

Nal'ibali, June 2018: data analysis report

Just over six years in, we take stock of our reach, reading club trends and strategic implications - in the context of our historical growth and our long-term goals.

Context

Over the last year, Nal'ibali has embarked on an intensive process of updating its Theory of Change and key impact metrics; revising its data collection indicators, tools and processes; strengthening its data management systems, and improving capacity for analysis.

At the same time, we've been hard at work - growing our footprint on the ground thanks to new funders and special projects, honing our strategies based on new research and experience, and strengthening the back-end systems that enable us to spread a culture of reading far and wide.

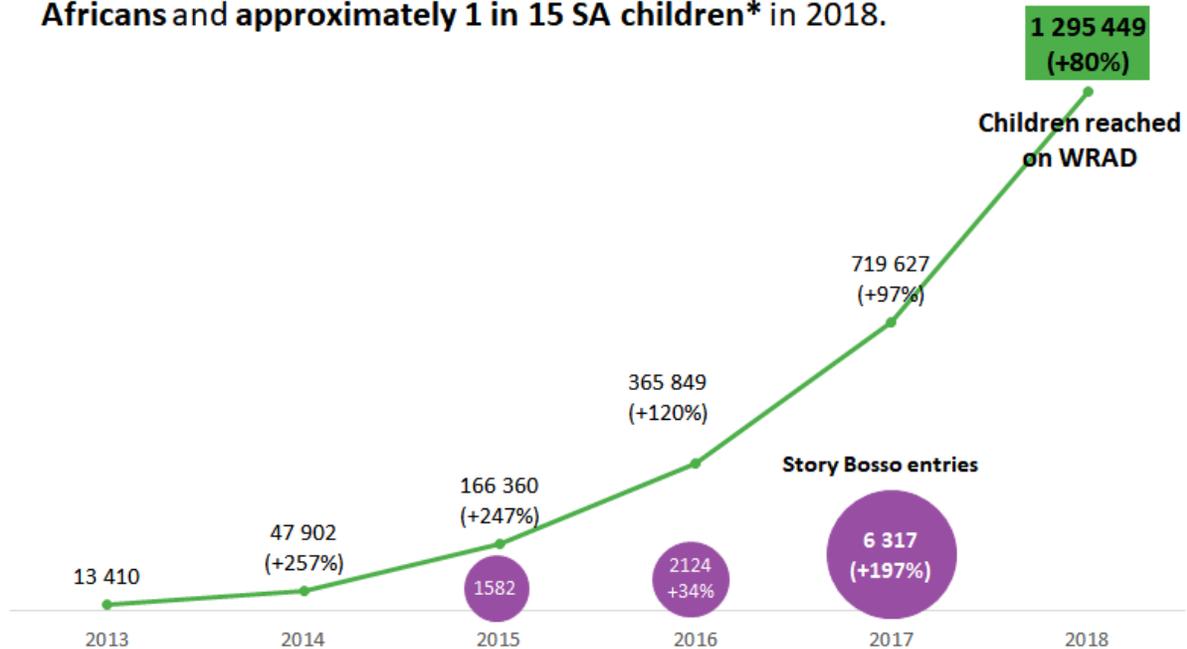
We still have a lot to learn - but we are in a better position than we've ever been to start describing, understanding and learning from the behaviour change we are sparking across South Africa. Emerging trends are examined below, aligned with our theory of change and key impact metrics.

1. Knowledge and awareness

a. Flagship events

Nal'ibali achieved unprecedented reach during this year's World Read Aloud Day (WRAD) campaign. The exponential growth we have achieved year-on-year is evident in the graph below.

World Read Aloud Day participation reached approximately 1 in 43 South Africans and approximately 1 in 15 SA children* in 2018.



We exceeded our target of 1 million children read to by 30%, and increased 80% on last year's reach.

With nearly 1.3 million people participating, **~1 in 43 South Africans and ~1 in 15 South African children were read to on 1 February 2018.**¹

Strategic opportunities / next steps include:

- Build on the significant reach enabled by strong DBE backing, to work towards the goal of all primary schools participating in 2019.
- Ensure we continue communicating with people we mobilised for the first time.
- Harness the momentum and hype we successfully generated around WRAD, and find ways to sustain the call-to-action regularly, year-round.

2. Role models: training

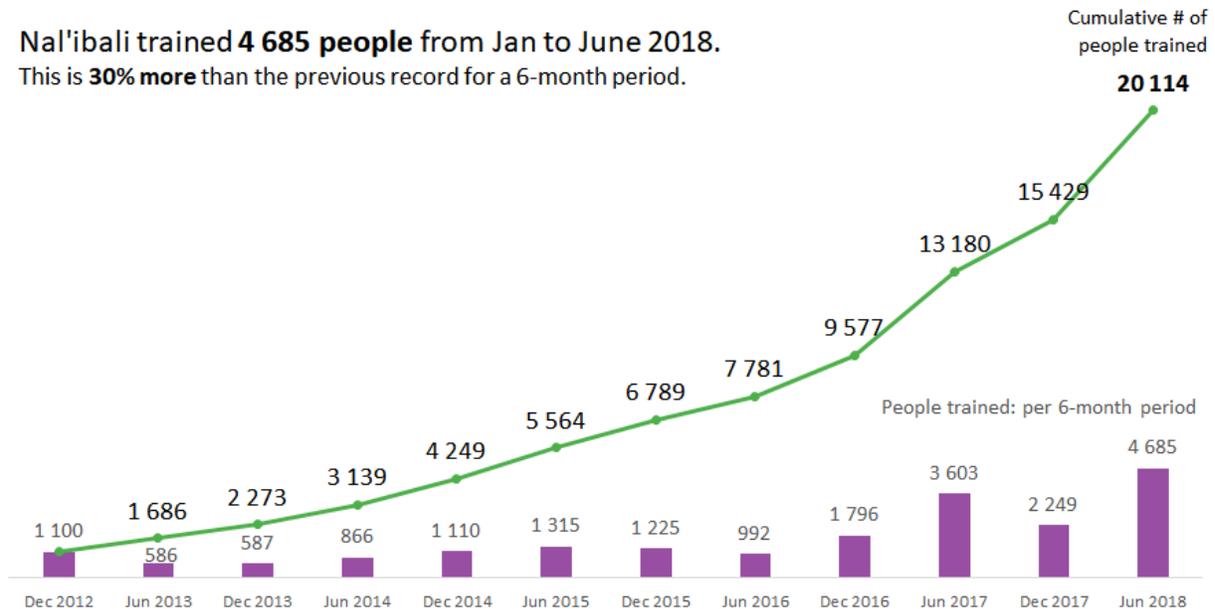
Nal'ibali trained more people in the first 6 months of 2018 than in any previous 6-month period. It exceeded the previous 6-month high (3 603 people, in Jan-June 2017) by 30%. This includes:

