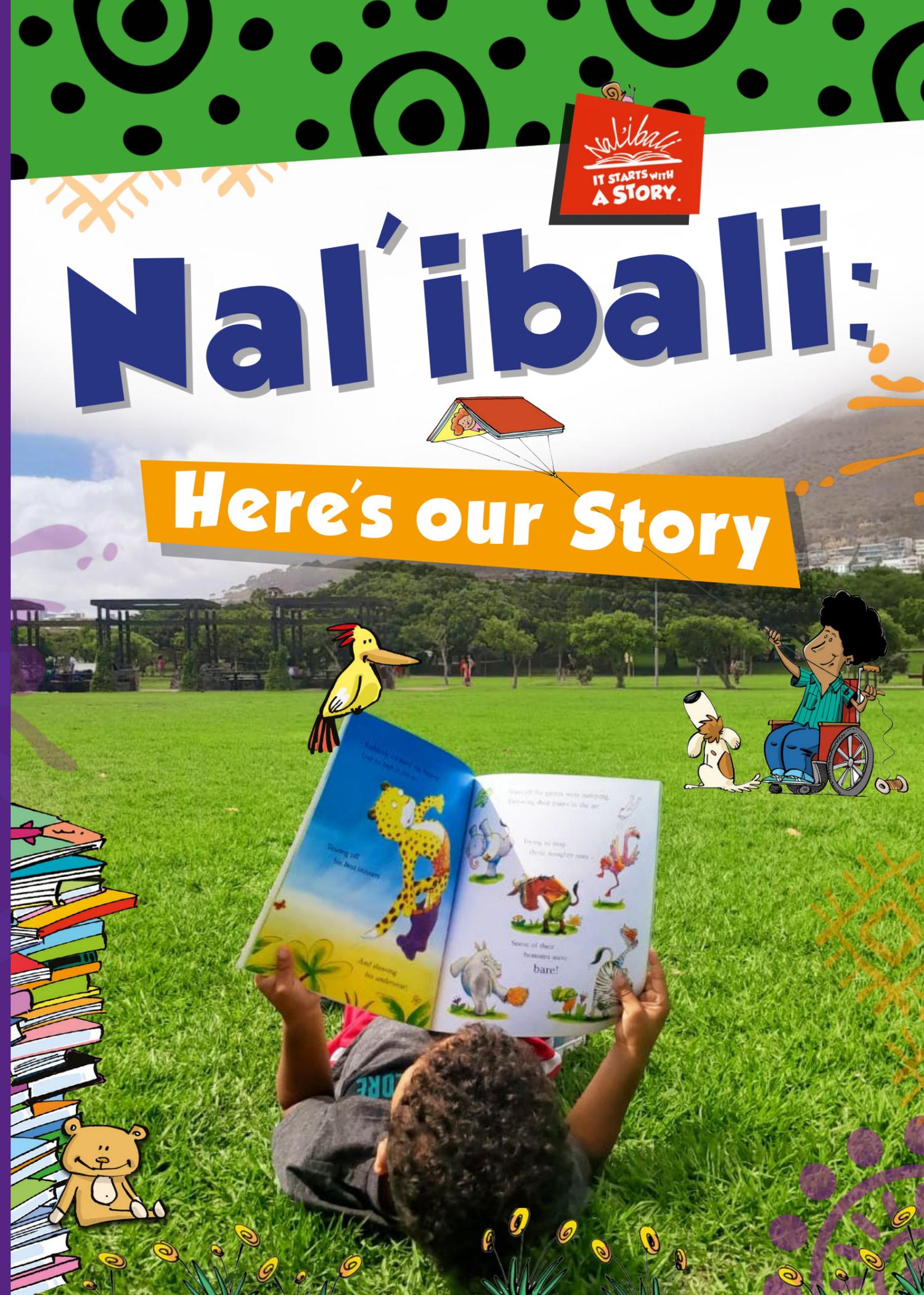




Nal'ibali:

Here's our Story





Our funders in 2024

DG MT	LETSATSI SOLAR PARK TRUST	TREVOR NOAH FOUNDATION
Social Employment Fund Work for the common good	LESEDI SOLAR PARK TRUST	LIFSA LOCAL INITIATIVES FUND SOUTH AFRICA
Lebalelo Water User Association	OLDMUTUAL	VOLKSWAGEN for good
USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE	NLC NATIONAL LOTTERIES COMMISSION a member of the dtic group	IDC Industrial Development Corporation
LIBERTY Standard Bank Group	Standard Bank	



The South African Literacy Landscape

The 2023 National Reading Survey found that 17% of South African adults are committed readers and 52% of adults living with children, read with them. However, access to children's books remains a challenge¹.

Studies have shown that the number of books in a home is a significant predictor of children's educational performance, even more so than parents' education, socio-economic status and occupation². But very few South Africans have easy access to books with 65% of households with children under 10 not having a single picture book and only 10% of households having ten or more picture books³.

The alarming consequences of these factors for our children are clearly illustrated by their weak performance in regional and international tests, such as the Progress International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS). The most recent PIRLS, conducted in 2021 found that 81% of our Grade 4 learners cannot retrieve basic information from a text to answer very simple questions⁴. In other words, they cannot read for meaning.

Very often, children learning to read in Foundation Phase are required to engage with letters and words in isolation, rather than as part of stories or texts that communicate context and ideas. These teaching methods limit children's ability to construct meaning from what they read, and spoil the pleasure of early reading experiences, diminishing children's motivation to read⁵. Most children have limited opportunities to engage with books and learn to read in languages they understand and know best. There are simply not enough high-quality books published in South African languages apart from English and Afrikaans⁶.

Our literacy landscape is limiting, not only for individual children and their future, but for the country as a whole. Reading literature develops empathy, critical thinking, and imagination, which are at the heart of strong, innovative nations. There are also economic consequences. Illiteracy costs South Africa half a trillion rand per annum in lost GDP⁷.

