A Message From NABU’s Board Chair & Executive Director

This year was more than an historic year. As the world faced a global pandemic that affected the lives of over 1.6 billion children globally who were unable to attend school, many organizations were forced to close their doors. At NABU, we met the challenge head on, and were able to quickly bring our team to a fully remote scenario, and scale our technology platform to support more children than ever before with culturally relevant mother tongue books.

NABU focused this year on a key pillar of our model: the rapid creation of high quality, relevant early grade content, while redefining ourselves as a technology-based publisher of multilingual children’s books. As a result, within weeks of the global lockdowns and school closures, NABU mobilized authors and illustrators remotely in our Authentic Book Creation (ABC) Lab to develop the COVID-19 Health Collection; five titles developed with experts to educate those most vulnerable about how to prevent the spread of the virus, and support children and families dealing with the psychological impact of the pandemic. The Collection was adopted by UNICEF and the UK government, as well as translated by volunteers into over 28 languages worldwide.

Whilst this year has stretched us beyond our limits personally and professionally, we look ahead and are fortunate that we are even more prepared than ever to respond to the needs of children globally - from Rwanda to Micronesia to England - whenever and wherever we are needed. While we remain laser focused on our top four target markets where NABU can have the greatest impact on literacy, we are open for partnerships and opportunities to respond to crises as they emerge.

It is with a hope for a better future that we deepen our efforts to solve the global literacy crisis. We invite you to join us in rising to meet the needs of children and families who need essential access to literacy resources, so we can build a brighter future for all.

— Dr. Kathryn Ritchie and Tanyella Evans

NABU’s model remains grounded in a virtuous cycle of positive impact, and has been affirmed even more this year as aspiring children’s book authors and illustrators in Rwanda were trained in our Authentic Book Creation (ABC) Lab. These local artists are not only equipped with sought-after 21st Century digital design and publishing skills, they are also economically empowered to create books for children in their own communities. The impact of children’s books produced locally - rather than being shipped in from afar with little relevance to the local context - will be felt for generations to come, as children see themselves and their experiences reflected in the pages.

As the educational world pivoted to meet the challenges of the learning crisis deepened by the pandemic, and calls for more digital learning resources to reach children and families around the world sheltering at home rang out, NABU’s free Early Grade Reading Collections were a lifeline to those with little or no access to books. Distribution and engagement on our reading app increased steadily as awareness of the NABU app grew, providing further evidence of the critical demand for digital learning resources.

2020 Annual Report

Kathryn Richie
Board Chair

Tanyella Evans
Executive Director
NABU’s mission is to solve the global literacy crisis, so that every child can read and rise to their full potential.

Literacy is a prerequisite for eradicating poverty, yet globally there is a severe shortage of local language books at the early grade levels. As a result, 250M children are leaving school without being able to read, rendering them extremely vulnerable to social and economic exploitation.

To solve this challenge, we focus on creating culturally relevant mother-tongue stories, more efficiently and at a scale never achieved before. NABU is a tech-enabled publisher of multilingual children’s books, and our vision is to provide every child with inclusive and equitable access to literacy by 2030.

Theory Of Change
Increased access to culturally relevant, mother tongue books directly promotes higher reading engagement, leading to higher literacy levels at the K-3 levels

Content
A child needs access to 160 mother tongue reading books at the early grades. In the ABC Lab, we train local artists to publish high quality books.

Distribution
Content is useless without distribution. We have developed the best reading app for low bandwidth environments.

Engagement
Literacy requires children to be actively reading every day. We invest in grassroots Reading Ambassadors through our Bridge To Literacy program.
By 2025, half the population of sub Saharan Africa will have a mobile phone, and low cost smartphones are replacing basic feature phones. In fact, by 2025, two-thirds of all connections in sub Saharan Africa will be smartphones.

In this context, we have a huge opportunity now to provide free access to early grade reading books to low income children and families, on mobile devices that they already have in their homes.

Through our low bandwidth reading app, NABU is poised to help accelerate access to mother tongue books for children and families, which is one of the most cost effective interventions in early grade literacy.
Why Literacy?

Literacy is essential to eradicating poverty by 2030, in line with the UN Sustainable development goals. Literacy fuels economic growth and development; literate communities create jobs to feed their families, seek medical care, and protect the rights of women and girls.

40% Of the global population does not have access to education in a language they understand.

