



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

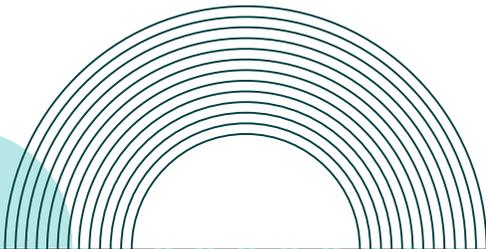


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Word from our Chairperson



Kay Lala-Sides
Chairperson

In 2023, Nal'ibali continued to impact the literacy landscape through engaging programs. Our holistic approach focuses on socio-cultural practices in children's living and learning spaces. This year's report highlights our Theory of Change, research insights, and our engagement with stakeholders on the National Reading Survey and Barometer.

We share lessons from our collaborations and our increased engagement and material distribution efforts following postal service disruptions. Our improved communication efforts spotlight the critical role of men in literacy development.

Notwithstanding the exciting developments of 2023, we also experienced challenges. Most significant was the toll of the restructuring process on the organisation's leadership. Nqabakazi Mate Gina, who drove that process, stepped down as Director in December last year. While a change in key staff can initially feel unsettling, it opens up opportunities for new talent. We are delighted to report that Lorato Trok has stepped into the role of Director at Nal'ibali. Lorato is a reputed early literacy expert with over twenty years of experience. Her passion and expertise complement our organisation.

We also welcomed Nadeema Musthan to the Board of Trustees this year. Nadeema, who is also the Chair of the Literacy Association of South Africa, understands Nal'ibali well and was part of its founding team. Her vast field expertise and insights will be invaluable.

On behalf of the Board, I thank our funders and partners for your continued support and our staff for your passion and commitment to Nal'ibali's vital work. Together, we can significantly contribute to children's literacy in South Africa.

Kay Lala-Sides

Chairperson, Nal'ibali Trust



Implementation of the 2023-2027 Strategy and Theory of Change

Strategic Focus and Direction

The Nal'ibali Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 offers a focused and actionable blueprint for promoting literacy and nurturing a reading culture in South Africa. This plan addresses literacy from early childhood through to the foundational grades, with an emphasis on community involvement and the utilisation of digital platforms to widen reach.

Nal'ibali's strategy is underpinned by a clear vision: for children in South Africa to have enriching experiences with stories and reading, aligning with its mission to spark a love for stories, build language and literacy skills, and foster a lifelong reading culture. This vision and mission are supported by core values such as creating safe spaces, accountability, respect, teamwork, transparency, and incorporating fun into learning and developmental processes.

Unique Role in the Literacy Ecosystem

Nal'ibali is a prominent organization in the literacy sector that focuses on promoting reading for enjoyment and building language and literacy skills in children. The

organization challenges the misconception that literacy learning begins at school and is solely the responsibility of classroom teachers. Instead, they emphasize a literacy ecosystem approach that focuses on reading experiences and behaviour, and exposure to stories and books in homes, schools, and communities. Nal'ibali aims to increase children's access to reading resources, particularly in African languages, by producing and distributing materials in all 11 official languages.

Nal'ibali believes that it has a unique value proposition and approach with regard to children's literacy development:

- ◆ **Focus on Reading Aloud and Storytelling:** Emphasizing the power of oral storytelling to engage children.
- ◆ **Holistic Approach:** Addressing literacy development from early childhood through to adulthood within community settings.
- ◆ **Emphasis on Home Language and Culture:** Providing materials in all 11 official languages to ensure cultural relevance and accessibility.
- ◆ **Influence on Government Policies:** Collaborating with policymakers to integrate best practices into national literacy strategies.
- ◆ **National Communication Campaigns:** Leveraging

mass media to promote reading for enjoyment.

- ◆ **Evidence-Based Learning and Thought Leadership:** Leading research and disseminating insights to influence literacy practices.
- ◆ **Focus on Pre-Literacy Skills:** Emphasizing the development of foundational language skills in young children.
- ◆ **Community Engagement and Reading Clubs:** Establishing and supporting community-led reading initiatives.





Evolution of Strategy

Nal'ibali's strategy has evolved significantly since its inception, reflecting a journey of adaptation, learning, and strategic realignment to address the complex landscape of literacy development in South Africa. Initially celebrated for its storytelling initiatives, radio stories, book giveaways, and reading competitions, Nal'ibali gradually shifted its focus towards more systemic approaches to fostering a reading culture.

