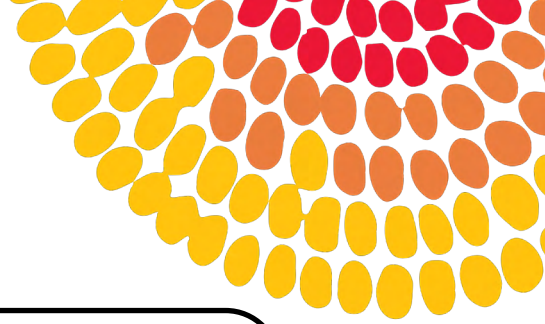




# LITTLE ZEBRA BOOKS™



## 2025 Annual Report



## **Vision**

Little Zebra Books exists to inspire children in Africa to grow in their love for reading and their love for the Lord.

## **Mission**

To promote a reading culture in print-scarce African communities through the development of affordable, high-quality, culturally rich children's books.

## **Objectives**

### **1. My Book**

Distribute 1 million more books across Southern and other African countries.

### **2. My Story**

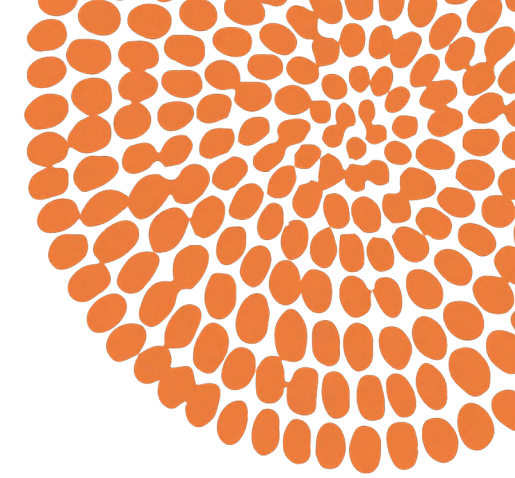
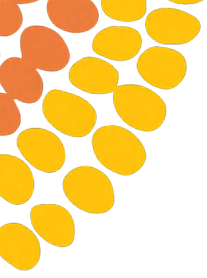
Create 18 new proudly African titles that inspire children to read.

### **3. My Language**

Advocate for children owning and reading books in their mother tongue.

### **4. Our organisation**

Build a strong, sustainable organisation and effective partnerships that ensure long-term impact.



## CONTENTS

<b>2</b>	A word from our Chairperson
<b>3</b>	From the Director's Desk
<b>4</b>	Strategic Plan in Review
<b>6</b>	More Books Reaching More Children in South Africa
<b>7</b>	Our first Masifunde Sidlala Authored Book
<b>9</b>	New Book Reach in Mozambique
<b>10</b>	Advocacy, Visibility and Media Engagement In 2025
<b>11</b>	Growing our Catalogue of Books
<b>12</b>	Who Has Been Reading our Books?
<b>13</b>	Our Work Within the Sector - LITASA and CECD
<b>14</b>	Financial report
<b>15</b>	Thank You for your support

## A WORD FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

This past year has been one of meaningful growth and encouragement for Little Zebra Books. As a Board, it has been a privilege to witness the organisation step confidently into its new three-year strategy and to see both the scale and quality of its work expand in such tangible ways.

We are grateful for the clarity of direction, disciplined planning, and thoughtful implementation demonstrated by the leadership team during the year. The progress made reflects not only strong management, but also a deep commitment to serving children with dignity, excellence, and care through access to books in their own languages.

During the year, our Board itself also grew, welcoming new members who bring valuable skills, experience, and perspective. This strengthening of governance capacity positions us well to support the organisation's continued development and long-term sustainability. We are thankful for a Board culture marked by engagement, generosity of time, and shared purpose.

We remain especially mindful that this work is about more than programmes and numbers, it is about children, families, and communities. Our ethos

continues to shape how we serve: with humility, stewardship, compassion, and hope. We are grateful to God for faithful partners and supporters, and for the protection and provision that have sustained the work through both opportunities and challenges.

On behalf of the Board, I extend sincere thanks to the staff, partners, donors, and volunteers who make this mission possible. It is a joy to serve alongside you, and we look forward with faith and expectation to the year ahead.

