



2024

Annual Report



Nalibali (isiXhosa for “here’s the story”) is a national reading-for-enjoyment campaign to spark children’s potential through storytelling and reading.

Contents

- 5 Word from Chairperson
- 6 Director's Report
- 9 Nal'ibali's Approach and Impact
- 12 Media, Campaigns and Content
- 33 Our reach over the last 5 years
- 34 Core Programmes Report
- 40 Special Projects Report
- 52 Reflections from Implementation and Evaluation
- 62 Finance and Operations





WORD FROM INTERIM CHAIRPERSON



by
CATHY GUSH
Interim Chairperson

Building a Brighter Future, One Story at a Time



I can clearly recall the moment more than ten years ago that I first learnt of the Nal'ibali Reading for Enjoyment campaign and my heart sang, because it has been a lifelong quest for me to promote children's literacy development through a love of books and stories.

In a country where **81%** of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning, we have clearly got work to do. And that work needs to happen on multiple fronts, through an ecology of literacy support for children.

Nal'ibali provides a key element of this ecology, and one often overlooked or neglected by other players and institutions. With a heavy emphasis on learning phonics and decoding in the classroom, the immersion in reading and stories as a way to provide the bigger picture, the enjoyment and the understanding, tends to fall by the

wayside. That is not to say that phonics and decoding are not essential building blocks for becoming literate, but they are not enough.

So Nal'ibali's work in the other spaces that make up a child's literacy ecology - such as homes, communities, libraries and school enrichment periods - is essential. This work of course is also multi-faceted: radio, television, newspaper supplements, reading clubs, parent workshops, etc, and all of it in multiple languages so that we honour the principle of children having access to stories and reading material in their mother tongue.

There are always challenges along the way, but I believe that with strong leadership, valuable partnerships, and a cause worth fighting for, our organisation will continue to thrive and grow. We hope you enjoy reading about everything that Nal'ibali has been up to during 2024.



by
LORATO TROK
Director

Empowering Young Minds and Promoting Literacy in South Africa

May 2025 marks a year since my appointment as Director of Nal'ibali. It has been a year of wonderful beginnings and lasting memories. Nal'ibali is the ultimate home of literacy in South African homes, schools and Early Childhood Development centres. Our team is the heartbeat of the organisation. They are carrying the hopes of a nation, through storytelling, home visits, reading clubs, training of teachers and caregivers as well as the many literacy resources we provide.

With a strong team of more than 100 employees, team building sessions are essential. Our team building session in October 2024, followed by a two-day strategic meeting was a great way of bringing the team together and reminding ourselves about the power our

organisation holds in the country. We followed up with a Stakeholder Engagement Event in December, where we invited our partners, funders and potential funders and told our story in a way that it has never been told before. We embarked on collecting impact stories throughout our programmes and special projects work, showcasing the richness of our work and the impact that they have on communities across the country. As a rapidly growing organisation with a national footprint, there will be some challenges along the way, but they get us to reinvent ourselves and renew our strategies that aligns with current trends and needs in the literacy space. We will always put the needs and safety of the children at the forefront. We continue to engage our partners and funders to work together in safeguarding the children we have been entrusted with.

The closure of USAID in January 2025 was

an eye opener on how fickle the funding world can be. It shook the non-profit sector the world over, and some organisations did not survive. Our USAID-Siyafunda project in Msunduzi Municipality, KZN, was sadly affected. We are grateful for our founder and core funder, the DG Murray Trust for partially funding the project for another six months, not only giving a lifeline to our 47 employees, but continuing our work in the community, especially reaching children at homes and providing them with early childhood resources and stories, the right of every child in the country, enshrined in the country's constitution.

Endline studies of our special projects show that our literacy interventions in schools and homes are yielding positive results. My recent appointment to the Eminent Persons Group to champion the national dialogue by President Ramaphosa, is a testament to the importance of early literacy education on the national platform.

Nal'ibali continues to grow from strength to strength, with the addition of Prudence Erens, our new Programmes Manager, and Etienne Bramley, our Head of Programmes, Impact and Partnerships, who are both bringing a wealth of experience in the non-profit sector to the leadership team.

The communities we work in remains our most valuable assets. We are nothing without them. Our work is impossible without our partners and funders. Re a leboga!

Lastly, I would like to thank our three board members who stepped down from the board late last year and early this year. Our former chairperson Kay Lala-Sides, Nonikiwe Mashologu and Thabiso Madiba, have all served our board diligently. We bid them farewell and wish them all the best in their next steps.

We are looking forward to the next 13 years of Nal'ibali in South Africa, and the years beyond!



The South African Literacy Landscape

The 2023 National Reading Survey found that **17%** of South African adults are committed readers and **52%** of adults living with children, read to them. Other studies have shown that the number of books in a home is a significant predictor of children's educational performance, but **65%** of households with children under 10, do not have a single picture book and only **10%** households having ten or more picture books. Teaching methods in Foundation Phase also require children to engage with letters and words in isolation, rather than as part of stories or texts that communicate context and ideas, limiting children's ability to construct meaning from what they read, spoil the pleasure of early reading experiences and diminishing children's motivation to read. Most children have limited opportunities to engage with

books outside the classroom, especially in languages they understand. There are simply not enough high-quality books published in mother-tongue languages. The alarming consequences of these factors for our children are illustrated by their weak performance in the most recent PIRLS study (2021) where **81%** of our Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning. Reading develops empathy, critical thinking, and imagination, which are at the heart of strong, innovative nations.

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



Nal'ibali's Intervention Approach

In response to this literacy crisis, the Nal'ibali campaign seeks to contribute by encouraging reading for enjoyment in their home language, providing access to books, and strengthening the reading ecosystem to create and sustain positive reading habits.

Making reading fun

Research shows that self-selected reading for enjoyment results in profound growth in all aspects of literacy. As we read, we develop not only our reading ability but also our vocabulary, grammar, writing style and spelling competence. Also, the more we read, the better we read – and the more pleasure we get out of reading! Children who read for enjoyment perform better at schools in all subjects, including Maths. And while poverty negatively affects children's educational prospects, reading for enjoyment has been reported as being more important for children's educational success than families' socio-economic status. By cultivating a love of reading and providing access to engaging materials, Nal'ibali aims to build a reading nation in which all children can realise their potential.

Numerous research studies have created a body of evidence for the benefits of a child reading for enjoyment.

Emphasising learning to read in mother tongue

The research regarding access to materials is very clear – children with limited resources at home enter school at a disadvantage as children don't have opportunities to learn and practice reading, and they miss out on stimulating caregiver-child interactions. Children that have enjoyable interactions with their caregivers reading to them at home, develop "stronger vocabulary, more background knowledge, better expressive and receptive language abilities and stronger phonological awareness and early literacy skills.

From its inception in 2012, Nal'ibali has emphasised the importance of children learning to read in their mother tongue and has worked to highlight the gap in available reading materials in African languages, making it one of the first large-scale initiatives to address this issue head-on.



Lulu



Niki Daly

Supporting National and Local Reading Ecosystems

In recent years, Nal’ibali has shifted to an ecosystems approach to support the holistic development of a child’s literacy ecosystem by:

- 1. Developing, distributing and supporting access to African-language resources and behaviour change messaging.
- 2. Capacitating communities to support children’s literacy development by:
 - ☆ Supporting the development of community facilitators;
 - ☆ Supporting literacy inside the home through caregiver training and mentorship;
 - ☆ Supporting literacy outside the home:
 - ECDs;
 - Schools; and
 - Reading clubs
 - ☆ Through partnerships, collaboration and thought leadership (including the National Reading Barometer).
- 3. Nal’ibali media campaigns (Radio, TV stories, and special events such as WRAD and literacy month).
- 4. Content Development and Distribution.

1. Developing and Distributing African-language Resources

☆ Supporting South African creative talent

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



☆ Nal’ibali stories



Supplement

The **Nal’ibali reading supplement** is a bilingual resource (English plus another language) distributed to all Nal’ibali reading clubs across South Africa. It includes stories, activities, tips for encouraging reading and cut and keep storybooks. In 2024, Nal’ibali distributed **1,765,665 supplements**.



Radio stories

Every year, Nal’ibali produces a selection of **45 - 52 radio stories** which are aired by SABC and independent radio stations in different languages across the country.



Books

Nal’ibali has produced a range of stories – both printed and online. The printed books include the **Read-Aloud Story Collections**, the **Nal’ibali Anthology** and the **Cadbury’s Glass and a Half Story collection**. Nal’ibali has produced **17 printed books** in 2024.

Nal’ibali has more than **270 multilingual online stories** with 11 stories added each month; 20+ multilingual rhymes and a variety of audio stories in all languages.



Children-authored books

The **Nal’ibali special projects** have supported child beneficiaries in authoring stories through writing workshops. To date, **eight anthologies**, with numerous stories, have been written by children in various languages.



WhatsApp Bot

Our **WhatsApp chat bot** offers training and access to audio and written stories.

Training: One course, three modules – About Nal’ibali, Be a Funda Leader, Run a Reading Club. Since May 2020, over **4929 people** have completed this training.

Audio and written stories: Stories are offered in 11 languages. Between May 2020- November 2024, the Nal’ibali chatbot has reached **82,300 users** who have interacted with the audio and written stories on the platform **96,073 times**.

