



**NATIONAL LITERACY MONTH 2020 REPORT**

*Literacy teaching and learning in the COVID-19 crisis and beyond*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an effort to develop and foster a culture of reading among children and adults in Rwanda, the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) launched Soma Rwanda in 2012 through the Rwanda Education Board (REB), in cooperation with development partners. Soma Rwanda ([www.rwandareads.rw](http://www.rwandareads.rw)) strives to foster synergies among stakeholders by providing a holistic, coordinated platform for information sharing, networking, and promotion of activities and initiatives. By design, Soma Rwanda is not an implementation body itself, but rather a knowledge platform and a coordination forum that brings together many stakeholders with a common purpose – promoting literacy and strengthening the culture of reading throughout Rwanda. Today, Soma Rwanda has over 200 members representing community libraries, the book sector, NGOs and civil society, formal education, MINEDUC, Ministry of Youth and Culture (MYCULTURE), and others.

More than fifty years ago, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) officially proclaimed September 8 International Literacy Day, to mobilize the international community and to promote literacy as an instrument to empower individuals, communities and societies. International Literacy Day is now celebrated worldwide, including in Rwanda. Rwanda's Ministry of Education, with support from the Soma Rwanda Steering Committee, extended the celebration from a single day to the entire month of September. During Rwanda's National Literacy Month, members of Soma Rwanda organize literacy promotion activities throughout the country.

In 2020, a webinar, a social media campaign, and other activities were organized to recognize International Literacy Day on September 8. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, and to avoid overlap with school reopening, the Hon. Minister of State in Charge of Youth and Culture and the Hon. Minister of State in Charge of Primary and Secondary Education launched National Literacy Month on September 21st in a TV and radio talk show; the virtual launch also featured the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC).

Throughout the month, members of Soma Rwanda organized literacy promotion activities including writing competitions, read aloud challenges, literacy events, literacy talk shows through local TV and radio stations, and the launch of a community library. In collaboration with MYCULTURE and MINEDUC, Soma Rwanda organized a virtual National Literacy Month closing event on October 21.

The 2020 National Literacy Month celebration was a component of Rwanda's National Reading Campaign that was launched in February 2020. The National Reading Campaign targets the following outcomes:

## NATIONAL READING CAMPAIGN OUTCOMES:

### OUTCOME 1: **Children**

Children, including those with disabilities, read for at least 15 minutes outside of school every day, and ask parents and siblings to read with them and listen to them reading.

1

### OUTCOME 2: **Parents**

Parents, both illiterate and literate, are engaged in literacy activities, at home, in the community and at school. Parents are sending their children to school at the right age, on time, for a full day.

2

### OUTCOME 3: **Teachers**

Teachers are making time in class for effective reading, are following teachers' guides, encouraging children to take books home, and are assessing children's learning, and sharing the results.

3

### OUTCOME 4: **School Leaders**

School leaders allocate resources for EGR\*, are supporting and monitoring teachers, are promoting EGR across the school and community, are focused on improving results.

4

### OUTCOME 12: **High-level leaders**

The high-level leaders are giving their personal commitment to promoting EGR.

12

**All children reading at early grade to the required benchmarks is a national and urgent priority addressed at every level.**

### OUTCOME 5: **School General Assembly Committees**

SGAC members are promoting EGR as a priority in school, and engaging parents and the community to improve reading

5

### OUTCOME 11: **The Media**

The media understands the importance of Early Grade Reading and is incentivized to put a positive vision of literacy on the agenda, including extensive coverage.

11

### OUTCOME 6: **Sector Education Inspectors**

SEIs are ensuring that head teachers and teachers attend school on time every day, and are in school for the full day.

6

### OUTCOME 10: **Policy Makers**

Policy makers and leaders, both within and beyond the education sector, understand the role of Early Grade Literacy in the creation of a knowledge- based economy and are actively promoting literacy.

10

### OUTCOME 9: **Ministry of Local Government**

MINALOC is using its provincial and district networks to promote EGR and is establishing an Umuganda Literacy initiative.

9

### OUTCOME 8: **Ministry of Education**

School leaders are allocating resources for early grade reading, are supporting and monitoring teachers, promoting EGR across the school and community, are focused on improving results.

8

### OUTCOME 7: **Rwanda Education Board**

REB is supporting school reading and taking measures to ensure the reading benchmarks are understood and met.

7

\*EGR: Early Grade Reading

## SOMA RWANDA OVERVIEW

Initially the Soma Rwanda platform was only called by the English name, Rwanda Reads. In 2019, the Kinyarwanda name, Soma Rwanda, was launched, and the Kinyarwanda version of the logo was created to reflect this update.

