

Key points Early Literacy Development survey

1. Introduction

The survey ran from April – June 2021 as a precursor to an Early Literacy Development course for staff of public and community libraries in Africa. Country champions (librarians) who had been previously briefed on the project, the rationale for the survey and their roles in contacting public and community libraries were used to get contact persons in 18 chosen English-speaking African countries to fill the survey. The champions had also been introduced to supervisory authorities of public and community libraries through a letter from AfLIA to enable and smoothen the process of data collection.

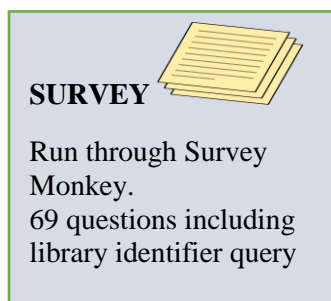


Figure 1- Survey

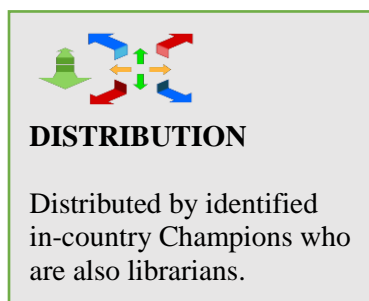


Figure2 – Means of distribution

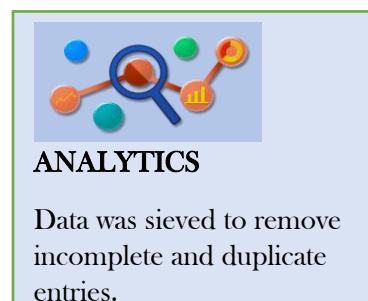


Figure 3 – Analytics

2. Population

Public and community libraries in eighteen (18) English speaking countries were targeted

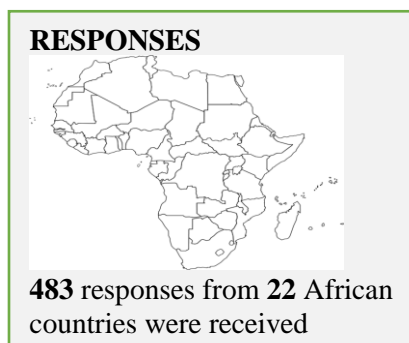


Figure 4 - Responses

2a. 39.9% of the responses came from;

Benin Republic, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti and Sudan who had 1 response each,

Rwanda and Tanzania who had 2 responses each,

five (5) responses were gotten from **Lesotho**,

7 from **Botswana**,

8 from **Seychelles** and 9 responses each from **Malawi** and **Eswatini**.

Fifteen (15) survey responses were from **Sierra Leone**, and 25 responses from **Zimbabwe**, 33 from **Ghana**, 35 from **Zambia** and 38 responses were from public libraries and community in **Uganda**.

2b. 60.1% of the responses came from;

South Africa with 102 responses (21.12%),
Namibia with 56 responses (11.59%),
Nigeria with 51 responses (10.56%),
Kenya with 41 responses (8.49%) and
Egypt with 40 responses (8.28%)

Also, 57 responses (11.8%) were from public libraries located in the **capital cities** of Lusaka, Windhoek, Cairo, Nairobi, Lilongwe, Abuja, Accra, Freetown, Harare, Kampala, Gaborone, Dar-es Salaam and Kigali.

2c. Contact person of libraries

Out of the 483 responses received, it was discovered that **16 (3.3%)** of the libraries had contact persons who can be considered not to be in the Library field (PRO, Paediatrician, Registry Clerk, Founder, Administrative Assistant and Manager, Health and Social Services). Interestingly, 13 contact persons who are librarians cover 7.6% (37) of the libraries.

3. Languages

The survey had sought to establish the languages spoken in the communities where the libraries are located. This is deemed essential as early literacy development for children invariably starts with the mother tongue before a second language is learned. A total of 212 languages are spoken across the communities where the 483 libraries are located. Mother tongues make up 96.2% (204) of these languages while 3.8% (8) are second languages.

Interestingly, 463 (90.2%) respondents admitted that English is spoken in their communities while French is spoken in 21 (4.3%) communities, German in 7 (1.4%), Portuguese in 4 and Chinese in 2 communities, while Spanish, Italian and India are spoken in one community each of the locales with libraries surveyed. Afrikaans, a language that emerged under colonialism in South Africa is spoken in 99 (20.4%) communities of the survey's population.

4. Electricity, Electronic devices and Internet access

The question on the availability of electricity and electronic devices in public and community libraries was answered by 419 respondents representing 86.7% of the survey's population. **Electricity** is available in 400 (95.6%) libraries while 19 (4.4%) do not have access to electricity. However, in response to the question about power outages of which 395 respondents answered, it was discovered that 60.5% (239) of the libraries do not have frequent power outages. The figure below explains it clearly.

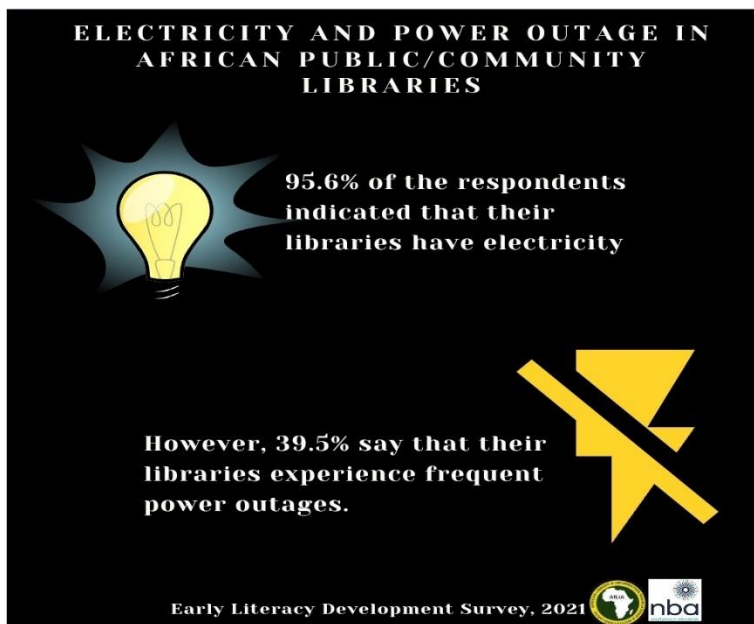


Figure 1 – Electricity power in African public and community libraries

Results indicate that a total of 6337 (six thousand, six hundred and thirty-seven) **computers** are available in 362 libraries which represents 86.3% of the population surveyed as only 419 responses were received for this enquiry. However, 22(twenty-two) libraries had only one computer each, 35(thirty-five) libraries had two computers each while 20 (twenty) libraries had only three computers each. Interestingly, two libraries had 500 (five hundred) computers each. 43% (208) of the libraries had between 1-10 computers each. The figure below aptly presents the data for availability of computers in African public and community libraries.

