Nal'ibali Annual Report 2025

Empowering Literacy,
Enriching Lives

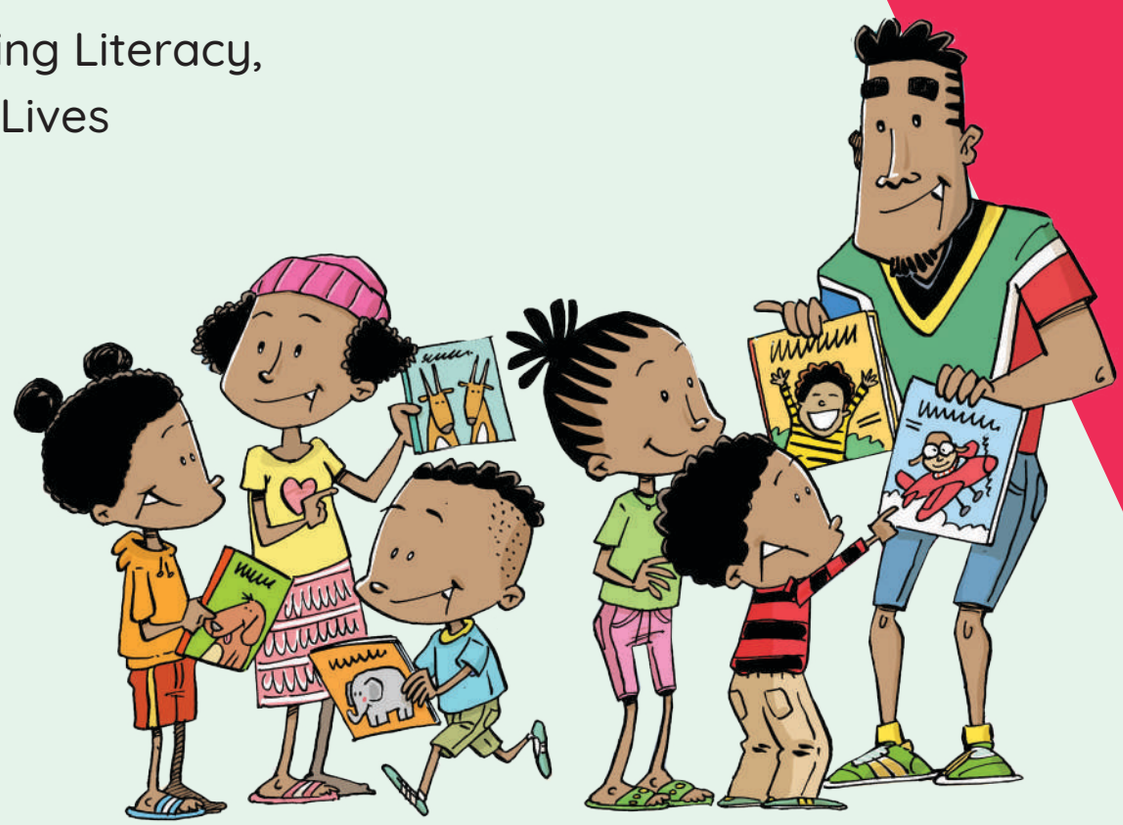


Table of Contents

6 Word from Chairperson

8 Executive Director's Report

12 Nal'ibali's Approach and Impact

28 Media, Campaigns and Content

40 Our reach in 2025

42 Core Programmes Report

50 Special Projects Report

60 Reflections from Implementation and Evaluation

72 Finance

78 Governance

Programmes & Impact

Media & Outreach

Finanace & Governance

World Read Aloud
Ifa Lezindaba

NATIONAL ANTHEM

ng
ph
ny

Building a Reading Nation: Nal'ibali's Year of Impact

Literacy is foundational for setting up children for success; children who cannot read are at greater risk of falling behind academically. This increases the chance of dropping out in later grades. This directly impacts the trajectories of young children and their ability to contribute towards building our society and economy. The compound impact of this includes poor educational outcomes over the long term and real reductions in South Africa's economic productivity.

The 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) evaluation found that 81% of children in South Africa cannot read for meaning. In addition, the 2025 Funda Uphumelele National Survey (FUNS), the first nationally representative dataset measuring early reading outcomes across all official languages, found that 30% of South African learners in Grades 1 to 3 are reading at grade level in their home language. Urgent and bold action is required to ensure that children in South Africa are not left behind.

With this framing, Nal'ibali's mission to spark and embed a national culture and love of reading in children from birth is fundamental. Over the last year, Nal'ibali has continued to play a critical role as a catalyst for shifting the culture of reading at home, in schools and communities through its programmatic initiatives. Importantly, Nal'ibali plays a significant role in connecting the dots between access to reading materials in multiple languages as well as providing opportunities for caregivers, practitioners, teachers and children to connect with reading.

Over the last 14 years, working across multiple communities and reaching thousands of children, through radio, television, and reading clubs, Nal'ibali has strengthened and pioneered critical work in understanding that at the heart of improving reading outcomes is shifting behaviour by encouraging adults to read with children, creating reading role models, and normalising reading as part of daily life. The national campaign that Nal'ibali has built has allowed it to embed itself in various communities across the country, reaching children who otherwise would not have any other opportunity to get enthused about reading.

This year, the work has continued to be replicated through national initiatives and project partnerships, including Nal'ibali's work with the Social Employment Fund, which has

seen hundreds of young people working across seven provinces to reach thousands of families and children. Work with a national focus also includes Nal'ibali's partnership with the Department of Basic Education to launch the DBE Literacy Collective, which includes working directly with district officials and training over 3 500 Reading Champions. Beyond direct programme delivery, Nal'ibali has continued to strengthen the broader literacy ecosystem by producing accessible, multilingual content, supporting partnerships across government and civil society, and contributing to national research and advocacy efforts.

Nal'ibali has provided a blueprint for creating a larger-than-life phenomenon national campaign that has the scale, intensity and longevity to change reading behaviours in South Africa. Shifting reading outcomes and the culture of a nation is not going to happen overnight. There is still extensive work to be done, which requires strategic collaboration between civil society, government and the private sector. Nal'ibali's key strategic objectives are well-positioned to provide a critical foundation for children, as well as placing the importance of shifting reading practices and behaviours on the national agenda.

Kentse Radebe

Board Chairperson

Adapting to a Changing Literacy Landscape: Reflections on Our Year

Our 2025-2030 strategic changes were implemented in October 2025. It was a challenging time for the organisation, especially our staff members affected by the changes. As the government introduces new policies in education and school governance, Nal'ibali and other literacy promotion organisations in the country must constantly adapt their programmes and projects to reflect the changes in education policies in the country. Our strategic changes were made to reflect this reality and to place Nal'ibali in tune with the realities of the evolving educational needs of the country.

South Africa continues to struggle with persistent challenges in education, with children struggling to read and the lack of relevant resources in schools and homes. As our country commemorates 50 years of the brave young people of the 1976 Soweto uprisings, a reminder that 50 years later, education in home languages remains out of reach for many children in South Africa. We are excited about the Department of Basic Education's Mother Tongue based Bilingual Education. Nal'ibali was founded on the premise that children learn better when they hear, read and write in their home languages.

Nal'ibali was approved for the fourth round of the Social Employment Fund (SEF 4 2025), a testament to the impact of literacy in society, and the confidence and trust in Nal'ibali and its leadership. In partnership with Penreach in Mpumalanga, Axium in the Eastern Cape and LIMA in the Northern Cape, a strong 1000 workforce was onboarded for the 10-month SEF 4 project. Our work continues to impact children and their families across the country, with our foot soldiers traversing every corner of rural heartlands, cities and towns spreading the love of stories in the home languages of the communities we reach.

The impact of our work is recognised throughout the African continent. Our work has been featured in several media outlets from Francophone Cameroon to Uganda. In May 2026, I was recognised by

the Association of Mental Health Reform Organisations in Africa (AMHROA) with an award that acknowledges my lifelong commitment to advancing early literacy on the continent and my leadership of Nal'ibali. This was a tremendous acknowledgment for the many years spent working tirelessly to promote African languages and children's literacy. This award does not only honour me, but it is an honour to all those who came before me and the men and women who continue to work to promote children's literacy amid limited resources and under the strain of funding constraints. As AMHROA rightly stated, there is a connection between reading, emotional well-being and social resilience.

To the communities that we work in, Nal'ibali could never exist without you. We thank you for allowing us into your homes, your schools, and in the lives of your children. To the Nal'ibalians who are the backbone of this organisation, we hold you in the highest respect and appreciate your commitment in ensuring that our work continues to reach the millions of children in the country. To our board, we value your leadership in guiding us as we take our organisation to the next level. To our funders, we are grateful for your continued support. We will continue to work to the highest standard that you have entrusted us with, with your financial support.

May the next chapter of Nal'ibali be as bright and constant as the Northern Star!

Lorato Trok

Executive Director

#nalibaliwrad2025
Wêrelddag vir Hardop Lees
saam met Nal'ibali
Stories to read again and again!
World Read Aloud Day

World Read Aloud Day
World Read Aloud Day
World Read Aloud Day

The South African Literacy Landscape

The literacy landscape in South Africa is shaped by deep contrasts: high enrollment rates, sit alongside persistent reading-for-meaning challenges. Studies like PIRLS consistently show many Grade 4 learners struggle to read for understanding, and the gap widens with language barriers, since most children learn in a home language that differs from the language of instruction.

At the centre of this is the home. Home-based reading culture remains thin for a lot of families due to a mix of factors: limited access to books, competing demands on caregivers' time and inter-generational patterns where parents themselves didn't grow up with books at home. Where reading corners, bedtime stories, and book sharing do occur, children start school with stronger vocabulary and confidence. But in many households' books are scarce and seen as school resources, rather than daily objects and literacy is confined to classrooms.

This gap matters because research shows that early, playful engagement with reading at home is one of the strongest predictors of later school success, more than socio-economic status or the type of school. Community initiatives, mobile libraries and informal reading circles are trying to influence this shift by putting books into homes and growing the cultural habit of reading for pleasure.[1]

Requiring children in Foundation Phase to engage with words and letters in isolation, restricts meaning-making. Learners can decode but still struggle to connect text to ideas, which reduces motivation and reading for enjoyment. This limits reading success, pleasure of reading, and purpose driven practice. Without meaning, reading feels like an assessment or test, not ongoing and interactive communication.[2]

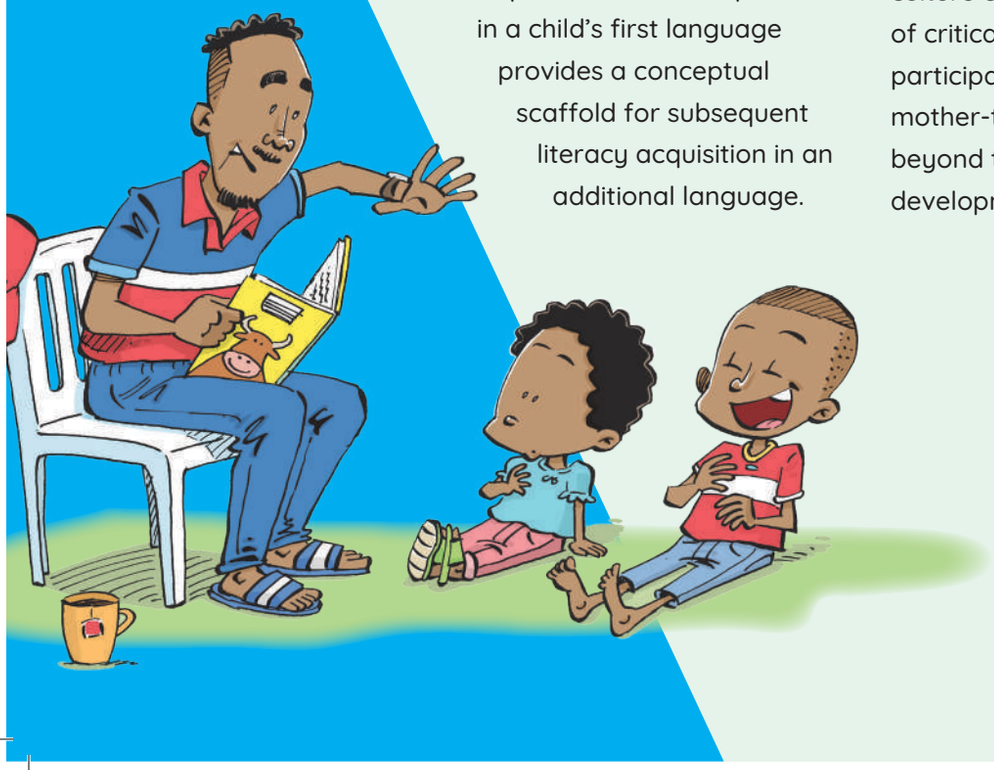
A further constraint is the limited extra-mural access to reading material, particularly in the learner's home languages. Within the South African context, there exists a pronounced scarcity of high-quality, developmentally appropriate children's literature for reading for enjoyment across the diverse 12 official languages. Consequently, children encounter minimal print exposure beyond the classroom environment. This paucity of mother-tongue texts restricts opportunities for incidental literacy acquisition, thereby attenuating the transfer of decontextualized decoding skills to fluent, comprehension-driven reading and undermining the development of positive dispositions towards reading[3, 4]

The challenge is corroborated by PIRLS which consistently indicates that South African children demonstrate low reading achievement, a trend intensified by limited reading in mother tongue.

