

Stories for Inclusion Uganda launched

1. INTRODUCTION

The 'Stories for Inclusion' pilot project was launched at inception meetings with Pakwach District Local Government (DLG) and Nebbi District Local Government on the 11th and 12th of February 2026 respectively. The project is funded by ProVictimis (Switzerland), with also a contribution from UNESCO (Netherlands), while additional funding is still being sought. The pilot benefits from, and builds on the Stories for Inclusion project in Bangladesh. As a 2 year pilot, it will be implemented in the earlier mentioned northern districts of Uganda in 8 schools, focusing on pre-primary and lower primary grades.

Despite the challenges of the national elections in January 2026, the two local partner organisations, Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC) and Education Local Expertise Centre Uganda (ELECU), developed their Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) for the first quarter of the project and have started to map which other actors in the district might be interested in Stories for Inclusion for future scaling up and sustainability. In Nebbi District the following organisations were already identified: Trailblazers, Caritas and World Vision¹. ELECU and USDC also prepared the Training of Trainers (ToT) and the project inception meetings in each district, and developed a digital baseline data collection tool.

Adjustments had to be made in the workplan when the Government of Uganda (GoU) decided to postpone the start of schoolyear from the 2nd to the 10th of February, due to post-election security concerns.

Sufficient copies of the storybook from Bangladesh, "My name is Runa", were brought from the Netherlands and a visit was made to Pangea Publishing House in Kampala to collect the (disability) inclusive storybooks printed in Uganda. The 8 pilot schools in Pakwach and Nebbi will receive a package of storybooks ("mini-library"), while the project will also explore the development of a new storybook. Such a new storybook will then also be shared with Bangladesh, and most likely with Sri Lanka – a country that has shown an interest in Stories for Inclusion and is starting up similar activities.

2. TRAINING of TRAINERS (ToT)

The Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop was held in Pakwach – a 7 hour drive from Kampala. Participants included trainers of USDC and ELECU and representatives of the District Local Government as well as education professionals such as Centre Coordinating Tutors² (CCT) and head-teachers.

The workshop made use of, and built on the expertise and training experience of the participants. It resulted in the establishment of a Community of Practice (CoP) to enable participants from both districts to stay in touch and support each other during implementation of the pilot project.

¹ <https://trailblazersuganda.org/> ; <https://caritasuganda.org/> ; <https://www.wvi.org/uganda/what-we-do>

² CCTs support, mentor and monitor teachers in their designated school catchment areas

The participants also volunteered to **review** the teacher training module to better fit the context of Uganda.



Figure 1 Els explaining the process

“What we want to achieve ultimately is that teachers have the ability to identify and remove barriers which exclude children with disabilities, so that these children can enjoy equal rights and meaningful participation.” (Els)

In Uganda, storybooks can easily be used in pre-primary and lower primary classes, as part of the thematic curriculum, however, it is important to *guide* teachers, parents and community volunteers on how to use the storybooks for various purposes, ranging from literacy class, library hour, and thematic curriculum topics to class discussions and role-plays for parents. Though English is taught as a subject in lower primary grades, the language of instruction in Pakwach is Leb Jonam and in Nebbi Alur. Therefore, stories may also have to be told in the local language!

There is a keen interest to develop a new inclusive story-book for Uganda. ToT participants suggested a story-book about a child with *epilepsy* or with a *speech difficulty* such as a serious stutter.

3. BASELINE DATA COLLECTION

With the ToT participants the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) digital tool (with consent forms incorporated) was reviewed. Sampling was explained and suggestions for questionnaire adaptations provided as well as how to go about collecting data from young children (e.g. by using pictures). However, instead of collecting data from the youngest children, the project team could also mainly collect data from children in primary 2 and primary 3 grades. It was decided to also incorporate questions about *children with Albinism*. Both, the ToT and the baseline consultation, will lead to a more contextual teacher training module and baseline survey, while increasing project ownership.

Bangladesh may be able to learn about this digital tool for data collection using a smart phone application that USDC developed!

4. PROJECT INCEPTION in PAKWACH- and NEBBI DISTRICT

The Stories for Inclusion local partners – ELECU in Pakwach and USDC in Nebbi – require to sign a MoU with the District Local Government. These are already in place and/or being updated. Following protocol, government representatives – political, administrative and technical – from both districts were present at the respective inception meetings. Full support and commitment were expressed for this project, while Coordinating Centre Tutors (CCTs) and head-teachers of the pilot schools considered this project very timely and urgently needed.