*Minah Koela*



## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

What an incredible year 2025 has been for Little Zebra Books. We launched our ambitious three-year strategic plan — *My Book, My Story, My Language* — and by year end had achieved 84% of our first-year goals.

To this end, we expanded our Masifunde Sidlala project from reaching 2,550 to 7,000 children per month across South Africa. We also welcomed our first programme partner in the Eastern Cape and, by December, secured funding to onboard a new partner in Limpopo.

It was also a highly productive year of book development. We added 10 new titles to our catalogue and engaged new local artists to illustrate our very first Masifunde Sidlala authored book, an exciting milestone!

This growth would not have been possible without strengthening our team. I am deeply grateful to our staff for their dedication, creativity, and commitment to bringing our strategy to life with such energy and care.



Our expansion has also been guided by a supportive, engaged, and intentional Board. I am personally thankful for their wisdom and steady leadership throughout the year.

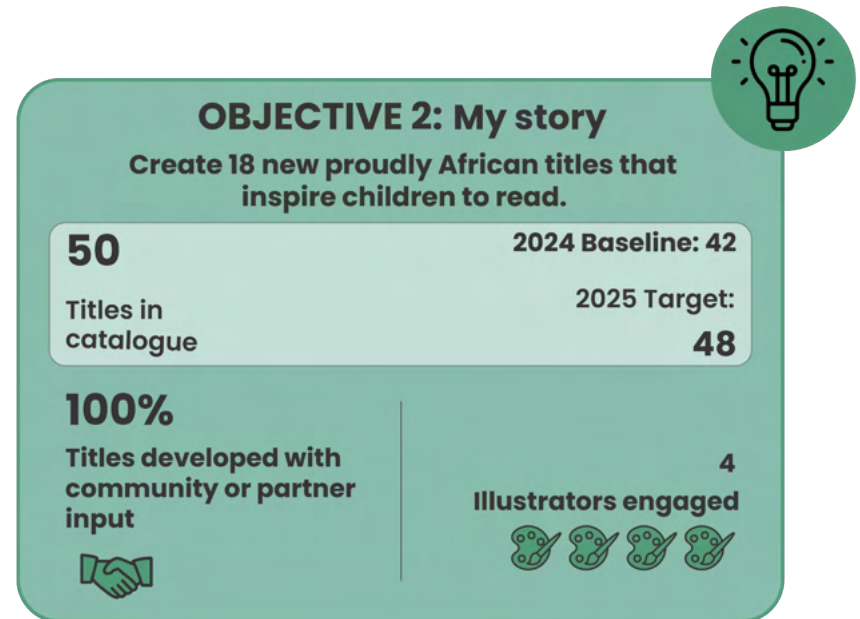
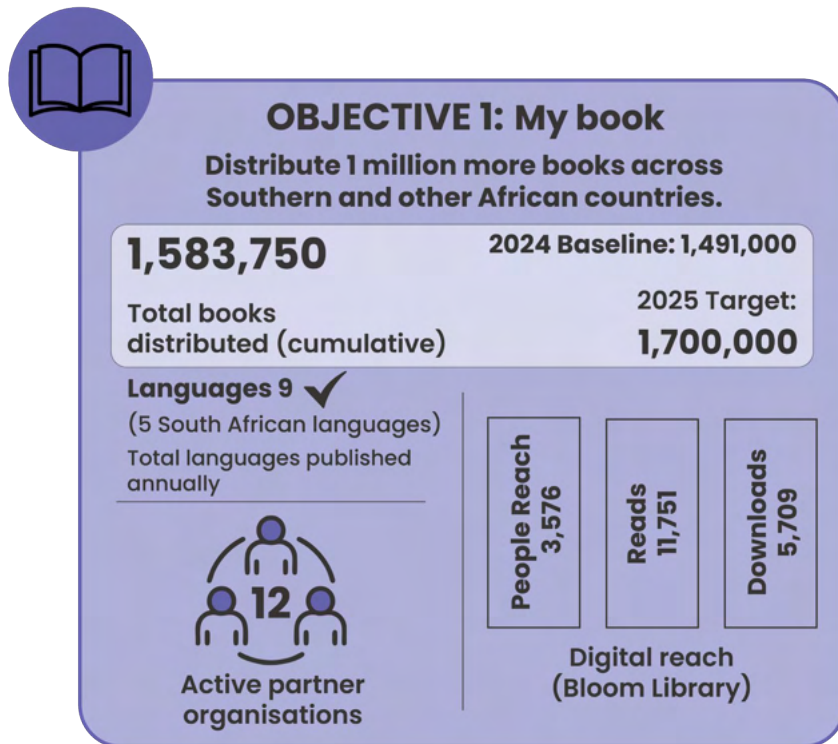
Finally, none of this work would be possible without the generosity of our long-standing and new donors who believe in our mission to inspire children to grow in their love of reading. We are grateful for your partnership and excited for what lies ahead.