- 1 459 people (31% of those trained) who attended the modular training series (core campaign).
- 717 people (15%) who attended "Big 5" teacher training at Story Powered Schools.
- 2 409 people (51%) who attended community training at Story Powered Schools.
- 100 people (2%) who attended training via the Diaconia partnership.

We are striving in 2018 not only for quantity, but for quality and depth. These numbers partially obscure the amount of work done by our team: a large proportion of the 1 459 people who attended modular trainings went to more than one training (but are only counted once in the total above).

Nal'ibali trained 4 685 people from Jan to June 2018.

This is **30% more** than the previous record for a 6-month period.



¹ The estimate of 1 in 15 South African children assumes that 95% of those participating in World Read Aloud day were children ages 0 to 17. The calculation is based on South African population size of ~56 million (Stats SA), and a child population (ages 0 to 17) of ~18.576 million ([Children Count 2015 data](#)).

Training participants indicate a “profile type”, and are allowed to choose more than one option (for example, they may be both a teacher and a parent). This year:

- 1 616 (34%) of people trained indicated they are volunteers or community members.
- 1 227 (26%) of people trained were educators or teachers.
- 1 160 (25%) of people trained indicated that they are parents or caregivers.
- 442 (9%) of people trained were ECD practitioners; 185 (4%) were NGO practitioners and 86 (2%) were library practitioners.

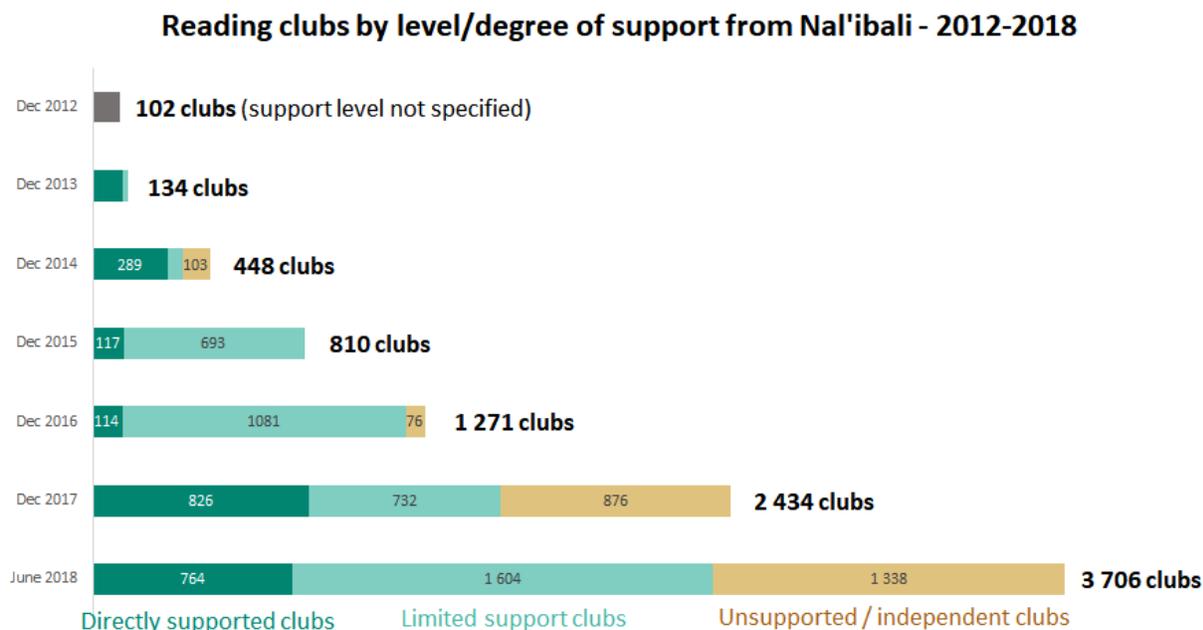
Across all the categories, particularly parents/caregivers, we suspect actual numbers are higher, as many people did not realise they could tick more than one “profile” box on the attendance form.

2. Opportunities to read

a. Reading club growth over time - by level of support

In June 2018, 3 706 reading clubs were active: a 52% increase over December 2017, and more than double the number of clubs (1 660) we had a year ago in June 2017.

Nal’ibali classifies reading clubs as receiving 1 of 3 levels of support.² Growth over time is below:



² These definitions have fluctuated slightly over the years, as our implementation strategies have evolved over time. However, the basic principle of the degree to which we have interacted with reading clubs can be used to understand broad trends.

