

READ TOGETHER PROJECT

Northern Uganda

January - December 2025



Investing in
Education

IMPACTS:

 **1,964**
storybooks distributed

8
more wheelable libraries
provided for safe storage
and display

60 
teachers trained
in Read Aloud and library
management

371
participants in reading
workshops

 **936**
pupils attending a
Reading Club



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Read Together project was designed to foster a love of reading and improve literacy among nursery and primary school children in Northern Uganda. By combining distribution of donated storybooks and wheelable libraries to store them in, with hands-on workshops and teacher training on library management, reading aloud and phonics methodology, the project aims to make books accessible, engaging, and a regular part of school life.

In 2025, the project reached 20 primary schools across six districts in Northern Uganda. For many children, this was their first experience holding a book, listening to stories being read aloud, and participating in lively reading clubs. Teachers reported renewed confidence in integrating books into their lessons, and schools embraced reading as a joyful, shared activity. Special events like Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Day also brought entire school communities together, reinforcing that reading is both educational and fun. The project's holistic approach – linking resources, training, and community engagement – is helping to bridge the gap between having access to books and their effective use.

Feedback from pupils, teachers, and families has been overwhelmingly positive. Children are more enthusiastic about reading, teachers feel better equipped to support literacy, and parents have become more involved, with some even borrowing books to read at home with their children. Local leaders have pledged ongoing support, and monitoring visits have shown that reading clubs are flourishing, with pupils growing in confidence and academic achievement. The Read Together project is helping to create a lasting culture of reading, with school communities committed to sustaining these practices for the future.

PREPARED BY

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December 2025

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About African Revival

Our vision is an Africa where every child has equal access to quality education, as we believe education is the key to overcoming poverty. Since 2005, we have worked with **over 300 primary and nursery schools** in Uganda, South Sudan and (until recently) Zambia, to allow **over 120,000 children** to fulfil their potential. We don't just provide infrastructure; we empower whole communities – pupils, teachers, and parents – to transform schools into thriving learning environments that build brighter, better futures.

Why Read Together?

In Northern Uganda, literacy remains a major challenge, worsened by prolonged school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many children in rural schools have never held a book, and rote learning dominates - limiting comprehension, creativity and critical thinking. Books provide more than knowledge – they spark curiosity, joy and inspiration. As Book Aid International (2022) notes, books impart power: improving literacy, creating opportunities, and offering hope through escapism. Equal access to education means access to books and reading, strengthening learning across the curriculum and contributing to rural development by driving progress in wider social markers such as health, nutrition and mortality.

Project Background

African Revival has championed literacy for two decades through the distribution of books in Uganda, Zambia and South Sudan, in both English and local languages. In 2020, we deepened this commitment by partnering with Book Aid International, to date delivering **almost 24,400 storybooks** to **over 160 schools** across Northern Uganda, Zambia and South Sudan.

While many schools where we work still lack access to books, where they have been provided, school visits reveal unopened boxes, with books locked away or damaged because teachers lack training and schools lack storage. Pupils unfamiliar with books do not know how to handle them, and teachers struggle to integrate them into lessons.

In 2024, the Read Together project in Zambia and Uganda addressed this by combining storybook distribution with provision of wheelable libraries – 19 in Zambia and 20 in Uganda – for safe storage, easy access and appealing display. In Uganda, project officers also delivered ad-hoc storytelling sessions to spark pupils' interest in reading, which proved to be incredibly effective.

In 2025, we built on these foundations by not only distributing more resources, but also incorporating structured Read Together activities, establishing reading clubs, and providing teacher training – with a specific focus on managing libraries and delivering engaging storytelling sessions. These new elements ensure the books are read, enjoyed, and woven into daily school life – driving sustainable literacy improvements and nurturing a love of reading.



Wheelable library delivery and workshop at Labala Primary

Project Objectives

In 2025, our Read Together project continued its focus on practical steps to turn access to books into meaningful literacy gains. Activities were tailored to meet each school's specific needs, taking into account any prior support received through earlier projects. Our objectives for this year were to:

- Deliver wheelable libraries and storybooks (including bilingual titles) to project schools.
- Appoint a voluntary librarian at each school.
- Train teachers in 'read aloud' techniques, library management, record-keeping and basic phonics.
- Provide each school with a Read Together manual and record books.
- Conduct interactive reading workshops, to introduce pupils to books and spark a love of reading.
- Establish and support reading clubs, encouraging peer-led activities and friendly competitions.
- Engage parents, local leaders, and district officials to promote literacy at home and in school.
- Monitor schools to ensure libraries and reading clubs remain active and effective.