During the inception meetings, the situation of children with Albinism was discussed. In Pakwach these children were thought not to be there, while others responded that these children may be hidden at home and not going to school at all. In Nebbi there were similar views. Contacting organisations that address the rights and needs of children with Albinism such as the Albinism Umbrella (AU) in Uganda will be a next step to find out what the real situation is of these children in both districts.

Action point: Try to find out why people think there are no children with Albinism in Pakwach and Nebbi District.

In both districts the importance of involving parents and communities was highlighted. In that regard, Pakwach may benefit from the existing home-learning centres and Parent Support Groups already established by USDC in Nebbi.

The Resident District Commissioner (RDC) of Nebbi offered free radio airtime for the project. Both ELECU and USDC will pick this up to be able to inform a wider audience about the Stories for Inclusion project using local radio.



Figure 2 Generating discussion among the participants at the inception meeting

5. SUNSHINE URBAN FOUNDATION (SUF) in Kampala

Sunshine Urban Foundation (SUF) implements Early Child Development (ECD), primary education, livelihood and climate justice projects in 'slums' and refugee settlements in and around Kampala. This organisation spontaneously picked up Stories for Inclusion ideas and activities. Workshops held in Kampala for the SUF

team as well as for 24 teachers of government and non-government (pre-) schools, resulted in new ideas to improve both disability inclusion and early grade reading approaches. The workshop resulted in the development of concrete practical steps, such as how to locate children with disabilities in the communities, addressing societal barriers, further supporting teachers in developing disability inclusive skills, and actively and meaningfully engaging children in such a process.



Figure 3 Intense work on describing suitable actions at the SUF workshop

One of the teachers suggested to role-play “My name is Runa” at a school-parent meeting to also sensitize parents about disability.

6. GENERATING INTEREST for CHILDREN with ALBINISM

Discussing the fate of children with Albinism in the project districts resulted in little or no information about these children. Questions may need to be asked such as “Are there no children with Albinism in these districts?” and “Are these children not to going school?”

While the statistics of persons with Albinism in Uganda are not known, studies have found that the occurrence of Albinism can be as high as one in 1400. This would imply that most schools should have at least one or two learners with Albinism. Unless these are hidden away from view at home!

A visit to the organisation: Women and Children with Albinism Uganda³ (WACWAU) in Wakiso highlighted the importance of recognizing Albinism as a disability and including persons with Albinism in the Revised Persons with Disability Act (2023).

³ <https://wacwau.com/>

Children with Albinism who have been abandoned by their parents or are at safety risk, are taken care of at WACWAU. They go to a school nearby. The teachers at this school have been sensitized to the additional learning support needs of these children due to having low vision as well as need to protect their skin against the sun to prevent skin cancer.



Figure 4 Children at WACWAU in Wakiso

There are still many myths and misconceptions about Albinism, leading to human rights abuses. Children with Albinism suffer widespread social discrimination, exclusion from education and health care due to stigma and lack of awareness. The 13th of June is International People with Albinism Day.

7. PANGEA PUBLISHING HOUSE⁴ (Kampala)

This Ugandan publishing house supports the development of low-cost children's books, both about specific topics, as well as stories to read for fun and improve early grade reading skills. Books have been developed in all 12 officially recognized local languages in Uganda. Bilingual books and books for children in refugee settlements are also available from Pangea. Up till now 160 titles have been developed. Before storybooks are printed, children will proofread the stories and provide feedback. The Pangea storybooks are also available online as an Open Source. The organisation has 3 authors and 3 illustrators on the team.

The Pangea team has a strong professional education background. Teacher workshops are conducted and disability-friendly adaptations can be made, such

⁴ <https://www.pangeaeducation.org/>

as Dyslexia font adaptations, before a story is printed. Creative story writing workshops can be organised with teachers or others.

8. CONCLUSION

With the “Stories for Inclusion” pilot project we hope to demonstrate that using diverse and inclusive storybooks can become a powerful strategy towards disability inclusion as well as improved literacy and reading fun. The “Stories for Inclusion” storybooks are important for any learning space committed to diversity and inclusion. The storybooks are perfect for children of all abilities, as they encourage meaningful conversations , nurture empathy, and empower children to become allies in creating and sustaining inclusive (school) communities.

“Stories for Inclusion” is innovative and scalable, especially when embedding change where it lasts and by working in partnership with district education officials. We want to reach the most impact with the limited resources we have by also creating collaborative and complementary networks between different organisations working in the same districts and beyond.