The 2023-2027 strategic plan represents a pivotal shift from primarily creating story content to emphasizing content distribution, and from a school-based approach to a broader focus on cultivating a family and community reading ecosystem. This transition is underpinned by an understanding of the barriers to language development and literacy within the South African context, including socio-economic factors, lack of early language stimulation, and inadequate opportunities for reading enjoyment.

Overview of Strategic Objectives and Implementation

Child Literacy Development

1. Early Language and Literacy Stimulation for Children from Birth to Age 6

- Implementation: Upskilling of parents and caregivers through training programs to provide regular and effective language and literacy stimulation at home. The plan includes creating support networks for parents who have

completed training programs and upskilling Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners to integrate storytelling into their curriculum.

2. Increase Reading for Pleasure Amongst School-Age Children (Grades R-3)

- Implementation: Train teachers and teacher assistants to conduct vibrant story sessions and providing classroom libraries in targeted communities. The strategy also involves implementing story and writing festivals to stimulate interest in reading and creative expression among children.

Strengthening Community Literacy Ecosystems

3. Increase Community Reading Spaces and Opportunities

- Implementation: Establish new reading clubs and enhancing the existing ones through quality assurance guidelines and support mechanisms. Partnerships with community organizations and libraries will be strengthened to increase access to reading materials in various home languages.

4. Amplify Interactive Social Behaviour Communication to Strengthen Reading Cultures

- Implementation: Utilize national and provincial communication campaigns, alongside engaging content on social media, to promote reading cultures. The plan includes producing radio stories and leveraging digital platforms to

provide resources and training materials, enhancing the organization's reach and impact.

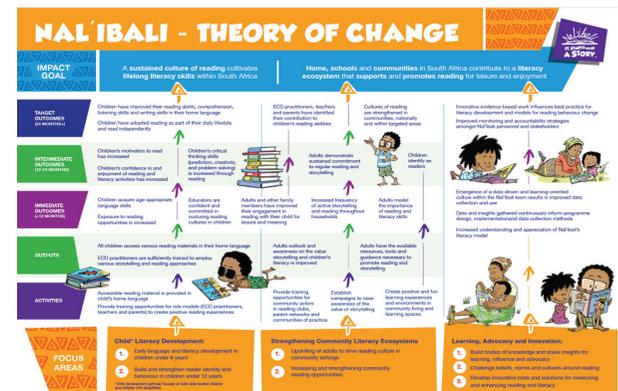
Learning, Advocacy, and Innovation

5. Strengthen Nal'ibali's Ability to Generate and Use Evidence and Insight

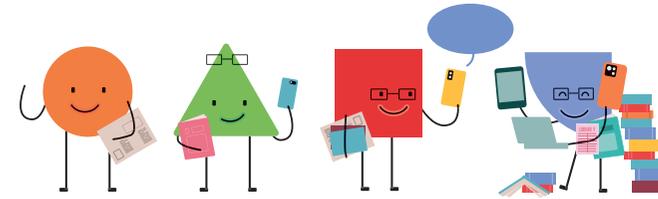
- Implementation: Develop a comprehensive knowledge management system to collect, analyse, and disseminate information for program improvement and advocacy. This objective also focuses on documenting and sharing effective models for literacy programs, and leveraging insights for thought leadership.

Theory of Change

Nal'ibali's new strategy is underpinned by a detailed Theory of Change, which outlines how the organization's activities lead to the desired impact. The Theory of Change integrates the strategic pillars and provides a roadmap for achieving literacy outcomes.



The National Reading Barometer



The National Reading Barometer (NRB), launched in June 2023, provides a comprehensive overview of South Africa's reading culture by consolidating various data sources into a single, easily interpretable tool.



The project consists of the National Reading Survey, a nationally representative survey of individual reading practices, and the National Reading Barometer, which compiles primary and secondary data on the national reading ecosystem. This initiative aims to inform policy decisions, drive collective action, and inspire improvements in literacy and reading culture across the country. Nal'ibali embarked on this project to understand and improve the literacy ecosystem, recognizing that adult reading behaviour profoundly impacts children's interest in and love of reading. By fostering a culture of reading among adults, we support children's literacy development, making reading a shared and valued activity within families and communities.

Key Achievements and Outputs

- ★ **Development and Launch:** The NRB features 55 indicators across four key dimensions: reading ability, access to reading materials, institutional framework, and reading motivation and practice.
- ★ **Survey and Data Collection:** Achieved a nationally representative sample with 4,251 respondents.
- ★ **Publications:**
 - ◇ Released summary and technical reports, an explainer video, special issue briefs, and infographics.

- ◇ Contributions to the Reading Panel 2030 main report and briefing document.
- ◇ Tailored communications products and presentations for key stakeholders.

