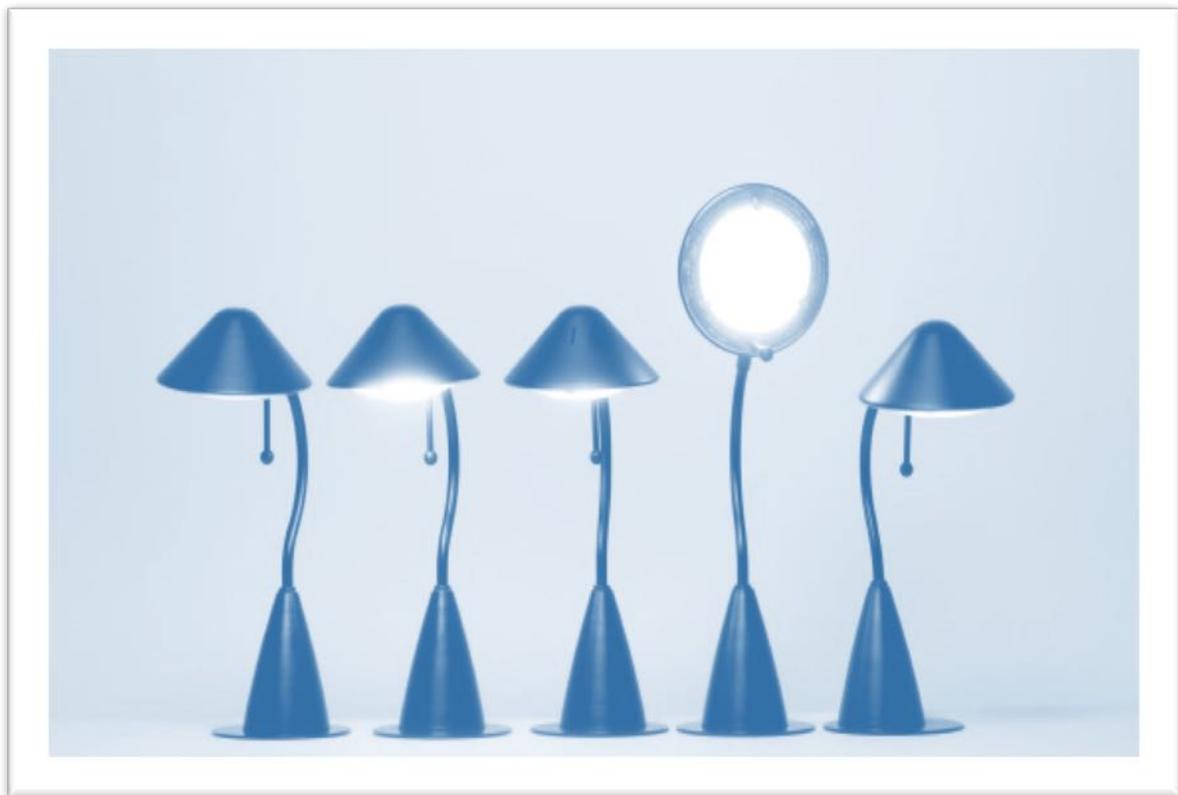

SHINING A LIGHT!

Exploring Na'ibali's Story Powered Homes innovation



OCTOBER 27, 2017
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“The simplest way to make sure that we raise literate children is to teach them to read, and to show them that reading is a pleasurable activity. And that means, at its simplest, finding books that they enjoy, giving them access to those books and letting them read.” (Neil Gaiman (2016) The View from the Cheap Seats)

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1. Introduction

“All disruption starts with introspection.” (Jay Samit (2016) Disrupt yourself)

This review tells the story of Nal’ibali’s testing of a home library model with the support of the DG Murray Trust. Inspired by the success of a reading innovation in Pratham, India, the campaign set out to explore the potential of adding a similar home-based approach to their collection of existing interventions, adapted to the South African context. This review shines a light on the implementation of *Story Powered Homes* in the North-West province, offering key insights into this promising innovation.

Primarily focused on learning from practice for purposes of refinement and expansion, this review holds true to the Pratham method. It uses stories of success and failure to inform critical choice-making, formulate new strategies, and enable changes in direction when necessary.¹ While the review does encounter implementation and management challenges, the deep dive into the practices of a cohort of home library hosts in the province showed inspiring potential.

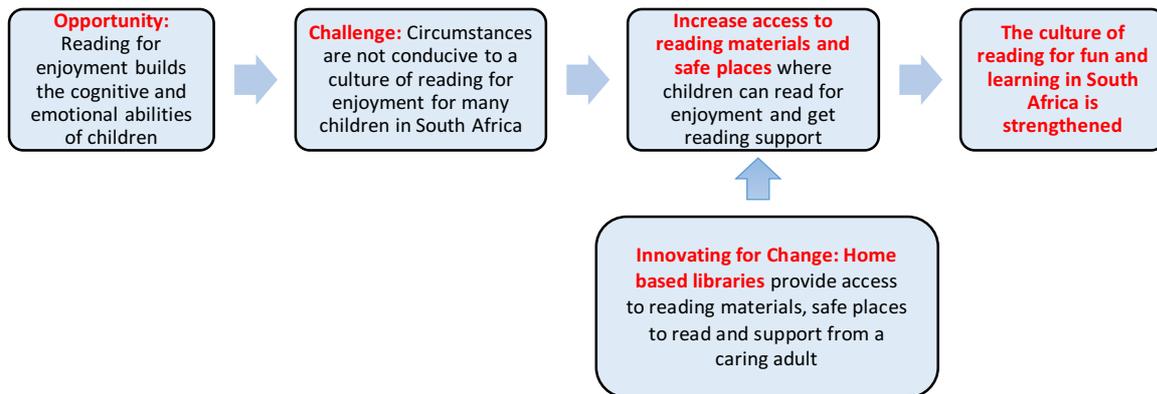
The review brings to the fore a significant level of interest and commitment to *Story Powered Homes*, showing that despite limitations, the injection of reading resources, capacity building and human engagement enjoyed by the home library hosts was appreciated in excess of anything imagined and proved important for adults and children alike.

Furthermore, the review pointed to specific actions that could drive sustained commitment and community action, enabling the consolidation and expansion of the model to new sites. These include;

- clarification of the model at strategic and implementation level;
- giving attention to the model’s activation and management;
- giving focus to the expectations and actions of implementing partners;
- improving dissemination of the package together with strengthened training; and
- on-going support and data collection to ensure the telling of the story to perpetuate the learning cycle.

¹ Shushmita Chatterji Dutt, Christina Kwauk, and Jenny Perlman Robinson. (2016). PRATHAM’S READ INDIA PROGRAM: TAKING SMALL STEPS TOWARD LEARNING AT SCALE. The Brookings Institution. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FINAL-Read-India-Case-Study.pdf>

2. Background



2.1 The challenge

Global evidence tells us that reading for enjoyment is important for both the educational and personal development of children. Indications are that it can be even more influential on intellectual growth than the socio-economic status of their family.²

Despite this knowledge about the potential impact of a reading culture on our children's academic achievement and their overall development, many still do not have the pleasure of being read to every day by a caring adult, nor do they have access to opportunities, resources and spaces that make reading for pleasure a daily possibility. For example, we know that;

- Only 15% of South Africans are within reach of a public library.³
- More than half of households (51%) have no leisure books, and only 6% of homes have more than 40 books.⁴
- Just 8% of primary schools have a library;⁵ many of which contain unsuitable books, or remain locked much of the time.
- Reading materials in African languages are scarce. Between 2000 and 2015, 53 599 children's books were published in South Africa's 11 official languages. Of these, 41% were in English, 24% were in Afrikaans, and only 35% were in the other 9 African languages.⁶

2.2 Innovating for Change: The Story Powered Home Package

With its intense commitment to the growth of a healthy, happy and productive culture of reading for enjoyment and development in South Africa, Nal'ibali seeks opportunities to learn from other successful reading innovations. This allows the campaign to borrow from successful ideas, expanding its own 'stable' of activities with potential to increase access to reading opportunities and materials in the languages of South Africa thereby expanding the overall campaign impact. In this report, we reflect on what the campaign has learnt from testing the *Story Powered Home* innovation, starting with defining the package.