$129 Billion Is the annual cost of the global learning crisis.

387 Million Children worldwide are illiterate and 66% are girls.
Literacy is a ladder out of poverty.

If all children left primary school with basic literacy skills, every year:

- 430,000 fewer girls would be forced into child marriage.
- 900,000 fewer children would die before their 5th birthday.
- 113,000 fewer mothers would die before childbirth.
- 171 million people would escape extreme poverty.
Where We Work

Regional Offices
- New York, USA
- Kigali, Rwanda
- Melbourne, Australia

Current Programs
- Haiti
- Rwanda
- Kenya

Democratic Republic of Congo

In Progress
- Philippines
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Niger
- Chad
- Burkina Faso
- Ghana
- Benin

NABU Reader in Rwanda

2013
Launch of NABU

2014
NABU.org low-bandwidth reading app design and development.

2015 & 2016
Pilot Programs in partnership with the Asia Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies

2017
Development of Content Creation Model with Writer Workshop in Haiti

2018 & 2019
Honing in on success in Rwanda

2020
COVID-19 rapid response globally

2021
Growth and Expansion

Oliver
A NABU Reader in Rwanda
COVID-19 has affected 1.6 billion children worldwide and threatens to reverse progress made towards early grade literacy.

2020 was a year like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic created the most severe disruption to global education systems in history, forcing more than 1.6 billion learners in over 190 countries out of school at the peak of the crisis. This global health crisis placed emphasis on already-existing inequalities and challenges to education within and across countries that must be tackled urgently in order to guarantee children’s right to quality education. Through the support our growing community, NABU has has leveraged technology to ensure that children have unlimited access to free, high-quality children’s stories in their mother tongue. Here’s how we remained purpose-driven in 2020.
The Authentic Book Creation (ABC) Lab

At the ABC Lab, we train local creators to publish collections of 160 leveled books in languages where they do not exist, ensuring that every child has free access to the essential books that they need to learn to read.
ABC Lab Highlights

February
NABU stands in solidarity with Black Lives Matter, condemning police misconduct, and affirming its commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and continues to fight for equality by publishing and distributing work by authors and illustrators of color.

April
The ‘Keep Reading! Keep Rising!’ campaign during COVID-19 was successful in significantly increasing engagement and visibility across all of our platforms, especially the website, as people are visiting the site to download our free COVID-19 Health Collection.

November
NABU landed its first content licensing deal with Achieve 3000, and NABU originals are the most read content on their platform.

NABU partnered up with Emma Roberts and Belletrist to run an Indiegogo fundraising campaign to create the first book in a world-changing children’s series entitled: Many Stars, One Moon.
In April, NABU created the COVID-19 Health Collection in conjunction with health experts, child psychologists, and local authors and illustrators to help prevent the spread of the virus and help children and families cope with the stress of being separated from loved ones.

The COVID-19 Health Collection of 5 books was translated into 28 languages by 38 volunteers, and was distributed globally in print and digital to over 300,000 children and families, in partnership with e-Bug, Public Health England and UNICEF.
In addition to the COVID-19 Health Collection, NABU continued work on publishing Early Grade Reading Collections in Kinyarwanda and Swahili. In 2020, by training and empowering local artists, NABU created 86 original stories with 10 local artists.
“NABU has given me the opportunity to impact the next generation. With my book “Go Stella Go” I want girls to know they can be absolutely anything they want to be and they can be successful to anything they put their minds to.”

Kate Wanjira
Editor, NABU

“I am all grateful to NABU for challenging me to put out my work. I wrote the book “Nuru’s Space Adventures” because there are few children books by African authors that talk about space adventure/exploration and especially at a time when the world is looking into that. It was also a way of pushing myself as an author into writing something new and exciting.”

