

IBBY-Yamada Fund

Project reports 2024

IBBY Uganda

Developing Creative Writing
Interest and Skills Among Children
in Vulnerable Communities



Every child has the right to become a reader



IBBY UGANDA CHAPTER

DEVELOPING CREATIVE WRITING INTEREST AND SKILLS AMONG CHILDREN IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

FINAL REPORT



Prepared by
NTUHA CHILDREN WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS ASSOCIATION
JANUARY 2025

FORWARD

Creative writing especially with children provides numerous opportunities that develop children's literacy capacities. It enables them express their ideas in writing and improves their motor skills.

Writing gives not only adults but also children space for imagination and its fun. Particularly with children, it helps identify with the world around them and it is believed to lead to the improvement of memory and concentration.

NCWIA has over the years encouraged children to be creative when writing. Currently it has some child authors whose books have been found interesting and enjoyable both among children and adults. NCWIA has mentored many children and more talent is being discovered as members continue to work with them in the many activities NCWIA has carried out.

Children writers of today are the authors of tomorrow. It is therefore important to continue promoting this creativity in order to have better future writers.

With support from IBBY Yamada fund, one of the most important activities for NCWIA was carried in a selected vulnerable community within the suburbs of Kampala. This report is an account of what transpired at Zana village, assisted by Motherly Heart Foundation a Community Based Organization working for the betterment of children's lives in this community.

Eva Mutongole Wamala

Chairperson

Ntaha Children's Writers and Illustrators Association

IBBY Uganda Chapter

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

Introduction

- Preparatory meetings
- About Motherly Heart Organization
- Aim of the workshop
- The main objectives of the workshop
- Participation

OPENING CEREMONY

- Opening ceremony
- The Director Motherly heart, Mary Ajambo
- The Chairperson of NCWIA, Mrs. Eva Wamala
- Day One -The Adults Workshop
- The Children's reading and writing session
- Day two of the workshop
- The adult workshop
- The drawing and coloring session
- The parent's session

THE CLOSING CEREMONY

- Presentation of gifts and donation of books
- Day three - Editorial workshop
- Conclusion
- Appendixes -
 - Activity expenditure statement
 - Workshop program
 - List of books donated

INTRODUCTION

This is a report on a three - day workshop that was conducted on the theme “Developing creative writing interest and skills among children in vulnerable communities”. With support from IBBY Yamada fund, this workshop was held from 6th – 8th March 2024 in partnership with Motherly Heart Foundation, a Local Community Based Organization (CBO) based in Zana, Nfuufu Wakiso District.

Preparatory meeting

Two preparatory meetings were organized. The first meeting was held at NCWIA offices to kick start the activity and spell out how best this activity was to be carried out. The second meeting was held on February 22nd 2024 at the Motherly Heart premises in Zana, Wakiso District. This meeting was attended by the management of Motherly Heart and three NCWIA members. It was important to have this meeting at the venue to discuss the appropriate dates when the workshop was to be held, the logistics that were required, who to invite and among other issues. Thereafter, all service providers were contacted and by the time the meeting ended, the dates of 6-8th March 2024 had been confirmed and all was set for the workshop to take place.

Motherly Heart Organization

This is a community-based organization (CBO) dedicated to promoting education for children. This CBO was selected to partner with NCWIA because its main activities support the education and development of children from low income families, some of whom are unable to go to school for various reasons. Their vision is a nurtured society for the present and future generations. Motherly Heart organization provides literacy programs that spread the love for books among children from low-income families. The organization creates space for children to come and explore the world through reading every Thursday and Saturday. Most of these children are stay home and do not go to school so they visit the center mainly on Thursday and Saturday. Volunteers help these stay home children learn how to read and write. Many of these children have the interest but their parents cannot afford to take them to school.

Aim of the workshop

The creative writing workshop aimed at demonstrating how the ability to compose and write stories can be realized, appreciated and enhanced children and adults. It also helped to know how this skill can be put into action and shared with children.

Previous experience during the many reading activities NCWIA has carried out has shown that games, creative writings and art work bring out hidden talents in children and enhance the reading culture. Many times it has led to increased demand for story books and reading beyond

the academic scope. It is also known that children enjoy reading their own works, the works of other children, or works of people they know, especially those stories they can easily relate to. Therefore, this workshop was an important activity for this community.

