

EARLY LITERACY PROMOTION IN RWANDA: OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES

BASED ON A STUDY CONDUCTED FOR SAVE THE CHILDREN
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OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rwanda has achieved remarkable progress in expanding access to schooling, but there are still significant challenges to address—including the question of **how to ensure that all children learn to read**. A recent study found that only 32% of Primary 6 students had attained minimum levels of reading fluency.¹ Reading comprehension is also a problem, with 40% of Primary 4 students unable to correctly answer questions about simple texts.² Yet basic literacy represents a necessary foundation for learning—this issue must be addressed if Rwanda is to reap the benefits of its significant investments in education.

How can Rwandan institutions and development partners support continued progress in the area of early literacy? This report analyses the policy and institutional context surrounding the promotion of early literacy in Rwanda, from birth to age nine. The following pages discuss Rwanda's strengths in this area, and the gaps and weaknesses that may need to be addressed for further achievements to be made. This research is presented as an outreach and advocacy effort, sponsored by Save the Children's signature programme *Advancing the Right to Read*.

The research for this report was conducted in March and April of 2014, with some updates in early May; due to the fast-changing nature of Rwanda's policy context, this should be considered a time-sensitive document with possible need for future updates.

RESEARCH PURPOSES AND METHODS

Part I of this report introduces this study's purposes and research methods, conducted under the approach known as "political economy analysis". A political economy analysis is a type of background study that assists in understanding the full range of social, economic, and institutional factors that can influence particular policies and programmes. This approach has become well-established in development literature, and can be used both for broad international and national-level studies, as well as analyses related to particular development sectors and programmes.

There are three core purposes for this analysis of early literacy promotion in Rwanda: (1) provide a comprehensive background on the historical and current policy context; (2) analyse the institutional context, key stakeholders, and structural issues of incentives and authority; and (3) assess

¹ Joseph DeStefano et al., "Early Grade Reading and Mathematics in Rwanda: Final Report," (Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI International, 2012), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 4.

opportunities and potential barriers to early literacy promotion at the community, school, sector, district, and national levels. Each section of this report addresses one of these issues in turn.

The information presented in this report was collected through both a desk review of policies and research studies, and through in-person interviews. Interviewees included representatives of development partners and national government agencies; District Education Officers; Sector Education Officers; Cellule authorities and Head Teachers. This report draws on a total of 55 formal interviews at the national, district, sector, cellule, and school levels, with the addition of 18 informal fact-checking interviews with teachers and local residents.

HISTORICAL & CURRENT POLICY CONTEXT

Part II of this report focuses on the historical and current policy context surrounding early literacy in Rwanda. Some of the major findings of this policy analysis include the following:

Historical Influences on Early Literacy

- Rwanda's formal education system has been strongly influenced by a historical legacy that responded to popular interest in learning to read through schooling, and yet also downplayed or actively restricted independent access to reading materials at a higher level of literacy.
- Major institutional changes in the education sector since the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi have greatly increased equity and access within the education system, yet so far little has changed in terms of the pedagogy being used in schools.

Current National Policy Context

- Current policies exhibit strong political will to expand educational opportunities both to the youngest children and to youth—however, projected budget expansions are currently targeted towards the secondary school years rather than the 0-6 age range.
- There is also a strong shift towards focusing on education **quality** issues in current policy documents, but **access** continues to take priority for the moment in terms of detailed strategizing and the use of Rwanda's limited available budget.
- Literacy promotion has arisen as a definite focus of policy-making; yet the specific strategies for achieving this objective are not completely thought-out.

Upcoming Policies and Programmes

- A number of policies and programmes on the horizon represent opportunities for further promoting the development of early literacy skills and child-friendly literacy environments.
- The national curriculum revision process, possible upcoming changes in the in-service teacher training system, openings in the area of parenting education, and initiatives in the publishing sector all represent particular upcoming opportunities for influencing early literacy policy and practice.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Part III of this report focuses on the institutional context and key stakeholders interacting with early literacy promotion in Rwanda. Some of the major findings of this institutional analysis include the following:

Principal Actors in Early Literacy

- Major international influences include UN commitments, intergovernmental bodies, and shifting dynamics in foreign aid.
- Government stakeholders include MIGEPROF; MINEDUC; MINALOC; Provinces, Districts and Sectors; MINISPOC; MINECOFIN; the Cabinet; and Parliament.
- A number of civil society organizations work on issues of ECD and on teacher training and pedagogy, but few combine these programmes with a specific focus on early literacy.
- Private sector stakeholders include privately owned ECD centres and primary schools, publishers, booksellers, authors, printers, and illustrators.

