Community of Practice Workshop:
Getting the Right Books to the Kids

Rwanda Reads
It's amazing that those twenty-six little marks of the alphabet can arrange themselves on the pages of a book and accomplish all that. Readers are lucky – they will never be bored or lonely.”
Population: 11 million (highest population density in Africa)

Median age: 19

Vision 2020: Shift economy from agriculture-based to knowledge-based economy
READING: A KEY SKILL FOR ACHIEVING VISION 2020

Rwanda must develop *a reading culture* in order to…

- Achieve quality education
- Strengthen English/Kinyarwanda reading fluency
- Develop imagination and creativity
- Empower the public through lifelong access to knowledge
- Develop the habit of seeking new information in response to constantly evolving economic, technological and social environments
MINISTRY’S COMMITMENT TO VISION 2020 - ALL CHILDREN READING BY 2015
BUT WE KNOW THAT ALL CHILDREN CAN’T READ LIKE THIS CHILD CAN...

Two baseline assessments (2011)

- Test of students’ reading comprehension (LARS)
- Test of fundamental reading skills (EGRA)

Results

A significant % of students cannot read with understanding a grade-level text (LARS)

Many students perform below grade level on foundational reading skills – by end of P3, 15% cannot read a word
BUT...WHY CAN’T THEY READ

• Reading for pleasure or life-long learning is not widely embraced
• Few parents read to their children
• Access to reading materials is limited
• Relatively few books in Kinyarwanda language, especially for young readers
• Few libraries and limited capacity to utilize and manage existing libraries (schools, community libraries etc)
• Supports for literacy instruction in primary schools are limited (age-appropriate books in classrooms, adequate training on how to teach reading)
RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE: THE RWANDA READS INITIATIVE (MAR 2012)

National initiative, co-chaired by the Rwanda Education Board and USAID

Goal
Involve all stakeholders (private & public sector, civil society, donors, publishers, NGOs, media, etc.) in the implementation a coordinated program to -

- improve students’ reading skills
- promote a culture of reading across Rwanda
1. Improve reading skills
2. Increase access to reading materials
3. Transform reading attitudes and habits
NATIONAL LAUNCH  July, 2012
1. Improve reading skills
2. Increase access to reading materials
3. Transform reading attitudes and habits
1. IMPROVE READING SKILLS – TRAINING

Preservice training
✓ New preservice curriculum that includes training to in how to teach reading, particularly in early primary (Dec 11)

Inservice training
✓ New school-based mentoring program to improve teachers’
  • English language skills
  • Literacy instructional practices
✓ Daily interactive audio programs that model evidence-based reading practices
1. IMPROVE READING SKILLS – CURRICULUM

New National Reading Standards (June 2012)

- P3 and P5 fluency and reading comprehension

New curriculum and instructional materials

- Implementation, by 2016 of a curriculum with increased focus on reading/writing and aligned with the new standards
- Production of textbooks and reading materials keyed to this curriculum
1. IMPROVE READING SKILLS – Instructional materials

- New reading instructional materials (USAID/L3)
  - Teacher’s manuals with lesson plans that model evidence-based reading practices

- Weekly teacher read aloud stories, and student decodable texts keyed to particular letter-sound combinations

- Audio stories and interactive audio programs

Some of the new weekly teacher read aloud stories
1. Improve reading skills
2. Increase access to reading materials
3. Transform reading attitudes and habits
2: INCREASE ACCESS TO READING MATERIALS

- Reinforce existing partnerships with local, regional and international publishers
- Distribute more reading materials to schools
- Increase local production of reading materials (*Writer’s workshops, National Story Writing competitions*)
- Increase number of libraries (school, community, etc.)
## REINFORCE PARTNERSHIP WITH PUBLISHERS

### Number of titles submitted 2009 tender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Titles</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinyarwanda</td>
<td>19 titles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(none for P1 to P3)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>227 titles</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
REINFORCE PARTNERSHIP WITH PUBLISHERS

April 2012 – Tender for new reading materials

Detailed technical specifications for 21 reading levels* – from beginning to autonomous reader

- age appropriate themes
- age and culturally appropriate social messages
- developmentally appropriate language, vocabulary, font, illustrations (from beginning to autonomous reader)

* adaptation of Fountas and Pinnell scale
Comparison between 2009 and 2012 tender

- **1900%** increase in Kinyarwanda titles
- **340%** increase in English titles
INCREASE ACCESS TO READING MATERIALS

KINYARWANDA TITLES

Number of titles

Levels
INCREASE ACCESS TO READING MATERIALS

KINYARWANDA TITLES

Number of titles

Levels

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21
INCREASE ACCESS TO READING MATERIALS

ENGLISH TITLES

Number of titles

Levels

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21
INCREASE ACCESS TO READING MATERIALS

ENGLISH TITLES

Number of titles

Levels

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21
Sufficient titles to

• build grade specific classroom library collections (library in a box)

• Introduce school-wide recreational reading materials (« Drop everything & read »)

• Implement home-school reading programs
Purpose: Creating a bank of age and context appropriate stories for primary classrooms
• 3 writer’s workshops since April 2012
• Over 70 story books authored
• **Next step**: Establish public-private partnership to publish stories and get them into schools
Parternship with the Equity Bank (Aug 2012) to

- Sponsor two competitions per year
- Publish annual anthologies of winning entries and distribute them to primary schools across the country
INCREASING ACCESS TO READING MATERIALS – MOBILE LIBRARIES

• Launch 11 mobile libraries in October 2012 in rural, hard to reach areas (Partnership with Peace Corps)

• Each mobile library has 1200+ titles and serves 2 to 3 communities

• Plan to expand to 80 mobile libraries by 2016.
1. Improve reading skills
2. Increase access to reading materials
3. Transform reading attitudes and habits
3: TRANSFORM READING ATTITUDES AND HABITS

✓ Communicate to parents and communities the critical role they play in supporting children’s reading

✓ Build popular interest and excitement around reading via

   • School reading competitions nationwide (First Lady)
   • “Drop everything and read program”
   • Home-school reading programs
   • Writers’ Workshops
   • Annual national story writing competitions
TRANSFORM READING ATTITUDES AND HABITS - ACTIVITIES TO DATE

✓ Television broadcast of Rwanda Reads documentary, radio broadcast of audio stories

✓ Rwanda Reads radio advertisements & SMS

✓ Posters distributed

✓ Book for parents on importance of reading developed

✓ Book discussion groups held
RWANDA READS OBJECTIVES

Monitoring progress

1. Improve reading skills
2. Increase access to reading materials
3. Transform reading attitudes and habits
MONITORING PROGRESS

National assessments to evaluate comprehension and fluency - P3 and P5

- **2011** – baseline
- **2014** – schools receiving intensive support to improve early grade reading
- **2016** – nation-wide assessment
THANK YOU
A CONCRETE MANIFESTATION OF RWANDA’S COMMITMENT TO BUILDING A CULTURE OF READING... THE NEW KIGALI PUBLIC LIBRARY