

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



**PANGEA**

Changing the narrative in literacy education

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## LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Friends,

2020. It is a year we will all remember, but certainly one we are also ready to forget. This year the world faced a global pandemic, causing the largest disruption to education in over a century. At first, school closures might sound like a welcome break from the busy lives of students. At first, that may have been the case. Schools are an essential part of children's routine and for many a relied upon haven of stability where they are fed, where they are safe, where they socialize, and where they learn. Not to mention, learning is essential for children's consistent cognitive development. School is one of the best places to do that. Ask any parent who has taken the role of teacher this past year.

For all, weeks and even months off of school has created an enormous fissure in the opportunity gap. While some students moved online, most around the world were left out of school for over 3 months. The World Bank has estimated that 3 months alone sets back educational progress towards equity in learning 10 years and will cost 10 trillion in lifetime earnings. Where we work, in Uganda, Liberia, and South Sudan, schools are still closed.

Despite this, our team responded faster and more effectively than ever. We produced a COVID-19 learning series faster than any books we have ever made. They traveled around the world bringing comfort and communicating critical public health information to an estimated 4.5 million children in 54 countries. Our Mobile Libraries continued their service, providing a lifeline of learning materials to children as they waited at home for school to return. Our teacher trainers adapted all of our books to include at home learning activities for low-resource settings. Nearly all of this was done working from the comfort (and confinement) of our homes.

I could not be more proud of our response to COVID and how we can help children bounce back as schools open again. Until then, we will meet children where they are at.

  
Drew Edwards  
CEO, Co-Founder

# Hello, we're Pangea

We are a social enterprise headquartered in Chicago, USA making a big impact on global literacy. Diversity, a human-centered approach, and sustainability. We have been working for 10 years with a focus on literacy for 3 years.

## OUR VISION

A 100% literate world by 2050.

## OUR MISSION

We create culturally relevant content and programs that help children learn to read and inspire them to read more often.



## WHY LITERACY?

Today 103 million children, 9% of the global youth population, still lack basic functional literacy, including one of four in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2015). Refugee and migrant youth are 52% less likely to gain functional literacy and even more vulnerable in these regions. This issue affects adults as well – there are 750 million adults who lack basic functional literacy, 14% of adults globally.

Literacy is key to unlocking every child's potential. Yet around the world, 90% of children in low-income countries are unable to read and comprehend a simple story by the age of 10. That means that even when children are enrolled in school and attending, they are still leaving primary school without having developed critical basic skills.



# OUR APPROACH

Today 103 million children, 9% of the global youth population, still lack basic functional literacy, including one of four in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2015). Refugee and migrant youth are 52% less likely to gain functional literacy and even more vulnerable in these regions. This is the foundation of what is now called the Global Learning Crisis.