*Robyn Beere*

# STRATEGIC PLAN IN REVIEW

At the start of 2025 Little Zebra Books launched our **3 year strategic plan: *My book, my story, my language***, where we set out **4 objectives** to achieve our goal to grow our organisation and increase the reach and impact of our beautiful books. We recently took some time to evaluate the first year's goals.

The infographic below captures the progress made.





### OBJECTIVE 3: My language

Advocate for children owning and reading books in their mother tongue.

4

2024 Baseline: 2

Advocacy events

2025 Target: 2

2

16

Media posts on mother-tongue reading



12

Stakeholder engagement reach



### OBJECTIVE 4: Our organisation

Build a strong, sustainable organisation and effective partnerships that ensure long-term impact.

100%

Staff development and growth

2025 Target: 80%

80%

5



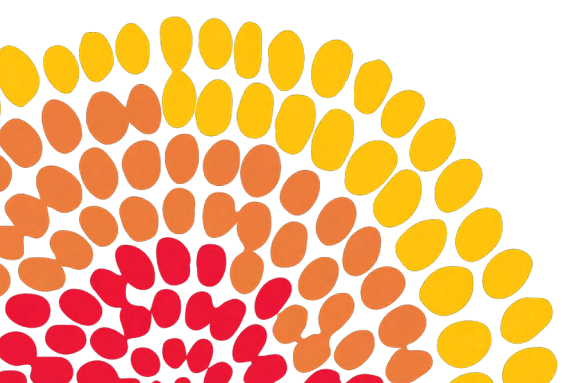
Strategic partnerships/networks



2

New funding sources secured

Having laid much of the groundwork in 2025, we look forward to a big jump in the number of books we are able to print and distribute through our growing partner network in 2026. To that end, we are very excited to have received funding to onboard a Masifunde Sidlala programme partner in Limpopo in 2026 using our books in xiTsonga! 2025 has been a significant year for Little Zebra Books. We have grown our team to increase our capacity to meet the demand for our books, both within South Africa, as well as in neighbouring countries. We are extremely grateful to our team and our expanding base of donors and supporters for helping us achieve so many of our Year 1 goals.



## MORE BOOKS REACHING MORE CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

2025 has been another year of growth for our South African, Masifunde Sidlala reading programme. Not only did the number of partner organisations grow but we also expanded into a new province.

In the Western Cape we welcomed onboard new partners Mfesane, Baphumelele ECD, Ikamva Labantu- ECD Programme, and Khulani NPO. In May, we welcomed our first out-of-province partner, Masinyusane in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape. We are so excited to partner with Masinyusane to give the thousands of children in their literacy programmes access to books in isiXhosa.

Sadly, we had to say goodbye to three of our partners in the after-school programme space. Their challenges in participating in Masifunde Sidlala, highlighted broader sector challenges such as limited funding and staff capacity. We wish them every success and hope to collaborate again in future.



We hosted nine Community of Practice meetings, rotating between our offices and being hosted by our partners. These sessions created valuable spaces for shared learning and decision making. Partners selected new titles for printing, reviewed translations and stories, and provided feedback on illustrations. Most importantly they bonded together sharing their joys and struggles and had an opportunity to network and hopefully collaborate going forward.

We remain deeply grateful to our partners who have journeyed with us since the pilot phase of Masifunde Sidlala in 2023, as well as to those who have joined, and sometimes moved on, along the way. Together, we have more than doubled our reach in 2025 from 3000 to 7000 children each receiving ten new books per year. Together we have promoted mother tongue reading and helped build home libraries.