Capacitating communities to support children's literacy development

☆ Supporting the development of community facilitators in the literacy space

By training and mentoring SEF participants to become literacy advocates, early childhood development practitioners, and reading role models, we create jobs and develop useful work readiness skills among SEF participants, such as public speaking, organisational, and management skills. Literacy facilitators employed through SEF have reported being more connected to and recognised in their communities and related networks, opening job opportunities and possible career paths.

☆ Supporting literacy inside the home: Building family literacy

Nal'ibali understands that there are two sites of acquisition for learning to read: the school and the home. Many children are exposed to very little written text in their homes and few opportunities to engage with books, especially story books, outside of school hours. A lack of adult reading role models in many homes also limits a child's exposure to examples of positive reading behaviour. In PIRLS 2021, students whose parents reported a strong enjoyment of reading scored higher than peers with parents who only somewhat enjoyed reading or did not enjoy it at all. This pattern highlights how parental attitudes toward reading can positively influence children's reading skills and overall academic performance.

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

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

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

1. **Fostering Emotional Awareness:** Book-sharing allows for deep emotional connections between the caregiver and the child. Through discussions about the book's content, children are exposed to emotional and social understanding, contributing to greater emotional intelligence.
2. **Improvement in Child-Caregiver Relationships:** Engaging in regular book-sharing strengthens the bond between child and caregiver, enhancing the quality of interactions and creating an emotionally supportive environment.
3. **Benefits to Language Development:** Dialogic book-sharing encourages rich, interactive conversations, significantly boosting children's vocabulary and comprehension skills, which are vital for school readiness.
4. **Social Understanding and Participation:** This approach helps children develop better social understanding and engagement with others, laying a foundation for more active participation and success in school.

☆ Supporting literacy outside the home

► Supporting ECDs

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

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

Furthermore, early literacy is an underemphasised aspect of many ECD programmes, despite the crucial role it plays in fostering future academic success. Research shows that early exposure to language, print awareness, and literacy-rich environments lays a foundation for later reading skills, cognitive development, and overall learning readiness. ECDs that focus primarily on social, emotional, and physical development often overlook

the importance of structured literacy exposure, which leaves gaps in vocabulary acquisition. ECDs that lack dedicated literacy activities, such as shared reading, book orientation and storytelling, fail to maximize this critical window when children’s brains are highly receptive to language learning.

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

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

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

► Supporting Schools

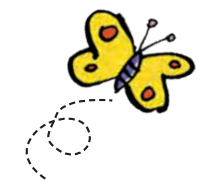
Muller (2022) has argued that the big inhibiting factor in the improvement of children’s reading abilities is the teacher’s lack of knowledge on how to do it successfully. Teacher training, especially in the Foundation Phase, is critical. It is at this stage that foundational reading and meaning making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

Activities that would build learners vocabulary at foundational phases include reading aloud to the class daily, explaining key words, and leading class discussions to develop learners’ syntactic repertoires.



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

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



In 2024, Nal’ibali supported **296** classes, reaching **8935** children.

► Nal’ibali Reading Clubs

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

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

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

In 2024, Nal'ibali had **1,809** reading clubs, reaching approximately **55,018** children.

As at 12 June 2025, Nal'ibali has **719** reading clubs whose most recent date of activity is in 2025, reaching approximately **29 363** children.

☆ Partnerships, collaboration and thought leadership

Nal'ibali plays a key role in coordinating efforts across the literacy ecosystem in South Africa. By working with various partners, they help bring people together to focus on promoting Reading for Enjoyment and supporting multilingualism.

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

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

► The National Reading Barometer (NRB)

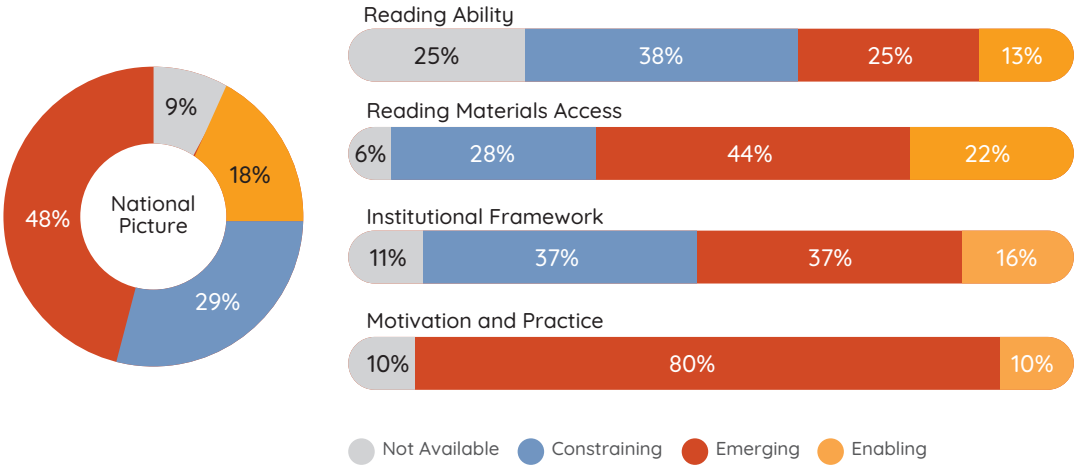
The National Reading Barometer (NRB) stands as an impactful, evidence-based visual tool that reflects the health of South Africa's reading ecosystem. Led by Nal'ibali in partnership with the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), the NRB provides an in-depth assessment of key drivers influencing reading,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





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

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



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

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

Reading with Children

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

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

What do they read?

40% text books | **33%** fiction stories | **29%** readers from school | **28%** religious stories

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

5% of adults use digital materials to read with children

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



What would help people read with children more?

- More time
- More interesting, free relatable material in preferred languages
- More confidence

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



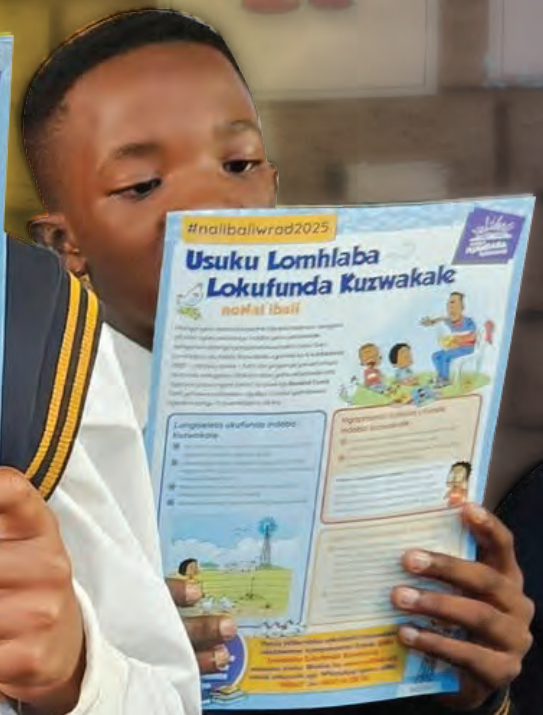
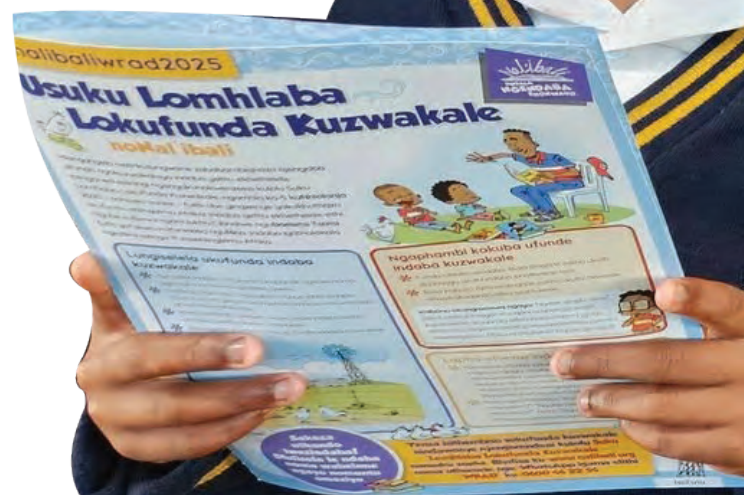
Media and Campaigns

The Communication Department at Nal'ibali plays a key role in expanding the organisation's impact and reach through media and campaigns. The department oversees a diverse portfolio that includes advocacy, community engagement, media broadcasting, digital strategies, and brand management.

Communicating with our target audiences has evolved significantly over time, shifting away from one-directional broadcasts in favour of more interactive engagement and impact-driven strategies. Social media platforms have enabled Nal'ibali to reach more participants in real-time, allowing for a truly networked approach. Through these channels, we are now able to actively engage with both our beneficiaries and partners to solicit direct feedback on our messaging and initiatives. By listening to stakeholder sentiments, we gain valuable insights that can be used to continuously refine and improve our communication efforts.

World Read Aloud Day

World Read Aloud Day (WRAD) has always been Nal'ibali's annual flagship event. It galvanises the nation by inciting all South Africans to pledge to read aloud on the day. In celebration of the event, Nal'ibali utilises a story that is translated into all SA languages and then made freely available to the public.



