required to pay an ever increasing amount for its oil imports (Kelly, 1991: 19). The rise in the share of the oil bill had to be paid at the expense of other services. This led to a lack of resources which were needed to facilitate the logical conclusion of most development programmes.
- The African socialist philosophy of Zambian humanism which prevailed during the Second Republic (1972-1990) denied the validity for development processes which foster personal advancement and wealth accumulation. The philosophy favoured communal action, group decision-making and profit sharing. This politicisation of development work did not allow individual entrepreneurship and thus hindered economic growth (Siddle & Swindell, 1990: 165).

Furthermore, most development programmes have normally been started without proper feasibility studies to assess their appropriateness among the communities which they profess to help. In most cases the needs of the communities which are involved were not considered and consequently such development projects are imposed on them. The model for development is normally weighed at the scales at which rural areas are able to emulate and catch up with the development ideals formulated in western countries. For example, some rural development programmes were based on the supply and diffusion of "innovative" inputs and technologies which were normally devised in an entirely different ecological, economic and social context and these transformations usually fail to take root in the rural environment. (Verhelst, 1989: 11). Most of the rural development programmes are based on a relatively narrow view of rural development seen through the eyes of one or another group of external specialists. Such programmes are based on the implicit assumption that rural development should be initiated only by outside intervention and by the introduction and imposition of modern production technologies.

A degree of relative success has been recorded where development programmes have been jointly undertaken with the active participation of the rural communities themselves. Under this category, the Kaputa Joint Integrated Rural Development project is a good example. The project, which led to an improvement in the provision of health care facilities to rural communities is based on the idea of integrating all

the efforts of all those involved in rural development, including the local communities themselves, to work together towards solving a specific problem (Macdonald, 1981: 62).

If development can be defined as “a process by which members of society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations” (Korten, 1990: 65). It becomes apparent that the major problem lies in identifying the real needs of the rural poor and then translating these needs into projects which will be appreciated by the rural communities. This means that issues associated with the achievement of food security in rural areas, increased production, the combating of rural poverty, and social inequalities need to be addressed in consultation with the concerned rural communities. One of the major instruments, which is needed in this type of development strategy is a flow of information between the rural communities and other development projects.

2.3 Information and rural development

To be effective, development programmes do not need to be grandiose; in most cases the need may just boil down to the provision of relevant information. Information which can be defined as an assemblage of data able to influence people's actions, behaviour and

decisions so as to reduce uncertainty as they go about interacting with others in a given environment (Lundu, 1995: 43). The provision of relevant information could be the missing link in the development chain. Information is not only necessary for the articulation of the needs of the rural poor but it is also the main factor in making better judgements which lead to making better choices. It is only when people are aware of the avenues before them that they can be expected to make decisions which will help to advance their situation. If one borrows Knuth's (1994: 79) definition of development as "change that promotes or actualises the innate capacities of society", it becomes clear that sustainable development will only take root in developing countries with the participation of the rural people. Furthermore, in order for the government to acquire the capacity which will allow them to adapt, and gradually enhance measures which will support and re-direct the economic and social forces in their societies for meaningful rural development, there is a need for them to muster information resources.

There is also a need for the use of information in development planning. Development planning, programming and monitoring entail optimal allocation and utilization of resources based on reliable forecasts and good decisions. For example, rural development would need information resources about trends in population dynamics, the socio-economic and political position within a country at national and local levels. There is also a need for a fast and correct feedback on the

impact of government policies which will help in the formulation of impact assessment techniques which can be applied to different policy options. Furthermore, governments need comparative information on the results of rural development plans from other countries for them to assess the success or failures within their own plans. Finally, it is more than access to information that will enable a process of development on the basis of shared objectives that will synergise the different actors in rural development. The formulation of rural development programmes which are likely to be accepted by rural communities will require models of communication between the various actors that will allow proper appreciation of each other's limits and possibilities, thus ensuring that both actors complement each other. There are several ways in which rural communities can complement government efforts in the development of rural areas. Ultimately, all projects which are meant for the uplifting of the peasantry should in the first place be accepted by the peasantry, otherwise the resources and time spent on such projects would be wasted. There is an urgent need for the establishment of working communication channels and information systems which will enable to capture and harmonise the relationship between development agents and the rural communities. One aspect of rural life which has a potential to contribute to rural development, but has been relatively ignored, is the integration of indigenous knowledge into rural development programmes.

2.4 Libraries and rural development

Libraries have the potential to contribute to rural development. Their role as providers and facilitators for the use of information is an important element in rural development. To understand the role of development, it is perhaps necessary to outline the major functions of libraries in society. Lundu (1995: 76-88) has outlined the following elements as some of the main functions of libraries in society.

- **Information processing:** Libraries collect, store, organise and disseminate information. Information is not only a major input into all library systems, but it is also the major resource required in the process of communication. Communication generally enhances the provision and exchange of information needed to facilitate agreement or to clarify differing viewpoints on public issues, which leads to the fostering of popular interests for the betterment of society.
- **Education:** Libraries are involved in the transmission of knowledge so as to foster intellectual development, the formulation of character and the acquisition of skills necessary in furthering development efforts.
- **Research:** Knowledge can be used meaningfully if it is properly understood. Research in areas which will foster rural development is a major prerequisite for the development of these areas. Libraries should not only provide information for

research purposes but should also be involved in undertaking research in rural areas, for example the identification of information needs for rural development.

- **Preservation and transmission of culture:** Libraries, especially those that are established in localities which are predominantly oral should be involved in the collection of beliefs, values, knowledge and customs in some form permanent enough as to be preserved and later transmitted to future generations.
- **Recreation, entertainment and leisure:** Libraries, in line with the needs of communities in which they operate, provide the needed material which promote personal happiness and social well being.

In a developing country like Zambia, the role of libraries in rural development is not fully utilised and in most respects it is still latent. This reality manifests itself clearly and the lack of prominence of issues concerning libraries in the development plans of the nation is a case in point. Although the concept of information as a national resource for social and economic development has come to be widely accepted (Neelameghan, 1981: 9) there is still uncertainty by most development planners as to the role of libraries in development especially in developing countries like Zambia (Lundu & Likubangwa, 1996: 127). For indeed, the effectiveness and trust by which libraries are

considered to be tools of national development can be estimated by the way their services are prioritised in national development plans.

Libraries have been mentioned, albeit in passing, in Zambia's national development plans. In the First National Development Plan (1966-1970) proposals were made for the establishment of provincial libraries. The Plan also set standards for the provision of reading materials for schools. It proposed the availability of at least five books for a secondary school pupil and a minimum of three for those in primary school (Zambia, 1965: 104). The Second National Development Plan (1972-1976) envisaged the turning of Zambia Library Service as an essential informal educational and cultural service capable of putting the wide resources of local and foreign libraries at the disposal of the nation. Sixteen branch libraries were to be built and village library centres were earmarked for establishment. Although these statements were made, there were no specific amounts of financial resources budgeted for the improvement of library services in the country. Other sectors of the plan were provided with specific projected funding (Zambia, 1971: 84). The Fourth National Development Plan (1989 - 1993), like its predecessor only highlights the incapability of the government in fulfilling the projected growth of libraries in the country due to financial constraints (Zambia, 1989: 102).

A closer study of all the four National Development Plans reveals that little has been achieved in terms of library development in

Zambia. The plans were made without funding being attached to specific projects. The policy makers have given financial constraints as the major cause for not meeting projected expansion of library services. Furthermore, it should be noted that in all the plans libraries are only associated with the role they can play in the educational development of the country and are not seen as facilitators for the use and provision of information for development.

Unfortunately, even the current government only sees the place of the library in education as its main policy. The current policy guidelines formulated by the Ministry of Education stipulate that:

- The Ministry will seek to make books and other literature more easily available in order to promote open learning and literacy
- Furthermore, it will promote the concept of the library as an essential learning resource in all its schools and colleges (Zambia, 1996: 88).

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be recognised that Zambia is an underdeveloped country, and to a large extent the development efforts which have been undertaken so far are biased against the rural areas. There are several problems associated with underdevelopment in rural Zambia but lack of financial resources and the failure by development

planners to institute programmes which are accepted by the rural populace are some of the major setbacks to rural development. These problems have been compounded by the nonuse of information as a development resource. This nonuse of information has resulted in the trivialisation of libraries and other information agents as tools of rural development.

Chapter Three: Rural libraries in Zambia

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the development of rural libraries in Zambia. It also serves as a foundation to the understanding of the problems which are faced by these libraries. The chapter is therefore divided into the following sections:

- (i) Legacy of oral traditions which has been inherited by modern rural libraries;
- (ii) Development of rural library services during the colonial period;
- (iii) Current rural library scene;
- (iv) Summary of contributions from other providers of information in rural Zambia.

3.2 Pre-colonial period and oral traditions

Compared with western civilisation, African civilisation at the turn of the century was backward mainly due to a lack of sophisticated literary and technological skills. However, the absence of such cultural advancement should not be construed to indicate a lack of civilisation. The absence of a book culture meant that Africans had to preserve

their ancient and recent past in other forms, of which oral transmissions, rock painting and sculpture were the most important media. The accepted and time-proven method of learning was to commit important facts and knowledge to memory. Oral history still remains the most important source of African history (Fafunwa, 1982: 11).

African traditional education was both formal and informal. Modern scholars seem unable to appreciate that traditional African education was, and still is, in its own way, universal, free and compulsory for all children below the age of 15 or before puberty. Traditional education, essentially and logically, was functional and utilitarian. It purported to train youths for effective participation in adult life. From this training they acquired physical competence and mental skills for enabling them to make the most of the abundant natural resources and to solve environmental problems of food, shelter and general security for the entire community. The methods of education aimed at curbing and suppressing anti-social behaviour and impulses for the benefit of all. The intention was to cultivate in the individual the importance and uniqueness of belonging to the community (Fafunwa, 1982: 9).

The type and extent of African education was dictated by practical needs. Training was rigidly specialised for the community's mode of existence. Pastoral communities imparted animal husbandry skills to

their young, whereas agricultural communities concentrated on farming. Tribes living in close proximity to big rivers, lakes or islands taught their children how to fish. Forest dwellers learnt the various skills and techniques needed to kill animals for their daily needs or in defence of their lives. Because peaceful co-existence was not possible, training in warfare in most tribes was essential for all men, and sometimes even for women. Early training was the responsibility of parents and close relatives and gradually the whole tribe became involved. Although there were no organised classrooms or timetables, this does not mean that there was no formal education in African societies. Anderson (1970: 41) argues that

the Europeans did not bring the idea of formal education to Africa; in many ways this has been established in African societies before their arrival. Yet through such practices as grouping children into classrooms for regular daily lessons, emphasizing the importance of reading and writing, Europeans had done much to shape Africa's most recent understanding of the school.