Cognitive research confirms that comprehension developed in a child's first language provides a conceptual scaffold for subsequent literacy acquisition in an additional language.

When children understand text in the language of their cognition and identity, transfer to a second language is significantly more efficient. Beyond decoding, reading cultivates critical thinking and understanding and helps develop imagination, which in turn establishes the foundation of lifelong learning. Learners who develop these dispositions are more likely to engage later in life as informed, responsible citizens who can contribute to innovation and social development.

Initiatives such as the Nal'ibali reading-for-enjoyment programme directly address this gap through a deliberate focus on mother-tongue engagement. By positioning reading as an enjoyable, socially situated practice in the homes and communities of children in their home languages, Nal'ibali seeks to actualize both individual and societal potential. At the individual level, sustained exposure to meaningful texts in mother tongue strengthens vocabulary, comprehension, and identity formation. At the societal level, the cultivation of a national reading culture contributes to a citizenry capable of critical thought, innovation, and active participation in democratic processes. Thus, mother-tongue literacy promotion moves beyond technical skill acquisition toward the development of human and social capital.



Nal'ibali's Intervention Approach

Global contemporary literacy intervention increasingly recognizes that technical decoding instruction alone is insufficient for foundation phase children.

The Nal'ibali reading-for-enjoyment programme demonstrates a meaning-centred approach by prioritizing mother-tongue engagement in homes, schools and community-based reading clubs where reading is positioned as a social, enjoyable activity. This aligns with contemporary programmes such as the DEAR (Drop everything and read) programme by the Department of Basic Education and the Funda Wande project, which emphasize classroom reading corners and facilitated reading and the development of good-quality mother -tongue reading material. Collectively, these approaches shift the pedagogical focus from isolated phoneme-grapheme correspondence toward integrated literacy practices that build vocabulary, comprehension, and disposition simultaneously. Empirical programme evaluations suggest that when children encounter good-quality reading material in languages they understand, decoding skills transfer more readily to comprehension and critical engagement with texts. Therefore, effective intervention requires coordinated attention to teacher practice, access to appropriate reading material, and the cultivation of reading cultures beyond the school gate. [5, 6, 7, 8]

Making reading fun

Self-selected engagement in reading for pleasure[9] is associated with accelerated growth across all domains of literacy development, including vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, reading fluency and the formation of enduring reading habits. [10, 11 & 12] Increased volume of independent reading is strongly associated with improved reading proficiency, higher scholastic achievement and functions as a primary determinant of all subsequent learning capacity. Nal'ibali aims to ensure the widespread provision of sufficient, good-quality books and supplementary reading materials to cultivate a nation of super-readers in which all children are afforded the opportunity to realize their full cognitive and social potential.

Emphasising learning to read in mother tongue

Research consistently demonstrates that children entering school from homes with a weak reading culture and limited access to books are at a distinct disadvantage and are also less likely to have developed secure attachment bonds with primary caregivers due to the absence of shared book-reading and storytelling experiences with an engaged adult reading role model. Children whose parents regularly read to them and engage in oral storytelling develop larger vocabularies, greater general knowledge, stronger expressive language, and demonstrate overall more robust literacy skills when entering school. [13, 14 & 15]

From its inception in 2012, Nal'ibali have placed a strong emphasis on mother-tongue reading for enjoyment and continues to distribute reading resources nationwide in children's home languages. Written by young people, these stories demonstrate their ability to create high-quality literature, not merely consume it.

Supporting National and Local Reading Ecosystems

As noted above, Nal'ibali now adopts a more holistic approach to the South African literacy ecosystem, addressing not only access to texts but also the development of readers and writers in a connective network of support by:

1. Building the literacy competencies of local reading facilitators;
2. Building caregiver capacity through training for home-based literacy programmes, and providing continues training and mentorship to primary caregivers;
3. Extending literacy support beyond the household in:
   - ECDs;
   - Schools; and
   - Reading clubs
4. Partnership-building, collaboration, and generation of evidence-based thought leadership (including the National Reading Barometer);
5. Nal'ibali media campaigns (Radio, TV stories, and special events such as WRAD).

Developing and Distributing African-language Resources

☆ Supporting South African creative writers

Nal'ibali is deeply committed to developing local South African writers, providing emerging writers, illustrators, and translators with the support and resources they need to grow. In 2025, the concept of a structured writer coaching and mentoring programme was conceived. This concept will create a network to support developing writers with technical skills, publishing opportunities and financial rewards.

This aims to create a supportive environment to sustain developing writers in languages where a shortage of books exists. Nal'ibali places strong emphasis on delivering good-quality reading material in especially African languages, while providing a platform for the production and publication meaningful and culturally diverse and relevant content for readers. Notably, these are African languages such as Sepedi, Setswana, Sesotho, Xitsonga, siSwati, Tshivenda and isiNdebele. Through this network, Nal'ibali aims to foster a robust ecosystem for emerging writers, helping to enrich South African literature and inspiring a lifelong love of not just reading, but also developing a sustainable supply of children's books in mother tongue.

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 2025, Nal'ibali distributed **752,432 supplements**.

Radio stories

Every year Nal'ibali sources stories through our annual Call for Stories to be produced into radio stories. SABC Radio translates the stories into all official languages and produce radio stories for broadcasting on its **18** national radio stations, reaching **30,1 million listeners**.

Books

In 2025, existing Nal'ibali anthologies were repurposed from two 272-page A4 books into nine A5 **"Joy of Reading" booklets** of 24- to 40-page extent. This new booklet set is designed for children's smaller hands to engage with directly and allows up to nine children to each engage with their own book at their own pace.

Children-authored books

Two full-colour, illustrated collections of **children's writing and artwork** were developed during 2025: **Seeds of Change: Our Voices Matter**, a 176-page book funded by the Lesedi Solar Park Trust (Northern Cape), and **Ke Leeto Vol. 3**, an 88-page book funded by the Lebalelo Project.

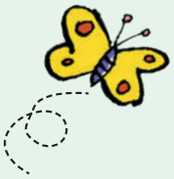
WhatsApp Bot

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 **9064 people** have completed this training.

Audio and written stories: Stories are offered in 12 languages. In 2025, the Nal'ibali chatbot has reached **98,395 users** who have interacted with the audio and written stories on the platform.

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, organizational, and management skills. Literacy facilitators employed through SEF have reported being more connected to and recognized in their communities and related networks, opening job opportunities and possible career paths.

☆ Supporting literacy inside the home: Building family literacy

Nal'ibali recognizes both home and school as critical contexts for literacy development. [16, 17 & 18] Many children lack exposure to reading and books in the home, particularly children's books that foster reading for enjoyment . Limited adult reading contact within the home environment further contributes in a lack of reading interest among children who have few opportunities to observe adults reading for pleasure. Findings from PIRLS indicate that children raised in homes where reading is valued achieve higher scores than their contemporaries from homes with low levels of reading engagement. These findings underscore the capacity and responsibility of parents to influence the reading practices and attitudes of their children. [19, 20]

Research indicates that literacy development in children extend beyond the formal school environment, encompassing home and community context.

☆ Supporting literacy outside the home

★ Supporting ECDs

High-quality and intentional early learning programmes play a critical role in supporting children's holistic development and future employability.

Notwithstanding their importance in early childhood development ECDs continue to receive limited attention from local, provincial and national government, regarding policy frameworks and the resourcing required for quality provision.[21 & 22]

According to the South African Early Childhood Review, 2019, of the **3.1 million** children aged 3 – 5 years, only **69%** of children attended an early childhood programme such as a playgroup, community-based-programme, nursery schools and Grade R. This leaves **31%** of children not attending any early learning programme.

Despite the well-established importance of early years for cognitive development, early literacy development receives insufficient attention within ECD centres. Exposure to early learning provides the foundational basis for holistic language development and subsequent learning readiness in children. While ECDs prioritize social, emotional and physical development, the absence of intentional literacy instruction results in weak vocabulary outcomes in children. In the absence of a dedicated and intentional literacy development programme, focused on book sharing, reading and storytelling, children miss out on a critical period for cognitive development. [23, 24]

Through book sharing, children develop print awareness: they learn book handling conventions, directional print concepts such as left-to-right and top-to-bottom progression, and the correspondence between written text and oral language. Early print awareness is fundamental to reading success. Interactive read-aloud sessions in which adults intentionally scaffold print concepts – including letters, words, sentences, punctuation, grammar and paragraph structure – yield stronger literacy outcomes than passive listening to reading. [25, 26, 27, 28, 29]

Diverse and progressively complex storylines encountered through storytelling and reading support children's co-construction of new and developing knowledge. Such experiences are essential for developing reading readiness and deepening textual understanding. If children lack an understanding of themselves and their place in the world upon entering formal schooling, their development and learning are compromised. By linking narrative events to lived experiences, children integrate new knowledge with existing prior knowledge. Tapping into prior knowledge is important for constructing future knowledge and advancing development.

For optimal impact, stories shared during this developmental phase must be culturally relevant, aligned with community values, and grounded in children's lived experiences, to enable meaningful cognitive connection between text and meaning. [30]

The scarcity of appropriate reading resources in most communities compounds existing low literacy levels. Children, especially in rural settings, face critical book scarcity. Coupled with weak reading for pleasure focus in ECD environments, this further reduces children's opportunity to engage with books in a meaningful way.

★ Supporting Schools

Okoye and Mligo (2026) [31, 32] asserted that inadequate teacher knowledge and intentional instruction capacity, significantly constrain children's developmental outcomes in school settings. Addressing this gap through foundational teacher training is essential for improving instructional quality and child outcomes. The foundation phase is critical for the development of reading and comprehension skills, as well as for cultivating a positive attitude towards reading. [33] The absence of teacher modelling reading and limited pedagogical knowledge can impede children's reading development. [34]

Daily interactive read-aloud sessions focusing on reading for enjoyment should be prioritized in classrooms by teachers, alongside explicit vocabulary instruction and the expansion of children's syntactic repertoires. [35, 36]

Empirical evidence suggests that teachers' engagement in voluntary recreational reading significantly influences students' literacy development. When teachers model reading for enjoyment, they normalize reading as a valued cultural and intellectual practice beyond the curriculum. This vicarious modelling can strengthen learners' reading motivation, expand their perception of reading as a leisure activity, and contribute to the fostering of lifelong reading habits.[37] Through teacher behaviour and acting as role models, children in their care acquire the norms, values and practices of their community by observing and internalizing the demonstrated behaviours of their salient role models. Social learning theory posits that role models function as mediators of cultural transmission by providing concrete examples of desired behaviour. [38,39] Studies indicate that a notable proportion of early grade teachers do not engage freely in voluntary leisure reading. This lack of personal reading engagement amongst teachers has implications for literacy modelling, as it may limit learners' exposure to reading as a valued, self-directed activity.[40,41] Children's under-exposure to teacher who overtly value reading diminishes the perceived importance of literacy practices. Grounded in social cognitive theory, this absence of modelled valuation weakens learner's reading self-efficiency and attenuates positive attitude formation towards reading and writing, thereby reducing their prioritization of such literacy building activities.

Nal'ibali 's programmatic objective centres on the provision of sustained support to Foundation Phase children alongside the continuous professional on-the-job development of their teachers. The campaign operates on the premise that strengthening both learner exposure and teacher pedagogical capacity will yield measurable improvements in literacy achievement. [42]

★ 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 2025, Nal'ibali registered **5349** Reading Clubs, reaching approximately **228 741** children. **902** Reading clubs were based at ECD centres and in communities, while **4 447** were based at schools.

Nal'ibali Reading clubs established:

Registered reading clubs:
5 349

Children reached through reading clubs:
228 741

Reading clubs at ECD centres & communities:
902

Reading clubs at schools:
4 447

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 organization with a strong presence, uses its wide reach through media and networks to keep literacy at the forefront of discussions. Nal'ibali pioneered National Leadership in Literacy Dialogues in 2025 by bringing together a curated group of senior leaders from government, education, philanthropy, academia and civil society who share a concern for South Africa's persistent literacy challenges and a commitment to strengthening long-term literacy capability across the system. Two dialogues were hosted in 2025, the first on 31 October in Cape Town and the second on 12 November in Sandton. The discussions moved beyond diagnosis toward clearer strategic thinking, alignment of effort, and disciplined system-level choices. The discussions focused particularly on early-grade and mother-tongue literacy outcomes and explored:

- How leadership and institutional choices shape literacy outcomes;
- Structural constraints limiting progress at scale;
- Alignment, accountability and long-term capability-building; and
- Practical leadership shifts required for coordinated national impact.