School Selection

The rural nursery and primary schools selected to participate in this project, based on strong leadership and teacher support, were:

Juba Road, Pawel Langetta, Palwong, Agole, Labala, Pagak, Labongogali, Lujoro, Lalak, Ocettoke, Kitgum Demonstration, Pajimo, Alero, Bwobomanam, Adyedda, Kulu Otit, Busia, Awindiri, Nyakaliso and Barifa Primary Schools.

We thank all project schools for their collaboration.

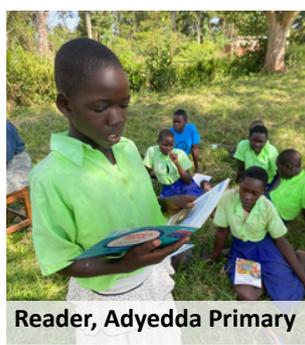
Activities Delivered

Resource Distribution

Some schools had already benefited from book and library provision in 2024, so this year's efforts focused on expanding reach to additional schools. 14 project schools received 106 assorted books donated by Book Aid International (BAI), and 40 locally-published bilingual storybooks were distributed to each of 12 primary schools; bringing the total to 1,964 books delivered across project schools. To enhance access and proper storage, eight schools were equipped with new wheelable libraries.



Wheelable library at Ocettoke Primary



Reader, Adyedda Primary



Wheelable library stocked with books

Activities Delivered

Capacity Building for Teachers

New elements introduced to Read Together in 2025 were 'read aloud' and library management training. This initiative equipped 60 teachers and librarians with practical skills to deliver engaging story sessions, manage school libraries effectively, and maintain accurate lending records. Each participating school also received a comprehensive Read Together manual, providing practical guidance on library management and 'read aloud' techniques, as well as record books. These resources have supported teachers in applying new skills and maintaining effective lending systems. The training achieved its objectives, with participants from 20 project schools demonstrating strong interest and valuing the capacity-building efforts. Teachers reported increased confidence in conducting 'read aloud' sessions and managing their libraries.

The project also delivered Phonics Set 1 training; designed to strengthen early literacy instruction for nursery and lower-primary (P1-P3) classes. The training exceeded expectations, reaching 104 teachers from 13 schools, against a target of 60. For many participants, this was their first phonics training, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Teachers learned how to teach phonics sounds effectively, plan and deliver reading lessons, and create simple learning resources. School leaders committed to sharing the training with colleagues and integrating phonics into timetables, ensuring sustainability. These efforts are helping pupils confidently sound, blend, and read simple words, so they can become better readers.

Promoting a Reading Culture

Listening to Stories

In 2025, Read Together placed strong emphasis on fostering a love of reading through 'read aloud' sessions. These became a highlight in participating schools, drawing large groups of pupils who listened attentively to stories such as "Happy Girl and Happy Boy" and "The Boo! Zoo". Many children were so inspired that they asked to read aloud themselves, building confidence, sparking curiosity, and demonstrating the joy of shared reading. Teachers and librarians expressed enthusiasm for continuing 'read aloud' practices, recognising their value in improving comprehension and encouraging participation. The sessions also sparked lively discussions, with children especially engaged by stories reflecting community life, such as "Rats in the Village", and often retelling or translating stories into their local languages. This interactive approach not only improved reading skills but also helped children connect stories to their own experiences, making reading a meaningful and enjoyable part of school life.



Teacher reading aloud to his pupils



Pupil reading aloud to her friends

Promoting a Reading Culture (continued)

Reading Clubs

Reading clubs were established in all 20 project schools. Through dedicated workshops, teachers, librarians, and pupils learned how to manage and grow active clubs. Each club formed a leadership committee and agreed to meet weekly to discuss books, share ideas, and engage in creative activities, such as storytelling, poetry, and dramatisation. The workshops exceeded expectations, attracting enthusiastic 371 participants (against a target of 280). Schools pledged to incorporate club meetings into their calendars, ensuring that libraries are used regularly and reading becomes part of school life.