*"We would like to express our heartfelt thanks for the wonderful books you share with our children. Your initiative has helped create a genuine love for reading among our kids. The children look forward to each new book every month with so much excitement. Your stories spark their curiosity, grow their imagination and open doors to learning. Thank you for being such an important part of the story. We wish your organisation continued growth and prosperity. May Little Zebra Books reach even more young readers and continue inspiring a love for books everywhere."*

Clever Kids - Masiphumelele

## OUR FIRST MASIFUNDE SIDLALA AUTHORED BOOK

In April, we hosted our first ever **Masifunde Sidlala Story-shop**, where partners explored what it means to write children's storybooks. They developed story ideas, created characters and settings, and voted on their favourites. One story was selected by our team to carry forward, *Abantwana abanesibindi noDyakalashi* – the tale of a terrorizing jackal and the brave children of the village.



We worked with our partners to refine and review the text and translations, feedback to the artist on illustrations and finally published a story our partners can proudly call their own!

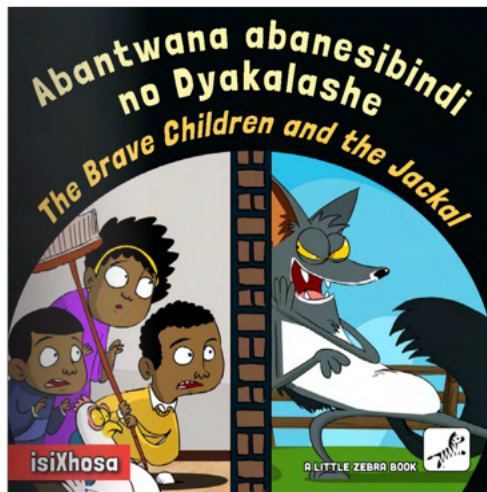




*“What I liked about being given the chance to write our own story is that it gave us a sense of ownership as people who work with children. It makes us proud to have a book that’s ours, for our children.”*

Xoliswa, Mfesane – Khayelitsha

In July, we held another story-shop with Masinyusane’s Literacy Coaches, which inspired two new stories now in development. We are so proud of these books and inspired to see what new books our budding story writers will come up with next year!



## NEW BOOK REACH IN MOZAMBIQUE

In Mozambique in 2025, our partners prioritized training as they expand to new areas. In Mozambique, Little Zebra Books has partnered with Children's Hope in Christ since 2015. Since that time, Children's Hope has made impressive steps in reaching children across Tete Province. This dynamic organization led by James Ficha Joanete places an emphasis on training churches to do children's ministry in their communities. Under Joanete's leadership, dozens of churches are receiving the training and materials to run successful children's programs. According to Joanete, "Churches host weekly Saturday kids' clubs where children are evangelized and disciplined."

A big part of the program is made possible through the books provided by Little Zebra Books. Books are printed in two languages: Nyungwe and Nyanja, and they are distributed where they are most needed. In 2025, Children's Hope expanded to two new communities: Domue and Songo. Together with the city of Tete and Vila Ulongue, this project is now reaching more than 3,000 children monthly. Thanks to generous donors in the U.S. and Sweden, Mozambican churches receive books free of charge which is a big blessing in a place where resources for children's ministry are often limited or non-existent.

Each month, children from across these communities gather for a "Tiri Pabodzi" (We are together) event. At this event, children bring prepared songs, dramas, and Scripture readings, all based on the book children have been reading that month. According to Founder of Little Zebra Books, David Ker this is an exemplary programme. "We are really pleased to be able to be a part of this exciting project in Mozambique."



## ADVOCACY, VISIBILITY AND MEDIA ENGAGEMENT IN 2025

In 2025, Little Zebra Books continued to grow its digital presence as a strategic tool for raising awareness, strengthening partnerships, and advocating for mother-tongue literacy. Our social media platforms and website are not only communication channels, but spaces where we share learning, amplify partner voices, and contribute to broader conversations on language, reading, and access to books in African languages.