Nal'ibali also participates in national 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 in 2025 and have identified collaboration as a key component of the strategic approach to programming going forward. Our interventions contribute to a small component of the education pipeline of a child and the more we can collaborate with other actors affecting this pipeline, the more efficiently we can integrate interventions, broaden reach and deepen impact.

Prayers
Everyday
Nal'ibali
Iintsana Namabali
Workshop

★ 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 Libraries South Africa (NLSA), the NRB provides an in-depth assessment of key drivers influencing reading, including policies, systems, structures, and behaviours that collectively shape the literacy landscape.

2025 was a year of strategic consolidation and renewed momentum for the NRB. Following the successful launch of the 2023 survey, Nal'ibali began planning for the next round in partnership with NLSA, Social Impact Insights (SII) Africa and new core partner, Room to Read.

The Steering Committee was reconstituted with new members and reconvened in February to shape the direction of the next phase. Through this process, the consortium developed the concept of a dedicated Teen Survey, a focused sub-study examining reading behaviours, attitudes and access among children aged 10-18 and their caregivers. The decision to pursue the Teen Survey as a standalone instrument reflected both a strategic and practical rationale: adolescent reading remains an underserved area in South Africa's evidence base, and a focused study would allow the NRB to test new methodological ground while building the fundraising case for the larger 2027 round.

Following confirmation of funding from NLSA and the Zenex Foundation, the consortium extended ethics approval and worked with Steering Committee members through a series of engagements in late 2025 to develop the survey instrument collaboratively. Findings will be launched in July 2026, with the next full round of the NRB planned for 2027.

The year also brought important external recognition. NRB partners presented findings and practical applications of the 2023 survey at the National Reading Summit 2025, and the NRB was featured as a case study of good collaborative practice in the Independent Philanthropy Association of South Africa Collaboration in Education in South Africa: Themes and Insights for Funders (2025), recognising its networked governance model and role in building a shared, publicly owned evidence base for the literacy sector.

Media, campaigns and content

The Communications and Media Department plays a critical role in advancing Nal'ibali's mission by increasing the organisation's visibility, strengthening stakeholder engagement, and promoting reading for enjoyment as a national priority. Through strategic communications, media relations, digital engagement, storytelling, and advocacy campaigns, the department ensures that our impact reaches children, families, educators, partners, and communities across South Africa.

Media and Campaigns

We continue to leverage media platforms and national campaigns to promote literacy and inspire participation in reading activities. The organisation's flagship campaign, World Read Aloud Day (WRAD), remains one of South Africa's largest literacy mobilisations, bringing together schools, families, community organisations, government departments, and corporate partners to celebrate reading aloud in all South African languages.

Throughout the year, we also implement a range of advocacy and awareness campaigns aligned to key literacy, education, and social development priorities. These campaigns encourage reading within homes, schools, and communities while reinforcing the importance of multilingual literacy, storytelling, and caregiver involvement in children's learning.

The organisation continues to secure strong earned media coverage across print, broadcast, and digital platforms, helping to position us as a leading voice in literacy development and reading promotion.

World Read Aloud Day

Every year, World Read Aloud Day (WRAD) is celebrated across the world with stories being read aloud to more than **90 million children** on one day. This initiative was started by an NGO in the United States of America (USA) in 2007 and Nal'ibali has been leading on this event in South Africa with its partners, since 2012. In 2025, we celebrated it for the first time as World Read Aloud Month (WRAM) and the whole month of February was dedicated to reading aloud to children.

WRAM reminds us of a simple truth: when adults read aloud with children, stories have the power to spark imagination, build confidence and strengthen literacy skills. During February 2025, thousands of South Africans answered the call to read aloud to children, turning a shared commitment into meaningful action.

From parents reading bedtime stories and teachers gathering learners for story sessions, to community volunteers, literacy activists and radio listeners pledging to read aloud, the programme united people from all walks of life around a common goal. Together, **15,431** individuals and organisations pledged to read aloud with children, demonstrating a growing national commitment to nurturing a love of reading.

These pledges translated into an estimated **3,612,157 children reached**, exceeding the campaign target of **3.5 million** children by **112,157** children. Behind each of these numbers is a story of a child discovering a new favourite character, a caregiver sharing a treasured moment with their child, or a classroom coming alive through the magic of storytelling.

The success of WRAD 2025 reflects more than just impressive reach, it highlights the collective belief that reading can transform lives. By coming together in schools, communities, media platforms and digital spaces, South Africans once again showed that creating a nation of readers begins with something as simple and powerful as sharing a story.

Website	WhatsApp	Special Projects
no. of pledges	no. of pledges	no. of pledges
9 305	2 877	3 249
no. of children reached	no. of children reached	no. of children reached
3 162 130	259 996	190 031

Total number of pledges

15 431

Target

3.5 million

(Excess 112 157)

Total number of children pledged to be read to

3 612 157

children

Digital Engagement and Innovation

Digital platforms remain central to our communications strategy, enabling the organisation to engage audiences in real time and extend its reach beyond traditional channels.

Social media platforms provide opportunities to connect directly with beneficiaries, partners, supporters, and literacy advocates while fostering meaningful conversations around reading, learning, and child development.

Our WhatsApp platform continues to strengthen access to literacy resources through a mobile-first approach. The platform provides stories, reading supplements, activities, and literacy support directly to caregivers, educators, reading club leaders, and community volunteers, helping to increase access to quality reading materials, particularly in under-resourced communities.

Expanding WhatsApp

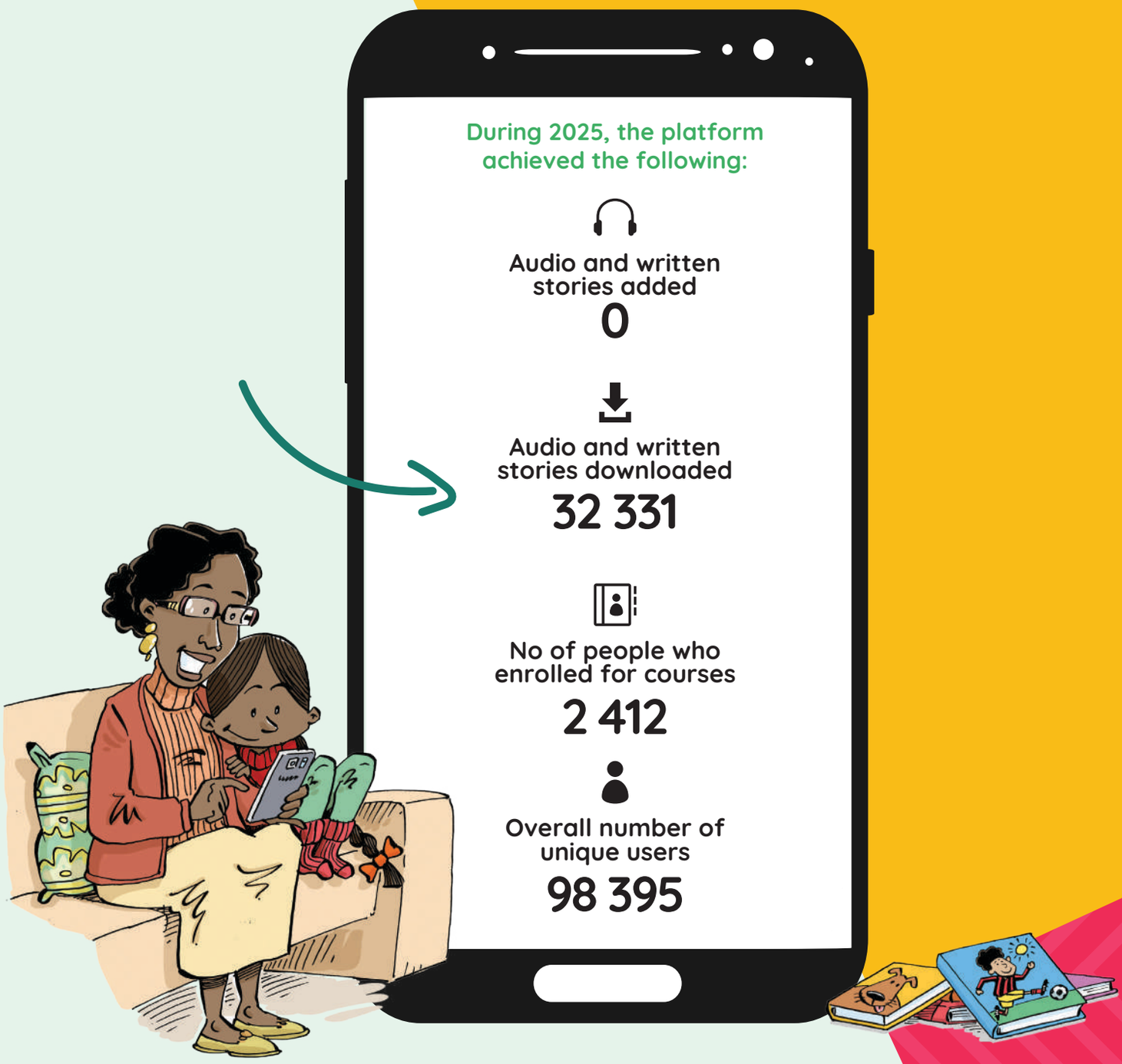
Since 2020, the Nal'ibali WhatsApp platform has served as an important gateway to literacy resources, providing children, caregivers, educators, and community literacy champions with easy access to stories, activities, and learning opportunities. As one of South Africa's most widely used and affordable digital platforms, WhatsApp continues to play a vital role in breaking down barriers to access and bringing reading for enjoyment into homes and communities across the country.

Building on the success of the Nal'ibali WhatsApp Communities launched in 2024, the platform continued to strengthen connections with literacy champions throughout 2025.

To further strengthen Nal'ibali's national network of reading clubs, nine provincial WhatsApp groups continued to support reading club leaders throughout the year.

The Nal'ibali WhatsApp chatbot also continued to demonstrate its value as a scalable digital literacy tool. By providing on-demand access to stories, activities, and courses, the chatbot enabled thousands of users to engage with literacy content at a time and place convenient to them. During 2025, users downloaded **32,331** audio and written stories, demonstrating the significant demand for accessible reading materials. A further **2,412** people enrolled in Nal'ibali courses, strengthening their knowledge and capacity to support children's literacy development.

Overall, the platform reached 98,395 unique users during the year. This extensive reach highlights the growing role of digital platforms in advancing literacy and demonstrates how Nal'ibali is leveraging technology to inspire a culture of reading, support literacy champions, and ensure that quality stories and learning resources are accessible to families and communities across South Africa.



These figures demonstrate the growing demand for accessible, mobile-based literacy resources and highlight the important role WhatsApp continues to play in supporting Nal'ibali's mission to inspire children and adults to read and share stories regularly.

The department continues to explore new opportunities to enhance digital engagement, improve user experience, and strengthen data-driven communication approaches that support programme participation and resource uptake.

Digital Content Development and Storytelling

Content remains at the heart of our work. The organisation develops and distributes high-quality multilingual stories, reading resources, educational content, and literacy support materials across print, digital, audio, and community media platforms.

A growing focus on impact storytelling enables us to showcase the experiences of children, caregivers, educators, literacy facilitators, and community leaders whose lives have been transformed through reading and storytelling. These stories not only demonstrate programme impact but also help inspire greater participation in literacy activities and strengthen stakeholder support.

Emphasis on impact stories

Stories have the power to turn impact into something people can see, feel and connect with. In 2025, Nal'ibali continued to place impact storytelling at the heart of its communications strategy, sharing authentic accounts of how reading for enjoyment is transforming the lives of children, caregivers, educators and literacy activists across South Africa.

Through social media, website features, YouTube content and media engagement, we showcased the people and communities behind our programmes, highlighting the meaningful change that occurs when children have access to stories, books and supportive reading environments. These stories not only demonstrated the impact of Nal'ibali's work but also amplified the voices of those driving literacy change in their communities.

Our website played a significant role in extending the reach of these stories and resources, attracting **240,363 active users** and generating **1,146,380 views** during 2025. These figures reflect the growing demand for literacy content and the value of digital platforms in connecting children, caregivers, educators and literacy champions with Nal'ibali's resources and impact stories.

By focusing on human-centred storytelling, we strengthened engagement with supporters, donors and stakeholders while building greater awareness of the role reading plays in improving learning outcomes, wellbeing and social development. The stories shared throughout the year served as powerful reminders that behind every programme, resource distributed and reading club established is a child whose future is being shaped through the joy of reading.

Through strategic content creation, we continue to amplify community voices, celebrate local literacy champions, and demonstrate the role reading plays in supporting learning, wellbeing, and social development.