The event attracts huge media attention and has become an anticipated feature on school calendars throughout the country, so much so that the Department of Basic Education starts rallying around WRAD preparations in the last term of the school year. The 2024 WRAD target was to read to **3.5 million** children, and through our partnership with the Department of Education, we exceeded that goal by reading to **3.8 million** children throughout February 2024.

An innovative approach was also used, with the WRAD story read live on **12** SABC radio stations, allowing children who were not present at the WRAD events to benefit from the story and have it read to them in their own language.

Total number of pledges

15 431

Total number of children
pledged to be read to

3.8 million
children

WRAD story downloads in
12 South African languages
(including sign languages)

24,300
WRAD Story
downloads on the website
and WhatsApp platform.

Digital reach

875 000

Post-WRAD
journey sign-ups

10 517

Literacy Month

Nal'ibali's Literacy Month campaign on social media used the hashtag *#MyHeritageinTranslation* to emphasise the importance of translation and how languages have evolved to meet societal needs over time. Nal'ibali interacted with **267 831** people on social media at a rate of **5.6%** (1.5% is the baseline).

Emphasis on impact stories

In 2024, our Nal'ibali creation and dissemination strategy switched more towards impact stories. The purpose was to gather more stories about how Nal'ibali influenced the lives of South African children, caregivers, teachers, early childhood educators, and literacy activists. Our communications, core, and special programmes shared over five long form impact stories through video and writing, reaching more than **200,000** individuals across digital platforms.

Expanding WhatsApp

The Nal'ibali platform has, since 2020, served as a content repository for Nal'ibali audio and written stories as well as Nal'ibali courses. However, in 2024, Nal'ibali introduced Nal'ibali WhatsApp communities, a collection of individuals who pledged to be part of the Nal'ibali Post-WRAD journey over WhatsApp. Throughout 2024, **604** people received over **34** pieces of communication in the form of stories, activities and tips from Nal'ibali.

To boost the effectiveness of Nal'ibali reading clubs, we developed **9** provincial reading club groups on WhatsApp. These groups serve to equip, inform, and motivate reading club leaders in their journey. **1149** reading clubs received reading club tips from Nal'ibali over 40 weeks. Through these, reading club leaders received the much-needed assistance from reading club amplifiers and the Nal'ibali communications team.



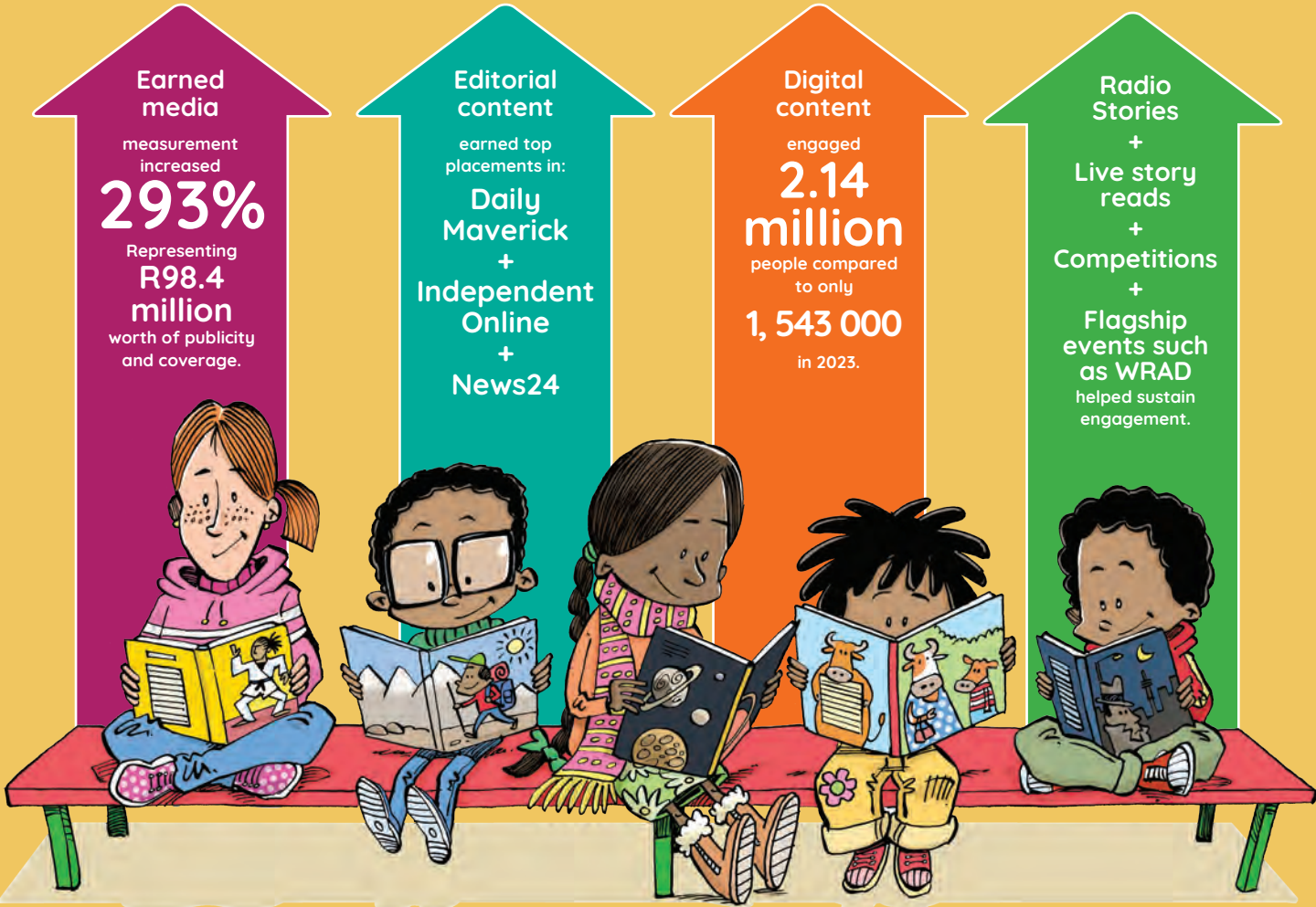
2024 overview of reach through media and campaigns

Earned media measurement increased an impressive **293%** compared to the previous period. Representing a value of **R98.4 million** worth of publicity and coverage.

Our editorial content has also consistently earned top placements in major South African publications such as Daily Maverick, Independent Online, News24, and others. This prominent third-party validation is a testament to the quality, timeliness, and resonance of our key messages.

Our digital content reached and engaged **2.14 million** people, compared to **1, 543 000** individuals in 2023. This represents a substantial increase in our overall outreach and impact.

Our educational radio stories have been consistently enjoyed and well-followed by children and we have now enhanced this offering with personalised features like “live story reads,” competitions, and live broadcasts from our flagship events such as World Read Aloud Day (WRAD). Participants, especially younger children at ECD centres, have clearly enjoyed and looked forward to these interactive elements. This personalised approach has helped sustain children’s interest and engagement with our radio programming over multiple years.



4. Content Development and Distribution

As one of the foremost literacy organisations in South Africa, Nal’ibali considers it requisite to produce and disseminate nationally, excellent quality, authentically South African stories, and books in print and digital formats and in all official written languages. The Content Department oversees the development and distribution of these stories to reach children at home, in ECD centres, schools and reading clubs. This covers a broad portfolio of printed- and audio stories that are distributed physically or via radio that allows Nal’ibali to provide access to stories to children from birth and throughout their primary schooling.

Furthermore, we partner with organisations that take the lead in providing literacy resources in South African Sign Language and braille to support the rights of Deaf and Blind children to literature in their preferred method of communication.

The bilingual Children’s Newspaper (Supplement)

The monthly bilingual newspaper supplement was developed to scale up access to reading materials with each supplement containing three stories, two in fold-and-cut formats to create little bilingual booklets, and the other as a story card. Each year 10 editions of the supplement are produced and distributed to schools, ECDs, NGOs, reading clubs, and community volunteers. The supplements have been distributed throughout the nine provinces in all 11 official languages. The total number of supplements distributed in 2024 is 2,933,195. The supplements remain the most cost-effective and widely used literacy resources that Nal’ibali produces and since its inception, Nal’ibali has distributed more than 90 million copies of the supplement, providing access to millions of children to stories in their mother tongue and English.

Anthologies

Anthologies are a collection of stories that are published as a collection, allowing access to multiple stories in a single book. Three anthologies were developed in 2023 and continue to form part of the reading

resources distributed to schools, ECD centres, reading clubs and homes throughout our programmes. These anthologies are - an ECD anthology, a Foundation Phase anthology and a 64-page full-colour anthology with illustrated collections of children's writings and drawings in Sepedi and English.

Nal'ibali-SABC Radio Stories

Audio stories expose children to oral language which improves the child's language acquisition rate. We increased access to South African-themed and flavoured stories by producing **45** brand new stories as radio scripts for SABC Radio Stories programme to be broadcast in 2024. The stories are reviewed and edited in-house to reflect Nal'ibali's values such as inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and to enhance enjoyment of the story. The stories are broadcast, not only in the languages of the communities served by each participating radio station, but also in the dialects used by those communities.