By design, Soma Rwanda is a multi-institutional initiative. It is not an implementation body itself, but rather a knowledge platform and a coordination forum bringing various stakeholders in both the public and private sector together under one common purpose—to strengthen efforts to promote a culture of reading throughout Rwanda. Soma Rwanda ([www.rwandareads.rw](http://www.rwandareads.rw)) supports the objectives of the Government of Rwanda’s Vision 2050 by empowering the citizens of Rwanda to independently seek and access print materials. Also aimed at improving literacy and language outcomes among students, Soma Rwanda is fully in line with the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2018/19-2023/24), which outlines priorities and policy actions targeting the acquisition of literacy skills among Rwandan primary and secondary school students. Soma Rwanda seeks to support, facilitate, and promote efforts to create literate citizens of Rwanda, more capable of influencing their own individual achievement, economic growth, and better health - all of which will contribute to the overall development and prosperity of the country. By investing in the readers of today, Soma Rwanda supports the leaders of tomorrow.

## SOMA RWANDA STRUCTURE

According to the Terms of Reference, Soma Rwanda is governed by a Steering Committee chaired by the Honorable Minister of State in Charge of Primary and Secondary Education and co-chaired by the Director of the USAID Education Office, with the support of a Secretariat appointed by the co-chair. Other members of the Steering Committee include 14 senior officials selected from key institutions, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Culture (MYCULTURE), Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), Rwanda Education Board (REB), Higher Education Council (HEC), and development partners. The Steering Committee is supported by the Technical Committee, which is chaired by the Secretariat. There is also a General Assembly which includes all interested stakeholder groups, both public and private; currently there are over 170 member organizations.

Implementation of the 2020 National Literacy Month was coordinated by a Technical Committee comprised of representatives of MINEDUC, MYCULTURE, REB, USAID Soma Umenye, UNICEF, World Vision, Umuhuza, Rwanda Bookmobile, Kigali Public Library, Rwanda Community Library Forum (RCLF), Rwanda Children’s Book Organization (RCBO), Save the Children and USAID Mureke Dusome as the Secretariat. Multiple stakeholders contributed financially to the organization of National Literacy Month. The primary sponsors of National Literacy Month were USAID (through USAID Mureke Dusome and USAID Soma Umenye), the Canada Global Initiative through Right to Play, the French Embassy in Rwanda through Edified Generation Rwanda, Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO (CNRU)/UNESCO, World Vision, Rwanda Bookmobile, Save the Children, MYCULTURE and MINEDUC.

## NATIONAL LITERACY MONTH 2020

### *Themes and Key Messages*

UNESCO’s theme for International Literacy Day 2020 was “Literacy teaching and learning in the COVID-19 crisis and beyond,” with a focus on the role of educators and changing pedagogies. Rwanda’s national theme and key messages drew inspiration from UNESCO’s, while emphasizing the role of parents, teachers and the community in supporting children to learn and read at school, home and in the wider community. Messaging supported the Soma Rwanda National Reading Campaign and the parents’ awareness-raising strategies.

To complement this broad theme, key messages were identified for each week:

- **September 21 - 27 (Week 1)**
  - *English: Keep your brain fresh; read a book.*
  - *Kinyarwanda: Soma igitabo, bituma ubwenge buhora bukungutse.*
  - *French: Faites la lecture pour garder votre cerveau éveillé.*
- **September 28 - October 4 (Week 2)**
  - *English: Protect children's future; keep them safe and learning.*
  - *Kinyarwanda: Rinda ahazaza h'umwana umubungabunga, ndetse umufasha guhora yiga.*
  - *French: Protegez l'avenir des enfants en vous rassurant de leur sauvegarde et leur apprentissage.*
- **October 5 - 11 (Week 3)**
  - *English: Lifelong learning starts at home; parents; make reading and learning a daily habit.*
  - *Kinyarwanda: Babyeyi, gusoma no kwiga mubhindure akamenyero (ka buri muni), kuko kwiga ni uguhozaho kandi bigatangirira mu rugo.*
  - *French: Chers parents, faites de la lecture et de l'apprentissage une habitude journalière; car, c'est à la maison que commence l'apprentissage à vie.*
- **October 12 - 18 (Week 4)**
  - *English: All children can read; create an equitable learning environment.*
  - *Kinyarwanda: Abana bose bashobora gusoma, bityo bahe bese amahirwe angana yo kubona aho bigira hakwiriye.*
  - *French: Tous les enfants ont la capacité de lire, procurez-leur un environnement equitable pour l'apprentissage.*

### **International Literacy Day Virtual Celebration**

Events were organized to recognize International Literacy Day on Tuesday, September 8, to set the tone for a month of reading and promotion of literacy messages. A social media campaign, webinar, and radio talk show were organized:

#### **Webinar**

A webinar was organized targeting Soma Rwanda members, districts, and sector officials, school leaders, and opinion leaders with the theme, "Keep your brain fresh, read a book!" to communicate plans for National Literacy Month and the National Reading Campaign. MINEDUC collaborated with MINALOC to invite local administrators to the webinar.