Planning, Budgeting, and Implementation

- Overarching policies such as the EDPRS and the ESSP determine priorities and budgeting over a several-year period, within which major shifts are unlikely to occur.
- National government agencies take a strong lead in the planning process, with a range of local government and civil society stakeholders also playing a role.
- Budget constraints and aid dependence strongly influence decision-making.

The Influence of Incentives on Early Literacy Promotion

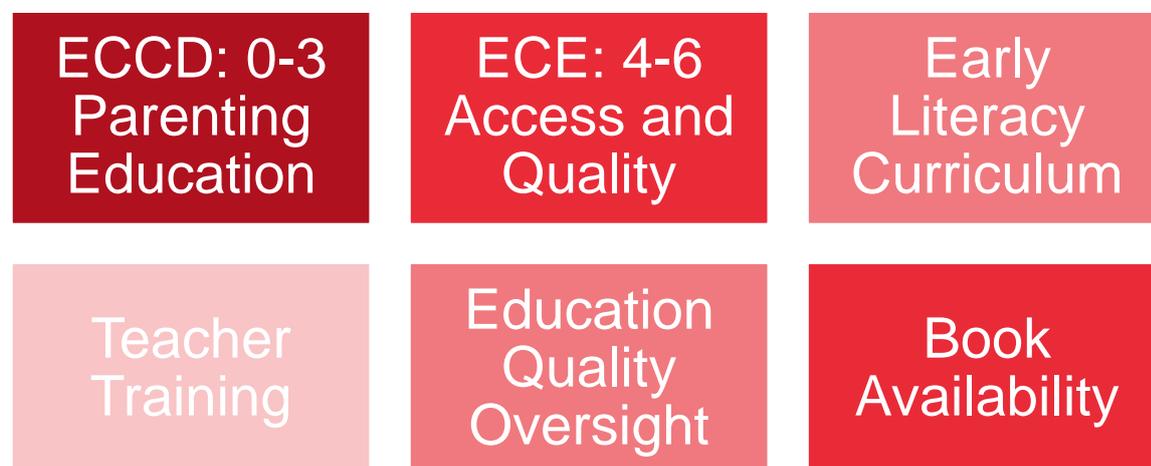
- At the national level, Rwanda's incentives are largely aligned with international goals, and national government staff work hard to achieve policy objectives.
- At the District and Sector levels, officials are most praised for tangible, countable achievements that appear in the *imihigo* goals and indicators. The *imihigo* currently often leave out more qualitative activities and objectives.
- Sector Education Officers receive no budget for transport or communications, a counter-incentive to the work they could do in monitoring school quality.
- Sector, Cell, and school officials can be strongly praised or critiqued for examination scores, but these are not included as quality objectives in the *imihigo*.
- The most significant issue of private-sector incentives is the way that the current textbook approval process rewards low quality investments in book publishing.

Institutional Gaps and Contradictions

- District and Sector Education Officers have major managerial and technical functions; yet they do not receive any specialized preparation for this work, and they are not adequately supported by the institutional structures currently in place.
- Quality school management and teaching is affected by institutional gaps between pre-service training and in-service follow-up, between REB and the DEOs/SEOs, and by perceived limitations in the authority of DEOs and SEOs over schools.
- There is almost a 100% gap in oversight of ECD quality, given that the authorities technically in charge--at the cellule level--have no background in ECD issues, and national coordinating bodies are not yet strongly functional.
- The structures for supporting parenting education in Rwanda are still at the very early stages of development and additional inputs would be needed to ensure the incorporation of cognitive development issues in parenting programmes.
- Many of the institutional gaps related to access to quality reading materials have been summarized in the National Policy for Library Services and work on these has begun; however, there is a shortage of university-level specializations in book sector professional skills, and there are also problems with the selection and use of reading materials within schools, an issue that is not yet widely understood.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The final Part IV of the report discusses the implications of this study's findings for the promotion of early literacy in Rwanda. Recommendations address the following six areas:



Taking into account the significant efforts currently underway in Rwanda's curriculum and institutional development, **coordinated efforts could make a lasting systemic impact on early literacy promotion in Rwanda**, working towards the goal of ensuring that all children leave school able to read.

