

HOW DISPLACED CREATIVES DELIVERED 40 UNICEF COMMISSIONED STORYBOOKS FOR SUDAN

The partnership between Amahoro Coalition and NABU shows how education technology, local creative talent, and smart sourcing can solve one of Africa's biggest development challenges in early childhood literacy. NABU, a global literacy organisation providing free digital books for children, needed Sudanese illustrators, editors

and proofreaders for a major education project in Sudan. Through Amahoro Coalition's network, NABU was able to identify creatives living in displacement who brought a rare mix of technical skill, cultural fluency, and lived experience.



NABU is a tech-enabled nonprofit that publishes free storybooks for children in local African languages. In 2025, UNICEF and Oxford Learning Labs commissioned them to address the shortage of books in Sudanese schools by producing 40 book titles for Sudan's Ministry of Education.

The turnaround was tight, and the stories needed to feel familiar from the first page.

To pull it off, NABU needed illustrators who could draw classrooms, homes, and neighbourhoods Sudanese children would immediately recognise. Writers had to understand the right language rhythms and reading levels. While proofreaders needed the cultural instinct to catch what a remote editorial process would miss.

That kind of cultural precision is difficult to manufacture from a distance.

SO NABU CALLED THE [AMAHORO COALITION](#)

Through its network, Amahoro Coalition connected NABU with 16 Sudanese illustrators, editors, and proofreaders living in displacement.

Some were sourced through Labs for Development, a Sudanese-owned creative studio now based in Nairobi. They handled re-illustration and audio narration for the collection, creating six jobs through the studio in the process.

Part of the brief included a ten-book resilience collection for children living through active conflict, stories that dealt with loss, displacement, interrupted routines, and the work of trying to feel steady again when life no longer is.



Their library now stretches across more than 1,200 titles in 41 languages, all freely available on mobile and web.

But the same localisation instincts are valuable far beyond publishing.

Many displaced creatives move across several African cities and language environments, carrying multiple cultural references and linguistic instincts into their work. For companies building products across African markets, that kind of fluency becomes commercially useful.

It shapes whether campaigns travel well, whether products feel local enough to trust, and whether audiences recognise themselves inside the messaging.

“The challenge was finding the balance,” Camille Park, the CEO of NABU, told Amahoro Coalition. “The stories needed to feel emotionally honest for children living through conflict without becoming emotionally overwhelming.”

“There’s a reason companies spend heavily trying to localise content across African markets,” Park noted. “People respond differently when something feels like it genuinely understands them.”

By the end of the project, forty readers with audio narration were delivered on time, ready for schools and households across Sudan.

WHAT DISPLACED CREATIVES BRING TO THE TABLE

What NABU discovered is something more organisations are starting to pay attention to: displaced creatives bring a rare mix of technical skill, cultural fluency, and lived experience.

NABU, for example, has published storybooks in local African languages like Kiswahili, Hausa, Yoruba and Amharic.

Amahoro exists to connect such talent to the businesses and organisations that need it most.

If you want access to that pipeline, onboard on the Skills Hub, Amahoro’s digital platform for connecting private sector partners to displaced talent.

You are a forward-looking business looking to tap into the most battle-tested creative talent on the continent, reach out at info@amahorocoalition.com or visit <https://amahorocoalition.com/> to start the conversation.

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