The major way of formalising education was through rites, and the initiation ceremony was the peak of customary education in many African societies. By puberty, through systematic exposure to practical hardships, the children (mainly boys) acquired the ability and courage for physical endurance in preparation for the initiation ceremony that marked the end of formal education and the beginning of adult life for the most part, initiation involved the circumcision of boys and

sometimes clitoridectomy for girls. The initiates went through a trying period, sometimes lasting for months. Read (1959: 106) describes the aims and methods of initiation in the following manner:

Initiation rites, as a form of *rites de passage*, occur in many societies immediately after puberty. The majority... take the form of a "school", involving a period of seclusion in some remote locality away from normal social life, varying degrees of physical endurance tests, instruction in traditional hygiene and sex life and in correct behaviour to senior people, with an intense submission to authority... The aims of the ritual in initiation schools were to strengthen the individual at a time of crisis in his life, to sanction his new status in society after a period of exclusion and instruction, and to assert the authority of society over the individual through the solemnity and the rigour of the ritual.

It is fair to concede that customary education was in its own way a real and true education. As long as it produced a whole man for a localised complete living, then it achieved the objectives for which it was designed. Knowledge was conserved in two simple ways, art and memory; and was easily retrieved and disseminated.

The modern idea of a public library is reflected in the traditional methods, however rudimentary and primitive. The underlying factor in public librarianship is the capacity to store, retrieve and disseminate relevant information to the local community (Baron & Curran, 1980: 619). It may be argued that these tenets were present in the traditional systems, and it is therefore suggested that "primitive libraries" based

on oral tradition were and are still part of the traditional heritage (Amadi, 1981: 137). Even though the traditional educational system is presented in its pre-colonial perspective, there is evidence that this heritage still persists in Africa today; and the planning of library services in rural areas should not exclude these traditions.

3.3 Colonial period

The history of rural libraries in Zambia began with the colonisation of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) by Britain in the late 19th century. This was preceded by missionary activities and most missionary stations had small collections of books for the exclusive use of missionaries. It is a well known fact that the explorer David Livingstone travelled around Zambia in the mid 19th century with his strongbox library which remained in Zambia on his death (Parr, 1969: 6). The discovery of copper helped to consolidate the colonisation effort and lured many white people to come and work on the Zambian copperbelt. The growth of copper mining together with the huge labour market, helped to establish a settler population of farmers along the line of rail from Livingstone to Chingola. As the settler population increased social clubs were formed to cater for the needs of the settler population. It is in these clubs that subscription libraries were formed. Subscription libraries were established in the provincial administrative towns of Chipata, Choma, Kasama, Luanshya, Mansa, Mongu and Ndola by the late 1920s (Parr, 1969: 9). The success of these libraries

depended on the active participation of the members. In urban areas, where membership was generally higher, the subscription libraries eventually became the cornerstones of municipal libraries, but their success in rural areas were limited due to the narrow audience (Parr, 1969: 11).

These libraries did not cater for the African population due to colour bar regulations and the fact that there were very few Africans who could read and write. Indeed, following the Western library traditions, libraries could not exist in illiterate communities. The growth of rural libraries in Zambia which had their origins in the Western library traditions had by necessity to be preceded by the creation of a reading culture in the rural areas. It is therefore important to outline the growth of Western style type of education in Zambia so as to illustrate the origins of rural libraries.

During the early years of colonial rule in Zambia the provision of Western education depended largely upon missionary societies. The main purpose of the early mission schools was evangelisation. In school, young Africans were taught Christian beliefs and basic literacy which would enable them to read the Bible. The missionary societies in the territory had different views on the type and level of education which was necessary for successful evangelisation. They all, however, established similar education systems to those already in operation elsewhere in Africa, where village or bush schools were set up under

the control of the teacher / evangelist who preached Christianity, led local church services and taught basic literacy. These bush schools were supervised from a central mission station which was invariably staffed by a European missionary (Gadsden, 1992: 98).

The colonial authorities welcomed the establishment of missionary schools in the territory and encouraged their activities by providing them with free grants of land and, in some cases, contributed small sums of money towards the construction of schools (Gilhuis, 1982: 158). The value of missionaries and their schools to the colonial government was that, apart from strengthening the presence of Europeans in the territory they also taught and preached values which facilitated peaceful administration. The schools were not intended to train an educated labour reserve for the development of the country.

The colonial authorities appointed white administrators and encouraged immigration of white settler farmers and traders. The role of the African population in the economy was to provide unskilled labour for the mines and the white farming communities. To this end, it was not necessary to provide a more advanced education system for the Africans but there was a wide establishment of bush schools throughout the territory which did not provide education beyond Standard IV (Gadsden, 1992: 100). The lack of advanced centres of education can be illustrated by the fact that at the time of

independence in 1964, Zambia had only 1500 secondary-school graduates and 100 university graduates (Snelson, 1974: v).

The origins of rural libraries in Zambia can be traced to the need to provide elementary reading materials for those Africans who were graduating from the basic mission schools. The level of education provided could only be successfully taught in vernacular languages and this promoted the establishment of organs which dealt with the advancement of African literature. Uncoordinated attempts to create African literature were made by individual missionaries in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) following the advent of colonialisation. These efforts culminated in the formation of the African Literature Committee of Northern Rhodesia in 1937. This Committee, which was run on a voluntary basis mainly by missionaries, was the forerunner of the colonial government-sponsored Territorial Publications Bureau which was established in 1947 under auspices of the Department of African Education (Msiska, 1986: 242). Its functions were as follows:

- To encourage reading among Africans by means of libraries, bookstalls and colporteurs, and especially to make available suitable literature in vernacular languages and basic English.
- To ensure that simple textbooks, both in English and vernacular languages, were made available for both school and adult use.

- To organise the production of books, magazines and posters to meet the requirements of the African population.
 - To organise provincial committees on publications.
- (Mwacalimba, 1982: 62).

These functions were further expanded in 1948 to Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland with the formation of the Joint Publications Bureau of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. To enhance the activities of the bureau under this new arrangement, the following responsibilities were added:

- To arrange publication of books written by local authors with a view to meeting local reading materials;
- To build up the local book industry; and
- To foster the growth of library service (Northern Rhodesia & Nyasaland, 1960: 47)

The bureau existed primarily for the African population. It arranged for the publication of books for that readership. It took special interest in encouraging local authors as it believed that the creation of African literature was the responsibility of the Africans themselves. The majority of these authors were mission educated elites. They wrote mainly about the history of their tribes, cultures and

customs. Most of these books were relevant as reading for both children and adults and thus helped to further literacy among Africans.

The Bureau should be credited with forming the first rural library service in Zambia. In line with its mandate to foster the growth of libraries in the country, it started a book-box library scheme in 1953 (Msiska, 1986: 245). Under the scheme and in line with the prevailing public library facilities which were dominated by subscription libraries, any rural centre was allowed to borrow a book-box provided it paid an annual subscription fee of £2 (Parr, 1969: 8). The bureau continued to operate the book-box scheme until 1962 when this role was taken over by the newly established Northern Rhodesia Library Service. This was the fore-runner of the Zambia Library Service (ZLS).

3.4 Current rural library scene

The ZLS is principally a rural library service for the entire country. It was established in 1962 with a grant of £43 000 from the Ford Foundation of New York. It was agreed at that time that the Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) government would provide future recurrent and capital funds for the service (Milne, 1961: 8). It was given the following terms of reference:

- To establish a public library network throughout Zambia.

- To give professional advice on the establishment and running of government ministerial and departmental libraries.
- To run a primary and secondary school library network.
- To assist professionally insofar as is practicable in the training of librarians.
- To eventually take over public libraries in the hands of local authorities. (Walubita, 1978: 88)

The ZLS has its headquarters in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia, but does not directly run or provide library services to the urban areas. City and municipal libraries are run respectively by their local government authorities. The ZLS, however, provides these urban libraries with stocks of books on semi-permanent loan. Furthermore, ZLS operates a number of rural library centres in the remote parts of the three urban provinces of Central, Copperbelt and Lusaka. It has provincial libraries in the other six rural provinces. Each provincial library has a stock of about 25,000 volumes and contains both general reading materials and the recommended educational reading material for all grades of readers (ZLS, 1994: 3).

The service is administered by the Ministry of Education. It is headed by a Chief Libraries Officer, who is assisted by a Deputy Chief Libraries Officer and four Principal Libraries Officers. The provincial

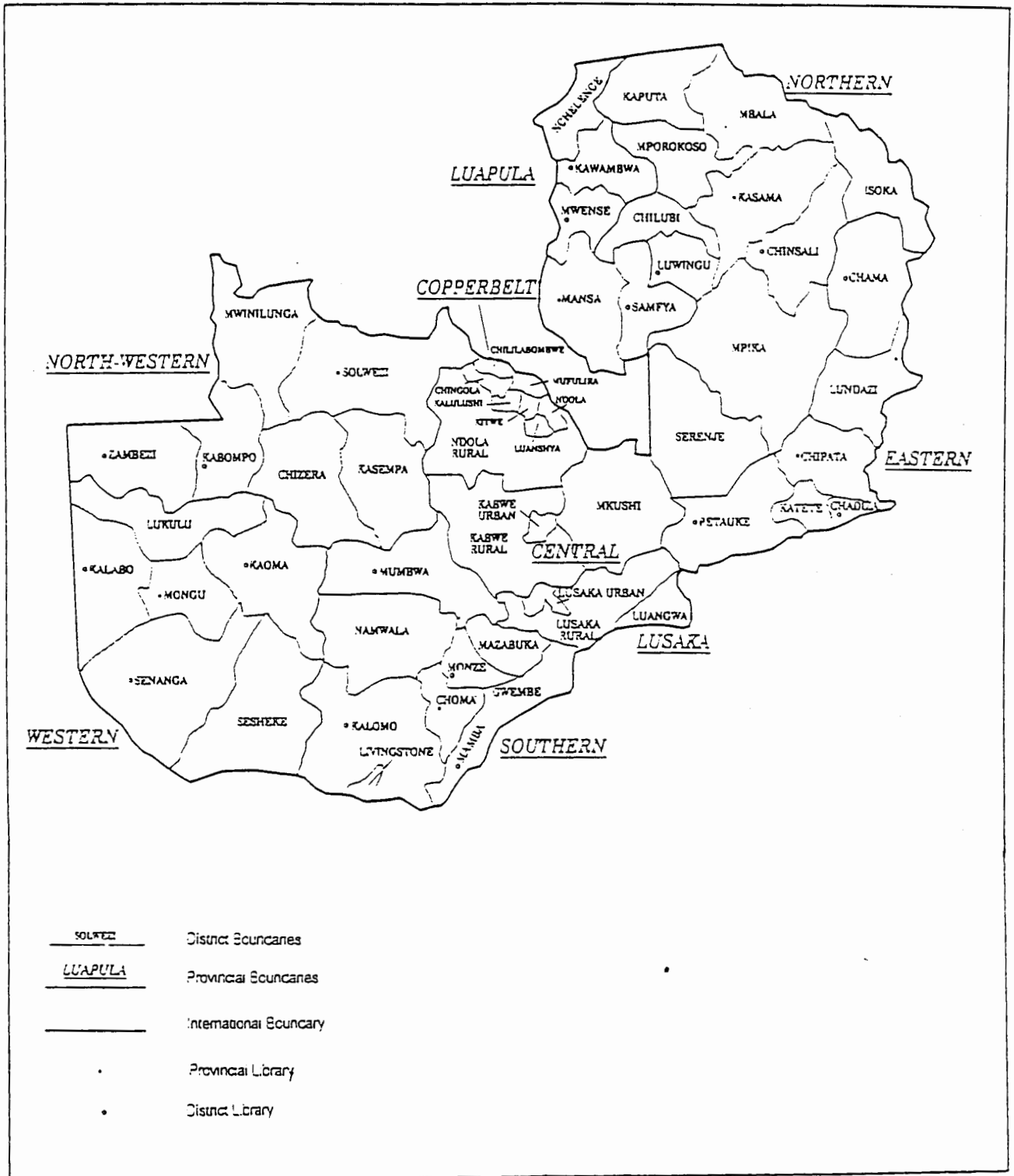
libraries are run by Provincial Libraries Officers. All the above positions are supposed to be held by professional librarians with a minimum qualification of at least a degree in library studies or information science. From the technical services point of view, book selection, purchasing, cataloguing and classification of all reading materials is done centrally at headquarters and there is therefore a concentration of professional librarians at the headquarters who deal with these tasks (ZLS, 1992: 1). It is important to note that although ZLS is treated as a department within the Ministry of Education, the Chief Libraries Officer is not accorded the same status as other departmental heads within the Ministry. In fact, as pointed out by Wina (1993: 16), the Chief Libraries Officer is answerable to the Chief Inspector of Schools and does not directly report to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry as is the case with other heads of departments. This situation has negative implications for ZLS in terms of staffing and resource sharing within the Ministry.