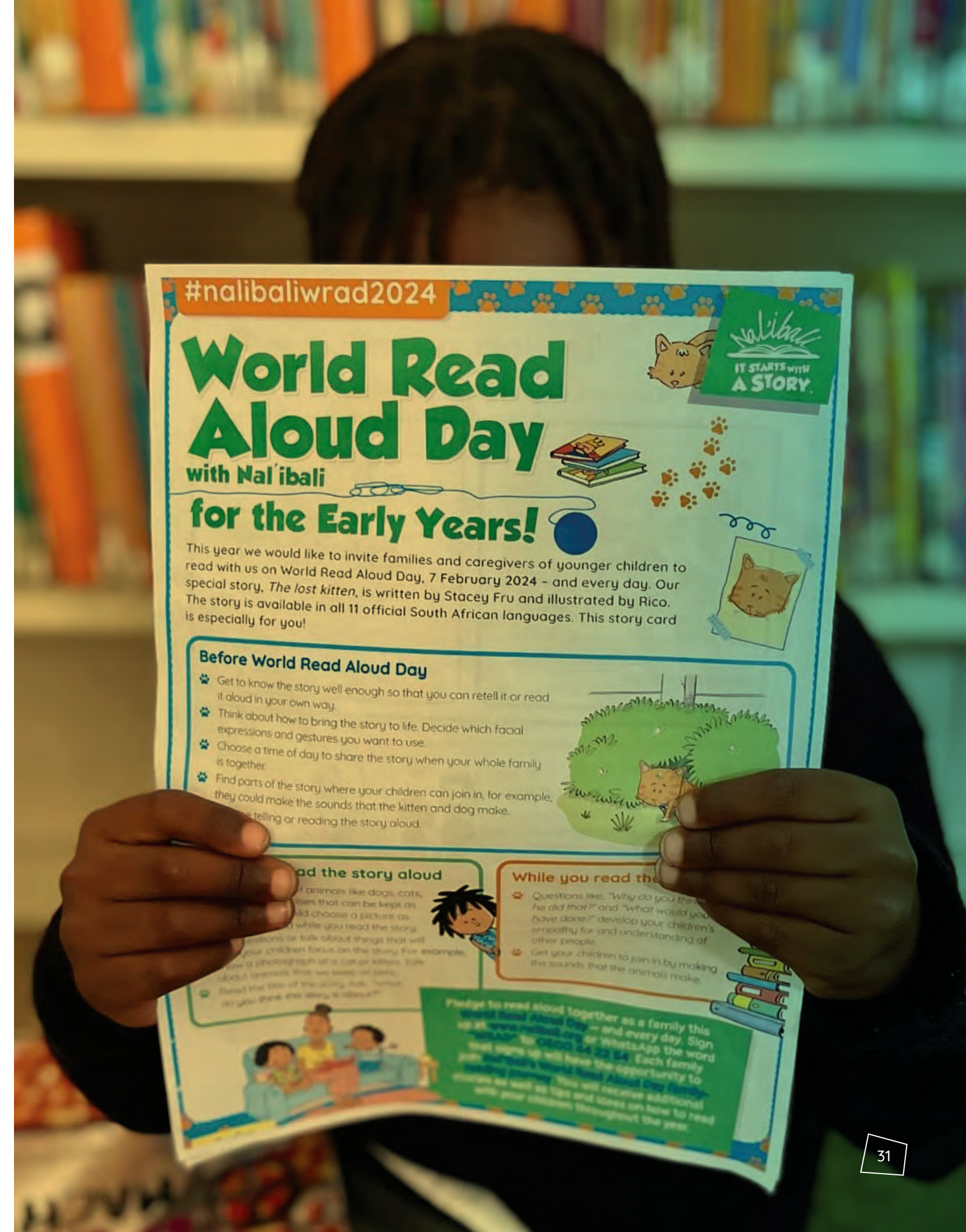
The author profile for the project has changed significantly over the years to include more Black South African writers. Using the official SA race classification categories, of the eighteen authors whose stories were accepted, ten were Black, three were Coloured and twelve were female.

World Read Aloud Day story cards

For World Read Aloud Day 2024, we translated Stacy Fru's "The Lost Kitten" into the 12 official South African languages. This year's campaign used a more inclusive approach, with an emphasis on South African Sign Language. An activation geared at integrating deaf children was organised in Cape Town, and it was a huge success since the children were able to enjoy the read-aloud story as well as adapt and interpret it themselves. They also took some reading materials to read at home. We disseminated the Nal'ibali narrative in both English and SASL on social media channels.

Publishing Wing

The publishing wing of Nal'ibali remains in its formative stages and is yet to be fully established as a standalone division within the organisation. However, despite limited structural and strategic development, the wing has demonstrated significant activity and promise over the past year. Through strategic engagement and proposal development, we have made headway in carving out a meaningful presence in the broader literary and cultural landscape.



One of the key highlights has been our growing relationship with the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture (DSAC). This included conceptualising and managing the first-ever Kids' Corner as part of the department's national days celebrations, a major milestone in positioning Nal'ibali as a stakeholder in national cultural programming. An MOU to formalise this partnership is currently pending, the MOU is to see Nal'ibali as a formal partner of the Department's celebration of national days.

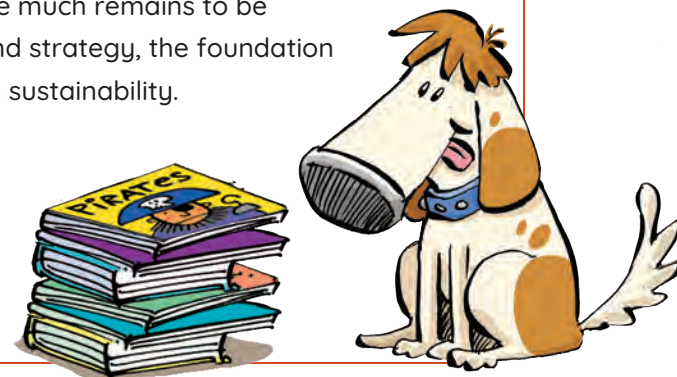
We also submitted a proposal to DSAC's MGE (Mzansi Golden Economy) funding stream to support the sustainability of the wing. In addition, we have developed targeted proposals to other institutions, including Parliament and Standard Bank. While the Parliament project did not materialise, Standard Bank has come on board as the first paying client for the publishing wing, marking a significant step toward income generation. We continue to identify possible collaboration partners.

Our presence in the literary space has also been strengthened through participation in and organisation of literary events and festivals, which have both amplified the Nal'ibali brand and offered platforms for engagement with key stakeholders and audiences. The publishing wing gave a talk at The Polokwane Book Festival, gave a writing workshop at Franschoek Literary Festival, and a talk and reading at UNISA for the opening of the Unisa Book Club.

We have also facilitated a relationship between Nal'ibali and the Open Book Festival in Cape Town.




Internally, we successfully curated book procurement across various projects. And published three anthologies for our Special Projects: Lesedi, TNF, and Lebalelo.

Importantly, the wing's manager has consistently leveraged existing networks and built new relationships to create visibility and opportunities for Nal'ibali's CORE division. These efforts have contributed to positioning the organisation not only as a literacy campaigner but also as a viable partner in publishing, content creation, and strategic collaborations. While much remains to be done in formalising the wing's structure, staffing, and strategy, the foundation has been laid for meaningful growth and long-term sustainability.







Nal'ibali's reach 2019 – 2024

African language story distribution:

 Radio: 16.2 million listeners	 TV: 49.9 million viewers	 Supplements: 11 097 780
 Books: 153 601	 Website audio and written story downloads: 1 988 705	 WhatsApp chatbot story downloads: 96 073

People trained:

 Teachers: 1054	 ECD practitioners: 2119	 Parents: (trained in 2024) 1953	 Reading Champions: 14 988
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Reading clubs established:

 Reading clubs: 15 997	 Children reached through reading clubs: 118 263
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World Read Aloud Day:

 Number of pledges received: 3 126 114	 Number of children pledged for: 12 452 335
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Core Programmes Report

The Core Programmes division serves as the heart of Nal'ibali's literacy campaign, driving implementation of all community-based literacy interventions.

Its primary purpose is to strengthen and sustain a culture of reading for enjoyment across South Africa through direct engagement with children, caregivers, educators, and ECD practitioners. This is achieved through a range of activities, including training, reading club support, community mobilisation, and the promotion of reading practices in homes, schools, and ECD centres. The division also manages strategic partnerships, ensuring alignment with the national literacy agenda and education sector priorities.

2024 Impact

In 2024, Nal'ibali's Core Programmes division made significant strides in scaling its impact across the country. Through focused literacy training, reading club expansion, and active community engagement, the division continued to advance its mission of promoting reading-for-enjoyment as a foundation for lifelong learning.

Educator and Teacher Training

Nal'ibali trained **694** educators and teachers on how to incorporate reading for enjoyment

into the classroom and within school-based reading clubs. In addition to the training, we also established **392** Reading Corners and distributed **7840** books. The reading corners are used to facilitate DEAR periods, book borrowing in schools without functioning libraries, and at times as incentives for learners who complete their classwork.

ECD Practitioner Training

A total of **1,105** Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners were trained. This milestone was achieved through close collaboration with community based Early Childhood Development Centres and officials withing the Department of Basic Education.

