

# Book donation to benefit 80,000 South African children

The DG Murray Trust (DGMT) and FNB have partnered with Books For Africa and logistics company DSV to provide books to 80,000 children across South Africa.



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One of the key drivers of the literacy crisis in the country is the low access to books, especially in townships and rural areas. Only 15% of South Africans live within easy reach of a public library, and the prohibitive cost of books means that just 4% of South Africans are buying them. In light of this issue, American organisation Books For Africa has donated over 300,000 books to the DGMT, which supports several initiatives working to grow a love of reading in children as one of its key strategies to ensure that every person has the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

“Around the world, there tends to be a correlation between illiteracy and poverty. Quite literally, by addressing the limited access to resources that children have, we can help strengthen their educational prospects. Studies show that when children are exposed to a greater variety of books, they are much more inclined to read,” says Dr Sebatso Manoeli, director of DGMT’s early childhood development portfolio. “And when they can read well, they can learn well. The troubling reality in South Africa is that eight out of 10 children in grade four cannot read for meaning. This is a problem we, as a country, can and must address.”

## Nurturing development in under-resourced communities

To help distribute the books, FNB will use DSV to ensure the books get to those who can benefit most. Three organisations committed to nurturing the development of children in under-resourced communities – Nal’ibali, SmartStart and The Unlimited Child (TUC) – will each receive consignments of books to use in their programmes.

Approximately 80,000 children between the ages of three and 10 are likely to benefit from the initiative, with books going to Nal'ibali reading clubs, The Unlimited Child crèches, SmartStart playgroups, as well as pre-schools participating in FNB's "adopt a crèche" programme.

"Access to books is not enough. Children also need adults who listen, talk, play and read with them if they are to develop optimally – particularly in the years before school. In fact, reading aloud to children in the early years has been found to be associated with language growth, early literacy and reading achievement in school. However, in South Africa, only 5% of parents read to their children – at all, let alone daily," says Dr David Harrison, CEO of DGMT. "Each of the selected organisations uses books and stories in their programmes as an endless source of wonder and enjoyment for children; to introduce new language and ideas and, most importantly, to inspire a love of reading. These books are a way for us to recognise and support their efforts because, at the end of the day, the ability to read is critical not only for our children's later success in life, but for our collective social development as a nation."

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