It is the recognition of the role literacy plays in the realization of both individual and societal potential that is the driving force of the Nal'ibali reading-for-enjoyment campaign.



Nal'ibali's approach

Nal'ibali is addressing the literacy crisis with a research-backed, multi-faceted campaign which includes reading for enjoyment, encouraging children to read in their home language, providing access to books, and strengthening the reading ecosystem to create and sustain positive reading habits.



Making reading fun

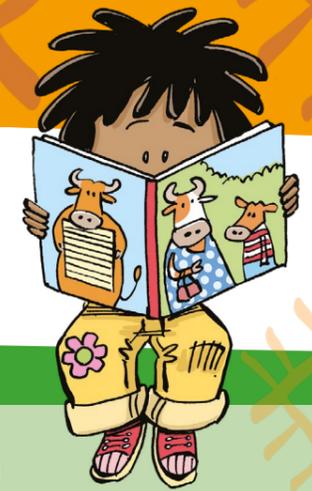
Extensive research done over the past three and a half decades demonstrates that self-selected reading for enjoyment results in profound growth in all aspects of literacy⁸. As we read, we develop not only our reading ability but also our vocabulary, grammar, writing style and spelling competence⁹. Also, the more we read, the better we read – and the more pleasure we get out of reading!

Research shows that children who read for enjoyment perform better at schools in all subjects, including mathematics. And while poverty negatively affects children's educational prospects, reading for enjoyment has been reported as being more important for children's educational success than families' socio-economic status. By cultivating a love of reading and providing access to engaging materials, Nal'ibali aims to build a reading nation in which all children have the opportunity to realise their potential.

Numerous research studies^{10, 11, 12, 13} have created a body of evidence for the benefits of a child reading for enjoyment. The benefits are:

1. Cognitive and Academic Development

- **Expanded vocabulary and knowledge:** Reading expands vocabulary, knowledge, and intellectual curiosity, enabling children to handle more complex texts.
- **Scholastic achievement:** Reading for enjoyment enhances comprehension, grammar, writing skills, and boosts confidence and school attitude.
- **Cognitive development:** Reading nurtures imagination, empathy, and cognitive flexibility, supporting holistic development beyond academics.



2. Personal Empowerment and Motivation

- **Empowerment and agency:** Choosing reading material based on personal interests fosters autonomy and engagement.
- **Intrinsic motivation:** Reading for enjoyment, driven by interest, improves comprehension, retention, and personal interest discovery.
- **Lifelong habits and benefits:** Developing a reading habit in childhood fosters lifelong literacy, emotional growth and relieves stress.

3. Social, Emotional, and Cultural Development

- **Social and emotional development:** Fictional narratives help children understand diverse perspectives, fostering empathy and cultural understanding.
- **Identity and belonging:** Culturally relevant stories reinforce identity, cultural pride, and connection to community.
- **Building connections:** Adult involvement in reading strengthens family and community bonds, creating a literacy-rich environment for future generations.

Emphasising learning to read in mother tongue

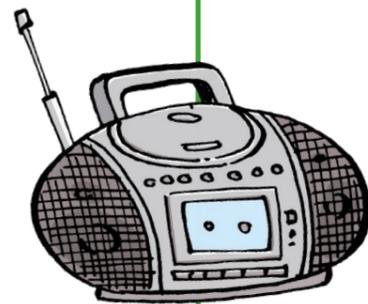
The research regarding access to materials is very clear – children with limited resources at home enter school at a disadvantage. This stems from two inter-related factors. Firstly, children who don't have access to reading material at home, don't have opportunities to learn and practice reading. Secondly, because they don't have books at home, children miss out on stimulating caregiver-child interactions. When children have enjoyable interactions with their caregivers reading to them at home, especially through conversations with their caregivers and having stories read aloud to them, this has a significant impact on their academic success. They develop "stronger vocabulary, more background knowledge, better expressive and receptive language abilities and stronger phonological awareness and early literacy skills"¹⁴.

From its inception in 2012, Nal'ibali has emphasised the importance of children learning to read in their mother tongue. Nal'ibali understands that language plays a critical role in cognitive development and that children understand and engage better when taught in languages they speak at home. Therefore, over the years, Nal'ibali has worked to highlight the gap in available reading materials in African languages, making it one of the first large-scale initiatives to address this issue head-on.

Nal'ibali's media campaign

The Communication department at Nal'ibali plays a key role in expanding the organisation's impact and reach by overseeing our advocacy, community engagement, media broadcasting, digital strategies and brand management portfolios.

Communicating with our target audiences has evolved over time, shifting away from one-directional broadcasts towards interactive engagement and impact-driven strategies. Social media platforms have enabled Nal'ibali to reach participants in real-time, allowing for a truly networked approach. We are now able to engage with beneficiaries and partners to solicit feedback that helps refine and improve our communication efforts.



2024 OVERVIEW

THROUGH OUR RADIO STORIES, AN ESTIMATED

8 million

CHILDREN WERE REACHED

THROUGH 13 SABC RADIO STATIONS AND

1.24 million

THROUGH 12 COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS

EARNED MEDIA MEASUREMENT INCREASED AN IMPRESSIVE

293 %

COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS PERIOD
REPRESENTING A VALUE OF

R98.4 million

WORTH OF PUBLICITY AND COVERAGE

Our editorial content has also consistently earned top placements in major South African publications such as *Daily Maverick*, *Independent Online*, *News24*, and others.

OUR CONTENT REACHED AND ENGAGED

2.14 million

PEOPLE, COMPARED TO 543 THOUSAND
INDIVIDUALS IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR



Supporting National and Local Reading Ecosystems

In recent years, Nal'ibali has shifted to an ecosystems approach in order to support the holistic development of a child's literacy ecosystem.