A major development in 2024 was the completion of Nal'ibali's revised ECD training curriculum, which is set to be rolled out in the upcoming training cycle to enhance early literacy support for children in their formative years.

Parent and Caregiver Training

Nal'ibali reached **2,073** parents and caregivers through community-based training initiatives aimed at equipping families to nurture literacy development at home.

Reading Clubs and Children Reached

In 2024, Nal'ibali registered, tracked, and confirmed **1,809** active reading clubs nationwide. Through these reading clubs, Nal'ibali reached **55,018** children.

Literacy Campaigns and Events

In alignment with our **Strategic Objective: Amplify interactive social behaviour communication to strengthen reading culture**, we implemented literacy campaigns and activations across all nine provinces, designed to promote reading for enjoyment and engage families, schools, and communities in building a reading culture. Nal'ibali successfully hosted literacy festivals in seven provinces, creating vibrant spaces where children, caregivers, educators, and storytellers could connect through books and stories. In collaboration with Standard Bank South Africa, additional large-scale events were held in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, and the Western Cape, strengthening our public-private partnerships and expanding the reach of our literacy messaging.

Key Highlights

Eastern Cape: Partnered with the Eastern Cape Braille and Print Institute to promote reading in families with visually impaired members and advocating for inclusive literacy materials.

Western Cape: In addition to DEAR activities at the Open Book Festival, the province conducted a Mother Language Day event at the Dominican School for the Deaf, where sign language storytelling was integrated. An advocacy-focused library march in central Cape Town involved families and children, raising awareness of libraries as essential community resources for early literacy.

KwaZulu-Natal (Umkhanyakude District): Foundation phase learners (Grades 1–3) participated in open-choice reading sessions where they received books and took part in DEAR activities. Educators joined Nal'ibali's first episode of the "Storytalks" podcast, sharing practical insights on cultivating sustained reading habits in classrooms.

Mpumalanga: Hosted a writing festival in collaboration with BK Publishing, which resulted in the launch of a children's book authored by local learners. This initiative promoted creative literacy and provided a platform for young authors to express their voices.

Together, these achievements reflect Nal'ibali's continued commitment to promoting equitable access to literacy opportunities and strengthening the foundations of reading in homes, ECD centres, and schools across South Africa.

Opportunities Emerging from Strategic Partnerships

Nal'ibali's strategic partnerships continue to play a pivotal role in expanding access, driving systemic change, and unlocking new opportunities for deepening our impact across sectors and communities.

- **Traditional and Local Government Partnerships: Expanding Access in Rural Areas**

Our engagement with royal and traditional leadership in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal has positioned Nal'ibali to extend its reach into rural and under-resourced communities. These partnerships offer a valuable gateway to embed reading culture in areas with limited educational infrastructure, supporting inclusive literacy development.

Further discussions with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs across North West, Western Cape, and Gauteng have created a pathway to align with the Community Works Programme (CWP). This alignment holds significant promise for 2025, presenting opportunities to expand Nal'ibali's footprint through integrated community-based literacy initiatives. Importantly, it contributes to long-term impact by empowering communities to lead local literacy efforts and embedding a culture of reading as a shared community value.

Health Sector Integration: Literacy in Healing Spaces

The growing partnership with the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Health has created a powerful cross-sectoral model for reaching children in vulnerable environments. In 2024, the establishment of four reading corners at Wentworth, King Edward VIII, St. Aidan's, and Addington hospitals, demonstrated the potential of literacy interventions in healthcare settings. These safe, story-rich spaces not only support children's cognitive and emotional development during hospital stays but also signal the potential for replication in other provinces, positioning literacy as a contributor to holistic child well-being.

Systems-Level Collaboration: Department of Basic Education

As a key member of the DBE Literacy Collective, Nal'ibali has helped shape a national, systems-based response to South Africa's literacy challenges. Our strategic positioning within this initiative has created two significant opportunities for system-wide impact:

- **Reading Champions Programme – BEEI Phase 5:** Nal'ibali will be supporting the implementation of this programme, training community-based literacy ambassadors to lead storytelling, book sharing, and read-alouds in school based reading

clubs. We also contributed to the creation of the Reading Champions Manual, a core training and reference resource.

- **National Literacy Toolkit Development:** Nal'ibali is supporting the design of a comprehensive toolkit for district-level implementation. This resource focuses on strengthening literacy support across reading clubs, home and family engagement, and school-based efforts, drawing on culturally relevant and evidence based practices.

These initiatives position Nal'ibali as a critical systems enabler, embedding community-driven models into national policy frameworks and supporting sustainable literacy transformation at scale.

Media and Campaigns

The organisation's major campaign, The World Read Aloud Day, reached **3.5 million** children through pledges and **22** events held across the country in a single day.

Nal'ibali produced **44** radio stories for Season 9 of its radio show, aired on 13 radio stations, reaching **9.25 million** children.

The Young Nal'ibali Storytellers television show, featuring exciting episodes, reached **4.1 million** children on the SABC 2 Kids News segment.

During Literacy Month, campaigns were held in all Nal'ibali provinces, featuring activities such as spelling bees, book-nicks, writing festivals, and numerous other events.

Various monthly campaigns were conducted to promote a reading culture among children, families, schools, and early childhood development (ECD) centers. These events included "Drop Everything and Read" periods, reading supplement days, library weeks, International Family Day, and Child Protection Week.

Impact stories filmed throughout the year were a highlight, showcasing the lived experiences of children, caregivers, educators, parents, writers, and illustrators, and how Nal'ibali positively contributed to their lives.

Nal'ibali's total earned media reach was valued at **R119 million**, and its brand sentiments reached a remarkable height of **97%**.





Special projects Report

The Trevor Noah Foundation (TNF) Community Project

Project Overview

The Nal'ibali, Trevor Noah Foundation Khula Funda Schools Project's main goal is to strengthen literacy in the Bramfischerville community through innovative and engaging reading practices. The project operated in 7 multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and diverse schools located in Bramfischerville, Soweto, with a total enrolment of 4,868 children. The project successfully met its objectives and closed its Bramfischerville operations as planned in April 2025, with operations having commenced in Eldorado Park in February 2025. The milestones and highlights below are based on Bramfischerville operations.

Milestones

- ☆ **Reading materials:** 55,000 Nal'ibali newspaper supplements, 49 Reading Club Journey packs containing 49 storyboards, 64 storybooks and 619 anthologies, 5,000 WRAD story cards were distributed to children, parents, partners and educators across the 7 participating schools.
- ☆ **In-classroom support:** Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) sessions conducted in 122 classrooms, on a regular basis, 122 teachers received support in terms of storytelling tips, and 82 children trained in creative writing which culminated in stories published in the children's anthology, Ifa Lezindaba, which was launched in October 2024.
- ☆ **Reading club sessions:** 850 children attended reading club sessions on a regular basis.
- ☆ **Holiday Programmes:** 3 holiday programmes hosted in April, June and September 2024 reaching a maximum of 82 children per programme. Trainees included teachers and partners who showed interest in supporting reading for enjoyment activities.
- ☆ **Communities of Practice (CoPs):** 83 people participated in 38 CoP meetings. The meetings provided a platform for knowledge sharing, discussing various themes such as tech-infused learning, energizing strategies for encouraging lifelong reading, forming partnerships, and sustaining literacy practices.

- ☆ **Partnerships:** 52 children from across all 7 schools made media appearances at Diepkloof Radio (DKFM), a community radio station, where they were exposed to themed live radio interviews, as well as the 12 event radio interviews which were not only broadcast live, but also recorded to be replayed. 98 Households received free solar power installations from READPower, a Light up for Literacy initiative initiated by Educubed enabling children to do their homework and reading activities even during periods of power outages.

Key Highlights

The endline evaluation findings showed that:

- ☆ DEAR sessions, storytelling sessions, and reading clubs were particularly effective in developing children's literacy skills and enthusiasm for reading, and created a strong bond between educators and learners.
- ☆ Educators felt that the training received was relevant and helped to improve their teaching strategies.
- ☆ 60% of sampled parents indicated they read to their children daily, 30% read 2-3 times a week and 10% read to their children 1-2 times a week.
- ☆ Educators confirmed that their learners are now spending more time reading than they did before Nal'ibali. Children are reading books without being instructed to do so.
- ☆ Parents confirmed that children read voluntarily at home ever since they joined Nal'ibali.



The VW Community Trust community project

Project Overview

The VW ECD-school-community literacy project is a partnership between Nal'ibali Trust and VWSA and the main goal is to expand and enhance literacy development and sustainability in Uitenhage (known as Kariega) in the Eastern Cape province. The project is implemented in KwaNobuhle, a township located in the North-Western part of Gqeberha, and it targets foundation phase learners in **7** primary schools and **25** ECD centres. The project was in its final year in 2024 with a no-cost extension approved to 30 June 2025. The project has demonstrated learning opportunities for other special projects as it introduced the first children's anthology written by the children themselves and launched the Men's Literacy Imbizo which attracted men to take part in their children's literacy journeys. The children's anthology written by children has been adopted in three special projects in various provinces (Limpopo, Gauteng, Northern Cape), expanding the reading for enjoyment activities to story writing and illustrations.