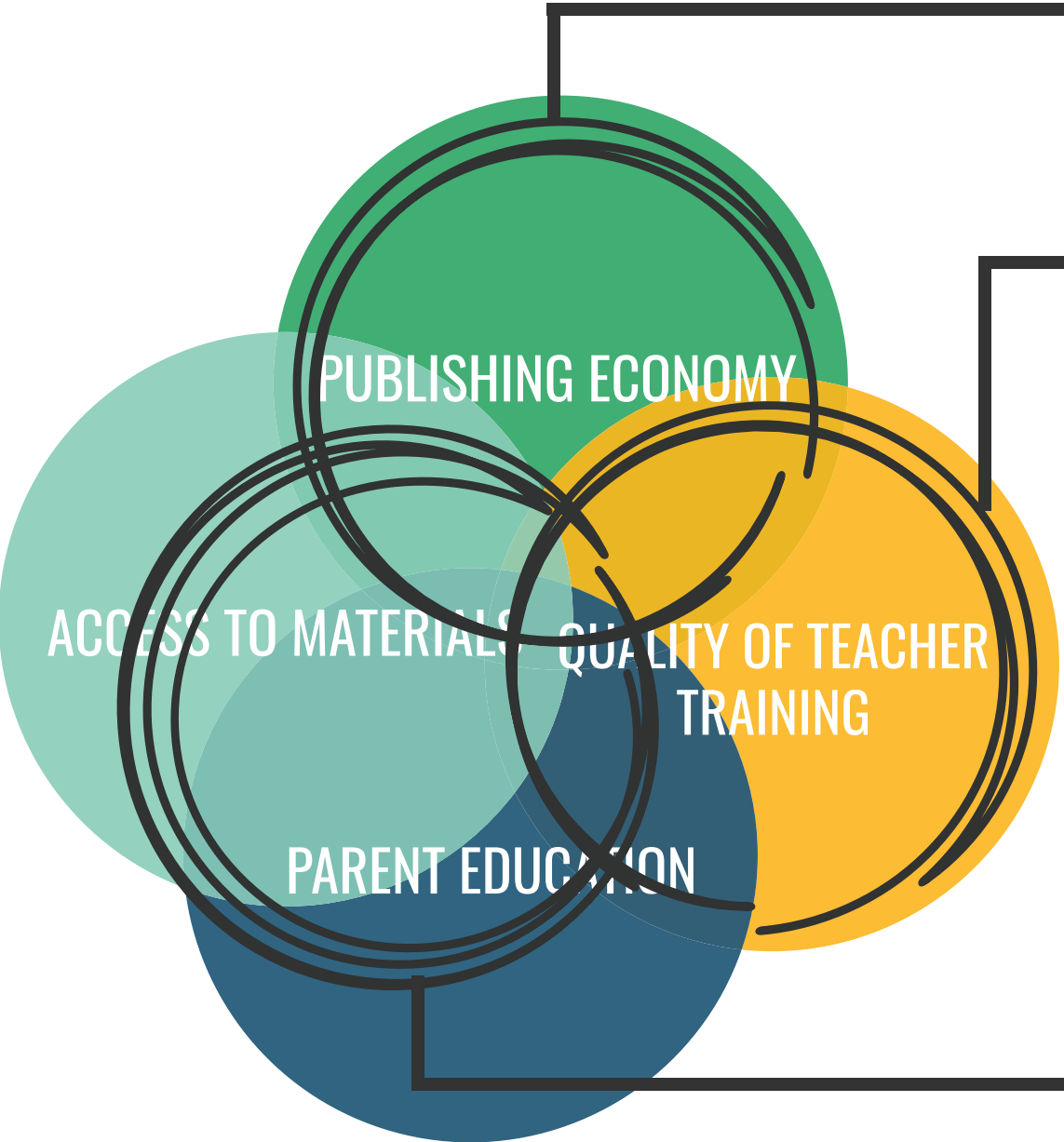
Literacy development is complex and is only further complicated by the system-wide breakdown of contributing factors, in schools, in communities, and at home. Factors include language policies, quality of teacher training, the subsequent quality of education, limited publishing economies, the subsequent access to teaching and learning materials, parent education, poverty, and the resulting lack of a culture of literacy. Each factor supports or impacts another. Layered upon all of this, data on effective practices within these resource constrained context is both varied and limited.

## 8 key factors that enable/prohibit literacy development



# OUR FOCUS

Our evidence-based programs are intended to address the factors known to have the greatest impact on a student’s learning. Namely, we focus on engaging readers and equipping the most important stakeholders in their lives with the knowledge and tools to help them learn to be lifelong readers.



## PANGEA PUBLISHING



Pangea Publishing produces high quality children's books. The books are made to culturally, linguistically, and visually reflect the children who read them. We write both original stories as well as record, dictate, and reproduce local folklore. We currently publish in 14 languages with readers in 54 countries around the world.

## LITERACY INSTRUCTION TRAINING



We believe that well-trained, passionate teachers should be at the heart of every classroom. Our LIT program equips teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to ensure all children are equipped with the literacy skills they need to be successful.

## MOBILE LIBRARIES



Every child should have access to reading materials to support their learning, no matter where they live. Our Mobile Library program increases access to books by delivering directly to homes and schools. Families and classrooms subscribe to our netflix-like service that sustainably makes books more affordable.





# OUR IMPACT



## 2020: A Commitment to

## Serve Families and Communities During Challenging Times

**4.5 million**

children and families reached across 54 countries with learning materials about COVID-19.

**1,605**

children served by our mobile library program.

**86%**

of these children were refugees.

**56**

books published accross 14 languages.

**72**

teachers trained on more effective instruction practices in the classroom, reaching more than 2,000 students before COVID-19 school closures.