Strategic Contribution

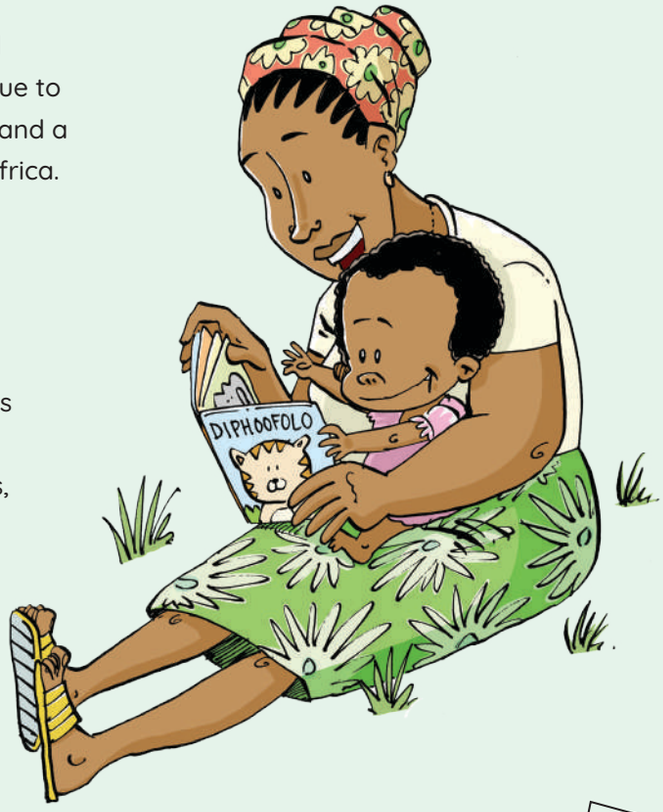
Through an integrated approach to media engagement, digital communications, campaigns, and digital content development, the Communications and Media Department serves as a key enabler of our organisational goals.

The department supports programme visibility, partnership development, fundraising, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement while promoting reading as a daily and enjoyable practice for children and families.

By combining compelling storytelling, innovative digital engagement, and strategic communications, we continue to strengthen its position as a trusted literacy movement and a leading advocate for reading for enjoyment in South Africa.

2025 overview of reach through media and campaigns

Nal'ibali's presence in African media during 2025 was marked by extensive coverage and engagement across news, social media, and community platforms. Key themes included literacy advocacy, reading campaigns, multilingual storytelling, and educational outreach for children. Major highlights and trends are as follows:



★ Key Themes & Events

- **World Read Aloud Day** and Nal'ibali's reading clubs were widely celebrated, inspiring a love for reading among young children and communities.
- **Literacy and education** remained central, with frequent mentions of storybooks, reading ambassadors, and community outreach programs.
- **Multilingual storytelling** and language development initiatives were prominent, reflecting Nal'ibali's commitment to inclusivity.
- **Campaigns and partnerships** (e.g., "Story Power," "Story seeds," and collaborations with organizations like the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund) received positive attention.
- **Challenges** such as policy debates and partnership terminations (notably with the Gauteng Education Department) also featured in the media.

★ Geographic & Channel Reach

- **Top countries:** Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana led in coverage and engagement.
- **Media channels:** X (Twitter), news websites, and blogs were the most active, with millions of mentions and interactions.
- **Languages:** English dominated, with notable coverage in French and Arabic.

★ Engagement & Influence

- High-reach stories and campaigns generated significant engagement, especially around major events like World Read Aloud Day.
- Influential African news outlets and social media accounts (such as Punch Newspapers, Citizen TV Kenya, eNCA, SABC News, and NTV Kenya) amplified Nal'ibali's message.

★ Sentiment

Coverage was largely positive, celebrating literacy achievements and community impact, though some negative sentiment arose from organizational challenges and policy issues.

Content Development and Distribution

Nal'ibali's content programme is driven by a commitment to ensuring that children across South Africa have access to high-quality, locally relevant literacy materials. As a leading literacy organisation, Nal'ibali develops and distributes stories and books in print, audio and digital formats in all official written languages. The Content Department manages the creation, adaptation and dissemination of these resources so that they reach children in homes, ECD centres, schools and reading clubs. Through these resources, Nal'ibali supports children from birth through the primary school years by providing opportunities to engage with stories in accessible and meaningful ways.

Nal'ibali also works in partnership with organisations that specialise in South African Sign Language and braille resources. These collaborations help advance the rights of Deaf and Blind children by improving access to literature in formats and communication methods that meet their needs.

The bilingual Children's Newspaper (Supplement)

The monthly bilingual newspaper supplement remains one of Nal'ibali's flagship literacy resources, created to expand access to reading materials at scale. Each edition contains three stories, including 2 fold-and-cut bilingual mini-books and one story card. During 2025, Nal'ibali distributed **752,432** copies of the supplement. While production and distribution expenditure was curtailed significantly during 2025, this resource continues to be one of Nal'ibali's most cost-effective literacy interventions, providing countless numbers of children with opportunities to enjoy stories in both their home language and English.

Anthologies

Three anthologies developed in previous years continue to form part of the reading resources distributed to schools, ECD centres, reading clubs and homes throughout our programmes: an ECD anthology, a Foundation Phase anthology, and a 64-page full-colour anthology of children's writings and drawings in Sepedi and English. The ECD Anthology was made available in all eleven official South African languages, each divided into nine separate booklets, with only Afrikaans and Setswana printed for the Northern Cape Province.

During 2025, existing Nal'ibali anthologies were also repurposed from two 272-page A4 books into nine A5 "Joy of Reading" booklets of 24- to 40-page extent. This new booklet set is designed for children's smaller hands to engage with directly and allows up to nine children to each engage with their own book at their own pace.

Nal'ibali-SABC Radio Stories

Audio storytelling remains an important component of Nal'ibali's literacy strategy because it strengthens oral language development and supports children's acquisition of language skills. Our partnership with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) extended into its 10th year, reaching **30,1 million listeners**. Nal'ibali sourced 52 stories through our annual Call for Stories and SABC Radio translated the stories into all official languages and produced the stories for broadcasting on its 18 national radio stations. Each radio script undergoes an internal review and editing process to ensure alignment with Nal'ibali's values, including inclusivity, suitability for children, cultural relevance and cultural sensitivity, while also enhancing the overall storytelling experience

NATIONAL		LIMPOPO		KWAZULU-NATAL	
RSG	Afrikaans 1,392,000	THOBELA FM	North Sotho 2,925,000	ukhozi	Zulu 7,607,000
SAfm	English 192,000		Tsonga 1,208,000	lotus fm	English 185,000
RADIO 2000	English 751,000	PHALAPHALA	Venda 804,000	**EASTERN CAPE**	
METRO FM	English 4,331,000	**MPUMALANGA**		uMhlobo Wenene fm	Xhosa 5,850,000
THE POWER OF 5 FM	English 607,000		Ndebele 1,090,000	trufm	Xhosa/Eng 187,000
		Igwala gwala	Swazi 1,090,000	**NORTH WEST**	
					Tswana 2,755,000
NORTHERN CAPE		**WESTERN CAPE**		**FREE STATE**	
X-K	!Xu and Khwe 3,000		Eng/Afr 468,000	LESEDI FM	South Sotho 3,346,000

World Read Aloud Day (WRAD) story cards

The World Read Aloud Day 2025 story, titled *What Is That?* by Baeletsi Tsatsi with illustrations by Rico, was developed in English, translated into all 11 South African languages, published and distributed across the country. World Read Aloud Day activations took place across the provinces, with all field workers participating and contributing to the success of the event.

In preparation for the 2026 World Read Aloud Day campaign, Nal'ibali worked closely with Sign Language Education and Development (SLED) to develop the 2026 WRAD story "A New Friend" into all 12 official South African languages. A story card was developed in each language, including an English for Deaf children version – a first for Nal'ibali. The WRAD 2026 campaign placed a stronger emphasis on inclusion, particularly through the integration of South African Sign Language, and the story was shared across Nal'ibali's social media platforms together with a video of the story in SASL.

Publishing Wing and the Writers Development Project

During the reporting period, the former Publishing Wing was formally integrated into Nal'ibali's Content Department, reflecting a strategic shift towards embedding publishing and content creation more closely within the organisation's core literacy development work. This integration has enabled greater alignment between content development, publishing initiatives, and Nal'ibali's mission of cultivating a culture of reading and storytelling among children.

A major milestone during the year was the establishment and launch of the Writers Development Project, which aims to identify, nurture and develop emerging writers of children's literature, with a particular focus on South Africa's underrepresented and smaller language groups. By investing in local writing talent, the project seeks to strengthen the pipeline of culturally relevant children's stories while contributing to Nal'ibali's own content needs and long-term publishing objectives. The department also continues to oversee children's writing initiatives developed through Nal'ibali's Special Projects portfolio, which during the reporting period was streamlined to focus on two active partnerships: The Next Chapter Fund Trevor Noah Foundation (TNF) and Lebalelo.

Two full-colour, illustrated collections of children's writing and artwork were developed during 2025: Seeds of Change: Our Voices Matter, a 176-page book funded by the Lesedi Solar Park Trust (Northern Cape), and Ke Leeto Vol. 3, an 88-page book funded by the Lebalelo Project.

Publishing proposals were developed for various partners, including the Parliament Children's Book project, which was later halted due to budget constraints, and the Standard Bank Children's Book, which was ultimately suspended following external events. Broader partnership proposals were also pursued, including the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) Children's Festival, the DSAC National Days partnership and an MGE Publishing Wing proposal aimed at institutional strengthening. The relationship with the DSAC continued to develop positively, and following Nal'ibali's successful involvement in the Department's National Days programming, discussions towards a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) have progressed significantly and are currently in their final stages.

Professional development efforts included participation in the Puku Children's Literature Review workshop and attendance at the LITASA Conference, while special projects such as children's writing workshops were launched to cultivate creative writing talent. Nal'ibali further expanded its visibility within the literary community through participation in literary events and festivals, maintaining relationships with the Open Book Festival, the Limpopo Book Fair and the iLembe Festival.

The integration of publishing into the Content Department, together with the launch of the Writers Development Project, marks a significant step in strengthening Nal'ibali's capacity to generate, develop and publish high-quality children's content, providing a strong foundation for future growth.

No Cell Phone Use
Thank you
NO
SMOKING
EATING OR
DRINKING

Nal'ibali's reach in 2025

Nal'ibali expanded its footprint across South Africa and beyond in 2025, reaching more children, families, and communities through storytelling and literacy programmes.

In addition to our reach through radio coverage, reading clubs, training and employment, Nal'ibali also provided **752,432** bilingual children's newspaper supplements.

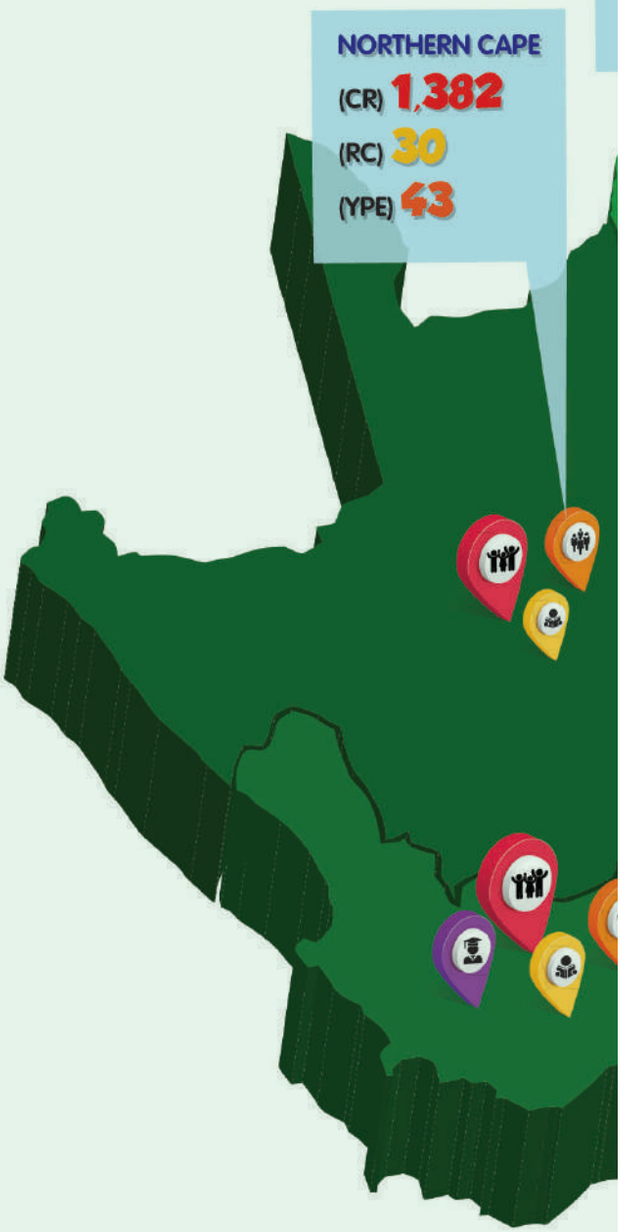
RADIO COVERAGE REACHING
30.1 Million
LISTENERS