² DG Murray Trust (2015) Let's Get South Africa Reading: Strategies involving all of Us available at www.dgmt.co.za

³ Equal Education. 2011. We can't afford not to: costing the provision of functional school libraries in South African public schools. Available from: <http://goo.gl/bmyTmJ>

⁴ South African Book Development Council 2007.

⁵ Equal Education. (2011). We can't afford not to: costing the provision of functional school libraries in South African public schools. Available at: <http://goo.gl/bmyTmJ>

⁶ <http://bookslive.co.za/blog/2016/02/18/nalibali-calls-for-more-books-in-local-languages-for-international-mother-language-day/>

Defining the Package

Purpose

The testing of this home-based innovation explored;

- I. the potential of the story powered home model for scale; and
- II. the potential of a resource intense (hanging library package), light touch (low level of face to face interaction) approach for scale.

Activation and Management

- I. Championing and managing the testing of the innovation would be 'held' by the existing campaign team in collaboration with selected partners.
- II. Nal'ibali will activate implementing partners, provide the kits, track implementation and stimulate ongoing engagement with 'top up rewards' for feedback and reporting.
- III. Recruitment, roll out and on-the-ground activation of *Story Powered Homes* will be through the partners (of Nal'ibali and/or DGMT).
- IV. Recruited caring adults will act as Home Library Hosts - they will each receive a hanging library activation kit and attend an information sharing session.
- V. Home Library Hosts will create safe environments for children to do fun reading activities as well as access, read, and borrow books.

What's in the box?

- I. *A fold-up hanging library with 40 books*, in local language[s] and English.
- II. *Story Powered Homes guides*, activity toolkits and tip sheets giving practical suggestions on running a home library for children.
- III. *A checkout kit* (paper-based).
- IV. *A Nal'ibali branded T-shirt and cap*.
- V. *Branding materials including window decals, stickers and posters* to identify their home as a *Story Powered Home*.

Ongoing Support

Further support to enhance and sustain take up would be provided by Nal'ibali. This would include:

- I. *SMS and call centre support*, and a dedicated "please call me" number (on branded materials).
- II. *Motivational SMS/WhatsApp messages* with ideas and tips.
- III. *Invitations to participate* in national Nal'ibali events and campaigns (such as World Read Aloud Day and Story Bosso) and in local events and trainings.
- IV. *Connection to a community of fellow FUNda Leaders*, via Facebook and later via a Nal'ibali app, who encourage and support one another to spark children's potential through stories.

Documenting the Story

Nal'ibali and its partners will provide direct support as part of a light touch data for monitoring and incentivisation process including;

- I. At least three phone calls per annum to all home library hosts to get a sense of progress, offer support and capture relevant feedback.
- II. Undertake, as part of regular implementation, site visits and interviews with a sample group of home library hosts to gather insights on successes, challenges and needs.
- III. Establish communication channel such as WhatsApp for submission of photographs of book checkout wall charts, activities and events. Regular submissions would earn home top-up books and merchandise (caps, T-shirts for kids, bracelets/buttons) and access opportunities (including training and a potential annual FUNda Leader conference).

3. Learning from Action: A Deep Dive into the North-West Province

“Effective solutions evolve through iterative cycles of trying and reflecting. To do that, we favour prototyping as way to try, evaluate, and discard potential solutions, building on the ideas that work.”⁷

Ongoing learning is at the heart of innovation that works. Nal’ibali recognised from the outset that the introduction of the Story Powered Home innovation would, by necessity, be an iterative learning process. Implementing the idea in a ‘contained’ way where the implementation evidence could be collected relatively easily, and ideas tested within a set beneficiary community with existing partners, was a key element of this process. Uncovering its potential to be fully integrated into the wider campaign would thus be guided by curiosity and open-mindedness about what success would look like.

3.1 Framing the Data Collection and Analysis

“New social ideas are also rarely inherently new in themselves. More often they combine ideas that had previously been separate.”⁸

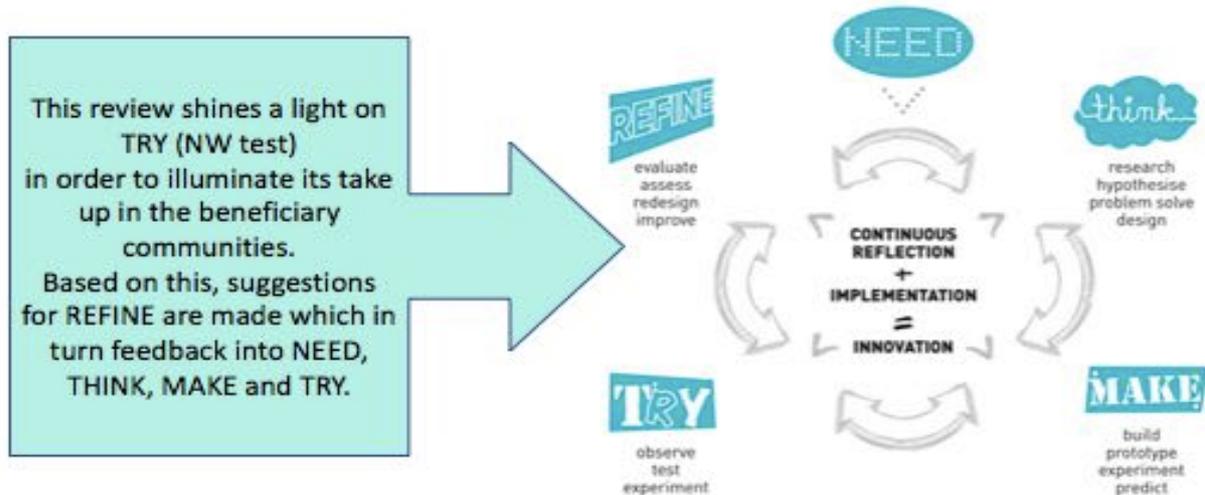
This review draws on the internationally accepted iterative process of design for innovation which involves a continuous cyclical flow of ongoing learning through doing and reflection, regularly refining and strengthening action for improved impact.

Design in human centered practice begins with understanding the needs of communities and responding accordingly with appropriate models of innovation that are need-based. Given that the Nal’ibali home-based library model was borrowed from Pratham to respond to a similar set of social challenges, the campaign stepped straight into the MAKE and TRY phases of the design process. A package was created for distribution (made up of the hanging library and support materials), and distribution of this was done with the aim of minimum face-to-face intervention with the hope that it would be sufficient to stimulate action in communities and so enjoy take up. The approach sought to be light on direct human intervention with contact being largely through the telephone and social media. *Therefore, the innovation was a combination of the hanging library package and the specific mode of delivery.*

What follows in this report is an exploration and analysis of this process to better understand what was achieved in the North West between 2016 and 2017 through the *Story Powered Homes*, what could be learnt from this, and what this means for the future of the innovation. Data was gathered from the point at which the idea was tested in the field by the home library hosts in the North-West province (i.e. at the point of TRY). Managing and implementing the idea institutionally is also reflected on as part of the TRY phase. Of necessity, this also includes going back to understand how the process unfolded, largely to illuminate how the interpretation of NEED and the THINKING that informs the making of the innovation impacts on its achievements on the ground.

⁷ <http://www.innovatechange.co.nz/news/2017/3/10/learningbydoing>

⁸ Geoff Mulgan (2006) *The Process of Social Innovation*. Innovations Spring. Available at: mitpress.mit.edu/innovations



3.2 Story Collecting: The Approach

*“When people's needs and values are at the heart of solutions intended to serve them, they're far more likely to actually work. It's important we hear from these people early and often through the social innovation process to ensure we're recognising and meeting their needs”.*⁹

The activation and design of this review was based on data collected by Nal'ibali on the distribution and take-up of the 180 hanging libraries. Of this cohort, thirty people in the North-West province who had participated in the home-based innovation in the province were identified. All were contacted by Nal'ibali in a drive to collect data telephonically about the innovation. Twelve of this number expressed interest in further training and support. On reflection, the data collected via the telephonic drive was valuable and illuminating, but offered insufficient depth to the take up of the innovation. Interested in a deeper perspective, the request from the twelve hosts for further support created an exciting opportunity to collect their stories directly.