- **Directly supported clubs** are run by Nal’ibali Literacy Mentors and Story Sparkers, or are at schools and educare centres that receive weekly visits from Nal’ibali staff via the Story Powered Schools and Lesedi-Letsatsi projects.
- **Limited support clubs** are clubs that are established and run by partner organisations that participate in structured training and mentoring programmes.
- **Unsupported clubs** are reading clubs that started independently, or which used to receive face-to-face support and have “graduated” to running independently.

As shown above, over the last few years, Nal'ibali has managed to grow its direct footprint; to support partner organisations to run reading clubs; and to enable a network of people taking independent action to promote a culture of reading.

Key drivers of growth in 2018 include a new partnership strategy in our mainstream campaign and an extensive reading club re-registration drive.³ In 2017, our direct footprint increased via the Story Powered Schools programme, where participating schools are visited weekly by a Story Sparker.

We are proud of our team's hard work to train and recruit new partners. And we are excited that - as we suspected - our network of previously-registered reading clubs is indeed bigger than we thought!

b. Reading club sustainability: re-registrations vs. new clubs

The 3 706 Nal'ibali reading clubs registered at 30 June 2018 included:

- **2 015 new reading clubs (registered for the first time in 2018).** These included:
 - 870 clubs registered via 2018 active partner organisations;
 - 654 reading clubs at Story Powered Schools;
 - 175 reading clubs from the Diaconia partnership;
 - 59 clubs from the Lesedi-Letsatsi project;
 - 140 clubs that registered *for the first time* via the re-registration phone drive;⁴
 - 95 online registrations.
- **1 691 re-registered reading clubs (registered prior to 2018 and still running).** These included 1 573 clubs reached via our re-registration phone drive, as well as some Story Powered School clubs that re-registered via paper forms.

Notably:

- The number of newly-registered clubs, 6 months into 2018, has **already exceeded the number of newly-registered clubs for the full 2017 year.**
- **69% of our 2017 reading clubs have re-registered in 2018.** This is much higher than last year's re-registration rate of 35% (though there were some active clubs we simply failed to reach last year).

These trends are illustrated in the graph below.

³ The higher number of independent clubs does not necessarily represent increased activity; rather, it means we are better able to map and communicate with people we may have lost touch with, who previously were under-counted.

⁴ New clubs registered via the re-registration phone drive in cases where, for example, a reading club leader was involved with more than one club; an old reading club had shut down but a new one had been started; or a group previously registered as *one* reading club was actually multiple groups of children, meeting at different times, in which case we registered them as separate reading clubs.

Reading club re-registrations: # of active clubs still running
 More than two-thirds of our 2017 active clubs are still running in 2018.



c. Reading club longevity and turnover - a brief look

A more detailed analysis of reading club longevity and turnover will be conducted in the second half of 2018. However, a preliminary look at outcomes of the 2018 re-registration drive suggests that, of 2 076 reading clubs reached via the drive⁵:

- **The majority of clubs (63%; n=1 460) that registered in prior years are still active in 2018.** The vast majority of these (at least 87%, or 1 300 clubs) have been active in every consecutive year since they registered.⁶ This includes:
 - 770 clubs registered in 2017 (2 years)
 - 226 clubs registered in 2016 (3 years)
 - 199 clubs registered in 2015 (4 years)
 - 66 clubs registered in 2014 (5 years)
 - 21 clubs registered in 2013 (6 years)
 - **18 clubs registered in 2012 (7 years!)**

The number and percentage of clubs still running in 2018, by registration year, is illustrated below:

⁵ We completed the re-registration process with 2 076 of a total 4 293 reading clubs we sought to contact in the drive (48% of clubs). This is a relatively high response rate for a phone-based survey. However, we believe that the reading clubs reached in the drive are more likely to still be running than those we did not reach. In other words, the percentage of clubs still running is likely to be higher in the sample we reached than among the clubs we didn't reach. However, we will never be able to definitively track each and every reading club we have ever registered - especially given the weaknesses in our data collection systems in our early years. We believe the number of clubs reached represents a large enough pool of clubs that it is still useful to begin understanding trends.

⁶ We suspect that some instances where a club is reported to have been active in 2015, 2016 and 2018 (excluding 2017) may be a case of data entry error. We plan to look into these more closely by following up with a sample of clubs.



When we exclude clubs that registered in 2017, to focus only on those that could have been running in 3 years or more, we still see very positive trends. Of 957 clubs registered *prior to 2017*, only 145 stopped after 1 or 2 years. 630 pre-2017 clubs we reached (66%) ran for 3 years or more. 545 of these (58%) are still running in 2018.

