



DIALOGUES  
Languages, literacies  
and learning in a  
digital age

# DIALOGUES – Languages, literacies and learning in a digital age (2024-2027)

An Erasmus + Capacity building in Higher Education project, Strand 1



Funded by the  
European Union



ECSPM Symposium 19-20 March 2026  
Kristin Vold Lexander



# Outline

Background and preparation of the project

Structure, goals, and activities

Experiences so far and reflections on these:

How can we engage in truly collaborative and equitable  
Global South-Global North partnerships?

How can we challenge power imbalances when funding is  
based on those very power imbalances?



# Decolonization in collaboration?

“When Northern and Southern scholars collaborate, there is always the question of who speaks for whom” (Chetty, Gibson, and Reilly, 2024, p. 249)

Differing priorities and expectations are not necessarily a problem:

- Acknowledge the complexities inherent in South-North collaboration;
- Interrogate processes and power dynamics involved;
- Decolonization should not become a matter of «virtue signalling» to allow truly collaborative and equitable partnerships to be formed (op.cit., p. 259)

Chetty, R., Gibson, H., & Reilly, C. (2024). Decolonising Methodologies Through Collaboration. *Decolonizing Linguistics*, edited by A. H. Charity Hudley, C. Mallinson, and M. Bucholtz, Oxford University Press, 245-260.



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# Background

Collaboration between the University of Zambia (School of Education) and INN University (Faculty of Education) since 2008



Main activities:

Student mobility (MA and Ph.D.): literacy and multilingualism

Teaching practice

Virtual mobility during Covid-19 -> blended mobility



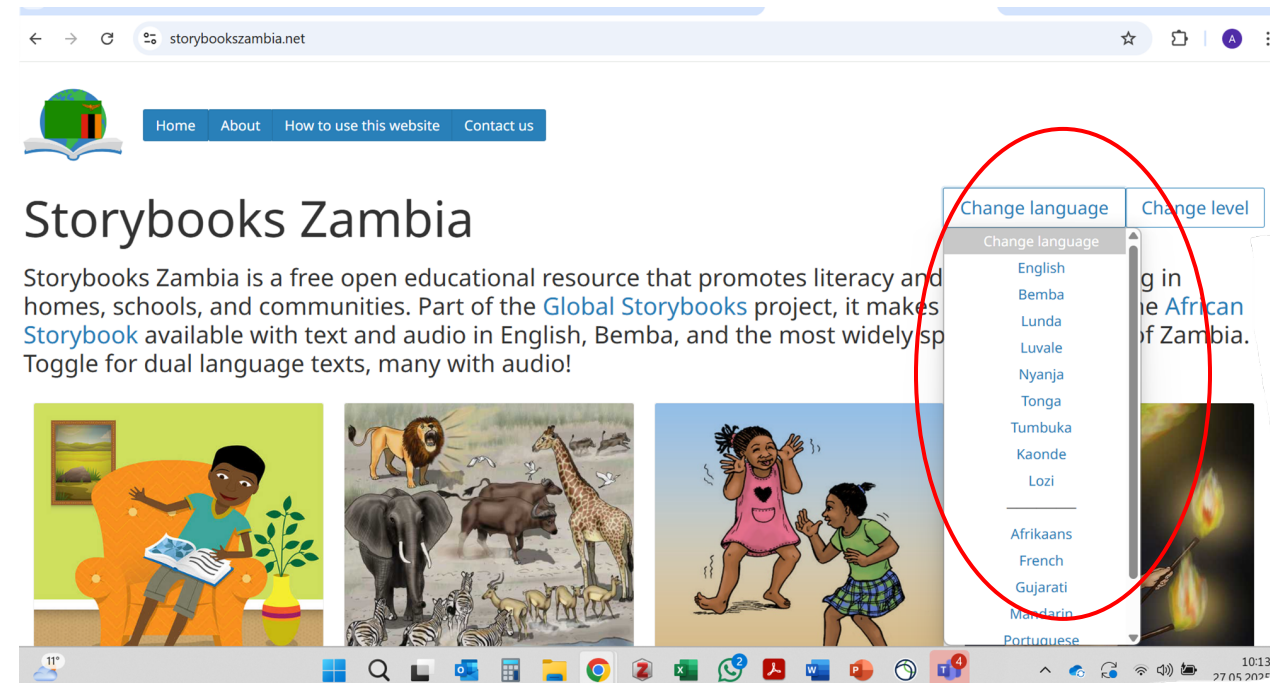
# storybookszambia.net

Promoting literacy in Zambian languages through providing free, open reading material

40 stories from African Storybooks translated into Zambian languages

Text, audio, illustrations (five levels)

Digital or print (e.g. bilingual with illustrations)



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# Preparing the project

Aiming for Erasmus + funding: one way mobility

Recruiting new partners: Chalimbana University, Kitwe College of Education, University of Iceland

Proposal workshop (Lusaka 2022): Kitwe brought up sign language/support of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students as important need

-> New conceptualization of multilingualism, new partner in the Global North: Oslo Metropolitan University



# Preparing a collaborative environment, inclusive and reciprocal exchange of knowledge, ideas and expertise

The requirements of preparing successful funding proposals make it difficult to make sure all voices are heard throughout the writing process.

