Chapter 4
Libraries as Portal for Knowledge Driven Rural Community Development: Cases from Botswana

Rebecca Lekoko
University of Botswana, Botswana

Josephine Modise-Jankie
University of Botswana, Botswana

Christopher Busang
University of Botswana, Botswana

ABSTRACT
This case presents libraries as a portico through which individuals, communities, and nations can access information for developing themselves. Libraries have potentials to accommodate all types of information: printed, e-publication, audio-visual, and others. They can be used by both governments and their development partners to play a key role in the collection, production, organization, and dissemination of information to enhance socio-economic, emotional, and intellectual development of individuals and the communities. They can appeal to everyone, regardless of age, gender, economic background, interest, and other differences. This chapter specifically explores the role that public libraries play in helping youth to meet the information need for improving their lives and contributing to the development of their communities. To the knowledge of the authors, the stories presented in this chapter have not been documented before as authors researched on them in preparation for this chapter.

Botswana is a country in which the availability of information is among the highest priorities of needed resources for developing the country. It does not come as a surprise that by the year 2016, the government wants to see Botswana having been transformed into a society where information on the operations of government, private sector, and other organizations is freely available to all citizens. The National Development 9 paved a way for the setting up of community information centers aimed at providing

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Libraries in Botswana are positively impacting the lives of young people in many respects. Significant breakthroughs come as a result of using the computer and Internet free of charge in public libraries. Stories presented in this case include those of a youth trained in a library on how to use computers. After this short training he pursued more studies and researched on ICT. He has now opened an Internet café in Lobatse using the Youth Grant. The business is doing very well and he is now sharing his success story as a way to motivate other people to use libraries as sources of livelihood and potential tools to eradicate poverty.

The government of Botswana through the Ministry of Youth and Culture provides the grant for funding youth. Young people are encouraged to come up with innovative ideas and if found viable, they are funded to start their businesses. Another case is that of a youth who developed his website after being trained in the Lobatse public library. He is now into business of designing and developing sales for shops in and around Lobatse. He has also completed his business plan for website development for businesses using the library facility. The third case presented is that of a young person who used the library books to learn about designing and making an airplane, The young man was able to complete the project and the airplane was tested and was able to fly. His story was broadcasted and shared on the Botswana Television program although this was a one time off report and as such the future of his project remains unknown to the public.

Some libraries are also cultural centers, for example, Mmankgodi Community Library and Cultural Centre. These libraries promote culture and are used intensively during the cultural heri-