Our educational radio stories have been consistently enjoyed and well-followed by children. We have enhanced this offering with personalised features such as “live story reads”, competitions and live broadcasts from flagship events such as Word Read Aloud Day (WRAD).

1. Developing and Distributing African-language Resources

Supporting South African creative talent

Nal’ibali is deeply committed to developing local South African talent, providing emerging writers, illustrators, and translators with the support and resources they need to grow. Through commissioning, detailed feedback, and targeted publicity, we empower creatives to refine their skills and gain recognition. Nal’ibali’s focus on quality publishing in African languages also enables these talents to produce meaningful, culturally relevant content that resonates with local readers. Nal’ibali fosters a robust ecosystem for creatives, helping to enrich South African literature and inspiring a lifelong love of not just reading, but also creativity within our communities.



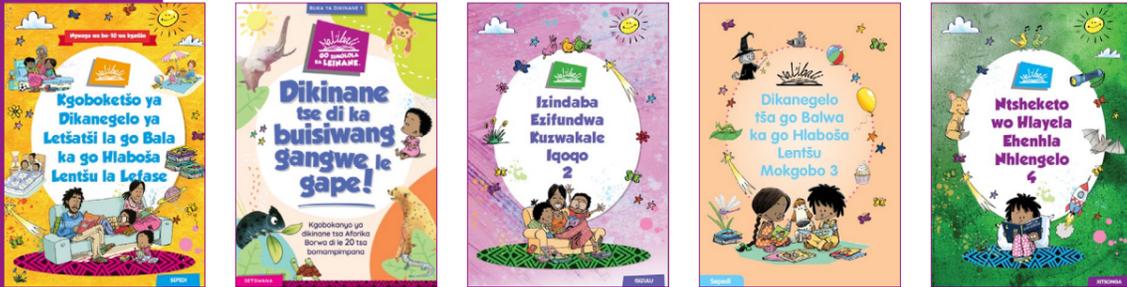
“I am Melody Ngomane, born and bred in Hazyview, Mpumalanga. My first contact with Nal’ibali was in 2019 when I submitted stories for their Radio Stories Season 5 submission. I have since submitted 21 stories for both Seasons 5 and 6. Some of those, namely *The old woman and the bee*, *The mirror in the jungle*, *The kind man*, *Daisy’s little voice* and *Lazy Lollie* were successfully published by Nal’ibali and SABC education.

The realisation that I have the ability to create a world that once only existed in my head, and later to see an audience react and sometimes relate to that world, fascinated me. It kept me going. My inspiration for writing children’s stories comes from the love I have for children, and through reading short stories. I love the flexibility that children’s story writers have in terms of creativity, imagination and style. I love the simplicity of the stories and the fact that I can tap into child mode for a moment.

Nal’ibali is a huge platform that reaches thousands of households. I used to listen to their stories and I knew working with them would kickstart my career as an author. Since I’ve started working with them, I have found my voice as a storyteller, and writing children’s stories has become second nature to me. Through their guidance, I went from writing one short story in a couple of days to writing one in just a day (of course, the editing and proof-reading follows). Nal’ibali is an amazing platform to grow and discover yourself as a writer, so reach out and be heard! ”

Melody Ngomane: Author

Nal’ibali stories

Supplement	<p>The Nal’ibali supplement is a bilingual resource (English plus another language) and is produced monthly and distributed to all Nal’ibali reading clubs across South Africa. It includes various stories, activities, tips for encouraging reading and cut-out-and-keep storybooks. In 2024, Nal’ibali distributed 1,765,665 supplements.</p>
Radio stories	<p>Every year, Nal’ibali produces a selection of 45 – 52 radio stories which are aired on 13 SABC and 12 independent community radio stations in different languages across the country</p>
Books	<p>Nal’ibali has produced a range of stories – both printed and online.</p> <p>The printed books include the Read-Aloud Story Collections, the Nal’ibali Anthology and the Cadbury’s Glass and a Half Story Collection. Nal’ibali has produced 17 printed books.</p> <p>Nal’ibali has more than 270 multilingual online stories with 11 stories added each month; 20+ multilingual rhymes and a variety of audio stories in all languages.</p> 
Children-authored books	<p>Nal’ibali special projects has supported child authors with Children’s Writing Workshops.</p> <p>To date, eight anthologies, with numerous stories written by children in various languages, have been produced by the children of Nal’ibali.</p> 
WhatsApp Bot	<p>Our WhatsApp Chat Bot offers training and written and audio stories.</p> <p>Training: One course, three modules – About Nal’ibali, Be a Funda Leader, Run a Reading Club. Since May 2020, over 4929 people have completed this training.</p> <p>Audio and written stories: Stories are offered in 11 languages. Between May 2020 – November 2024, the Nal’ibali chatbot has reached 82,300 users who have interacted with the audio and written stories on the platform 96,073 times.</p>

2. Supporting the development of community facilitators in the literacy space

Nal'ibali trains, supports and mentors unemployed youth and adults to become literacy facilitators in their communities. The Social Employment Fund (SEF) and USAID Siyafunda Community Learning Hubs Programmes have created thousands of jobs and developed the work readiness, management, public speaking and organizational skills of the facilitators. The experience opens up future employment paths and facilitators have reported being more connected to and recognized in their communities and related networks.



“It supports us to study further and look for a job. Last time I checked, there was an online ECD course that provided certificates, and they have told us to study or complete it so that we can apply for jobs in schools.”

KwaZulu-Natal, Literacy Facilitator, SEF-2 external evaluation interview 2024



“I could not speak in front of people, but the program has assisted me in overcoming that. Now I can speak in front of people and the community.”