Key highlights

The project endline evaluation found that:

- ☆ The creation of an anthology of children's literature, lingqondi zeQhagqiwa, demonstrates that children are now contributing to literary works.
- ☆ Children have gained exposure to national radio and some exposed to television broadcast through the Young Nal'ibali Storyteller programme. This reinforces the idea that children are being empowered and encouraged to express themselves creatively.
- ☆ The Men's Imbizo initiative has been influential in getting fathers involved in reading stories at home and even writing children's books.
- ☆ Parents /caregivers reported improvements in their children's school readiness and reading skills due to Nal'ibali's parent workshops, testified that their children have excelled in school because of their engagement in reading at home.
- ☆ Children are now reading independently, with evidence showing they read at school even when Nal'ibali staff are not present.

- ☆ The endline evaluation found that children were using the Nal'ibali supplements to develop their own home libraries using shoeboxes and containers.
- ☆ Story Sparkers have gained confidence, developed facilitation skills and have grown to become literacy champions. They also show leadership in storytelling sessions and reading clubs, proving that the project is cultivating a new cadre of reading role models.
- ☆ The innovation and creativity in the classrooms enhance learning and contributes to good academic outcomes.

Lesedi and Letsatsi (LnL) Community Project

Project Overview

These projects aim to establish sustainable literacy and storytelling cultures by 2027 through a long-term, multi-stakeholder model. The projects work with partners, ECD centres, and primary schools to strengthen an enabling literacy environment, improve the capacity of the Nal'ibali workforce, and support individuals, families and communities in sustaining literacy behaviours. The Lesedi project serves the Postmasburg and Danielskuil communities in the Northern cape, working alongside **16** partners, **18** ECD centres, and **10** primary schools. The Letsatsi project services communities located in Dealesville and Soutpan in the Free state, reaching **8** ECD centres, and **3** Primary schools.

Milestones

In 2024, the two projects underwent major structural changes which have led to improvements in output achieved.

- ☆ **Reading resources:** **29,479** newspaper supplements distributed in Lesedi and **13,976** in Letsatsi, benefiting children in the schools, ECD centres, partner organisations, libraries, and reading clubs. Each project also keeps stock of books in the tuk-tuks, and these are convenient for book-lending to children, with **1,627** books in the Northern Cape and **1,200** books in the Free State communities.
- ☆ **Caregiver training:** Caregivers trained using Every Word Counts workbook, focusing on the importance of play in language development (**97** in Lesedi, and **34** in Letsatsi).

- ☆ **Partner training and mentorship:** 29 ECD Practitioners and 22 CWP workers, and 2 Librarians trained in Lesedi.

Key Highlights

- ☆ **Father's Day celebration:** Lesedi hosted a Father's Day celebration in Postmasburg, highlighting the role of fathers in early literacy.
- ☆ **Children's anthology:** The Lesedi Project launched its first children's anthology, *Seeds of Change*, in September 2024.
- ☆ **Children's Literacy Festival:** In September, literacy events were hosted in each of project communities in Lesedi and Letsatsi where children from reading clubs participated in various performances.

Lebalelo Water Users Association Project

Project Overview

The Lebalelo ECD-School-Community Literacy Project, funded by the Lebalelo Water User Association, is in its second phase of implementation after a successful 3-year cycle. The project is implemented in seven villages of Sekhukhune East District in Limpopo and provides homes, ECD centres, schools, drop-in-centres, and communities with the knowledge, skills, and resources that support children's literacy development. Results of the first phase endline evaluation demonstrated that the project model was effective in changing reading behaviours in the targeted communities.

Milestones

- ☆ **Reading resources:** 16,491 newspaper supplements, and anthologies distributed.
- ☆ **Children's Literacy Festival:** The 2nd edition of the children's anthology, *Ke Leeto*, was launched during the Literacy Festival held in October 2024, demonstrating the writing and illustration skills of children and parents who participated in the creative writing workshops.





- ☆ **Training:** 55 people trained (educators, ECD Practitioners and caregivers) to give them skills they need to enhance reading and storytelling.
- ☆ **ECD and school sessions:** 1,059 story sessions were conducted across schools, ECD centres and reading clubs to give children strong language foundations.

Key Highlights

- ☆ **Holiday programmes:** Children participated in various literary activities conducted during the June and September holidays, reaching a maximum of 486 children. The programme gave children opportunities to enrich themselves through group reading, drawing, storytelling, indoor games, and listening to traditional poems.
- ☆ **Reading competitions:** 3 reading competitions were held and the winners of each event walked away with Takealot vouchers worth R500.



Winners of the reading competition



Holiday programme



LIFSA

Project Overview

The LIFSA Child-Caregiver-ECD Practitioner language and early literacy development project was a collaboration between Nal'ibali and the Local Initiatives Fund of South Africa (LIFSA), and was implemented in Orange Farm, Evaton West, Lakeside, and Beverly Hills in Gauteng. The aim of this project was to enhance the developmental environment for children under 6 by upskilling adults in their living and learning spaces and encourage a culture of reading in homes and ECDs. The project emphasized the crucial role of caregiver involvement, aiming to strengthen early stimulation and promote language and literacy development, and sought to address the learning setbacks experienced by children who missed education during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly those facing obstacles related to distance and affordability in accessing early learning programmes.

Milestones

- ☆ **90 ECD Practitioners** trained using iNtsana Namabali module, which focuses on the importance of play in promoting learning in children. Each ECD Practitioner received a copy of the Little Stars workbook which they used during training.
- ☆ **156 caregivers** were trained and received a copy of Every Word Counts manual, which provides practical ideas for supporting the development of early language and literacy, across two age bands: pregnancy to 3 years and 3 to 5 years.
- ☆ **250 story books** distributed across the 25 ECD centres where practitioners had been trained so that they could establish reading corners in their ECD centres.
- ☆ **350 Nal'ibali ECD anthologies**, all in local languages, were distributed to the ECD centres for children to take home.



Social Employment Fund (SEF) Family Literacy

Project Overview

The SEF Family Literacy Programme is a partnership between The Nal'ibali Trust and the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa (IDC) and is in its third phase of implementation. The primary purpose of the project is to create regular reading habits and develop children's reading skills. The project employs **1,000** people spread across **85** sites in five provinces: Eastern Cape (EC), Gauteng (GP), KwaZulu Natal (KZN), Limpopo, and the Western Cape (WC). Working in pairs, Literacy Facilitators conduct regular story sessions in ECD centres, schools, reading clubs, and visit households to demonstrate to caregivers how to make reading and telling children stories a part of their daily activities.

Milestones

- ☆ **Training: 1,152** participants trained on how to make reading enjoyable for children. Other types of training included classroom management conducted by Axiom in the Eastern Cape, play-based learning conducted by MacMillan in KZN, financial literacy training in KZN, leadership training for all **86** Team Leaders, report-writing and administrative skills training completed by all Provincial Administrators, PlaySA online training, Mother-tongue Based Bilingual Education (MtBBE) online course, and workplace readiness training offered to all participants as part of the exit strategy.
- ☆ **Community outreach, reading resources distributed: 2,871** households were visited twice a month, and caregivers were encouraged and shown how to make reading to children fun and enjoyable. **257,720** printed reading resources were distributed (anthologies, compendiums and Nal'ibali newspaper supplements), and **18,732** digital resources were distributed in audio and text. caregivers.
- ☆ **Library membership drive: 9,370** new library cards were issued because of the library membership drive, and this led to an increased frequency of library visits by children and their caregivers.
- ☆ **ECD and school sessions: 10,831** children were reached in **638** ECD center classrooms where regular story sessions of 45 minutes each were conducted.



☆ **Reading clubs:** 444 reading clubs were registered and weekly sessions conducted, benefiting **10,852** children in total. Endline evaluation findings show that children are developing an increased interest in reading, engage more during sessions, and take books home to read.

Key Highlights

- ☆ **Partnerships:** Nal'ibali trained **34** Literacy Facilitators in the Northern Cape as part of Nal'ibali's collaboration with LIMA Rural Development. This expanded Nal'ibali's reach in the Northern Cape, benefiting reading clubs, schools and ECD centers in Pella, Witbank and Onseepkans. Nal'ibali benefited from the Small Projects Foundation, who trained **21** participants on how to identify business opportunities in their communities and how to start and manage their small businesses. **102** households in Gauteng received free solar panel installations as part of Nal'ibali's partnership with READPower, and 4 SEF participants were trained on how to install and repair solar panels.
- ☆ **Pathways:** Endline evaluation results show that there is strong evidence suggesting that the skills and work experience obtained from the Nal'ibali SEF Family Literacy programme prepared participants well for their next job opportunities. **78%** of those who participated in the endline survey indicated that participating in SEF had influenced their future career plans, with **68%** indicating an interest in pursuing a career in the education sector, aligned with the skills and experience acquired through Nal'ibali. 113 Participants resigned after securing employment elsewhere.



Home visit



ECD story session

Reflections from Implementation and Evaluation



Monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) approach

Nal'ibali's intervention is designed to build the *foundational conditions* for children to become readers: regular exposure to stories, enjoyment of reading, and adult support at home and in the community.

Through this work, Nal'ibali creates the conditions for reading success by fostering regular story-sharing, intrinsic motivation, and adult involvement in children's reading lives. These conditions are necessary for literacy development, even if they do not replace formal instruction. We focus on tracking changes in reading habits, environments, and adult behaviours — all of which are shown to underpin long-term reading outcomes.