The requirements regarding the length of the text and the level of details makes it difficult to organize extensive co-writing across geographical distance.



- ➔ With seed funding, we could meet physically to discuss the DIALOGUES proposal and lay the foundation for later digital discussions
- ➔ Inclusion of sign language and the inclusion of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing learners
- ➔ Many decisions need to be made in the final stages of submitting the proposal -> power to the project owner

# Main goals and activities



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Increase competences and skills of Zambian teacher educators in **digital literacy and multilingualism, including sign language** through **blended mobility** of Zambian teacher educators pursuing a Ph.D. degree.

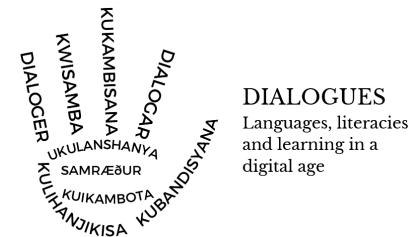
Increase quality in Ph.D. education and **participation in international networks** through **joint supervision** and a **cross-institutional supervisors' forum**

# The requirements of international funding and validation

- The first application was unsuccessful, the second application got funding – feedback enhanced equity in the partnership
- However, Kitwe College of Education was not validated as a partner by the EU because it was not a legal entity



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“Despite efforts to rebalance power, inequality was evident when funders unilaterally excluded one Global South institution that had been involved since the proposal's outset” *Agnes Chileshe Chibamba*



# DIALOGUES project organization



Project  
management  
Anne M. V.  
Danbolt/  
Kristin Vold  
Lexander  
INN



Digital  
infrastructure  
Innocent  
Mulenga  
UNZA



Digital literacy  
courses  
David Mwanza  
UNZA



Sign language  
integration and  
support  
Arnfinn M.  
Vonen  
OsloMet



Blended  
mobility  
Jonas Y. Iversen  
INN



Ph.D.  
supervision  
Hanna  
Ragnarsdóttir  
UI



Extending  
dialogues for  
the future  
Clare Mwiinga  
CU

WP1

WP2

WP3

WP4

WP5

WP6

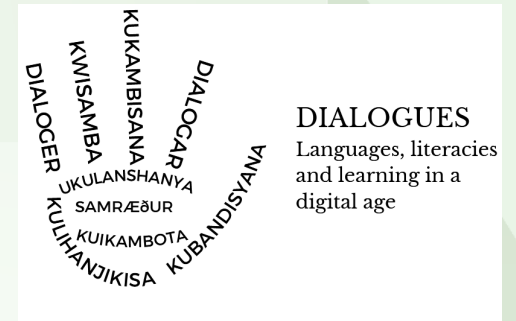
WP7

# Digital infrastructure/ Digital literacy courses

Making of material for digital inclusion (how to use speech-to-text, how to use Storybooks)

South-South capacity building:  
University of Zambia lend equipment acquired through DIALOGUES to Kitwe College of Education and organizes a workshop on digital literacy

