African Storybook

## Overview and Services

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Overview of African Storybook work

There is a severe shortage of contextually appropriate materials for young African children learning to read, particularly in indigenous languages. This is a major factor in tackling the low levels of school literacy in many African countries, especially in socio-economically disadvantaged communities. Saide's African Storybook initiative is addressing this challenge by working with local educators to develop, publish and use contextually appropriate storybooks and support material.

The African Storybook website has thousands of openly licensed picture storybooks in the languages of Africa for children's literacy, enjoyment and imagination. It also has tools for the translation, adaptation and creation of picture storybooks for children aged two to ten (early childhood and first three years of primary school). A reading app downloadable from Google Play and the iStore gives parents and children access to the storybooks even when they are offline.

The website launched with 120 stories in June 2014, and has grown to over 1000 storybooks and nearly 6000 translations, with storybooks in over 170 of the languages of Africa.

Fig 1: Home page of www.africanstorybook.org
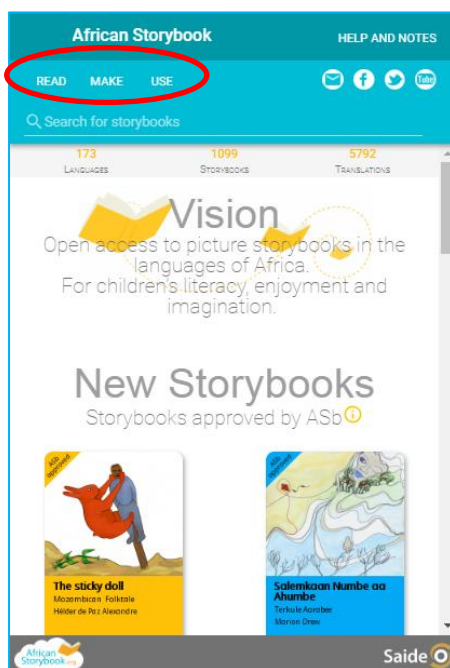
When you open the African Storybook website Home page, you can immediately Search for storybooks by typing the name, language or key word.

When you go to the **READ** page, you can browse the titles and summaries of *all* of the available edited storybooks on the website (that is, 'ASb-approved' storybooks that have been checked by the African Storybook team and local language experts). You will find individual storybooks and themed storybook collections to read with young children. You can read online, or download to read offline or to print.

When you go to the **MAKE** page, you create a new picture storybook, translate a story, adapt a story for a different reading level, and build your own storybook collections.

When you go to the **USE** page, you can read stories of how other people across sub-Saharan Africa are using African Storybooks and the African Storybook website.

African Storybook was initially piloted in in Kenya, South Africa, Lesotho and Uganda, and then extended to Ethiopia, Rwanda, Cameroon, DRC, Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Namibia. From 2014 to the end of 2018, African Storybook had reached 48,303 educators and 1,145,226 children. More than 18 international platforms including the Global Digital Library re-publish African Storybooks and African Storybook has a Channel on Learning Equality's offline e-learning platform, Kolibri. An associated initiative, Global Storybooks, has created more than 30 country-specific sites with curriculum-linked storybook sites. These sites make 40 storybooks from the African Storybook available with text and audio in the most widely spoken languages of a particular country.

There is evidence that 'going the open (licence) way' can produce the quantity of storybooks in the languages of Africa that children need to practise their reading, to learn to value reading, and to develop lifelong reading practices. In addition, the digital open licence publishing approach of the African Storybook initiative both requires and stimulates teacher and community agency. This is a critical component of sustainable literacy development in under-resourced contexts.

Services offered by African Storybook

The experience and expertise of the African Storybook team and network means that African Storybook is able to offer a range of customisable services as part of building educator and community capacity in storybook development, publishing and use. These services are available to support organisations and individuals in the effective creation and use of storybooks, and various related competencies/capacities.