# COVID-19 RESPONSE



**When COVID-19 resulted in the largest school closures the world has ever seen, PANGEA found a way to meet the moment and ensure learning continued.**



This year, the global pandemic disrupted every aspect of daily life for individuals around the world. School closures disrupted education for more than 1.5 billion children around the world, with many learners left at home with little access to technology and few learning materials. Many parents saw their employment and livelihoods threatened and had to meet the challenge of supporting their children while out of school.

Our first focus was on the health, well-being, and safety of our staff amidst country-wide lockdowns. We developed a plan that supported staff to work from home and created space to share up-to-date resources and accurate information about preventing the spread of COVID-19. While schools across Uganda have remained closed since March 2020, PANGEA staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that learning can continue. We created an ethical safety plan for our Mobile Librarians to continue delivering books to schools and households in a way that minimized direct contact with families while closing the access gap to at-home learning materials. Our team at Pangea Publishing created two children's books in 14 different

languages to help families come together to talk about COVID-19 and the impacts the virus was having on their lives and communities. And our Instructional Coaches created at-home learning activities and guides to support parents and caregivers who took on an additional role.

COVID-19 has posed immediate and long-lasting challenges for families around the world; PANGEA remains committed to empowering individuals and communities to fulfill their own purpose and potential by fostering cultures of literacy.

**While COVID-19 brought new challenges to our organization, it also presented new opportunities to put our core values into action and strengthened our belief that learning can and should happen everywhere, not only in the classroom.**



# WORKING WITH PARTNERS TO ENSURE LEARNING CONTINUES FOR ALL STUDENTS BY DELIVERING AT-HOME LEARNING KITS

## Save the Children

COVID-19 school closures affected more than 10 million learners in Uganda, who remained at home with varying levels of access to technology, radio, or other remote learning opportunities. PANGEA partnered with Save the Children and the Ministry of Education of Uganda to distribute **at-home learning packages** to over 100,000 children. The learning packages included story books published by Pangea Publishing.

## Cambridge Education

PANGEA partnered with Cambridge Education, and through the support of the Ministry of Education South Sudan, UKAid, and the Canadian International Development Agency, made an adaptation of The Unwelcome Stranger that was distributed to every primary school and nearly half of secondary schools in South Sudan, reaching 1.4 Million students.

With Cambridge Education, PANGEA also supported the Girls Education South Sudan program by developing a magazine for secondary school-aged girls about issues related to their lives and returning to education after COVID-19 closures. Girls have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, with increases in pregnancy, early marriage, and violence, with girls facing a greater risk of not returning to education. The magazine will be distributed across South Sudan in 2021 with an accompanying radio program to support girls' return to education.





# THE UNWELCOME STRANGER

*A timely narrative that provided millions of families around the world a tool to initiate conversations around COVID-19.*

With the growing number of COVID-19 cases around the world, PANGEA developed a COVID Learning Series to help families navigate critical conversations about what is happening and what it means for them. The series began with one allegorical narrative explaining the virus and how to protect ourselves from it.



It has since grown to four titles that each address aspects of the COVID-19 crisis and include learning activities to continue at home education. The first story, "The Unwelcome Stranger", helps readers understand the uncertainties of the crisis. The second story, "Heroes of COVID-19" highlights positive responses to address it. The third story, "I Have Questions" encourages questions for clarity and navigating Social Emotional learning for some of the largest concerns kids have about COVID-19. The fourth story, "The Unwelcome Stranger Visits" shows a family managing when a mother contracts COVID.

The stories are culturally responsive, featuring communities of color as protagonists and reflecting differences across regions. The books are available in 13 languages & four cultural adaptations. We have seen the impact of this. The books have shown an outsized impact on learner engagement and comprehension because it is helping them solve a problem in a structure that is responsive to their lives. 89% of children between the ages of 8-10 could identify at least one safe operating practice. Compared to a recent national examination in Uganda that found that just 11% of students of the same age who could answer only one question after reading a text (USAID, 2016).



North America



East Africa



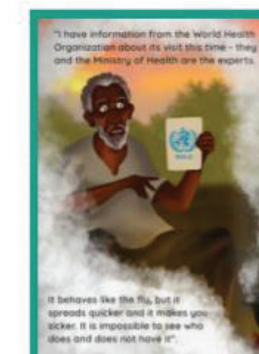
North Africa



Middle East



North America



East Africa



North Africa



Middle East

The book utilized different 'wisdom figures' or caretakers who would be responsible for explaining the difficult situation to children in each cultural adaptation. Additionally, variations in plot helped the narrative reflect different readers and traditions around the world.