The main objectives of the workshop were:

- a) To teach children in vulnerable communities, teachers, and literacy ambassadors how to create interesting children's books
- b) To encourage children's inventiveness and intelligence by creating interesting educational content.
- c) To foster a community of young African authors and readers.
- d) To develop the writing skills and abilities from childhood to young children from vulnerable communities.

This report therefore highlights the activities conducted during the creative writing workshop. The workshop was divided into two parts, a two-day children's reading tent and creative writing, as well as the adult writing and editing workshop. On the third day editorial team met at NCWIA offices where all stories received from both the adult workshop and the children writing sessions were analyzed, edited and forwarded to the illustrator in preparation for printing. The workshop program will be attached on the final report.

Participation

The participants included 35 children from two local schools that partner with Motherly Heart, four teacher representatives, and children from the community enrolled in the Organization literacy program. Also in attendance were six Motherly Heart members who included a Board member, the Director and volunteers. NCWIA's participants included the Chairperson, The vice chairperson and five members. The aim of this activity was to enable teachers, Motherly heart volunteers and other participants learn how to help children enjoy and get the best out of their creative writing. It is hoped that the adults who participated in the event will share the knowledge gained at the event with their colleagues at their respective places of work. The occasion was graced by the Local Council Chairman who officially opened it.

OPENING CEREMONY

The Director Motherly heart

After singing the National Anthems of Uganda, The E.A. Community and Buganda Kingdom, The Director / Founder **of Motherly Heart Organization, Ms. Mary Ajambo**, welcomed everyone to the occasion.



Ms Mary Ajambo, The Director of Motherly Heart giving her opening remarks

She gave brief information about her organization and its work. She introduced her team to the participants. She also thanked Ntuha Children's Writers and Illustrators Association (NCWIA) for agreeing to come and 'plant a seed' among children from their community. She said that this seed (of writing and reading) was an important asset in the life of everybody in their community and hoped that this seed would grow with the children.

The Chairperson of NCWIA, Mrs. Eva Wamala



Ms Eva Wamala, The chairperson NCWIA giving her opening remarks

The Chairperson NCWIA welcomed participants to the workshop. She gave a summarized brief about NCWIA and IBBY, the organizations behind the project and why the Creative Workshop Project was being implemented in partnership with Motherly Heart organization. She hoped that the relationship established between the Motherly Heart Organization and NCWIA would be maintained, grow and yield many fruits. She paid tribute to IBBY Yamada Project the partnering international organization that was sponsoring the project.

The Chairperson Local Community 1 for the area, Mr. R. Katamba, officially opened the workshop and welcomed all participants to his area. He assured them of their safety and wished them a good and worthwhile time in his area. He appreciated the work of Motherly Heart Foundation in their community and called for more support to the CBO.



The chairperson of NCWIA thanking the Local Council Chairman for his good speech

Day One -The Adults Workshop

The main purpose of this workshop was to guide adults in helping children create and write their own stories, because writing and reading go hand in hand.

Altogether 15 adults were in attendance. These included some members of the partnering CBO, some teachers from schools in the area and some parents.

Mrs. Eva. Wamala , the Chairperson NCWIA facilitated in this workshop.



The Chairperson NCWIA giving her presentation

In her presentation, she first described what children's books are – books intended for the audience of children below the age of 12 years. She outlined some features expected of books for children at different levels. On reasons why one should write children's books, she observed that children are the future of our world and they need books that can impact on them. Books pass on important skills – they educate, inform and entertain. Children's books use simple language and pictures. She observed that ideas for deciding what to write about can come from stories that happen in real life; historical fiction - that is actual historical events; biographies – memoirs based on life of real persons; fantasy – made up stories from one's imagination; science and technology; folklore – stories from local history and culture, and passed on in specific communities, from one generation to another; poetry; drama and non-fiction i.e. true anecdotes giving facts and actual real life stories.

She went on to give details on steps that one goes through when writing for children which included the following:

- Understanding your book audience
- What makes a children's book
- Reading as many children's books as possible
- Outlining your children's book details
- Writing that first draft
- Reading and Rereading the draft to revise and make additions
- Get a critique who can be a child or editor
- Find children's book illustrator
- Celebrate your book

She emphasized the importance of determining the intended audience for the books because this influences the handling of the plot, the length of the story, the language used, the illustrations used etc.

She advised that it was important to read through your work many times in order to perfect it. It was also important that the work is given a critical eye by another person to iron out all those issues that the author may have overlooked. It would also be good to test the work with a sample of the intended audience especially children before coming up with the final work.