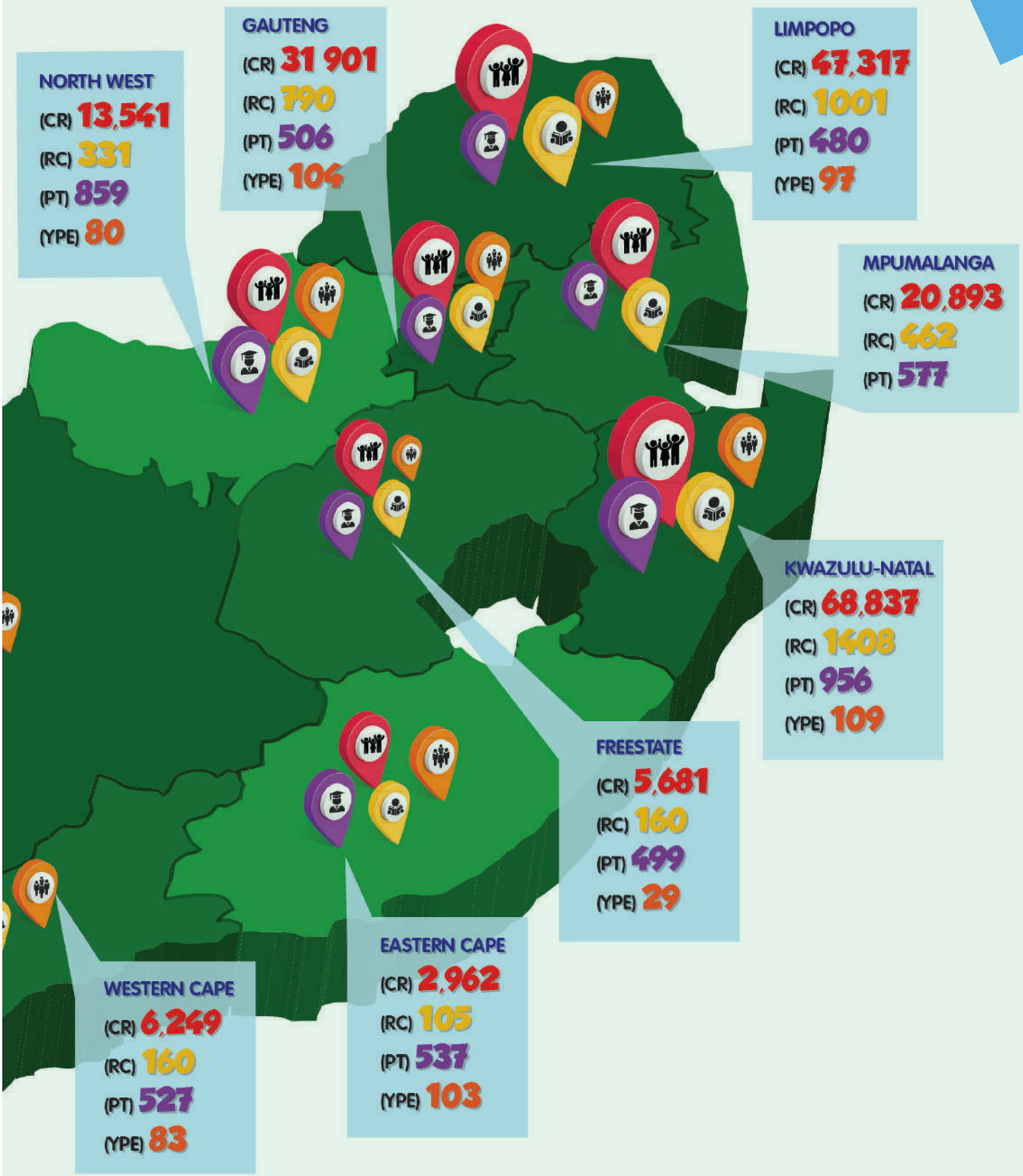
CHILDREN REACHED
198,763

READING CLUBS
4,447

PEOPLE TRAINED
4,941

YOUNG PEOPLE EMPLOYED
648




NORTH WEST
(CR) 13,541
(RC) 331
(PT) 859
(YPE) 80
GAUTENG
(CR) 31 901
(RC) 790
(PT) 506
(YPE) 104
LIMPOPO
(CR) 47,317
(RC) 1001
(PT) 480
(YPE) 97
MPUMALANGA
(CR) 20,893
(RC) 462
(PT) 577
KWAZULU-NATAL
(CR) 68,837
(RC) 1408
(PT) 956
(YPE) 109
FREESTATE
(CR) 5,681
(RC) 160
(PT) 499
(YPE) 29
EASTERN CAPE
(CR) 2,962
(RC) 105
(PT) 537
(YPE) 103
WESTERN CAPE
(CR) 6,249
(RC) 160
(PT) 527
(YPE) 83

Core Programmes Report

Building a Nation of Readers Through Community-Led Literacy

The Core Programmes division remains at the centre of Nal'ibali's mission to inspire and sustain a culture of reading for enjoyment across South Africa. Through direct implementation, strategic partnerships, training, community mobilisation, and literacy advocacy, the division works to ensure that children have access to meaningful reading experiences in homes, schools, ECD centres, libraries, and community spaces.

In 2025, Core Programmes continued to expand its reach and deepen its impact by strengthening literacy ecosystems that support children throughout their reading journey. Alongside large-scale training and reading club support, the division focused on developing sustainable community structures, strengthening monitoring and learning systems, contributing to national literacy initiatives, and creating innovative programmes that respond to emerging literacy challenges.

The result was a year marked by significant growth in participation, strengthened community ownership, expanded partnerships, and increased opportunities for children and adults to engage in reading and storytelling.

Impact of Core in 2025

Educators and Teachers Trained

Nal'ibali trained 3,199 educators/educator assistants across the country, equipping them with practical strategies to create positive reading experiences in classrooms and school-based reading clubs.

Training focused on fostering reading for enjoyment, strengthening read-aloud practices, establishing sustainable reading clubs, and creating literacy-rich learning environments that encourage children to engage with books beyond curriculum requirements.

Educators reported increased confidence in facilitating reading activities and integrating storytelling into everyday teaching practice, helping to cultivate stronger reading cultures within schools.

ECD Practitioners Trained

Early literacy remains one of the strongest predictors of future learning success. During 2025, Nal'ibali trained **1,441** ECD practitioners, strengthening their capacity to support language development, storytelling, and reading for enjoyment during children's critical early years.

Through partnerships with ECD centres, forums, community organisations, and government stakeholders, practitioners gained practical tools to create engaging literacy experiences that build vocabulary, comprehension, imagination, and a love of stories from an early age.

This work contributes directly to improving school readiness and ensuring children enter formal schooling with stronger foundational literacy skills.

Parents and Caregivers Trained

Recognising that literacy begins in the home, Nal'ibali trained **2,193** parents and caregivers during 2025. Training focused on helping caregivers integrate storytelling, conversations, songs, and shared reading into everyday family life. Caregivers were encouraged to become active participants in their children's literacy development, regardless of their own literacy levels. Feedback from participants consistently highlighted increased confidence in reading with children and a deeper understanding of how everyday interactions contribute to language and literacy development.

Reading Clubs

One of Nal'ibali's most significant achievements in 2025 was the continued growth of its Reading Club network. A total of **5,349** reading clubs were established, registered, supported, and tracked nationally, reaching **228 741** children. These reading clubs serve as safe and accessible literacy spaces where children can engage in storytelling, shared reading, creative activities, and peer learning. They continue to provide a critical platform for community ownership of literacy and remain one of Nal'ibali's most effective models for promoting sustained reading habits.

Literacy Campaigns & Events

In alignment with our strategic objective to amplify interactive social behaviour communication to strengthen reading culture, Nal'ibali implemented literacy campaigns, activations, and community engagement initiatives across all eight provinces during 2025. These activities were designed to promote reading for enjoyment, increase access to literacy opportunities, and engage children, caregivers, educators, and communities in building a sustainable reading culture.

Through partnerships with schools, libraries, municipalities, community organisations, government departments, and the private sector, Nal'ibali delivered a wide range of literacy-focused events, including reading festivals, storytelling sessions, literacy awareness campaigns, community dialogues, library activations, caregiver engagements, and reading club support activities.

2025 Literacy Programme and Activation Reach

- **71 literacy activations and community engagement events** conducted nationally.
- **1,062 adults reached,** including volunteers and community stakeholders
- **18,826 children reached** through storytelling sessions, read aloud sessions, literacy games, festivals, and community literacy events.

These activations created joyful and interactive literacy experiences that encouraged children to engage with books and stories while strengthening the capacity of adults to support reading and language development. The activities also provided important opportunities to raise awareness about the value of reading for enjoyment and to strengthen community ownership of literacy initiatives.

Literacy Resources Distributed

Access to quality reading materials remains essential for building a reading culture. In 2025, Nal'ibali distributed **52,189** literacy resources across eight provinces, including:

- Nal'ibali supplements;
- Children's storybooks;
- Anthologies;
- Reading club resources;
- Literacy promotion materials.

These resources enabled children, caregivers, educators, and reading club leaders to continue literacy activities in homes, schools, ECD centres, libraries, and community settings.

Strengthening Systems for Learning and Long-Term Impact

While direct implementation remained a priority, 2025 also marked a significant investment in strengthening Nal'ibali's Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (MERL) systems. To better understand programme effectiveness and measure long-term outcomes, Nal'ibali expanded its evidence-generation and learning systems through the:

- Development of a centralised data dashboard to track participation, engagement, and programme reach.
- Introduction of pre- and post-training assessments for caregivers, educators, and ECD practitioners.
- Development and implementation of a Reading Club Observation Tool to improve quality assurance and programme support.
- Improvement of systems integration to streamline reporting and strengthen organisational learning.
- Introduction of a longitudinal tracking model to assess medium-term literacy outcomes in selected communities.

These developments strengthen Nal'ibali's ability to move beyond measuring outputs and towards understanding behavioural change and literacy outcomes over time.

nalibali.org
#Nalib
#i

iam reader
bali

Innovation and Strategic Growth in 2025

Men's Literacy Imbizo Programme

One of the most exciting developments during 2025 was the expansion of Nal'ibali's Men's Literacy Imbizo Programme. The programme was developed in response to the recognised need to increase meaningful male participation in children's literacy and development.

Through workshops, dialogue sessions, community mobilisation, and literacy-focused engagement, the programme seeks to:

- Promote positive fatherhood and male caregiving.
- Increase men's involvement in children's literacy journeys.
- Establish community-based literacy hubs led by men.
- Strengthen literacy support within families and communities.

The programme moves beyond awareness raising by creating ongoing structures for mentorship, peer support, and community ownership.

By positioning men as literacy champions, the initiative contributes not only to literacy outcomes but also to broader social development goals, including responsible fatherhood, positive masculinity, and stronger family engagement.

Supporting the National Reading Champions Programme

Nal'ibali continued to play a key role in supporting the implementation of the Department of Basic Education's Reading Champions Programme across:

- Gauteng
- KwaZulu-Natal
- Western Cape
- Northwest
- Limpopo

Support included:

- Technical and project implementation support.
- Provincial and district-level Training of Trainers (ToT) coordination.
- Mentorship and coaching support.
- Digital onboarding and engagement through WhatsApp platforms.
- Literacy campaign implementation.
- Monitoring, reporting, and knowledge generation.

A major contribution was the development of a structured School-Based Reading Club Journey, providing Reading Champions with a six-week pathway to establish sustainable reading clubs that remain active after programme support concludes.

Contributing to National Literacy Systems

As an active member of the Literacy Collective, Nal'ibali continued contributing to systems-level literacy improvement efforts.

National Literacy Toolkit Development

During 2025, Nal'ibali supported the development of a comprehensive district-level Literacy Toolkit designed to strengthen:

- School literacy programmes.
- Family and caregiver engagement.
- Community-based reading initiatives.
- Reading club implementation.

This work positions Nal'ibali as both an implementation partner and a thought leader contributing practical experience to national literacy improvement efforts.

Looking Ahead

The achievements of 2025 demonstrate the power of community-driven literacy interventions when combined with strong partnerships, evidence-based approaches, and sustainable support systems.

As Nal'ibali continues to strengthen reading cultures across South Africa, the organisation remains committed to:

- Expanding access to literacy opportunities.
- Strengthening community ownership of reading initiatives.
- Deepening evidence generation and learning.
- Supporting national literacy priorities.
- Building sustainable literacy ecosystems where every child can experience the joy and lifelong benefits of reading.

Through the collective efforts of communities, partners, volunteers, educators, caregivers, and literacy champions, Nal'ibali continues to contribute towards a future where every child can become a confident and enthusiastic reader.

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 Eldorado Park community through innovative and engaging reading practices. The project commenced in February 2025 and is implemented in **5 primary schools** with a total enrolment of **2,642 learners** and **64 teachers**. Despite the 6-month pause experienced between April and September 2025, the project achieved significant milestones in year 1. The project successfully met its objectives and closed its Bramfischerville operations as planned in April 2025.