**INN** University of  
Inland Norway

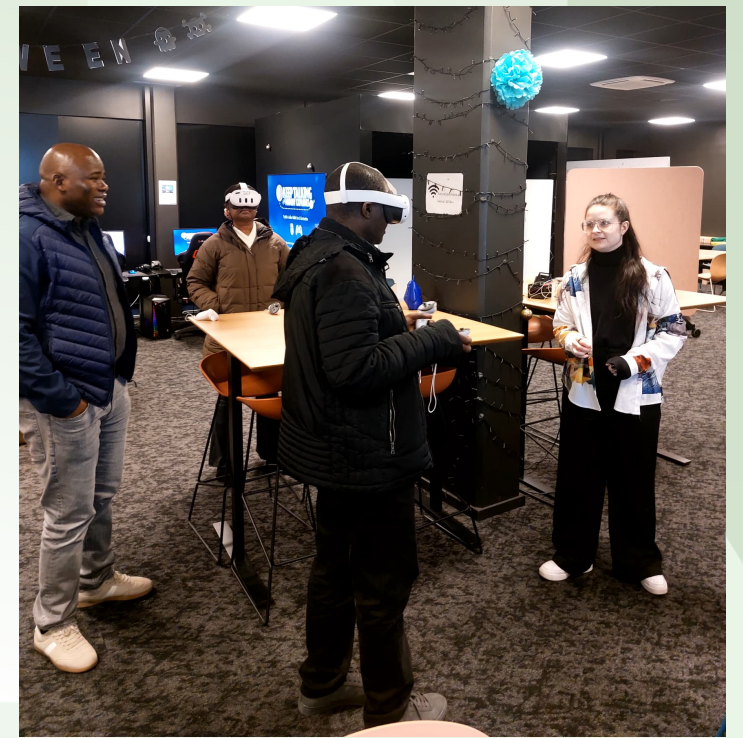


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# Blended mobility

Six Ph.D. students/teacher educators from UNZA for three months of physical mobility, attending physical Ph.D. courses followed by virtual mobility

Six Ph.D. students/teacher educators from UNZA for virtual mobility (online courses)





“Despite the many benefits of my mobility experience, I faced some challenges. **Language barriers** affected social interactions outside school, making it sometimes difficult to fully engage in informal gatherings and cultural events. **Limited digital literacy**, particularly with platforms such as Microsoft Teams/Meet, caused **delays in joining virtual classes, accessing materials, and participating fully** in class activities.” (student report on project website)

# Sign language integration and support

Four Ph.D. students focusing on sign language/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing learners

Two students following online course in International Sign 2026 (OsloMet)

Seminar and field visits to secondary school and early childhood education for Deaf learners

Zambian sign language versions of Storybooks  
Zambia



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“The Oslo tour provided a powerful **extension of our classroom learning**. Observing how Norwegian institutions support learners with hearing impairments revealed the depth of commitment to inclusivity, innovation, and child-centered practice. The emphasis on Norwegian Sign Language, personalized instruction, and coordinated support structures highlighted what it means to **operationalize inclusion meaningfully**. (...) This experience shifted my mindset significantly. It made me **reconsider long-held assumptions about special needs education** and deepened my appreciation of the complexity involved in meeting parental and community expectations. (student report on project website)



