



OUR STORY

2017



Thank you so much for everything you did to make sure that we had a memorable 2017. With your support, we were able to get closer to seeing our vision come to pass.

Here is how far we went from January 2017 to February 2018:

PUBLISHING

Sooo Many Stories co-published the second part of *The Still Wonder*, a graphic novel by Rich Wagaba and Gabriel Mugabi on the blog, Twitter and Facebook.

In April 2017, we launched our second title, *Flame and Song*, a memoir by Philippa Namutebi Kabali-Kagwa. We had a successful book-signing at Aristoc, a reading at Femrite Readers and Writers club, an author appearance at The Fireplace: #MEiREAD, Ntinda Chapter and a conversation with the author hosted by The African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME). Namutebi Kabali-Kagwa also visited and spoke to the Writers' Club of Gayaza High School.

This year, we will focus on children books: one, an anthology of children's stories by children from our first children's writing workshop and another, from a Ugandan writer.

BOOK CLUBS/THE FIREPLACES

A. THE FIREPLACE: TOT TALES

2017 was a year of growth for The Fireplace: Tot Tales.

We re-launched Tot Tales in March at two locations; the Ntinda Chapter location at the Innovation Village, Ntinda Complex, with 34 children and the Bugolobi one at the Dancing Cup on Luthuli Avenue with 26. We later moved the Bugolobi Chapter to Aida's Place, a more child-friendly and spacious location.

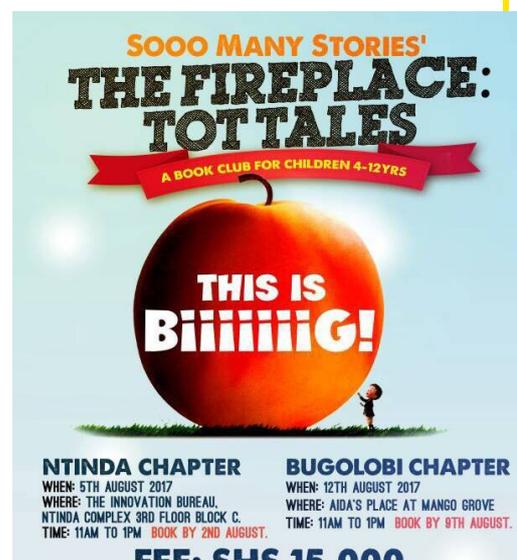
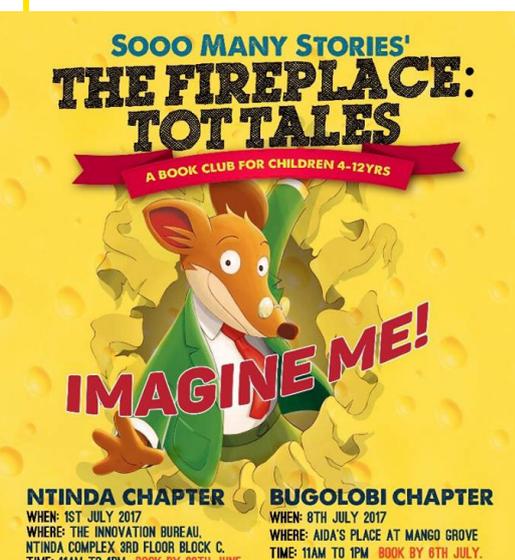
We had an average of 30 children in attendance per month at each chapter with the highest number being 54 children.

Each month had a different theme with different books to suit the different age groups.

In September, we celebrated Authors' month by inviting Ugandan authors who read their stories to the children. For many children, this was the first time they interacted with authors.

In celebration of Independence Day in October, we asked two young Ugandan writers, Joel B. Ntwatwa (now late) and Immaculate Acan to write fiction stories about Independence in order to enable the children better understand the meaning of the day.

We also organised a poetry show during one of the sessions and invited Ugandan poets who performed for the children, encouraging them to write more. It enabled the children to look at storytelling in a new way.



i). Offsite Chapters:

- Pop-up book club at the Kampala Serena Hotel Mothers' Day brunch
- Pop-up book club at the Writivism Festival in Kampala
- Pop-up book club at the Storymoja Festival in Nairobi, Kenya.
- Pop-up book club at The North Green School in Ntinda during their Book Week in February 2018.