Since the purpose of the field study was to better understand the strategic value potential of the innovation to broader Nal'ibali campaign objectives, the review focused particularly on illuminating the following:

1. The take up of the concept of the home-based library by hosts (how they conceptualise the idea of a home-based library, its value, uses etc.);
2. The take up of the home-based library by communities and children (how much access children have, how many children drew on this, what their experiences were etc.);
3. The opportunities created by the initiative (deeper conversation about what worked, what didn't, what facilitates, what blocks etc.);
4. The way in which the home-based model was used in implementation level (if the model adapted at all how and why it did, if the adaptations were advantageous etc.); and
5. Occurrence, and subsequent levels of success, of Nal'ibali providing a range of support to enable the take up (checklist of provisions, how Nal'ibali provided support, what value this added, what additional support should be given to make this fly etc.).

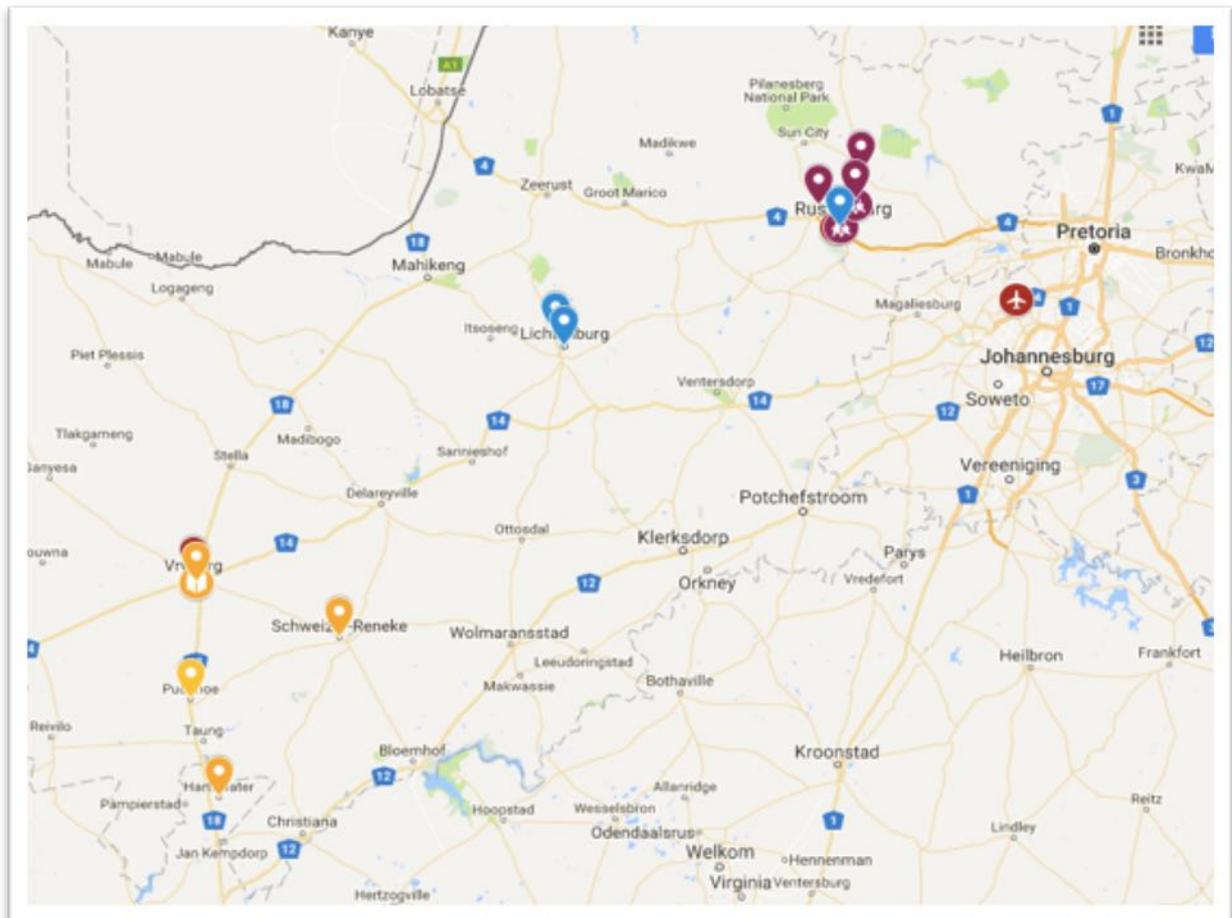
⁹ <http://www.innovatechange.co.nz/news/people-are-the-experts>

3.2.1 The Journey

“Starting the research process by going to villages and talking in depth with people—with a focus on simply listening and observing—is, in fact, quite powerful and leads to insights that you might not otherwise find.”¹⁰

A trip to the North West was planned to meet these twelve hosts, to offer coaching support and to top-up their hanging libraries. At the same time, the visit would be used to collect stories of implementation through a series of dialogue interviews, small focus groups, coaching observations and site visits. Underpinning the research approach was the technique of ‘appreciative inquiry’ (AI). Appreciative Inquiry is considered congruent with human centered design - it gives voice to participants, recognising their understanding and experience as core to the design and take up of the innovation. AI focusses on what works; as such it facilitates reflection on the positive features, practices and strengths of an intervention rather than being primarily concerned with problems and what doesn’t work, and thus seemed appropriate.

Given the geography of the area, these visits took four days (see map below, sites highlighted in red and orange). The map also provides a bird’s eye view of the area and the large spaces between communities in this dry, poverty affected area.



¹⁰ <http://www.innovatechange.co.nz/news/people-are-the-experts>

3.2.2 Tools and Processes

Tools were designed to allow for the researcher to listen and then to reflect on what was being heard from the interviewees. They included a generic self-reporting tool (Appendix A) focused on reading behaviour that Nal'ibali is interested in integrating into all training events in the future. It asks questions about interviewees' own reading attitudes and practices, what they read, where they get the things they read as well as how frequently they read to children and to how many.

The second instrument (Appendix B) was specific to the site visits and focused on the implementation of the *Story Powered Homes* innovation. It included a checklist on the 'package' and its use, as well as more open-ended dialogue oriented questions. Data was collected during the observation of two coaching sessions which included both *Story Powered Home* hosts as well as other who were keen to learn more about Nal'ibali, particularly from libraries.

An important element of the data collection was the team that was engaged in the face-to-face process. It included two staff members from Nal'ibali, an interpreter from the province and the lead researcher. This team travelled together across the province for four days, documenting, coaching and sharing learnings from their observations. This spontaneous 'community of practice' provided a hub for the exchange of ideas, clarification of Nal'ibali's intentions and practices, as well as in depth analysis of what was being observed. These open-ended, often undocumented dialogues, enriched both the collection of data and its analysis.

Finally, three Nal'ibali staff members who were key to the implementation and management of the innovation were interviewed: Ben Rycroft (Head of Communications and project lead), Katie Huston (Head of Research and Innovation, who helped conceptualise the project while still at DGMT and joined Nal'ibali mid-way through implementation), and Portia Daniso (a Nal'ibali Literacy Mentor who had worked extensively with the North West home library hosts through another training programme prior to the launch of this pilot). The questions asked of them emerged from the attempt to clarify numerous questions about the startup and implementation of the innovation at the Nal'ibali and partner end. The interviewees shared important details on how the conceptualisation, decision making, and management of the testing process had happened and how these factors influenced the success of the innovation.

3.2.3 Site Selection and Activation

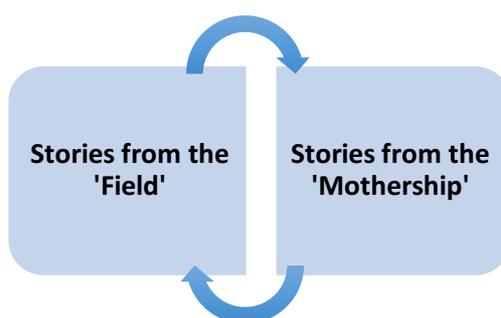
North West province was selected as a primary implementation site for the *Story Powered Home* model because it was a clean slate, almost 'untouched' by other Nal'ibali initiatives, and under-served due to the language limitations of Nal'ibali's main resourcing strategy to date - its bilingual supplement, which is not yet available in Setswana. Selection was guided by the following criteria:

- *Untouched by Nal'ibali*: sites where Nal'ibali was not already active on the ground;
- *Geography*: rural or semi-rural sites that were not easy to reach and stood to benefit significantly if a light touch community based approach worked;
- *Active partners*: the presence of an organisation with the capacity to support implementation in the selected geographic area; and
- *High interest*: a cohort of people at community level interested and willing to participate in the initiative.