# PRAISE FOR THE SERIES

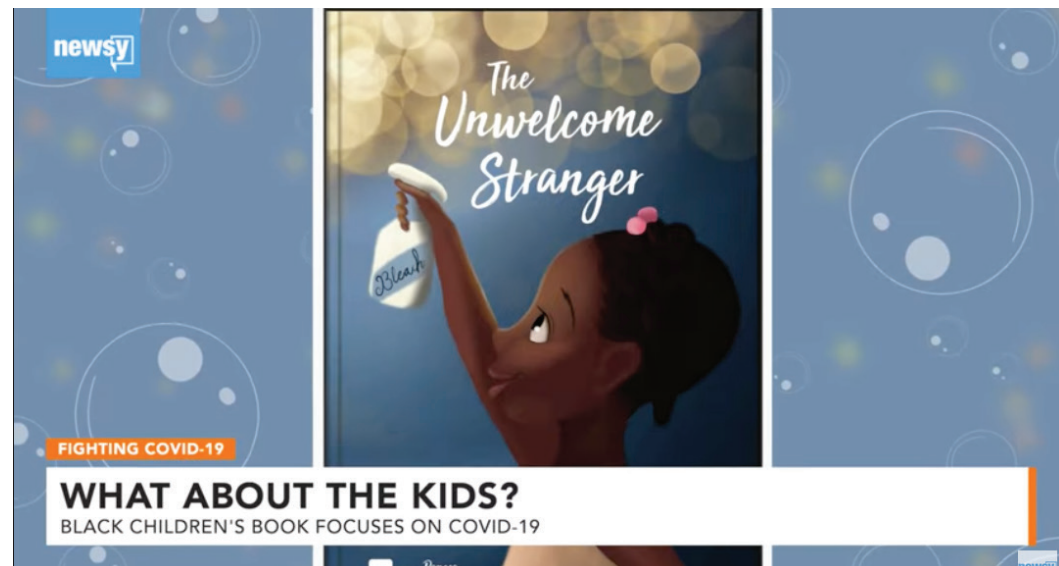
## A National Read Aloud by Vice President of Liberia

In an effort to keep children learning while schools in Liberia remained closed, Vice President Jewel Howard-Taylor read *The Unwelcome Stranger* on national television.



## "The Unwelcome Stranger" featured on Newsy

The segment highlighted the impact the book can have on reaching black families in the United States – a group disproportionately affected by COVID-19.



"Pangea is making learning materials that are simple, accurate, and engaging for children. I am impressed by work they are doing and proud to partner with them in our government's response to COVID and support of education"

— Jewel Howard-Taylor, Vice President of the Republic of Liberia

"No matter who you are or where you come from, you can make life better for your community. Just look around you, then take initiative to make things better."

— Dr. Ronald F. Ferguson, Harvard University Professor and Founder, The Basics

" So impressed by @pangeaeducation, a non-profit founded by @DepaulU students. They recently released the Unwelcome Stranger, a multicultural book designed to help families navigate #COVID19."

—Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot



# PANGEA PUBLISHING

**Every book created through Pangea Publishing provides a learning experience for children and their families.**

Our books are aligned to the local curriculum taught in schools to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate. They also include a learning guide that can be used by teachers in the classroom or parents at home to facilitate both academic and social-emotional learning and foster conversations about important topics like gender stereotypes, mental health and wellness, and equity and inclusion.

Supporting childrens' literacy skills development requires that they have access to books. But oftentimes, children in Uganda and many parts of the world have little access to books in their classrooms or in their homes, and the books they do find have characters that do not reflect them, or are written in a language that is not their own. PANGEA's social enterprise, **Pangea Publishing**, produces culturally and linguistically relevant children's books for communities that have been traditionally underserved and underrepresented.

**Capturing communities' stories:** Our StoryCorps team builds relationships with diverse communities, hosting storytelling events and opportunities where everyone can share their stories.

**Putting pen to paper:** Our team at Pangea Publishing transcribes and translates the stories told and also creates new, original stories never heard before, working to ensure that every story is relevant, relatable, and educational for children and their families.