Milestones

- ☆ 5 Story Sparkers and a Project Lead appointed and trained using the Nal'ibali Curriculum. The training also covered Nal'ibali HR Policy, Child Protection Policy, and capturing of monitoring data using Survey CTO. A Story Sparker was assigned to each school.
- ☆ Programme resources were procured in March and delivered to each Story Sparker. These included a cellphone, stationery, story books, golf shirts which were co-branded with Nal'ibali and Trevor Noah Foundation logos, Nal'ibali branded materials kiosks which are used to demonstrate reading resources during activations.
- ☆ Story Sparkers and the Project Lead attended the young writer's workshop, conducted by the Publishing Specialist. Story Sparkers gained the knowledge and skills needed to support young writers in their schools, in preparation for the first children's story book.

Above Left: Children using the supplement during in-class story session.

Above Right: Supplement distribution after school.

Key Highlights

- **Baseline evaluation** was undertaken in March 2025 to assess the current status of early literacy development and attitudes toward reading among key stakeholders in the school environment. The report was submitted in May 2025.
- **Story Sparkers** attended a Computer Literacy programme which was offered by Afrika Tikkun and Gauteng Library Services. This initiative was aimed at equipping the youth of Eldorado Park with basic computer skills and knowledge. The programme also offered courses such as monitoring and evaluation, how to use Microsoft Excel, and coding.
- **Reading resources distributed: 45,000 supplements**, **1,040 story books** (**600** for reading corners, **400** for book-lending and **40** for give-away during competitions), **4,708 WRAD story cards** distributed.
- **30 learners** were trained in story writing. Stories were developed and the publishing of the children's book deferred to 2026.
- **Literacy Month:** Kliptown Primary School and Freedom Primary School hosted the Spelling Bee competitions during Literacy Month for children in grade 2 and grade 3. Kliptown Primary also celebrated Character Day whereby teachers and learners dressed up as their favourite book characters and brought along books to showcase their characters.
- **66 educators** and **2 Librarians** trained to set up or support in-school reading clubs.
- **48 community members** participated in Community of Practice (CoP) engagements across all 5 schools. WhatsApp groups were created for each school CoP. Members of CoPs include Child and Youth Care Workers, Librarians, Learner Support Agents, Reading Champions and parents and these are necessary structures to sustain reading interventions.
- **6,201 people** including children and adults were reached through activations.
- **24 radio sessions** broadcast on Eldos FM with every Tuesday at 10:30. At least 3 learners participated in live sessions every Saturday morning at 08:30, on the show named The Request Line.
- **931 children** participated in reading clubs regularly.

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.

- An endline evaluation was conducted in October 2025 as the projects were in their final year of implementation.
- A no-cost extension was granted up to March 2026 to catch up on implementation to accommodate activities that were delayed due to challenges experienced in year 1.
- In September 2025, the DGMT invited Nal'ibali to submit proposals for both Lesedi and Letsatsi projects, for another three-year phase. Nal'ibali submitted a proposal for Lesedi in December 2025. There was no submission for Letsatsi as the project still had approximately **R2 million** unspent budget at the end of year 3.
- Both Lesedi and Letsatsi projects celebrated WRAD events in February and hosted Literacy Festivals in September.
- During Literacy Month, Lesedi project launched the second edition of Seeds of Change, a collection of stories written by children.
- Caregiver programme: In Lesedi project, the number of caregivers who completed the caregiver training programme more than tripled in 2025, with **154** of the **169 caregivers** who started training sessions graduating across Danielskuil and Postmasburg, showing an impressive **91%** completion rate. This shows that the 3 consecutive days of training followed by 3 days of mentorship sessions was working. In Letsatsi project, **18 parents** started the training but only **10** completed the training and graduated in December 2025. Training was only conducted in Dealesville.

Key Highlights

- **Endline evaluation findings** showed that, book ownership increased, particularly amongst those caregivers who did not own books when they joined the programme. **36%** did not own any books at baseline, and at endline none reported not owning any books. While **33%** reported owning 6-10 books at baseline, this category increased to **53%** at endline. **50%** of households owned 3-9 children's books, and nearly **90%** had reading materials in the child's home language.

- **The number of parents** who reported never reading to children decreased, while parents reporting reading to their children "many times"increased from **44%** at baseline to **75%** at endline.

Above Left: Creative writing workshops, Lesedi project

Above Right: Children's Literacy Festival in Dealesville, Letsatsi project

Badirammogo Water User Association Project

Project Overview

The Badirammogo ECD-School-Community Literacy Project (formerly known as the Lebalelo project), funded by the Badirammogo Water User Association, is in its second year of the second phase of implementation. 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.

Milestones

- ☆ Reading resources: At the end of 2025 the project had distributed **10,275 newspaper supplements**, and **672 anthologies** excluding the 3rd edition of Ke Leeto anthology.
- ☆ Children's Literacy Festival: During the Literacy Festival held in September 2025, the project launched the 3rd edition of the children's anthology, Ke Leeto, a product of creative writing workshops administered for children early in the year. A total of **13 children** and **11 parents** contributed to this edition which contained 33 stories with related illustrations. **500 copies** were printed and distributed to the schools and partners.
- ☆ Training: **83 adults** (teachers, caregivers, ECD Practitioners and Reading Club Leaders) were trained on how to enhance reading and storytelling. The training is an important element of building mechanisms to sustain programme implementation and outcomes at the schools, homes and in the communities.

Left: Literacy Festival 2025

Right: Holiday programme

Key Highlights

- **Holiday programmes: 309 Children** from **9 participating schools** attended a holiday programme in July. Activities included reading sessions, creative writing exercises, listening to audio stories, spelling bee competitions, and outdoor games.
- **Reading competitions: 10 schools** participated in a Reading Competition which focused on reading ability and articulation in both Sepedi and English languages. All **10 learners** who represented their schools received a Nal'ibali bag, wristband, T-shirt, supplement, and storybooks. The top three learners received book hampers plus Takealot vouchers with a total value of **R1,500**, awarded as follows: R600 for 1st place, R500 for 2nd place, and R400 for 3rd place.

The 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). The primary purpose of the project is to create regular reading habits and develop children's reading skills. The project concluded the third phase of implementation in June 2025 and was awarded another grant for phase 4 which commenced in October 2025. In phase 3, the project employed 1,000 people spread across 85 sites in five provinces: Eastern Cape (EC), Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal (KZN), Limpopo, and the Western Cape (WC). In phase 4 the project reached all 9 provinces through partnerships with LIMA Rural Development in the Northern Cape, Penreach in Mpumalanga, and Axium in the Eastern Cape. Literacy Facilitators work in pairs to 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

- **Partnerships:** MOUs were signed with Penreach for **183 participants** in Mpumalanga, Axium for **109 participants** in the Eastern Cape, and LIMA provides monitoring and site support to **44 participants** in the Northern Cape.
- **Training: 18 participants** attended the Nal'ibali training in December 2025. The rest of the training was deferred to January 2026 due to recruitment challenges at the end of the year.

KIDS WHO CAN
READ CAN GO
ANYWHERE

DANCERS

WORLD
JUSTICE
ALOUD

D READ
SEBOLAT
DAY

Reflections from Implementation and Evaluation

MERL for the Core programme

To integrate and strengthen the collaboration between programme teams and MERL, the MERL department was dissolved in 2025 and a MERL Officer allocated to each of the Core programme and Special Projects teams. This has led to the improvement of the design of data collection tools, several trainings on tools, approaches and data quality, as well as improved data collection and monitoring.

MERL Core focus areas

Reading habits and motivation in children were supported through activations conducted across the country and by providing beneficiaries with reading resources.

Adult behaviour and attitudinal change were supported by training adults to create positive reading experiences using different storytelling and reading approaches.

The number of registered reading clubs was tracked, including the reading resources they have and how they use them. Provincial administrators also observed children's engagement during sessions when visiting reading clubs.

MERL for Special Projects

Nal'ibali's MERL Officers played a central role in generating evidence on the reach, quality, outcomes and learning emerging from literacy programmes across the special projects. Through baseline studies, ongoing monitoring and endline evaluations, MERL helped the organisation understand not only what was delivered, but what changed for children, caregivers, educators, field teams and communities.

Baseline assessments confirmed that South Africa continues to face a deep literacy crisis, with some children entering school without strong early language, vocabulary and comprehension foundations. The challenge is more severe in under-resourced rural and township communities, where families often have limited access to books, libraries, safe learning spaces and home-language reading materials. With these findings, Nal'ibali's work remains highly relevant because it strengthens the foundation that comes before formal reading success: children's motivation to read, exposure to stories, confidence, language development, caregiver engagement and community reading culture.

The evidence across the special projects shows that Nal'ibali is contributing to literacy development in three important ways:

- Children are becoming more interested in books, stories and reading activities.
- Adults around children are becoming more confident and better equipped to support literacy.
- Communities are beginning to see reading as a shared responsibility rather than only a school-based activity.

The Trevor Noah Foundation (TNF) Khula Funda Project

The Eldorado Park baseline confirmed that Nal'ibali's intervention is responding to real and urgent school needs. Across the five participating schools, literacy challenges were widespread: many learners were not reading at grade level, comprehension was weak, and some Grade 3 learners were functioning closer to Grade 1 level. Schools also reported limited home support, poverty, trauma, multilingual learning challenges and insufficient home-language resources. The baseline provides a strong case for Nal'ibali's planned support through Story Sparkers, reading corners, book-lending, educator workshops, supplements, World Read Aloud Day activities and community media engagement.

Siyafunda Community Learning Hubs (KwaZulu-Natal)

Child outcomes improved in key developmental areas. By endline, **61%** of assessed children were on track in cognition and executive functioning, compared with **48%** at baseline, and **61%** were on track in emergent literacy and language, also up from **48%**. Practitioners and parents reported that children showed greater interest in books, longer attention spans, improved confidence and a stronger ability to retell stories. Parents also reported increased storytelling and book-sharing at home, while practitioners reported using more stories, books and play-based approaches in their classrooms.

Badirammogo (Limpopo)

The child beneficiary evaluation showed strong developmental gains among ECD children and meaningful improvements in reading behaviour and oral reading fluency among Grade 3 learners. ECD children shifted substantially from “falling behind” categories toward being “on track” across developmental domains, and all assessed Grade 3 learners reported reading five or more times per week at endline, showing that Nal’ibali’s reading-for-enjoyment approach is helping build regular reading habits. The evaluation also showed that comprehension, inferencing and higher-order vocabulary require more deliberate support from educators alongside reading-for-enjoyment activities.

Social Employment Fund (SEF) Phase 3

The SEF Phase 3 evaluation demonstrated the value of combining literacy promotion with youth employment. Nal’ibali trained and deployed more than 900 young people as Literacy Facilitators and Team Leaders across under-resourced communities. The project engaged **630** ECD sites, supported **444** reading clubs and held **1,564** community activations, and supported **9,775** households to apply for library cards. Beyond the numbers, children showed improved confidence, communication and interest in books, caregivers reported stronger bonding with children through storytelling, and Literacy Facilitators gained confidence, workplace skills and improved employability.

Letsatsi and Lesedi

Evidence from the Letsatsi and Lesedi project showed that reading-for-enjoyment can shift community culture when embedded through schools, ECD centres, libraries, social workers, NGOs and community champions. Children participated in story sessions, creative writing workshops, book launches and community radio features, and some became authors of their own stories. Educators reported high use of Nal’ibali materials, and 100% of surveyed educators agreed that reading aloud is important.

Impact stories

Nal'ibali's work continues to create meaningful change in the lives of children, caregivers and educators. The strongest impact themes emerging from 2025 are increased reading motivation, improved confidence and participation, greater access to books, stronger caregiver involvement, improved educator and practitioner practice, and growing community ownership of literacy activities.

IMPACT OF INCLUSIVITY IN READING CLUBS

"When my son first joined the reading club, he struggled with even the simplest sentences. Reading felt like a mountain too high to climb, and as a parent, it was painful to watch him lose confidence in himself... Everything changed when he became part of the reading club. Every week he came home more excited, carrying new stories to tell me... He no longer saw reading as a chore but as an adventure."

— Caregiver, Gauteng

"Amahle Majola, a five-year-old girl, began her reading journey with the Buzzy Bee Reading Club in Tembisa. Initially shy, she struggled to focus on words and form sentences. Concerned, her reading club leader recommended a healthcare visit, which led to a diagnosis of Autism Level 1. The reading club leader and an Amplifier worked together to adapt activities and supplements to Amahle's needs. Since then, Amahle's reading skills have improved remarkably: she can now read certain stories and share them with the group confidently, has developed a fondness for textless storybooks, and participates more actively in group activities."

— As narrated by the reading club leader, Nonhlanhla Willow Mdlani, Gauteng

COMMUNITY BUY-IN

"A school principal in Pennville contacted the Nal'ibali team to establish a reading club, officially launching it alongside a Literacy Day celebration. Stakeholders were invited, children engaged enthusiastically with the reading materials provided, and the school went on to create a dedicated reading corner using Nal'ibali materials, fully incorporating the DEAR period and supplements into daily school life."

