### Evaluation of the quality, outcomes, and sustainability of Nal’ibali Reading Clubs

**About Nal’ibali Reading Clubs**

Reading Clubs are safe, informal spaces run by caring adults where children can engage freely with books and stories.

**About the evaluation**

In December 2018, Nal’ibali had 4,839 active* Reading Clubs. JET Education Services was contracted to evaluate the quality, outcomes and sustainability of Reading Clubs.

**Research methods:**

Telephonic survey – 349 active and 50 inactive Reading Club Leaders

Site visits – 25 clubs in 9 provinces, including Reading Club session observation, interviews and focus groups.

*The study sampled 2,706 clubs confirmed active via re-registration by June 2019.

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### Club and leader profile

#### Sex
- 90% women

#### Age
- 80% 30-59 years old

#### Race
- 89% Black African
  - 8% Coloured
  - 2% White
  - 1% Indian

#### Employment
- 65% work full-time
- 8% most in educational organisations

### Reading Club quality

#### Adult / child ratio
- Ideal: ≤1:15
- 63% of clubs meet this

#### Frequency and duration of meetings
- Ideal: at least once a week
- 97% of clubs do this
- Ideal: At least 45 minutes per session
- 66% of clubs do this

#### Access to resources
- Ideal: at least 2 types of core reading materials (own books, Nal’ibali newspaper inserts, library books)
- How many types of core resources do clubs have?
  - 3 types: 29%
  - 2 types: 46%
  - 1 type: 25%
  - None: 1%

- Materials are generally available in the language/s used at clubs, except in Tshivenda.

- However, quantities of core resources are limited. 44% have less than 20 of each resource.

### Practice

Ideal: Activities mapped in the graph (%) should take place mostly or always.

- Children do not engage with text independently as often as intended. This may be hindered by Reading Club Leaders’ understanding of its importance, and in some cases by insufficient reading materials.

#### Perceived outcomes

Some of the changes most frequently reported are that children are spending more time reading for enjoyment and their reading skills have improved.

#### Sustainability

More than two thirds of Reading Clubs stop running within a year of registration.

**Threats to sustainability are:**

- Departure of Nal’ibali staff when a focused project ends.
- Challenges of attracting volunteers in communities with high unemployment.
- Difficulty balancing curriculum demands and running a school-based Reading Club.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

Cost-effective strategies identified include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>COST PER CLUB/YEAR*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face training which better emphasises ideal practice</td>
<td>R1 654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-year supplement subscription (15 editions) to increase reading resources</td>
<td>R1 350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stipends for Nal’ibali staff to monitor and support clubs</td>
<td>R894</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Assuming an average of 30 children per Reading Club