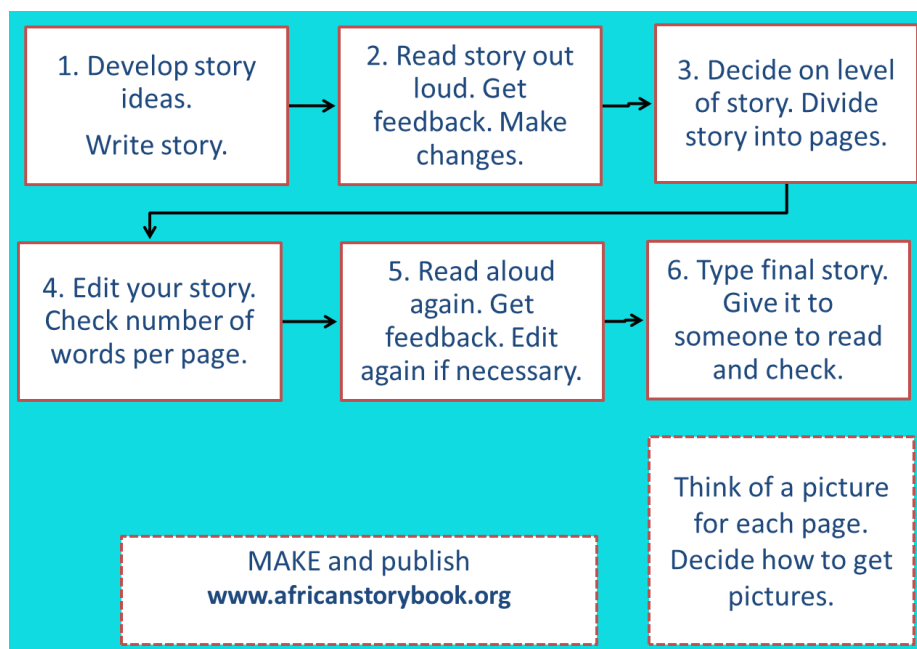## Storybook development and publishing workshops

These workshops, which African Storybook can offer for between two (minimum) and six (maximum) days, depending on the outputs required. An African Storybook story development and illustration process combines capacity building with development of high quality resources and ideally are offered over a five or six-day period (to include the creation of illustrations). The expected product from a two -to six-day story development workshop process is:

• Ten 12 to 16-page picture storybooks, all in one indigenous language and English (20 storybooks)

• Published digitally on the African Storybook website in multiple formats (print-ready A5 booklets, as PDFs for digital reading, and in ePub formats).

For these workshops, we invite a group of up to 20 people interested in education and in writing storybooks for children (not professional writers, but rather community members involved in education who have first-hand knowledge of the reading needs and interests in their contexts).

We also invite two to five illustrators (local artists) to attend the workshop to start the illustration process, and for longer workshops artists actually produce pictures for some of the manuscripts written during the workshop (African Storybook continues to work with artists after the workshop to ensure appropriate pictures are created for up to ten manuscripts). Writers need to come to the workshop with stories in indigenous languages (oral or written), and they write and edit the manuscripts in the indigenous language and in English.

Fig 2: Storybook development and publishing: from a story idea to published storybook

1. Develop story ideas. Write story.	2. Read story out loud. Get feedback. Make changes.	3. Decide on level of story. Divide story into pages.
4. Edit your story. Check number of words per page.	5. Read aloud again. Get feedback. Edit again if necessary.	6. Type final story. Give it to someone to read and check.
	MAKE and publish **www.africanstorybook.org**	Think of a picture for each page. Decide how to get pictures.

We aim to have at least two of the story manuscripts illustrated during the workshop (depending on artists' capacity), and published on our website within ten days of the workshop. We commission artwork for the remaining titles, and typically these are published within three months of the workshop. There is an intensive process of engagement with the illustrators until the final work is produced.