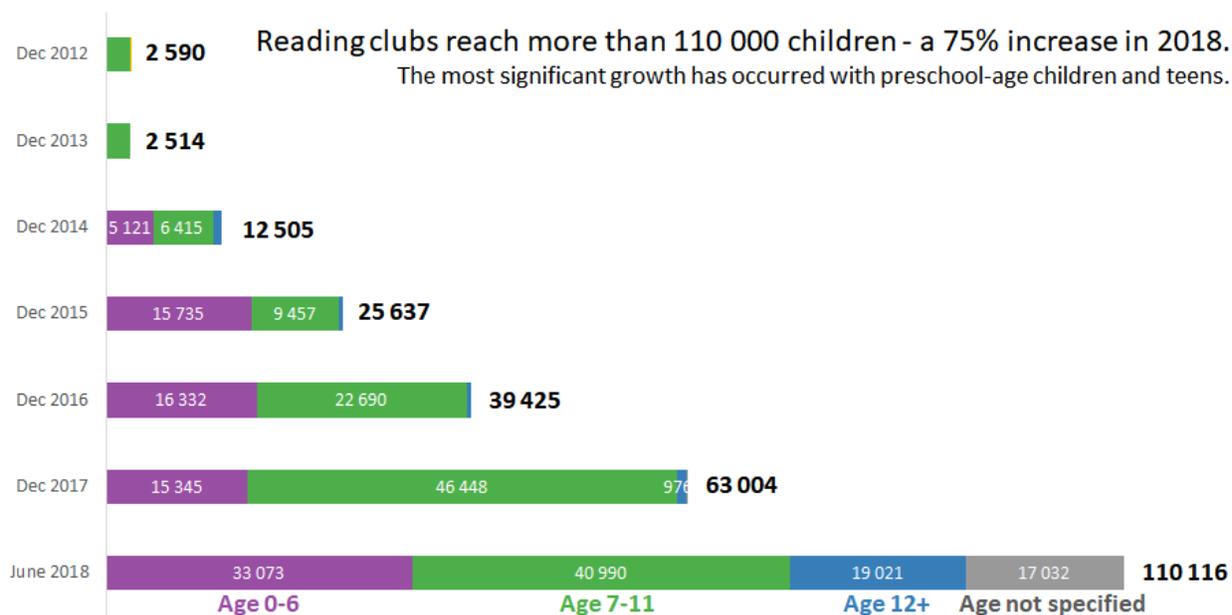
We are very interested in carrying out research in the future at some of the clubs that have been running for a number of years to try to ascertain what it takes to keep the clubs going for so long, and to understand what the winning recipe might be!

d. Children in reading clubs: number and demographics

The number of children reported to be attending reading clubs in 2018 has increased by 75% over December 2017, and has topped 100 000 for the first time - a total of **110 116 children**. This growth over time is illustrated in the graph below.

At a population level, we can estimate that approximately 1 in 169 children in South Africa, and **approximately 1 in 144 children ages 0-11**, are in a reading club.⁷

⁷ This estimate is based on [Child Gauge "Children Count" statistics for 2015](#), the most recent year available, when there were 18 576 000 children ages 0 to 17 and 12 574 000 children ages 0 to 11 in South Africa. With 110 116 children in reading clubs, an estimated 87 615 of whom are ages 0-11 (extrapolating the "age unknown" children proportionately according to known age data), this means approximately 0.59% of all children and 0.70% of children ages 0-11 are in reading clubs.



Age group is known for 85% of children:

- 33 073 children (30%) are ages 0-6 (up 116% from 15 345 in Dec 2017)
- 40 990 children (37%) are ages 7-11 (down 12% since Dec 2017)
- 18 058 children (16%) are ages 12-15 (an 18-fold increase since Dec 2017)
- 817 children (1%) are over 16
- Age group is unknown for 17 032 children (15%).

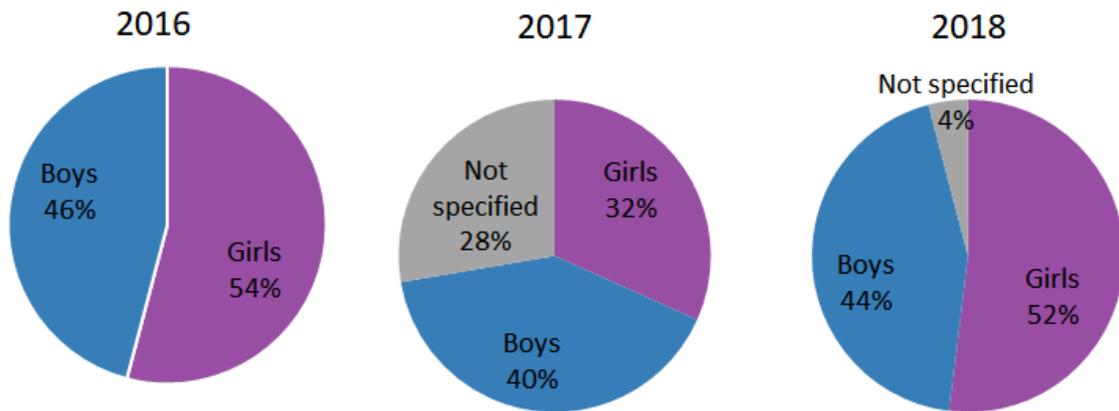
In 2018, we re-strategised to focus on partnering with organised ECD forums, instead of ECD community sites. As evidenced by the more than doubled number of children ages 0-6, this approach is bearing fruit.

The number of children ages 12 and older showed surprising growth (19 021, up from only 976 in December 2017). We can't fully explain this yet, though at least some of the apparent growth is due to increased granularity in our data collection.⁸ However, it may also indicate that although teenagers are not our primary audience, FUNda leaders are easily able to apply Nal'ibali approaches to other settings and age groups. It also suggests that some children may be "growing with reading clubs", and remaining in them as they grow older – something we'd love to investigate further.

Gender of children in reading clubs is relatively evenly split, though we see a marginally higher participation rate for girls. While there is often concern in education that boys are being left behind; these figures suggest that reading club spaces and activities appeal to all children irrespective of gender.

⁸ Prior to 2018, Nal'ibali calculated # of children per age group figures based on the predominant age group of the reading club - for example, all children in a "teen reading club" were counted as teenagers. From 2018, we are counting the age of each individual child, as reported by reading club leaders - even where different age groups are present in the same reading club. This may be why a greater number of teenagers appear to be participating in 2018 - for example, there may be many 12- and 13- year olds in reading clubs that are predominantly focused on primary school children