— Mam Langa, Gauteng

"An ECD owner who attended a Nal'ibali training workshop described it as an eye-opener, immediately requesting training for her own staff and 40 other ECD practitioners in her community, and offering her hall as a free training venue."

— Thulisile Mdluli, Mpumalanga

READING RESOURCES

"As part of the annual Smart Starters Unite awards, Fortunate Mkhwanazi received the Growth and Impact Award, with her ECD receiving a hanging library of quality picture books. "Having such beautiful books makes our learning corner come alive... I believe these books will spark their imagination, boost their confidence, and help them learn in a playful and enjoyable way."

— Fortunate Mkhwanazi, Mpumalanga

Impact stories cont.

Partner organisations across Mpumalanga, including Study Buddies and the iNdlovukazi Back to School Campaign, reported that Nal'ibali's book donations and story sessions transformed their reading clubs, opening doors to new partnerships, including grants from the DG Murray Trust for affiliated ECD centres.

PARTNERSHIPS

"A partnership between Nal'ibali and Splendid Sports has grown to include ECDs and local primary schools, with training sessions resulting in newly registered reading clubs supported by Nal'ibali book donations. The story highlights the important role men can play in literacy development, helping to break the stigma that reading is a "feminine" activity, particularly for boys in rural areas like Kwa Mhlanga."

— Righardt le Roux, Provincial Coordinator, Mpumalanga

"For the past three years, we've had to make do without access to the school library... thanks to Nal'ibali's generosity, we've established a vibrant reading club that brings stories to life for our children. The children's eyes light up... book donations and story sessions have transformed our reading club. Together, we're creating a brighter future for our children, one story at a time."

— Study Buddies, Mpumalanga.

"Our partnership with Nal'ibali continues to open doors for our ECD network. Through this partnership, we have not only promoted the love of reading and storytelling among young children but also opened new doors of opportunity for our network of ECD centres. Three of our affiliated centres were recently selected to be awarded grants by the DG Murray Trust to support early learning centres and to strengthen their work. This achievement is a shining example of what happens when we mobilize support, share resources, and work hand in hand."

— Zandile Mpholo, Mpumalanga.

RECOGNITION FROM THE EDUCATION SECTOR

"Many schools managed to establish reading clubs and are very active. There is a great improvement in learners' participation in classroom activities, reading comprehension, writing skills and vocabulary... Most of the schools that are participating in Nal'ibali programmes are performing very well in our provincial spelling bee competition."

— Nompumelelo Shongwe, Senior Education Specialist SLIS, Gert Sibande District, Mpumalanga

MERL Findings

- Reading-for-enjoyment is a strong entry point for building lifelong literacy habits.
- Reading becomes a favourite activity when it is fun, social and rooted in children's home languages and lived experiences.
- Trusted local anchors such as libraries, schools, ECD centres, NGOs and community champions improve programme legitimacy and sustainability.
- Training and mentorship can shift classroom practices but need follow-up to sustain quality.
- Enjoyment builds motivation and frequency, but deeper literacy outcomes require intentional questioning, vocabulary building and educator-guided story discussions.
- Caregiver engagement is essential and should remain a core part of programme design; it is currently uneven, requiring flexible approaches that fit family schedules, work demands and literacy levels.
- Access to relevant books remains one of the strongest enablers of reading culture, especially in rural and multilingual contexts.
- Story Sparkers and literacy facilitators are a high-value part of the model because they support children while also gaining employability skills and community leadership experience.
- Shortages of age-appropriate, home-language books remain a setback to literacy development, underlining the need to invest in developing more home-language books.

Alignment of MERL Findings with Nal'ibali's Theory of Change

The findings across all programmes affirm Nal'ibali's theory of change by showing that when children, caregivers, educators, volunteers and community partners are given access to books, storytelling support, reading-for-enjoyment activities and practical training, they develop the motivation, confidence and behaviours needed to build a culture of reading. Children are becoming more interested in books, more confident to participate, and more willing to read or tell stories; caregivers are beginning to support reading at home; educators and ECD practitioners are gaining skills to create richer literacy environments; and reading clubs are being sustained. This confirms that literacy development is not achieved through books alone, but through a wider ecosystem of supportive adults, accessible reading materials, joyful reading experiences and local ownership.

The MERL evidence shared in this report tells a strong literacy story. Nal'ibali is making a meaningful contribution to South Africa's literacy landscape by creating joyful, language-rich environments where children want to read, adults feel more confident to support them, and communities begin to take ownership of reading. The work is important in contexts where children face poverty, limited access to books, weak home literacy support and overstretched schools. Nal'ibali's model works best when reading-for-enjoyment is frequent, well-resourced, locally anchored and supported by trained adults. By strengthening the joy of reading, Nal'ibali can continue to support children not only to love stories, but to become confident, capable readers who can participate fully in learning and life.

2025 Financial Overview

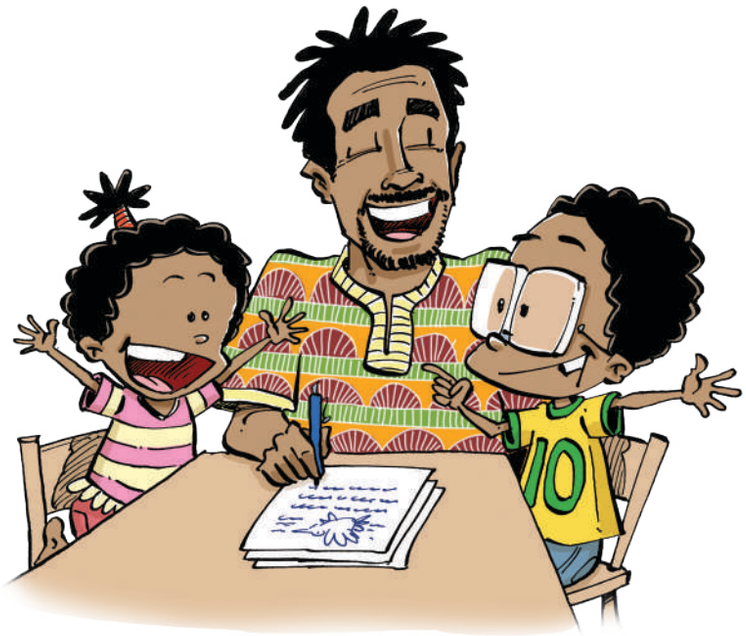
Nal'ibali obtained another unqualified audit opinion from our external auditors, BDO South Africa, for the year ended 31 Dec 2025.

The external audit for the 2025 financial year resulted in an unmodified audit opinion, with no material findings or reportable irregularities identified. Furthermore, the auditors have confirmed that the organisation remains a going concern, supported by available cash resources and forward-looking financial projections.

For the year ended 31 December 2025, total revenue amounted to **R54.5 million**, reflecting a decrease from **R64.0 million** in the prior year, primarily due to reduced funding levels across key programmes. Operating expenditure decreased significantly to **R57.2 million** (2024: R73.4 million), demonstrating deliberate cost containment and alignment of expenditure with available funding. This resulted in a reduced operating deficit of **R2.4 million**, compared to R9.2 million in 2024.

The overall deficit for the year improved to **R2.1 million** (2024: R8.4 million), indicating strengthened financial management and theorganisation's ability to respond to a constrained funding environment. Cash and cash equivalents increased to **R9.8 million** (2024: R8.7 million), supported by improved cash flow management during the year.

Overall, while the organisation continues to report deficits driven by fluctuations in funding cycles, these are managed within a sustainable funding model. Nal'ibali remains financially viable, with strong governance, effective cost management, and sufficient reserves to support ongoing operations and programme delivery.



The Nal'ibali Trust

(Registration number: IT547/2016)
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2025

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2025

Figures in Rand	Notes	2025	2024
Assets			
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	2	1 544 037	1 417 595
Current Assets			
Trade and other receivables	3	23 952 044	26 573 528
Project receivable	4	-	1 134 742
Prepayments	5	38 269	351 492
Cash and cash equivalents	6	9 815 572	8 711 607
		33 805 885	**36 771 369**
Total Assets		**35 349 922**	**38 188 964**
Equity and Liabilities			
Equity			
Trust capital	7	1 000	1 000
Accumulated surplus		11 688 169	13 785 524
		11 689 169	**13 786 524**
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Deferred income	4	22 479 219	23 756 287
Trade and other payables	8	1 181 534	646 153
		23 660 753	**24 402 440**
Total Equity and Liabilities		**35 349 922**	**38 188 964**

The Nal'ibali Trust

(Registration number: IT547/2016)
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2025

Statement of Comprehensive Income

Figures in Rand	Notes	2025	2024
Revenue	9	54 477 040	64 006 501
Other income		333 920	223 563
Operating expenses	10	(57 162 798)	(73 428 874)
Operating deficit		**(2 351 838)**	**(9 198 810)**
Investment revenue	11	254 481	798 097
Deficit for the year		**(2 097 357)**	**(8 400 713)**
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive deficit for the year		**(2 097 357)**	**(8 400 713)**

Notes to the Financial Statements

Figures in Rand	2025	2024

2. Property, plant and equipment

	2025			2024		
	Cost	Accumulated depreciation	Carrying value	Cost	Accumulated depreciation	Carrying value
Computer equipment	1 793 561	(1 409 776)	383 785	1 582 047	(1 152 342)	429 705
Furniture and fixtures	363 489	(102 283)	261 206	211 838	(84 000)	127 838
Motor vehicles	1 899 246	(1 149 305)	749 941	2 284 356	(1 534 415)	749 941
Office equipment	186 410	(40 598)	145 812	138 011	(32 468)	105 543
Other equipment	12 748	(9 455)	3 293	12 748	(8 180)	4 568
Total	**4 255 454**	**(2 711 417)**	**1 544 037**	**4 229 000**	**(2 811 405)**	**1 417 595**

Reconciliation of property, plant and equipment - 2025

	Opening balance	Additions	Depreciation	Closing balance
Computer equipment	429 705	211 514	(257 434)	383 785
Furniture and fixtures	127 838	151 650	(18 282)	261 206
Motor vehicles	749 941	-	-	749 941
Office equipment	105 543	48 399	(8 130)	145 812
Other equipment	4 568	-	(1 275)	3 293
	1 417 595	**411 563**	**(285 121)**	**1 544 037**

Reconciliation of property, plant and equipment - 2024

	Opening balance	Additions	Disposals	Depreciation	Closing balance
Computer equipment	526 802	158 307	33 934	(289 338)	429 705
Furniture and fixtures	146 120	-	-	(18 282)	127 838
Motor vehicles	749 941	-	-	-	749 941
Office equipment	31 095	19 275	63 303	(8 130)	105 543
Other equipment	5 843	-	-	(1 275)	4 568
	1 459 801	**177 582**	**97 237**	**(317 025)**	**1 417 595**

3. Trade and other receivables

Trade receivables	22 349 958	24 975 344
Deposits	107 111	124 725
VAT	1 582 979	1 434 408
Other receivable	(88 004)	39 051
	23 952 044	**26 573 528**

Notes to the Financial Statements

Figures in Rand	2025	2024

4. Project receivable/(Deferred revenue)

The major components of the Project receivable/(Deferred revenue liability) balance are:

Project receivable		
Letsatsi Solar Park Projects (The DG Murray Trust)	-	710 769
The Trevor Noah Foundation project	-	423 973
	-	**1 134 742**
Deferred revenue		
Lesedi Solar Park Projects (The DG Murray Trust)	-	(485 850)
Standard Bank of South Africa	-	(4 167 074)
Liberty - Yizani Sefuna Project	-	(938 598)
Volkswagen South Africa project	-	(450 540)
National Lotteries Commisson	-	(4 402 000)
Lebalelo Water Users Association	-	(106 612)
The Trevor Noah Foundation project	(1 262 077)	(360 694)
Social Employment Fund project 2	-	(563 082)
Social Employment Fund project 3	-	(12 393 860)
Other	1 134 742	112 023
Social Employment Fund project 4	(22 059 062)	-
The D G Murray Trust	(292 822)	-
	(22 479 219)	**(23 756 287)**

5. Prepayments

Prepayment	38 269	351 492
Net prepayments		
Current assets	38 269	351 492

6. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents consist of:

Bank balances	9 814 884	8 710 919
Short-term deposits	688	688
	9 815 572	**8 711 607**

7. Trust capital

Capital account / Trust capital		
Balance at beginning of year	1 000	1 000

8. Trade and other payables

Trade payables	(266 893)	1 471
Payroll accruals	989 632	506 635
Accrued expenses	458 795	135 563
Other payables	-	2 484
	1 181 534	**646 153**

Notes to the Financial Statements

Figures in Rand	2025	2024

4. Project receivable/(Deferred revenue)

The major components of the Project receivable/(Deferred revenue liability) balance are:

Project receivable		
Letsatsi Solar Park Projects (The DG Murray Trust)	-	710 769
The Trevor Noah Foundation project	-	423 973
	-	**1 134 742**
Deferred revenue		
Lesedi Solar Park Projects (The DG Murray Trust)	-	(485 850)
Standard Bank of South Africa	-	(4 167 074)
Liberty - Yizani Sefuna Project	-	(938 598)
Volkswagen South Africa project	-	(450 540)
National Lotteries Commisson	-	(4 402 000)
Lebalelo Water Users Association	-	(106 612)
The Trevor Noah Foundation project	(1 262 077)	(360 694)
Social Employment Fund project 2	-	(563 082)
Social Employment Fund project 3	-	(12 393 860)
Other	1 134 742	112 023
Social Employment Fund project 4	(22 059 062)	-
The D G Murray Trust	(292 822)	-
	(22 479 219)	**(23 756 287)**

5. Prepayments

Prepayment	38 269	351 492
Net prepayments		
Current assets	38 269	351 492

6. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents consist of:

Bank balances	9 814 884	8 710 919
Short-term deposits	688	688
	9 815 572	**8 711 607**

7. Trust capital

Capital account / Trust capital		
Balance at beginning of year	1 000	1 000

8. Trade and other payables

Trade payables	(266 893)	1 471
Payroll accruals	989 632	506 635
Accrued expenses	458 795	135 563
Other payables	-	2 484
	1 181 534	**646 153**

Notes to the Financial Statements

Figures in Rand	2025	2024

17. Going concern

The financial statements have been prepared on the basis of accounting policies applicable to a going concern. This basis presumes that funds will be available to finance future operations and that the realisation of assets and settlement of liabilities, contingent obligations and commitments will occur in the ordinary course of business.