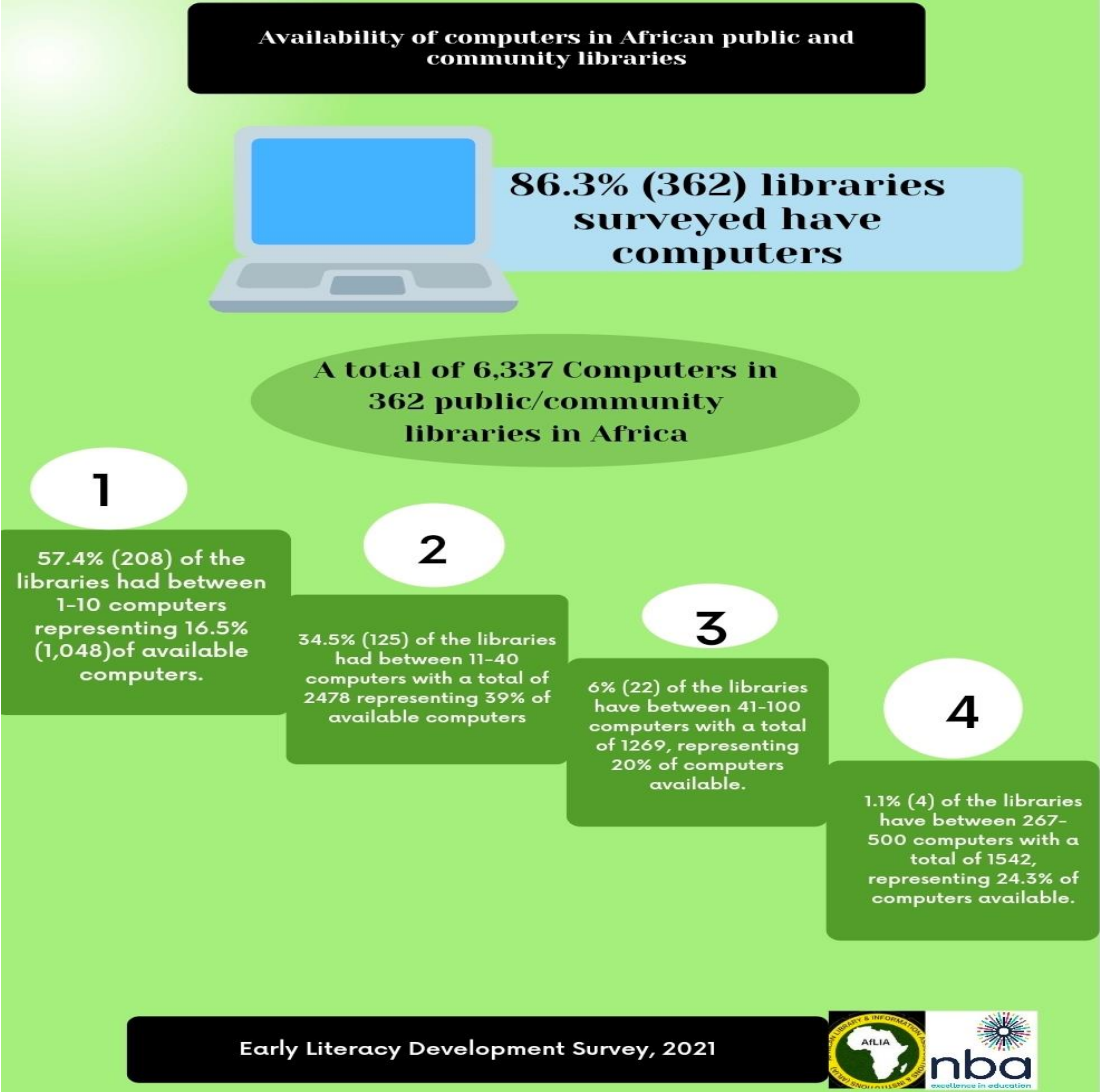
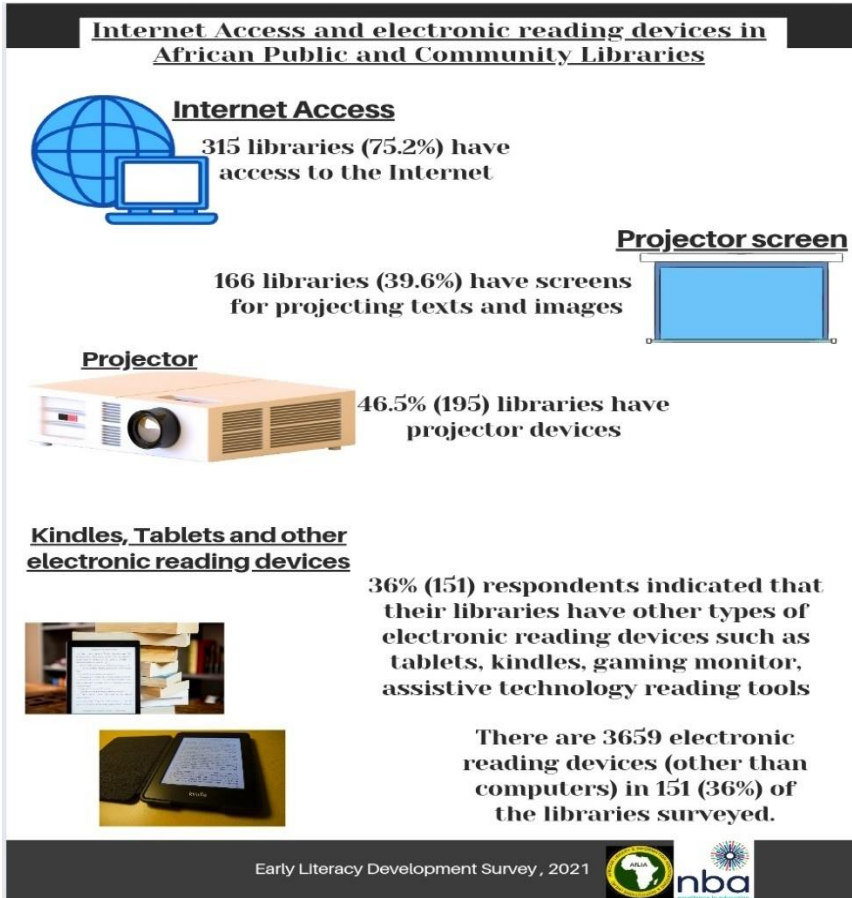


Figure 2 Availability of Computers in African public and community libraries



Results also show that 315 (75.2%) of libraries surveyed have access to Internet. They also have other electronic reading devices other than computers in the libraries. Figure 3 explains this better.

Figure 3 – Internet access and electronic reading devices in African public and community libraries

5. Children Section/Corner



Figure 4 – Children's Sections/Corners in African public and community libraries

The survey sought to find out if all the public and community libraries surveyed have a Section or Corner dedicated to children. 417 responses were recorded for the enquiry. 346 (83%) have children section/corner while 17% (71) answered 'not yet'. It was also discovered that those libraries with Children's Section/Corner have tables, shelves, books (including colouring and pop-up storybooks) as well as carpets, mats, blankets for children to sit

down on during story hours. Curiously, a library also uses the Children's Section as a corner for the elderly while one also has seats outside under a tree designated solely for children. More details are in figure 4 above.

5a. Staff in Children's Section/Corner

Only 338 (70%) out of 483 respondents answered the enquiry about the number of staff in the children section/corner of their libraries. Results show that 116 (34.3%) of children's sections/corners in the surveyed libraries are manned by a lone staff each and 4 (1.2%) of the

libraries do not have a single staff in the children’s section/corner. At the other end of the spectrum, one library (.2%) has 34 staff in the children’s section and another lone library (.2%) has 20 staff working in their Children’s section. Figure 5 below provides more details.

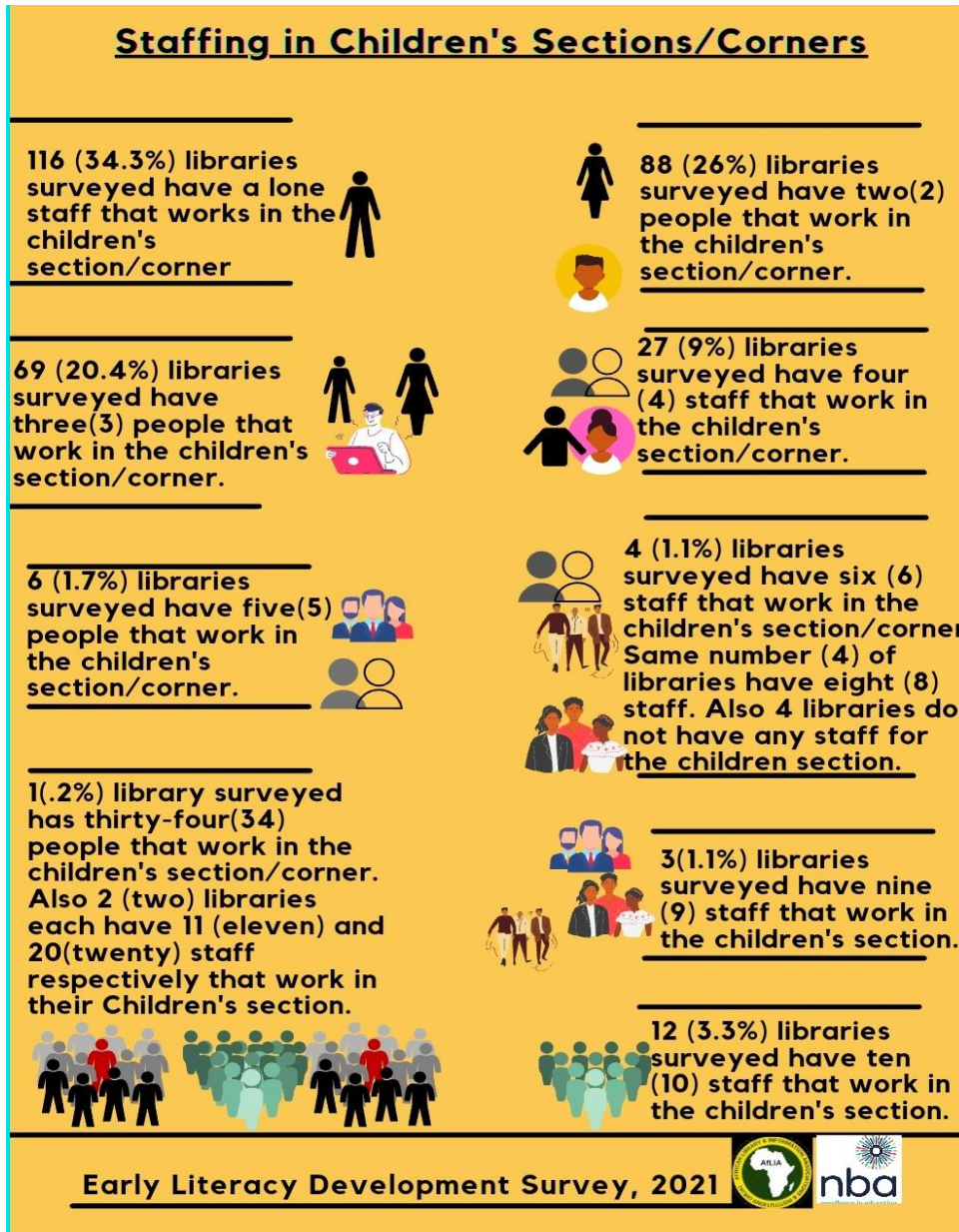


Figure 5 – Staffing in children’s section/corner

240 libraries representing 49.6% of the surveyed population gave more insights on staffing. It was also discovered that 92% (221) libraries have a staff whose one of the primary duties is to handle the Story hour programme. 19 (8%) do not have such arrangements. The presence of staff in the sections/corners is a strong indicator that there are staff that can be trained

through the proposed early literacy development course.

5b. Information resources in Children’s sections/corners

Three hundred and thirty-eight (338) responses were received for the enquiry to determine the type of information resources available in Children Section/Corners of these libraries. This represents 73% of the total number of respondents to the survey. Basically, all the Children’s sections and corners have reading desks, tables, carpets, reading mats and in some cases, blankets. They also have different types of information resources for children. Details can be found in Figure 6 below.