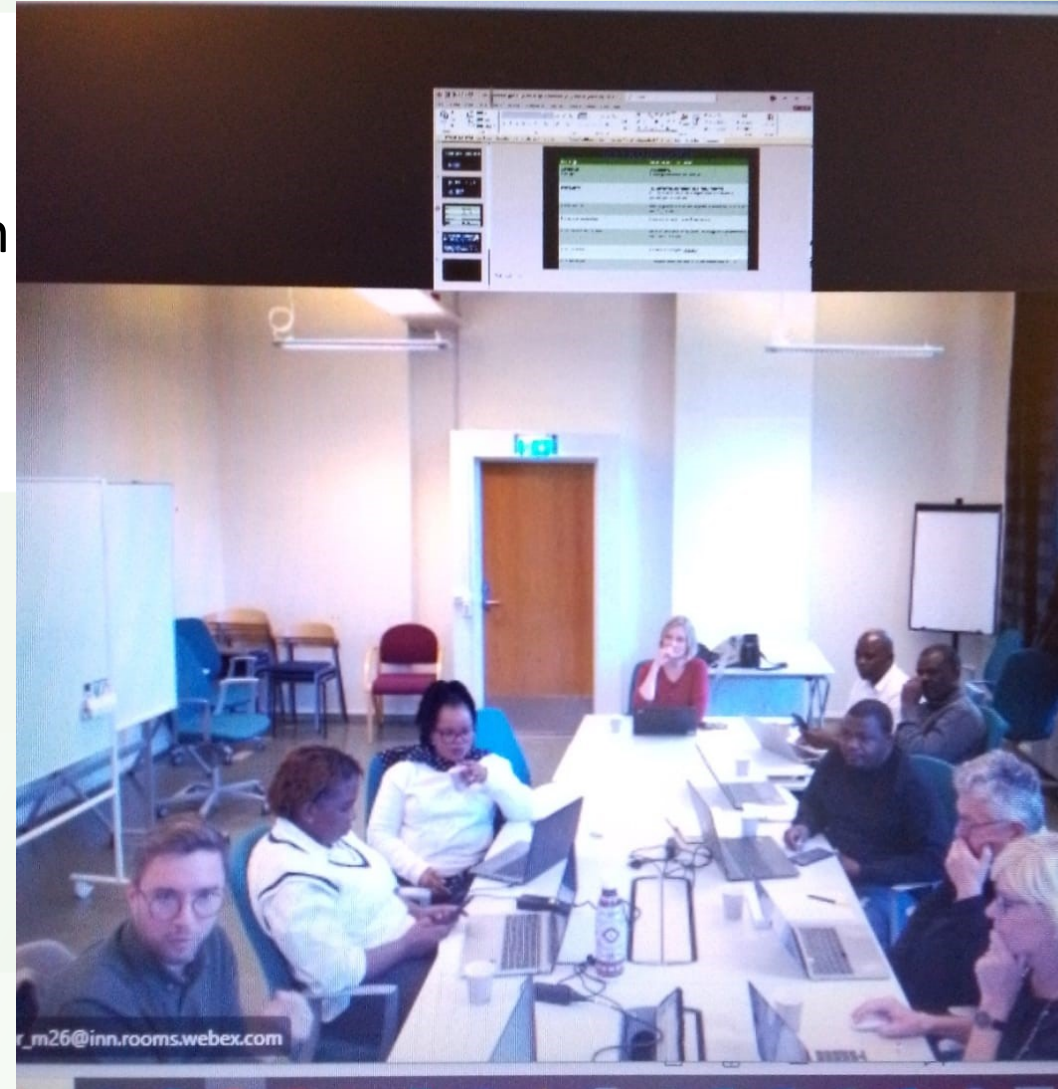


# Networking and capacity building in Ph.D. supervision

12 Ph.D. students experiencing joint supervision with supervisors from Norway and Iceland

Supervisors' forum (online) meeting twice a year to discuss issues related to supervision

Hybrid joint supervision seminar



“A major highlight was the co-supervision I received on my PhD project. Through **supervision meetings, presentations, and feedback sessions**, I refined my research questions, strengthened my conceptual framework, and improved the methodological clarity of my dissertation.” (student report on project website)

# Extending dialogues for the future: dissemination, impact and sustainability

Logo

Website: [dialoguesproject.com](http://dialoguesproject.com)

-multilingual presentations of the participants

-reports from students on mobility

Facebook group

Ph.D. students presenting research in schools



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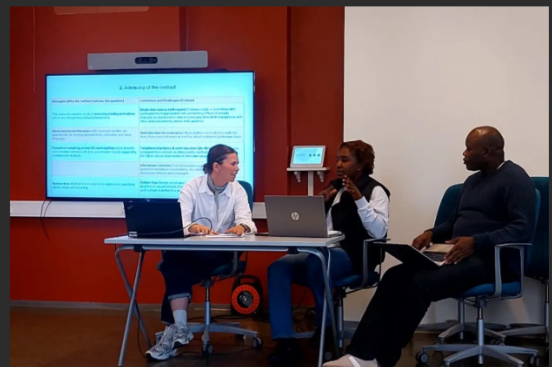


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has been flexible, clear, and fully inclusive, addressing all my needs and creating a supportive learning environment.



The several courses covered have been intellectually stimulating and personally reflective, providing tools and insights directly relevant to my doctoral research on advancing digital tools in Sign Language education for teachers of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing learners in Zambia, as well as my broader work within the disability movement.



Agnes Chileshe Chibamba PhD



ENGLISH

Agnes Chileshe Chibamba has a Doctor of Philosophy in Literacy and Language and is a lecturer in the Department of Language and Social Sciences Education at the University in Zambia. Her research focuses on multilingualism, literacy and language education and early childhood education. Currently, she is the Coordinator for all Postgraduate Programmes at the University of Zambia, Institute of Distance Education (IDE). In the Dialogue project, Agnes is working as team member.

BEMBA

Agnes Chileshe Chibamba alikwata Doctor of Philosophy in Literacy and Language, kabili ni kafundisha mucipani ca masambilila yamitundu na ubwikashi bwa bantu pa University of Zambia. Ama sambililo yakwe ya pamitundu iyingi, ukufunda ukubelenge na ukulemba, elyo na ukusambilisha abana abanono. Pali ino nshita, emukalamba aloleksha pa masambililo yakalamba aya pa University of Zambia, iciputulwa ca Institute of Distance Education (IDE). Muli Dialogue project, Agnes abomba pamo na bonse aba mu project.

# Lessons learnt so far

The structures of international funding can create obstacles for equitable partnerships through

- Non-validation of partners
- Proposal writing requirements

However collaborative partnerships can be enhanced through

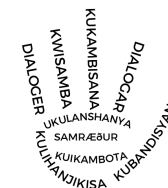
- Allowing for new voices to be decisive in shaping the project, also when these are not in line with the most powerful partners' initial ideas
  - Physical meetings to build trust so that no partners fear raising their voice or are prevented by practicalities to do so
  - Building on existing activities and interpersonal relationships and experience with the contexts to facilitate implementation
  - Student participants as important resources and brokers
- > Innovative activities need more time and effort

Constantly interrogate:

**who holds power, who benefits, and whose voices are heard or silenced**



Opening workshop in Lusaka, 2025



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# Takk!

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www.dialoguesproject.com



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