

## Why Saide's African Storybook initiative?

There is a severe shortage of appropriate books for early reading in the languages of Africa – a shortage that has the greatest impact on the literacy development of the poorest 80% of people in African countries.

There is often no reading material in children's home languages, and reading material in English (or other language of wider communication) is mostly scarce and unfamiliar. As a result, in reading lessons children do little more than recite the alphabet and read individual sentences on the chalkboard, or repeat memorised words from the few books that are available. In some instances reading lessons are on the school timetable but never actually implemented due to lack of reading materials.

The African Storybook is addressing this scarcity of reading material in African languages through an **alternative publishing model** – providing digital openly licensed storybooks, with creation and translation tools for users to publish their own storybooks. On the ASb website you can:

- **Create** your own picture storybooks in your own language/s,
- **Search** an expanding library of storybooks created elsewhere in Africa,
- **Choose** the ones you like and use 'as is', or
- **Translate or adapt** them for the language, context or level you need.

The ASb initiative shows that sufficient storybooks can be published and available to teachers, caregivers and librarians, without having to consider the size of the buying market for those storybooks. **Open licensing means that storybooks can be shared without paying a fee or asking permission.** It is possible for people themselves to build a collection of storybooks in their language. As a result, the website has storybooks not only in widely-spoken languages (like Kiswahili or Luganda), but also in marginalised ones (like Ng'aturkana or Lunyole).

The content (both pictures and text) is free and can be accessed on a range of devices. If print copies are required, the only costs are for printing and, in some cases, for publishing services to prepare the storybooks for cost effective large print runs.



Open access to picture storybooks in the languages of Africa  
For children's literacy, enjoyment and imagination.



Address

Saide

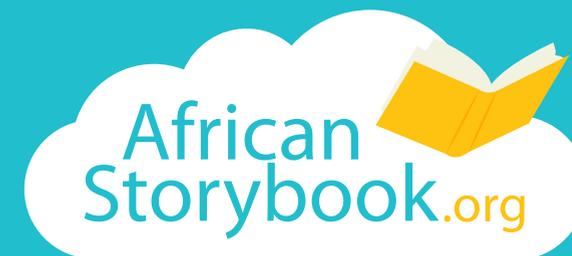
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Braamfontein Johannesburg,  
South Africa

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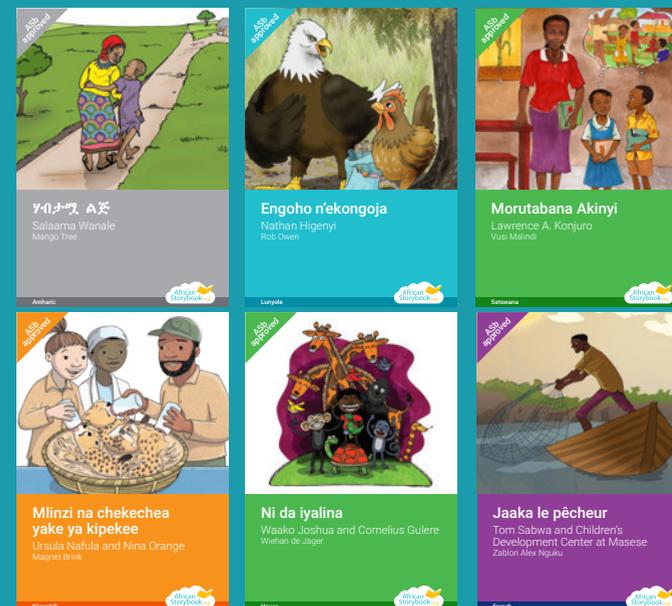
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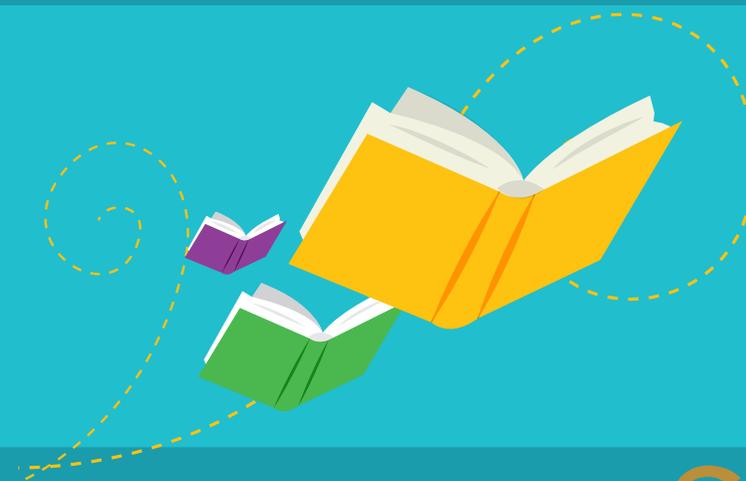
[africanstorybook@saide.org.za](mailto:africanstorybook@saide.org.za)