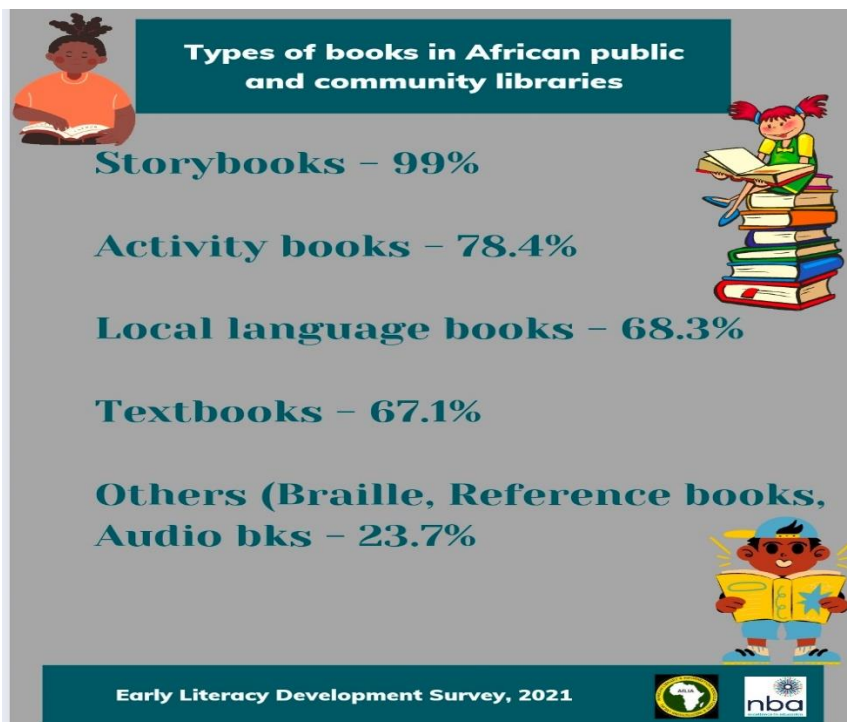


Figure 6 – Types of books in Children’s sections/corners of African public and community libraries

5c. Acquisition of books for children’s sections/corners

According to the respondents, books for the Children’s sections/corners are gotten mainly through donations as indicated by 235 (57.6%) while 194 (47.5%) of the libraries were of the view that Government provides books and 157(38.4%) indicate that it’s their libraries that purchase books for the children’s sections/corners. 408 (88.1%) out of 463 respondents answered this enquiry and they were allowed to tick as many options as applicable.

Again, the survey sought to find out who the donors of books to Children’s Section/corner of African public libraries, the languages of the books and how useful the book donations are. 126 (26%) out of 483 respondents provided information on this. Twenty-four book donors were identified. Results show that one (1) library each received book donations from the following

organizations- Story Moja, World Vision, WorldReader, Time to Learn, Krio Descendant Unions, Mummy Foundation, Weaver Press, Bookbus, RIL-NET, UBOS, DENVIVA, Nermin Bahaa Technical Operations Department and Theological Book Network while two (2) libraries each indicate that they receive book donations from USAID, Rotary Club, Sierra Leone Book Trust and Africa Library Project. Also, three (3) libraries each revealed that they get book donations from Books for Africa (BFA) and Beit Trust. The details of the major donors are aptly portrayed in Figures 7 below.

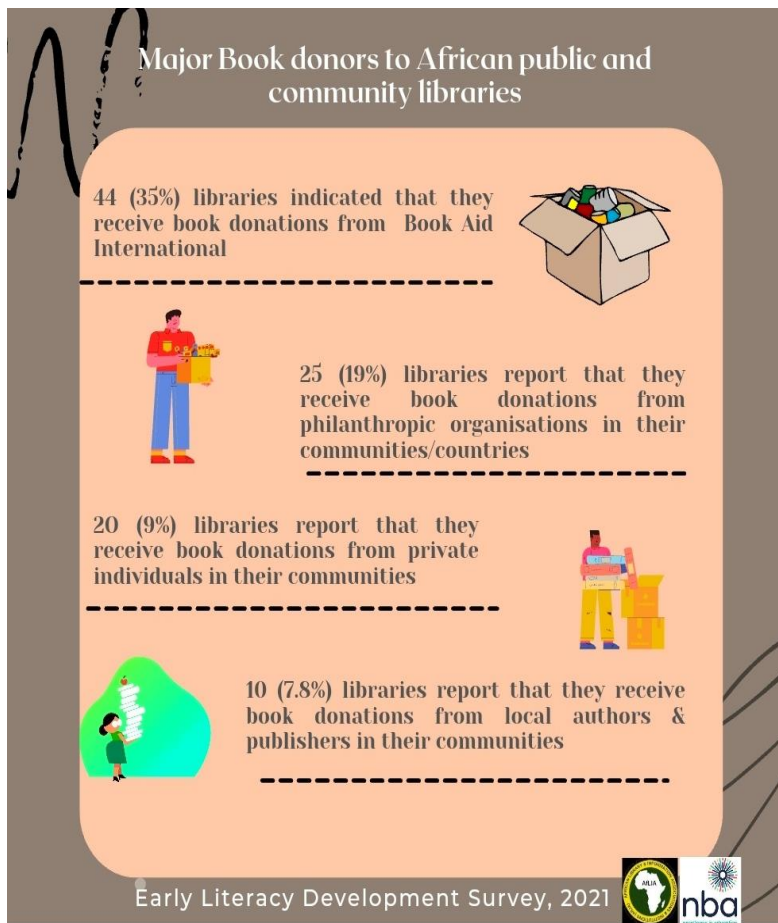


Figure 7: Major book donors to African public and community libraries

Results also show that the books donated are in nineteen (19) languages with English dominating with one hundred and twenty-five (99.2%) libraries indicating that they have received book donations in English. Thirteen (13) libraries representing 10.3% of the survey population that gave responses to this question have received books in French while 11 (8.7%) libraries have book donations in Afrikaans. Seven (7) libraries, that is 5,5% of the libraries have received books in Arabic as donations while 6 (4.7%)

libraries have book donations in Swahili, 4 (3.1%) in Kiswahili, 2 (1.5%) libraries each have book donations in Setswana, Xhosa, Ndebele and Spanish. One (1) library each has book donations in Oshiwambo, Kakwa, Bemba, Germany, Isixhosa, Chichewa, Siswata, Kinyanwanda and Yoruba languages.

Eighty-three (83) libraries representing 65.8% of those that answered this question agreed that the book donations are very useful for literacy development, increasing proficiency in English

language for children, and for boosting the reading culture. However, 4 (3%) libraries noted that the donated books are not useful because children cannot relate with most of the content. The details are succinctly presented in Figure 8 below.



Figure 8: Usefulness of donated books to African public and community libraries

6. Usage of Children's Sections/Corners

Usage of children's section/corner in African public and community libraries can be adduced from the number of registrants for each library. However, only 383 responses representing 79.2% of the survey population provided answers to the questions in this section on the number of registered children in the Section/Corner, their age range and if they are accompanied to the library. Curiously, 9.1% (35) of respondents inputted zero (0) for the number of children registered in their libraries. Details of registered users in the Children's Section/Corner of African public and community libraries can be clearly seen in Figure 9 below.

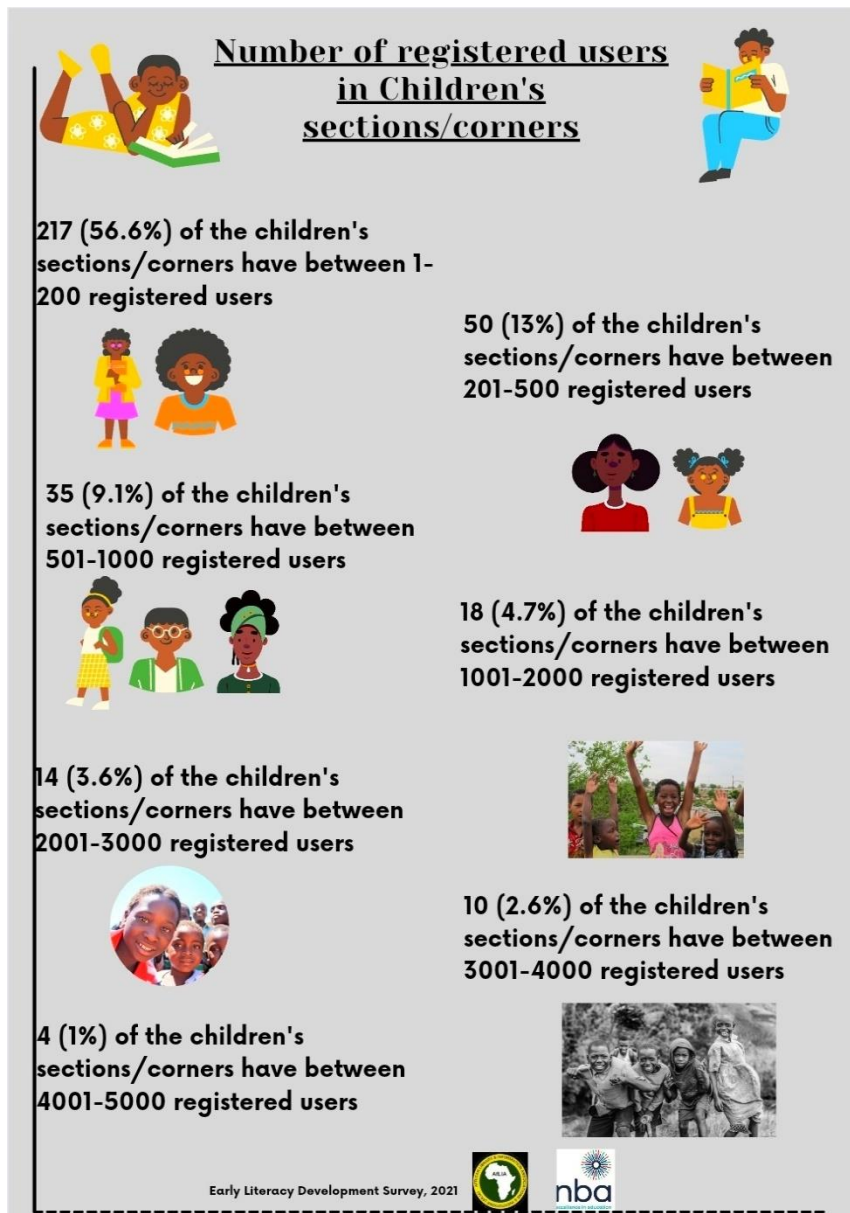
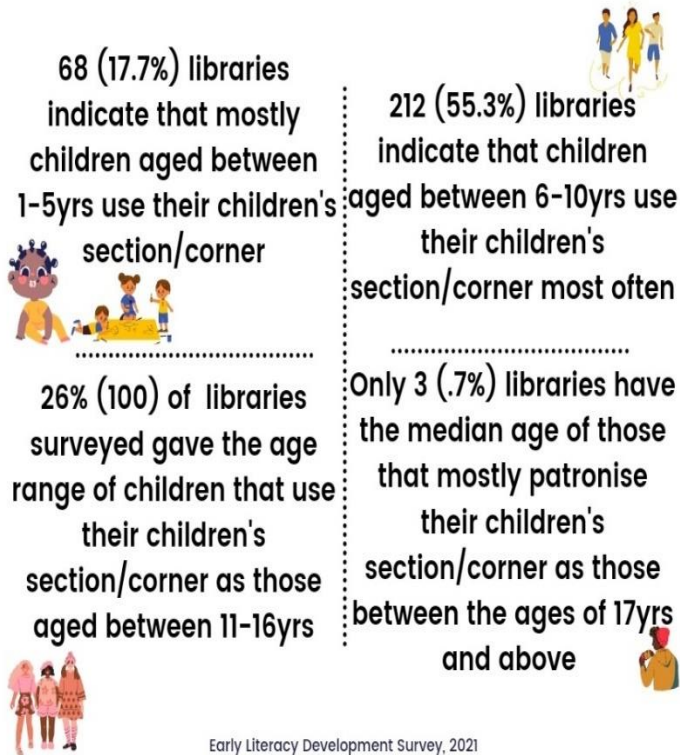