KwaZulu-Natal, Literacy Facilitator, SEF-2 external evaluation interview 2024

3. Supporting literacy inside the home: Building family literacy



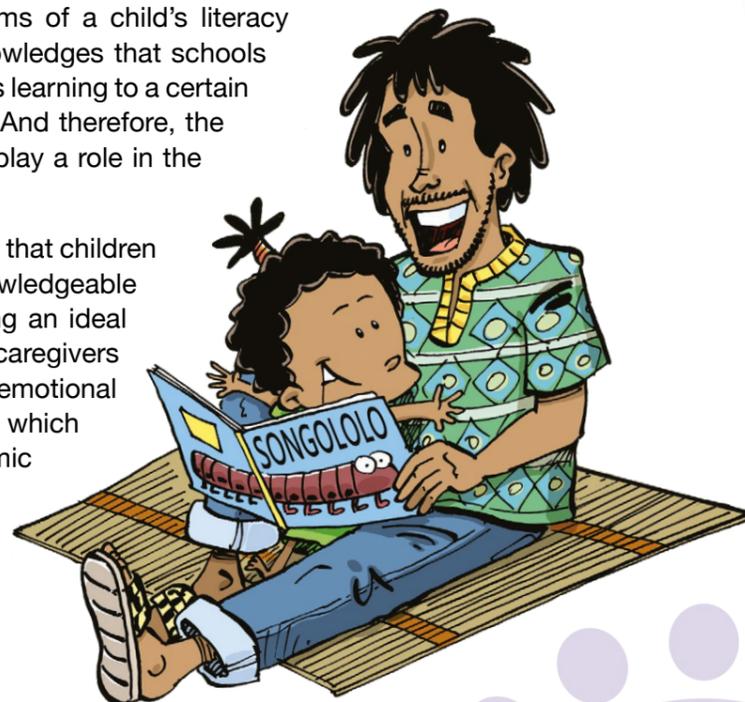
Nal'ibali understands that there are two sites of acquisition for learning to read: the school and the home¹⁵. Many children have limited or no exposure to written texts in their home and few opportunities to engage with books, especially story books, outside of school hours. A lack of adult reading role models in many homes also limits a child's exposure to examples of positive reading behaviour. Adults who identify strongly as readers are more likely to read with children regularly, suggesting that caregivers' own reading habits heavily influence these interactions. Additionally, a higher number of books at home also correlates with increased reading time with children¹⁶. In PIRLS 2021, students whose parents reported a strong enjoyment of reading scored higher

than peers with parents who only somewhat enjoyed reading or did not enjoy it at all. This pattern highlights how parental attitudes toward reading can positively influence children's reading skills and overall academic performance¹⁷.

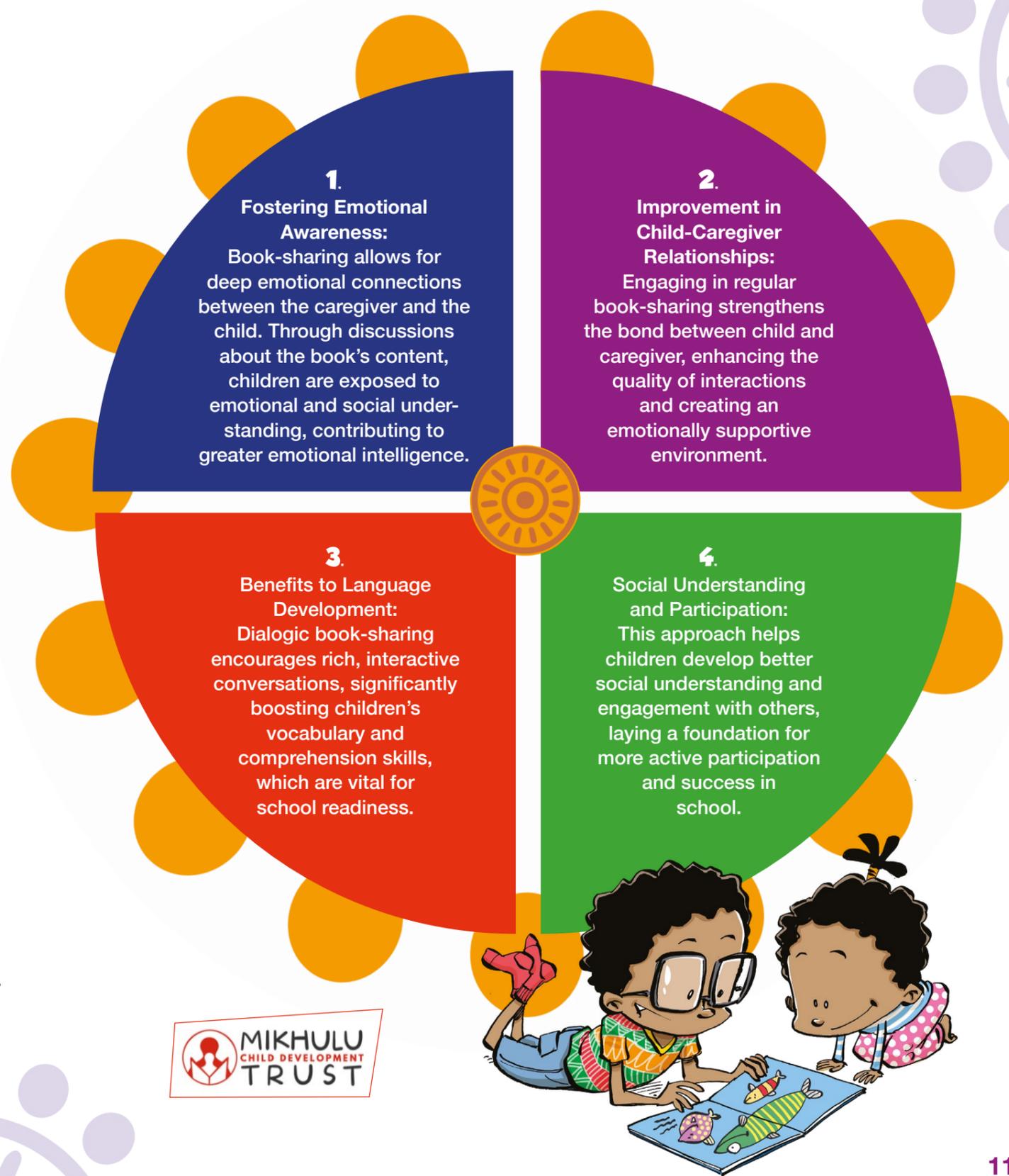
In terms of creating and encouraging a reading culture in South Africa, there is still a way to go. The 2023 National Reading Survey (NRS) found that 65% of homes with children under the age of 10 do not have a single picture book¹⁸. However, the NRS also found that more adults are reading with children and that most adults believe that reading with children is important, but they do not have access to enough children's books¹⁹. Children require more exposure to text and more opportunities to practice reading than what is made available to them during school hours²⁰.