The adoption of an environment where the campaign was not active was seen as important to better understanding its potential. Community level activation and implementation was to be through Nal'ibali partners as envisaged in the DGMT concept note. Given that Ilifa was the primary DGMT implementing partner working in this province, with an already established relationship with PRAESA, a partnership between the two organisations was seen as an ideal channel for establishing and testing the innovation.

3.3 The Implementation Story

This is the first part of the TRY narrative: the 'Stories from the Field' focusing on what the hosts shared with us. These conversations and observations led us into a deeper exploration of how the initiative reached communities, so in essence, the back end of implementation. Given that this role was one of design, activation, support and ongoing management (quality), for the purposes of this report, this section is called 'Stories from the Mothership'. Stories from the Mothership are covered in the second part of the narrative. These two parts of the Story Powered Homes innovation are intertwined as illustrated in the diagram below.



3.3.1 Stories from the 'Field'

The stories from the field were collected in four ways:

1. Observations from visits to the implementation sites and one-on-one interviews with hosts (5);
2. Observation and notes of the coaching groups (2); and
3. One-on-one interviews with hosts, who did not receive site visits, at the coaching sessions (7);
4. Photographs of the implementation sites were also taken.

While the stories told in this review are from a small number of people they are powerful and inspiring. They demonstrate the capacity of people to be innovative, resourceful and resilient even in circumstances of great difficulty. They are stories of hope and promise. They illustrate anecdotally an encouraging return on investment for a relatively small dose of targeted resources with a light touch of human-centered support.

➤ Start Up

Key observations:

- What/who NaI'ibali is as well as the *Story Powered Home* (SPH) innovation should be clarified;
- The library is only a tool; start up and activation of the SPH innovation is also part of the SPH model;
- Quality implementation at community level will be driven by the quality thinking and input that guides the process from the start; and
- Training and support are an important part of the model, are highly valued and must be part of the design and plan for implementation.

The way in which various library hosts got started on and prepared for implementing the innovation was patchy. There were reportedly a number of ways in which 'introductions' happened including; connections with the Ilifa/PRAESA Storyplay programme and invitations from an involved friend. One person said she had come across Nal'ibali online, while another noted that she had come across Nal'ibali on the radio and explained how much she loved the stories and would to run with the radio to the children in her ECD centre to gather them around to listen.

"I was invited to training by Mrs. Ramorora, she told me about Nal'ibali. She told them about me and that I could teach children... I went to training with Nadia and Portia four or five times."

What was also apparent is the exposure to Nal'ibali and the preparation for the take up of the *Story Powered Homes* was inconsistent. Some hosts attended training with PRAESA; not all attended all the sessions. One host said she was recruited at the tail end of the training and attended one session which led to her receiving the home-based kit. Another said she attended two sessions and was called and told she would receive a hanging library as a result.

A sense of uncertainty about how to use the library was commonly found. One host said she went to people's homes and asked to read to their children. Sensing their discomfort with this, she said she began to "feel shame" and stopped. She then integrated the hanging library into her ECD centre book collection, but still spoke about ways she was trying to get a group underway in her community.

"When I got the hanging library I did not know what to do with it..."

"What we don't know is what is Nal'ibali expecting of us, how do deal with the community library? This is our first training with you so we are expecting a lot from you."

In both the coaching groups (Rustenburg and Vryburg), questions were asked about what Nal'ibali is and how it works. There were also many questions about how to use the hanging library, with a specific note that the concept needed to be clarified. Of note is that no reference was made in these groups by participants to *Story Powered Homes* as an idea.

Participants were excited to be part of the coaching group. They were keen to learn about storytelling and how to maintain children's interest in books.

"I have learnt a lot today about reading clubs and how to set them up at the library, today I found ideas for those children who are on farms who don't have opportunities, we can reach out to those children."

"I learnt what is Nal'ibali...I learnt from others about how they are doing it...I also learnt the use of the mobile library in centres."

"I am happy today because you invite me...I think you will send me the books and I will call the children...I have already told some parents even though I don't have the books yet.... the parents have said they will come.... parents like reading like me, I like reading very much."

➤ *Reading, Reading: What the 12 hosts told us about themselves as readers*

Own Reading Practices: Key Observations:

- All 12 hosts value stories and reading - they expressed a love for books;
- Not everyone reads books, some read magazines and the bible; and
- All 12 hosts have books in their homes, just from different sources and in different numbers.

Of the 12-people interviewed during the coaching sessions, all indicated that as children somebody, mostly a grandmother or mother, told them stories. Only two said they had also been read to.

“I used to read at school – my mother told us stories that started ‘a long time ago....’ These stories helped me learn – sometimes at school they would talk about things and I would remember them from the stories my mother told.”

All claimed to be committed readers, both for themselves and to children. When asked about their own reading habits:

- All claimed to read regularly - one once a week and the remaining 11 every day;
- One claimed to only read the bible, and another three said they only read magazines (Bona, For Joy and Drum);
- Some reading materials were bought (especially the magazines), others were borrowed from friends, while five borrowed from the library, and only one said she downloaded books online;
- Five said they don’t buy books because they are too costly and two said the library was too far;
- All indicated that they had books in their home, reporting any number from five to over 100.

The table below summarises the feedback from 12 hosts on how many books are in their homes.

More than 5	More than 10	More than 20	More than 50	More than 100
1	2	-	7	2



Image 1: Site

Reading to Children: Key Observations

- This small group of 12 people have a remarkable 'reading footprint', making use of numerous day-to-day spaces and opportunities to read to children – a small amount of inspiration goes a long way.

When asked how often they read to children, all said that they read to children every day, and some more than once in a day. A tally of how many children are read to in total by these 12 hosts indicates that between them they read to at least 872 children.



872 children read to every day

➤ *What we learnt from the five hosts we visited on site*

The Package: Key observations

- Increase clarity about the concept and use of the *Story Powered Homes* package;
- Strengthen communication channels to increase take up and impact (clarify assumptions, for example do not assume sending written instructions is sufficient for communities where education has been weak); and
- Improve distribution – to ensure all hosts receive the full package.

The distribution of the packages for the *Story Powered Homes* was done via courier. The welcome letter outlined the start-up process offering hosts a guide on what to do and how to use the contents of the package. Two hosts indicated they did not receive the letter. Of the three who did receive the letter, two said they found it extremely helpful. However, what became evident during the dialogues with the hosts is that they might actually have received the letter in the pack but did not engage with it. The same can be said of the other content where one host who indicated she had not received the *Story Powered Guide* actually showed it to the researcher but seemed not to know what it was for, she also indicated receiving the stickers saying she never knew they were for the children so she had used them herself.

"I have some of the small stickers on the doors of my house and my car, but not the proper big branding...never received the big branding...the small stickers can't be seen from the street".

All five of the hosts said they had received the check out forms and cards but none had used them, mostly because they had not allowed the children to take books home. One host explained to us that she was a teacher and she knew '*how naughty children could be*'. Her concern was if they took the books home they would damage them or not return them.

Another showed us bags she had made in which she said she sent books home with children. She claimed that even though most of them lived with grandparents or other family members who could

not read, it was evident to her that the children looked at these books with an adult. She indicated that the check out forms were not useful because, in her experience running an ECD centre, adults were unresponsive to forms sent home with their children.

None of the hosts we visited had received the caps or t-shirts. When asked if this was important to them, all said they would have appreciated getting them as being visibly part of the campaign mattered. The table below provides a summary of these inputs from the five hosts visited.

Package Component	Yes	No	Value add			
			Not at all	A little Helpful	Mostly Helpful	Extremely Helpful
Welcome letter	3	2	-	-	1	2
Home library (30 – 40 books)	5	-	-	-	1	4
Check out forms	5	-	5	-	-	-
Check out cards	5	-	5	-	-	-
Story Power Guide – Homes	3	2	-	-	-	3
Activity toolkit/tip sheet	5	-	1	-	-	4
Decal to put on window	-	5	-	-	-	-
Story powered home pledge	1	4	-	-	-	1
Stickers to give out	5	-	2	-	2	1
Cap	-	5	-	-	-	-
T-shirt	-	5	-	-	-	-

The Books: Key Observations

- The books were greatly appreciated and enjoyed;
- The diversity in terms of language and ages should be increased;
- Given the age span for which they are used, 40 books is not enough. Thought should be given to ways of exchanging or topping up on a regular basis to sustain interest.