Each place provided us an opportunity to share the Tot Tales experience and to interact with different children.

ii) Expansion

Since then, there has been increasing demand for Tot Tales and this year, we are adding a Muyenga Chapter that will be hosted by one of the Tot Tales parents at Harmony International PreSchool in Kiwafu.

Plans to add an Entebbe Chapter are underway.

With the expansion, comes an increase in the fee from She 15,000 to Shs20,000, inclusive of a snack.

Our Ntinda Chapter will now be hosted by Feza Children's Centre in Minister's Village. This space is more child-friendly and will allow us to do our book club activities without worrying about disrupting other people.

B. THE FIREPLACE: #MEiREAD

#MEiREAD met in Ntinda at Kahwa2Go, located at Ntinda Complex, from March till November of 2017. The Bugolobi Chapter met for three months at The Village Mall in Bugolobi until a decision was made to close that chapter.

We read the following novels:

- *Flame and Song* by Philippa Namutebi Kabali-Kagwa who also visited the book club and interacted with storylovers in attendance.
- *Tram 83* by Fiston Mwanza Mujila (Congo)
- *Blackass* by Igoni Barrett (Nigeria)
- *Fate of the Banished* by Julius Ochwinyo (Uganda)

We also read short stories by African authors:

- *Sext Me* anthology by Jalada
- *Daughters Who Become Lovers*, an anthology by Writivism
- Stories from The Enkare Review, a Nairobi-based Lit Mag

We hosted our first Amateur Night where unpublished Ugandan authors were invited to share their work with us. We had a blind read and discussion of these stories during the book club but because there were a number of stories, we extended it into the following month. The amateur night was a success and rated highly by the book club members.

You can find stories from the Amateur Nights on our blog;
<http://somanystories.ug/category/blog/features/short-stories>

i) Offsite chapters:

#MEiREAD at The Writivism Festival where we hosted Igoni Barrett and discussed his book, *Blackass*.

This year, the Fireplace will be taking on a new format that is more far-reaching and more innovative. We can't wait to share details of this.



THE CHILDREN'S WRITING WORKSHOP | A FIRST

Between 11th and 15th December 2017, we held our first children's writing workshop as we realised there were some aspiring writers among our readers. The aim was to give young writers an opportunity to learn how to write their stories and the different aspects of storytelling. We had 10 young writers.

SOOO MANY STORIES'
PRESENTS
A CHILDREN'S WRITING WORKSHOP
FOR CHILDREN 7-12 YEARS OLD



FOR FIVE DAYS, CHILDREN WILL WORK WITH TWO WRITERS, EDITORS AND A PUBLISHER TO BRING TO LIFE THEIR STORIES AND WORKSHOP THEM INTO STORIES THAT WILL BE PUBLISHED IN AN ANTHOLOGY.

WHEN: DECEMBER 11-15
Monday Friday

TIME: From 10am to 4pm

Fee: Shs270,000 (for Tot Tales book club members)
Shs320,000 (for non book club members)
LIMITED SLOTS. BOOK BY 25TH NOVEMBER, 2017

We had lessons on different aspects of storytelling, a fully stocked reading nook, one-on-one sessions between coaches and writers and they had an opportunity to interact with different people that are writing in different ways: Cathy Kreutter shared about the different steps she took to write her picture books (from the time she conceived the idea to when the book was published), Anne Kansiime spoke about how they created the character Kansiime and what they have done over the years to keep the character consistent. Together with Joe Kahirimbanyi they wrote the Cassava Song but more importantly, Kahiri spoke to them about the value of writing their own stories. Lloyd Lutara spoke to them about Screen-writing and shared some films and shows he has written for and Gloria Kiconco spoke about writing and performing poetry.



The children also had a chance to work with Richard Musinguzi (of the Katoto fame) an illustrator and bring their stories to life.

This was to help with the characterisation and also involve them in each and every stage of the making of a book.

We also did some group assignments as well played some games that indirectly taught them some of the things we had learnt earlier.

Here is a video of Kansime with the children:

<https://youtu.be/73iAKtZYuQk>

We hope to launch the anthology from this workshop in August, 2018.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

At The College of Arts, Makerere University, Nyana Kakoma, a former student of Literature at what was then called The Faculty of Arts spoke about how she is putting her Literature degree to use through the work she does with *Sooo Many Stories*. The team also used the opportunity to share with the students the vision behind #MEiREAD and highlight their experiences with the book club which resulted in 30 sign-ups from the students in attendance.