Parental engagement plays a huge role in terms of a child's literacy development. The ecosystems approach acknowledges that schools and teachers can only be responsible for a child's learning to a certain extent. The rest of the time a child is at home. And therefore, the home environment, and the people there, also play a role in the child's learning.

Vygotsky's *Social Development Theory* suggests that children learn better in social interactions with more knowledgeable others (caregivers), which makes shared reading an ideal early-learning practice. Shared reading between caregivers and children has been shown to foster positive emotional connections and develop a child's literacy skills, which later translates to greater engagement and academic success in school²¹. Additionally, reading with a caregiver often creates a sense of safety, warmth and bonding, which makes children associate reading with positive emotions. This emotional connection may lead children to enjoy learning and participate more in school activities^{22, 23}.



Insights from our partner Mikhulu Trust on the benefits of caregiver-child book sharing:



Coming from this theoretical background, one of Nal'ibali's programmatic focus areas is parental training. In our USAID Siyafunda Community Learning Hubs Programme, Nal'ibali staff have been trained by Mikhulu Trust to engage children around dialogic book sharing practices. The training offered to parents is an adapted version of the WordWorks *Every Word Counts* programme and is accompanied by follow up mentorship sessions with Literacy Mentors and by MacMillan Education to engage in play-based learning.



Parents who participated in the parental training through Nal'ibali's Lesedi and Letsatsi (LNL) programme in the Northern Cape and Free State, had the following to say about their experiences of the training:

Transformation through Reading and Bonding:

The Nal'ibali training fostered a love for reading, which has been passed on to children, leading to stronger relationships between parents and their children. Homes have become centers of learning and storytelling, providing engaging environments.



“The children will remind me if I don't read to them. They will tell me it's time for me to read to them.”

Mother, translated

Improved Parenting Skills:

The training has helped parents become more patient, nurturing, and capable of handling various parenting situations. It has also encouraged greater involvement in their children's education and activities, leading to better support for their learning and development.

“I used to just shout. My child didn't like bathing with soap, and I would just shout. But I learnt to ask questions, “Why don't you like the soap?”, “What does it smell like?””

Mother, translated

Creativity and Engagement:

Parents have gained new, creative ways to engage their children in reading and storytelling, making learning enjoyable and effective. This has reduced screen time, allowing for more meaningful family interactions and focus on educational activities.

“I would tell the child to wait. I need to do my work first, then I can help the child. Now I have learnt to include the child in what I am doing. And now the child loves to help me with the baking. And I can ask the child questions while we are busy like, “What is this called?””

Grandmother, translated



Personal Growth and Continued Learning:

Despite challenges like relocation, participants remain committed to applying what they have learned and are eager to continue their education through future Nal'ibali sessions. They value the ongoing development of their skills as parents and educators.

“I learnt I am never too old to learn something new. And I learnt a lot.”

Grandmother, translated

“Nal'ibali got me interested in my child's learning.”

Mother, translated



4. Supporting literacy outside the home

Supporting ECDs



Research has repeatedly shown that early childhood education is critical for improving the health, academic levels and future employment possibilities of a child²⁴. Despite the key role ECD centres play in laying the foundations for future learning, ECDs are often overlooked by national and local authorities in terms of policy guidelines, regulations, and resource provision²⁵.

While national data shows that 69% of children between the ages of 3 and 5 are enrolled in an early learning programme (such as Grade R, preschool, nursery school etc.), it is still estimated that 1.1 million South African children do not have access to any form of early learning programme²⁶.

Furthermore, early literacy is an underemphasised aspect of many ECD programmes, despite the crucial role it plays in fostering future academic success. Research shows that early exposure to language, print awareness, and literacy-rich environments lays a foundation for later reading skills, cognitive development, and overall learning readiness. ECDs that focus primarily on social, emotional, and physical development often overlook the importance of structured literacy exposure, which leaves gaps in vocabulary acquisition. ECDs that lack dedicated literacy activities, such as shared reading, book orientation and storytelling, fail to maximize this critical window when children's brains are highly receptive to language learning²⁷.

“Lukhanyo Aghulas, Luthando Sigwana and Onika Wele who are learners at Sinomonde Pre-School in Airport Park, East London received their first books from the Yizani Sifunde team. A Yizani Sifunde Story Sparker visited the homes of these three children when their caregivers informed her that the children did not have any books at home. The parents of the children will be using the books to build a culture of reading aloud and storytelling at home.”

First story books distributed through the Yizani Sifunde project



“As an ECD practitioner, I did not know that I need to display or show the book to the kids before I read- kids need to see the book first and I need to ask questions before I start reading for them. Now I know that I need to apply this at crèche.”