The provinces are subdivided into districts and so far there are only 17 districts which have libraries out of a total of 46 rural districts. A typical district library is capable of holding about 12 000 books and has both a lending and a reference section (ZLS, 1992: 3). The district librarians oversee the running of library centres in their districts. These centres are situated wherever room is available. Schools, petrol stations, village centres, prisons and farmsteads have been known to house a library centre. The service operates on the lines that ZLS will

deposit between 200 to 1 200 books at any centre in the country which can fulfill the following conditions:

- The centre can only be opened at the request of the community and this can be justifiable if the community has a reasonable number of people who can read and write;
- It is the responsibility of the community to provide a suitable place to house the books safely from damage or theft;
- The community has to identify a suitable volunteer to run the centre; and
- It makes an undertaking to pay for any loss of books. (ZLS, 1970: 6)

The map on the following page shows the distribution of provincial and district libraries.



MAP 1

DISTRIBUTION OF PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT LIBRARIES IN ZAMBIA

Statistics show that there are more than 1000 library centres scattered throughout the country as illustrated by the table below (Kabyema, 1996[a]: 2)

	Provincial Libraries	District Libraries	Rural Library Centres
Central	-	1	93
Copperbelt	-	-	114
Eastern	1	4	105
Luapula	1	2	197
Lusaka	-	-	124
Northern	1	4	83
North-Western	1	-	118
Southern	1	3	79
Western	1	3	94
Zambia Total	6	17	1007

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF ZLS PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT LIBRARIES

Due to the poor state of the national economy and other problems which are discussed in the next chapter, ZLS has not adequately carried out the mandate which it was given in 1962. No attempt has been made to take over municipal libraries and it does not have a say in the running of ministerial and government departmental libraries which have been described as "a total mess" by Huckabay (1979: 116). Its operational problems are such that the institution now relies heavily on donor support for the acquisition of most of its reading

materials. There are several donor agents which have tried to supplement the efforts of ZLS, but the most notable contributions have come from the British Council, the Ranfurly Foundation and the Canadian Organisation for Development through Education (CODE) (ZLS, 1992: 5). To illustrate these relationships, the activities of CODE, the most active of all the donor groups, is described.

CODE is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) which has been collaborating with other NGO's and donor agencies, the private sector and governments for more than 30 years to help support and enrich a literate environment in developing countries. There are currently 13 countries in Africa and three in Central America who are benefiting from the activities of CODE. CODE operates as a registered, private charity in Canada. It draws financial, material and technical support from the following sources:

- Donations from Canadian individuals, institutions, companies and corporations mainly North American publishers and libraries.
- Support from the Canadian government through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
- International donor agencies, foundations and governments.
- Contributions from its sister organisation, CODE International.

In 1989, CODE established a Southern African Regional Office (SARO) in Harare to serve specifically Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In Zambia, it operates through the ZLS. The major activities of CODE can be categorised into the following:

- Human resource development by financing seminars and short courses organised by ZLS for people who run rural and school libraries. It also provides resource persons and financial support for the training of trainers in the field of librarianship.
- Book donation programme (Kabyema, 1996[b]: Interview).

The book programme provides books and other educational materials for school and college libraries. The major aim of the institution is to assist the most remote and needy schools. Books provided by CODE are, typically, supplementary and reference texts and books for leisure reading. They also supply a limited number of tertiary and technical texts, audio-visual aids, educational games and material for literacy activities. The only condition attached for the receipt of books is that the receiving institution should make its own arrangements for collecting the donated books. (Kabyema, 1996[a]: 1).

3.5 Other providers of information in rural Zambia

The ZLS is not alone in trying to provide information in rural Zambia. The other organisations which have programmes for the

provision of development information may be categorised in three main groups as follows:

- Government extension services
- Voluntary organisations
- Traditional sources

3.5.1 Government extension services

Extension services may be defined as the provision of information, knowledge and skills from outside resources to inside resources. The former is the “source” of the information while the latter constitutes the “receiver”; for example a group of rural dwellers (Mulele, 1984: 31). From this broad definition it may be seen that there are certainly many types of extension services in any country. The prime objective of extension services is to persuade and help rural communities to increase production by adopting improved technical practices. Furthermore, the services seek to improve rural life by teaching people modern ways of life, especially in home economics, health and appropriate environmental practices. Most departments and ministries that are in one way or another involved in rural development have some form of an extension service. However, the major players in Zambia are the Departments of Agriculture, Veterinary Services and those from Fisheries as well as the Ministry of Health. To illustrate how extension services are operated in rural Zambia, the operation of

agricultural extension, which is the most extensive in the country, will be outlined.

The extension services under the Department of Agriculture exist to provide technical and managerial advice, instruction and supervision to all agricultural producers. The basic aim is to improve husbandry practices and to promote efficiency in order to increase output and, in the long run, to create a large pool of self-reliant and viable farmers among the rural populace. The role of the agricultural extension service is therefore to bring to the rural farming community the information, skills and knowledge deemed necessary for improving farming methods. Much of this information and production skills come in the form of recommendations formulated by the Research Branch of the Agricultural Department (Mulele, 1984: 31).

Like many other government departments, the agricultural extension service is organised at national, provincial and district levels. At the department headquarters, the service is headed by an Assistant Director of Agriculture who employs specialists responsible for coordinating research and formulating production strategies in their respective areas of specialisation. This arrangement is repeated at the provincial level and there is a network of agricultural stations and camps which are supervised at the district level. It is the staff at the stations and camps who are in contact with the rural dwellers and they receive instructions from their supervisors on how to deal with the

agricultural problems of the rural farmer. The most common manner of transmitting information is through visits and demonstration (Namataa, 1996: Interview). Furthermore, visits and demonstrations are usually supplemented

The above arrangement is the norm in most government departments. One exception is the Department of Veterinary Services which is experimenting with the idea of involving the rural communities in its extension services. With this approach, selected "voluntary Veterinary Assistants", who are members of the community, are given information packages, in the form of posters and pamphlets for distribution in their areas. In order to encourage them to provide this service, they are allowed to buy certain basic veterinary products which they can then sell to their communities at a nominal profit. Furthermore, these agents act as intermediaries for government officials in terms of organising visits and demonstrations (Mungunda & Mumbuna, 1991: 23). Furthermore, visits and demonstrations are usually supplemented by radio and television programmes which are designed for the rural audience (Mulele, 1984: 33)

It should be mentioned at this juncture that the Ministry of Labour and Social Services tried to run its own rural library services between 1975 to 1979. During this period, the responsibility of running adult literacy programmes came under its jurisdiction, and to help the new literates have access to suitable reading materials, a rural

library service were established based in the ministry's rural community centres. Unfortunately planning was inadequate and due to problems of funding and structural incapacity for the maintenance of such a service in the ministry, the venture was closed down (Zambia, 1980: 5).

3.5.2 Voluntary agencies

Information is also provided to rural areas by different groups. Most important among these are non-government organisations, religious and representative groups. All of these play a vital role in the community information networks. But, as expected, the information from these groups is generally influenced by the ideals and motives of the particular organisation. Such information, especially when aimed at "unsophisticated" rural dwellers, tends to be propagandist and manipulative in nature (Zwizwai, 1996: 56). The situation is aggravated by the fact that the illiterate rural dweller, in most cases, has few alternative sources through which to verify the information in this category. Political organisations have been notorious in supplying manipulative information as a way of winning votes. However, recognition must be given to certain agencies that have made a great effort to provide information for development in rural areas. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church should be commended for the publication and distribution of the only viable vernacular newspaper in Zambia, the *Icengelo*.

3.5.3 Traditional sources

Surveys by Kaniki (1989:160) and Mungunda & Mumbuna (1992: 20) have confirmed the fact that in rural Zambia, the dwellers themselves are the major source of information. These reports are consistent with similar research carried out elsewhere. Mchombu (1993: 163) and Vavrek (1995: 25) confirm that people in rural areas are generally inclined to seek further information from the people who are nearest to them and especially those whom they trust. In communities with a strong oral tradition, information is most frequently spread by word of mouth. Moreover, this is not exclusive to developing countries, as some rural libraries in America are trying to formalise this source of information by publishing local people-to-people indices as a way of linking certain topics with named individuals in the local community (Usherwood, 1992: 23).

3.6 Conclusion

It can be concluded from the preceding discussion that from as early as the 1950's, an attempt has been made to provide some reading materials for the people of rural Zambia. These attempts were fragmented and dependent on missionary enterprise but, nonetheless, they laid the foundation for the commissioning of ZLS. It is also notable that the ZLS has not shaken off its colonial inheritance and still aspires to serve the interests of the minority literate individuals

who live in rural areas. This is a major setback to rural libraries in Zambia since their current audience is too narrow to have an impact on rural development.

Chapter Four: Problems faced by rural libraries in Zambia

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the major problems which are faced by rural libraries in Zambia. For the sake of clarity, the problems are divided into three major categories:

- (i) Problems related to the lack of relevancy of the service to rural people;
- (ii) Issues beyond the control of ZLS;
- (iii) Internal problems faced by ZLS.

However, it should be mentioned that the categories are closely inter-related and are therefore not exclusive.