Leading up to the webinar, the Soma Rwanda Secretariat collaborated with MINEDUC to send instructions to education officials at district and sector levels on how they can get involved and can sensitize parents on how they can continue to support their children to read and learn at home.

The webinar consisted of:

- Opening remarks by the Hon. Minister of State in Charge of Primary and Secondary Education, who specifically urged participants to actively get involved in the upcoming National Literacy Month activities and to ensure that parents have enough information on how they can support their children to read and learn at home;
- Remote learning activities conducted by Soma Rwanda members as a response to COVID-19, including plans to ensure that no child is left behind;
- Discussion of the role of the local administrators during the National Literacy Month celebration;
- Overview of literacy promotion activities in 2020;
- A summary of the National Reading Campaign and the Parents' Awareness-Raising Campaign;
- Discussion of the role of the book industry to advance a culture of reading; and
- Closing remarks by the USAID Mission Director.

More than 150 members of Soma Rwanda participated in the virtual celebration of International Literacy

Day, including representatives of MINEDUC, MYCULTURE, MINALOC, REB, Head Teachers, DDEs, DEOs, SEOs, community libraries, publishers and booksellers, development partners, local and international NGOs, and other partners that have an interest in creating a strong culture of reading.

### **Radio Talk Show**

To inform the wider public about the International Literacy Day celebration and plans for National Literacy Month, literacy topics were adapted for a radio talk show at Radio Rwanda in the afternoon on September 8. The program targeted the wider public to communicate plans for National Literacy Month, including the role of parents to ensure that children continue to read and to learn at home, as well as challenges and proposed solutions, based on the National Reading Campaign and Parents' Awareness-Raising Campaign. The guest speaker on the show was the REB Director General.

### **National Literacy Month Virtual Launch**

On Monday September 21, in a TV and radio talk show that was broadcast on Rwanda Television, Radio Rwanda and affiliated community radio stations, and on the Rwanda Broadcasting Agency (RBA) Twitter account, the Hon. Minister of State in Charge of Youth and Culture virtually launched National Literacy Month, together with the Hon. Minister of State in Charge of Primary and Secondary Education, and with participation by the Permanent Secretary of MINALOC. The show can be viewed at the following link: [Dusangire Ijambo: Ukwezi ko Gusoma no Kwandika](#).

The following are key highlights of the launch:

- Welcome remarks were delivered by the Permanent Secretary of MINALOC, who also talked about the role of local administration to advance literacy in general, MINALOC's commitment to ensure that the COVID-19 response included messages to advance literacy while children are staying at home, and the role of local administration to ensure that the community has adequate information to support children to read and learn at home;
- The remarks of the Minister of State in Charge of Primary and Secondary Education focused on:
  - The National Literacy Month weekly themes, key messages, and activities, and plans for the closing event and other key activities throughout the month, including the Read Aloud Challenge, read aloud sessions, a media campaign, writing competitions, community library events and literacy promotion events at the community level;
  - Responsibilities of families for learning and reading at home, including what has been achieved so far by the remote learning program, and emphasizing the role of parents to ensure that each child knows the TV and radio lesson schedules and that he/she is ready to participate at the time of the lesson with a notebook and a pen, does exercises, and completes homework, as directed by teachers;
- Overview of the Soma Rwanda Parents Awareness-Raising Campaign and National Reading Campaign. The following were key talking points:
  - The Ministry of Education led Soma Rwanda members to launch the National Reading Campaign in February 2020, which aims at ensuring that children have access to reading materials in schools, home, and the community. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, as part of this campaign, literacy promotion activities were organized in the community, including the celebration of International Mother Language Day. The campaign sensitized parents, teachers, and the community to support their children to read in schools, at home and in the community, by supporting their children's participation in various literacy promotion activities;
- Remarks on learning and inclusion by the National Union of Disability Organizations of Rwanda (NUDOR) representative, who talked about the general status of learning and especially learning from home for children with special education needs. Challenges were also identified, including

that braille books are rare, inaccessible, and expensive in Rwanda, thus making it difficult for some children with disabilities to access reading materials;

- The keynote address and official launch of National Literacy Month was given by the Hon. Minister of State in Charge of Youth and Culture, outlining the writing competitions organized by MYCULTURE, MINEDUC, and Edified Generation Rwanda.

## MEMBERS' NATIONAL LITERACY MONTH ACTIVITIES

Soma Rwanda members hosted literacy promotion activities and delivered literacy messages through local radio stations from September 21 to October 21, 2020, including the following:<sup>1</sup>

- Inclusion and literacy promotion in Ngororero District;
- A webinar on disability inclusion organized by Rwanda Education Board, with support of USAID Soma Umenye, UNICEF, and Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs)
- Literacy Competitions;
- Literacy Champions and Community Education Workers book lending to families
- Engagement of faith-based organizations (FBOs) to share key literacy messages and organize reading activities for children;
- From October 5-30, 2020, youth volunteers used a mobile literacy approach to meet with children twice a week in their homes, moving from house to house to respect and follow the advice of the Ministry of Health to prevent the spread of COVID-19 through social distancing;
- TV and radio talk show on literacy topics with senior MINEDUC, REB and MYCULTURE officials;
- Public service announcements and literacy messaging through radio, social media and SMS;
- The launch of a community library in Kirehe district by USAID Mureke Dusome Activity
- Media engagement throughout the month highlighting literacy events taking place.