Across all the conversations with hosts at site visits and in the coaching sessions appreciation was expressed for the books received. One host, when asked about how interesting the books were to the children, said, *“oh, too much”*.

“I am very happy...I say thank you Nal’ibali...I have a two-year-old child who knows how to hold a book and tell a story because she sees it every day.”

“I read the books with 3 – 5 year olds, the babies read baby books, they can’t talk but they babble, they point and show you things in the books.”

Language diversity should be looked at more closely to better understand the needs of communities and address this in the choices offered in the hanging libraries. One host said that the books were too old for her group and that she needed more Tswana material. Two said their practice was to translate the books as they read them. Another indicated that she did not always understand the words in the books and that Tswana books would be helpful to her.

“I translate the English books to Tswana when I read them...I am fine with this because some of the children who come go to multi-racial schools.”

All spoke of the need for more books and a greater spread because of the age ranges of children they reach in their various ways.

“There are not enough books for the children...they read fast...they say; we have read all the books, why should we come again?”

“As time goes on we will need more books for older children, we have beefed up with books from the school library, we should also have more than one copy rather than one-one....”

The table below provides a summary of these inputs from five the hosts visited.

Further Reflections				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Let’s talk a little more about the books. Did you think they were...				
Age appropriate?	2	3	-	-
Interesting to the children?	4	1	-	-
Address language needs of the children?	-	3	2	-
You have enough resources and materials	1	0	4	-

Communication and Support: Key Observations

- Face-to-face support is greatly valued and appreciated;
- The light touch implementation and support methodology should be further explored; and
- Communication between the hosts and Nal’ibali must be strengthened. This includes clarifying channels through which reporting and feedback are given and received as well as the way in which the programme is activated.

There seemed to be a lack of clarity about the *Story Powered Home* innovation. While take up and use of the resource was enthusiastic and innovative, what hosts offered was something of a mixed bag and not always a *Story Powered Home*. Talking to hosts revealed different understandings about the idea, as well as a great deal of uncertainty about what it actually meant to host such an initiative. It seems some of this may go back to the selection of hosts who evidently came from ECD centres in the province. This is probably because the implementing partner was active in the training of ECD practitioners in Storyplay at the time.

“I tried to read to people in my community – I used to go to their homes and read with the children but I could see they were not happy. I started to feel shame so I stopped.”

“We are expecting a lot, the challenge is time, I finished work at five and then have to gather children, sometime I find them, sometimes I don’t, I always work with whoever I find, sometimes, I take the books for my programmes at work ...but then again, I need a strategy for how to separate the two but have them serve a purpose that is positive for the community.”

Feedback on support from Nal’ibali was mixed. Those who were called liked the way staff spoke to them. However, most of the 12 people interviewed at some level seemed to think there was not enough of it and in some instances, none at all. For example, one interviewee said she had been told at the training that the team would be in touch, but she did not receive any further communication from them. Also noted was that some hosts had submitted reports via a WhatsApp group but had not received a response. Nal’ibali, on the other hand, indicated that they had not received any feedback from hosts via WhatsApp. Somewhere, communication went wrong.

“I don’t hear from Nal’ibali...I send reports on the WhatsApp but they don’t answer.”

“These people (meaning Nal’ibali) are friendly, they know how to speak with people”

The challenges of communication need further investigation to determine where the blockages have been and also to make choices about what the most effective channels may be for hard to reach communities who may not have consistent internet or cellphone coverage.

Another challenge that communities face in the NW is poverty. It impacts on what hosts are able to offer and the ability of children to remain engaged. One host who produced a marvelous record of the *Story Powered Home* group she had run, with each meeting carefully documented, told us that hunger brought the group to an end.

“We had the children coming twice a week, they would play games and we would read together. Then they began to say they were hungry – we have nothing to give them so eventually they stopped coming. We stopped running the group in May.”

The table below provides a summary of the inputs on communication from five the hosts visited.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Let’s talk about the support you received from Nal’ibali				
Communication is clear and easy to understand?	3	0	1	1
You feel supported by the Nal’ibali team	1	1	2	1

Evident in the coaching groups is how much the face-to-face support is appreciated. Some people travelled significant distances to be able to attend the meeting. It was evident from their level of engagement in the conversations and activities that they valued the opportunity to learn together. One host who also ran an ECD centre said she was keen on more training and found it so valuable that she would take her whole staff should there be an opportunity. Participants in the coaching meetings said many positive things about the experience and noted some important learnings.

“I learnt that we don’t have to be harsh, we have to support our children.”

“You have added more value to me to express my feelings when I am reading and telling a story, to have eye contact (laughs shyly) ...so now I feel free to tell a story and to dramatize it.”

“I have learnt a lot today about the reading clubs and how to set them up at the library, today brought some ideas for those children on farms who don’t have opportunities, we can reach out to those children.”

“I learnt what is Nal’ibali....I learnt from others about how they are doing it...I also learnt the use of mobile libraries in centres.”

“I gained a lot of thing...I have a lot of ideas from you. I say thank you.”

“This session inspired me a lot to go out there and do whatever I can to help the community to start reading like I do reading.”



Image 2: Host

Overall Value Add: Key Observations

- Even though things are not perfect with the way this test began and was carried out, the value add is appreciated by all, the materials inspire action, and the books are loved;
- Hosts demonstrate versatility and innovation in their use of the resource, using it in multiple settings – they are, in their way, social entrepreneurs; and
- The hanging library as a resource is an enabler of action. Attention must be given to defining the action that goes with it, as this is the heart and driver of the innovation.

Across the conversations in the coaching sessions as well as in the one-on-one interviews, participants expressed appreciation for Nal’ibali and its offering. Important is that none did this without simultaneously being able to acknowledge challenges or concerns about issues such as communication or follow through by the part of the campaign.

All five of the hosts visited on site felt the home library was a good or excellent initiative, worth sustaining and replicating.

“I see it working because they will be reading at ease, there is nobody who will shout at them, they will be free and can relate to the book in their own time.”

“It’s different from school – at school they read in front of the other kids and sometimes they are scared to make mistakes...with the home library they are free to make mistakes...I think it can work.”

Scale of 1 (Poor) – 4 (Excellent)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
I think the home library idea is...	2	3	-	-

Take up of the resource was interesting. Many used the resource in numerous ways, finding it a versatile tool. What the field trip made clear is that people find the injection of material exciting and inspiring. They are resourceful and innovative enough to find ways of using the materials although they express reservation about their implementation and are certain that they could do better with more support. They adopted a ‘do it yourself’ approach, referred to in the social entrepreneurship sector as ‘*Bricolage*’, which is French for “*Do It Yourself*”. Their capacity to “always make do” is inspiring. Making do with what they had, these women contributed to the expansion of the model, illustrating its promise in the field.¹¹

“Because the bag is mobile we take it to different places, including the schools where we are working. Sometimes we go together, sometimes alone. She has a car, I don’t. We haven’t done much but we are getting there.”

“The Nal’ibali programme changed the way we are handling our peer to peer reading sessions and our interactions with our parents. It gives us some “back-up” regarding the value of reading. We also use the stories in our diary.”

At Rustenburg Primary School we found the Hanging Library displayed in a corner of the school library with a number of photos and other branded materials around it. The host explained that the Nal’ibali books provide a valuable resource for multilingual reading choices. While not a conventional use of the hanging library, there was undeniable evidence that the key messages of Nal’ibali and its colourful resources, stories and commitment to multilingualism make a contribution even in the context of a well-resourced, highly functioning learning environment.



Image 3: Hanging Library in Rustenburg

¹¹ Kerry Krige and Gus Silber (2016) *The Disruptors – Social entrepreneurs reinventing business and society*, Gordon Institute of Business, Pretoria

3.3.2 Stories from the Mothership

Insights gained from the field pointed to the need to better understand bigger institutional issues and how they influenced the success of the *Story Powered Home* innovation. In this section of the review, the key elements - the conceptualisation and design, championing of the innovation within Nal'ibali and its implementation and management - are reflected on using some leading thinking on social innovation.