4.2 Lack of relevancy

The ZLS, like many other public library services in developing countries, is a product of foreign influences. Its conception of a public library in a rural setting is traditionally related to printed books and materials. The transplantation of this type of library to an oral traditional culture coupled with low literacy rates have resulted in a number of conflicting issues which has rendered the service irrelevant

to its major constituency. In terms of actual or potential users, the current library arrangements do not discriminate. There is indeed no regulation that forbids any member of the community to have access to any of the rural library centres but there are major factors which mitigate against the use of these libraries by most of the rural population. Socio-cultural factors and illiteracy are among the reasons which have contributed to the non-use of rural libraries.

4.2.1 Social and cultural factors

Zambia is a multi-cultural country which has many systems of beliefs and different cultural values. To a large extent these indigenous social patterns inhibit the growth of libraries as they are known in the west. The predominantly oral orientation of the people of the country can be cited as one of the patterns that does not support the growth of libraries as they are known in the industrial countries. There is no indigenous writing system and thus no history of the type of education which could have formed the basis for the inculcation of the reading habit as understood in the western hemisphere.

Furthermore, in most Zambian societies the traditional values respect community ethos at the expense of individual achievement. This is the strength of the survival and dominance of the extended family system. These traditions do not support introverted individual pursuits like reading. In some circumstances, reading in Zambia, as it has been reported in other parts of Africa (Ndiaye, 1988: 40), can even

be condemned as anti-social and non-constructive unless it is pursued in a context of educational purposes. Adimorah comments that, to a large extent, even literate Africans only read to satisfy a specific end, usually the passing of an examination (Adimorah, 1983: 166).

The above problem should not reflect badly on the Zambian cultural and social structures. Rather it should emphasise the need for change in rural libraries and adopt strategies which are relevant to the social and cultural milieu in which they operate. The reliance on the book as the main form of packaging information does not meet the realities prevailing in most rural areas.

4.2.2 Illiteracy

Closely related to the social and cultural factors is the problem of illiteracy. The Zambian rural library service is mainly based on printed materials. These materials are of no use to most people in rural areas because the majority cannot read. It is estimated that 45% of rural people can read and write (Zambia, 1995: 42). Although this is already below the national average of 56%, it is still an under-estimation. More than 50% of the reading population in rural areas are under the age of 15 years and about 15% are above 60 (Zambia, 1995: 44). Technically, the above figures mean that fewer than 20% of the rural population within the productive ages of 16 to 59 years of the rural population can read and write, and it is only a tiny fraction of this group which has access to library services. This is so because ZLS does not have

suitable reading material, both in content and style, for this age group (Kangulu, 1988: 16).

Dependence on the printed word as the main source of information makes it difficult for rural libraries to meet the information needs of their rural clientele and thus the service is irrelevant to them. It is indeed necessary to identify the information needs of the rural populace before setting up libraries in their midst. It is only when the needs have been identified that it is appropriate to determine the nature of the service and the form of packaging the information. Unfortunately, those who were instrumental in setting up rural libraries in Zambia did not attend to this critical issue. This was admitted as a grave anomaly, due to the lack of adequate data at the planning stage of the service (Parr, 1969: 11). No attempt has been made by the ZLS to rectify the situation.

Studies have been undertaken to identify the information needs of rural people. Notable among these, and relevant to Zambia, are Kaniki's work in South Africa (1995), Mchombu's (1993) evaluation of the needs and use of information by rural people in Botswana, Malawi and Tanzania, and Aboyande's (1984) survey in Nigeria. Kaniki (1989) and Mungunda & Mumbuna (1992) also undertook studies in Zambia although their works were mainly concerned with the provision of agricultural information in rural areas. All these works indicate that most rural people need information related to personal existence,

survival and development. Furthermore, to quote Kaniki, people need "information that could assist them to exercise civic and political rights; leisure information; and information which help them adapt to social and cultural change" (Kaniki, 1995: 15). Mchombu (1991: 27) identified information which could support health, basic economics, self-governance, agricultural activities, environmental renewal and literacy education. On the other hand we are reminded by Raseroka (1986: 289) that rural dwellers are not only information seekers but also information providers in their own right. Apart from a vast store of oral history which waits to be tapped in Africa's rural communities, the people themselves have considerable stores of indigenous knowledge which needs to be shared, not only with rural communities, but with the world at large.

These studies underline that rural communities have information needs and that they can also provide meaningful information relevant to national development. It is therefore imperative that libraries should be involved as part of this information system, and insisting on literacy as a prerequisite in a rural environment will simply mitigate against the use of libraries themselves. There is certainly a high rate of adult illiteracy in rural Zambia but the universality of the problem should also be recognised. It has been reported that 16 million Europeans are illiterate and 0,5% of the population of the USA above the age of 15 cannot read or write (Kedem, 1990: 447). These statistics are from countries which have the resources to successfully campaign for the

eradication of illiteracy, but there are still pockets of illiterate groups amongst them.

This suggests that the complete elimination of illiteracy in Zambia is an impossible task. It is therefore prudent that the stakeholders who are involved in the development of rural areas should adjust their programmes and acknowledge the existence of the illiterate person and make provision for their upliftment. This calls for a redefinition of the role of libraries in rural areas. Literacy campaigns should continue. Moreover, libraries should cooperate with other agents in this cause. Educating people how to read and write is only one catalyst to the developmental effort. If libraries are to be relevant in the development of rural areas, then they must brace themselves to provide information to everyone in the rural community. Kempson (1986: 183) has rightly argued that the relevance of libraries will only be felt if they provide information that will help the people to improve their quality of life. This can either be done directly by solving the immediate problems, or in the longer term by helping the people to influence decisions that will affect their lives; regardless of whether or not the people are illiterate.

4.2.3 Lack of a national agenda

On account of the factors discussed above, to a large extent the ZLS is not associated with an agenda which has national importance. Rural libraries have in most cases only acted a subordinate role in literacy campaigns, although even in this field the leading

actors have been the educationists. The contribution of rural libraries is negligible because they have in most cases failed to provide appropriate reading materials to sustain literacy. Furthermore, the future participation of rural libraries in literacy campaigns is at stake since the Ministry of Education, which is the mother-body of ZLS, has as a matter of policy, disassociated itself from adult education programmes due to financial constraints (Kelly, 1991:195). Apart from its attempts in literacy campaigns, ZLS should be more visible in the provision of information on national issues. The fields of agriculture and health are good examples where ZLS can render more assistance. Rural libraries should become focal points for the dissemination of information on national issues in conjunction with other institutions. It is with this involvement which can make rural libraries be appreciated by rural communities. Without this appreciation, rural libraries will have no place in the major development programmes and will therefore have no impact on the development process in rural areas.

4.3 External problems

The problems which have been discussed above have not only resulted in the minimal relevance of rural libraries in rural development but have also contributed to the marginalisation of rural libraries in government circles. Because of their inappropriate services, which by their nature discriminate the majority rural illiterates, rural libraries have robbed themselves of a constituency which they could

use to justify their existence. It is in the light of this unfavourable position that some of the problems which have frustrated the operations of rural libraries in Zambia are outlined.

4.3.1 Lack of financial support

Libraries do not operate in isolation from the general problems that have beset the Zambian economy. The fact that libraries are still based on a Western model does not improve the situation. Libraries have to compete with other stakeholders for the limited foreign exchange allocations. Inflation has adversely affected their operations and the problem has been further accentuated by the prohibitive cost of books and equipment since these have to be imported from developed countries. Financial cuts on library spending is not only peculiar to Zambia. Funding of libraries has been cut in the USA (Merryfield, 1995: 60) and complaints have been voiced in England (Truesdell, 1994: 20).

The economic well-being of a country has a direct impact on the extent to which a government can support social services like libraries. Unfortunately, Zambia is a poor country and the government has to prioritise services that it can support. As in all other countries, library services have to compete with other state services for a slice of the cake. In developing countries this battle is intense, as the cake is smaller and to satisfy the needs of one sector often requires that "non essential" services receive nothing or very little. Top policy-makers

decide on budget priorities and, unless they are convinced that a national library service is desirable, this service stands little chance of receiving adequate financial support. Gaining the support of these decision makers for the financing of rural libraries is difficult for a number of reasons, including the following which were identified during the study:

- Very few people working in the library profession in Zambia, especially those in the public library sector, have the political “muscle” and status to influence the attitude of top decision makers (Kakwasha, 1996: Interview). Furthermore, as discussed under item 3.4, ZLS officers have relatively low status within the Ministry of Education.
- It is difficult to assess, in real terms, the value of information services to national development and thereby present concrete evidence to policy makers when lobbying for financial resources (Lundu, 1988: 2).
- The benefits of a rural library service in a predominantly illiterate environment is still a potentiality in Zambia and therefore decision makers do not attach any significance to programs associated with rural libraries (Kangulu, 1988: 15).
- The current placement of ZLS as a department within the Ministry of Education presents its own problems. In the first

place it has become difficult to lobby for financial resources for the efficient running of a nation-wide library service because the Ministry does not feel that it is responsible for providing the service short of maintaining the school libraries. In this light, the department has low status within the Ministry and its needs are given very low priority. The department's status is so low within the Ministry that its running expenses only appear under the sundry budget of the Ministry of Education (Msadabwe, 1997: Interview). On the other hand ministries with a social welfare or the information mandate cannot lobby for financial resources for rural library services for fear of being accused of "meddling" in the affairs of another ministry.

The above reasons compounded by the weak national economy have resulted in the deterioration of the provision of library services to rural areas. Apart from the maintenance of staff salaries and other minor expenses, there was no money put aside for the running of rural libraries from 1985 to 1991 (Mwanakatwe, 1992:15). It was only in 1992, that an allocation of 10 million kwacha was made for the specific purchase of children's books. In the same year that the service managed to purchase six reconditioned vehicles for use in the inspection of rural library centres after a period of more than ten years (ZLS, 1992: 5).

4.3.2 Lack of library legislation

Although ZLS is responsible for running the rural libraries, it is carrying out this mandate without any legal framework. The service is operating as a cinderella department under the Ministry of Education. The importance of legislation to the development of library and information services has long been recognised by international organisations such as Unesco. The realisation of the importance of library services to society prompted Unesco to spearhead international campaigns for the promotion of public library services especially in Africa. Hence, international conferences and seminars have been held to promote these services. In all these major gatherings the role and importance of library legislation was clearly stressed. As far back as 1949 Unesco published a Manifesto on Public Libraries. The Manifesto which was revised in 1994 clearly states that “the public library should be established under the clear mandate of law so framed as to ensure nation wide provision of public library service” (Unesco, 1995: 67). In 1953, Unesco sponsored a seminar on the Development of Public Libraries in Africa (generally known as the Ibadan Seminar) also advocated the adoption of appropriate legislation to ensure a service with an effective administration and adequate financial support (Unesco, 1954: 8).

Ocholla (1991: 28) has listed the following reasons as the main purposes of library legislation:

- To facilitate the creation of library agencies;
- To guarantee the establishment of a network of libraries on a statutory basis;
- To ensure a stable financial support on a progressive basis;
- To set up library authorities to be responsible for the staffing, administration and management of the libraries;
- To ensure permanent, uniform, efficient, expanding and coordinated library services;
- To presuppose free service, easily accessible to potential users irrespective of their qualification and age.