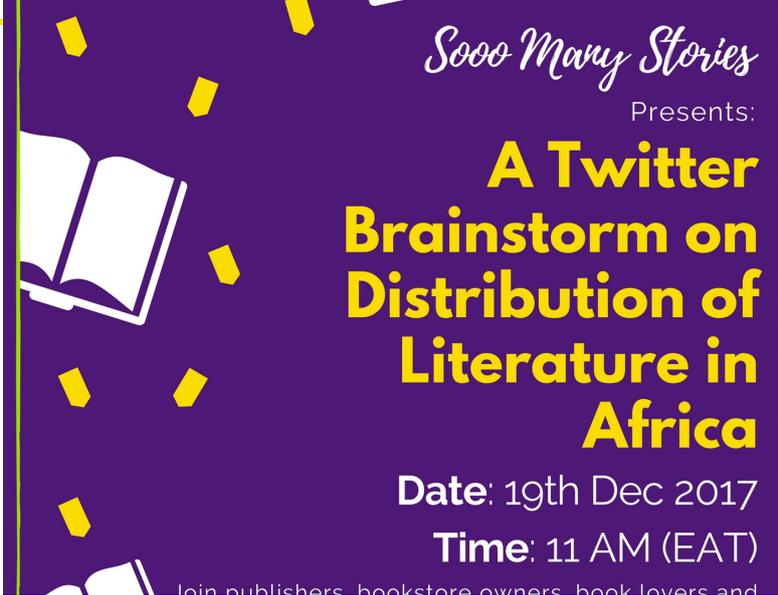
Nyana Kakoma on the panel at The 3rd Edition of The Uganda International Writers' Conference discussing: DIY Narratives on current trends in African writing and publishing.

Esther Nshakira on the Readers' Choice Panel during the Writivism Festival.

Nyana Kakoma moderated a conversation on Writing Sex in African Literature at The Writivism Festival.

Nyana Kakoma on the panel at Women's Meet-up with Zimba Women | Overcoming the unconscious bias. The panel sought to address the different ways women encounter and experience such bias in their daily lives.

Nyana Kakoma at the Future Leaders Conference, organised by Uganda Unites. Uganda Unites seeks to bring together youth from all over Uganda to build a peaceful and nonviolent Uganda. Nyana talked about what she is doing with other Ugandans to solve present day challenges around her.



OTHER EVENTS

Peter Kagayi at The Afrocologne Festival in Germany in *The Audience Must Say Amen*, based on his poetry collection, *The Headline That Morning*.

Sooo Many Stories at Babishai Niwe Poetry Festival: a Facebook live chat with Philippa Namutebi Kabali-Kagwa and a poetry masterclass taught by Peter Kagayi.

Sooo Many Stories at Storymoja: The *(Un) Spoken* production by Peter Kagayi and Philippa Namutebi Kabali-Kagwa. The performance was based on their books *The Headline That Morning* and *Flame and Song* and was presented as a conversation between two Ugandan generations about Uganda. The discussion after was moderated by Kenyan Literary blogger, James Murua.

Digital Training with Richard Njau of 4Up Digital, in Nairobi. Njau is a well known digital content creator in Nairobi who gave a training on how to use digital spaces to promote our products and give our consumers more value.

Twitter Brainstorm on Distribution of Literature in Africa under the hashtag #BooksAcrossAfrica. A report from this conversation will be published on the blog soon. In that one hour we had 500 posts, 184 users, 615,896 reach and 1,714,620 impressions. It involved readers, publishers, writers, courier companies such as DHL, book shops and kiosks, book bloggers and arts journalists, online stores among across Africa and in the Diaspora discussing how access of African Literature can be improved.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Radio: Radio City, Power FM, X FM, KBC English Service (Books Cafe with Khainga O'Okwemba, Kenya)

Print: Daily Monitor, The New Vision: Toto Magazine, The Tribe Magazine, The New Vision Magazine predicting 2018 trends, The East African, Daily Nation(Kenya), Business Daily (Kenya)

TV: Morning At NTV, NTV (Perspectives with Josephine Karungi), Urban TV (Talk With Gaetano)

Online: The Daily Nation, ThisIsUganda. nevender.com, Turn The Page, Justified Ecstasy, jamesmurua.com

Nyana Kakoma was nominated by The New Vision readers as one of the most admirable women of 2017.