Figure 9: Registrants at children's sections/corners

Results also show that the age range of major users of Children’s Sections/Corners of public and community libraries in Africa is 6-10years. Details are in Figure 10 below.

Age range of users of Children's Section/Corners



Also, results show that children most often are brought to public and community libraries by either their parents or their teachers. This was affirmed to by 62.6% (236) of the respondents who answered the question.

Figure 10 – Age range of users

7. Story hour in African public and community libraries

The story hour is believed to be a staple programme in children's sections/corners of public and community libraries.

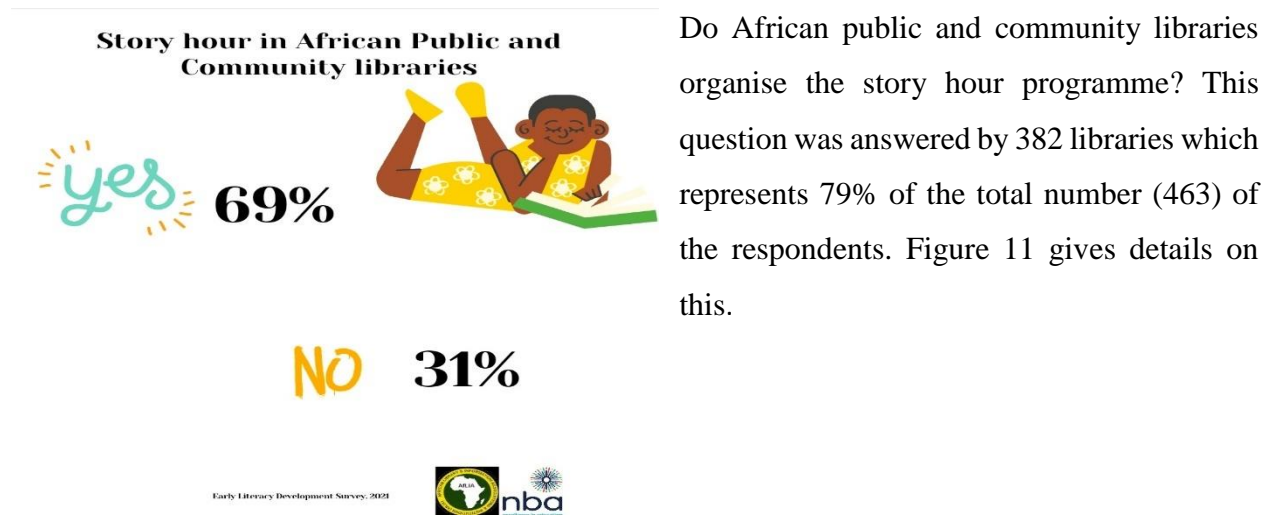


Figure 11: Story hour in African public and Community libraries

7a. Regularity of Story hour activity

Also, results from answers provided by 240 (49.6%) of the surveyed population show that the 229 (95.4%) libraries have regular Story hour programmes while 11 libraries representing 4.6% of those that answered the question do not have such an arrangement on regular basis.

Furthermore, it was discovered that the **most often Story hours are held** in the libraries is once a week as 42.5% (102) of the respondents affirmed. 20.8% (50) organize the programme twice a week, 18% (43) do it once a month while 25 (10.4%) libraries hold story hour for children three times in a week. Twenty (20) other libraries representing 8.3% of the population say they either have the programme every day (3), once a school term (3), during holidays (4), twice a month (4) or at any time (6) that is suitable for them.

7b. Publicity for the Story hour programme

Results show that African public and community libraries have five major ways of driving publicity for the Story hour programme – by word of mouth through library staff and the children themselves, through the social media and three other avenues. Details are in Figure 12 below.

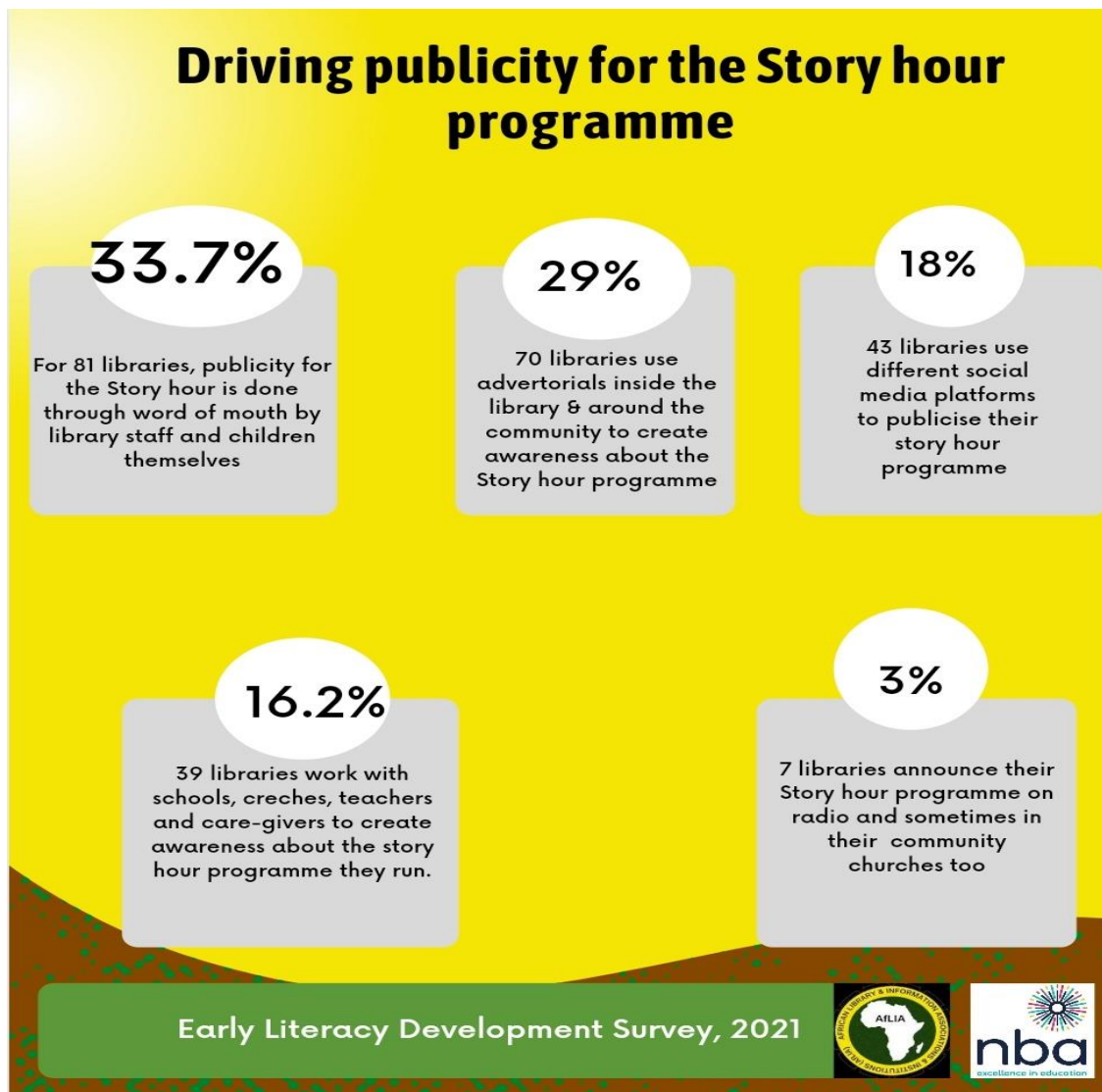


Figure 12: Publicity for Story hour programme

7c. Attendance to Story hour programme

Only one library each has up to 1000 (one thousand) and 500 (five hundred) children in attendance during the story hour programme of the libraries surveyed. Figure 12 has additional details.