The trustees believe that the trust has adequate financial resources to continue in operation for the foreseeable future and accordingly the financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The trustees have satisfied themselves that the trust is in a sound financial position and that it has access to sufficient borrowing facilities to meet its foreseeable cash requirements. The trustees are not aware of any new material changes that may adversely impact the trust. The trustees are also not aware of any material non-compliance with statutory or regulatory requirements or of any pending changes to legislation which may affect the trust.

Governance

2025 marked a significant year in the journey of Nal'ibali. Nal'ibali found itself at a strategic crossroads driven by external and internal factors. The Leadership team realised that if the organisation was to remain relevant in the next decade, a new strategic direction was needed. We must innovate our interventions, collaborate for impact, diversify our funding and reduce our costs.

External context

The donor landscape has become dynamic and unpredictable as shown by USAID's international closure in February. Donors require leaner implementers that create more value and impact. Beneficiaries keep on evolving in the way in which they interact with books, literacy and the world. Competition for funding is becoming fierce with the reduction of especially larger donors.

Internal context

Nal'ibali is well known in the literacy space and co-leads the development of solutions to respond to SA's literacy crisis, supported by a sizeable body of evidence. There is a demand for our quality multilingual literacy resources. We have a strong presence on radio and on digital channels. We have a strong relationship with DBE and have a large reach (especially with the WRAD campaign) and have a strong funding base.

Areas that needed to improve were:

- Departments historically worked in isolation;
- Organisational structure has not grown with the organizational needs and there was a lack of critical skills in the organisation;
- Lack of a performance culture;
- Lack of integrated systems that can provide real-time, relevant and accessible information;
- Lack of historic data;
- Lack of accessible reporting from our financial system, restricted our ability to integrate financial reporting into progress monitoring at departmental level;
- Lack of integration between the financial and operational systems increasing risk and duplicating work.

Strategic review

A complete strategic review was conducted with all departments in 2025 to identify critical skills gaps, redundant roles and inefficiencies.

As result of the review, the following strategic imperatives clearly emerged:

- Restructure roles to ensure efficiency and competence;
- Empower Human Resources and Finance;
- Leap-frog current systems by exploring AI-driven technology to integrate system, improve data capturing and reporting; and
- Drive a new culture of accountability, innovation, collaboration, reporting and excellence.

Staff in redundant positions were retrenched, structural changes made to remove barriers between departments and cost-cutting measures implemented to improve our value proposition.

We believe that as we drive the new strategy, the organisation will be well positioned to thrive for many years to come.

References

1. Eriksson, K., Lindvall, J., Helenius, O. and Ryve, A., 2022. Higher-achieving children are better at estimating the number of books at home: Evidence and implications. Frontiers in Psychology, 13, p.1026387.

2. Anggraini, D.A., Ekawati, R., Arifin, S., Kuswandi, D. and Ramli, M., 2025. Declining Interest in Reading in Elementary School Students: An Analysis of Inhibiting Factors and Their Impact on Learning Achievement. Eduvest-Journal of Universal Studies, 5(6), pp.6445-6463.

3. Ngwenya, E.T. and Ngubane, S.P., 2024. A systematic review of key challenges in implementing Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education in South African Schools. Journal of Literary Criticism, Comparative Linguistics and Literary Studies, 45(1), p.1980

4. Dayimani, S., Hurdles to Language Growth: Stimulation of Language Learning Through Reading in a South African Rural Primary School.

5. Bavuma, S.S. and Nomlala, L., 2025. The Impact of Reading Habits on English Proficiency in South African Grade 4 Township Learners. Ideguru: Jurnal Karya Ilmiah Guru, 10(3), pp.2665-2674.

6. Morse, K. and Polzer-Ngwato, T., 2025. The National Reading Barometer (NRB): A Systems Approach to Leveraging Change in the Reading Ecosystem.

7. Nunan, R. and Shantone, J., 2026. Teacher Preparedness To Teach Reading In The Foundation Phase: A Case Study In KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. Educational Practice and Theory, 48(1), pp.27-48.

8. Rugambwa, N.O. and Lyaka, M., 2026. Advancing Child-Centred Research Methodologies in the School Library Context. In AI-Driven Research Innovations in Computing and Information Science (pp. 247-284). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.

9. McDonald, M., 2026. Fostering Student Joy and Motivation for Reading.

10. Papoutsaki, K., 2026. Development and Assessment of Writing and Spelling Skills: Prerequisites, Writing Systems, and Educational Implications. Journal Of Education And Sociology, 5(1), pp.11-20.

11. McDonald, M., 2026. Fostering Student Joy and Motivation for Reading.

12. Kyei, J.J. and Kyei, P.S., 2026. The home matters: influences of household and student factors on early grade learning outcomes in Ghana. Early Child Development and Care, pp.1-19.

13. Mugabo, E., Tusiime, M. and Nzabalirwa, W., 2026. Family Literacy Perceptions And Early English Literacy Skills In Pre-Primary Grade One Children In Gasabo District, Rwanda. Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies, 17(1), pp.25-35.

14. Steinmann, I., Medgyesi, M. and Symeonaki, M., 2026. Do increasing participation rates in early childhood education narrow the reading achievement gap between high-and low-SES primary school students?. Large-scale Assessments in Education, 14(1), p.1.

15. Coşkun, B. and Göktaş, S.A., 2026. The role of home and classroom factors in shaping reading achievement: A multilevel study based on PIRLS 2021 Türkiye data. Studies in Educational Evaluation, 89, p.101598.

16. Li, P., Yan, Z., Xu, L., Wang, R., Li, D. and Ye, Y., 2026. Overcoming early reading challenges: The crucial roles of home literacy environment, school environment, and approaches to learning. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 96(1), pp.475-495.

17. Somo, Charity Mokgaetji, and Sikhulile Bonginkosi Msezane. "Parental home-and school-based involvement in rural schools in the Limpopo province, South Africa." South African Journal of Education 46, no. 1 (2026): 1-9.

18. Letswalo, V.M. and Rapeta, S.J., 2025. Exploring the impact of parental engagement on academic achievement in South African primary schools: A qualitative case study. International Journal of Research in Business & Social Science, 14(5).

19. Siziba, T., Geduld, B. and Du Toit-Brits, C., 2025, June. Beyond the classroom: how parents view motivation as a key to self-directed learning in township schools. In Frontiers in Education (Vol. 10, p. 1587470). Frontiers Media SA.

20. Holness, W. and Clark, B., 2025. The South African Government's Budgetary Obligations to Tackle the Severely Strained Resource-and-Funding Environment of Inclusive and Holistic Early Childhood Development. Obiter, 46(3), pp.539-576.

21. Access to Early Childhood Development programmes

22. Bierstekeri, Linda, and Nicholas Dowdallii. "Progress and pathways towards quality early learning: From the home to structured learning programmes." Enhancing early childhood development (2024): 96.

23. Cullen, M., Calitz, A.P., Boucher, S. and Manakana, L., 2024, January. The Factors that Influence Early Childhood Development Readiness for the 4IR. In IFIP International Conference on Digital Forensics (pp. 43-55). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

24. Mwinyi, M.J., 2025. Teaching Literacy with Simplified Instruction and Evidence-based Pedagogy to Improve Early Childhood Reading.

25. Stern, J.M., Jukes, M.C., Cilliers, J., Fleisch, B., Taylor, S. and Mohohlwane, N., 2026. Persistence and emergence of literacy skills: Long-Term impacts of an effective early grade reading intervention in South Africa. Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 19(1), pp.1-22.

26. Bruwer, B.J. and van Staden, A., 2026. Building Foundations for Biliteracy: Aligning Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment in Early Literacy. In Policies and Issues in Deaf Studies and Education (pp. 411-444). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.

27. Sezen-Barrie, A. and Huang, Y., 2026. Youth storytelling in climate change education: a systematic review of research designs, pedagogical scaffolding, and digital tools (2014–2024). Environmental Education Research, pp.1-37.

28. Hanser, H., Geduld, B., Kunene, N. and Kloppers, M., 2026. Teaching for thinking: developing metacognitive and self-directed learning skills in foundation phase literacy. Cogent Education, 13(1), p.2643537.

29. Nunan, R. and Shantone, J., 2026. Teacher Preparedness To Teach Reading In The Foundation Phase: A Case Study In KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. Educational Practice and Theory, 48(1), pp.27-48.

30. Esposito, L.S., 2026. Students' Multimodal Reading of Culturally Conscious Stories: A Multiple Case Study Analysis (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University).

31. Mligo, I.R., 2026. Knowledge, attitudes and practices of educators and administrators on pre-primary education in Dodoma, Tanzania. Research on Preschool and Primary Education, pp.13-27.

32. Okoye, Felix I. "Encouraging eco-pedagogical awareness through play amongst early childhood development educators: A reflection on the South African context." Journal of Education (2026).

33. Stern, J.M., Jukes, M.C., Cilliers, J., Fleisch, B., Taylor, S. and Mohohlwane, N., 2026. Persistence and emergence of literacy skills: Long-Term impacts of an effective early grade reading intervention in South Africa. Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 19(1), pp.1-22.

34. Hanser, H., Geduld, B., Kunene, N. and Kloppers, M., 2026. Teaching for thinking: developing metacognitive and self-directed learning skills in foundation phase literacy. Cogent Education, 13(1), p.2643537.

35. Nunan, R. and Shantone, J., 2026. Teacher Preparedness To Teach Reading In The Foundation Phase: A Case Study In KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. Educational Practice and Theory, 48(1), pp.27-48.

36. Kosi, T. and Nomlomo, V., 2026. An integrated approach to isiXhosa literacy teaching and learning in the foundation phase: Current practices and prospects. South African Journal of Childhood Education, 16(1), p.1774.

37. Cremin, T., Mukherjee, S.J., Bearne, E. and Therova, D., 2025. Pre-service teachers as readers: moving beyond reading frequency as a marker of engagement. The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, 48(3), pp.229-247.

38. Ahn, J.N., Hu, D. and Vega, M., 2020. "Do as I do, not as I say": Using social learning theory to unpack the impact of role models on students' outcomes in education. Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 14(2), p.e12517.

39. Tohet, M. and Nuraini, F., 2026. More Than Teaching Values: Teacher Exemplarity and Moral Formation through the Figurative Learning Model. Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Studies, 5(1), pp.40-55.

40. Tichenor, M., Piechura, K. and Heins, E., 2021. Motivating preservice teachers to read for fun. Srate Journal, 30(1), p.n1.

41. Cao, Y., Cho, M. and Kim, Y.S.G., 2026. Exploring teacher language use and early literacy achievement. Learning and Instruction, 101, p.102256.

42. Wanzek, J., Wood, C. and Schatschneider, C., 2023. Teacher vocabulary use and student language and literacy achievement. Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 66(9), pp.3574-3587.

NALIBALI
Lixesha lokufunda ngokuvakalayo!
It's time to read aloud!
BELIEVE IN YOU
IT'S OK NOT TO
NEVER GIVE
THE BEST IS YET T
CHIN UP, SMILE
LIVE YOUR
FE IS BEAUTIFUL

Nal'ibali

IT STARTS WITH A STORY.

Thank You

To our partners, donors & stakeholders

We are deeply grateful for your continued support and belief in the power of stories and literacy. Together, we are building a reading and storytelling nation — one child, one family, one community at a time. Thank you for walking this journey with us.

All our Funders

Thank you

Nal'ibali
TheNalibaliChannel
nalibaliSA
@nalibaliSA
@nalibalisa
@nalibalisa
nalibalisa
The Nal'ibali Trust
+27 0600 44 22 54