Eastern Cape, ECD practitioner



“I am an ECD practitioner, and I have been part of the Nal'ibali training, and I loved it, I learnt a lot. I adopted the Nal'ibali energisers in my class because I love them. When it is story session my children gather around me curious to hear the story. Even when we have visitors, we show them the Nal'ibali way of engaging with children, the concentration span of these children is very low but with the Nal'ibali activities we have found a way of keeping them focused. I could not read a story for children the way I do now. The Nal'ibali team has so much energy and our children love them. We did not have books and Nal'ibali gave us, as you know we do not have money, children pay less but at least now Nal'ibali has helped us.”

Eastern Cape, ECD Practitioner

“We learnt new activities that we could do with the kids, and they also learnt some other ones from us. So we both benefited.”

Free State, ECD practitioner



Book orientation involves teaching children how books work – understanding that text is read from left to right, top to bottom, and that printed words correspond to spoken language. These early skills, part of what is known as “print awareness,” are fundamental for reading success. Children who are actively involved in shared reading sessions where adults explicitly point out print elements (e.g., letters, words, sentences) show greater gains in early literacy skills compared to those who are merely read to passively²⁸.

Developing background knowledge through storytelling and exposure to a wide range of topics helps children make sense of new information. This is foundational for reading comprehension. If children enter school with limited knowledge of the world around them, their ability to understand texts, which often rely on prior knowledge, is hampered. Storytelling, rich in cultural references, values, and life experiences, can provide children with the necessary cognitive tools to connect text with meaning.

Moreover, the scarcity of books, especially in under-resourced communities, exacerbates the problem. Children may not have access to books at home, and if ECD programs do not emphasize shared reading, their early exposure to text is limited.

Supporting Schools



Muller (2022) has argued that the big inhibiting factor in the improvement of children's reading abilities is the teacher's lack of knowledge on how to do it successfully. Teacher training, especially in the Foundation Phase, is critical. It is at this stage that foundational reading and meaning making skills are developed as well as formative reading habits and attitudes³⁰. If a teacher is ill-equipped, lacking in pedagogical content knowledge about reading and its development, they can impede their learners early reading trajectories³¹.

Activities that build learner's vocabulary in foundation phase include reading aloud to the class daily, explaining key words, and leading class discussions to develop learners' syntactic repertoires³².

In addition to this, there is an argument to be made that teachers training should also include a focus on the teacher's own reading habits and the idea of fostering reading as a regular and enjoyable activity³³. Teachers play a significant role in modelling behaviour for children, as children learn the ways of their culture through role models³⁴. A small number of studies have shown that early grade reading teachers do not read for enjoyment themselves³⁵. If teachers do not read themselves, it can have an impact on their own literacy levels, vocabulary, appreciation of genre and knowledge of text structure³⁶. As such they may not prioritise reading and writing activities.

Nal'ibali seeks to support foundation phase learners and their educators through weekly story sessions/DEAR periods facilitated by the Story Sparkers and teacher training.



Through Volkswagen South Africa's Legacy Literacy project, Nal'ibali supports 7 schools in the KwaNobuhle area of the Eastern Cape. This is what participants have to say about the programme:

“Our school is one of those that are privileged to be in the VW project. We love Nal'ibali. When some activities clash with Nal'ibali events, I cancel the [other] programme for Nal'ibali, because it means a lot for me. I am in a group with other Principals and I always share the Nal'ibali activities that our children do. All the Principals wish they were part of the project. Our pass rate has improved, our educators do not struggle to teach because now they teach using the strategies taught by Nal'ibali. As educators, when we receive training it is more theoretical but now Nal'ibali has given our educators the practical aspect. The DBE should adopt Nal'ibali and make it a compulsory activity in all schools, it is needed.”

Principal, VW Legacy Literacy School

“Every time the Story Sparker took my children for story time, they came back with so much excitement and even their participation in class would change. I observed that a number of times and I got curious about what was happening in that class. I decided to join activities, and I understood why my children loved the Nal'ibali activities. I would sometimes invite the Story Sparker to come and conduct the activities in my class, she did that and she supported me all the way. I love the Nal'ibali books and the Nal'ibali stories especially the supplement. The stories are fun and not too long. It has made teaching fun. My children can even tell me the stories. They even remind me about reading time.”

Foundation Phase Educator, VW Legacy Literacy School

“Reading and writing skills have improved in our learners. We have learners who write their own journals through your programme. Some even partake in our public speaking competitions because of you. We have the library which our learners utilise because of you.”

Letter of thanks from one of Nal'ibali's participating schools



IN 2024,
NAL'IBALI SUPPORTED
296
CLASSES

REACHING
8,935
CHILDREN

SCHOOLS SUPPORTED
THROUGH THE SEF
PROGRAMME:
450

Nal'ibali Reading Clubs

Nal'ibali reading clubs are a core part of the Nal'ibali offering. Reading clubs provide safe, informal spaces for children to engage with stories, either through reading or listening, promoting a love for reading in their mother tongue languages. The clubs are typically run by volunteers, community members, Nal'ibali Story Sparkers or Literacy Facilitators, who aim to inspire children to read for enjoyment.

These clubs are particularly impactful because they emphasize creating a stress-free and enjoyable environment where children can freely share stories, play, and participate in activities to stimulate their literacy development. Clubs are run in diverse locations, from schools and libraries to community halls or even under trees, wherever a quiet and welcoming space can be found. The materials used include a wide range of books and multilingual resources, ensuring that children of all backgrounds can access stories in their language.

The Nal'ibali reading club model has even been taken up nationally, both by government and other organisations. The Department of Basic Education has integrated Nal'ibali reading clubs into their broader educational initiatives, promoting the model in schools and public libraries. Through this partnership, Nal'ibali reading clubs have been brought into more formal educational spaces, ensuring a wider audience of children can access the benefits of reading for enjoyment.