National Literacy Month weekly highlights are reported below.

### Week 1 (September 21- 27)

*Weekly theme: Keep your brain fresh; read a book/Soma igitabo, bituma ubwenge buhora bukangutse.*

#### **Read Aloud Sessions**

Sunzu Yacu Community Library (in Kinoni Sector, Burera District) initiated various activities as part of National Literacy Month, including:

- Reading Kinyarwanda stories for young kids from Nyagatoki, Sunzu and Kigina villages at their homes. In order to respect the measures required to prevent COVID-19, the program was done in small groups of 3 to 5 students in order to maintain social distancing;
- Encouraging parents from the villages surrounding the Sunzu Yacu library to turn on radios for children to follow the Rwanda Bookmobile program of reading stories for the kids through radios and social media;
- Lending books to people from the surrounding villages and encouraging parents to borrow books;
- Promoting e-reading;
- Encouraging community children to join a writing competition and send their writings to the sector office; and
- Visiting people and evaluating the changes that took place in the community and attitudes about the reading culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Soma Rwanda is dependent on members to conduct and report their activities; therefore, this list may underrepresent the literacy activities conducted during the month. To facilitate organization and reporting of member-led activities, the Soma Rwanda Secretariat communicated to members through the official Soma Rwanda email and liaised between different members.

### Week 2 (September 28 – October 4)

Weekly theme: *Protect children’s future; keep them safe and learning/Rinda ahazaza h’umwana umubungabunga, ndetse umufasha guhora yiga.*

#### Read Aloud Challenge



The Read Aloud Challenge was launched on September 21 by the [Hon. Minister of State in Charge of Primary and Secondary Education](#). Participants included the [Minister of Sports](#), [Minister of ICT & Innovation](#), [US Ambassador to Rwanda](#), the [Minister of State in Charge of Youth and Culture](#), [Former DG REB](#), [DG Education and Policy and Planning](#), [PS MINALOC](#), and the [PS of Ministry of](#)

[Sports](#) and more!

### Week 3 (October 5 – 11)

Weekly theme: *Lifelong learning starts at home; parents, make reading and learning a daily habit/Babyeyi, gusoma no kwiga mubihindure akamenyero (ka buri munsu), kuko kwiga ni uguhozaho kandi bigatangirira mu rugo.*

#### Community Outreach



- In Rwinkwavu Sector, Kayonza District, literacy messages were broadcast from a car moving through the community;
- 225 “Ready For Reading” Literacy Ambassadors disseminated literacy messages to households;
- 44 community leaders from Kayonza District were also engaged to disseminate literacy messages.
- Community librarians across the country were trained with support from Kigali Public Library, Save the Children (USAID Mureke Dusome and Reading Ready projects), and Umuhuza.

National Literacy Month banners were put on display in Kigali and districts (by USAID Soma Umenye and National Commission for UNESCO)



### Week 4 (October 12 – 18)

Weekly theme: *All children can read, create equitable learning environment/Abana bose bashobora gusoma, bityo bahe bose amahirwe angana yo kubona aho bigira hakwiriye.*

## Community Libraries

### *Launch of Community Libraries*



USAID Mureke Dusome, Save the Children, Umuhuza, KPL, NIC, & districts committed to establish and equip one community library in each of the following four provinces: Burera District (Northern Province), Kirehe District (Eastern Province), Ngororero District (Western Province), Ruhango District (Southern Province). Each community library will be

provided with books, bookshelves, mats, chairs, and computers. The library in Kirehe District opened on October 21.

During National Literacy Month, the Vision Nouvelle Library in Rubavu District encouraged children to read and borrow books through home visits. In addition, 100 girls from Rubona Cell in Nyamyumba Sector were trained and they made a saving group that helped them buy schools kits.

### *Training for Community Librarians*

From September 2 to October 15, 2020, KPL, in partnership with Save the Children Rwanda and Umuhuza under the Reading Ready Project and the USAID Mureke Dusome project, organized a training for Community librarians/volunteers in the framework of capacity building and skills development. The major objective of this training was to provide capacity building for the Community Librarians in terms of effective library management. Community librarians/volunteers from 62 community libraries in Kigali City, Northern Province, Eastern Province, Western Province and Southern Province participated.

From September 30 to October 2, 2020, Kamonyi Public Library, in partnership with Global Civic Sharing Rwanda under the funds of Samsung Dream Scholarship Foundation, organized a librarian and youth volunteer training workshop with objectives of learning more about library management, cataloguing, classification, educational programs and children's rights.