Special Events

Labala Primary School celebrated DEAR Day in March, which brought the entire school together for a dedicated reading session and tree planting activity. Over 379 pupils participated in reading stories aloud, followed by discussions and retelling exercises. Teachers pledged to make reading aloud a regular feature of classroom life, and pupils expressed excitement about spending more time reading. The event reinforced the message that reading is not only educational but also enjoyable and community-building.

Monitoring and Evaluation

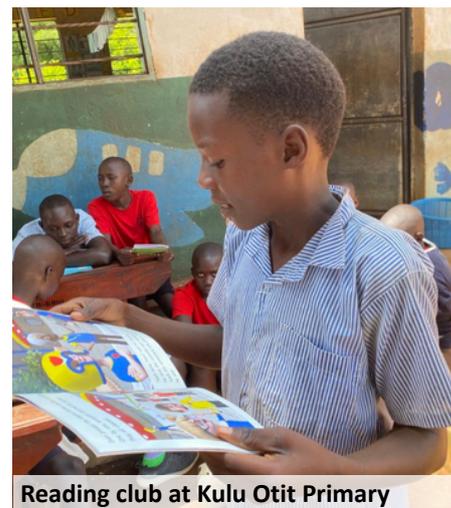
Joint Monitoring Visits

In October-November, we conducted joint monitoring visits at six project schools with District Education Officers. The visits to the best- and worst-performing schools included classroom observations, reviews of library records, and discussions with teachers, pupils, and parents to assess the effectiveness of library use, reading club activities and teacher training.

Joint Monitoring Insights:

Agole Primary School stood out, with confident phonics teaching and a lively reading club that recently won a district debate. Regular, structured reading has boosted pupil engagement and literacy. At Adyedda Primary, the well-run library attracts parents to borrow books, showing the project's impact beyond classrooms and the community's commitment to literacy.

Reading clubs across schools are thriving; children meet often, create songs, and enjoy activities that build confidence and a love of books. Teachers note these pupils excel academically, many achieving first grade. However, challenges remain in some schools around library record-keeping and teacher commitment, therefore continued support will be key to replicating the strongest successes.