Furthermore, Mchombu and Miti have expanded on the above functions of library legislation to include the following factors:

- Regulation: Policies have a regulatory function. Within a specific country library legislation will monitor and coordinate functions like
 - information exchange
 - importation of information products
 - standardisation
 - accountability

- Legislation will normally define institutional responsibility and will thus institute accountability.
- Donor support: a library service which operates under a mandate backed by legislation will encourage donor support since it shows that the government is serious about the library structure within a country (Mchombu & Miti, 1992: 140).

This illustrates the importance of legislation. Legislation is usually used as a tool to force the state to fund libraries. Without clearcut legislation library boards find themselves helpless when they make demands on central government. Legislation is the blueprint of the growth and direction in which libraries are supposed to operate, and without them most plans to upgrade the services will flounder.

The major problem surrounding the non-existence of library legislation in Zambia is lack of support from the mother body of ZLS, the Ministry of Education. Two attempts have been made so far to instigate legislation in 1975 and 1977, but both were rejected at the ministerial level. The Ministry of Education felt that it would cripple itself financially if legislation for libraries was allowed (Kabyema, 1997: Interview). This suggests that the Ministry is using ZLS as one of the educational support systems through which it can ask for and justify further financial resources from the government. When these resources are granted, it can easily manipulate its budget in favour of what the

ministry considers to be priorities. This manipulation is not likely to take place within the framework of a legislated service.

This study has established that the issue of legislating library services in the country is still being vigorously followed and the current government is sympathetic to the demand (Msadabwe, 1997: Interview). It is extremely important that this problem should be solved because without proper legal recognition, ZLS cannot be included as one of the players which can foster rural development.

4.3.3 Publishing industry

As in most parts of Africa (Kedem, 1990: 454) publishing in Zambia is still under-developed.

Chirwa (1980: 59) has identified the following factors as problems which hinder the growth of publishing in Zambia:

- The poor state of the economy has made it difficult for printers to import printing requisites. This is compounded by the fact that although there is no import duty for books, printing requisites and machinery carry an import tax.
- The readership level is too low to maintain a healthy book industry. Furthermore, the multiplicity of vernacular languages further narrows a viable publishing industry in local languages.
- Lack of a national policy on book development.

Moreover, it may be said that the book publishing industry is one of the industries which has totally collapsed and is far less organised than it was in the pre-independence era. As we have already noted in the preceding chapter, rural libraries owe their development to the efforts of different publication bureaux (Msiska, 1986: 245). This was a wise decision because the sale of books in the country heavily depended on the number of people who had access to books. In fact it may be postulated that the book-box system which was available in the 1950's was one way of marketing the books from the publication bureaux.

In 1966 the Zambia Publications Bureau was replaced by a wholly government-controlled organisation which was known as the Kenneth Kaunda Foundation. The prime objective of the organisation was to produce and distribute primary school textbooks and other educational materials (Mbewe, 1985: 46). In 1971, the Kenneth Kaunda Foundation formally became a statutory body through an Act of Parliament which led to the further establishment of two subsidiary companies, viz. the National Educational Distribution Company of Zambia and the National Educational Company of Zambia (Chirwa, 1990: 58). Both companies were formed to handle the distribution of educational materials to all schools in the country, and to publish educational and general books on Zambia respectively. This was a marked departure from the operations of the publications bureaux. The bureaux of the mid-50s did not publish books. They generally

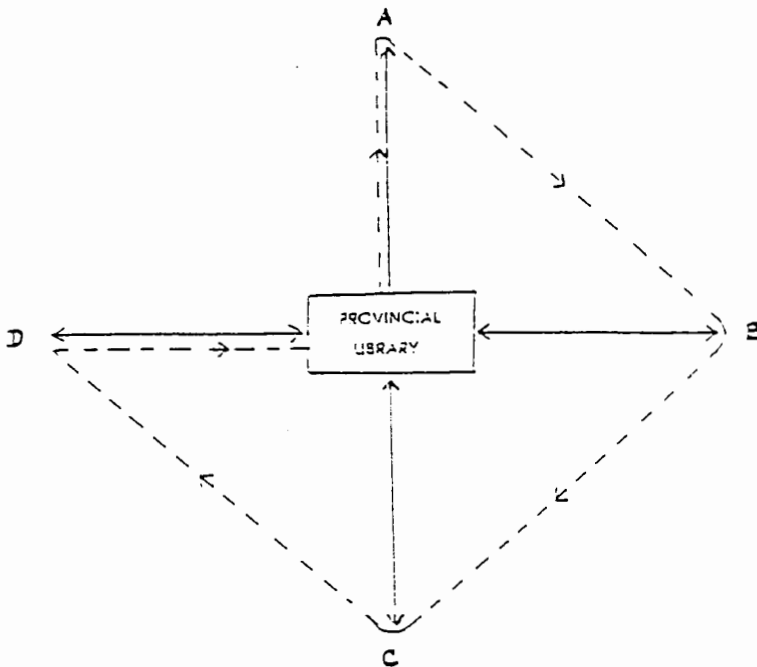
solicited for manuscripts and placed these with commercial publishing firms who received guarantees or subsidies for the publication of the items (Msiska, 1986: 243).

Like many other institutions which depend on government subsidies, the two sister companies collapsed due to financial problems. The government is now trying to re-liberalise the publishing industry but in the meantime there are no viable publishing companies in the country. The market is dominated by books which have been published elsewhere. For the purposes of rural libraries, these books are out of context for the needs of the emergent reader in most parts of Zambia. Fragile literacy skills that have been acquired by primary school leavers and graduates of literacy classes need special reading materials which can nurture their reading skills. Currently there is no formal organisation which is dedicated to the production of simple primers and other related material to cater for this market. The situation is compounded because the ZLS is by and large supported by book donations from foreign donors. To some extent these donations are of use in schools and colleges but are certainly worthless to the average villager with minimum reading skills. The development of rural areas, especially when dependent on strategies like functional literacy, cannot take root without the relevant literature.

4.3.4 Mobility problems

A rural library service by its nature is heavily dependent on its capacity to manage an efficient transport system as a means of circulating library materials in the rural areas. The ZLS is no exception to this rule. Although transport problems have been touched on as some of the general side-effects of the financial problems; it is necessary to review the issue because of its strategic importance for the successful running of a rural library service. Closely following the Tanzanian experience, the circulation of library materials by ZLS was designed on the following lines:

DIAGRAM 1
CIRCULATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS WITHIN A PROVINCE



Adapted from Baregu (1972: 41).

————— Library materials leave the provincial library to library centre A where they remain at most for a month. The items are then brought back to the provincial library, the stock is checked, changed, and dispatched to library centre B and so forth.

- - - - - Library materials go to centre A and without changing stock circulate to B, C and D and finally return to the provincial library.

The above situation was representative of the rural library service when it was first established. According to annual reports the last mobile library broke down in 1979 (ZLS, 1980: 4). This service has been discontinued since then. ZLS operated without a vehicle from 1985 to 1991 (ZLS, 1993: 5). During that intervening period, the

service relied on the generosity of other government departments, but this did not meet its demands. Inspection of rural library centres, let alone the delivery of library materials, was only resumed after the acquisition of several vehicles in 1992 (ZLS, 1993: 4).

The current system is for library centres to visit the provincial libraries and secure their needs. In most cases the provincial libraries themselves have to refer rural library users to visit the national headquarters in Lusaka if they want to replenish their stock (Kabyema, 1997: Interview). This has been a major constraint, especially for the CODE book programme, because the most needy rural school libraries do not have the resources to collect their share and books are piling up at the ZLS headquarters due to lack of transport (Kabyema, 1997: Interview). This scenario does not augur well for a service which is supposed to target the poorest people in the country. The survival of rural library centres in Zambia is evidence of the desire by the rural dweller to acquire reading materials at all costs.

4.4 Internal problems

It should be noted that the problems beyond the control of ZLS as identified, have a direct impact on what may seem to be internal problems of the organisation. One of the major constraints faced by ZLS since its conception is its inability to attract and retain qualified personpower. This problem goes beyond the recruitment and retention

of qualified staff by ZLS. It is necessary to reflect how this “staff shortage” has affected the running of rural libraries, and how the staffing problems of ZLS have impacted on the operation of rural libraries, the training of “grassroot librarians” and the image of the library profession in Zambia.

4.4.1 Staffing

The running of any public service requires suitably qualified, experienced and enthusiastic staff, and this rule is no exception to the maintenance of library services. The importance of an adequate and qualified staff has been mentioned as a prerequisite to the running of any library. Barron (1995: 77) summed up the American experience with the following conclusion:

Many rural libraries have inadequate numbers of staff, and many others have staff which are seriously undereducated to meet the expanded information needs of the people in their communities.

The problem of inadequate levels of staff seems to be widespread. Instances of the closing-down of rural provincial libraries due to lack of staff have been reported in the Solomon Islands (Evans, 1992: 64). Nearer home, Mchombu (1991:28), Adimorah (1983: 166) and Abdullah (1996: 49) all mention the inadequacies of staffing in most African libraries and they see this as a major problem.

The Zambian experience is no different in this respect from other countries. The ZLS has been facing a serious staffing problem since the service was opened. The seriousness of this is reflected in most annual reports of the Service. The main reason given for the failure of ZLS to recruit and retain suitable professional staff has been due to the fact that for a long time, posts in the Service were graded under the government's administrative scales rather than according to the professional and technical scales which have a relatively better package (ZLS, 1990: 4). As a result of this problem, ZLS has for a long time acted as training ground for young professionals who spend short periods with the service to gain the necessary experience before moving on to better paying institutions (ZLS, 1976: 3). However, it is gratifying to note that after protracted submissions from ZLS and the Zambia Library Association, the government recognised the status of librarians as professionals in 1992 (ZLS, 1992: 2). This development has upgraded all librarians working in the civil service and they are now paid like all other professionals. Due to this progressive development, ZLS has succeeded in filling most of the professional posts which were vacant (ZLS, 1995: 4).

Although the staffing position has improved to some extent within the ZLS, this improvement has had very little impact on the running of rural library centres. The centres are all run on a voluntary basis and with a few exceptions the majority are housed in rural schools. This is not surprising since in most areas the rural school is the most

convenient and central place. It should be noted that the schools are only supposed to act as depots where books and other materials are deposited for the use of surrounding communities. There should be no integration between the school library resources and that for the rural library centre. Although this service is better than nothing, there are major disadvantages, all of which are connected in one way or another with the problems of staffing rural library centres. These disadvantages were outlined by a teacher-librarian in a rural school and are representative of the situation in other library centres housed in rural schools.