Attendance to Story hour activities



148 (61.6%) libraries have between 1-20 children in attendance during Story hour activities

Between 21-50 children attend Story hour programme in 60(25%) libraries surveyed

7.5% (18) of libraries surveyed indicated that between 51-100 children attend their story hour activities.

Only 8 (3.3%) libraries say that attendance to their story hour programme can have between 101-200 each time.

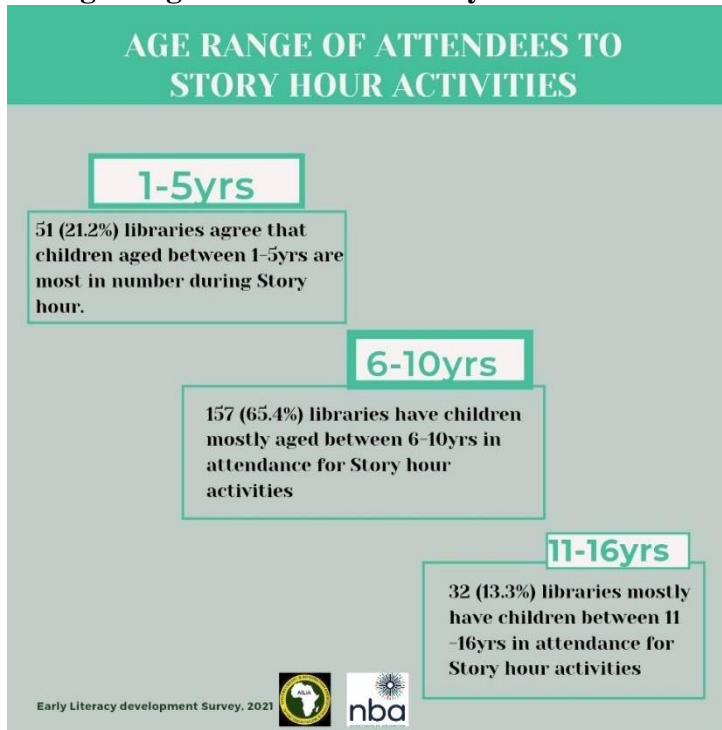
1.6% (4) of libraries surveyed indicated that between 201-400 children attend their story hour activities.



Early Literacy Development Survey, 2021

Figure 13: Attendance to Story hour activities

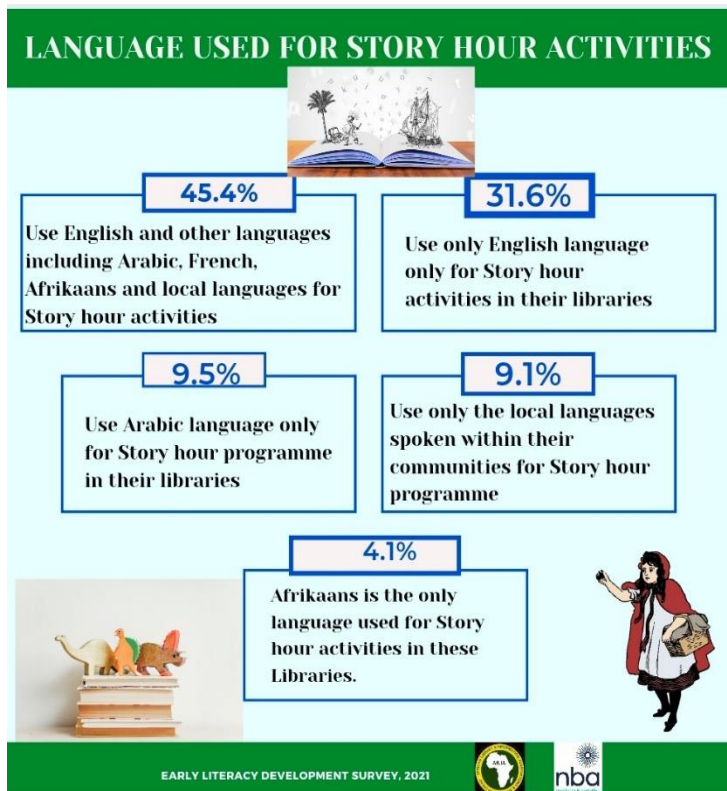
7d. Age range of attendees to Story hour activities



Data collected show that though three (3) public and community libraries had indicated that young people from 17yrs and above use Children’s Section/Corner of their libraries, those in that age range do not show up at all for story hour activities. Figure 14 has the details.

Figure 14: Age range of attendees to Story hour activities

7e. Language used for story hour activities

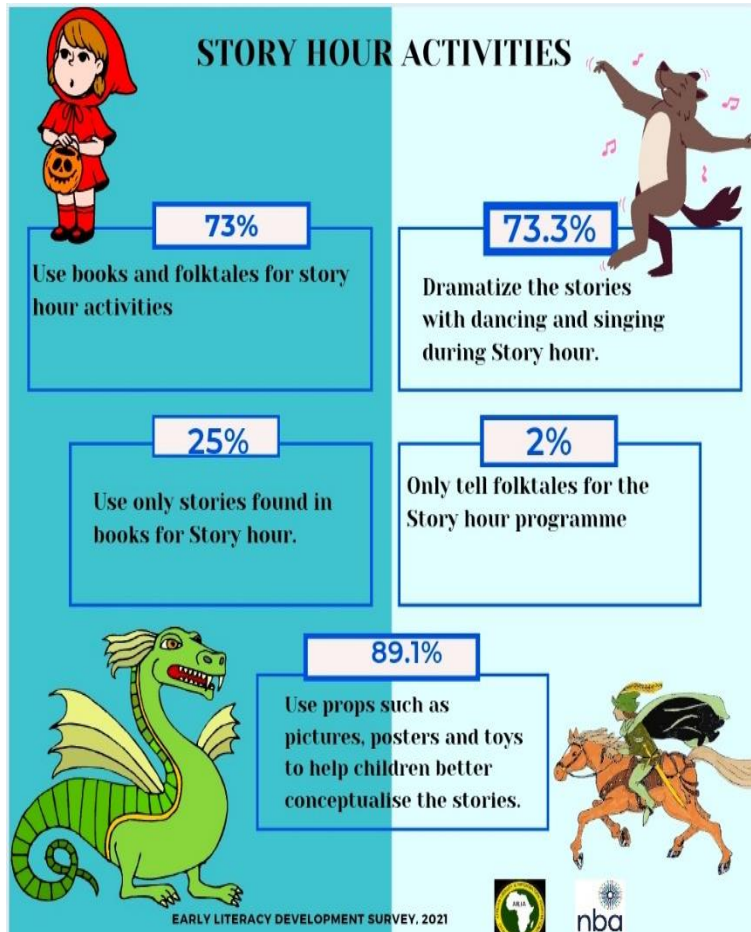


A mixture of local languages, English, Arabic and Afrikaans are used for story hour activities in the libraries surveyed. 240 libraries representing 49.6% of the population surveyed, provided responses on this. This is clearly outlined in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Languages used for Story hour activities

7f. Activities during the story hour programme

49.6% (240) of the survey population gave responses about activities within the Story hour programme. Data collected show that 175 (73%) of the libraries surveyed use both story books



and folktales for the Story hour programme while 25% use only stories found in books for the programme. Also, 73.3% (176 libraries) of the respondents revealed that they add dramatization including dancing and singing collected libraries (10.8%) do not use any type of props. Figure 16 highlights some of the data on this aspect.

Figure 16: Story hour activities

7g. Criteria for choosing stories for the Story hour programme

Probing further to discover the criteria for choosing books and stories to use during the programme, it was discovered that there are six (6) main determinants used for making a choice for story hour. The answer was provided by 240 respondents that is 49.6 of the population surveyed. Figure 17 below has all the details.

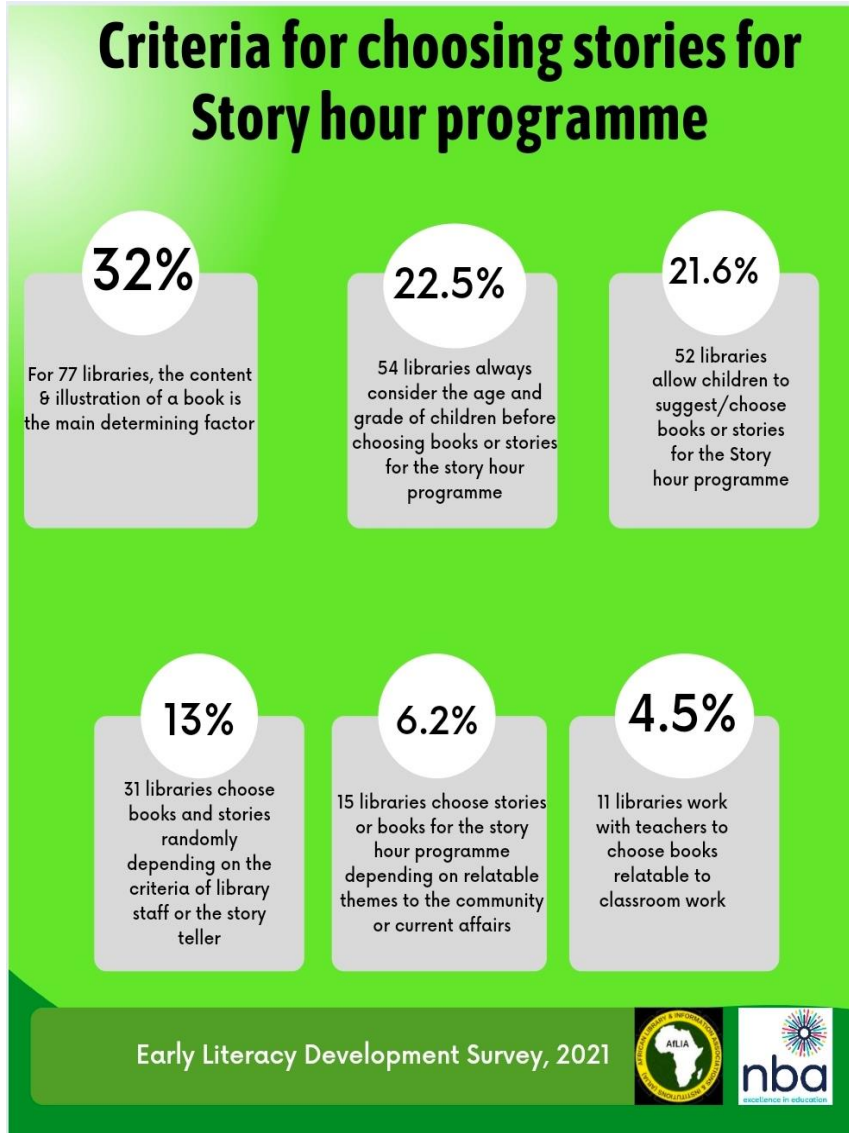


Figure 17: Criteria for choosing books/stories for the story hour programme

7h – Most loved stories for the Story hour programme

After using these criteria to choose books, the survey also sought to find out the particular type of