★ Media Coverage:

- ◇ Secured 16 pieces of media coverage, including major radio and news outlets.
- ◇ Social media campaigns reached tens of thousands of people.
- ◇ The launch event was attended by high-profile stakeholders, including the Minister of Basic Education.
- ◇ Executed a comprehensive communications strategy, including an interactive website and advocacy plan.

- ★ **Engagements:** Presented NRB results at key forums (various National Libraries South Africa and Department of Basic Education fora, Publishers Association of South Africa, Library and Information Association of South Africa, Literacy Association of South Africa, National Reading Summit, Knowledge Management South Africa) and conducted workshops on applying findings in practical contexts.



Impact and Importance to the Reading Ecosystem

The NRB has highlighted critical gaps and opportunities in South Africa's reading culture, spurring conversations and actions aimed at improving literacy outcomes. The project has facilitated high-level engagements with government departments, influenced policy discussions, and been cited

in funding applications and communication strategies.

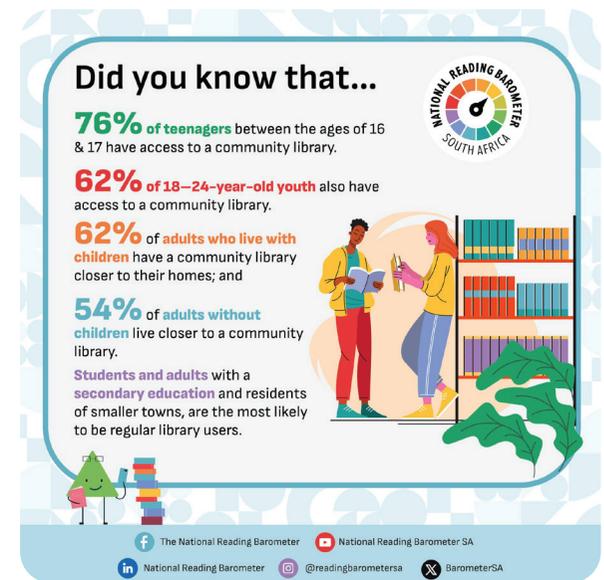
The NRB has redefined reading culture by emphasizing the interconnectedness of individual reading practices and the broader national reading ecosystem. This holistic approach highlights the importance of access to reading materials, institutional support, and community engagement in fostering a culture of reading. By understanding reading culture as a multi-faceted ecosystem, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to promote literacy and reading habits across different segments of the population.

Collaborations and Stakeholder Engagement

The NRB project benefited from the involvement of influential steering committee members and funders. Most notably, National Libraries South Africa, Zenex Foundation, DG Murray Trust, National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT), and

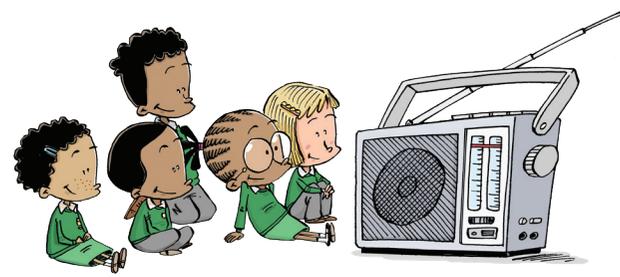
the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture. The Department of Basic Education also played a key strategic role on the steering committee and dissemination of results.

Collaborative engagements extended to the corporate sector and community level, involving corporate social investors through platforms like Trialogue and focusing on promoting reading cultures and distributing reading materials. These efforts, along with targeted recommendations for stakeholders, have significantly enhanced the practical application and impact of the NRB findings.





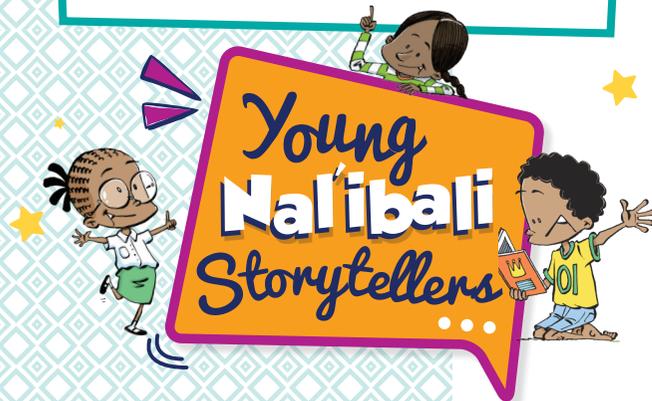
Our Media and Campaigns Reach



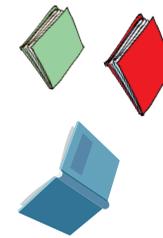
Nal'ibali has remained a permanent feature in the SABC 1 Kids News with an edutainment segment of the Young Nal'ibali Storytellers. This partnership, in its third year, creates fun 5-minute video segments of children telling stories in various South African languages, reaching 3.4 million viewers and bringing the love of stories into homes across the country. Subtitles were added to the programme this year, enabling children to read on screen and recognise the correlation between written words and speech.