- Most teacher-librarians do not have the necessary skills to run a rural public library.
- Teacher-librarians are normally reluctant to accept responsibility for library materials, since it is the general policy of ZLS that losses should be paid for by the rural centre itself. When they do accept the responsibility, their concern with preserving the books is the overriding factor and use of the materials is consequently restricted to a few individuals whom they can trust. The services are therefore not available to everyone in the community.
- Head teachers of some schools where centres are housed have often refused access to the public especially outside normal school hours due to their concern about the use of premises

during the other times. These “opening hours” are not normally convenient to the average rural dweller (Mutalifelile, 1996: Interview).

It is obvious that the current arrangements must be reviewed if rural library centres which are housed in rural schools are to operate effectively. Rural libraries should operate in an atmosphere where everybody in the community can have access to them if they are to have an impact.

4.4.2 Training

Mention has been made that the majority of the people who run rural library centres do not have the necessary knowledge to run such institutions. This is one of the major problems faced by rural library centres. The assumption that anyone who has the zeal and stamina to come forward, and thus voluntarily assume the responsibility for running a library service, following accepted professional standards, is a mere fallacy. It is also unethical for the library profession in Zambia to allow itself to be represented by untrained individuals. To some extent, the low status of librarianship in Zambia can be attributed to its reliance on volunteers. The management of a public library is a specialisation on its own right, let alone the management of a rural library in an environment which is predominantly illiterate. The shortcomings of a “volunteer librarian” in the field normally conveys a poor image to the profession as a whole. Furthermore, ZLS cannot force

volunteers to account for their actions, short of withdrawing their services and so punishing innocent library users.

To redress the above situation, ZLS has tried under difficult conditions to arrange seminars and short courses for volunteers who run rural library centres. Because of financial constraints this scheme has had little impact on the rural library scene. As early as 1969, ZLS recommended the establishment of a library management module as part of the teacher training syllabus (ZLS, 1969: 6). Unfortunately this recommendation was rejected by the Ministry of Education on various occasions. The present head of ZLS was informed that the recommendation could not be accepted because the current teacher training syllabus was already too congested for it to include any more courses (Msadabwe, 1997: Interview).

4.4.3 Image of the library profession

It is clear from what has been discussed so far that libraries and librarianship are not high on the list of government priorities. This situation is made worse because the library professionals in Zambia have in general failed to project an appropriate image of the profession. The public image is poor and the general public see library workers as clerks or mere assistants without any tangible skills which they can offer to the public. The situation is made worse by the fact that it is only occasionally that members of the public come face to face with professional librarians. Professional librarians tend to hide behind the

scenes and the public are usually served by the unqualified library staff or the “voluntary librarian” at the rural library centre. The general public confuses the role of these people with that of a professional librarian. This image does not portray nor enhance the potential role of a librarian in furthering development in the rural areas.

4.5 Conclusion

Rural libraries in Zambia face several problems. These problems have lessened the effectiveness of the services provided by libraries. In the light of these problems, it is perhaps surprising that there is a rudimentary service which tries to cater for the rural area. This service should be acknowledged and what is most important is to find ways of improving the services so that they meet the needs of the rural populace and thus contribute to the development of rural areas.

Chapter Five: Alternative approaches to rural library services

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Four outlined some of the problems that are faced by rural libraries in Zambia. It is clear that the libraries, to a large extent, have failed to deliver a meaningful service to the majority of the rural populace. Their services are not relevant to the rural situation. To redress this, the library profession should re-examine itself and make the necessary adjustments to suit conditions in rural areas. This Chapter outlines proposals which aim at transforming rural libraries so that they become responsive to the needs of rural communities in the immediate future. The following points are discussed:

- (i) Why there is a need to introduce alternative methods in the provision of information in rural Zambia;
- (ii) How rural libraries can co-operate with other agencies to promote rural development through:
 - Providing and disseminating information which is relevant to rural areas
 - Preserving and promoting indigenous knowledge
 - Catering for the needs of semi-literates

- Diversifying rural library services
 - Enhancing the use of information technology in rural areas
- (iii) Suggest the staffing alternatives for rural libraries;
- (iv) Propose the infrastructural framework in which rural libraries should operate;
- (v) Financing of rural libraries and propose alternative strategies.

5.2 The need for alternative approaches

Zambian society essentially is an oral culture in which the spoken word occupies an important place. Dissemination of information using the written language not only poses problems for the predominantly illiterate rural communities but it also militates against the use of rural libraries. The establishment of rural library services on the lines of Western library traditions is generally out of context with the realities prevailing in rural areas. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the inability of most people to read and write should not be a reason for not offering them an information service. Providing library services which aim to reach the poorest people in rural areas should recognise the impossibility of eradicating illiteracy. In fact Kedem (1990: 447) has highlighted the universality of illiteracy and that even developed

countries still have illiterates among their communities. In fact as far back as 1954 when Unesco made the first revision of the Public Library Manifesto, it was accepted that the contents of public libraries should reflect the evolution of knowledge and culture of the milieu in which they operate and that their major concern should be the communication of information and ideas in all forms which these may be expressed (Unesco, 1972: 130). Most rural libraries in developing countries, including Zambia, do not reflect this aspiration.

If the above assumption is accepted, then the current passive approach of providing solely traditional library services in rural Zambia, whilst waiting for the majority of the population to develop the requisite skills to use these services, cannot be justified. Lundu & Milimo (1990: 149) have highlighted the dependence of the rural populace in Zambia on oral communication. Therefore libraries in rural Zambia should adopt techniques which will enable them to operate effectively in line with the conditions that prevail in rural areas.

5.3 Alternative approaches

A radical approach is needed if libraries are to be accepted and appreciated in the rural areas. The following proposals suggest how libraries could provide and encourage the use of information for development in rural areas.

5.3.1 Provision of relevant information

For libraries to have an impact on the rural scene, the major thrust of the service should aim at understanding the information needs of the poor. These needs, which have been generally referred to as “survival information” (Kaniki, 1995: 15) tend to revolve around the need to access information which could help the rural dwellers solve the problems confronting them in their daily lives. Information needs can, for the most part, only be solved by weighing up the alternatives that are available to the rural dweller at the moment of need. At the same time appropriate action should be taken.

African library systems, including that operating in Zambia, are inappropriate for rural information needs (Wyley, 1995: 5). The services are town-based and cannot answer the needs of rural dwellers. If library services are to have any meaning for the rural populace, a strategy should be developed which will target those areas. According to Amadi (1981: 218), there is a need for a cadre of “oral librarians” who have a strong sense of purpose and are prepared to work in a rural environment. This would be a drastic change from the present arm-chair role of the librarian who expects clients to come to the library to consult or borrow materials.

The role of the rural librarian should be to advise library users on how best to access and utilise information for their betterment. The duties of a rural librarian could comprise two major components:

- Helping the rural dwellers to articulate their information needs
- Linking them with the relevant source of information whether from within or outside the community (Ochai, 1995: 169).

It must be emphasised that the provision of library services in rural areas extends beyond the problem of providing relevant reading materials for the semi-literates. The majority of the people are unable to read or write and therefore the provision of books, even at the most elementary level, cannot meet their information needs.

The proposed approach will not only give rural libraries a practical function in rural development but may, to some extent, help co-ordinate the current fragmented nature of government rural extension services. The norm is that each ministry or department which has a mission to inform the rural populace makes its own arrangements for the delivery of development information. This approach is not only wasteful in terms of duplicating resources and effort, but it is in some cases impractical because certain ministries and departments have not yet developed the relevant machinery for the effective delivery of information to rural areas. For example, the Department of Wildlife only imposes punitive measures in its own anti-poaching campaigns instead of educating rural communities on the importance of preserving wildlife (Mutukwa, 1996: Interview).

5.3.2 Indigenous Knowledge (IK)

IK systems play an insignificant role in the promotion of rural development in Zambia. This failure is due in part to the negative attitude of most development planners, who see IK as marginal and an obstacle to development. This study argues that there is no sustainable development which can take root in rural areas without the inclusion of IK. These systems should be seen as the natural base on which other information resources needed for development should be founded.

Brouwers, as quoted by Appleton et al (1995:55) has defined IK as knowledge that is generated by communities over time so that it can enable them to understand and cope with their particular agro-ecological and socio-economic environment. IK qualifies to be scientific knowledge in its own right, because, like other knowledge systems generated by universities, research institutions and private firms, it is generated and transformed through a systematic process of observation, experimentation and adaptation. The major advantage of IK over other knowledge systems is that it is the prime source of local level decision-making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural resource management and a host of other activities in rural areas (Agrawal, 1995:416)

From this, it is clear that IK is primarily concerned with activities that are intimately connected with the livelihood of the communities in

which the knowledge is generated. Its main function is to make meaning and provide answers to the problems which rural people face. All societies, irrespective of their technological development, have the capacity to re-examine their own actions or intended actions and decide whether they want to act in a given way. The process of this "self-consciousness" means that societies' world views are rooted in people's ability to construct a meaningful reality out of the many options which are available to them.

Societal processes are explained by examining the way in which people construct meanings, either confirming old meanings or offering novel interpretations of these meanings (Alan & Romm, 1990:45). In rural societies, the construction of meaning and the way an interpretation may be offered for the most part based on the available information resources, the major part of which is IK. Any development effort which does not recognize IK as an information resource is likely to fail because the rural communities will not construct meaning out of what is being offered to them.

When examining development as the process by which an individual gains greater control over his/her own life, or, alternatively, as the process whereby the individual increases his/her capacity to make decisions (Alant, 1990: 164), the implications of the use of IK in development becomes obvious. IK, to a large extent, is the major source of information for people in rural communities. The models of

development, which have largely centred on the use of external knowledge systems, have had a relatively high failure rate in developing rural areas. The main problem has been that the IK resources of the rural people have been largely neglected, and these resources do provide some answers to the needs of the peasantry.

The value of IK is not restricted to the rural dwellers alone; it has a considerable impact on the development process of the whole country. There is a need for development planners to understand and appreciate IK systems if their plans are to succeed in rural areas. There is no doubt that IK systems have contributed to the development of the country in the spheres of cultural and spiritual development, traditional healing methods, indigenous agricultural techniques and the fostering of indigenous educational systems (Appleton, 1995: 57)

Rural librarians should take an active role in the fostering of IK systems as an agent of development in rural areas. The following issues are suggestive of what can be done in this field:

- **Preservation:** Rural libraries should attempt to preserve the vanishing IK systems in the rural areas. IK systems are generally based on oral culture. Oral cultures are an integral part of the nation's heritage and it would be disastrous to let them disappear. The death of a person knowledgeable in IK systems has been compared with the burning of an archive library (Amadi, 1981: 140). There is no excuse for libraries not

to embark on programmes to preserve IK because the technology which will allow this undertaking already exists. Rural librarians can help to preserve IK systems by identifying such systems and be involved in the collection of artefacts and the recording of specific IK systems on both video and audio tapes. Furthermore, projects of this nature would give rural libraries programmes of national importance with which to identify themselves, and thus give rural libraries a sense of purpose.