### *Making Reading Materials Available*

During the COVID-19 lockdown, the Kamonyi Public Library adopted a mobile library model, from May 25<sup>th</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, to facilitate children to get books for reading at home. Then from July 4<sup>th</sup> to August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020, they loaned 2,135 books; at least 781 children were served, including 443 boys and 338 girls.

In July 2020, Agati Library launched a pilot project in Musanze that involved recording children reading selected library books for radio broadcast, followed by a phone-in Q&A. The project concept was called "Nge Nawe Dusome," which roughly translates as "Read with Me." For National Literacy Month, Agati Library recorded and edited audio pieces about various stories. They broadcast radio shows every week, and 12 stories were read followed by a live Q&A. Children submitted original stories via phone calls on the radio and by bringing their manuscripts to Agati library, and they were proofread and edited at the library.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, some community libraries did not hold planned events as part of the National Literacy Month celebration, while others were able to modify their plans. Hewitt Community Library, located in Kayonza District, Gahini Sector, gave 20 storybooks to parents so that they could read for their children while they were home. It also formed a group of 20 parents to sensitize others through the radio about supporting their children to read during the period of learning from home.

## Disability Inclusion Events

### Webinar



Rwanda Education Board, with support of USAID Soma Umenye, UNICEF, and Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs), hosted a live webinar event on literacy for students with disabilities on October 19, 2020. The event celebrated recent successes in increasing access to literacy materials for students with disabilities, and discussed commitments to further this work.

Both UNICEF and USAID Soma Umenye unveiled new accessible digital literacy materials, developed in partnership with eKitabu, REB, and Rwanda National Union of the Deaf (RNUD). These materials include REB’s first accessible digital textbook for Primary I English, and 54 accessible digital Kinyarwanda readers for P1 to P3 students. The accessible materials include audio, visual, and print components, including Rwandan Sign Language, and a glossary for further learning.



The National Literacy Month Inclusion webinar gathered more than 30 participants to discuss improving access to literacy materials for children with disabilities. The Executive Director of RNUD, Samuel Munana, discussed the importance of the new accessible digital literacy materials. Donatilla Kanimba, Executive Director of the Rwanda Union of the Blind (RUB), emphasized the importance of every child being able to access books and read in a way that suits them. She called for increased support to expand access and support in this area. This request was affirmed by Augustin Gatera of REB, who noted the great achievements being made to increase quality education for all children, and committed to ensuring the materials are made widely available.

The webinar was hosted by Rwanda Education Board, and included presentations by UNICEF and USAID Soma Umenye, both in collaboration with eKitabu. Rwanda Union of the Blind and Rwanda Union of the Deaf, with the National Union of Disability Organizations in Rwanda, served as moderator, provided additional remarks.

### Inclusion and Literacy Promotion in the Community

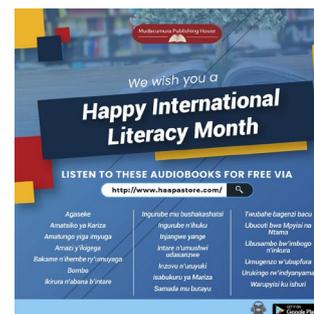
Save the Children, USAID Mureke Dusome, Uwezo, VSO, and BLF organized a community event in Nyange Sector, Ngororero District on Oct 20, 2020. Local officials, parents, children with disabilities, development partners, and Soma Rwanda members celebrated the National Literacy Month week four theme: “All children, with and without disabilities, can read; create an equitable learning environment.” Save the Children under its Schools For Change project gifted 800 storybooks to families of children with disabilities. Free audiobooks were also made available during National Literacy Month at <https://www.haapastore.com>.



## Writing Competitions

### RALSA & partners story writing competitions

Since 2017, the Rwanda Archive and Library Services Authority (RALSA) and its host Ministry have conducted writing competitions in collaboration with different partners. Up to now, local publishers in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Culture (MYCULTURE) have published 31 titles containing the winning entries.



This year, the writing competition became the joint activity of MYCULTURE, MINEDUC, MINALOC and REB, in partnership with different partners including Edified Generation Rwanda, the German Embassy, French Embassy, RUB, NCPD and NUDOR. The competition was planned from September 21 to October 19, 2020, and announcement of the 30 top winners was planned for October 21, 2020, during the closing ceremony of National Literacy Month. Due to the small number of short stories submitted to the sectors, districts and to MYCULTURE during the pandemic, the submission period was extended to November 1, 2020.