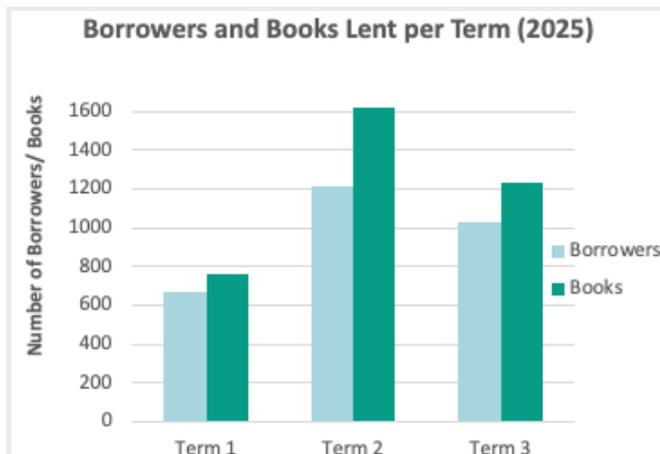
Reading club at Kulu Otit Primary



Tree-planting at DEAR Day, Labala

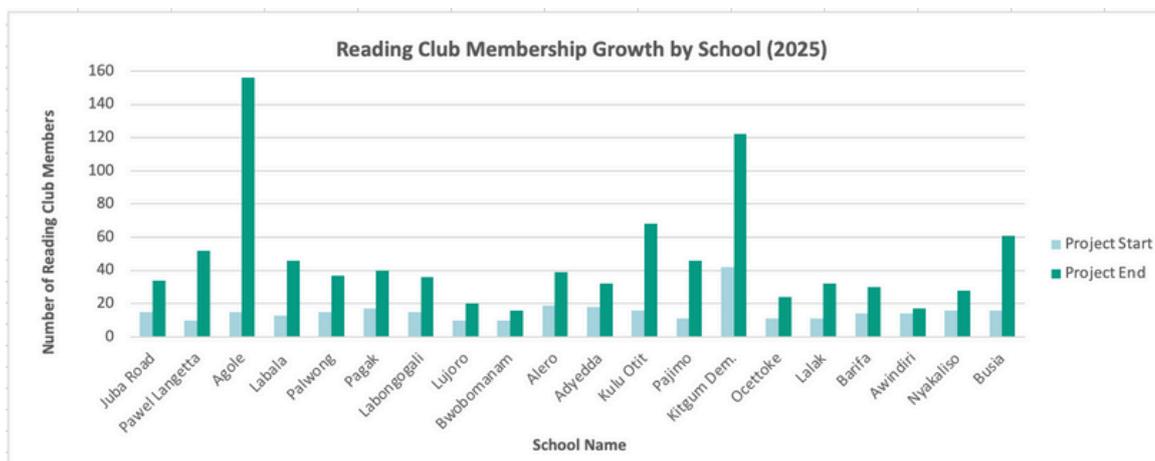
Project Impacts

While the data below highlights measurable outcomes achieved through the project, it reflects only a portion of the broader impact experienced by participating schools and communities. These numbers illustrate key areas of progress, but the true value of the project is also evident in the stories, confidence, and enthusiasm for reading across all participating schools (see examples on p.7).



The chart to the left shows a marked increase in book borrowing. Across project schools, borrowers rose from 665 in Term 1 to 1,210 in Term 2 (an 82% increase) while the number of books borrowed more than doubled from 762 to 1,625. Despite a teachers' strike in Term 3, activity remained well above baseline, with 1,030 borrowers and 1,230 books – evidence of resilience and sustained enthusiasm for reading.

It is important to note that some underreporting may have occurred due to inconsistent record-keeping by teachers; a challenge highlighted in project feedback. Nonetheless, overall, the data demonstrates that the project not only increased access to books but also embedded regular library use as part of school life.



The chart above shows reading club membership rose from 308, when the clubs were first established, to 936 over the year across all project schools, with every school reporting growth. This expansion reflects strong engagement and enthusiasm from pupils and staff in sustaining and growing the clubs. Agole's membership rose tenfold (from 15 to 156), while Kitgum Demonstration's nearly tripled (from 42 to 122). Schools like Pawel Langetta and Kulu Otit also saw substantial increases, and most reading clubs now have more than 30 members. The clubs continue to gain momentum, with membership still rising and clubs becoming vibrant and appealing spaces for pupils. This consistent growth demonstrates the successful integration of reading clubs, providing more pupils with regular opportunities to read, share stories, and develop literacy skills in a fun and supportive setting.

Impact Stories

The Read Together project has sparked a transformation in schools and communities across Northern Uganda.

At Agole Primary School, the reading club patron, S. Obong, shared his heartfelt appreciation:

"The generous donations of storybooks and dictionaries have significantly enhanced our club's activities; including reading practices, pronunciation, essay writing, poetry, drama, spelling games, and debating competitions. The wheelable library has become a treasure trove for our pupils, supplementing the main library's resources. These contributions have positively impacted not only the reading club members but also the entire pupil body, fostering a culture of reading and learning."

This enthusiasm is echoed by teachers and school leaders throughout the region. Mr. Titus, Deputy at Kitgum PTC Demonstration, observed:

"Teachers should embrace such activity because it will widen the imagination and thinking power of the children and improves their social habits."

The Headteacher of Lalak noted that phonics-based teaching has improved learners' reading and comprehension, and he also reported a significant increase in the number of children visiting the library to borrow books.

Children themselves are discovering new confidence and joy in reading. D. Benard, a reading club member at Busia Primary School, expressed,

"I am very willing to be helped to learn how to read very well through this club."

Other pupils, like Barbra in P6 at Pajimo Primary School, are overcoming their fears:

"I used to fear reading aloud, but I will try to read aloud in class."

Kenneth, a P7 student at Lalak Primary School, improved from grade 4 to grade 3 in mock exams after learning phonics and joining the school's reading club, and gained confidence to participate in class discussions after reading "The Little Bird." The school anticipates even better results for him in the recently concluded Primary Leaving Exams.

The ripple effects extend to school leadership and the wider community. Nancy at Adyedda Primary School shared:

"These books teach us many important lessons because they remind us how people should live together in communities. Personally, I never had the chance to study, but the storybooks have inspired me to develop an interest in learning how to read, even now at the age of 46."

The Chairperson of the School Management Committee at Juba Road Primary School remarked:

"I was blessed by the reading club initiative, urging the teachers to take this seriously because the poor reading challenge at the school will be no more."

These stories, demonstrate how Read Together is not only improving literacy but also building confidence, nurturing creativity, and inspiring a lifelong love of reading among children and communities.