Fig 3: An example of the process from a rough sketch to a final coloured illustration
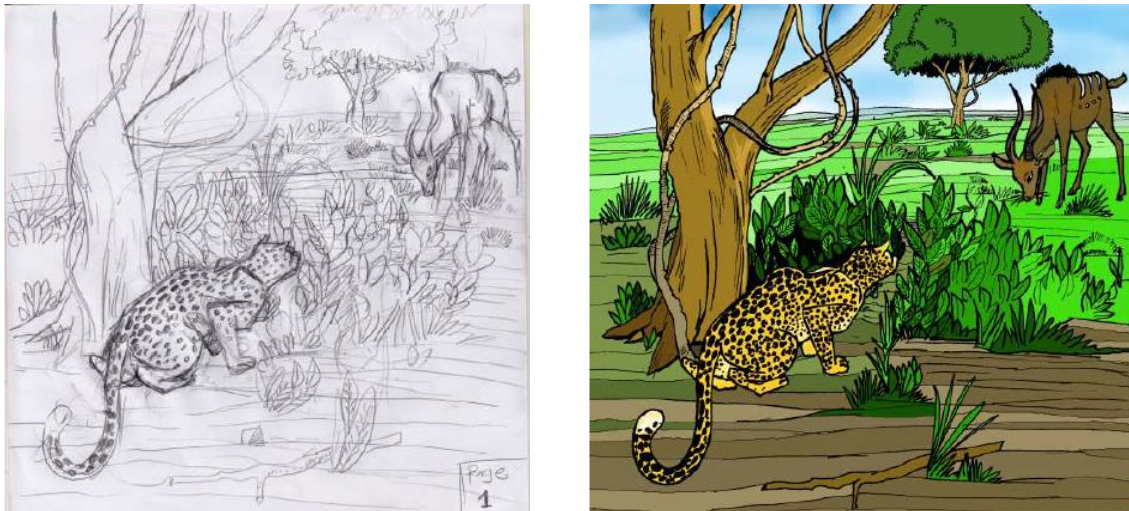
Services around the translation and adaptation of African storybooks
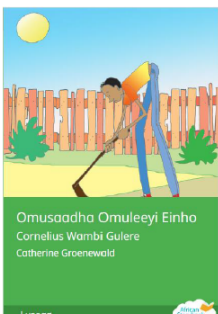
On the African Storybook website it is possible for any registered user to translate and adapt storybooks:

- Storybooks are translated in order to have stories available in many African languages.
- Storybooks are adapted so that they can be made more familiar to readers in a particular place, or easier to read for children that are at a lower reading level, or more challenging at a higher level.

We run workshops to develop capacity in how to translate and adapt storybooks on and for the African storybook website. We offer support and advice for effective quality assurance of material.

We also commission translations – with a quality assurance process – in order to increase the numbers of storybooks available in an identified language.

Fig 6: Translation: the multiplier effect

This story, written by a Ugandan and his son is
- Now available in 11 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa
- And in 45 languages

Omusaadha Omuleeyi Einho
Cornelius Wambi Gulere
Catherine Groenewald

Lusoga

It is mainly through translation that we have multiplied the number of storybooks available on the African Storybook website.

Since 2013, we have built up a network of over 60 translators and language practitioners working in over 40 African languages. This enables us to offer services in the translation and quality assurance of storybooks in African languages used by people in the countries in which we have a footprint.

We have been careful to reflect on and improve our processes for translation and quality assurance. In 2018, Room to Read commissioned African Storybook to facilitate a workshop for publishers and develop an accompanying Guide on Translation, which is now available under an open licence on our website: https://www.africanstorybook.org/pdf.php?id=documents/home/Translation.pdf.

Fig 7: Extract from the Guide on Translation

"Don't worry, we will study soon. Please play!" Bedilu begged Tarik. In the end, the boys played kisara.

(Kisara is a game in which players take turns throwing flat stones or coins into a small hole, standing about a meter and half from the hole.)

Here is an illustrated page from a storybook *Shepherd and his best friend*.
What decisions did the translator make about the character names when he translated into English?
What decision did the translator make about the name of the game?

Services around editing and quality assurance of African storybooks

Through its website, African Storybook offers people the opportunity to publish their own picture storybooks for children aged two to ten. We encourage publication in an indigenous African language, but with an English version - to facilitate translation into other indigenous languages.

To support independent self-publishing, we offer a service editing and quality assuring their published storybooks – so that they can be 'ASb approved', and ready for use by children, parents, and educators. There are some language limitations to this service, but if African Storybook doesn't have the necessary internal editing capacity it can refer storybooks to expert advisors within its network.

Fig 4: Editing services focus on these aspects of storybooks

Style
• Early literacy?
• Appeal to children?
• Meaningful?
• Vocabulary choices?