Stories for multilingual literacy development

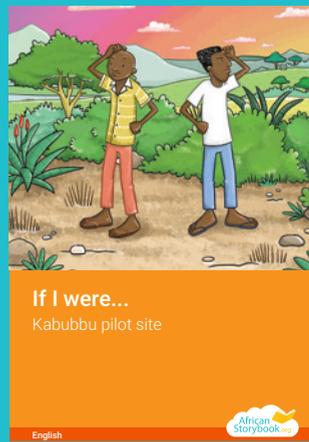
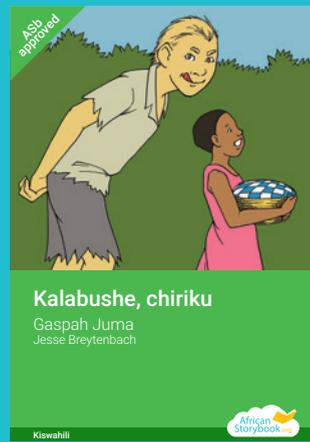
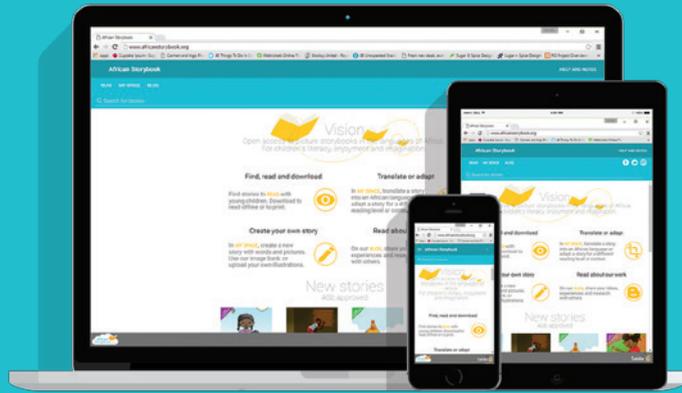


Comic Relief UK,  
89 Albert Embankment,  
London,  
SE1 7TP UK



[www.africanstorybook.org](http://www.africanstorybook.org)





Write to us at:  
[africanstorybook@saide.org.za](mailto:africanstorybook@saide.org.za)

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## How do people access the website?

In places where users have tablets or laptops, or a computer lab with internet connectivity, there is direct access at [www.africanstorybook.org](http://www.africanstorybook.org). Storybooks can be downloaded and saved ahead of time and then projected onto a screen or wall using a data projector. In places with electricity and a photocopier, but no internet, print copies of the storybooks can be made.

In education centres and mobile libraries equipped with laptops and projectors or large tablets, children can be involved in group reading of digitally available storybooks.



For caregivers in home settings, the storybooks are very readable on mobile phones. The ASb Reader (an App for Android and Apple) is downloadable for free, and will reduce the data costs of accessing the website.



## Who writes and creates our stories?

Our growing community of digital storybook creators, editors and publishers is the future and sustainability of the ASb website.

Because our website encourages creation and translation, it empowers ordinary users, and gives them a sense of agency. This is often not possible in large scale literacy programmes using conventionally published materials. Stories are developed and written by the communities that will use the storybooks, and the content is strongly local.

In addition to the self-publishing of ASb community publishers, the ASb has its own centralised publishing programme that produces about 50 new storybooks each year. The ASb team sources and develops story manuscripts in writing workshops and through work with local partners. The manuscripts are then sent to the central office for production and online publishing. The storybooks are illustrated by local illustrators, ensuring that both text and pictures will resonate with children and caregivers. The goal of the ASb publishing programme is to produce storybooks that are enjoyable for children and useful to teachers.

Those storybooks and translations that ASb publishes are 'ASb approved', but we also review a selection of community stories, and many of them pass the basic quality check and can be approved.

## How are we encouraging use of the website and storybooks?

### Pilot sites

In 2014 and 2015, we worked in 14 pilot sites: schools and community libraries in rural and peri-urban contexts in Kenya, Lesotho, South Africa, and Uganda. We tested methods of delivery and supported storybook creation, translation, adaptation and use.

### Partnerships

We have a network of international and pilot country-based partnerships. This facilitates the sharing of stories and storybooks. We also share ways of creating, translating, printing and using storybooks to improve literacy development in primary schools and community contexts in African countries.

### Look at our blog

<http://www.africanstorybook.org/wordpress/> to see the interesting ways in which people are thinking about and using our website.

### Implementation across a systems

We are working to get our storybooks:

- Approved and on the websites of Departments of Education,
- Printed and distributed in large numbers to schools,
- Used in digital or printed format across library networks, and
- Integrated into teacher education programmes.