Reading club at Agole Primary School

Outputs

Because some schools had already received libraries, books or phonics training under previous projects, 2025 activities were tailored to fill gaps and deepen impact. This adaptive approach ensured resources and training reached where they were most needed.

- **Almost 20,000 pupils** enrolled in participating schools gained access to improved reading resources.
- **1,964 books distributed**, including:
 - **106 BAI storybooks to 14 schools**
 - **40 local bilingual storybooks to 12 schools**
- **8 wheelable libraries** provided, enabling flexible book access across classrooms.
- **60 teachers trained** in 'read aloud' techniques and library management; 14 schools also received phonics training.
- **Read aloud sessions** delivered in every project school, sparking lively discussions and helping pupils connect stories to real-life experiences.
- **20 reading clubs established**, with total membership reaching 936 by the end of the project. Club sizes ranged from 16 (Bwobomanan) to 156 (Agole), with most schools exceeding 30 members.
- **Special literacy events**, including DEAR Day, engaged nearly 400 pupils in joyful reading and tree planting, linking literacy to community pride.

Outcomes

- **Improved Access to Reading Materials:** Pupils now have regular opportunities to borrow books and participate in structured reading activities.
- **Enhanced Teacher Capacity:** Training has strengthened teachers' confidence in delivering interactive reading sessions and managing libraries effectively; over 60 lower-primary teachers trained in phonics, many for the first time.
- **Growing Reading Culture:** Reading clubs have become vibrant spaces for peer learning, with pupils writing stories, poems, and even news articles.
- **Community Engagement:** Parents expressed gratitude and borrowed books to read at home; local leaders pledged support for sustaining literacy initiatives and improving school environments.
- **Early Literacy Gains:** Monitoring visits and teacher feedback suggest increased reading confidence and comprehension among lower-primary pupils. Teachers report that pupils are confidently sounding, blending, and reading simple words, with noticeable increases in participation and motivation.
- **Inspiring Individual Impact:** Cases (like those featured in the impact stories on p.7) show that pupils are gaining confidence and curiosity, joining discussions and reading aloud – demonstrating how access to engaging books transforms attitudes and aspirations.



Challenges

Although the Read Together project has made remarkable strides in promoting literacy and fostering a love of reading, it has not been without challenges. In some schools, limited engagement from certain teachers and headteachers hampered efforts to build a consistent reading culture, occasionally leading to inconsistent library record-keeping and making it harder to capture the project's full impact. At times, school activities overlapped with district events, disrupting the scheduling of reading workshops and club meetings. Operational issues, such as a teachers' strike in Term 3, temporarily reduced borrowing activity and interrupted established routines – though enthusiasm for reading remained strong overall.

Large class sizes in lower-primary grades posed difficulties, as teachers struggled to provide individual attention during reading and phonics sessions. There is a need for more phonics training for teachers in these schools, as they only received a basic introduction. Sustaining the momentum of reading clubs and ensuring regular participation will require ongoing support, monitoring, and encouragement too.

Despite these obstacles, the dedication of school leaders, teachers, and the wider community has laid a strong foundation for continued progress.

This project was largely funded by African Revival's Big Give Christmas Challenge 2024 (and 2023) campaigns, with online donations matched by two anonymous Champion Donors.

Thank you from the Read Together participants for supporting this project!

Conclusion

The Read Together project, which will roll on to continue indefinitely, has demonstrated the transformative power of books and community engagement in primary schools across Northern Uganda. Through the combined efforts of teachers, pupils, parents, and local leaders, thousands of children have gained access to quality storybooks, developed new literacy skills, and discovered the joy of reading. The growth of reading clubs, the enthusiasm for read aloud sessions, and the heartfelt testimonials from pupils and teachers, all point to a lasting shift in attitudes toward literacy. While challenges remain, the project's successes have inspired renewed commitment from schools and district officials alike. With continued support and collaboration, the foundations laid by Read Together will help ensure that a culture of reading continues to flourish, opening doors to brighter futures for children across the region.

Budget

Just over **£14,000** has been spent on the Read Together project in 2025. This is less than planned, because we mainly focused on supporting successful use of books and libraries that had already been obtained in 2024. Some new books were procured from a local publisher this year. Unspent funds will continue to help Read Together expand as a rolling project.