The following are the initial participation rates in the 2020 competition led by Edified Generation Rwanda:

- 40 short stories were submitted, rather than the 416 (1/Sector) expected (9.61% of expected),
- 341 short stories were submitted, rather than the 2080 (5/Sector) expected (16.40 % of expected)
- Sector participation in writing competitions:  $135/416 = 32.45\%$
- District participation in writing competitions:  $23/30 = 76.66\%$

Below is the plan for finalizing these competitions:

- The writing competition schedule was extended until November 1<sup>st</sup> as a date of submission at sector level by S4, 5 and 6 students. The sector had to do screening and send one story to the district level.
- The selected stories at sector level should be submitted to district level on November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020.
- The district to submit the stories through a link to MYCULTURE on November 6<sup>th</sup> 2020. MYCULTURE is expecting to receive 416 stories from 30 districts (one per sector).
- MYCULTURE to organize a workshop with Publishers, MINEDUC, REB and Edified generation Representatives to screen stories and select the 30 best stories in the week of November 16<sup>th</sup>
- MYCULTURE and MINEDUC to publish results on its website at the end of November 2020
- MYCULTURE and MINEDUC to award winners in April 2021 during holidays.

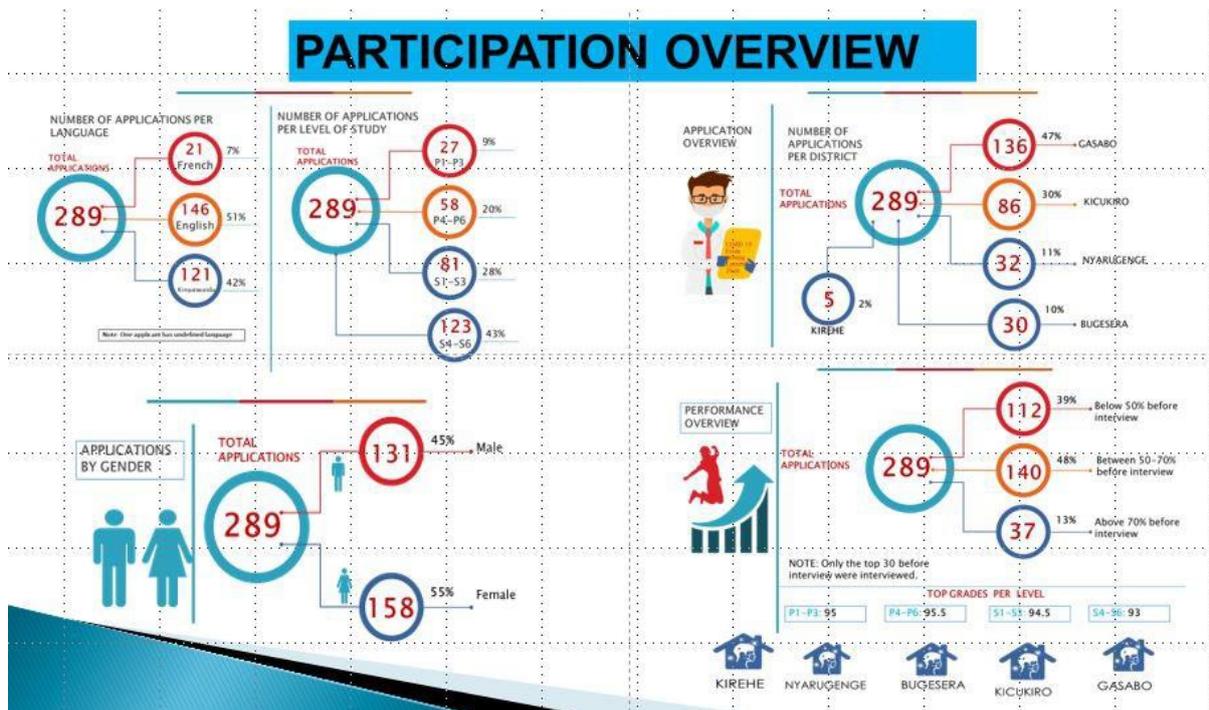
### **Umuhuza, GREAT, and Right to Play's story writing competition**

Umuhuza held reading festivals in the districts of Bugesera, Kayonza and Ruhango on October 21<sup>st</sup>, organized under the GREAT Project, and implemented in partnership with Right to Play. Community members, including literacy volunteers, parents, and children, had been encouraged to write stories and make books using locally available resources. The stories that were written by children, parents and volunteers were evaluated by Umuhuza staff in collaboration with education officers and community representatives, and the best performers were awarded at the closing of the National Literacy Month

### **COVID-19 Essay Competition**

In recognition of National Literacy Month 2020, Edified Generation Rwanda conducted essay writing competitions about COVID-19 in Gasabo, Kicukiro, Nyarugenge, Bugesera and Kirehe Districts, to encourage children to develop good writing and reading skills and continuously improve their skills during the period when they were learning from home.