For nine years, Nal'ibali has delivered innovative radio materials through SABC radio, broadcasting original children's stories to 8 million listeners weekly. This year, we secured a story time slot in 13 national radio stations. Forty-four episodes will be aired, including repeats, totalling 1,144 episodes across all participating radio stations. We have also included episodes delivered in South African Sign Language on various SABC digital platforms.

The Nal'ibali Reading Virtual Communities project, launched in June 2023, aims to create virtual reading communities on WhatsApp to promote reading and literacy among children and communities. The project classified 64 WhatsApp groups based on activities and languages, ensuring they catered to diverse interests and linguistic preferences.



Media Outlet	Viewership/Listenership
SABC Kids News	3.4 million viewers
Community Radio Partnerships	13 national radio stations and 8 million listeners
Nal'ibali WhatsApp Reading Communities	530 members (launched June 2023)

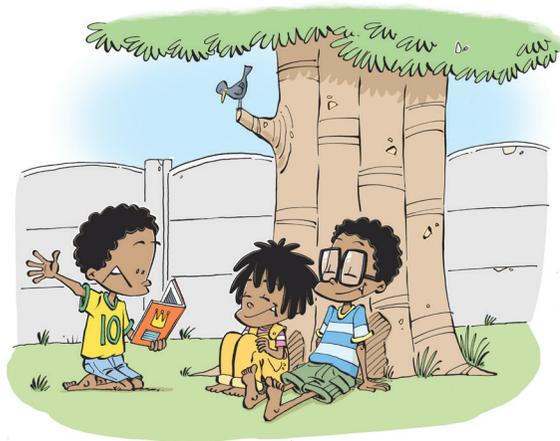


Our Media and Campaigns Reach

World Read Aloud Day



For World Read Aloud Day 2023, we produced “Every Day’s a Story” by Tumisang Shongwe in 12 official South African languages. This year’s campaign shifted focus to an all-inclusive approach, involving key partners, ECD centres, caregivers, literacy organisations, and community projects, including the Department of Education. Post-event, 84% of the 13,749 adults pledged to continue receiving stories from Nalibali. This was the first World Read Aloud Day after the COVID-19 pandemic marked by reading aloud events attended by thousands nationwide.



Metric	Total Number
Total number of pledges	13,749
Total number of children pledged to be read to	2,010,974
WRAD Story downloads in 12 South African languages (including sign-language)	32,842
Digital reach	800,000

Content Development and Distribution

In response to our expanding operations in the ECD sector and with young readers, the leadership team requested an ECD anthology and a Foundation Phase anthology. Each anthology contains 20 stories with full-colour, detailed illustrations. Twelve stories are original Nal'ibali stories, and the remaining eight are adapted Book Dash stories. Both anthologies are available in 11 languages.



Content Type	Distribution
Total supplements distributed	2,933,195
New multilingual audio stories	45
Anthologies distributed	11,519





Programmes Report

Across our core programme funded by DGMT, Standard Bank, and TotalEnergies, as well as special projects, we partnered with schools, NGOs, ECD centres, libraries, and supported independent reading clubs across all provinces.

Type	Number
Schools	187
ECD Centres	1,749
Drop-in Centres	3
Community/Public Libraries	23
Partners	154
Reading Clubs	1,836
Tuk-tuks	4
Literacy Centres	4

Highlights from Our Core Programme

Across our core programme funded by DGMT, Standard Bank, and TotalEnergies, as well as special projects, we partnered with schools, NGOs, ECD centres, libraries, and supported independent reading clubs across all provinces.

Eastern Cape

- Nompumelelo Primary School (Duncan Village):** In collaboration with TotalEnergies and Breadline Africa, a reading centre was launched. Training was provided to parents, educators, and children to activate DEAR reading corners, benefiting 1,105 learners and 60 parents. All educators across various grades were trained.
- Qwalasela Primary School (Khet yana Village):** All Foundation Phase educators adopted Nal'ibali methods after WRAD 2023. 80 parents were trained, and educators created Nal'ibali portfolios. An After-School Reading Hour was implemented for all classes and continues to this day.
- Amathole West ECD Clusters:** In partnership with the Department of Education, 180 ECD practitioners from various areas were trained. Support was extended until the end of the year, benefiting parents and Smart Start practitioners. Literacy Month in September 2023 was well-received.



