



## Tuesdays in the Trenches Literacy Presentation Series

### Conclusion: 13 August 2024

In line with NASCEE's focus on bringing organisations together to strengthen education in South Africa, in this final session of Tuesday in the Trenches, we invited [Litasa](#) (Literacy Association of South Africa), and [NECDA](#) (National Early Childhood Development Alliance) to provide an overview of how these two associations are creating possibilities for knowledge sharing and engagement among stakeholders working within literacy and early childhood development. This was followed by a presentation by Lauren Fok of the [Zenex Foundation](#) which allowed us to hear from a funder's perspective. Finally, Claire Biesman-Simons shared NASCEE's reflections on the Tuesday in the Trenches webinar series and highlighted some of the key themes that came out of this series.

#### *Litasa and NECDA*

Thank you to Nadeema Musthan, chairperson of Litasa, and Rex Molefe, the NECDA's chairperson, for providing an overview of your important work. National Early Childhood Development Alliance shared **deep insight into the challenges facing education and literacy in South Africa**. As organisations committed to disseminating knowledge and providing possibilities for those working in literacy and ECD to collaborate, they provide strong foundations for NGOs and other stakeholders to **engage, support one another, share resources and build each other up**. Nadeema and Rex invited all interested attendees to contact them for further information on partnering with them and membership. Nadeema closed her presentation with details of Litasa's 19<sup>th</sup> annual conference which is being held in Cape Town from 13-15<sup>th</sup> September. Registration closes on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> August and details can be found on the conference [website](#).



LITERACY  
ASSOCIATION  
OF SOUTH AFRICA



As an organisation, NASCEE is excited about our partnerships with Litasa and NECDA and we look forward to closer engagement with them in ways that allow all three organisations to **extend our reach and impact**.



## *Zenex Foundation*

Lauren stressed the need for NGOs to identify their purpose and position within the literacy landscape. She emphasised Zenex’s perspective that it does not matter what size an organisation is, it can have an impact. What is crucial to achieving impact is that **programmes serve a clear purpose, and support the DBE in meeting their priorities.** This requires implementing programmes that are grounded in evidence, strategically sound and consistently evaluated and refined if necessary. In its efforts to strengthen impact, Zenex is focusing on **bringing NGOs and funders together to work in a more co-ordinated way in a complex system where government is working with an austerity budget.** In reflecting on the series, Lauren highlighted the role that NASCEE can play in strengthening co-ordination and collaboration. She emphasised the importance of NASCEE partnering with Litasa and NECDA, as these two organisations are professional learning communities that bring all relevant stakeholders together and that such communities are essential to improving education in South Africa because “working together is the only way to really make impact.”



## *NASCEE’s reflections*

In the final presentation of this series, Claire spoke on behalf of NASCEE and reflected on the key themes and learning areas. This webinar series resulted from a working group that NASCEE formed in response to the [PIRLS results](#) released in 2023 that stated that only 1 out of 5 learners in South Africa can read for comprehension. We wanted to create a platform for organisations to share their stories and experiences to facilitate learning and knowledge sharing among stakeholders in the literacy sector. It was pleasing to see the efforts that the 21 organisations (a list is provided below) and the DBE put into presenting their work and their honesty in reporting on their successes and challenges. There were five major themes that we identified in this series:

### **Programmes planning, implementation and alignment**

Successful programme implementation requires that NGOs engage with potential partners and participants – this can range from national government level to individual community members – to understand contextual realities, identify priority areas and establish how NGOs can contribute resources and expertise to address these priorities. As Lauren stated, successful programme implementation depends on careful and strategic planning that is aligned to government’s priority areas. This implementation needs to be consistently reviewed to identify if any adaptations or refinements are required.

### **Monitoring, evaluation, research and learning**

From the initial planning of any programme, it is essential that decision-making and implementation is informed by research, consideration of other programmes’ outcomes and understanding of contextual



realities. This increases the possibility of a programme's success in aligning to priorities and addressing identified gaps.

While monitoring and evaluation may seem a lengthy and potentially costly process, it is fundamental to programmes' successes. It is through monitoring and evaluation that we can identify and learn what works in a programme, what could be improved or if the programme needs to undergo significant shifts in its thinking and implementation. This knowledge enables us to refine strategies and implementation in ways that improve outcomes and maximise impact.