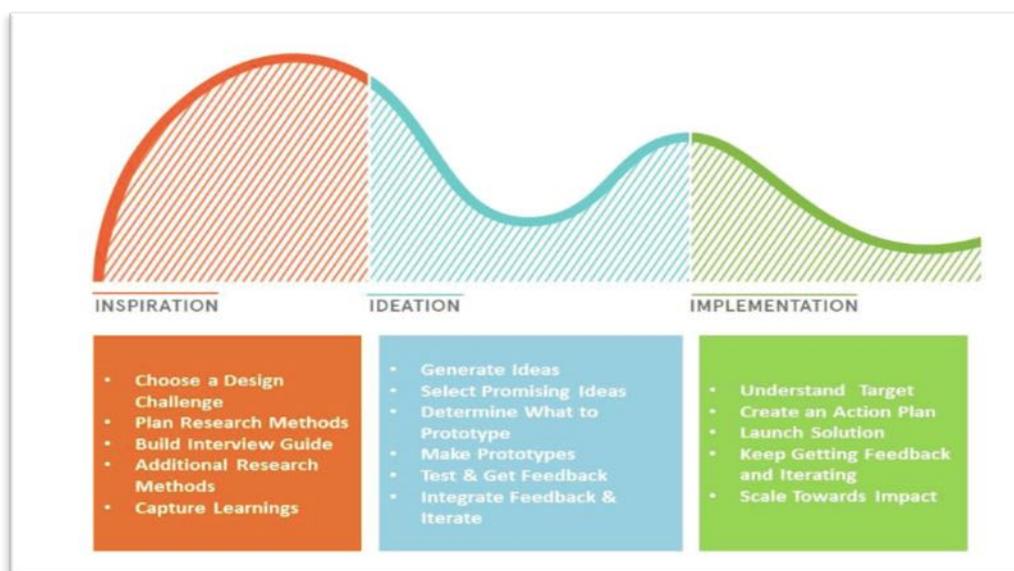
Concept and Design: Key Observations

- Articulate clearly each element of the *Story Powered Home* innovation and how it should be implemented and managed as part of the model, and
- The Hanging Library has demonstrated its versatility across a range of reading for enjoyment activities, it has successfully contributed to expanding access to books and reading for enjoyment.

*"Innovation isn't the technology, it's the behavior."*¹²

The diagram below elaborates three key stages of the design of an innovation.¹³ Using this as a lens, it seems that the process followed to take the *Story Powered Homes* to market was as follows; :

- Inspiration (which in this case was a combination of need in South Africa and the finding of a model in India);
- Ideation (which was short circuited by an existing model drawn in from India); and
- Implementation (which has been the focus of this research).



¹² <https://www.fastcompany.com/1844177/innovation-isnt-about-new-products-its-about-changing-behavior>

¹³ <https://sidlaurea.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/hdc-process.jpg>

What the evidence uncovered through this piece of research seems to be suggesting is that some of the earlier design work must be revisited and tightened up. This includes giving thought to, “*what is the innovation being tested by Nal’ibali?*”

- Is it a *Story Powered Home* model?
- Is it a hanging library?

The evidence tells us that the Hanging Library is well constructed and easily used in a variety of ways - the library hosts demonstrated this very well. It also tells us that the concept of the *Story Powered Home*, although attended to in the provision of some resources like decals, the welcome letter and so on (though not all elements were provided with the package), did not come through strongly enough in the introduction or in the ongoing support. Where is the implementation model? Without careful thought to the innovation in its ‘fullness’ the *Story Powered Home innovation* is not scalable. Not paying attention to activation and ongoing support leaves the model incomplete.



Image 4: Hanging Library

Championing Innovation: Key Observations

- Value is created by the ‘convergent’ relationship between Nal’ibali and investor partner DGMT; and
- To maximize to potential of innovation for scale, give it a champion and integrate it into the deliberate institutional culture and action of the organisation.

“Think of a culture of innovation as the rocket fuel that drives innovation implementation forward.”¹⁴

Like many innovations, Nal’ibali ‘borrowed’ the idea for the *Story Powered Home* model from a similar idea implemented in India which was thought to have potential for the South African setting. The hope was that by adopting, adapting and adding it to the campaign collection of activities, access to enjoyable, safe reading opportunities would be rapidly expanded to areas most in need.

¹⁴ <http://www.innovationcoach.com/2016/10/innovation-process-communication/>

Its take up was strongly motivated for by Nal'ibali's key investment partner, the DG Murray Trust, a thought leader in the development sector in the South Africa.

The literature notes that *"innovation blossoms where the sectors converge. At these intersections, the exchanges of ideas and values, shifts in roles and relationships, and the integration of private capital with public and philanthropic support generate new and better approaches to creating social value"*.¹⁵ The interest and investment of DGMT in Nal'ibali contributed getting the *Story Powered Homes* activated as a campaign innovation. Take up of this within the organisational structure seems to have presented some challenges which impacted on the overall success of the test.

Investment in the innovation focused more heavily on the production of the hanging libraries and packages of support materials, with insufficient focus on the testing of the innovation itself. At the time of startup, the team was stretched to capacity. No additional staffing was brought in to champion this initiative leaving an already over stretched team to integrate this into their already overfull plates.

The lack of specific attention to the *Story Powered Homes* was further complicated by changes in senior staff shortly after it began. In May 2017, a team leader for innovation within the organisation joined the project team after the *Story Powered Homes* testing had begun, which brought the testing of this approach more sharply into focus. Effort was put into tracking the progress of the innovation, which is where this study began.

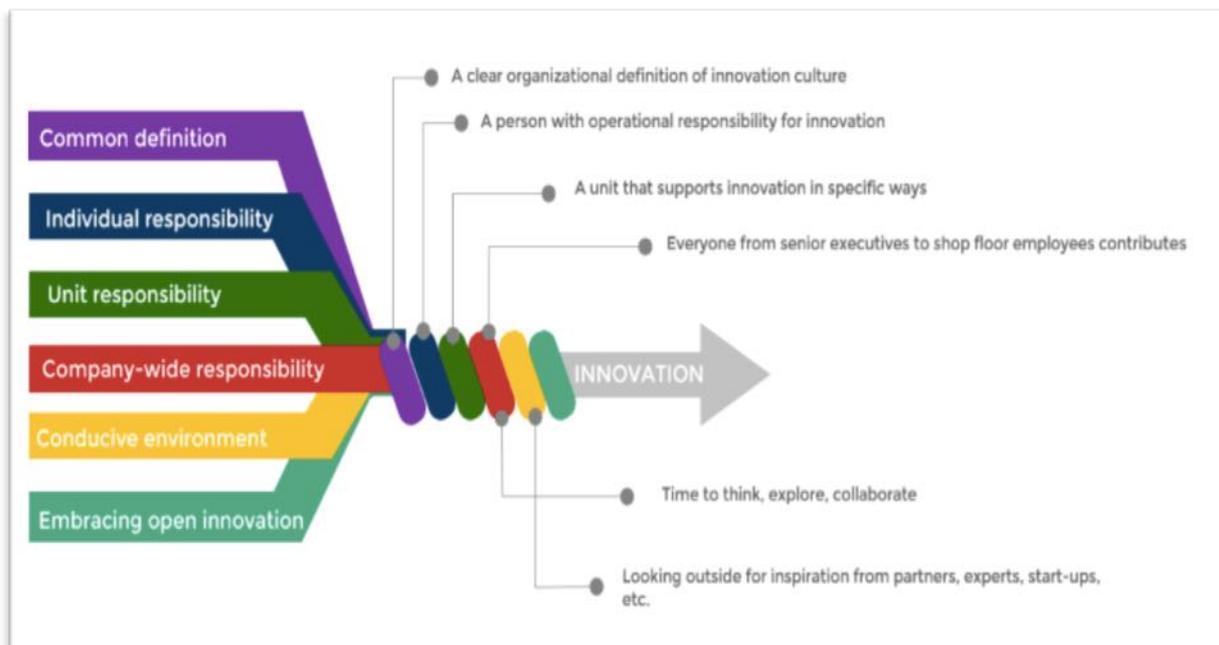
Maximizing the potential of any innovation is not light touch. The most important time for an innovation is at conceptualisation and start up. This means championing the idea, nurturing and shaping it and ensuring it gets the attention needed to support take up. This may include stepping back and watching what unfolds, but this cannot happen too early in the process. An article in Stanford Review (2008) provide two pointers for Nal'ibali to consider when integrating innovation into its day to day operations;

1. *"Successful innovation involves every level on the organizational chart, from the individuals who identify novel ideas, to the middle managers who champion them, to the senior executives who shape the overall culture."*
2. *"Innovation in organizations cannot be a random or unstructured activity. It requires people with innovation mindsets who work together to explore, ideate, craft and implement groundbreaking ideas. When leaders understand how this process works, they can spot gaps and develop a strategy for filling them."*¹⁶

The diagram below elaborates this culture of innovation visually. It emphasises the collective efforts across the layers of an organisation which must integrate to enable impactful innovation.