“Emileigh was a shy child. But when her mom spoke of the impact that reading had on Emileigh’s demeanour, a warm glow came over her face. Happily, Emileigh is in the care of parents, elders, and carers who take pride in their child. Since being involved in a Reading Club, Emileigh’s school performance has improved significantly, scoring well in reading and languages. There is clearly a virtuous cycle of confidence inspiring confidence. In addition to the direct impact of reading, Emileigh is also enjoying the benefit of inspiration. Her horizons are broadening, and she is nurturing new dreams. The overall outcome is a gentle ray of light from within herself to her peers, educators, family, and community.”

Excerpt from Nal'ibali blog:
How Nal'ibali supported Emileigh Mentoor in her reading journey



“Finding what you are really passionate about and working diligently on it will open doors that you did not even knock on.

When I enrolled for the free Nal'ibali Online Course to be a Literacy Activist last year in November, I did it fully aware that I'd be getting NOTHING! I would be volunteering and just playing my part as a citizen who wants to see her people, more especially the children, moving forward. This is what I love.

Since the reading club was founded, I would make social media posts and tag the official Nal'ibali pages until they noticed my content. This then led to conversations between myself and their Digital Specialist. All of a sudden I'm having my first paid "gig" with Nal'ibali. Something even more amazing happened this week, I received an email to do Sesotho audio stories for their website! Another job that I am going to get paid for. Imagine getting paid to just read a 3-5 minute-long story in YOUR MOTHER TONGUE!

The point of this post is that, it is not always necessary to chase after money and make it a priority. Identify your purpose, go after it and focus on your passion first THEN the rest shall follow, the money will come! Opportunities that you never knew existed will also present themselves to YOU.”

Basetsana Sheane, Nal'ibali Reader Club leader, social media post



5. Partnerships, collaboration and thought leadership

Nal'ibali plays a key role in coordinating efforts across the literacy ecosystem in South Africa. By working with various partners, Nal'ibali helps bring people together to focus on two key areas: promoting reading for enjoyment and supporting multilingualism.

Nal'ibali, as a national organization with a strong presence, uses its wide reach through media and networks to keep literacy at the forefront of discussions. Nal'ibali also participates in important conversations and dialogues about literacy through platforms like NASCEE, The Reading Panel, and the National Reading Barometer (NRB).

We have strengthened partnerships with various organisations as they have become more aware of the breadth of our reach and the positive influence we can have on children and communities. As these groups better understand our ability to connect with and support our target audiences, they have shown a greater interest in collaborating to maximise our respective efforts. Looking ahead, we aim to further develop these important relationships and identify new opportunities to pool our resources for even greater public benefit. By bringing diverse stakeholders together, Nal'ibali strengthens the literacy movement, ensuring that everyone works more effectively to promote reading and multilingualism.



What our partners have to say:

“The partnership between Children’s Cup and Nal’ibali, brings hope, inspires dreams, and drives sustainable change within our communities.”



“SLYSIG Mpumalanga would like to take this opportunity to thank Nal’ibali for training teachers to establish reading clubs and creative writing project.

The school principals are very happy because there’s a great impact in the schools. The following skills improved:

- Creative thinking
- Writing and reading skills
- Learners are able to work as a team.”

*Senior Education Specialist,
School Library & Information Services, SLYSIG*



“Thanks to Nal’ibali’s intervention, Ntataise Lowveld’s story telling has never been so intentional, engaging, animated, interactive, passionate, captivating, wild with imagination, enchanting, encapsulating, as we strive to open a whole new world where a young child can travel miles on end, and visit magical uncharted faraway lands. This partnership has had ripple effects and snowballed right into our ECD Practitioners Classrooms, on-site at our Play Groups, straight into the homes of our primary beneficiary where caregivers are skilled on an array of techniques of storytelling through our Care Givers Learning Through Play initiative.

Through Nal’ibali’s partnership we are able to focus on and address issues pertaining to emergent literacy and numeracy.

One can never express our sincere gratitude and appreciation on the role Nal’ibali plays in enriching our multi-faceted programmes, which are underpinned by the love to read, think critically, communicate and build on social skills. It all starts with exposure to the first book, the first reading supplement and improvised inspired picture books.”



Director, Ntataise, Lowveld

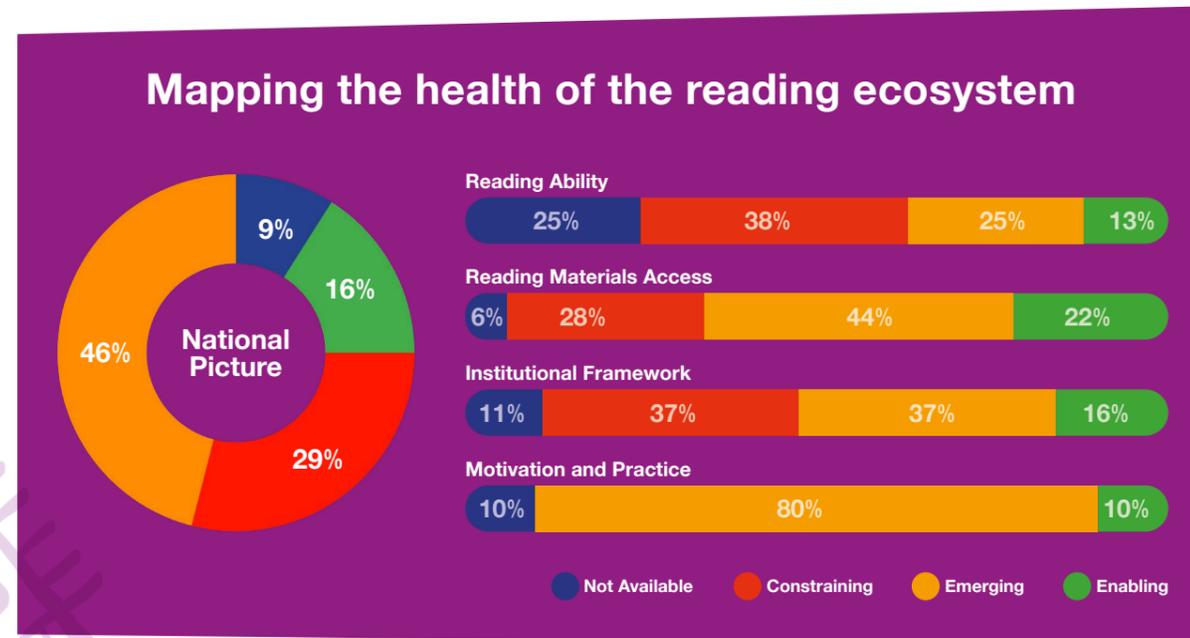
The National Reading Barometer (NRB)