The Edified Generation Rwanda COVID-19 essay writing contest 2020 was officially launched on July 17, 2020, and it officially closed on August 24, 2020. In the response to COVID-19, the competitors applied through an online platform. In total, 289 applications were submitted from different levels of classes from the five districts, including 136 applicants from Gasabo District, 86 applicants in Kicukiro District, 32 applicants in Nyarugenge District, 30 applicants in Bugesera Districts and 5 applicants from Kirehe Districts. 131 of all applicants were boys and 158 were girls. 146 essays were written in English, 21 in French, and 121 in Kinyarwanda.



On September 7, 2020, the grading phase was led by Rwanda Academy of Language and Culture (RALC), and to insure fairness all submissions were coded during the grading period and decoded during the deliberation. The top 30 most outstanding essays and stories were selected. The contest results were officially published on September 18, 2020, and the 30 winners' works were given to RALSA to coordinate with the authors and publishing houses for publication in a book which will be a bank of memories and experiences from the COVID-19 lockdown period. The book will be made available to the partners, Ministries and relevant institutions, as well as book shops and libraries. On October 21, 2020, the winners were officially announced during the virtual closing of National Literacy Month organized by MINEDUC and Soma Rwanda members. Prizes for winners included scholastic materials, laptops, certificates of participation and school fees. This program was implemented with joint support from the French Embassy in Rwanda, the Ministry of Youth and Culture, Rwanda Education Board, Save the Children, USAID Mureke Dusome, Harambee, UNESCO, National Commission for UNESCO, the City of Kigali and an individual donor, Mr. Kozelj Rok, who works with the European Union as an administrator in the Directorate-General for External Policies.

### Media campaign

- Every Saturday at 3:00 PM, children followed the Reading Radio Program through HUGUKA Radio 105.9 FM;
- USAID Soma Umenye organized a radio talk show on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020, which focused on the role of parents and communities in supporting all children to read. During the talk show, they were joined by the Vice Mayor for Social Affairs for Rwamagana District, Mrs. Umutoni Jeanne, who affirmed that when children learn to read, they are better equipped to support their family, community, and country. The talk show increased parental awareness of National Literacy Month and the Reading Campaign, encouraging everyone to participate. It further helped parents understand that reading with their child is the best way to help them develop literacy skills and improve learning outcomes, and that parents should take an active interest in their child's reading and learning at home, finding available reading materials, and reading with and to their child for at least 15 minutes each day;
- The Rwanda Bookmobile Initiative, USAID Soma Umenye, Save the Children, and USAID Mureke Dusome collaborated to air Public Service Announcements featuring literacy messages on Radio Rwanda, Radio Energy, KT Radio, Flash M, Ishingiro, Isangano, and Izuba community radio stations;

- MINEDUC, Right to Play, World Vision, USAID Soma Umenye, USAID Mureke Dusome, and Save the Children collaborated to organize a talk show with literacy testimonies, which was aired on RTV, Radio Rwanda, and Flash FM;
- The Rwanda Bookmobile Initiative and Edition Bakame aired read aloud sessions on RTV, Radio Rwanda, and Radio Maria;
- Soma Rwanda members shared literacy messages through Twitter & Facebook;
- During National Literacy Month, Save the Children continued to coordinate a parents' awareness raising campaign using radio, TV, and social media. Parents and children gave testimonies about literacy promotion. [One of these programs is posted at this link](#);
- The Secretariat reached out to Soma Rwanda members to track and publicize events. The full calendar of events was posted on the Soma Rwanda website, [www.rwandareads.rw](http://www.rwandareads.rw);
- Local media houses produced five stories publicizing National Literacy Month activities, including three online and two radio news stories covering an inclusion and literacy promotion event that took place in Ngororero District. Details and links are listed as an annex of this report.



## NATIONAL LITERACY MONTH CLOSING CEREMONY

The virtual closing of National Literacy Month took place on October 21, 2020. The event recognized literacy promotion activities that took place throughout the month and talked about the back to school measures. 45 participants from Soma Rwanda and the local community attended the National Literacy Month Closing Ceremony, including representatives of MINEDUC, USAID, USAID Soma Umenye, USAID Mureke Dusome, Save the Children, BLF, World Vision, Ready for Reading, the French and Germany Embassies and MYCULTURE. The representative from MINEDUC in his opening remarks commended the great achievements in promoting literacy in Rwanda and appreciated the contributions of different partners and added that the National Literacy Policy is in the approval process. The closing ceremony featured pre-recorded videos of children and senior officials who participated in read aloud sessions. The USAID Director, Education Office (the Co-chair of Soma Rwanda), in her closing remarks, thanked all partners who participated in National Literacy Month events and encouraged all partners to keep up the momentum.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Soma Rwanda platform aims to promote a culture of reading through sustained interventions by multiple stakeholders, reaching Rwandans in rural and urban areas, as well as children, youth and adults. Despite COVID-19 challenges, National Literacy Month 2020 supported a successful parents' awareness campaign as well as local literacy promotion activities.

The following recommendations are strategies to build on the momentum and excitement about the promotion of literacy and to strengthen the ability of Soma Rwanda to fulfil its objectives.