**Making stories come alive:** Local artists create original, colorful artwork for the stories, bringing authenticity and beauty to each

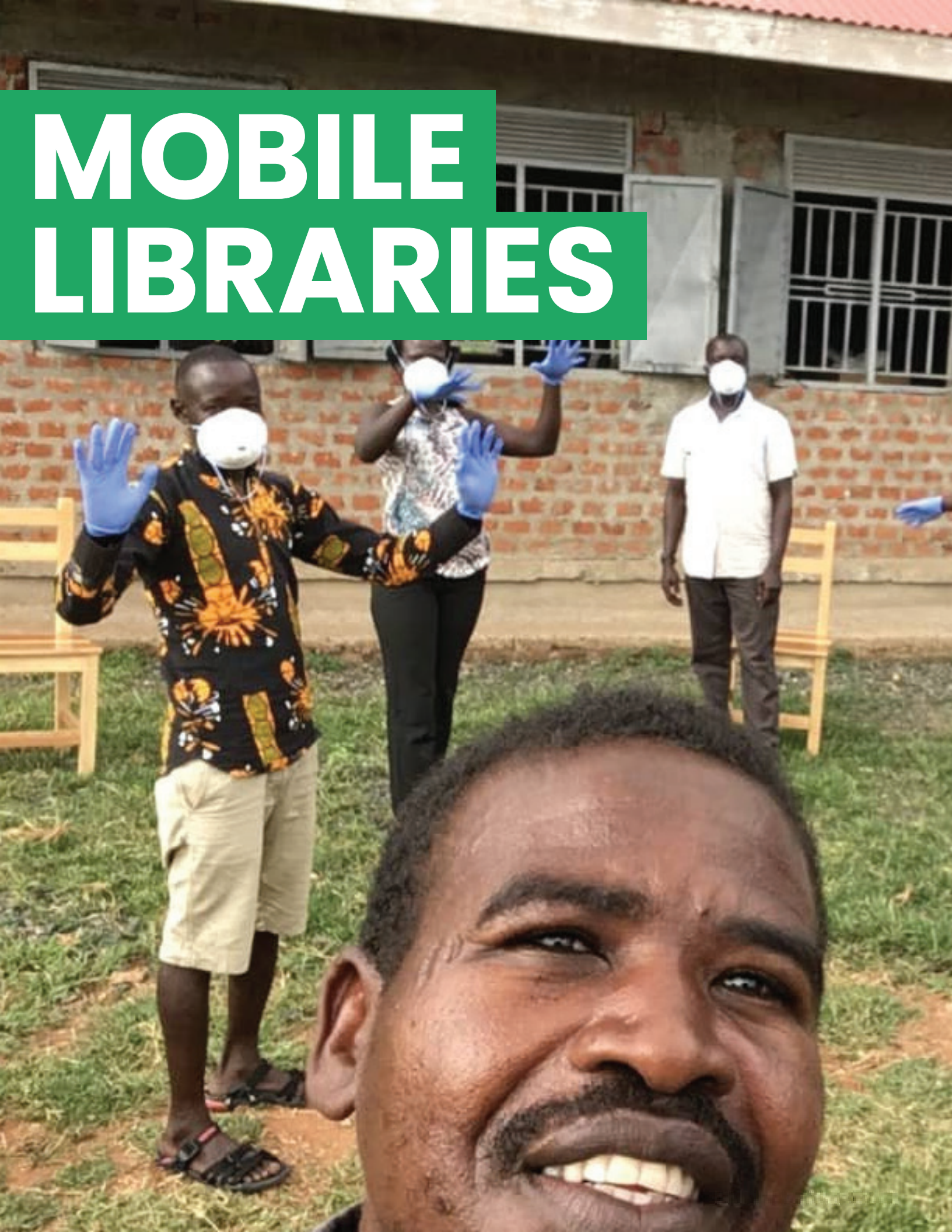


character, culture, and setting found on every page.

**Getting books in the hands of families:** Once books are printed through a local publisher, we add them to circulation in our Mobile Library program and work with other local organizations to ensure they reach families and schools. Anyone, anywhere can purchase Pangea Publishing books.







# MOBILE LIBRARIES

Access to books in schools as well as households is a pervasive challenge in Uganda. Only 46 public libraries exist to serve a population of 41.5 million people. For many families, these public libraries or school libraries remain inaccessible because of distance; for those that are nearby, many libraries still do not allow families to check out books, leaving homes without the essential materials they need to help foster literacy skills for children.