Structure
• Sentences
• Paragraphs
• Punctuation
• Whole story text

Content
• Interesting to read?
• Appropriate for children?
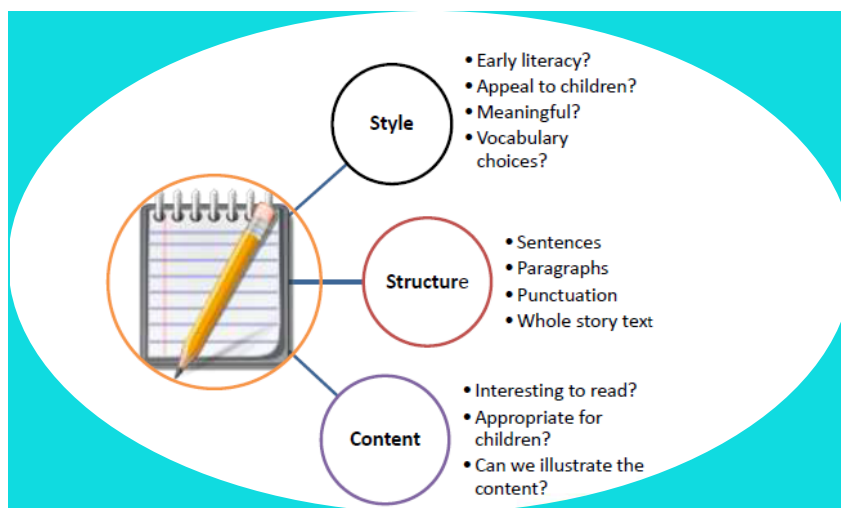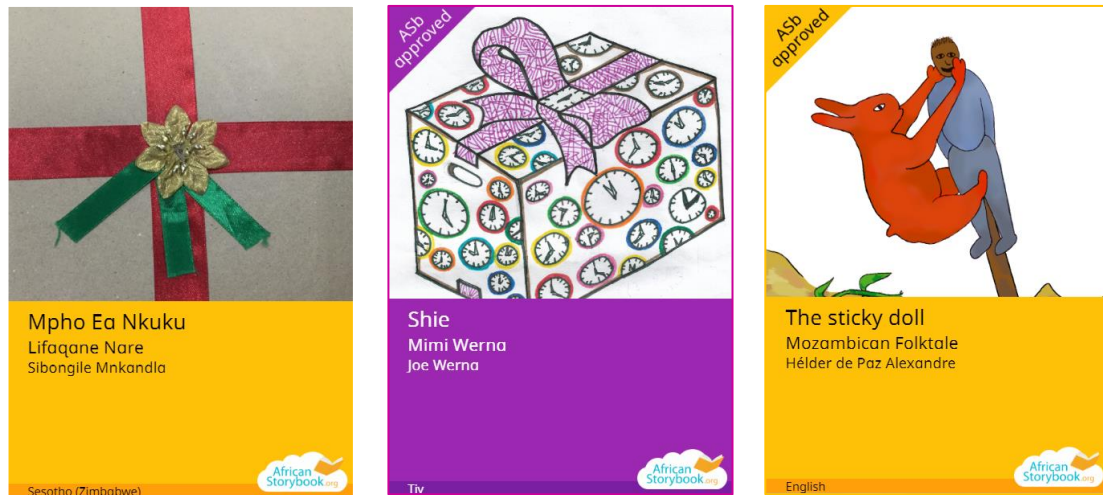• Can we illustrate the content?

Fig 5: Examples of self-published storybooks from Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Mozambique

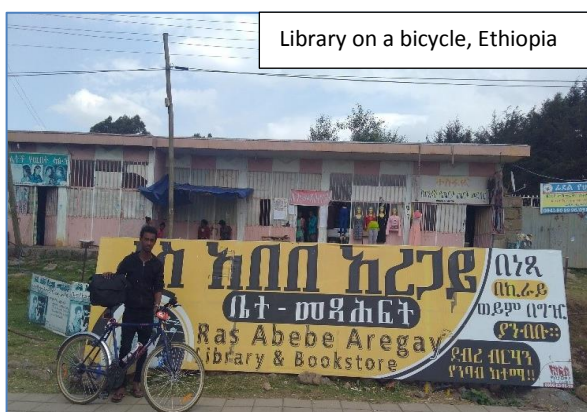## Services around the selection and use of African Storybooks

There is no point in developing storybooks if they are not used! As we work on development, we encourage our partners to make concrete plans for using the storybooks with children.

Since 2015, we have been offering workshops for teachers, student teachers in colleges and universities, early childhood development educators, and community librarians. We have captured our experience and that of our partners in a series of African Storybook Guides, as well as in a number of Stories of Use – both available on our website.