Participants later formed 3 groups of 4 and created stories of their own. They decided their themes, audience, language, morals, lessons as well as the main issues to look out for and others to by- pass. To ensure that each book was properly illustrated, each group worked with an illustrator to determine the appropriate areas in the book that required illustrations and number of illustrations for their book.



Participants discussing their story while on the left, the illustrator explains the importance of illustrations in the children's books

During the plenary session the participants discussed the work done by the various groups and came up with more ideas and advice on creative writing. The characters in the books were discussed as well as the moral of the stories. They appreciated the fact that a book is not only enjoyed but the lessons learnt from the story are equally important.



The Vice Chairperson contributing to the discussion while on the left, a contribution was also received from one of the board members of motherly Heart

The Children's reading and creative writing session

About 35 children participated in the reading tent. These were from the local community who mainly included the children under the Motherly Heart Organization literacy program. Also invited were a few children from neighboring schools – Jack and Jaleel Primary School and St Theresa Catholic Primary School who normally participate in activities organized by Motherly heart over the weekends. NCWIA has a collection of books that is normally used during the reading tents and these were used during the children reading sessions.

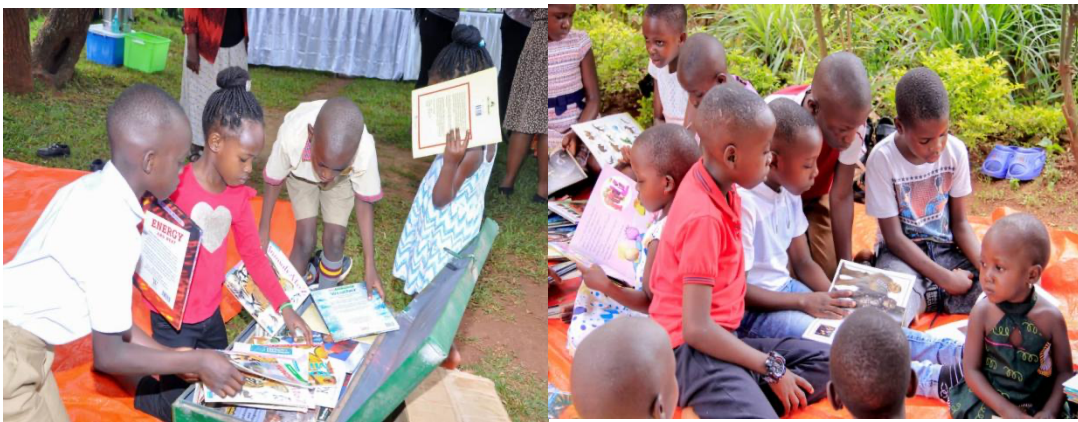
That morning, one of the NCWIA members addressed the children and informed them that they had come to create and write their own stories. Before writing, there was need for them to read the story books that were availed to them to enable them learn how stories are written which would in turn assist them create their own stories. The activities for the reading and creative writing camp were:

- Reading the story books provided
- Group reading
- Reading aloud to others
- Molding
- Writing stories
- Drawing illustrations
- Singing and dancing.

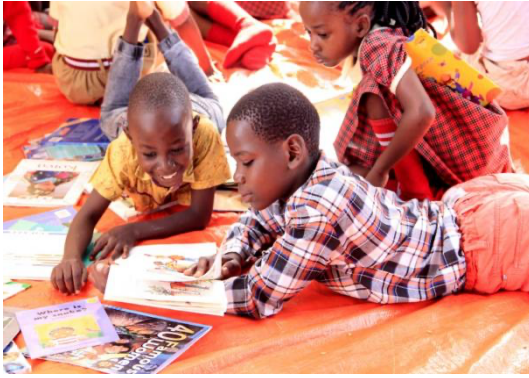


The children listening attentively to the address by the NCWIA member on reading and creating a story

The children were very excited about reading the books and could not wait to receive them. They were encouraged to pick whatever story book they liked and read freely in the morning session of the reading camp.