PANGEA's mobile library program was launched to close the access gap and bring high-quality, relevant books to homes and schools. Every month, families receive books delivered straight to their door, aligned with the child's interests and developmental level, to ensure that learning can continue outside of school hours.

## Ensuring the safety of families and Mobile Librarians during COVID-19

At the start of COVID-19, PANGEA suspended its mobile library operations to minimize contact and protect the safety of staff and the families they served. As COVID restrictions lightened across Uganda, we worked alongside staff to train them on health and sanitation protocols, ensured that

they had the necessary personal protective equipment, and worked alongside families to ensure they felt comfortable and confident with deliveries continuing.

## Essential workers in the face of COVID-19

86% of the children served by the mobile library program are refugees in the Imvepi Refugee Settlement in northwestern Uganda. During COVID, while most places in communities around the world have come to a standstill, our team has helped learning go on. In April, Uganda's Office of Prime Minister (OPM) requested that our Mobile Libraries stay open to help children continue reading during lockdown. In collaboration with the International Rescue Committee medical team in Imvepi, and under the leadership of the Uganda's Office of Prime Minister (OPM), we were able to take extra precautions to continue serving families.







# LITERACY INSTRUCTION TRAINING

**We believe that teachers play an essential role in equipping students with the literacy skills they need to become the next generation of leaders.** PANGEA's Literacy Instruction Training (LIT) program is designed to support primary school teachers to be more effective in teaching literacy skills in their classrooms.

Our 8-module program equips teachers with the core competencies and skills they need while providing targeted coaching and mentoring to teachers in their classrooms to support them in translating concepts to practice.

## **Supporting teachers amidst wide-scale school closures**

When schools in Uganda closed in March 2020, PANGEA's LIT team immediately began thinking about how they could support teachers remotely during a period of immense uncertainty. Our Instructional Coaches created Communities of Practice through WhatsApp where teachers could seek support from their peers. We also shifted our trainings to occur digitally, and

while we were unable to continue as teachers were forced to find sources of income while out of school, we learned a lot about how to provide ongoing support through digital tools.

## **Developing at-home learning guides**

In collaboration with the Pangea Publishing team, LIT created at-home learning guides to accompany Pangea Publishing children's books that were printed and distributed. The team also created at-home learning kits distributed through the mobile library program to support caretakers to engage in literacy practices and support their child's learning from home.





# IN GRATITUDE



## Our Partners

It takes a community to advance quality education for all children. Thank you to our partners for supporting PANGEA’s work

### Corporate Partners

Balyasny Asset Management  
Cigna Foundation  
GoAbroad Foundation  
McNulty Foundation

### Program Partners

Big Spit Cooperation  
Cambridge Education  
The Change Society Needs  
Elephante Commons  
Enjuba  
GLG Consulting  
The Literate Earth Project  
National Library of Uganda  
Read for Life Uganda  
The Simple Good  
Uganda Community Libraries Association  
World Reader  
Xavier Project

## Our Team

A community of changemakers working tirelessly to shift the narrative in literacy education.

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Teacher at the Baker School and  
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### Staff

**Nathan Okiror**  
Country Director, Uganda

**Brenda Apeta**  
Director of Teaching and Learning



**Diana Nawatene**  
Director of Pangea Publishing

**Paul Oluka**  
Project Manager, Mobile Libraries

**Caroline Tugume**  
Operations Manager

**Ibrahim Kadara**  
Instructional Coach

**Edina Akello**  
Instructional Coach

**Isaac Watum**  
Story Curator, Pangea Publishing

**Lillian Kusiima**  
Lead Designer, Pangea Publishing

**Joseph Ochieng**  
Mobile Librarian

**Abok Santo Ray**  
Mobile Librarian

**Amos Driliga**  
Mobile Librarian

**Cicilia Lodiong**  
Mobile Librarian

**wwRuth Anenochan**  
Mobile Librarian

**Julian Aroku**  
Sales Executive, Pangea Publishing

**Okot Alex**  
Story Corps

**Juliet Bugirwa**  
Story Corps

**James Nyende**  
Groundskeeper

**Amina Nassali**  
Chef

**Drew Edwards**  
Chief Executive Officer & Co-Founder

**Andrew Bauer**  
Chief Operations Officer & Co-Founder

**Jessica Bergmann**  
Director of Monitoring and Evaluation



**Thank You!**



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