books children enjoy during the story hour programme. Results indicate that children love stories that feature different types of animal, folktales including those in local languages or in English as well as fairy tales and cartoons. Details of this can be found in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Most loved stories for the Story Hour programme

7i – Activities during the Story hour programme

What do African and public libraries really do during the Story hour programme? Nine (9) main activities were revealed ranging from storytelling to sing aloud, dancing word games, drama and

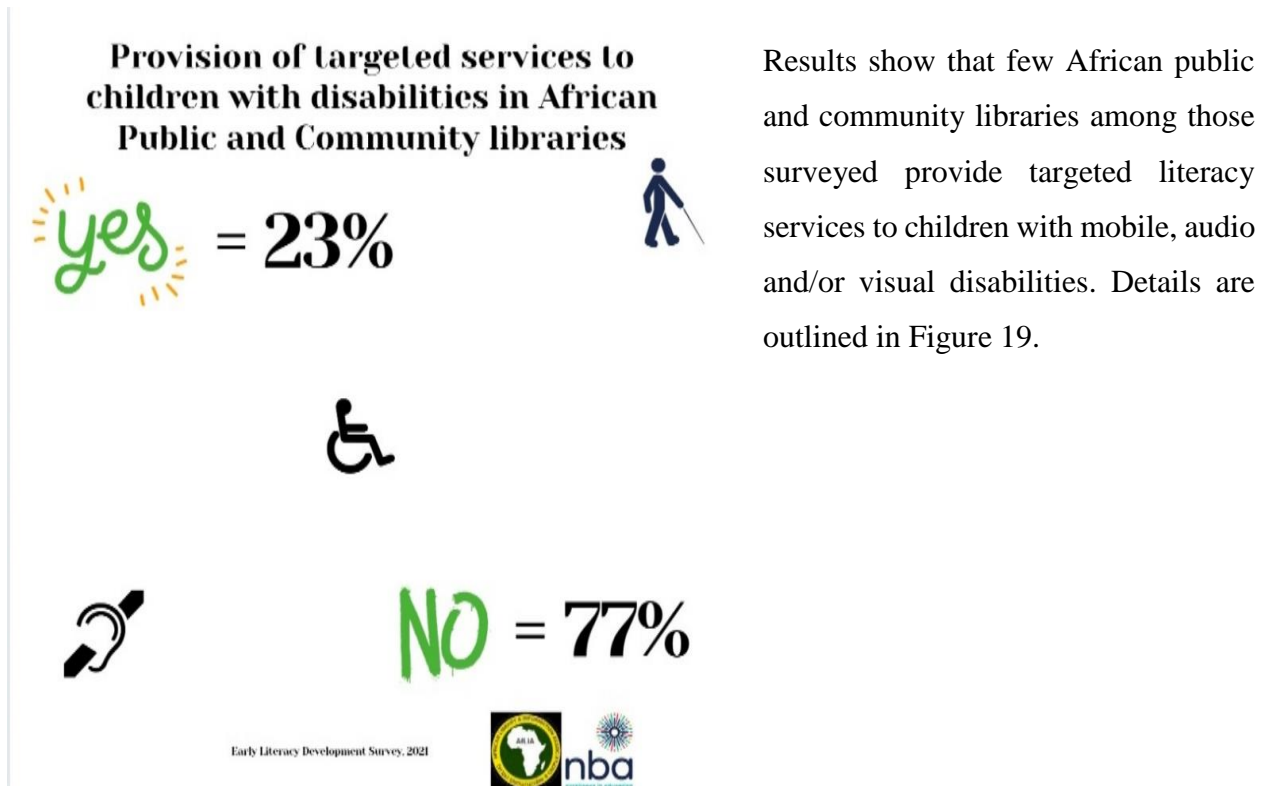
puppet shows. These activities and the number of libraries that engage in them are well outlined in Figure 19 below.



Figure 18: Breakdown of activities during Story hour programme

8. Children with disability

The survey also sought to find out if the libraries surveyed provide literacy services based on the special needs of some children.



Results show that few African public and community libraries among those surveyed provide targeted literacy services to children with mobile, audio and/or visual disabilities. Details are outlined in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Targeted literacy development services to children with disabilities

9. Collaborations for early literacy development activities

Results indicate that African public and community libraries collaborate mostly with schools, parents and guardians as well as with creches, publishers, authors and other local organizations.

See Figure 20 below for additional details.

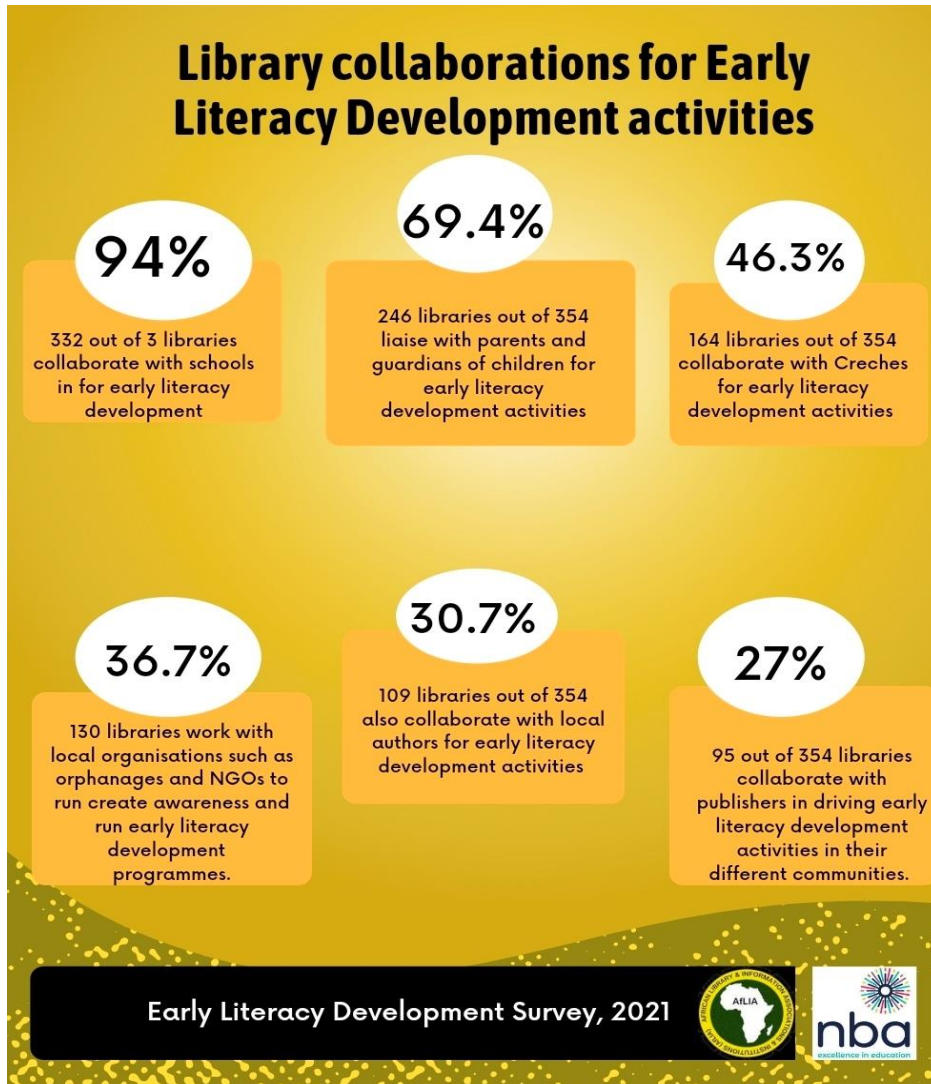
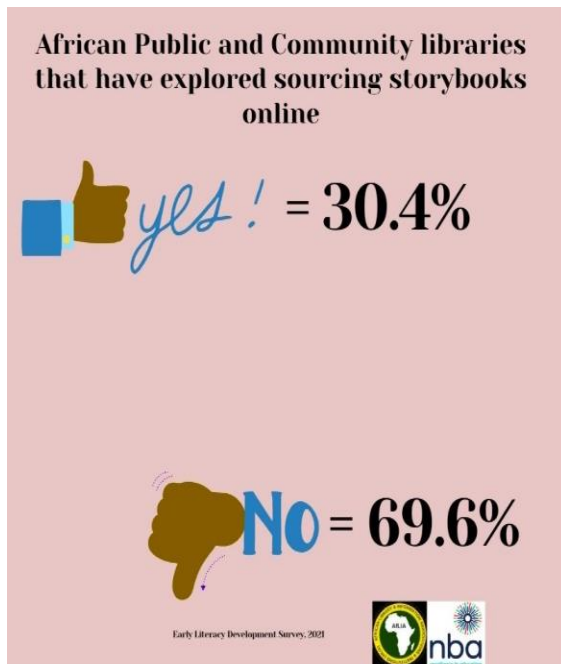


Figure 20: Library collaborations for Early literacy development

10. Digital Storytelling

The survey also sought to establish if and how African public and community libraries interact



with online platforms that have free storybooks for children. This was asked with a view of gaining insights into how to introduce the open license concept within the proposed early literacy development course.