Gauteng

- ◆ **Gauteng Department of Education (GDE):** Nal'ibali's long-standing relationship with GDE includes facilitating support for Reading Champions and providing training on reading clubs. Collaboration extends to events promoting reading throughout the province.
- ◆ **African Children Feeding Scheme (ACFS):** Nal'ibali partnered with ACFS to train staff and volunteers at their centres in Soweto and Tsakane, introducing reading clubs. Literacy facilitators from the Social Employment fund (SEF) run weekly reading clubs at five of their centres.
- ◆ **Windybrow Market Theatre (Hillbrow):** Nal'ibali trained volunteers from nearby universities, who run daily reading club programs. Joint programs further promote literacy in the area.



Mpumalanga

- ◆ **Partnerships and Expansion:** Nal'ibali expanded its footprint through collaborations, peaking in reading club registrations. TotalEnergies and SBSA partnerships led to the opening of a school library in Backdoor, Ehlanzeni, and an edutainer in eManzana. SBSA's literacy month event in Mbombela was a highlight, fostering staff engagement in literacy activities.
- ◆ **Children's Cup Partnership:** A new partnership formed in 2023 resulted in exponential growth, with future plans to extend training to beneficiaries in Swaziland.

Kwa-Zulu Natal

- ◆ **TotalEnergies:** Glenover Secondary School received a container library, with educators trained to run reading clubs and manage the library.
- ◆ **Standard Bank:** A classroom at Ukukhanya Kwelanga Primary School was transformed into a library. A literacy month event at Standard Bank engaged employees and their children in storytelling, reading aloud, and literacy activities.

- ◆ **Hospital Collaborations:** Books were donated to establish a Hope Hub reading room at Inkosi Albert Hospital. A mobile reading corner was started in Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital's paediatric ward, with literacy facilitators conducting story sessions.
- ◆ **Caregiver Workshops:** Workshops for parents and caregivers were facilitated to promote a reading culture at home, covering various topics related to children's literacy development.



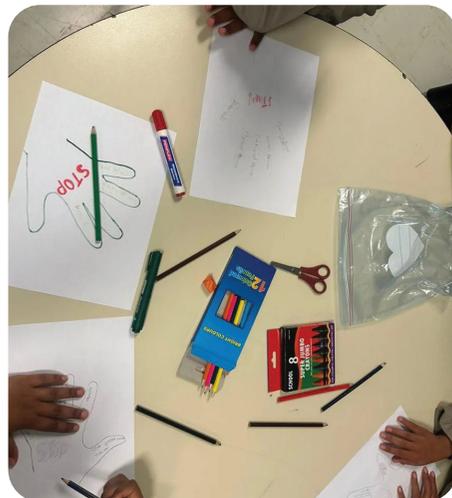
Limpopo

- ◆ **International Mother Language Day (IMLD):** Nal'ibali participated in IMLD celebrations in Malumulele, distributing reading materials in Sepedi, Xitsonga, and Tshivenda. The event, attended by language experts, educators, and community members, emphasized multilingual education.



Western Cape

- ◆ **World Read Aloud Day 2023:** In partnership with SLED, Nalibali introduced sign language into its campaign at the Dominican School for the Deaf. The story was also dramatized at Agape School for the Disabled.
- ◆ **World Play Day:** Celebrated with Sikhula Sonke, over 250 ECD learners engaged in educational games and stories. This annual event is scheduled to continue in June 2024.
- ◆ **Child Protection Week:** Visits to shut-in institutions highlighted self-care and resilience, engaging with children and adolescents at various centres.
- ◆ **Literacy Month with Standard Bank:** A collaboration with SBSA celebrated Literacy Month with storytelling sessions and activities at the SBSA Head Office, involving both staff and their families.





Special Projects Overview

Trevor Noah Foundation (TNF) Community Project



TREVOR NOAH
FOUNDATION

Project Overview:

The Nal'ibali Trevor Noah Foundation Khula Funda Schools Project aims to strengthen literacy in the Braamfischerville community through engaging and innovative reading practices. This multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and diverse community includes seven Quintile 1-3 primary schools. The project focuses on fostering a lifelong culture of reading in the multiple languages spoken within the community. Activities include 'Drop Everything and Read' (DEAR) sessions, reading clubs and monthly activations. Resources are also provided to homes through a holiday program, equipping parents with skills to support their children's literacy development.