Table 1: Examples of African Storybook Guides

Guide - Developing, translating and adapting storybooks: There are different ways of making storybooks for the African Storybook website. You can translate or adapt a storybook, and publish a new version of that storybook. You can develop and create your own storybook.
Guide - Preparing to use African Storybooks with children: The activities and resources in this Guide are designed to help you explore the growing African Storybook website collection of storybooks, with your children in mind.
Guide - Using African Storybooks with children: The activities and resources in this Guide include oral work with storybooks, asking questions and working with new words, linking reading and writing activities, talking about storybook pictures, and lots of ideas from successful reading lessons. We also give a detailed example of how to use African Storybooks for literacy activities in a multi-grade classroom with children of different ages.

Fig 8: Contexts of use

Community library, KwaZulu-Natal

Teacher College, Uganda

Library on a bicycle, Ethiopia

'Classroom' in Turkana, Kenya

Services for digital and print delivery

African Storybook is in a position to provide advice and support for cost effective digital and print delivery of storybooks.

Digital projection

From 2014 to 2016, African Storybook tested digital delivery in 14 pilot sites – community libraries and schools in rural and peri-urban contexts in South Africa, Kenya and Uganda.

Table 2: Equipment for digital projection (2016 prices)

Laptop (e.g. Dell Inspiron Notebook plus mouse)	USD 450
Standard data projector (e.g. ACER X1111)	USD 300
Router (e.g. Huawei router E5520s)	USD 100
Screen (e.g. JK Tripod Projection Screen)	USD 140
Flash drive	USD 10
Total	USD 1 000

Educators required a small subsidy for data to download storybooks onto a flash drive so that they could project storybooks in classrooms or libraries where there was no connectivity.

Print, packaging and delivery

Over the last five years, African Storybook has found excellent partners in South Africa, through whom it has learned about printing, packaging and distribution of large quantities of materials to schools. A combination of an open licence and books printed to scale can bring costs down dramatically.

Each of the following costs are from actual orders of books printed and delivered in 2017/2018. Costs include packaging, management and delivery. The books are full colour A5, 8 to 24 page booklets. The costs below are direct costs.

Table 3: Exemplar quotations for large scale print and delivery in South Africa (2017/2018)

	Total	Average cost per book
Print and delivery of 80 titles per school for 25 schools (14 240 books)	R336 557.63	R23.63
Print and delivery of 137 titles to 1020 schools (562 928 books)	R1 531 016.05	R2.72

Fig 9: Printed African Storybooks

Summary of African Storybook services

Aside from the use that people can make of the African Storybook website independently, organisations can approach the African Storybook team to provide particular services related to development, translation, quality assurance, publishing, and use of African Storybooks and the African Storybook site.

The budget for each of the services listed below will vary according to the context, country, and purpose as well as the extent of support provided by the organisation requesting the service/s.

Descriptions	Outcomes/outputs
Capacity building for development, translation and use of African Storybooks	
1. One day translation/adaptation workshop	Participants can do their own translations/ adaptations online
2. Two day story translation/ adaptation and use workshop	Participants can use the African Storybook website to select and read storybooks with children as well as translate/adapt storybooks in order to use them
3. Two day story development workshop	Participants can publish their own storybooks online
4. Five or six day story development and illustration workshop with follow up publishing process	Participants are inspired to continue creating and using African Storybooks. Up to ten high quality professionally illustrated storybooks are published in an African language and English within three months of the workshop
Editing, translation and quality assurance of storybooks for the African Storybook site	
5. Management of translation and quality assurance process in order to produce a critical mass of local language storybooks for use in classrooms or libraries	Selection of batches of 10 or more storybooks appropriate for a particular context of use. Translations commissioned in all the languages required, and translations quality assured and approved
6. Editing, quality assurance and, if possible, approval of interesting or useful storybooks published by users	User-created storybooks edited, quality assured and approved in discussion with originators
Print and digital delivery services	
7. Preparation of anthologies of African Storybooks for printing or digital use	Print-ready anthologies in In-Design, or ePub formats
8. Selection of African Storybooks for large scale printing for particular purposes. With relevant partners, management of supply chain process for printing, packaging and delivery of storybooks	Cost effective accurate printing and delivery of large order of storybooks
9. Capacity building for procurement and use of digital devices for digital delivery of storybooks	Organisations assisted to procure and use digital devices effectively even in contexts with power and connectivity challenges