First, there was need to find out if any of the surveyed libraries had explored the possibility of sourcing storybooks from online platforms. Responses were provided by 352 (73%) of the total population (483) surveyed. Figure 21 outlines the responses

Figure 21: Libraries sourcing storybooks online

10a- Online platforms for accessing, creating and/or translating storybooks

It was also important to find out the online platforms that they have used to source for storybooks.

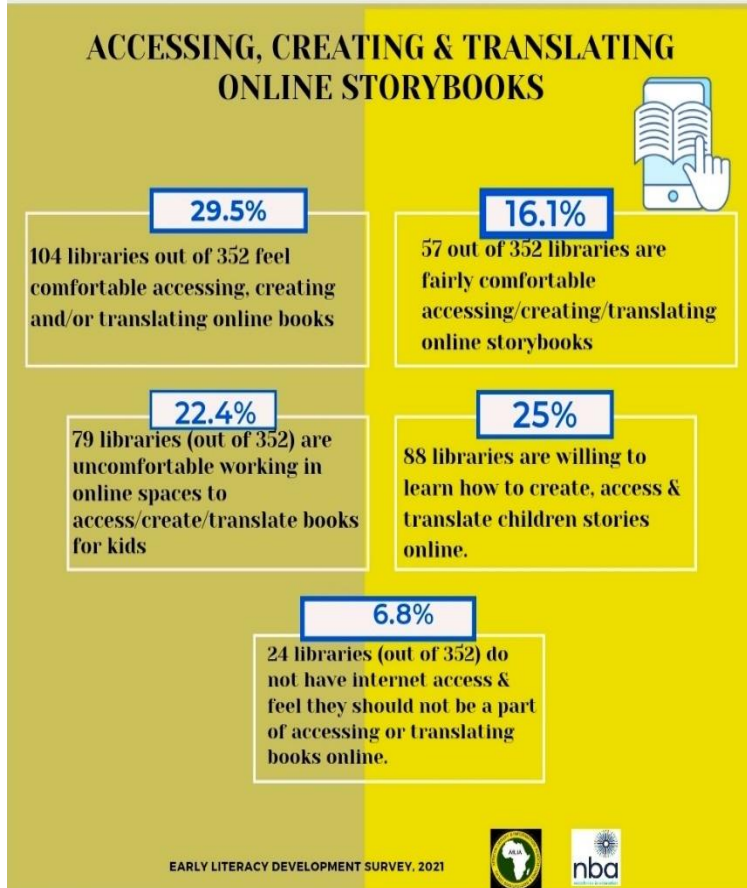


Only 21.5% (104) of the total number of respondents (483) provided feedback on this enquiry. The main findings are in in Figure 22. Furthermore, two (2) libraries reported that they download pdfs of storybooks from any free to use site. Two (2) libraries in Ghana also indicated that they use the Ghana Library app which has stories for children.

Figure 22: Online platforms for accessing storybooks

10b – Adeptness at using online platforms for early literacy development activities

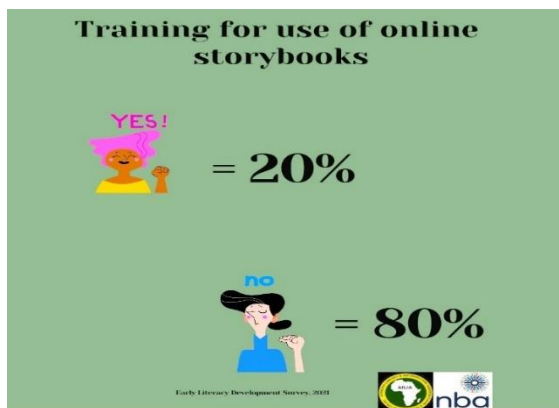
Information was also sought to establish how comfortable library staff in African public and community feel about using online spaces for early literacy development activities.



352 respondents representing 73% of the total population surveyed provided information for this query. Data collected significantly point to the fact that many of the staff in African community and public libraries are comfortable to work and/or are quite willing to learn how to access, create and/or translate storybooks in online platforms. Details can be found in Figure 23.

Figure 23: Accessing, creating & translating online storybooks

10c – Training for use of online storybooks



Digital storytelling for children in African public and community libraries was further probed to discover if the respondents provide any training to equip children with skills and confidence to use online platforms for reading and learning activities. Data collected from 352 respondents revealed that only 20% (70 libraries) train children on how to access and read storybooks online. Details in Figure 24.

Figure 24: Training for use of online storybooks

10d - Format of online storybooks used

African public and community have three main avenues for utilizing online storybooks –

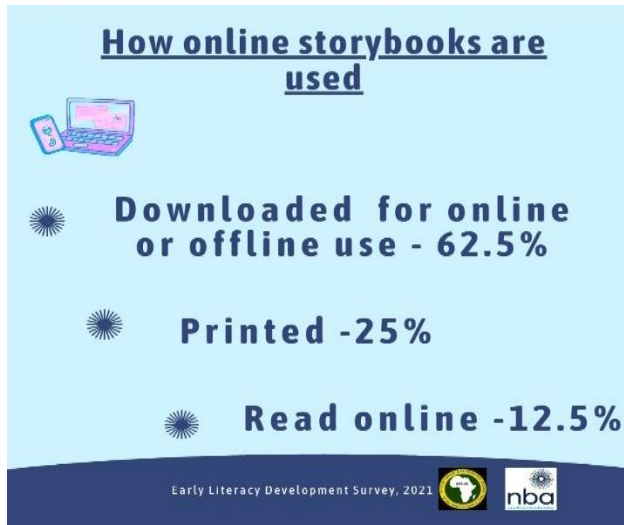


Figure 25: Format of online storybooks

through downloading, printing and reading them online with children. 104 respondents representing 21.5% of the study population provided feedback on this enquiry. Details are in Figure 25.

10e - Digital Story hour programme

With the availability of online storybooks, the next step naturally was to find out if African public



Figure 26: Availability of digital story hour programme

and community libraries use them for story hour programmes or just make them available for children to read individually. 103 libraries representing 21.3% of the study population responded to this enquiry. Details are in Figure 26.

10f – Mode of delivery for digital story hour programme

Results show that libraries have different delivery modes for digital story hour programme which holds at least once a month in the libraries that indicated so.

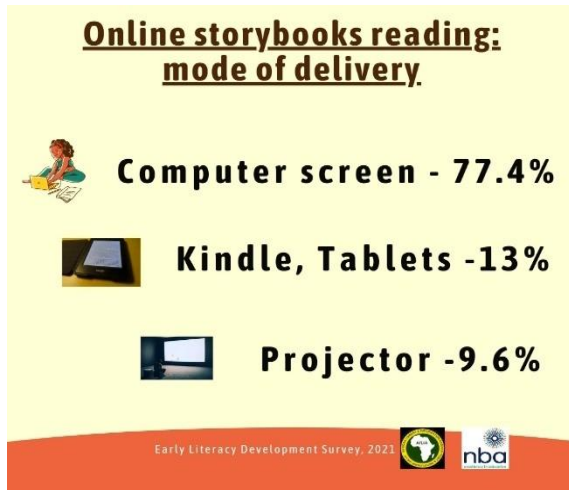


Figure 27: Mode of delivery for online storybook hour

Response on this was gotten from 31 libraries representing 6.4 of the total population (483) of the study. The results are outlined in Figure 27

10g. Languages used for digital story hour



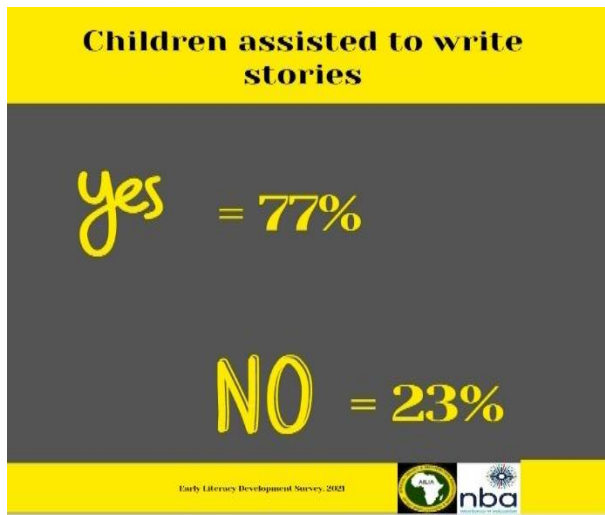
Figure 28: Languages used for online story hour

Results also indicate respondents (31 libraries) use local languages as well as English language in running the digital story hour. Details are in Figure 28.

Also, all respondents indicated that children enjoy the digital story hour as they get to touch the devices or watch/read words and see pictures on screens.