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TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

9YBE	Nine Years Basic Education
12YBE	Twelve Years Basic Education
ARR	Advancing the Right to Read, a Save the Children Signature programme
CDF	Capacity Development Fund (DFID fund for MINEDUC institutional development)
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPMD	Curriculum Production and Materials Distribution (Department of REB, formerly NCDC)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEO	District Education Officer
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DP	Development Partner
EA	Examination and Accreditation (Department of REB)
EAC	East African Community
ECE	Early Childhood Education (sometimes applied specifically to the 4-6 age range)
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development (applied to the whole 0-6 age range)
EDPG	Education Development Partners Group
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
ELMI	Early Literacy and Maths Initiative, a component of Advancing the Right to Read
EQS	Education Quality and Standards (Department of REB, formerly the Inspectorate)
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FR	First Read, a component of Advancing the Right to Read
HEC	Higher Education Council (agency of MINEDUC)
HT	Head Teacher (usually equivalent to School Director)
IFE	Innovation for Education, a DFID fund supporting 26 education projects
Imihigo	Performance Contracts with outputs and indicators, signed by local government officials
LB	Literacy Boost
MIFOTRA	Ministry of Public Service and Labour
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Promotion of the Family
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Government
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
MINISPOC	Ministry of Sports and Culture
NAWOCO	National Women's Commission (under MIGEPROF)
NCC	National Commission of Children (under MIGEPROF)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RALSA	Rwanda Archives and Library Services Authority
RCBI	Rwanda Children's Book Initiative
REB	Rwanda Education Board, the implementing agency under MINEDUC
RENCP	Rwanda Education NGO Coordination Platform
SCI	Save the Children International
SEO	Sector Education Officer
TDM	Teacher Development and Management (Department of REB)
TF	Task Force
ToT	Training of Trainers
TTC	Teacher Training College
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
Umudugudu	Village or neighbourhood of approximately 100-200 households
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
URCE	University of Rwanda College of Education (formerly KIE)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas (UK)

I. INTRODUCTION: ADVANCING THE RIGHT TO READ

This report focuses on analysing the policy and institutional context surrounding the promotion of early literacy in Rwanda, from birth to age nine. While the information contained in this report can be useful for any organization or institution working in the area of early literacy and educational quality, the research was originally conducted to support the programmatic and advocacy goals of Save the Children's Signature Programme in Rwanda, *Advancing the Right to Read* (referred to as ARR throughout this report). The research for this report was conducted in March and April of 2014, with some updates in early May; due to the fast-changing nature of Rwanda's policy context, this should be considered a time-sensitive document with possible need for future updates.

Rwanda has achieved remarkable progress in expanding access to schooling, but there are still significant challenges to address within Rwandan schools. Rwanda currently has a 93% net enrolment rate, with girls enrolling at a slightly higher rate (94%) than boys (92%). The rate of completing the primary education cycle has also doubled to 75%. Yet there are also large challenges remaining. A recent study found that 13% of Primary 4 students could not read even one word of a Kinyarwanda text intended for use in Primary 2 or 3. Another 13% could read less than 15 words correctly in a minute, and only 32% of P6 students could read more than 50 words per minute, which is "... considered the minimum required level of fluency for solid comprehension".¹ Reading comprehension is also a problem, with 40% of Primary 4 students unable to provide the correct answer to even half of the comprehension questions asked about simple texts.² Rwanda clearly still has significant issues of education quality to address,³ if its successes in increasing access to schooling are to bear fruit for the country's development—and early literacy is one of the major challenges.