Margaret Mutree
Trained Journalist and Writer from Kenya
Illustrators
Bruno Iradukunda
Odile Uwera
Joel Ntawurikura
Husna Ismail
Amizero Patrick
Niringiyimana Theoneste
NSHUTI MANZI Christian
Emmanuel Bagirishya
Abel Peter Murumba
Pambe (Much Hirwa Parfait)
Stephen Mabwa
Denyse Mushimiyimana
Mushier Robert
Rukundo KENNY
Kalisa Boris
Cedric Ishimwe
David Niyonkuru
Jeff Muchina
Kevin Ntwali
Kwijera Paisable
Benjamin Tuyishime
Boris Ndayizeye
Basemen Henry
Stanley Mbugua
Twambazumukiza Pacifique

Authors
Kate Wanjira
Sandrine Umahoza
Alice Gichuru
Deborah Marube
Margaret Muthee
Peter Ndiwa
Rebecca Nandwa
Ibrahim Oroni
Mayuba Bradley
Christina Levelt
Jessica Michibata

Translators
James Nyaga
Salome Rwiliriza

Editors
James Nyaga
Kate Wanjira

Creative Director
Michael Ross
NABU’s Reading App

A free, low-bandwidth and offline reading app for every child.

In 2020, the NABU mobile reading app became the fastest growing reading app in Haiti and Central and East Africa, and users spend on average 10 minutes reading daily, increasing their literacy skills over time.
NABU App Highlights

Pillar 2: Distribution

June
Sees the highest ever daily readers on NABU’s application. Our team is featured on CNBC Africa and our diverse stories have created positive ripple effects for underrepresented children to see themselves as heroes.

October
In line with our plans to expand our reach and in partnership with local government and partners across the education sector we officially launched the NABU reading application in Kenya, with the opportunity to reach 10M children and families in the coming 5 years.

December
At the close of 2020 NABU surpassed our reach projections for the year, ending at 94,654 users. 1.2 Million pages were read on the NABU org app in 2020.
How We Work: NABU Programs

Bridge to Literacy (B2L)

Through Bridge To Literacy (B2L), NABU trains community-based Reading Ambassadors and local partners to onboard and motivate families to read with their children every day.
"Motivating kids to read is about helping them discover their own interests and enthusiasm for books. Showing them that pages are full of wonderful stories and help them see the fun in reading so they become readers for life."

Isaie Uwambajimana - NABU Reading Ambassador
2020 Impact Summary

- Total App Installs: 113,846
- Books Downloaded: 197,474
- Pages Read: 756,074

Number of App Installs in 2020
2020 Impact Summary

Number of App Installs in 2020

- Books Downloaded: 197,474
- Total App Installs: 113,846
The Future: Where We Are Going

Engagement:
The Intersection of Opportunity

The Next 4 Target Markets
NABU’s Next Four Target Languages: Africa and Southeast Asia, where almost half a billion children and families have limited or no access to early grade mother tongue books.

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<th>Location(s)</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
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In 2020, all Management & General and Fundraising costs were covered through unrestricted gifts from our Board and Patrons, so that 100% of gifts from the general public went to NABU’s work in the community.
Patrons

David & Hermine Heller
Cheryl Mothes & Rick Hetzel
Christopher & Loretta Stadler
Children’s Book Fund For Swahili

Lachlan & Emily Given
Paul & Melissa Keary
Tom & Lorelle Krulis
Christopher & Loretta Stadler
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Portia Buckley
Rachel Adams
Ryan Mason
Ryan Rockefeller
Shelley Freiman
Tamara Rankin
Tanyella Evans
Violetta Weddepohl
Virginia Gray
Community Highlights

January
NABU participates in a groundbreaking 4-part Strategic planning series led by CEO of ignition Strategic and NABU board chair Kathryn Ritchie.

April
NABU launched the Next Generation Leaders Fund, with 10 young professionals providing a sustainable pipeline of funding and strategic support for NABU’s work in Rwanda.
Board of Directors

Kweku Mandela
Co-Owner of Out of Africa Entertainment and Co-Founder of non-profit Africa

Diana Cohn
Educator, Award-winning Children's Book Author & Former Executive Director of Panta Rhea Foundation

Damien Vanderwilt
Co-President & Head-Global Markets, Galaxy Digital Holdings

Kathryn Richie, Chair
Founder and CEO of Ignition Institute

Kevin Baird
Chairman, Global Center for College & Career Readiness

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VP of Content Acquisition at Ingram Content Group

Deanna Lane
CEO of FastLane Consulting Group

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Sashi Waltz
Global Head of Institutional Account Management at Coinbase

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Deanna Lane
CEO of FastLane Consulting Group

Sashi Waltz
Global Head of Institutional Account Management at Coinbase
Global Team

Our team is diverse in background, culture, and experience. We have team members across the United States, Australia, Rwanda, Kenya, and Haiti.