- **Dissemination:** The processing and cataloguing of the nation's IK systems will facilitate access to this resource at local, national or even international levels. This will be of particular importance at the local level. The rural library or librarian will have access to an information resource which will be understood and appreciated by the average villager. Where access to a particular IK system is restricted due to socio-cultural barriers, the rural library will attempt to provide some form of "directories" so that people are aware of individuals with specialised indigenous knowledge.

5.3.3 Literacy programmes

As already mentioned in 4.2.2, illiteracy in rural Zambia is still widespread. Nonetheless, many people, especially young adults are keen to improve their reading and writing skills. Special classes which

target the adult learner do exist throughout the country. Libraries have been known to be involved in literacy campaigns although in most cases they have played a subordinate role as providers of reading materials. Libraries, especially those in rural areas, should take up a more active role in literacy programmes. The following points suggest ways in which libraries could become more involved in the fight against illiteracy.

- **Venue:** Rural library centres, especially those that are not attached to rural schools, should offer their premises as meeting places for literacy classes.
- **Tutoring:** There is a serious shortage of teachers in most rural schools in Zambia. This is attributed to the fact that most newly graduated teachers prefer not to work in rural environments (Kelly, 1991: 134). In these circumstances, most teachers in these schools are overworked and are not prepared to take up further duties as teachers of literacy classes. Where available rural librarians should use a more direct approach and be involved in tutoring literacy classes (Phiri, 1984: 16).
- **Reading materials:** One of the major problems of literacy programmes is the lack of appropriate reading materials which can foster reading skills to the new literates (Kedem, 1990: 453). Apart from the traditional approach whereby libraries attempt to supply easy to read texts for literacy programmes, libraries should take up

a more proactive approach and be involved in the production of elementary readers. A recurring reason for the non-publication of elementary grade books, especially in the vernacular, has been that the audience levels are insignificant to justify the production costs (Adimorah, 1983: 165). With the advent of modern technology, such as, the use of desktop publishing methods, libraries can produce simple readers in vernacular languages. This can be extended to the production of local newsletter which will carry local news and thus have more appeal for rural areas. In addition, libraries, especially at the provincial level, should organise workshops which will identify local talent in the form of potential authors. Furthermore, librarians and related professionals should agitate for the removal of import tax on printing requisites and machinery.

- **Co-operation with other agencies:** Rural libraries in partnership with other agencies should disseminate information on the magnitude, characteristics and effects of illiteracy in their communities. Kelly (1991: 195) has pointed out that, although there is strong verbal support provided by policy statements in Zambia, very little is being done to alleviate the situation. One reason is that there is little concrete information on the position of illiteracy in the country. Planning literacy programmes, especially securing donor support, depends on how cogently the problem is presented. Rural

libraries are much better placed to present the facts as they are at grassroots levels.

The recognition that the majority of people in the productive category in rural areas are illiterate is enough to upgrade the efforts to teach them to read and write, while at the same time provide services which are relevant to them. Currently, as in other developing countries, outreach programmes for rural areas are designed to foster functional literacy (Zapata, 1994: 124). In the functional approach, literacy skills are taught as a vehicle for certain practical skills which have immediate application to daily life.

Basic literacy programmes concentrate on the direct teaching and learning of reading, writing and simple arithmetic. Based on figures from the Zambian experience, it appears that basic literacy classes are far more popular than functional literacy programmes. Between 1966 and 1985, 106 000 people enrolled for basic literacy programmes, while only 53 000 were registered for functional literacy programmes (Kelly, 1991: 195). These statistics indicate that the resources which the government is spending on functional literacy campaigns are being channeled in the wrong direction. It has been suggested that most of the practical skills being taught under the functional literacy programme are irrelevant to the needs of the rural audience (Muyatwa, 1996: Interview). An appraisal is needed to re-direct the programme. The library community in rural Zambia should be in the forefront of

sensitising development planners to the real needs of the rural populace.

5.3.4 Diversification of rural library services

Most people in Zambia, whether or not they use the library, perceive it in the traditional sense as a “place of books”. This is also evident from the translation of the word “library” into all seven major languages in Zambia in which library is only translatable in relation to books (Kaniki, 1989: 162). Consequently, and largely because the library is seen as a place to acquire information only through reading, most of the reasons for the non-use and use of the library relate to the ability to access and read such material. This traditional approach to library services in rural areas must be shaken off and every effort should be encouraged to transform the image of the rural library. This can only be achieved if the library can diversify some of its operations and be responsive to the realities of rural life. The following proposals could contribute towards changing this image:

- **Postal services:** The provision of postal and related services by rural libraries is one way in which diversification can be achieved. Postal services in Zambia do not generally have offices in the rural areas, save at the district level. The services rely on guaranteeing agency status to anyone who is enterprising enough to apply for the

status. This avenue is open to rural library centres, and there is a need for this type of service in the rural areas.

- **Rural bookshops:** Kelly (1991: 54) has correctly reported that there are no outlets in the rural areas from which people can purchase stationery and other school supplies. This shortfall can be exploited to the advantage of the rural libraries by opening up book stands that are designed to meet the needs of the communities.
- **Audiovisual equipment:** Kaniki has suggested that rural libraries in Zambia should have radios and other audiovisual equipment to cater for the illiterate audience (Kaniki, 1989: 164). This recommendation would be a welcome departure from the current service which is predominantly based on books. The provision of radios in rural libraries would be very much appreciated by the rural populace because most of them do not have access to radios or other audiovisual equipment, like audi-cassettes and television.

It is the experience of this researcher and informants in this investigation, in particular Mutalifelile (1996: Interview), that most rural people cannot afford to purchase radios. Those who own them find problems in maintaining them, and generally, the supply of inputs, like batteries, is erratic in rural areas.

Rural libraries would greatly enhance their services, and to a large extent, meet the needs of their audience, if they introduced services

which could be used by everyone. The example given by the Vaal Triangle Association for library co-operation in providing audiocassettes to people who cannot read and write should be a standard norm in all rural libraries (du Plooy, 1988: 8).

The above examples are suggestive of the possibilities which are available for the transformation of the rural library. The most important guideline is to ensure that rural library responds to the daily needs of the community in which it has been established.

5.3.5 Information technology

Olden (1987: 301) argued that libraries in developing countries should not waste their meager resources on expensive information technology (IT) but should concentrate on improving the present status of libraries in basic issues like illiteracy. While it is acknowledged that IT is expensive to buy and maintain, the benefits by far outweigh the disadvantages. The following are some of the advantages from which libraries in developing countries will benefit if they adopt IT:

- IT could help people in developing countries to achieve effective bibliographic control over their holdings. This is very important for networking, at local, national and international levels. As already mentioned, the availability of suitable materials for use among semi-illiterate situations is scarce. These materials, wherever they are found, should be made available so that they can be adapted for

other localities. One example is the work being done by the Malawi Library Service in the re-packaging of information for rural libraries (Sturges & Chimseu, 1996: 85). Taking in account the commonalities between Malawi and some parts of Zambia, in terms of language and culture, some of the items being produced could be of great use to Zambia.

- Furthermore, libraries in rural areas would effectively develop and build their own databases, especially in the field of conserving indigenous knowledge. IT will also give them access to use such facilities as e-mail, desktop publishing and the translation of some certain resources to meet their needs.

The Ministry of Health in association with the University of Zambia computer centre, has proved that IT is feasible in rural areas. Through the HealthNet programme, most rural and urban health institutions have been linked together. This online service has been used:

- To facilitate quick referrals of serious cases from a rural health centre to urban and better equipped hospitals,
- To capture epidemiological data and disseminate this information on a nation-wide basis,
- To administrate rural health centres, especially to control drug supplies,

- For consultations between para-medicals in the rural areas and medical specialists working in urban areas in cases where the latter lack experience (Shakakata, 1994: 101).

This scheme has been so successful that other ministries are in the process of introducing similar services. With considerable effort, ZLS could achieve the same. Furthermore, ZLS should take advantage of initiatives being made on the international front which aim at furthering the use of information technology in developing countries. For Africa, the African Economic Community has established an organisation called African Information Society Initiative which aims at influencing African governments to formulate national development programmes which include among other issues the following:

- establishment of locally based, low-cost Internet services
- adopt policies which will increase access to information and communications facilities to grass-roots societies and rural areas
- development of human resources in information and communication technologies (Africa's Information Society Initiative, 1996: 2)

ZLS should use efforts which are being advanced by international organisations as lobbying tools for the development of information technology facilities in rural areas.

Tanzanian and Botswana rural library experience (Kedem, 1990: 455).

However, although the above options may be the most desirable, the problems which ZLS is facing may not allow it to follow these options. Furthermore, the first option may not be feasible because the country has no capacity to train the necessary manpower at those levels. Under these circumstances, ZLS has two other alternatives which are more cost effective:

- The service can employ "part-time" library assistants. These could be community members who have been identified as capable of running a rural library centre. Unlike volunteers, these people should be remunerated as a way of boosting their morale and making them accountable to their "employer", the ZLS. This option can operate on the lines of the police reserve force, where a part-time employee is credited with a maximum number of hours for which he/she can claim payment every month. Unlike the option of employing full time staff, ZLS could save in form of non payment of leave allowances, pensions, housing subsidies and other expenses which are due to full-time staff. The appointments should be open to anyone who is considered capable, whether currently employed or an ordinary member of the community.
- The other alternative is to continue relying on volunteer labour. It should be made clear that this arrangement is not the best way to

run a public institution and should therefore only be considered when all other options have failed. Furthermore, there is need for closer supervision in order to monitor the activities of "volunteer librarians". Possibly the best way to motivate this category of helpers is to diversify the activities of rural libraries as proposed under 5.3.4 and then give the volunteers the mandate to run these ventures. The ZLS would then act as a wholesaler to the volunteers and any profits which ZLS would make could be used to improve rural libraries.

It should be emphasized that all the categories of people working under these options should receive some form of training which would give them the skills needed to work in harmony with a rural community. It is therefore mandatory that all institutions that are involved in training people, who are earmarked to work in libraries at all levels, should focus more on teaching skills which can foster interpersonal relationships and other requisite skills. Pleasant, courteous and well-groomed staff members with good communication skills are a great asset to any library and the acceptance of a library as a social institution in rural areas is largely dependent on identifying personnel who have the skills to work hand in hand with the rural populace (Odini, 1991: 7).

In addition to the above, training should be given which will equip staff working in rural libraries with the skills which will enable them to

carry out specialised functions especially in the field of the preservation and dissemination of IK. In this respect, it is therefore necessary that ZLS in conjunction with other organisations such as the Zambia Library Association should formulate training strategies which will benefit staff working in rural libraries.

5.5 Rural library accommodation

Under the current economic difficulties which Zambia is experiencing, it may seem unreasonable to call for the building of a specific infrastructure earmarked for use as a library. The most important issue at present is to re-design rural library services so that they respond to the needs of the majority of the rural populace. Having pre-conditions about the standards of housing may not be the right direction for encouraging the growth of a service which is still largely nascent. Furthermore, it could be unwise to advocate for the construction of what has been termed as Village Reading Rooms in Botswana (Keden, 1990: 455), because these may entrench the current stereotypical association of the library and the book.