### **Recommendation #1: Start NLM planning and fundraising at the start of 2021**

The Soma Rwanda Technical Committee should meet at the beginning of January to develop plans for literacy promotion activities throughout the year, including plans for National Literacy Month. The first meeting of the Soma Rwanda Steering Committee should be held in January or early February to review the 2021 plans developed by the Technical Committee and provide strategic guidance.

**Recommendation #2: Strengthen planning for budget support**

Overall planning for literacy promotion in 2021 should include, from the outset, planning for how to cover the budget for National Literacy Month activities. Specifying responsible parties, procurement procedures, and logistics as a component of planning from the beginning of the year will allow time to strategically solicit more sponsorship and ensure plans are funded.

**Recommendation #3: Strengthen the Soma Rwanda Task Force as a permanent event-planning subcommittee reporting to the Soma Rwanda Technical Committee**

The Soma Rwanda Technical Committee establishes a permanent Task Force (or technical subcommittee) consisting of event planners and communications professionals from MINEDUC, MYCULTURE, MINALOC, REB, UNICEF, RCBO, the Secretariat, USAID Soma Umenye, World Vision, and other leading partners.

## ANNEXES

## Media Coverage

No	Event	Organization	When	Media House	Language	Format	Link
1	<i>Inclusion</i>	SCI	20/10/2020	Top Africa	Kinyarwanda	Article	<a href="http://topafricanews.rw/2020/10/21/ngororero-ababyeyi-barasabwa-kutavangura-mu-guha-abana-amahirwe-yo-kumenya-gusoma-no-kwandika/">http://topafricanews.rw/2020/10/21/ngororero-ababyeyi-barasabwa-kutavangura-mu-guha-abana-amahirwe-yo-kumenya-gusoma-no-kwandika/</a>
2	<i>Inclusion</i>	SCI	20/10/2020	Top Africa	Kinyarwanda	Article	<a href="https://www.topafricanews.com/2020/10/22/ngororero-parents-urged-not-to-discriminate-children-with-disabilities-as-reading-month-closes/">https://www.topafricanews.com/2020/10/22/ngororero-parents-urged-not-to-discriminate-children-with-disabilities-as-reading-month-closes/</a>
3	<i>Inclusion</i>	SCI	20/10/2020	Rwanda Inspirer	Kinyarwanda	Article	<a href="http://rwandainspirer.com/2020/10/21/activists-call-for-inclusive-rights-to-education/">http://rwandainspirer.com/2020/10/21/activists-call-for-inclusive-rights-to-education/</a>
4	<i>Inclusion</i>	SCI	21/10/2020	Radio Huguka	Kinyarwanda	Radio report	<i>It was aired on October 21, 2020 at 17:30</i>
5	<i>Inclusion</i>	SCI	21/10/2020	Radio Salus	Kinyarwanda	Radio report	<i>It was aired on October 21, 2020 at 18:00</i>

## Budget

Category	Item	Price per unit	Quantity	Total Cost RWF	Sponsor Name	Amount
<b>Media and Branding</b>	Road Banner (4x1.5m) (3 Kinyarwanda, 2 English)	24000	5	120,000	<b>Right to play</b>	<b>5,757,709</b>
	Pull up Banners (4 Kinyarwanda, 2 English)	82000	6	492,000		
	Radio talk show at RBA Number 2	2,356,460	1	2,356,460		
	TV Talk show at RBA Number	2,789,249	1	2,789,249		
	Tear drops (6 Kinyarwanda, 4 English)	105000	10	1,050,000	<b>USAID Soma Umenye</b>	<b>3,170,000</b>
	NLM generic banners (4x1.5m) (Kinyarwanda)	32,000	5	160,000		
	NLM generic banners (4x1.5m) (English)	32,000	5	160,000		
	NLM PSA at KT Radio	20,000	30	600,000		
	NLM PSA at Flash FM	20,000	30	600,000		
	NLM PSA at Radio Energy	20,000	30	600,000		
	Radio talk show at RBA Number 1	2,356,460	1	2,356,460	<b>Save the Children</b> (USAID Mureke Dusome, Advancing School Readiness and School for Change Projects)	<b>9,466,460</b>
	NLM PSA at Radio Izuba	24,000	30	720,000		
	Online livestreaming of NLM	2,950,000	1	2,950,000		
	NLM PSA at Isangano	24,000	30	720,000		
	Kinyarwanda Story Books to gift families of CWDs	2500	800	2,000,000		
	Airing NLM celebration on 5 RBA affiliated community radio stations	2,500,000	1	2,500,000	<b>World Vision</b>	<b>2,500,000</b>
NLM PSA (air time Radio Rwanda)	51,000	15	765,000	<b>Rwanda Bookmobile</b>	<b>765,000</b>	
T-shirts and banners	1,000,000	1	1,000,000	<b>UNESCO</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>22,659,169</b>		<b>22,659,169</b>