Every child selected a book of his/her choice from the book box to read

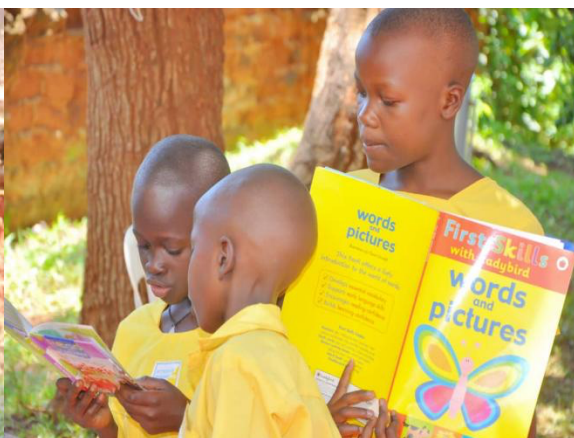


Reading is fun but reading while lying down is more relaxing especially if the story is captivating



Children were encouraged to share books freely and read together

The afternoon session had two main activities – reading aloud the stories that were the most interesting from the books availed, molding the characters and items that were in the story books, singing and dancing.



Children reading aloud the stories they found interesting



Motherly Heart Granny also read to the 3 year olds who could not read for themselves



A boy and girl explaining to others the characters they had molded from the books they read



The first day was crowned with doing some physical exercises, singing their favorite songs and dancing



Exercise session conducted by NCWIA member



When everyone was tired, one of our volunteers suggested that the children dance a little to crown the day. They really enjoyed it

Day two of the workshop

The second day begun with a recap of what had transpired during the first day in the adult workshop and the children's creative writing camp.

The adult seminar day two

The stories created were shared and more discussions were made and finalized. Suggestions as to where the illustrations were to be placed in the text were also made. However, the stories needed to be edited by the editorial team of NCWIA to come up with final drafts of the manuscripts to be considered for printing. It was therefore decided to have this activity done on the third day of the workshop



Discussions during day two of the adult workshop

After breakfast, all the adult participants were requested to join the children who had already started a writing session and assist them develop interesting stories and write them in their own way.

The writing session with the children

Children were given paper and pens to write on any topic they wanted as can be seen below.



Children writing and one tries to explain her idea to the NCWIA member



Creating a story is not an easy task, one has to think a lot in order to write a good one. On the right is the chair and one of the participants assisting children to create stories



The children enjoyed creating their own stories and reading them to the participants

The drawing and coloring session

The children were requested to make their own illustrations for the stories they had written in their own way. This session was very interesting because they were able to put their imaginations on paper. Those chosen are to be published as part of the stories made will form part of the final report.



The NCWIA illustrator assisting the children to draw their illustrations and relating them to their stories as well as identifying talented children.

After this session, all stories were collected and submitted to the NCWIA administration for discussion on the third day of the workshop

The parent's session

This was an important session for the children. Motherly Heart requested to have this session to show the parents what the children were capable of doing. Having both schooling and non-schooling children, the parents of non-schooling children would have a feel of what their children were missing.



Some of the parents who attended the parent's session seated together with the management of Motherly heart.

The children were able to read aloud the stories they had written for them to appreciate the activities they had gone through during the time of the creative writing camp..



Girls reading their favorite stories provided by NCWIA

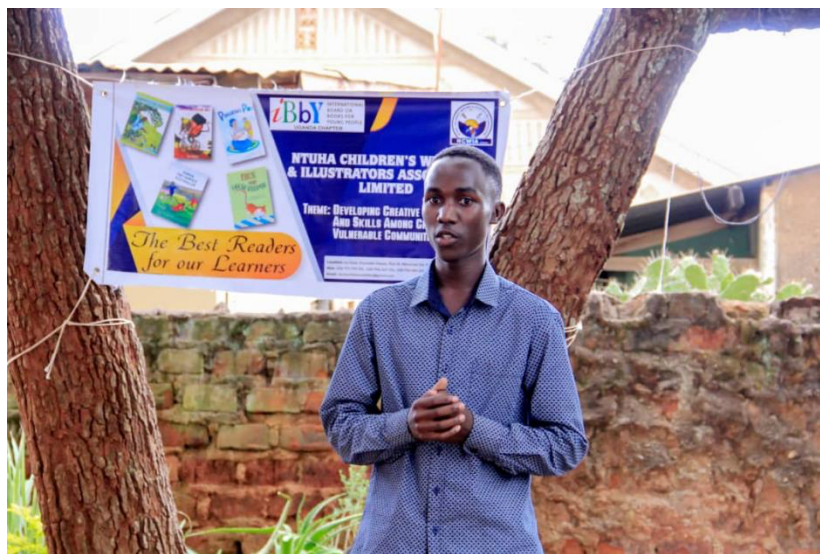
The closing ceremony

The Motherly Heart director expressed gratitude to the community for enrolling their children on the literacy program and encouraged them to continue doing so. She thanked NCWIA for giving them an opportunity to host the Creative Writing Workshop and the children's reading and writing sessions. She called for continued collaboration among the two organizations and pledged to support NCWIA by encouraging their volunteers to become join NCWIA and become children writers. She also promised to spread the word to its other branches in the eastern part of the country.