Throughout the year, we used our platforms to highlight the work of our programme partners, share insights from our Community of Practice, and promote the importance of early literacy in the language children understand best. This has helped position Little Zebra Books as a trusted voice in the literacy and language sector, while also creating opportunities for connection and collaboration with like-minded organisations

We saw steady growth across our digital platforms, with particularly strong expansion on LinkedIn, where our professional network increased significantly. This reflects growing interest in our work from partners, funders, and practitioners in the education and development space. Facebook remained our largest platform, with consistent engagement driven by storytelling, programme updates, and campaign-related content. Instagram also showed encouraging growth, particularly following the introduction

of short-form video content, which helped extend our reach to new audiences.

PLATFORM	JAN 2025	DEC 2025	GROWTH	% CHANGE
FACEBOOK	2,089	2,186	+97	+4.6%
INSTAGRAM	405	428	+23	+5.7%
LINKEDIN	20	170	+150	+750%
TIKTOK	0	13	13	New platform
MAILCHIMP	183	266	+83	45.36%.
LINKEDIN NEWSLETTER	0	51	51	New platform

In addition to social media, we published a series of blog posts on our website, providing space for deeper reflection on our work, partner experiences, and key issues in literacy development. Our website attracted over 5,300 visitors during the year, with peaks linked to advocacy campaigns such as Mandela Day.

Our growing digital presence has enabled us to reach wider audiences, strengthen our network, and advocate more effectively for equitable access to reading materials in African languages. As we continue to build this presence, we remain focused on using these platforms intentionally – not only to share our work, but to contribute to meaningful dialogue and influence practice in the sector.

### 2025 Digital Highlights

• Hundreds of impact stories & programme moments shared online	• 5,300+ website visitors in the year	• LinkedIn audience grew by 750%	• Strong engagement through storytelling, partner features, and campaigns	• Introduction of Reels and short-form video boosted reach and interaction	• Expanded presence across 6 digital platforms
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## GROWING OUR CATALOGUE OF BOOKS

When it comes to new book development, 2025 was a busy year at Little Zebra Books! We added ten new titles to our catalogue that celebrate imagination, courage, and connection.

### STORY SHOP

We were delighted to collaborate with artist **Mdu Ntuli** on our first ever title with our Masifunde Sidlala partners, *The Brave Children and the Jackal*. His vibrant illustrations beautifully capture the heart and spirit of the story.



Our second Story Shop, created in partnership with Masinyusane, is currently in development and features two exciting new titles *Zazi and the Path of Knowledge* and *The Tale of the Greedy Hyenas*.

### BIBLE BOOKS

Artists **Magriet and Leo Brink** have brought two of our four new Bible titles to life with illustrations bursting with colour and energy, *Fisher of People* and *The Power Of Forgiveness*.



### NEW SIMPLE BOOKS

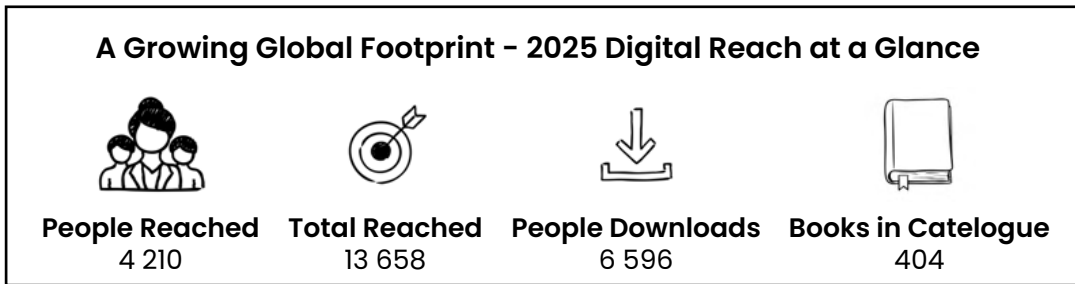
We're thrilled to introduce *Things I See...* a brand-new series we'll be continuing in the new year! We're starting with *Things I See in the Sky*, created with illustrator **Marleen Visser**, an exciting, imaginative book that invites little readers to look up and dream.



*Professions*, illustrated by **Tamsin Hinrichsen**, explores the many different kinds of jobs and careers that help the world go round.

# WHO HAS BEEN READING OUR BOOKS ONLINE?

In 2025, Little Zebra Books reached readers across 111 countries. While the majority of children who read our books do so in print, our presence on Bloom Library offers a powerful window into the breadth and diversity of our global readership.