In general, there is no problem of housing libraries at provincial and district levels. All rural provinces have buildings specifically designed to accommodate a library including core staff housing. The rural district libraries are housed by district councils and most of these are eager to set up library services for their constituencies as a way of

showing social responsibility. Thus, they are therefore usually amenable to the idea of providing library accommodation.

At grassroots level, although any offers should be accepted, the rural school should be regarded as a focal point. Schools are the most dispersed institutions in rural Zambia. In most cases, they are the central point of activity in the area and teachers are normally the most enlightened individuals in their communities and are held in high esteem. It should be recognised that for some time to come, the rural school should therefore be seen as the most appropriate location for a rural library centre. The major conflict seems to lie in the responsibilities associated with staffing the service as discussed in 4.4.1, other than accommodation.

5.6 Financing rural libraries

The resources which are made available to sustain an institution, such as a library service, have a direct impact on the quality and delivery of a particular service. The most important resource is usually financial. Financial resources generally dictate the nature and level of service, and the capacity which an organisation can muster financial resources is indicative of its vibrancy.

The financial problems of ZLS have been discussed in 4.3.1. It is important to note that this is one problem which has an impact on all other problems and efforts which aim at solving this problem will go a

long way towards resuscitating the operations of rural libraries in Zambia. The following points suggest solutions to the financial problems of rural libraries.

5.6.1 Public funding

It is generally accepted that most of the responsibility for public library services rests with the library authorities on national and local levels. They are responsible for passing laws and regulations, adopting strategies and policies ensuring the development of public libraries and, above all, providing funds for the running of public libraries. The draft revision of Unesco's Public Library Manifesto (1994) clearly states that public libraries should be funded by the State (Unesco, 1995: 67).

In a country with a declining economy like Zambia, the funding of such public services as libraries by the State is generally marginal. The available financial resources cannot satisfy all the demands, and only services that are construed to be vital receive a slice of the national financial cake. The necessity of a particular service is generally supported by a legal instrument. Unfortunately, the ZLS is operating without legal backup which makes it more difficult to make financial demands on the government.

It should be noted that libraries are still a new phenomenon in African society. It is therefore essential that the State make funds available to foster the establishment of libraries in rural areas. Above

all, the most important responsibility of the library community in Zambia is to constitute themselves as a powerful lobby group which should canvass for the financial support of libraries in Zambia within government circles.

5.6.2 Payment of fees

It must be understood that even with an increase in the public funding of libraries in general and rural libraries in particular, expenditure will still be limited. There will be a continued gap between the funds needed for the rural library service in the country and the amount of government grants.

Payment of fees in return for services rendered is one of the oldest methods used to collect funds for the running of libraries. In fact, the forerunner of the current rural library service, the book-box service under the Northern Rhodesia Publication Bureau had a £2 subscription levy per library centre (Msiska, 1986: 245). In order not to contravene the principle of a free public library service as advocated by Unesco (Unesco, 1995: 66), the fees should be considered as supplementary to public funding. Therefore, the level of fees, both membership and subscription, should be determined with care. Exorbitant fees should not be introduced as they might frustrate regular and adequate use of rural libraries. The best alternative is to let such fees be determined at grassroots level, and the clientele itself should decide the need for such fees and level which should be levied.

5.6.3 Fund raising campaigns

Rural library centres which show a willingness to help themselves will stand a better chance of improving their financial situation. Local fund raising campaigns may be undertaken. These may be in the form of organising cultural activities like dances, for the benefit of both tourists and locals. This will not only bring diversity to the services offered by rural libraries but might attract more funding. The proposed activities under diversification of rural library services, such as rural bookshops, could also be seen as a way of fundraising.

5.6.4 Endowments

Endowments are a particularly suitable and convenient means of raising financial support. An endowment can be made to enable a library to pay the salary of a part-time library assistant or enable the periodic hire of qualified librarians to advise on the management of particular aspects of rural library centres.

Endowments can be solicited from more wealthy Zambians who have interests in particular areas where rural libraries are situated. Furthermore, service organisations operating in the country, such as Rotary International, Round Table, Lions Clubs, professional and business organisations can all be approached to mobilise funds for the support of rural libraries.

5.6.5 External aid

Without doubt, rural libraries will continue to receive support from donor countries and organisations. As outlined in 3.4, this remains to be the most consistent source of support for rural libraries. Some weaknesses have been mentioned especially with the supply of items which may not be relevant to rural areas. This weakness may stem from within rather than from the donors themselves. It is the duty of ZLS and specific rural library centres to solicit specific forms of assistance. This can be done if ZLS draws up well formulated project proposals requesting donor assistance in specified fields. For example, funding can be requested for the undertaking of a pilot project to preserve indigenous knowledge in a particular locality. The success of such a pilot project may justify further funding, either directly from the government or from donor agencies. What is most important is for ZLS to make conspicuous efforts to explore all possible avenues for maximising assistance from donors to rural libraries.

5.7 Conclusion

It is clear from the above that there are several options which will facilitate alternative approaches to the running of rural library services in Zambia. The underlining danger is for the ZLS to embark on alternatives which it may not be able to complete successfully or maintain. An unsuccessful programme or project is likely to emit the

wrong signals both to government and sympathisers of the library movement. This is a situation which the Zambian library community can ill afford. ZLS should embark on innovations following established priorities while at the same time, it should try to consolidate existing services, the major guiding motive being the provision of relevant services to the rural areas.

Chapter six: Future of rural libraries in Zambia

6.1 Introduction

Chapter Six briefly outlines an overview of the issues raised in the study. This forms the foundation for proposing a long term, and possibly more sustainable future development of rural libraries. Finally, in support of the realisation of future development of rural libraries, suggestions are made on possible further research in the field of rural librarianship in Zambia.

6.2 Study overview

This study has established that there is low utilisation of information as a development resource in Zambia. In particular rural libraries have played and continue to play a very insignificant role in the promotion of rural development. Rural development strategies have largely excluded the role of the library in development.

The existence of a rudimentary rural library service is acknowledged, but in general, this service has failed to meet the information needs of the rural populace. Its major weakness is its dependent on written materials while the potential users are predominantly illiterate. This is a legacy of the colonial era. The rural library service was designed following western library traditions which are heavily dependent on the use of the printed word. This approach is

not feasible in an environment where the majority of the people are illiterate. Even where there is a semi-literate audience, the rural library service is plagued by too many operational problems for it to provide a meaningful service. Furthermore, the situation is compounded by the fact that the library community has failed to come up with innovative ideas which could improve the operations of rural libraries.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the provision of rural library services by ZLS is not based on the conception of a library as a communication-information institution; but as a way of exposing the rural population to western type of culture and education. The idea of establishing rural libraries is commendable, but the reasons for such a move are wrong. The libraries aimed only at serving the needs of a minority group which is able to read and write, leaving the needs of the majority illiterate group unattended. It is not surprising that the rural libraries are not appreciated by both the authorities and the rural communities.

6.3 Future of rural libraries in Zambia

This study accepts the view that the role of rural libraries and their impact on rural development in Zambia is largely potential. This is because the concept of the library as an institution for development is still new in Zambia. It will require a lot of effort, in particular from the library profession, to demonstrate both to the development

planners and the rural populace the contributions which libraries can bring to these communities. This acceptance can only come about if rural libraries offer a service which is relevant to the communities.

As Kempson (1990[b]: 47) has emphasized, effective services cannot be imposed on any community but they must be set up with them. Sustainable development, in any field, can only take place if the development programme has been accepted as an important element of the life of the people who are beneficiaries of the programme. For this to take place, there is a need for the community to be involved in determining the type of services which they consider appropriate to their communities.

It therefore follows that the acceptance of the rural library as an important element in the rural areas will depend on the transformation of the present service so that it reflects the needs of all the people in rural areas. It is only when rural libraries will be taken to be problem-oriented and stress the communication-information facilitating role of the service that the rural library service will lay the foundations for future development of libraries as agencies for the provision of information for development. For the above to take place, there is a need to link rural libraries to the development planning process through rural district councils. Currently, rural libraries are mainly managed without any consultation with the user group or the development planners. The service, to be effective, should operate more

at the local government level and should be integrated with other rural development programmes under the auspices of local authorities.

The role of ZLS should generally be advisory and it should attach its staff in some form of secondment to rural councils. Under the umbrella of the rural councils, the visibility of the library at the local level will be improved and its role as an information provider for the community can be enhanced. It is only when the rural libraries are accepted and appreciated that an attempt can be made for them to be turned into community information centres. Community information services, as they are generally termed, are becoming the accepted approach for the provision of information services to disadvantaged groups.

The British Library Association as quoted by Kempson (1986: 182) has defined community information services as:

Services which assist individuals and groups with daily problem solving and with participation in the democratic process. The services concentrate on the needs of those who do not have ready access to other sources of assistance, and on the most important problems that people have to face, problems to do with their homes, their jobs and their rights.

The underlying philosophy of community information services is the principle of community participation. The community is consulted from the start and is involved in determining the nature of the service and it is even encouraged that the service be owned by the community

(Kempson, 1990 [a]: 429). Wyley (1995: 7) has advanced the following reasons in favour of community services:

- **Participation:** The services rely on the participation of the community and thus it is hoped that this will empower the rural communities and give them a say on how they can improve themselves.
- **Relevancy:** Since the communities are involved, it is hoped that the centres will supply information needs which are more relevant to their situation.

This approach as a tool to the provision and use of libraries is being encouraged by library and information specialists (Alemna, 1995: 42). It is hoped that it may answer some of the problems associated with providing library services in the rural areas. With careful evaluation of user needs within a particular community it is possible that community information centres will be able to re-package information in suitable forms which will cater for both illiterates and literates. It will be a major function of the rural libraries to disseminate information in major areas such as health, agriculture, education and politics in formats which are acceptable by the rural poor.

6.4 Further study

The planning and development of rural libraries in Zambia has been carried out with only the broadest knowledge of its clientele. This point was underscored by Parr, the first director of ZLS, who admitted that he might have re-designed the rural library service if he had known the extent of illiteracy in rural Zambia at the time of planning the service in the early 1960's (Parr, 1969: 11). Rural libraries in Zambia, as we conceive them today, have no precedents. As such, there is the need to assemble valuable data in order to establish a service that will reflect in every way the varied information needs of the rural clientele. More especially, there is need for research work which will identify the information needs necessary to satisfy the social, economic, political and recreational needs of a typical rural community in order to develop the right type of library service that can fit into those requirements. This will entail possible research in the following aspects of information use and provision:

- Study the traditional patterns of communicating and absorbing information so as to determine whether, or not the traditional patterns are adequate and what improvements can be made
- Identify patterns of recreation and cultural activities to determine what role rural libraries can play in these activities.

- Examine at literacy rates in more detail among the rural population and evaluate their significance in the use of libraries.
- Evaluate the readiness for change by rural communities in their approach to the use and provision of information and whether modifications to the traditional modes of transmitting information can be accepted.

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