Gender of children in reading clubs



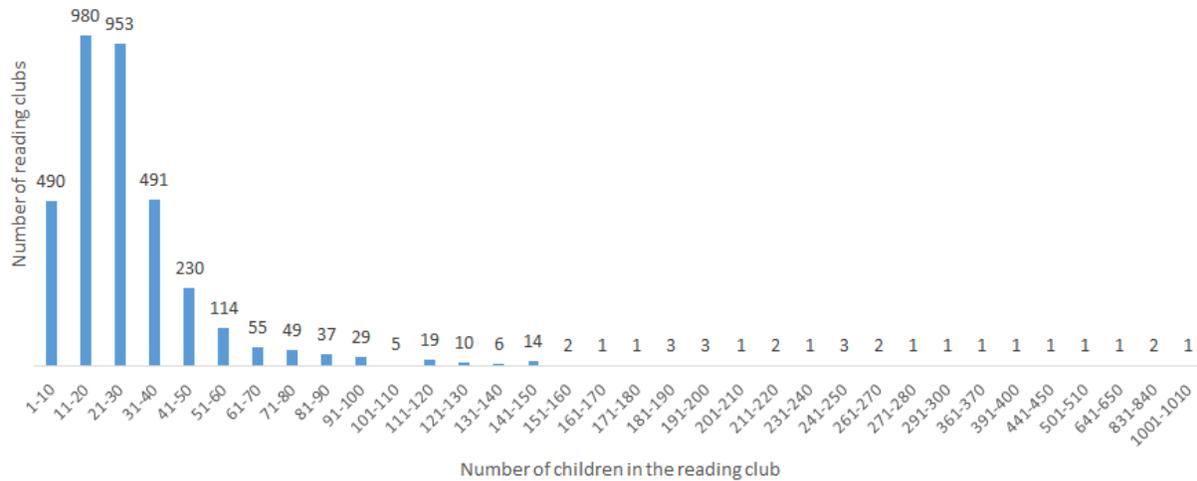
329 children (0.3%) have a **disability**, as reported by reading club leaders. (This percentage is lower than the population-at-large rate, estimated to be 5-10%.⁹ The actual number of children with a disability is likely higher, as not all disabilities are visible to/known by reading club leaders). While Nal'ibali reading clubs are including children with special needs, there may be more we can do to be inclusive of and mainstream children with disabilities.

e. Size of reading clubs

The majority of reading clubs (52% of clubs) have between 11 and 30 children, as shown in the histogram below.

⁹ National estimates of the number of children with disabilities seem to range from approximately 5% ([Uhambo Foundation 2011](#)) to 10% ([Stats SA 2014](#), [UNICEF 2011](#)).

Number of children per reading club, 2018 active clubs
(n = 3 511 clubs for which # of children is known)



We have found that in a school environment, sometimes “reading clubs” are full classes; this may be the case for some of the 835 clubs (23%) with 31 to 60 children.

A total of 29 clubs (<1% of clubs) report that they have more than 150 children; 12 of these report more than 250 children. It is possible for a reading club to have more than 150 children; however, we suspect that some of these reading clubs are either (a) entire schools or educare centres, or (b) school libraries or other spaces that work with multiple groups or children at different times, but have registered as only one reading club. This merits more investigation.

f. Number of volunteers and child-to-adult ratio

The number of volunteers is known for 69% of clubs (2 541 clubs). Of these:

- 1 076 (29% of all clubs) do not have any volunteers - i.e. only one adult (the reading club leader)
- 487 (13% of all clubs) have 1 volunteer (2 adults).
- 362 (10% of all clubs) have 2 volunteers (3 adults), and a further 10% have 3-4 volunteers.
- 199 clubs have between 6 and 10 adults, 28 clubs have 11-15 adults, and 12 have more than 15 adults.¹⁰

An additional 1165 clubs (31%) have not specified the number of volunteers.

While ratios of children-per-adult are not a perfect proxy for quality care, they are a useful indicator. In training, Nal’ibali that ideally, reading clubs should not exceed a 15-to-1 child-to-adult ratio. Of our 2018 active clubs:

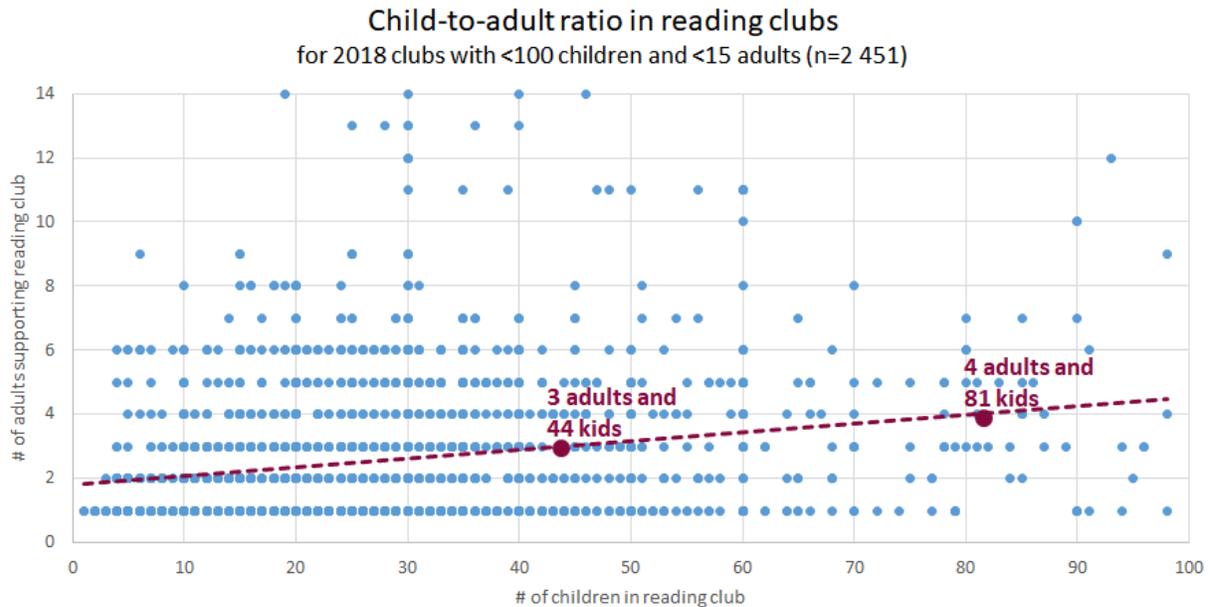
- 57% of reading clubs (1 441 clubs) have fewer than 15 children per adult
- Another 14% of reading clubs have between 15 and 25 children per adult.