Monitoring and Evaluation Focus Areas

To align with our Theory of Change and strategic objectives, Nal'ibali focuses on the following core areas for monitoring and evaluation:

1. Child-Level Indicators: Reading Habits and Motivation

These indicators aim to assess the *reading environment* and *emergent literacy behaviours* in children, rather than formal reading skills.

How: Short interviews with children, story logs, facilitator reports, and child surveys using visual tools for younger children.

2. Adult Behaviour and Attitudinal Change

- Caregiver/facilitator confidence in sharing stories
- Changes in attitudes towards reading and story-sharing

- Frequency of reading with or to children
- Engagement with Nal'ibali materials or other story resources

How: Baseline and endline surveys, facilitator reflection logs (these are used in USAID), and mobile surveys with parents and caregivers. We have used the ELOM-Home Learning Environment for this.

3. Reading clubs and Community-Based Practice

- Number and frequency of reading club sessions
- Participation metrics (age, gender, regularity)
- Type and use of materials (print/audio/story cards)
- Facilitator engagement, support and training completed

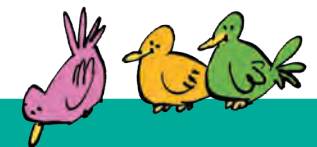
How: Reading club registers (would need to incorporate), attendance tracking, facilitator surveys, site visit reports by PAs and TLs (with the RC observation tool).

4. Mixed Methods

- Facilitator and caregiver stories of change
- Photovoice and story diaries
- Audio or video narratives from children
- Observations of reading sessions

Shifting Nal'ibali's focus from outputs and reach towards an outcomes-focused and reflective orientation and building a culture of research and learning across the organisations has been a key focus of the Nal'ibali leadership team in 2024.

Learning from beneficiaries



Melody Ngomane: Author

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

The realisation that I can create a world that once only existed in my head, and later to see an audience react and sometimes relate to that world, fascinated me. It kept me going. My inspiration for writing children's stories comes from the love I have for



children, and through reading short stories. I love the flexibility that children's story writers have in terms of creativity, imagination and style. I love the simplicity of the stories and the fact that I can tap into child mode for a moment.

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

"It supports us to study further and look for a job. Last time I checked, there was an online ECD course that provided certificates, and they have told us to study or complete it so that we can apply for jobs in schools." KwaZulu-Natal, Literacy Facilitator, SEF-2 external evaluation interview 2024

"I could not speak in front of people, but the program has assisted me in overcoming that. Now I can speak in front of people and the community." KwaZulu-Natal, Literacy Facilitator, SEF-2 external evaluation interview 2024

"The children will remind me if I don't read to them. They will tell me it's time for me to read to them" (Mother, translated)

"I used to just shout. My child didn't like bathing with soap, and I would just shout. But I learnt to ask questions, "why don't you like the soap?", "what does it smell like?" (Mother, translated)

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

"I learnt I am never too old to learn something new. And I learnt a lot." (Grandmother, translated)

"Nal'ibali got me interested in my child's learning" (Mother, translated)

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

- **Transformation through Reading and Bonding:** The Nal'ibali training fostered a love for reading, which has been passed on to children, leading to stronger relationships between parents and their children. Homes have become centers of learning and storytelling, providing engaging environments.
- **Improved Parenting Skills:** The training has helped parents become more patient, nurturing, and capable of handling various parenting situations. It has also encouraged greater involvement in their children's education and activities, leading to better support for their learning and development.
- **Creativity and Engagement:** Parents have gained new, creative ways to engage their children in reading and storytelling, making learning enjoyable and effective. This has reduced screen time, allowing for more meaningful family interactions and focus on educational activities.
- **Personal Growth and Continued Learning:** Despite challenges like relocation, participants remain committed to applying what they have learned and are eager to continue their education through future Nal'ibali sessions. They value the ongoing development of their skills as parents and educators.



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

"We learnt new activities that we could do with the kids, and they also learnt some other ones from us. So we both benefited." Free State, ECD practitioner.

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

#ReadBooks

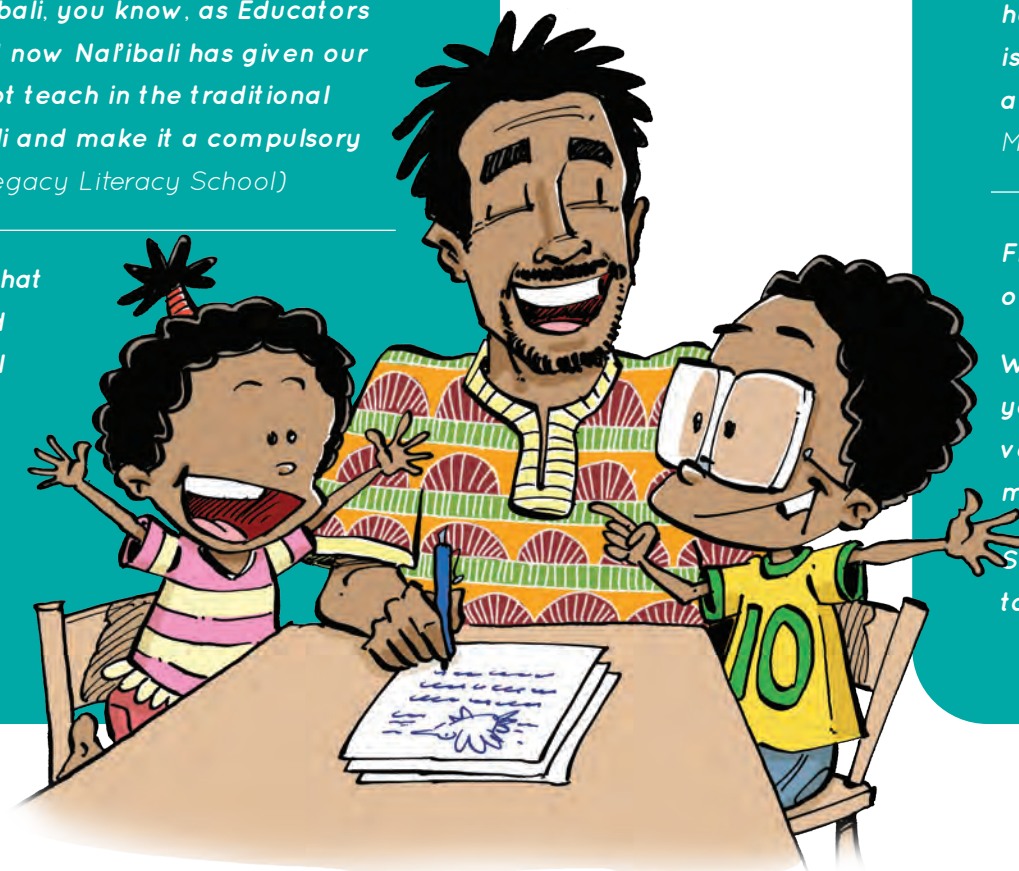


First story books distributed through the Yizani Sifunde project - Lukhanyo Aghulas, Luthando Sigwana and Onika Wele who are learners at Sinomonde Pre-School in Airport Park, East London, received their first books from the Yizani Sifunde team. Yizani Sifunde Story Sparker visited the homes of these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

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

"Our school is one of those that are privileged to be in the VW project, and we love Na'ibali, when some activities clash with Na'ibali events, I prefer to cancel the programme for Na'ibali, because it means a lot for me. Na'ibali has become family, just wearing a Na'ibali t-shirt and getting into a class, you will hear the excitement about Na'ibali as they scream "good morning Na'ibali" I am in group with other Principals and I always share Na'ibali activities that our children do with Na'ibali, believe you me, all the Principals wish they were part of the project. Our pass rate has improved, our Educators do not struggle to teach because now they teach using the strategies taught by Na'ibali, you know, as Educators when we receive training, it is more theoretical and now Na'ibali has given our Educators the practical aspect, our Educators do not teach in the traditional ways that they knew. The DBE should adopt Na'ibali and make it a compulsory activity in all schools, it is needed" (Principal, VW Legacy Literacy School)

"Every time the Story Sparker took my children to that class, they came back with so much excitement and even their participation in class would just change. I observed that a number of times and I got curious about what was happening in that class. I decide to join activities, and I understood why my children loved the Na'ibali activities. I would sometimes invite the Story Sparker to come and conduct the activities in my class, she did that and



she supported me all the way. Look I love Na'ibali books I prefer to even use Na'ibali books than Vula Bula, I love the Na'ibali stories especially the supplement, the stories are fun and not too long. Teaching has really been fun and my children can even tell stories and they love reading Na'ibali stories. They remind me about reading time. If you have time, I can go with you to my class and I will ask one or two of my children to read. Na'ibali is so helpful to us, I got so disappointed when Story Sparker anonymous left, I wish she can be brought back. (Foundation Phase Educator, VW Legacy Literacy School)

Reading and writing skills have improved in our learners. We have learners who write their own journals through your programme. Some even partake in our public speaking competitions because of you. We have the library which our learners utilise because of you. (Letter of thanks from one of Na'ibali's participating schools)

Emileigh was a shy child. But when her mom spoke of the impact that reading had had on Emileigh's demeanour, a warm glow came over her face. Happily, Emileigh is in the care of parents, elders, and carers who take pride in their child. Since being involved in a reading club, Emileigh's schooling performances have improved significantly, scoring well in reading and languages. There is clearly a virtuous cycle of confidence inspiring confidence. In addition to the direct impact of reading, Emileigh is also enjoying the benefit of inspiration. Her horizons are broadening, and she is nurturing new dreams. The overall outcome is a gentle ray of light from within herself to her peers, educators, family, and community. (Excerpt from Na'ibali blog: How Na'ibali supported Emileigh Mentoora in her reading journey)

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

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

Since the reading club was founded, I would make social media posts and tag the official Na'ibali pages until they noticed my content. This then led

to conversations between myself and their Digital Specialist. All of a sudden I'm having my first paid "gig" with Na'ibali. Something even more amazing happened this week. I received an email to do Sesotho audio stories for their website! Another job that I am going to get paid for. Imagine getting paid to just read a 3-5 minute-long story in YOUR MOTHER TONGUE!