Milestones:

- ★ Established 118 reading corners in classrooms with 118 hanging libraries.
- ★ Distributed 7,456 books to the seven schools, with 4,956 purchased specifically for the project.
- ★ Provided 48,240 copies of literacy supplements, totalling 96,840 booklets.
- ★ Implemented the DEAR period with support from TNF and Nal'ibali.
- ★ Trained 118 teachers and 170 parents in storytelling, reading aloud, and effective management of reading resources.
- ★ The Community of Practice (CoP) was established, raising awareness among community stakeholders and parents with 71 members.

Key Highlights:

- ★ Hosted four major events, including World Read Aloud Day, a story writing competition, a spelling bee, and the Khula Funda Literacy Festival, engaging over 3,600 participants.
- ★ Developed a book lending system to alleviate resource scarcity, allowing children to borrow books for home use and track returns.





VW Community Trust Community Project



VOLKSWAGEN
for good

Project Overview:

A partnership between Nal'ibali Trust and VWSA, this project aims to enhance literacy development and sustainability in Uitenhage (Kariega), targeting Foundation Phase learners in seven primary schools and 25 ECD centres. The project focuses on building national demand for a reading culture, equipping reading role models, creating opportunities to read and share stories, and increasing access to high-quality reading materials in African languages.

Milestones:

- ★ Broadcasted 79 audio stories via community radio partnerships with Bay FM and The Beat Radio.

- ★ Facilitated auditions for the Young Nal'ibali Storytellers TV production, involving top learners from seven schools.
- ★ Trained 404 partners, including educators, teacher assistants, and caregivers.
- ★ Established 157 new reading clubs, benefitting 3,499 children.
- ★ Procured and distributed 49 hanging libraries and 2,518 books.

Key Highlights:

- ★ Hosted the 2nd annual Khazimla Story Festival with 205 attendees, including the launch of Iingqondi Zeqhagqiwa, a children's literary collection.
- ★ Members of the Men's Imbizo presented the role of men in literacy development at the LITASA Conference, challenging social stereotypes and promoting male involvement in children's literacy journeys.





Lesedi Trust and Letsatsi Trust Community Projects



Project Overview:

Operating in the Free State and Northern Cape, the Lesedi and Letsatsi projects aim to establish sustainable literacy and storytelling cultures by 2027 through a long-term, multi-stakeholder model. The projects work with partners, ECD centres, and primary schools to strengthen an enabling literacy environment, improve the capacity of the Nal'ibali workforce, and support individuals, families and communities in sustaining literacy behaviours.



Milestones:

- ★ Launched the project in both provinces with events featuring Tuk-Tuk libraries and reading club performances.
- ★ Trained 83 parents in the Wordworks Every Word Counts caregiver program, receiving positive feedback on the program's impact.
- ★ Conducted story writing training, resulting in 59 children's stories to be published as books for each province.

Key Highlights:

- ★ Raised awareness through community activations, enhancing interest in Nal'ibali.
- ★ Launched well-attended Children's Festivals in both provinces.



Yizani Sifunde Project

Yizani Sifunde

This project has been made possible through the Liberty Community Trust



Project Overview:

Funded by Liberty Community Trust, this project enhances reading and literacy among isiXhosa-speaking children in rural and peri-urban areas of the Eastern Cape. It targets ECD centres, educators, parents, and communities to shift early language and literacy skills and reading habits. Implemented through a partnership between Book Dash, Na'ibali, and Wordworks, each partner contributes distinct roles, from providing books to training practitioners and engaging community volunteers.



Milestones:

- ★ Distributed 78,578 books to children in ECD centres, reading clubs, and through events.
- ★ Established 75 new community reading clubs, reaching 2,373 people through activations.
- ★ Conducted training for 45 ECD practitioners, benefitting approximately 1,000 children.

Key Highlights:

- ★ Achieved significant improvements in literacy skills and other developmental domains, especially among children who performed poorly at baseline.
- ★ Enhanced quality of activities and monitoring in reading clubs, maintaining high attendance and engagement, with one club recording 46 sessions in 2023.





Lebalelo Water Association Project



Project Overview:

The Lebalelo Triad Reading Project, funded by the Lebalelo Water User Association, focuses on creating sustainable literacy conditions in the Sekhukhune East District in Limpopo, targeting seven villages. The project aims to create regular, enjoyable opportunities for children to engage with books and stories, increase access to reading materials, spread awareness about reading benefits, train adults to run reading activities, and support the establishment of reading clubs.