¹⁰ We suspect these may be schools who did not understand the question and reported the total number of teachers.

- 16% of reading clubs (172 clubs) have a ratio of more than 40 children to one adult.

We suspect that these do not look like what we would consider ‘typical’ or ‘ideal’ reading clubs, and may be taking place in e.g. crowded school classrooms.

When we plot the number of volunteers vs. the number of children, it is clear that there is great variation re: the child-to-adult ratio, as shown below.



The trend line plotted on the graph shows that for clubs where the number of volunteers is known¹¹, as clubs grow larger, the child-to-adult ratio (on average) seems to grow at a faster pace (which may create a less optimal reading club environment). The average adult-to-child ratio is 2 adults for anywhere from ~1-20 children; 3 adults for 44 children; and 4 adults for 81 children.

4. Access to reading materials

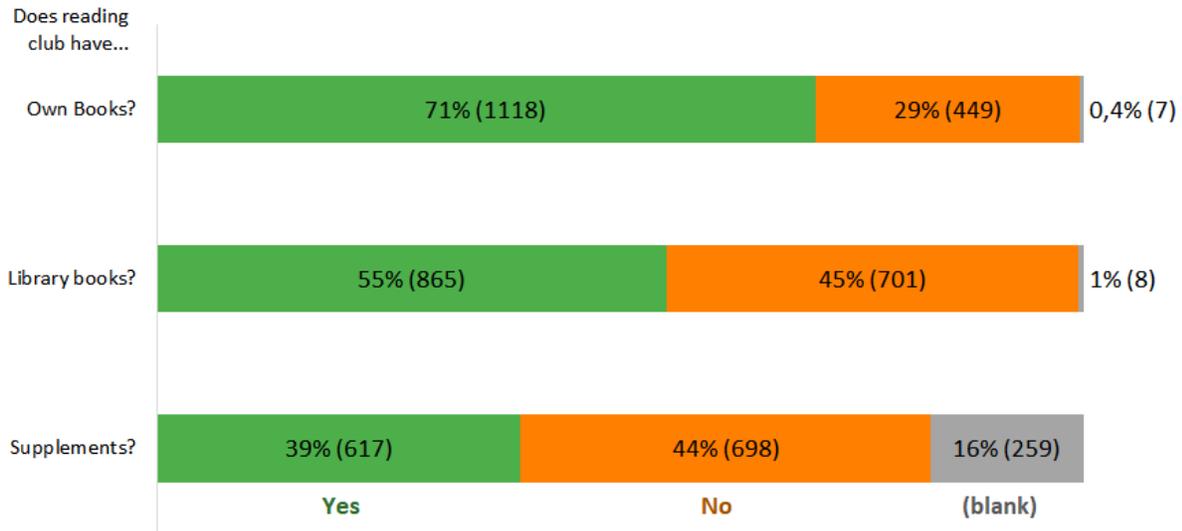
a. Reading clubs’ access to reading material

We have started to paint a better picture of how well-resourced (or not) our reading clubs are. In our reading club re-registration drive, we asked clubs about whether they have supplements, whether they have their own books (and how many they have), and whether they use library books.

As shown in the graph below, we learned that while 71% of re-registering clubs report that they have their own books, only 39% have Nal’ibali supplements. 55% use library books.

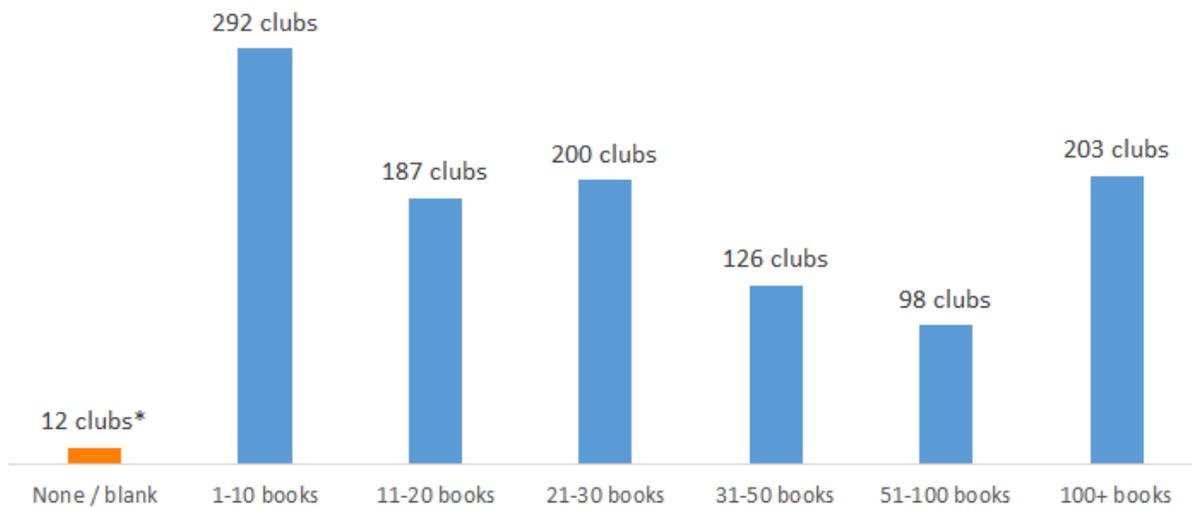
¹¹ Excluding outliers with >99 children or >14 volunteers

More than 2/3 of re-registered clubs have their own books, while only 2 in 5 clubs receive Nal'ibali supplements.