These figures reflect digital access only: via web (**4,000 readers**), Bloom Reader (**208**), and BloomPUB Viewer (**2**) and do not include the many thousands of children reading our books in physical form in homes, classrooms, and community settings across Southern Africa and beyond.

The reach of our books in **2025**, across **111 countries**, in **27 languages**, with **13 658 reads**, is a testament to the power of mother tongue literature and the communities who believe every child deserves to read in a language they call their own. As we look to 2026, we remain committed to growing this footprint, deepening our impact in Southern Africa, and continuing to make our books available to readers wherever they are in the world.

## In South Africa – Reads by Language

**Afrikaans** and **isiXhosa** led the way among South Africa’s official languages, each accounting for over **1500 finished reads**, with **English**, **isiZulu**, and **Setswana** also featuring strongly:

BOOK READ AND DOWNLOADED PER LANGUAGE					
	<u>Finished Reads</u>	<u>Downloads</u>		<u>Finished Reads</u>	<u>Downloads</u>
<u>Afrikaans</u>	1620	1555	<u>Setswana</u>	97	97
<u>isiXhosa</u>	1580	1305	<u>Sesotho</u>	45	38
<u>English</u>	592	208	<u>Xitsonga</u>	15	30
<u>isiZulu</u>	226	223	<u>Sepedi</u>	4	11

## OUR WORK WITHIN THE SECTOR: LITASA AND CECD CONFERENCES



In 2025 Little Zebra Books had the opportunity to showcase our books and our work at two significant sector conferences: **The Centre for Early Childhood (CECD)** Conference in Cape Town in September and the **20th Literacy Association of South Africa (LITASA)** Conference in Durban in October.

*“When indigenous languages are neglected in formal education, learners’ identities become marginalised, their cultural knowledge devalued, and their cognitive development compromised.”*

This powerful statement by keynote speaker Dr Naledi Mbude-Mehana, Deputy Director-General for Transformation Programmes at the Department of Basic Education, set the tone for a conference that challenged attendees to rethink traditional notions of literacy. Delegates were invited to strive towards an understanding of literacy that is deeply contextual and personal.

The theme of the LITASA Conference was Amazwi ethu: “Our Voices”, and in light of this our Community Facilitator, Sinoxolo, shared an extremely well-received snapshot of our Masifunde Sidlala project. Her focus was on how the project has used a **community of practice (CoP)** model to give voice to our programme partners in shaping our book development work.

The CECD Conference reflected on how South Africa’s **Early Childhood Development (ECD)** landscape has transformed in remarkable ways over the last 30 years.

The conference brought together passionate educators, innovators, and organisations shaping the future of early learning. We joined in energising conversations about the need for having a strong foundation in mother tongue language at ECD level, and explored the need to invest in ECD for the future of South Africa.



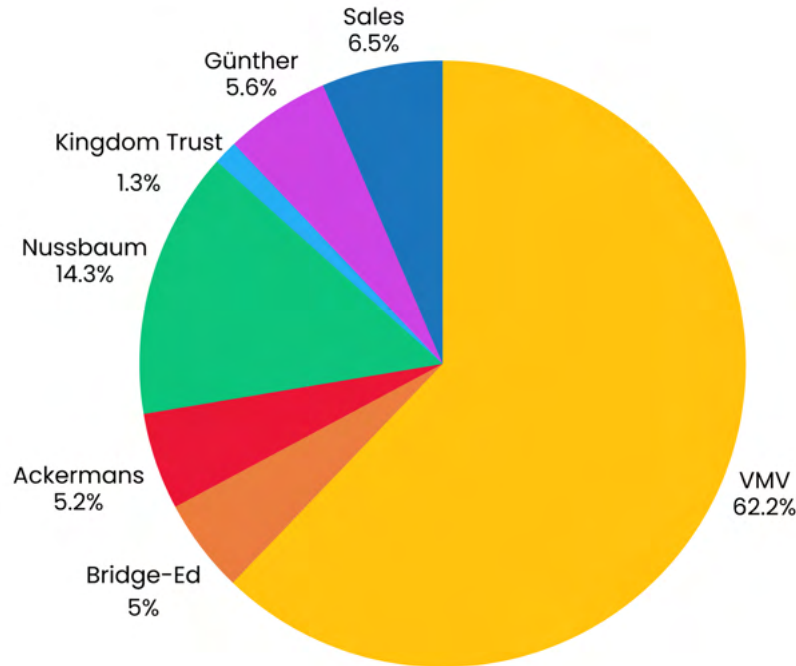
For Little Zebra Books, it was an exciting opportunity to connect with new partners equally committed to helping every child grow up with the joy of reading. Both conferences left us inspired and full of ideas for the future!