The National Reading Barometer (NRB) stands as an impactful, evidence-based visual tool that reflects the health of South Africa's reading ecosystem. Led by Nal'ibali in partnership with the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), the NRB provides an in-depth assessment of key drivers influencing reading, including policies, systems, structures, and behaviors that collectively shape the literacy landscape. Through the NRB, Nal'ibali has effectively repositioned itself as a thought leader in the literacy sector, delivering insights that spark essential discussions across sectors and influence decision-making around shared priorities in literacy.



At the heart of this endeavor is the National Reading Survey (NRS), a nationally representative survey that profiles adult reading habits and includes valuable insights into adults reading with children. This focus is significant, as the survey offers data on adult attitudes and practices in reading with young children (under 10 years) and older children (11-18 years). The 2023 survey reveals an upward trend in adults reading with children, with 52% of South Africans with children in their households engaging in reading activities – a significant rise from 35% in 2016. Furthermore, three quarters of South Africans who live with children encourage children to read, compared to 13% in 2016 and 68% encourage children to look at books, underscoring the evolving understanding among caregivers of the role of reading in children's development.

The NRB's data compilation and tracking feature evaluates the reading ecosystem across four dimensions: **Reading Ability**, **Reading Material Access**, **Institutional Frameworks**, and **Reading Motivation and Practice**.



Together, these indicators reflect a comprehensive view of the enabling and constraining factors within the South African reading environment. Notably, the NRB and the NRS findings reveal an essential gap between the high value caregivers place on reading with children and the actual reading practice at home. For example, while 93% of adults believe in the benefits of reading with children, only 37% read to children before the child can read themselves and 35% read to young children who are not yet able to talk.

Reading with children

93% of adults agree that reading with children improves school performance

52% of adults who live with children read with them (up from 35% in 2016)¹



What do they read? **40%** text books | **33%** fiction stories | **29%** readers from school | **28%** religious stories

35% of homes with children under 10 have at least one picture book | **10%** have more than 10 picture books | **31%** of adults said their child owned a book by the age of 5

5% of adults use digital materials to read with children

- What would help people read with children more?**
- More time
 - More interesting, free, relatable material in preferred languages
 - More confidence

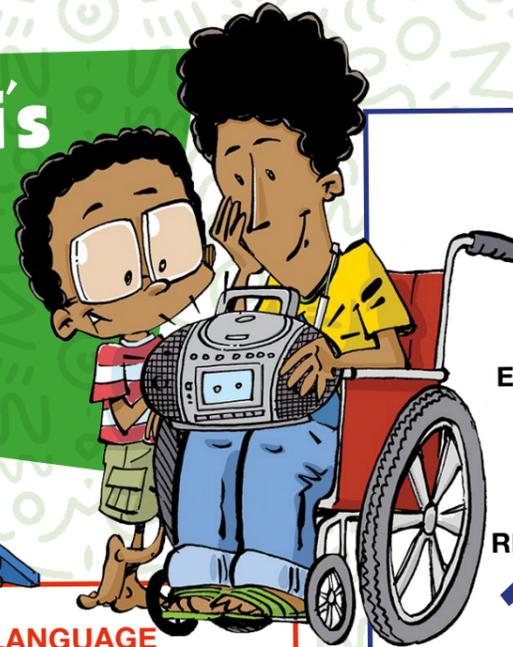
1: National survey into the reading and book reading behaviour of adult South Africans (2016). South African Book Development Council.

In terms of ongoing impact, the NRB's periodic collection – planned for 2026 and 2030 – creates a benchmark to assess progress in shifting reading behaviors, making it an invaluable tool for tracking the impact of literacy interventions over time. The NRB's findings not only illustrate the barriers caregivers face, such as a lack of time and limited access to age-appropriate reading materials but also highlight high levels of motivation among caregivers to read with children if materials become more accessible.

Through its robust research and collaborative model, the National Reading Barometer has firmly positioned itself as a catalyst for change within South Africa's reading ecosystem, enabling stakeholders to pursue impactful, data-driven interventions to foster a culture of reading and literacy nationwide.



Nalibali's reach 2019 – 2024



AFRICAN LANGUAGE STORY DISTRIBUTION

RADIO:

8 million
LISTENERS PER SEASON

TV:

3.4 million
VIEWERS PER SEASON

SUPPLEMENTS:

11,097,780

BOOKS:

153,601

WEBSITE AUDIO AND WRITTEN STORY DOWNLOADS:

1,988,705

WHATSAPP CHATBOT STORY DOWNLOADS:

96,073

PEOPLE TRAINED

TEACHERS:

1,054

ECD PRACTITIONERS:

2,119

READING CHAMPIONS:

14,988

PARENTS TRAINED IN 2024:

1,953

READING CLUBS

READING CLUBS ESTABLISHED:

15,997

CHILDREN REACHED THROUGH READING CLUBS:

118,263

WORLD READ ALOUD DAY

NUMBER OF PLEDGES RECEIVED:

3,126,114

NUMBER OF CHILDREN PLEDGED FOR:

12,452,335

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