Of those 1118 (71%) of re-registered reading clubs that have their own books, just over 2 in 5 have 20 books or fewer. Just over a quarter are reasonably well-resourced, with more than 50 books for their club, as shown below:

43% of clubs that own books have 20 books or fewer. 38% of clubs have >30 books, and 27% have >50 books.

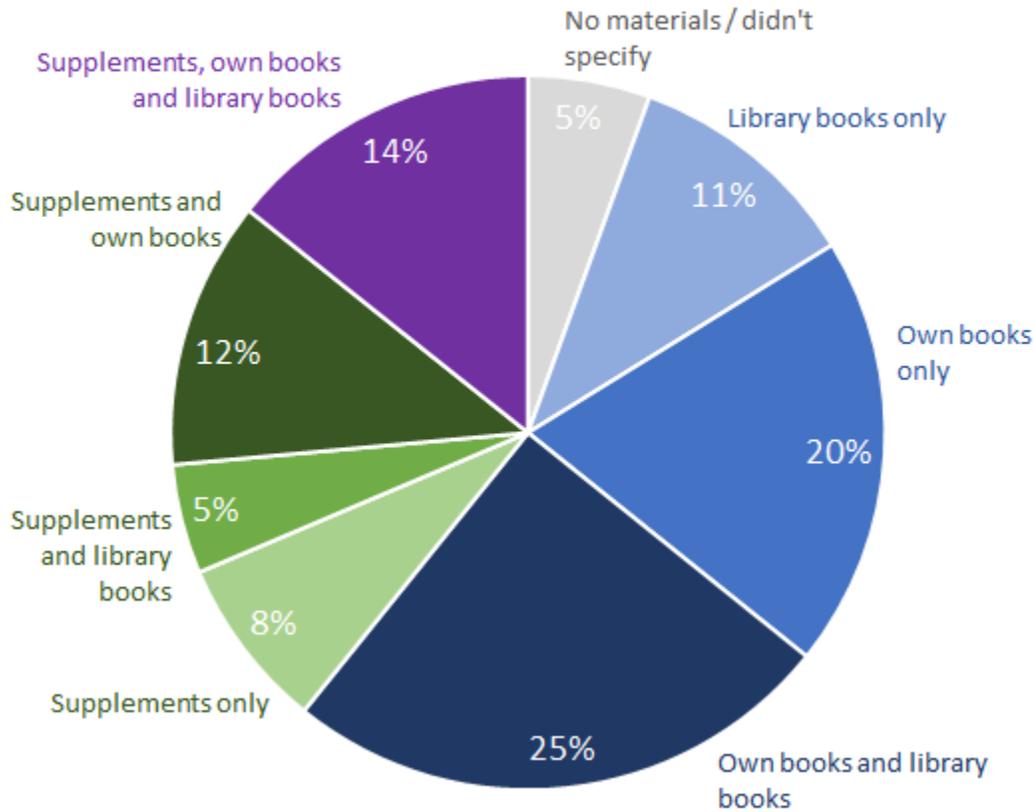


As shown in the graph below, we also learned that:

- **14% of clubs have access to all 3 types of reading material** asked about (supplements, own books and library books). 42% have two of these three, 38% have just one of these options, and 5% have none.

- **16% of reading clubs do not own their own materials** - 11% rely on library books and 5% do not report using any of the above.

Only 14% of reading clubs have access to 3 types of reading material. 38% only have one type.

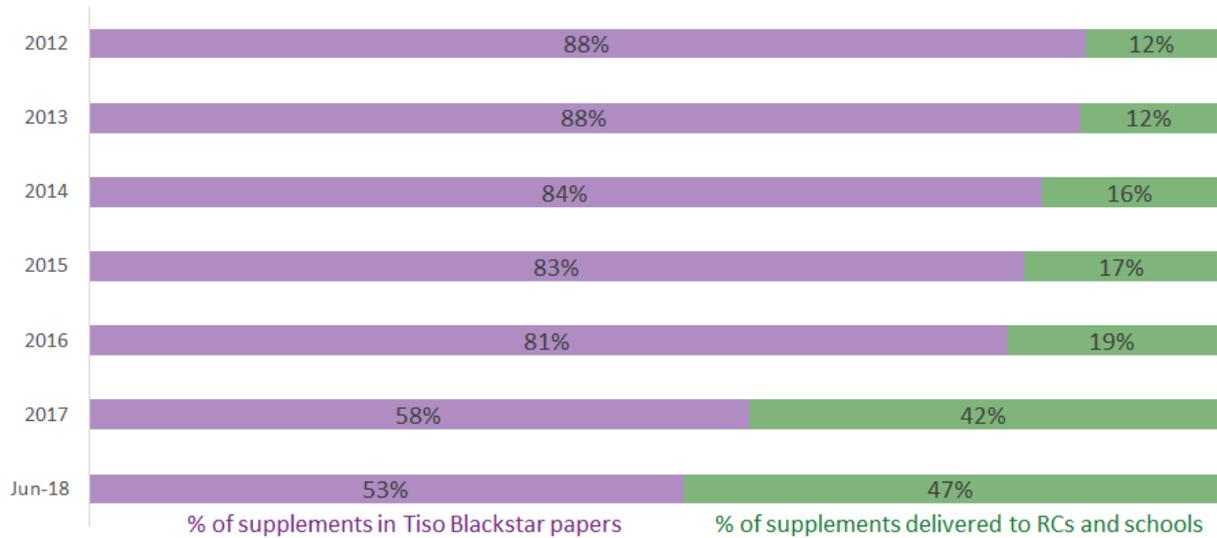


We did not ask about the language of reading material, nor whether the books are children’s picture books / story books, in this survey. We will try to collect more data about this in our upcoming FUNda Leader survey.

b. Supplement targeting over time

Over time, the Nal’ibali supplement has become increasingly targeted to reading clubs, schools, libraries and educarees, as shown in the graph below.