### **Collaboration**

Creating opportunities for NGOs in education to collaborate in order to magnify their impact and influence is central to NASCEE's mission. The importance of collaboration was consistently underscored in this series. There were examples, such as Yizani Sifunde, of co-ordinated multi-partner programmes where NGOs brought their respective skills and resources together to the benefit of the communities in which programmes were implemented. However, there are numerous other ways in which NGOs can partner and collaborate. These include the sharing of resources such as monitoring and evaluation tools, training videos and materials, and the opportunity for NGOs, especially those with more experience and expertise, to empower and build each other up. This final point could include assisting with strengthening structures and systems, training, mentoring and sharing expertise. There is an exciting opportunity here for leaders in the NGO sector to support and empower other organisations and NASCEE will be looking at how we can assist in this regard.

Undoubtedly, the most important partnership for NGOs is with government. During her presentation on mother tongue based bilingual education (MTbBE), DDG Dr Mbude stressed the need for strong, respectful relationships between the government and NGOs. She explained that it is by learning from each other, drawing on each others' expertise, evaluating our work and sharing best practices that we will be able to support learners in the most meaningful ways. Her opinion was echoed by organisations that have successfully established relationships with education departments and officials.

### **Scale and sustainability**

In taking programmes to scale, we need to be looking at what exists and what we can learn from the existing programme. Rather than replicating a programme without critique, we need to evaluate the original programme's progress and impact and then make necessary refinements or adaptations that are contextually and linguistically appropriate and respond to needs and priorities of a specific region or community.

### **Literacy and language**

Central to literacy and strengthening literacy practices is language. Many children in South Africa are disadvantaged by being taught in an additional language, either from Grade 1 or otherwise from Grade 4



when, currently, all learners transition to English or Afrikaans as the language of learning and teaching. With the incremental implementation of MTbBE education from Grade 4 onwards in 2025, there needs to be heightened consideration of how, as NGOs, we can work with government in implementing this strategy. NASCEE is aiming to host a follow-up session where the DBE can provide further details on the strategies surrounding implementing MTbBE and how NGOs can assist with this implementation.

There was weekly attention to the accessibility of reading materials, especially in African languages. Presenters and attendees in the chat spoke of the challenge of accessing materials in the appropriate language with content that appealed to children. It was highlighted that many such materials are available but how to source these is not always known. Thank you to NGOs in the chat who are in material development and distribution for providing contact information. We have compiled a list that is included below.

### *Final thoughts*

This webinar series has raised important discussions surrounding literacy, explored key debates in literacy and education in South Africa and, we hope, provided a platform that has enriched attendees' knowledge of the NGO literacy landscape in South Africa and how we, as individuals or organisations, can work to strengthen the already impressive work that is being done by civil society.

In the table below, we have provided some stats on attendance.

Total attendance	Ave. weekly attendance	Ave.# of organisations attending weekly	Ave. # of Member organisations attending weekly	Ave. # of Non-member organisation attending weekly	Ave.# of survey responses per week	Ave. satisfaction score per week
369	77	43	27	15	18	4.46

We appreciate the number of attendees at each webinar and enjoyed the mix of NASCEE members and non-members. For non-members who wish to learn more about NASCEE's work and explore joining as members, please have a look at our website or contact Lovedonia Mkansi @ [lovedonia@nascee.org.za](mailto:lovedonia@nascee.org.za) or [info@nacsee.org.za](mailto:info@nacsee.org.za) for further information.

One of the key themes of this series is that a programme's success is strengthened through consultation with participants. We appreciate the response we have had to hosting this series and aim to build on this initial success in future series. We have posted surveys at the end of each webinar, but if you have any further feedback or suggestions, please email [info@nascee.or.za](mailto:info@nascee.or.za)