The Director Motherly Heart Organisation giving her closing remarks

The teachers expressed their thanks to Motherly Heart and NCWIA for providing them with valuable opportunities and skills as educators.



Teacher Stuart giving a vote of thanks on behalf of the teacher participants

In her closing remarks, The NCWIA chairperson briefed parents from the community about her organization and thanked Motherly Heart for their effective cooperation. They also advocated for the promotion of a culture of writing among children. The chairperson expressed gratitude to the schools for attending the workshop and encouraged parents to register more children on the program. They hoped to continue working with Motherly Heart and invited them to become members of the NCWIA for more effective cooperation. The Director Motherly Heart Foundation is now a member of NCWIA.



The Chairperson of NCWIA giving her closing remarks

Presentation of gifts and donation of books

The best children story writers were requested to read their stories before the guests. The chairperson of NCWIA presented gifts of reading books to the top five young writers.



Gifting the best children authors with story books and pens

The winning story was entitled "Dangers of Rubbish". Other story titles included ' My visit to the hospital', "My First Day at the Bank," "My School, My Second Home," "Mothers, Mothers, Mothers" and "My Family."



The members of NCWIA and Motherly Heart Foundation in a group photograph with the best children authors with their gifts and the donated books

Five children with wonderful drawings were also awarded gifts. NCWIA donated 429 story books as a starter collection for a library at Motherly Heart Foundation and to support its literacy program among vulnerable communities.

The day was crowned with the cutting of the cake offered by NCWIA in appreciation of the cooperation from the community and motherly Heart Foundation. The children were very happy with the cake.



Day three of the adult workshop

This session was held at NCWIA offices. All the stories collected were edited by the editorial team which comprised of members of NCWIA and the Director of Motherly Heart organization. A total of three manuscripts for children story books from the adult participants were edited and passed. Their illustrations are ready and the books are on the designers desk from where they will be taken to the printer. Five stories whose manuscripts were created are also complete. The books are yet to be printed.



The editorial team at work at NCWIA offices

ACTIONS DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE PROJECT

There were three stories developed by both the adult workshop and three during the children reading tent. Here below are their descriptions. Illustrations are now ready.

Adult workshop

Group One

Title: Learn to be Honest

This is a story about a single mother who did odd jobs to be able to take care of her children. One day she was washing clothes for one of her clients and she found a lot of money in one of the pockets of his trousers. She informed the client that he had found money in the trouser she was about to wash and had kept it. She handed over the money to him and he thanked her for being honest. As a sign of appreciation, he got her a job in a supermarket where she was able to earn money to look after her family. She was very happy that the children were able to feed well, dress well and also go to school. Being honest had helped her lead a better life.

Group two

Title: Kintu the changed boy

This is a story about Kintu and how he changed from being a lazy boy to becoming a hard working young man. Kintu did not want to do house chores at home. He always found reason not to do anything. His parents decided to send him to his grandmother during holidays. His grandmother made sure that he does all the chores alone. Kintu learnt a lot from her. When he came back to his parents' home, he was a changed boy because he could do anything without being asked.

Group three

Safety of Children in the Community

This is a story about the children in Zana community and how parents don't really care about them. Many parents have many children and don't really mind about the safety of their children. Many are found roaming around, playing by the road side, and many other things that were compromising their security. The story ends with measures that can help to ensure that the children are safe in the community.

Stories created during the reading tent by the children. Only three were selected and these are described below.

My visit to the hospital.

This is a narration by a child about what happened when she visited the hospital for a tour. The many buildings she saw. The machines that treated different diseases were almost in every room. she saw, the smartly dressed nurses and doctors. She also saw many patients that looked like they were in pain. She felt pity and decided to read hard and become a doctor in future.

Mother, Mother

This is a story about the mother's love. Who she is and what she does for her children. This story narrates the many things mothers do for their children and how they do them with love.

Dangers of Rubbish

This is a story about why it is the responsibility of everyone to dispose of rubbish well to ensure a clean and healthy environment in our community.

(We believe this child was inspired to write this story because of the environment they live in. This community is basically in a slum area.)

OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT AND POSSIBLE EXTENSIONS

The outcomes this activity are as follows:

1. A few children were able to show creativity in writing stories. As guided by the teachers, children were able to improve their imaginations and this can be observed in the stories they wrote. NCWIA has collected these stories and these will be published.
2. The children showed confidence by being able to read and relate to the stories in the books.
3. Teachers got interested in joining NCWIA because they also want to become writers. They were encouraged after realizing that not only do we invite adults to join our association but also children. We have already received some manuscripts from one teacher and one child for review and editing.
4. One of the members of Motherly heart has offered to assist NCWIA during the reading tent we hope to carry out this year.
5. This workshop was an eye opener to the teachers who thought that they could not write children's books because of the training they received about creative writing and they have promised to send us more manuscripts.
6. NCWIA currently receives the Motherly Heart newsletter which now has a section that reports on reading among the other activities they do.
7. Motherly heart has opened another community support area in the eastern part of the Uganda in a place called Dabani. This center will host a reading camp in August 2025 and NCWIA will participate in this camp.
8. A proposal to use local materials like back cloth, papyrus, sisal and banana fibre to create hand crafts that represent the characters in the books created is being drafted for future funding.
9. Overall, the creative writing workshop provided valuable experience that enhanced both the craft of writing and personal development of the teachers and the children.

Conclusion

NCWIA would like to thank IBBY Yamada for having enabled it carry out this activity in one of the vulnerable community in Uganda. They were left yearning for more of these workshops and reading tents as well as more reading materials for the children.

Appendix 2

Workshop program

NO	ACTIVITY	TIME	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
DAY ONE			
1	Arrival of participants and registration	8.00am	NCWIA
2	Opening remarks		
	Director of Motherly Heart Foundation	8.30am	MHF
	Local Council Chairperson	8.40am	MHF
	Chairperson NCWIA	9.00am	NCWIA
3	BREAKFAST	9.30am	ALL
4	Workshop for teachers(Introduction to creative writing)	10.00am	NCWIA
5	Children reading tent begins	10.00am	ALL
6	LUNCH	12.30PM	ALL
7	Workshop (group work and developing stories)	2.00 - 4.00 pm	NCWIA
8	Children reading tent continues	2.00 - 4.00 pm	NCWIA
9	Children exercise and winding up the day	4.00pm	NCWIA
DAY TWO			
1	Arrival of participants	8.00am	NCWIA
2	Recap of what transpired during day one	8.30am	NCWIA
3	BREAKFAST	9.00am	ALL
4	Participants join children to assist them write stories, molding, illustration sessions	9.am - 12.30pm	ALL
5	LUNCH	12.30 - 2.00pm	ALL
6	Presentation of stories written and children reading to parents	2.00 - 3.00pm	NCWIA
7	Closing remarks	3.00 - 3.30pm	MHF and NCWIA
7	Presentation of gifts to the best children writers and book donation	3.30 - 4.00pm	NCWIA
8	Cake cutting and departure	4.00pm	ALL
DAY THREE			
1	Editorial workshop at NCWIA offices	8.30am - 2.00 pm	NCWIA

Appendix 3

LIST OF BOOKS DONATED

NO	TITLE	COPIES
1	Bambi the Naughty Kitten	10
2	Big thumb Lara	10
3	Courageous weaverbird	10
4	Donkeys on the Island	10
5	Friendly Feast in Heaven	10
6	I Love the Sun	10
7	I Need to Work	10
8	In the Sun	10
9	Jonathan goes to School	10
10	Joshua the famous Footballer	10
11	Kaheru the Orphan	10
12	Kain and his experience	10
13	Killer HIV/AIDs Pandemic	9
14	Kuku the Cock	10
15	Kuti goes to the Party	10
16	My Mother Likes her Job	10
17	My Name is Street Child	10
18	Ndugu and his Grand Father Kwebi	10
19	My Precious Name	10
20	Ngozaki and her Decorated Letters	10
22	Nice our Housekeeper	10
23	Nowhere safe to live	10
24	The Hare's reading Game	10
25	The two greedy women	10
26	This is our world	10
27	The mother bat and other stories	10
28	The Lazy Crocodile and wise monkey	10
29	The beautiful flowers	10
30	The Mahogany tree and the master	10
31	The precious name	10
32	The mysterious Rat	10
33	The hare's reading game	10
34	Ten foolish goats	10
35	Our escape from school discovered	10
36	Who owns the fruit tree	10
37	What is the tail for	10
38	Tandi goes to school	10
39	Voila does housework	10
40	Swapi the monkey	10
41	We are all animals	10
42	Tatu the toad	10