Supplement targeting has improved over time.
In 2018, 47% of supplements went directly to reading clubs and schools.



Better targeting comes with higher costs: it costs much more to courier supplements to a rural area via private courier than to deliver them inserted inside a Tiso Blackstar publication. However, the JET evaluation of the supplement suggests that supplements delivered to “Nal’ibali supplement subscribers” (reading clubs and NGO partners) are used at a higher rate than those distributed via newspapers. The final report and cost analysis is currently being completed and will be used to inform 2019 planning.

c. Reading material distributed in 2018: by language

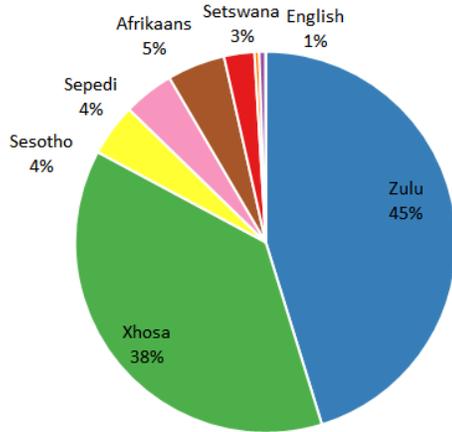
Thus far in 2018, 83% of reading materials distributed have been in either isiXhosa or isiZulu,¹² as shown below. While the Story Powered Schools project is a major driver of this (28% of all reading materials were delivered to Story Powered Schools), this is also rooted in our Tiso Blackstar partnership and a long history of face-to-face work in Xhosa- and Zulu-speaking areas.

Encouragingly, in line with our values, only 1% of reading materials distributed so far in 2018 are English-only, though 94% of the materials are bilingual.

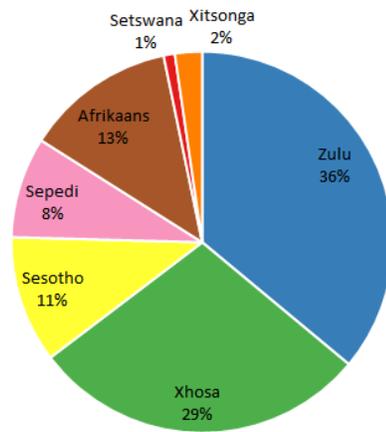
When we exclude supplements distributed to Story Powered Schools (97% of which are isiXhosa or isiZulu) or via Tiso Blackstar publications, and look at supplements delivered directly to reading clubs, we see a slightly more balanced picture, as shown via the contrasting charts below.

¹² This includes bilingual reading materials. The majority of these are the Nal’ibali supplement, which includes English.

Language split: all reading materials
1.987 million supplements, 93 120 magazines, 37 535 books

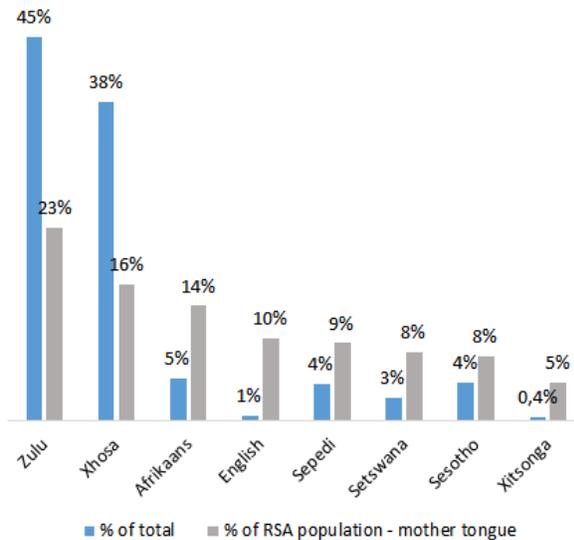


Language split: supplements/RCS
365 763 supplements delivered to reading clubs

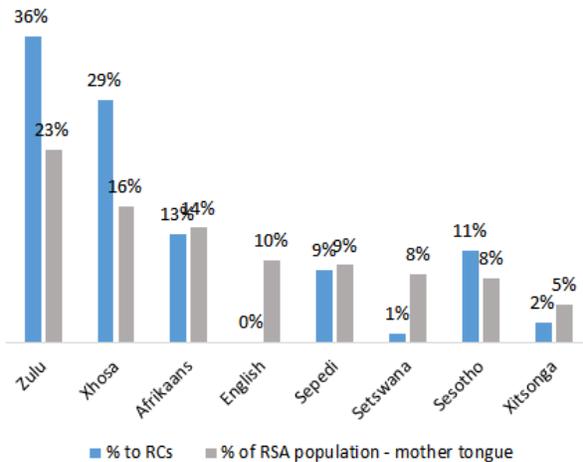


Our distribution to reading clubs is not terribly far off from our demographics regarding what percentage of South Africans speak each language as a mother tongue, as shown below on the right (in comparison):

Language of reading materials vs. RSA population - all materials



Language of reading materials vs. RSA population - reading clubs



Given that the investment in translation and editing is the same for every language produced, going forward Nal'ibali may want to try to print and distribute larger quantities of reading material in Sesotho, Sepedi, Afrikaans, Setswana and Xitsonga. This is well aligned to the content team's intention of repackaging more existing reading material from 2019.

- Compiled by Katie Huston, Head of Research & Innovation at Nal'ibali, 30 July 2018