## Tuesdays in The Trenches Table of Presenters

Organisation	Website	Contact email
Wordworks	<a href="https://www.wordworks.org.za/">https://www.wordworks.org.za/</a>	<a href="mailto:info@wordworks.org.za">info@wordworks.org.za</a>
Nal'ibali Trust	<a href="https://nalibali.org/">https://nalibali.org/</a>	<a href="mailto:info@nalibali.org">info@nalibali.org</a>
Book Dash	<a href="https://bookdash.org/">https://bookdash.org/</a>	<a href="mailto:team@bookdash.org">team@bookdash.org</a>
Yizani Sifunde		
Project Literacy Education Centre	<a href="http://www.projectliteracy.org.za">www.projectliteracy.org.za</a>	<a href="mailto:lungile@projectliteracy.org.za">lungile@projectliteracy.org.za</a>
Performance Solutions Africa	<a href="https://www.psafrica.co.za/">https://www.psafrica.co.za/</a>	<a href="mailto:geoff@psafrica.co.za">geoff@psafrica.co.za</a>
Biblionef South Africa	<a href="https://www.biblionefsa.org.za/">https://www.biblionefsa.org.za/</a>	<a href="mailto:info@biblionefsa.org.za">info@biblionefsa.org.za</a>
Funda Wandé	<a href="https://fundawande.org/">https://fundawande.org/</a>	<a href="mailto:phumelele@fundawande.org">phumelele@fundawande.org</a>
Seriti Institute	<a href="http://www.seriti.org.za">www.seriti.org.za</a>	<a href="mailto:rebotile@seriti.org.za">rebotile@seriti.org.za</a>
youth@WORK	<a href="https://www.sayouthatwork.com/">https://www.sayouthatwork.com/</a>	<a href="mailto:jabulani@sayouthatwork.com">jabulani@sayouthatwork.com</a>
Social Innovations	<a href="https://socialinnovations.co.za/">https://socialinnovations.co.za/</a>	<a href="mailto:kimon@socialinnovations.co.za">kimon@socialinnovations.co.za</a>
VVOB - education for development	<a href="https://southafrica.vvob.org/">https://southafrica.vvob.org/</a>	<a href="mailto:thobile.mdlophane@vvob.org">thobile.mdlophane@vvob.org</a>
		<a href="mailto:lieve.leroy@vvob.org">lieve.leroy@vvob.org</a>
Penreach	<a href="https://penreach.co.za">https://penreach.co.za</a>	<a href="mailto:penreach@penreach.co.za">penreach@penreach.co.za</a>
Saide African Storybook Project	<a href="https://africanstorybook.org/">https://africanstorybook.org/</a>	<a href="mailto:dorcasmw@saide.org.za">dorcasmw@saide.org.za</a>
Saide	<a href="http://www.saide.org.za">www.saide.org.za</a>	<a href="mailto:sheilad@saide.org.za">sheilad@saide.org.za</a>
Environment and Language Trust (ELET)	<a href="https://www.elet.org.za/">https://www.elet.org.za/</a>	<a href="mailto:cynthia.maphanga@mml.co.za">cynthia.maphanga@mml.co.za</a>
Dr CL Smith Foundation	<a href="https://drclsmith.org/">https://drclsmith.org/</a>	<a href="mailto:malcolm@drclsmith.org">malcolm@drclsmith.org</a>
Lectorsa	<a href="https://www.eyebraingym.com/">https://www.eyebraingym.com/</a>	<a href="mailto:minda@lectorsa.com">minda@lectorsa.com</a>
LETCEE	<a href="https://letcee.org/">https://letcee.org/</a>	<a href="mailto:kitso@letcee.org">kitso@letcee.org</a>
Lesedi Larona Home of Trust NPO		<a href="mailto:ncikolo@gmail.com">ncikolo@gmail.com</a>
NECDA	<a href="https://www.ecdalliance.org">https://www.ecdalliance.org</a>	<a href="mailto:rex@ecdalliance.org">rex@ecdalliance.org</a>
		<a href="mailto:abigail@ecdalliance.org">abigail@ecdalliance.org</a>
LITASA	<a href="https://www.litasa.org.za/">https://www.litasa.org.za/</a>	<a href="mailto:info@litasa.org.za">info@litasa.org.za</a>
ZENEX	<a href="https://www.zenexfoundation.org.za/">https://www.zenexfoundation.org.za/</a>	<a href="mailto:info@zenexfoundation.org.za">info@zenexfoundation.org.za</a>
NASCEE	<a href="https://nascee.org.za/">https://nascee.org.za/</a>	<a href="mailto:info@nascee.org.za">info@nascee.org.za</a>



## *Reading materials in African languages*

[African Storybook Project](#) has an extensive repository of open-source children's books published in all South African languages and hundreds of other African languages.

[Bibliodef](#) donates books, in all South African languages, to schools and organisations nationwide.

[Book Dash](#) produce open-source books that are available online and in print. Book Dash's books are in all South African languages and written for children zero to five.

[Nal'ibali](#) publishes colourful, bilingual newspaper supplements that are distributed nationally and can be freely downloaded from their website.

[Room to Read](#) develops literacy programmes for Grade 1 to 3 in African languages. The development of these programmes has included producing storybooks in African languages.

The [South African National Lexicography Units](#) publishes dictionaries in all nine African languages. They can be contacted on [info@lexiunitsa.org](mailto:info@lexiunitsa.org)

[Ulwazi Lwethu](#) is The Zenex Foundation's African Languages Literacy Project. It produces open source, high-quality African language leisure and graded readers for Foundation Phase learners.

[Wordworks](#) has a variety of books, games and activities that support literacy and language development in children from birth to eight years. These can be downloaded for printing.

<https://saslha.co.za/page/LiteracyToolkit>