To help respond to this situation, Advancing the Right to Read focuses on providing literacy and early-learning support to children aged 0-9 in five Rwandan Districts: Gicumbi, Burera, Rubavu, Ruhango, and Ngororero. To achieve the goal of ensuring that all children have the skills, support, and materials necessary to exercise their right to read, ARR is being implemented through four distinct projects, spanning different phases of childhood as well as issues of parenting, community involvement, and the broader creation of a literate environment:

1. **First Read (FR)** is a project aimed at parents of children 0-6 years old, particularly those who may not have access to formal ECD⁴ Centres. FR includes training parents in effective ways of building pre-literacy and early literacy skills in the home setting, and also involves gifting books to families and to community book banks. The project is embedded within a holistic parenting approach, which includes other aspects of childcare and development.

¹ Ibid., 3.

² Ibid., 4.

³ Concerns with education quality more generally are also raised in UpperQuartile and IPAR, "Evaluation of Results Based Aid in Rwandan Education: 2013 Evaluation Report," (Kigali, Rwanda: UpperQuartile, 2014).

⁴ In order to match official government language, this document refers to "ECD", rather than "ECCD" (early childhood care and development) throughout.

2. The **Early Literacy and Maths Initiative** (ELMI) focuses attention on pre-school learning, particularly in relation to the 3-6 year age group. ELMI targets improved literacy and maths curriculum and instruction within established ECD centres, as well as parent education around simple ways to promote early literacy and numeracy in the home.¹
3. **Literacy Boost** (LB) is a specific approach to teaching and promoting reading in the early primary years (Primary 1 to Primary 3) that involves all five core reading skills emphasized in the research literature. LB advocates for changes both in the formal school system (curriculum, instructional materials, and teacher practice) and for increased support for parent/community-based literacy-building activities.²
4. The **Rwanda Children's Book Initiative** (RCBI) represents an innovative public-private partnership in the publishing industry, in order to make available more and higher-quality children's titles in Kinyarwanda. RCBI connects to the other programme components by increasing the availability of reading materials in schools, ECD centres, and communities, as well as including a specific teacher-training component on the use of books in the classroom.

These projects are founded on four pillars that lend a holistic strategy to the programme's focus on the entire 0-9 age range, recognizing the vital importance of supporting learning from birth through to the mastery of foundational literacy skills in the early primary years. These pillars include: (1) creating a rich literate environment with high-quality books available and being used in the home, community, and in school; (2) closing the ECD services gap through family learning and the expansion of ECD centre coverage; (3) improving the teaching of reading in the early primary years; and (4) developing a culture of literacy and learning that goes beyond the classroom into everyday family and community life.

As a Save the Children Signature Programme, *Advancing the Right to Read* is also focused on achieving wider systemic change through advocacy and involvement in policy processes, public-private partnerships, influencing donor agency priorities, and collaborating with other non-governmental organizations. Four overlapping policy areas are the particular focus of attention:

1. **Influencing curriculum development**, including: the educational materials that may be used for parenting education and community literacy initiatives; the primary school curriculum so that it encompasses all five of the core reading skills emphasized in Literacy Boost; and the curriculum used for teacher training at both the ECD and primary levels.
2. **Influencing the content and approach to teacher training** for both ECD and primary school teachers, to help teachers more effectively cultivate pre-reading and reading skills within the classroom. At the ECD level, ARR also has a focus on pre-numeracy skills.
3. **Promoting access to quality ECD programming**, through the above initiatives in curriculum development and teacher-training, by advocating for budgetary allocations that would allow

¹ This project is currently being implemented through a randomized controlled trial, which separates out centre-based ELMI from community/parenting-based ELMI in different comparison groups.

² This project is currently being implemented in two different forms for purpose of comparing relative effectiveness. Some implementation sites include both teacher training and community action components, while others are being offered only teacher training.

ECD to be free of charge around the country, and by pursuing alternative non centre-based forms of ECD support such as parenting education.