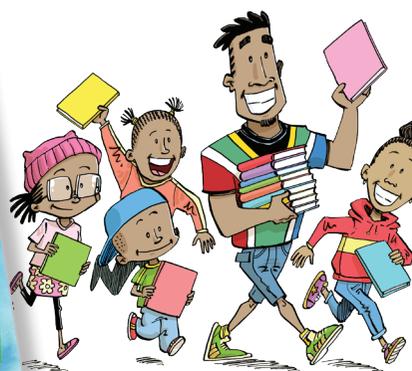
Milestones:

- ★ Delivered 52,032 newspaper supplements and distributed over 3,700 books.

- ★ Registered 74 reading clubs with 1,750 children.
- ★ Conducted over 1,700 story sessions in schools, ECD centres, and community reading clubs.
- ★ Successfully implemented a book lending system at the Pelo Diatla Drop-In Centre, serving as a central hub for five villages.

Key Highlights:

- ★ Published a new book, "Ke leeto," featuring stories from children and parents in the community. This book, launched at a well-attended Children's Festival, highlighted the community's creative talents, and reinforced the importance of storytelling.
- ★ Established a Community of Practice (CoP) to foster collaboration and resource mobilization, ensuring sustainable project outcomes through regular quarterly meetings.



Social Employment Fund



Project Overview:

The Social Employment Fund (SEF) Family Literacy Programme, a partnership between The Nal'ibali Trust and the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa (IDC), commenced in 2022. The primary purpose of the project is to create regular reading habits and develop children's reading skills. The project employs unskilled and low-skilled community members to implement family and community literacy programs across seven provinces: Eastern Cape (EC), Free State (FS), Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal (KZN), Limpopo, Northern Cape (NC), and the Western Cape (WC). These SEF employees receive on-the-job training and mentorship to carry out early literacy development activities, including home visits, ECD story sessions, caregiver workshops, and community reading clubs.

The second phase of the project commenced in August 2023 and is being implemented in 91 sites. The project targets the employment of 988 Literacy Facilitators (LFs), 96 Team Leaders (TLs), 7 Project Administrators (operations-based), and 9 Provincial Administrators.

Milestones:

★ Round 1 Completion and Round 2

Launch: Successfully completed Round 1 and began Round 2 of funding, employing 1,200 individuals to support literacy initiatives across 91 sites.

★ **Training and Recruitment:** Conducted extensive training sessions for Literacy Facilitators (LFs) and Team Leaders (TLs).

★ **Community Outreach:** Conducted home visits, ECD story sessions, and community activations to promote literacy, reaching numerous households and engaging thousands of adults and children.

★ **Reading Clubs:** Established numerous new reading clubs, significantly increasing the total since the start of Phase Two. Held 15,741 reading club sessions, engaging thousands of children in regular reading activities and creating supportive reading environments.

★ **Material Distribution:** Distributed 38,578 bilingual Nal'ibali supplements and 9,878 worded and wordless books. Continued high levels of distribution in subsequent months, providing 12,411 supplements and 2,295 books in support of literacy activities across various communities.

★ **Home Visits:** Conducted an average of 6,365 home visits per month from August to January, totalling 49,402 visits, against a target of 14,400. These visits aimed to foster a culture of reading in homes and ensure children had regular exposure to literacy activities.



Social Employment Fund cont.

Milestones:

- ★ **ECD Story Sessions:** Despite challenges due to school holidays, the team maintained engagement through increased home visits and other activities. Conducted 12,636 ECD story sessions, reaching approximately 28,197 children, promoting early literacy development and caregiver involvement.
- ★ **Community Activations:** Conducted hundreds of community activations, reaching tens of thousands of people, promoting literacy, and distributing reading materials. Increased community events during school holidays and other periods of low attendance to maintain engagement.

Key Highlights:

- ★ **Community Engagement:** The project has significantly enhanced community engagement, fostering a culture of reading among children and adults alike. Literacy facilitators have become respected figures in their communities, contributing to local development and social cohesion.
- ★ **Training and Capacity Building:** The training provided to SEF participants has equipped them with valuable skills,

improving their future employment prospects. The partnership with Salitig Training College in Limpopo has allowed 193 SEF participants to pursue a Public Administration NQF Level 5 qualification, further enhancing their career opportunities. Additionally, participants received ECD training certificates, recognizing their competence in early childhood development, and improving their employability within the sector.

- ★ **Sustained Literacy Development:** The project has successfully promoted sustained literacy development through regular home visits, ECD story sessions, and community reading clubs. These efforts have led to improved reading and writing skills among children and greater involvement from caregivers.





Reflections and Lessons Learnt through Implementation and Evaluation

The successful implementation of literacy projects across various communities revealed several critical insights, supplemented by research findings from the respective projects. These insights highlight the importance of various strategies and approaches to foster a robust reading culture and ensure the sustainability of literacy initiatives.

