



“More children reading more and better books”

THE SITUATION FOR CHILDREN IN RWANDA

While more children are in school today in Rwanda than ever before, many are struggling to learn to read. Recent evidence showed that students are struggling to read. An underlying factor is that there are not enough good quality and age-appropriate Kinyarwanda books in schools and across the country to support children to improve their reading skills. This ‘children’s book gap’ is due to a variety of reasons: low demand and a lack of a ‘culture of reading’ in the country, the absence of local, high-quality, age-appropriate children’s books printed in Kinyarwanda, and very limited distribution of books outside of Kigali.

Numerous learning assessments have proven that the accessibility of high quality reading materials is critical to children acquiring basic literacy skills, and is directly associated with higher student performance. Hence, addressing the ‘children’s book gap’ and creating a culture of reading is becoming increasingly important to ensure that children in Rwanda not only have access to education but also can acquire the skills needed to excel and transition to the next grade.



PROJECT AIM

The vision of Save the Children’s Rwandan Children’s Book Initiative (RCBI) is to get ‘more children reading more and better books’. Part of our ‘Advancing the Right to Read’ programme, the project ultimately aims to improve literacy acquisition and learning outcomes in Rwanda, The initiative is doing this by:

- 1) Supporting local publishers and suppliers to the book industry to improve the quality of age appropriate, local language children’s books;
- 2) Stimulating and guaranteeing demand for quality children’s reading materials;

- 3) Distributing materials to schools and supporting schools leaders and teachers to establish book collections and use reading materials effectively in support of literacy and learning outcomes.

MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH

Most attempts to address the lack of reading material or improve their quality are narrow interventions that involve producing material for direct distribution. Save the Children promotes a unique, whole-system approach, which will address the book gap by intervening at every stage of the local book chain; going beyond the provision of reading materials to immediate beneficiaries to develop an entire, self-sustainable market and industry for good quality, non-textbook, children's reading materials, in addition to ensuring that books provided to schools are managed and used effectively.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Training and support to local and regional publishers to produce high quality, age appropriate, local language children's reading material;
- Working with the Rwanda Education Board (REB) to apply set criteria for approval of high-quality reading materials;
- Stimulating supply and demand for reading materials by agreeing to purchase new books, encouraging publishers to produce more than Save the Children will buy and providing linkages between the publishers and other agencies to help create more demand;
- Creating classroom libraries by providing reading materials, bookshelves and reading mats to the P1-P3 classrooms of all primary schools in Burera District;
- Providing in-service training to all P1-P3 Kinyarwanda teachers, head teachers and education officials in Burera District on the effective use and management of books;
- Delivering pre-service training of teachers at teacher training colleges on the use of storybooks in classrooms;
- Engaging with Parent-Teacher Committees (PTCs) in order to inform about the importance of reading and to promote acquisition of new books in schools.

The work of RCBI is also complementing other projects within Save the Children's 'Advancing the Right to Read' programme, helping to strengthen the culture of reading in Rwanda and stimulate demand for quality books and reading materials.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- 1) Publishers, authors and illustrators will have the knowledge, skills and confidence to produce high quality children's books in Kinyarwanda;
- 2) Demand for quality children's books will be established and sustained and a range of mechanisms will be in place that will stimulate demand in the future;
- 3) Teachers will have the knowledge, skills and confidence to manage school book collections and use books to support reading and learning and children will have better literacy skills.