# FINANCIAL REPORT

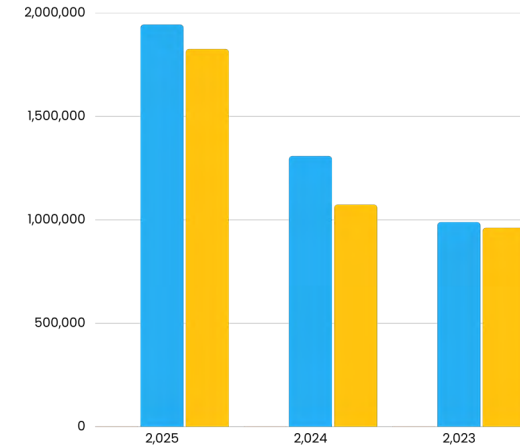
In line with the growth strategy of our **3-year strategic plan**, 2025 saw our revenue increase by almost 50%. This was achieved through attracting new donors and retaining existing donors.

Similarly, expenses increased by **70%**. This was largely due to an increase in staff to build the capacity of the organisation to achieve its goals.

## DONOR DIVERSIFICATION

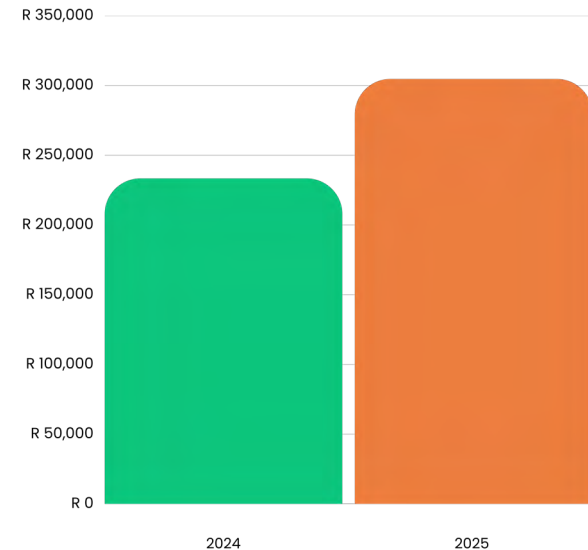


## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE



The Governing Board continued its commitment to building sustainability reserves and were able to add an additional R71 434 to reserves.

## SUSTAINABILITY RESERVES



# THANK YOU!

Thank you to the many individual, family and corporate donors who give regularly to our work. Your generous support is impacting the lives of thousands of children who love to read their beautiful little zebra books!

Special thanks to:

**Visions Made Viable**  
**Ackerman Family Foundation**  
**Nussbaum Foundation**  
**Bridge-Ed Foundation**

With appreciation for our new donors who have placed their trust in our work:

**Dr Ernst-Günther Bröder Stiftung**  
**The DG Murray Trust**

*“Overall, the program exemplifies a good model of community-based literacy promotion, especially culturally relevant content, that will benefit the participants in the program throughout their lives. We applaud what you do in the underserved communities of South Africa.”*

- Donor Feedback

## OUR TRULY TALENTED TEAM

2025 saw our small team grow! We welcomed Sino, a new Masifunde Sidlala Community Facilitator, Nombulelo, a Junior Designer and Danielle, our Office and Finance Administrator. What a difference they have made to our capacity! We have also welcomed Nina, an intern at SIL who has been helping us with Bloom Library.

Our new and existing team members have worked with such energy and passion to help us achieve fantastic results for 2025.

Thank you!

From left:  
Nina Rinquist, Robyn Beere, Danielle Sassman,  
David Ker, Hilary Ker, Jeni Bister, Gillian Basson,  
Sinxolo Hashe, Nombulelo Dlepu





**Registration number:**

144118 NPO

**Bank account:**

FNB Cheque account

631 5173 8128

**PBO number:**

930055514

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