Synergy and Collaboration

- ◆ **Synergy Between Stakeholders:** The importance of synergy between caregivers, schools and communities emerged as paramount for project success. All parties must work together as a cohesive system to foster a reading culture effectively. Strengthening community relationships and obtaining support from traditional leadership were crucial for driving community participation and engagement.
- ◆ **Community Involvement:** Strong community involvement and support have been crucial in achieving project goals. Building relationships with local stakeholders has facilitated the acceptance and effectiveness of projects.

Engaging Interventions

- ◆ **Interactive and Fun Activities:** Simply providing resources is insufficient to foster a reading culture. Consistent, fun, safe and interesting interventions are necessary to immerse children in reading and storytelling. Structured reading sessions and diverse materials significantly improved reading fluency and comprehension.
- ◆ **Role of Story Sparkers:** In environments with low parental involvement, Story Sparkers play an integral role. They often become the primary motivators for children to read, highlighting the need for dedicated literacy champions within communities. Reading clubs led by Story Sparkers were more successful than volunteer-led ones, suggesting the value of co-facilitating with key local organizations.

Holistic Approaches

- ◆ **Comprehensive Support Systems:** Addressing community-wide barriers through partnerships with other organizations enhances the impact of literacy projects. For instance, collaborations addressing power shortages or community-specific needs provide a comprehensive support system for literacy initiatives. Community mapping phases were crucial for tailoring interventions to local needs.

- ◆ **The Role of Men:** Men play a critical role in promoting a culture of reading and the Men's Imbizo's should be extended to other localities.

Materials distribution

- ◆ In light of post office disruptions and related difficulties and cost increases in distributing materials we are in the process of testing alternative models for national distribution.

Awareness and Activations

- ◆ **Community Activations:** Community activations significantly raise awareness and interest in literacy programs. Engaging, public events draw attention and encourage community participation, fostering a broader support base for literacy efforts. Activations also proved effective in making more people interested in Nal'ibali.

Tailored Programs

- ◆ **Contextual Relevance:** Programs designed with a deep understanding of the local community's culture, values, and needs are more successful. Tailoring interventions to fit the local context ensures higher engagement and relevance. Integrating





local languages and culturally relevant narratives into reading materials increases engagement and relatability among young readers.

Continuous Engagement

- ◆ **Ongoing Activities:** Ongoing engagement and follow-up are crucial. Regular activities, workshops and community events keep participants motivated and invested in improving literacy skills. Schools integrating literacy sessions into their regular schedules reported smoother implementation.

Resource Accessibility

- ◆ **Accessible Literacy Resources:** Providing accessible literacy resources and addressing logistical barriers enhances program reach. Ensuring that resources are easy to obtain and use, encourages wider community participation. Adequate reading materials and print-rich environments were key in improving functional literacy among children.

Community Ownership

- ◆ **Inclusive Participation:** Encouraging participation from a diverse range of community members creates a sense of ownership and inclusivity. Literacy

development becomes a shared goal, resonating across the community and ensuring sustained efforts. Engaging local businesses and obtaining their support also contributed positively.

Training and Capacity Building

- ◆ **Empowerment Through Training:** Training for educators, caregivers, and community members improves the quality of literacy activities. This empowers local stakeholders to continue promoting reading and storytelling independently. Regular training and support sessions for volunteers and educators enhanced their ability to support children's literacy development effectively.
- ◆ **ECD Training Certificates:** The ECD training certificates received by participants recognized their competence in early childhood development and improved their employability within the sector.

Sustainability and Resource Management

- ◆ **Effective Resource Management:** Effective management of reading resources, including book lending systems, is essential in ensuring sustained access to reading materials. Ensuring a variety of

books, including those in home languages, supported extended learning outside the classroom.

- ◆ **Sustainability:** Ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes remains a priority. Continued support and training for participants, along with strong community partnerships, are essential for maintaining the positive impacts of the project.

Inclusive and Safe Reading Spaces

- ◆ **Friendly Reading Environments:** Creating friendly reading spaces with soft furnishings and story mats may encourage more independent reading.

Reading Clubs

- ◆ **Support for Reading Clubs:** Providing more support for community-led reading clubs via digital and in-person mentoring and support.

Adaptability

- ◆ **Flexibility in Implementation:** The success in adapting to challenges, such as school holidays and low attendance, highlights the importance of flexibility in implementation strategies. Adapting to local contexts and changing circumstances is crucial for the continued success of literacy initiatives.



All our Funders





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