11. Helping children write their own stories

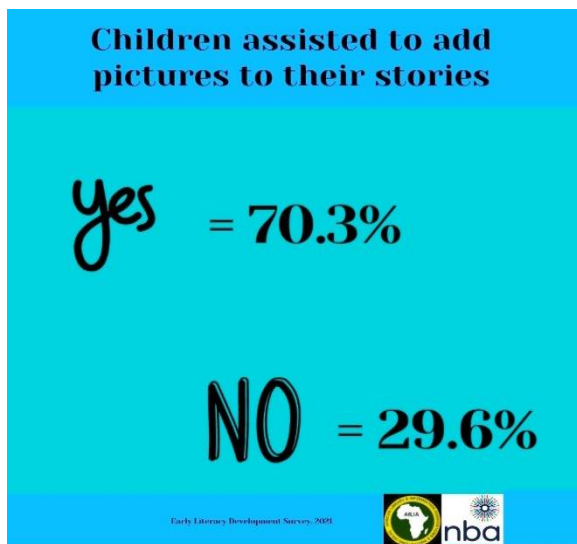
Results show that some libraries assist children to write down or speak out their own thoughts as



stories well as tell/write folktales they heard from home. 331 libraries representing 68.5% of the total study population of 483 libraries gave feedback on this. See Figure 29 for more details.

Figure 29: Libraries that assist children write stories

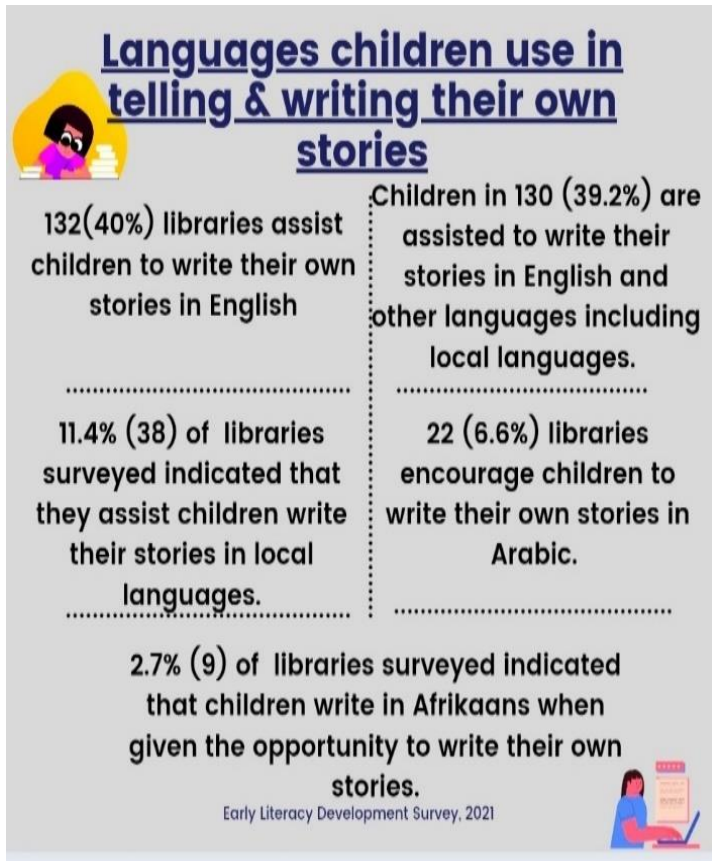
It was also found out that some libraries do not only assist children to write their stories, they also help them add pictures to the story to further deepen expression of their thoughts and concepts. As



many as 233 libraries (70.3%) offer this service for early literacy development. 331 libraries responded to this enquiry. Details are in Figure 30.

Figure 30: Adding pictures to stories written by children

Results from the survey also revealed that children use different languages to write and tell their

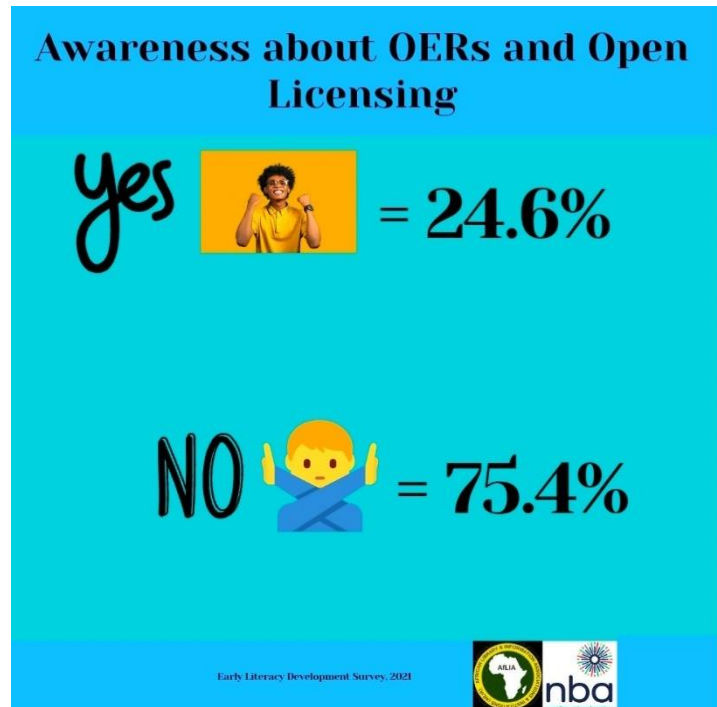


stories. However, it was discovered that children use mostly English language to tell and write their own stories in the public and community libraries surveyed. 331 libraries provided feedback on this. Details are outlined in Figure 31.

Figure 31: Languages children use in writing and telling their own stories

12. Knowledge about OERs and Open Licensing

Responses were sought to find out the level of knowledge staff in the surveyed libraries have about Open Educational Resources and Open Licensing; the two concepts that undergird

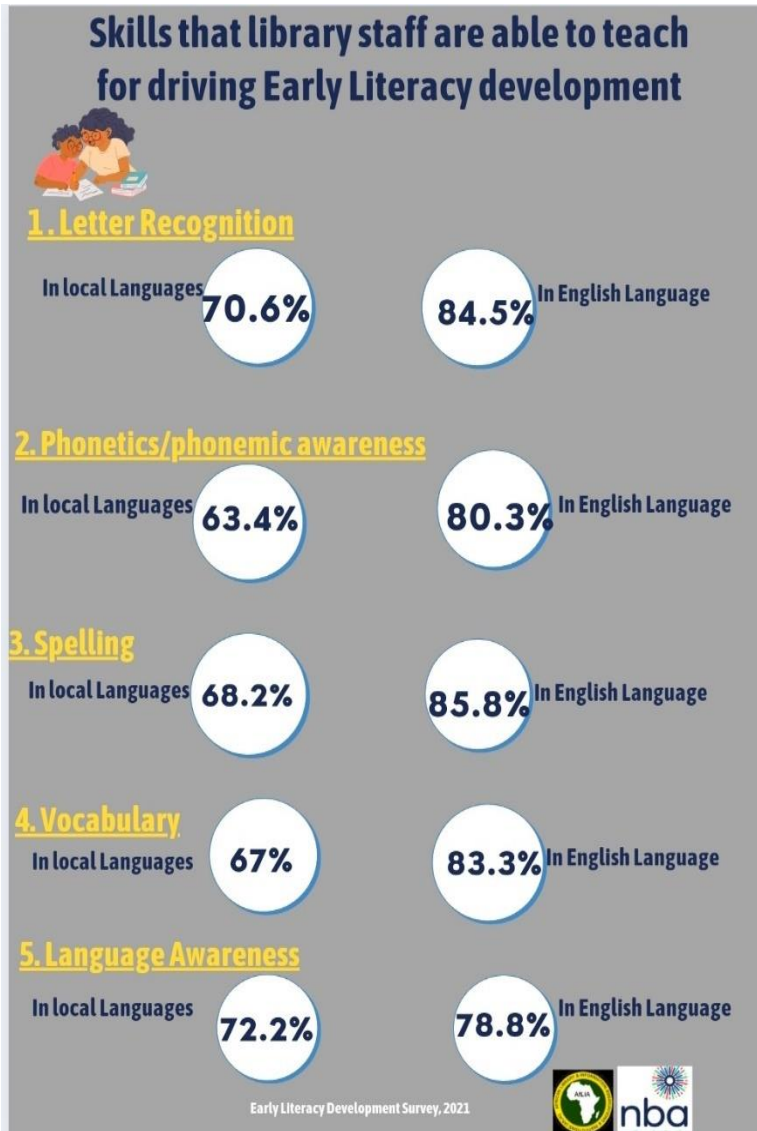


accessing, using, adapting and translating free storybooks in online platforms. 341 libraries representing 70.6% of the surveyed population provided feedback. Details are clearly shown in Figure 31.

Figure 31: Awareness of OERs and Open Licensing

13. Skills needed for driving Early Literacy Development

Feedback was sought on the skills that staff in the surveyed public and academic libraries have that will assist them drive early literacy development in their different communities.



Specifically, the libraries surveyed were asked if they have the staff that could inculcate early literacy skills in the local languages of their communities and in English in the areas of;

- Letter recognition
- Phonetic/phonemic awareness
- Spelling
- Vocabulary and
- Language awareness.

331 libraries responded. Details are in Figure 32.

Figure 32: Skills by library staff for inculcation of early literacy skills

The above notwithstanding, there was need to elicit more information on the skills needed by the library staff for inculcation of early literacy skills. The respondents (31) gave a litany of skills that cannot be easily categorized. They want to be taught how to teach;

- Phonics to children
- Vocabulary (letter identification, word making, spelling and word recognition)
- Basic teaching methods and skills
- How to tell stories captivatingly

- ICT skills for digital story hours
- Communication skills for working with children
- Drama skills
- Translation skills
- Open Licensing
- How to help children create stories on online platforms
- How to read Braille
- Sign language
- Use of educational aids
- Writing
- Drawing

The respondents also indicated the need to learn;

- Child psychology
- Early childhood development and appropriate strategies for teaching them at each level

Finally,

The survey results highlight the point that there are children's sections/corners in African public and community libraries and that they have facilities and services that can be further honed for targeted early literacy development. The findings also indicate that the availability of internet enabled devices in these libraries that can support acquisition of more storybooks in local languages through open licensing.