¹⁵ James A. Phillips Jr., Kriss Deiglmeier, & Dale T. Miller (2008) Rediscovering Social Innovation Stanford Social Innovation Review

¹⁶ <https://www.ccl.org/blog/5-biggest-keys-leading-innovation/>



Implementation Partners: Key Observations

- Good, functioning partnerships are central to achieving scale;
- Give partners a clear road map, outline roles and responsibilities and how it all fits together, what drives a light touch,
- Build capacity and shared understanding and common purpose,
- Clarify and agree on communication channels and accountability, and
- Recognise that key partners are the hosts and communities themselves, ensure they are included not just as subjects for take up but as partners for design, activation and scale.

“Partnership is a process not a product. Successful navigation through the process results in net benefits for all parties.”¹⁷

As part of its light touch approach, Na’ibali sought to activate the *Story Powered Home* initiative through a partnership with Ilifa and PRAESA. How the campaign engages and works with partners has been a focus of a previous piece of research (The report, “Voices from Partners”, has relevance to the findings of this study).

The partnership did not work well. The identification of hosts, their training and activation in the field seem inadequate. For example, a number of the hosts interviewed for the review process indicated that they had submitted feedback to Na’ibali via a WhatsApp group, Na’ibali on the other hand claim to have never received feedback from these hosts. Further exploration revealed the possible existence of three WhatsApp groups started by different people in different organisations across the partnership. This information was never shared with the head office. Furthermore, process is not well documented pointing perhaps to poorly defined accountability channels.

¹⁷Corrigan, Mary Beth, et al. Ten Principles for Successful Public/Private Partnerships. Washington, D.C.: ULI—the Urban Land Institute, 2005.

Research for the review process revealed some cross lines in terms of communication with a lack of clarity regarding training, key messaging as well as data collection and programme management. Evidence of this that:

- The 12 hosts interviewed for the review process had varying understandings of the *Story Powered Home* initiative, and
- Most indicated that they had submitted feedback to Nal'ibali via a WhatsApp group. Nal'ibali on the other hand claim to have never received feedback from these hosts.

Both issues could be related to the defining of key messages, the communication thereof and the way in which ongoing channels of communication were established. Issues like cellphone coverage and access to Wi-Fi in the North West is inconsistent, and relying only to heavily on WhatsApp and Facebook as ways for push-pull communication might not be optimal. Exploring these issues should be part of the design of the model and explored during the first two phases of the design of an innovation (NEED, THINK)

As far as could be ascertained for this review, the identification of hosts for the story powered homes happened through PRAESA as well as the Queen of the Royal Bafokeng. Individuals identified as potential library hosts were largely active in the ECD sector and were trained by PRAESA in collaboration with Nal'ibali. As a result, many of the home library initiatives visited during the research for this review were linked in some way to ECD centres. The researcher, along with the Nal'ibali team members who conducted the visit, were unable to establish a clear picture of the process and rationale for what followed, largely because of changes in the staffing of the implementation team as well as the end of the PRAESA intervention.

Some of the murkiness about start up and implementation at a 'programme' level points back to the way in which the partnership was established and how communication unfolded between PRAESA and Nal'ibali. Since no resourcing was specifically allocated for the testing, the assumption was that partners would integrate it into the activities. While this clearly happened to some extent, lack of clarity about the initiative and the partnership seems to have had a knock on to the eventual take up and impact at community level.

Clarifying the implementation elements of the innovation are important for what comes next. Defining the layers of partnership in the activation model and settling on mechanisms for communication and collaboration are important aspects of driving the *Story Powered Home* to realise its potential.

The Stanford Review (2000) notes that for strategic collaboration to be effective, seven things need to be in place;

1. Clarity of purpose
2. Congruency of mission, strategy and values
3. Creation of value
4. Connection with purpose and people
5. Communication between partners
6. Continual learning
7. Commitment to the partnership¹⁸

Reliance on partners to realise strategic intention, even where it is hoped this allows for light touch must be managed with care, well defined and 'contracted' before startup.

¹⁸ Michael R Reich (2000) Public-private partnerships for public health, *Nature Medicine*, Volume 6, Number 6, June 2000 available at <http://medicine.nature.com>

4. In Conclusion: The Key Recommendations

At its core, learning by doing is a preference for action. It is a preference for doing, making learning, and experimenting, over talking. Social innovation and design evolve best through iterative cycles of doing and reflecting.¹⁹

The Nal'ibali campaign has set out to respond to a complex social problem in South Africa. As an organisation, its intention is to bring change. Its culture is to do this through novel ways with the potential to spread. This requires different ways of thinking and doing. Story Powered Homes is an attempt to bring something new and has shown itself to have promise as this review highlights. Reflection on the Story Powered Home innovation testing in the North-West province has shone a light on its promise and the potential that has blossomed in the people on the ground who have received. By going into the field and listening to those who implement the programme, insight was gained into how this innovation is perceived, experienced and influenced by the people who interact with and implement it. This has allowed for the distillation of ideas about what works, areas for reflection as well as points for revision and action.

“Start small with a ‘minimum viable product,’ gauge customers’ reactions regularly and often, make improvements efficiently, and eventually scale up...”²⁰

The startup and testing of this innovation has been small and contained. Again, this is consistent with theories of innovation design, particularly thinking on lean startups where the emphasis is on taking minimal financial risks, getting regular feedback and redesigning fast to address challenges.²¹ Since the evidence from the review tells us the innovation has promise, both in terms of the injection of resources into communities, as well as the willingness and excitement of individuals to take the idea forward. It is with this in mind, that Nal'ibali should take up the recommendations summarised in this conclusion. Taking the simple but potentially powerful idea of Story Powered Homes back to the drawing board, integrating learnings from the field, including the needs that have been amplified from the communities engaged in implementation, and tightening up the whole package for re-testing is a logical next step that is entirely consistent with the theory of innovative design and practice.



Image 5: Children busy reading

¹⁹ <http://www.innovatechange.co.nz/news/2017/3/10/learningbydoing>

²⁰ <https://www.fastcodesign.com/1669738/to-get-to-the-root-of-a-hard-problem-just-ask-why-five-times>

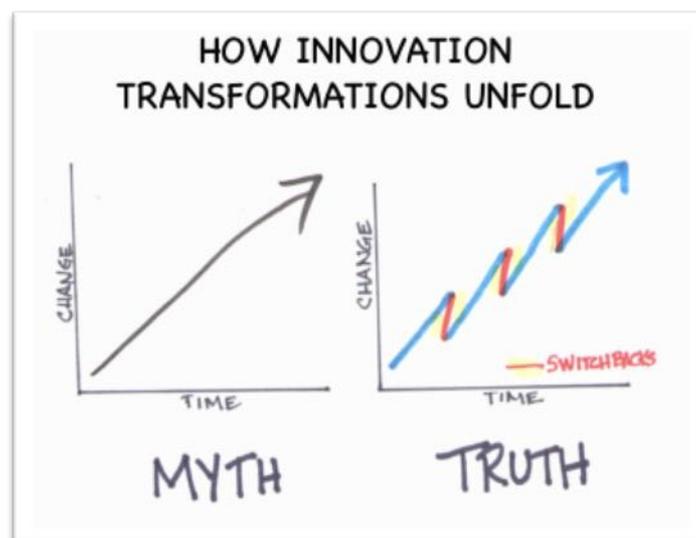
²¹ <https://www.fastcodesign.com/1669738/to-get-to-the-root-of-a-hard-problem-just-ask-why-five-times>

This section of the review offers a high-level synopsis of all the recommendations made through the report. It summarises key points for the team to consider and act on. These recommendations are focus on next steps with long term and short-term implications.