News:

<http://www.monitor.co.ug/arts/culture/Reviews/Write-happened-Kagwa/691232-3883778-d74ipz/index.html>

<http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Henry-Barlow-s-daughter-launches-memoir/688334-3879434-ssoykm/index.html>

<http://www.monitor.co.ug/OpEd/Commentary/-Flame-and-Song---Down-memory-lane/689364-3898476-n2nob7/index.html>

<https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/lifestyle/art/From-a-blogger-book-publisher/3815712-4141996-suqch2z/index.html>

<http://www.jamesmurua.com/philippa-namutebi-kabali-kagwa-launches-flame-song-kampala/>

<http://nevender.com/arts-uganda-2017-20-notable-books-events-and-people/>

Book Reviews:

<http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/magazine/A-family-s-struggle-building-a-nation--/434746-3909852-tmitgp/index.html>

<https://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/my-network/Flame-and-Song-A-Memoir/3141096-4157074-l2fw74/index.html>

<http://tpafrica.com/flame-and-song-philippa-namutebi-kabali-kagwa/>

<https://justifiedecstasy.wordpress.com/2017/08/06/book-review-flame-and-song/>

Interviews:

<http://observer.ug/lifestyle/51720-nyana-s-sooo-many-stories-promotes-reading-culture.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bl0h-NKNufg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1HE2LqEuJs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jxfl9qgHnko>

<https://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/artculture/Ugandan-poet-and-storyteller-Phillipa-Namutebi/1954194-4115698-2xxhft/index.html>



<https://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/artculture/10-BY-THE-BOOK-Nyana-Kokoma-/1954194-4112462-im2tj3z/index.html>

<https://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/artculture/Ugandan-poet-Peter-Kagayi/1954194-4117618-wqa20jz/index.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8pe8MyBJ74&index=10&list=PL52J8AvCMgLCmrKA6GD8bu4Wg3Bzig-cp>

<http://thisisuganda.org/nyana-kakoma-creating-generation-book-readers-right-grass-roots-sooo-many-stories/>

THE TRIBE

Volunteers

We would never go as far as we do without the volunteers that give us their time, their ideas, their love during The Fireplace: Tot Tales.

We recruited volunteers in the capacities of minders, readers and evaluators who have been doing an outstanding job with the children. On roaster, we had eight readers and 11 minders, and evaluators who worked diligently to ensure that parents receive feedback on their child during the sessions.

In January 2018, we put out a call for more volunteers given the Tot Tales expansion this year. On February 15th we were joined by old and new volunteers for training on how the fireplace runs and why it is important to us. We cannot wait to grow with you!

Dushiime Kaguliro, who joined us in 2016 on part-time basis was confirmed as a permanent member of the team as a Reading Nurturer and Events Coordinator. Dushiime runs all our book clubs and events at Sooo Many Stories.

Esther Nshakira is taking on new responsibility as Online Storyteller in charge of the blog and social media. Esther joined the team last year, first as a volunteer at The Fireplace: Tot Tales, then as an Online Storyteller in charge of the blog. In the last few months, she has brought a much needed freshness and depth to the content that has been running on the blog.

She now couples that responsibility with social media, ensuring a uniform voice on our online platforms. She will also be running the Muyenga Chapter of The Fireplace: Tot Tales.

Carol Kagezi joined us at the beginning of 2018 in the capacity of Editorial Assistant. Our publishing arm will be taking on freelance work and we are looking to publish some exciting books this year. She brings to the team experience in editing, and is definitely an invaluable addition to the team. Carol will also run the Ntinda Chapter of The Fireplace: Tot Tales, having started out as a volunteer at The Fireplace: Tot Tales and one of the coaches at our first Children's Writing Workshop.

Belinda Katumba joined us last year as a volunteer to run our Social Media platforms. Belinda was invaluable in making sure our online communication was engaging, informative and far-reaching. Belinda is away at the moment, studying for her MBA.



Thank you all for your support, encouragement and advice. Looking forward to the work we will do with you this year.

Special thanks to the following for their support in 2017:

Aristoc Booklex: for the free books they gave all year for Tot Tales

Madhvani Group (Kakira Sugar Limited): monetary support towards the launch of *Flame and Song*

Blush Media: for free photography at #MEiREAD

Tweny Moments: for discounted rates at Tot Tales and the launch of *Flame and Song*

Kahwa2Go: for hosting #MEiREAD

Centre for African Media Excellence (ACME): hosting The Author Conversation with Philippa Namutebi Kabali-Kagwa