The point of this post is that, it is not always necessary to chase after money and make it a priority. Identify your purpose, go after it and focus on your passion first THEN the rest shall follow, the money will come! Opportunities that you never knew existed will also present themselves to YOU. (Basetsana Sheane, Na'ibali Reader Club leader, social media post)

What our partners have to say:

"The partnership between Children's Cup and Na'ibali, brings hope, inspires dreams, and drives sustainable change within our communities."

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

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

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

(Senior Education Specialist - School Library & Information Services - SLYSIG)

Thanks to Na'ibali's intervention, Ntataise Lowveld's story telling has never been so intentional, engaging, animated, interactive, passionate, captivating, wild with imagination, enchanting, encapsulating, as we strive to open a whole new world where a young child can travel miles on end, and visit magical uncharted faraway lands. This partnership has had ripple effects and snow balled right into our ECD Practitioners Classrooms, on-site at our Play Groups, straight into the homes of our Primary Beneficiary where Caregivers are skilled on an array of techniques of storytelling through our Care Givers Learning Through Play initiative. Through Nali' Bali's partnership we are able to focus on and address issues pertaining to emergent literacy and numeracy. (Director, Ntataise, Lowveld)



Finance and Operations

Nal’ibali obtained another unqualified audit opinion from our external auditors, BDO South Africa, for the year ended 31 Dec 2024.

Our audit was completed without any material audit findings. Revenue, from 14 sources, was **R64m**, compared to the previous year (14 sources providing **R74m**).

Other income and interest were **R1.02m**, compared with R1.8m of the year prior. The total operational expenses for the year were **R73.4m** – a decrease of 12% over the prior year (**R83.4m**). The decrease brings the expenditure for 2024 in line with the income for the year.

The net deficit for the year of **R8.4m** in 2024, over the previous year deficit of **R7.7m** which was largely due to a decrease in funding.

The two major projects in 2024 are the SEF project (**R22.8mil** funding that employed **1000** people) and the USAID project (**R10.9mil**). Both are reflected in the income, on 20 January 2025, the US President signed Executive Order 14169, titled "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid," initiating a 90-day suspension of all U.S. foreign development assistance programs to conduct a comprehensive review.



The Nal'ibali Trust

(Registration number: IT547/2016)
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2024

Figures in Rand	Notes	2024	2023
Assets			
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	2	1 320 358	1 459 801
Current Assets			
Trade and other receivables	3	26 573 528	24 697 734
Project receivable	4	1 134 742	423 973
Prepayments	5	351 492	374 104
Cash and cash equivalents	6	8 711 607	22 448 954
		36 771 369	47 944 765
Total Assets		38 091 727	49 404 566
Equity and Liabilities			
Equity			
Trust capital	7	1 000	1 000
Accumulated surplus		13 785 524	22 186 237
		13 786 524	22 187 237
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Deferred income	4	23 756 287	23 722 463
Trade and other payables	8	548 916	3 494 866
		24 305 203	27 217 329
Total Equity and Liabilities		38 091 727	49 404 566

The Nal'ibali Trust

(Registration number: IT547/2016)
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

Statement of Comprehensive Income

Figures in Rand	Notes	2024	2023
Revenue	9	64 006 501	73 964 773
Other income		223 563	82 047
Operating expenses	10	(73 428 874)	(83 413 780)
Operating deficit		(9 198 810)	(9 366 960)
Investment revenue	11	798 097	1 681 283
Deficit for the year		(8 400 713)	(7 685 677)
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive deficit for the year		(8 400 713)	(7 685 677)

The Nal'ibali Trust

(Registration number: IT547/2016)
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

Notes to the Financial Statements

Figures in Rand	2024	2023
4. Project receivable/(Deferred revenue)		
The major components of the Project receivable/(Deferred revenue liability) balance are:		
Lesedi Solar Park Projects (The DG Murray Trust)	(485 850)	(1 842 390)
Letsatsi Solar Park Projects (The DG Murray Trust)	710 769	(911 470)
Standard Bank of South Africa	(4 167 074)	(4 167 074)
Liberty - Yizani Sefuna Project	(938 598)	(1 307 056)
Volkswagen South Africa project	(450 540)	(286 128)
National Lotteries Commisison	(4 402 000)	-
Lebalelo Water Users Association	(106 612)	(76 838)
The Trevor Noah Foundation project	423 973	423 973
The Trevor Noah Foundation project	(360 694)	-
Social Employment Fund project 2	(563 082)	(14 947 629)
Social Employment Fund project 3	(12 393 860)	-
The Alliance Francaise of Johannesburg	-	(183 878)
Other	112 023	-
	(22 621 545)	(23 298 490)
Current assets	1 134 742	423 973
Current liabilities	(23 756 287)	(23 722 463)
	(22 621 545)	(23 298 490)
5. Prepayments		
Prepayment	351 492	374 104
Net prepayments		
Current assets	351 492	374 104
6. Cash and cash equivalents		
Cash and cash equivalents consist of:		
Bank balances	8 710 919	22 448 266
Short-term deposits	688	688
	8 711 607	22 448 954
7. Trust capital		
Capital account / Trust capital		
Balance at beginning of year	1 000	1 000
8. Trade and other payables		
Trade payables	(95 766)	74 942
Payroll accruals	506 635	418 120
Grants payable	-	558 942
Accrued expenses	135 563	2 440 378
Other payables	2 484	2 484
	548 916	3 494 866

Notes to the Financial Statements

Figures in Rand	2024	2023
9. Revenue		
The D.G. Murray Trust	20 000 000	27 370 407
USAID	10 901 250	-
Volkswagen South Africa project	1 235 588	1 460 780
Liberty - Yzani Sifunde	368 458	3 053 715
Lebalelo Water Users Associaton	939 076	1 006 982
Standard Bank of South Africa	-	1 228 578
Sales of goods and services	202 387	583 165
National Education Collaboration Trust	-	3 449
Lesedi Solar Park Trust	2 751 565	3 609 129
Letsatsi Solar Park Trust	2 099 733	2 171 053
The Trevor Noah Foundation	658 346	1 294 008
National Reading Barometer project	-	1 069 627
Social Employment Fund - IDC 2	14 384 547	30 842 127
Social Employment Fund - IDC 3	10 246 673	-
ENEAX	-	246 799
The Alliance Francaise of Johannesburg	-	24 954
Marion Lohann	25 000	-
Children's holiday programmes	10 000	-
LIFSA	183 878	-
	64 006 501	73 964 773

10. Operating expenses

Operating expenses include the following expenses:

Operating lease charges

Premises		
• Contractual amounts	875 458	637 954
Depreciation on property, plant and equipment	317 025	312 727
Employee costs	43 077 325	44 285 409

11. Investment revenue

Interest revenue

Bank	798 097	1 681 283
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12. Taxation

No provision has been made for tax as the organisation is a public benefit organisation and is therefore exempt from taxation in terms of Section 10(1)(cN) of the Income Tax Act.

Notes to the Financial Statements

Figures in Rand	2024	2023
13. Cash used in operations		
(Deficit) surplus before taxation	(8 400 713)	(7 685 677)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation	317 025	312 727
Surplus on sale of assets	-	(1 725)
Interest received	(798 097)	(1 681 283)
Changes in working capital:		
(Increase) decrease in trade and other receivables	(1 875 794)	(4 886 425)
(Increase) decrease in prepayments	22 612	(4 805)
Increase (decrease) in trade and other payables	(2 945 950)	1 863 606
(Increase) decrease in project receivable	(710 769)	(423 973)
Increase (decrease) in deferred income	33 824	(291 873)
	(14 357 862)	(12 799 428)
14. Commitments		
Operating leases – as lessee (expense)		
Minimum lease payments due		
- within one year	240 728	344 734
- in second to fifth year inclusive	-	71 415
	240 728	416 149

Operating lease payments represent rentals payable by the trust for the rental of the property at 2 Dingle Avenue, corner of Dingle and Rosmead Avenues, Kenilworth, Cape Town, from lessor Roshin Ara Ebrahim Family Trust and the rental of a warehouse at Unit 7, Wetron Park fro Wetron Properties. Leases terms are negotiated on an annual basis and rentals are escalated annually. No contingent rent is payable.

All our Funders



Thank you