*"Innovations often require several goes before they work."*²²

- I. **Integrate the culture of innovation:** A thread through the research is that innovation design is always iterative, requiring a willingness to learn from what works as well as to get rid of what doesn't and to try things again where they show potential. Many ideas fail not because of inherent, flaws but because of the lack of adequate mechanisms to promote them or adapt them.²³ "I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aspect of the game—it is the game. In the end, an organization is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value. Vision, strategy, marketing, financial management—any management system, in fact—can set you on the right path and carry you for a while. But no enterprise—whether in business, government, education, health care, or any area of human endeavor—will succeed over the long haul if those elements aren't part of its DNA."²⁴ Nal'ibali now has a key staff member employed to focus on Innovation. Interest, responsibility and take up must be integrated across the organisation as part of its orientation and culture putting innovative practice at the core of its strategic intention and the busyness of everybody.

- II. **Embrace learning:** If innovation is iterative and a culture, part of that culture must be the recognition that innovation is not a straight line, it requires focus, attention and championing, it also requires an openness to learn from what works and what doesn't. Being comfortable with 'failure' is a key mindset for social innovation. Not adopting this mindset as investors, partners and implementers can be a significant barrier to innovation. "If we're not allowed to fail, we're often forced to implement things not fit for purpose, that don't quite work, and eventually wind up wasting hundred, thousands, or millions of dollars."²⁵ Understanding that the lessons that you learn from failure leads to success is the key to any learning organization.²⁶



²² <https://hbr.org/1985/11/implementing-new-technology>

²³ Geoff Mulgan (2006) The Process of Social Innovation, Innovations spring 2006 mitpress.mit.edu/innovations

²⁴ <https://www.fastcompany.com/3031092/how-to-create-a-culture-of-innovation-in-the-workplace>

²⁵ <http://www.innovatechange.co.nz/news/2016/11/15/mindset-failure>

²⁶ <https://www.wired.com/insights/2013/10/creating-a-culture-of-innovation/>

- III. **Clarify the Story Powered Homes ‘package’:** ideas are not really the issue – most organisations have lots of those. The real challenge once the best ones have been chosen is in the execution. *Innovation is not just about a new product or service; it is also about how that product or service is brought to market.*²⁷ Start up, activation and execution need a map, they are key to success. Nal’ibali must pay attention the content of the hanging library based on the input from the field AND to the actual activation of this idea at institutional, partnership and community levels.

What is the plan for execution, feedback and maintenance are part of this. Some suggestions that came from the hosts include;

- a. linking the SPH innovation to things that are already present in the communities of implementation, such as a library or school for top ups and further support,
 - b. activate through community leadership and existing initiatives (war rooms for example), and
 - c. link SPH hosts to each other creating home library networks as a way of addressing support, feedback loops and communication challenges.
- IV. **Strengthen Communication Channels:** Across the testing of the SPH, communication is a key driver of learning, implementation, feedback and ongoing achievement. When it does not happen well, the impact of the initiative is compromised. Evidence tells us that this was the case at all levels of take up and implementation. Nal’ibali must define communication processes and channels that are consistent with its execution processes, building in feedback loops that work for the communities involved. “Location, location, location” are the three keys to success in real estate then the equivalent in innovation implementation is “communication, communication, communication.” Regular and consistent communication is required for innovation teams to be in sync, trust each other, and collaborate in a meaningful way.²⁸
- V. **Relationships matter:** An overwhelming message from the field work for this research is that relationships matter. Across the fieldwork, what was heard is how much the human face matters. What hosts said about the training and coaching and how much it made a difference must be heard. “By measuring what really matters — outcomes for the public — it quickly becomes clear that what is important in delivering them are the relationships themselves. It’s time to acknowledge great relationships for what they are — an outcome with intrinsic value, but more pivotally an enabler of the change we want to see in people’s lives.”²⁹ Understandably, Nal’ibali wants to ensure a cost-effective model which is light touch. How to marry this with the deep need in our communities to be seen, heard and nurtured must be a focus of the prototyping of this idea for its next round of testing. Consideration to this will not only benefit the SPH innovation, it has relevance to all of the work of the campaign.
- VI. **Keep following people home:** Tremendous insight about this innovation, what works and what could make it work were gained from being with the implementers in their community. Making this a key feature of empathic design is important for an organisation like Nal’ibali, building this into the communication channels that are designed as a feature of the SPH model can lead to its ongoing strengthening together with other Nal’ibali innovations in the future. This approach is not unique: there are organisations involved in design where it is

²⁷ <http://timkastelle.org/blog/2010/04/three-key-ideas-for-leading-innovation/>

²⁸ <http://www.innovationcoach.com/2016/10/innovation-process-communication/>

²⁹ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/relationships-matter-people-services>

built into institutional culture, where even the CEO follows people home to see how it works in the real world.

An example of this in action can be the question asked during the field visit of the hosts about child safety. (A risk factor identified in the conceptualisation of this initiative at the outset.) They agreed it was a concern and went on to make suggestions about how this could be mitigated.

“We have drawn up a form for parents and we want to schedule a meeting for parents before we give out forms, it’s a consent form to allow children to join the sessions... we want to sit down with parents, we are telling them we must meet your parents personally so we can tell them what time you come and when you leave etc....what we are afraid of is they tell their parents they are coming to club and they have been somewhere else, we want to manage this so their parents see us positively.”

“What we tell them when they arrive, they don’t come inside the yard, they play in front of the house, after Winnie arrives then they enter the garage – we treat them just as we do when they are in school.”



Image 6: Hanging Library

APPENDIX A – Self Reporting Tool

SELF REPORTED BEHAVIOUR INDICATORS				
Date:		Event:		
Location:		Interviewer/data collector:		
Participant information:				
1. Did anybody read to you when you were a child? What impact did this have on you?				
2. Do you read aloud to children?		Yes	No	
Never				
Every now and again				
Once a week				
2 – 3 Times a week				
Everyday				
3. How many children?				
4. How old are they?				
5. Where do you connect with them?				
6. Do you ever connect with or support other home library or reading group facilitators? (how/where?)				
7. Do you read for pleasure? (what do you read?)				
Never				
Every now and again				
Once a week				
2 -3 times a week				
Everyday				
Comments				
8. Where do you get the books you read?				
Library				
Buy them				
Borrow them				
Belong to a book club				
Other				
Comment				
9. How many books in your home?				
None	More than 5	More than 10	More than 20	More than 50

APPENDIX B - Host Interview Sheet

HOST DETAILS	
Date:	Host:
Location:	Interviewer:
Are you a reader? (what do you read? How often?)	
How many children use your library?	
How often do the children have access to the library?	
How do you manage the library? (where do you host it, what activities and so on?)	
Do you read to the children? How often? What? etc	

Check In	Yes	No	Value add: 1 - 4			
			1 Not at all	2 Not so much	3 Quite Helpful	4 Very helpful
Welcome letter						
Home library (30 – 40 books)						
Check out forms						
Check out cards						
Story Power Guide - Homes						
Activity toolkit/tip sheet						
Decal to put on window						
Story powered home pledge						
Stickers to give out						
Cap						
T-shirt						
Insights, notes, additional comments						
How did you become a home library host?						

Further Reflections				
<i>Scale of 1 (strongly disagree) – 4 (strongly agree)</i>	4. Strongly Agree	3. Agree	2. Disagree	1. Strongly disagree
Let's talk a little more about the books, did you think they were;				
Age appropriate?				
Interesting to the children?				
Address language needs of the children?				
Let's talk about the support you received from Nal'ibali				
The communication is clear and easy to understand?				
You feel supported by the Nal'ibali team				
You have enough resources and materials to run you library effectively				
Any other comments:				

<i>Scale of 1 (Poor) – 4 (Excellent)</i>	4. Excellent	3. Good	2. Fair	1. Poor
Overall I think the home library idea is				
Because....				
What would make it more effective is....				
Any last thoughts or comments				