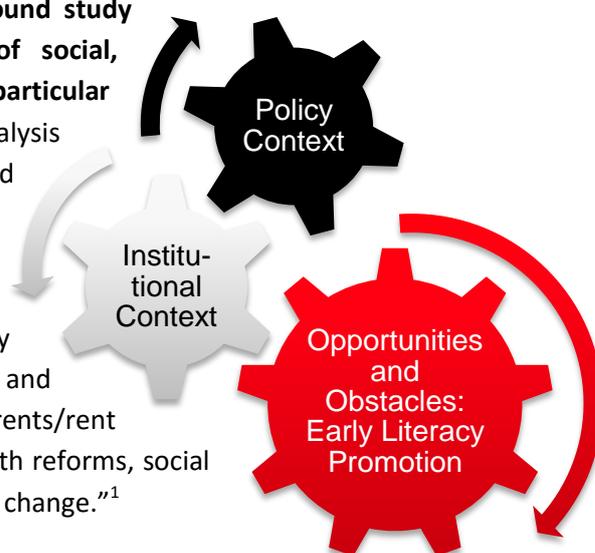
4. **Increasing the quality and availability of children’s books**, by working with private sector actors, government, and local communities. ARR aims to increase the quantity, quality, and regular supply of Kinyarwanda-language children’s books, as well as the general promotion of child-friendly literate environments, through advocacy goals such as: the creation of a National Book Development Policy; establishing collective standards within the publishing sector under a National Charter on Children’s Books; soliciting the support of local authorities for parenting education and community literacy initiatives; supporting community libraries/book clubs; and advocating for increased availability of books in school and in the home—including budgetary allocations for these efforts.

The Political Economy Analysis presented in this report is intended to assist Save the Children, and other organizations interested in similar goals, in learning more about how to promote early literacy and carry out these forms of policy advocacy effectively within the current Rwandan structure of education and governance, as well as in gaining insight into other potentially important policy and institutional issues that may impact early literacy advocacy and programming in Rwanda.

A. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS APPROACH

A Political Economy Analysis is a type of background study that assists in understanding the full range of social, economic, and political factors that can influence particular policies and programmes. Political economy analysis moves beyond rationalistic perspectives, which tend to assume that careful planning alone will be sufficient to ensure logical and predictable results.

Instead, the political economy approach focuses on issues such as “power and resources, how they are distributed and contested in different country and sector contexts, ... underlying interests, incentives, rents/rent distribution, historical legacies, prior experiences with reforms, social trends, and how all of these factors affect or impede change.”¹



The political economy analysis approach has become well-established in development literature, and can be used both for broad international and national-level studies, as well as analyses related to particular development sectors and programmes.² This particular

¹ Alice Poole, "Political Economy Assessments at Sector and Project Levels: How-to Notes," ed. Public Sector and Governance Group (The World Bank, 2011).

² TPP, "Political Economy Analysis: Selected Readings," (The Policy Practice, 2012); DFID, "Political Economy Analysis: How to Note," in *DFID Practice Paper* (Department for International Development, 2009); Poole, "Political Economy Assessments at Sector and Project Levels: How-to Notes; Claudia Melim-McLeod, "Institutional and Context Analysis Guidance Note," (Oslo, Norway: United Nations Development Program, 2012); Joy Moncrieffe and Cecilia Luttrell, "An Analytical Framework for Understanding the Political Economy of Sectors and Policy Arenas," (Overseas Development Institute, 2005).

political economy analysis has a national and programmatic focus, crossing several different sectors in the Rwandan context as it addresses factors related to the promotion of early literacy, from birth to age nine. Broadly following the approach suggested by the Overseas Development Institute,¹ **the core purposes for this Political Economy Analysis can be summarized in three areas**, each with their respective research questions to be addressed:

- **Provide a comprehensive background on the historical and current policy context**, addressing questions such as:
 - a. What is the relevant institutional and policy history in the area of early literacy in Rwanda, and how does this potentially influence the reality today?
 - b. What are the current applicable national policies and frameworks?
 - c. What are the planned/upcoming policy changes, and on what timeline?
- **Analyse the institutional context, key stakeholders, and structural issues of incentives and authority**. The education sector in Rwanda is fairly complex, with a number of different governmental institutions influencing family, pre-primary, and primary education policies and practices at different levels. Better understanding the relationships among these actors and the incentives that structure their behaviour can assist with AAR's implementation and advocacy goals. This report therefore responds to questions such as:
 - a. What are the principal institutions and actors in the area of early literacy, from the international down to the local level, and how do they conduct their work?
 - b. What is the "business cycle" of planning, budgeting, and implementation as it relates to early literacy promotion at local, district, and national levels? How are resources being distributed, by whom, and how does this relate to broader economic issues?
 - c. What incentives structure the implementation of early literacy initiatives?
 - d. What are the relevant systemic lines of authority and accountability that apply to early literacy efforts, and where are there gaps or contradictions?
- **Assess opportunities and potential barriers to early literacy promotion** at the community, school, sector, district, and national levels. The policy and institutional contexts naturally present both opportunities and barriers to ARR's programmatic and advocacy goals. This report therefore answers questions such as:
 - a. Which issues addressed in this report may affect the implementation of Advancing the Right to Read, and how can potential threats to implementation be addressed?
 - b. What appear to be the most promising areas for policy advocacy? What is the state of Save the Children's political capital in relation to these advocacy goals, and what partnerships could be strengthened in support of these objectives?
 - c. What methods of policy advocacy, and what timing for advocacy interventions, are likely to be most effective?

Gathering information on this wide range of research questions has involved a multi-faceted research strategy, as described in the following section.

¹ "An Analytical Framework for Understanding the Political Economy of Sectors and Policy Arenas."

B. RESEARCH METHODS & SAMPLING

The information presented in this report was collected through both in-person interviews and a desk review. To conduct the desk review, an initial range of policies, programme descriptions, and academic research related to the education sector and early literacy-related issues were identified and reviewed. This was supplemented by further searches for documents and media reports based on additional information gathered during interviews. In total, 63 national documents and research studies, and 23 District and other local documents, were reviewed for this report. The most relevant documents from this desk review are summarized in Part II of this report.

This report draws on a total of 55 formal interviews at the national, district, sector, cellule, and school levels, with the addition of 18 informal fact-checking interviews with teachers and local residents, as summarized in the following figure:

Figure 1: Interview sample



At the national level, a series of interviews was conducted with development partners involved with early literacy issues. These interviews focused on gathering updated information about their programmes and initiatives in early literacy, and discussing their perspectives on different institutional and structural factors affecting the education and family promotion sectors. The sample of development partners included DFID, UNICEF, USAID, EDC, Global Communities, Norwegian People’s Aid, Plan Rwanda, Umuhuza, VVOB, and Wellspring.

Also at the national level, this research included a series of interviews at the various government institutions and agencies whose work touches, in one way or another, on early literacy issues. These interviews focused on gaining an understanding of the functioning of each institution and agency in relation to specific issues in early literacy, gathering updates on policies and programmes, and discussing working relationships among institutions. The sample of government institutions and agencies included representatives from: the Directorate General of Education Planning and the Basic Education Unit at the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC); the Education Quality and Standards Department, the Curricula, Materials Production and Distribution Department, and the Teacher

Development and Management Department, all at the Rwanda Education Board (REB); the University of Rwanda College of Education—Faculty of Education; the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF); the National Women’s Council (NAWOCO) and the National Children’s Commission (NCC), both organs of MIGEPROF; the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC); and the Ministry of Sports and Culture (MINISPOC).

At the regional and local levels, a number of interviews with education sector actors were conducted in the five Districts of ARR’s programme implementation: Burera, Gicumbi, Ngororero, Rubavu, and Ruhango. These interviews focused on understanding the main priorities at each level, planning processes, the day-to-day functioning of each role, and the structures of incentives and accountability shaping their work. First, the **District Education Officers (DEOs)** in each District were interviewed. Next, the **Sector Education Officers (SEOs)** were interviewed from two Sectors from each District chosen based on their relative distance from the District Office (one accessible and one more remote), and whether or not they had Advancing the Right to Read programming within the Sector (one with and one without). Within each sector, an interview was also conducted with a **Cellule Executive Secretary or Social Affairs Officer** and a **School Director**, as well as some brief fact-checking with local residents and teachers.

The research methods employed for this study aimed for maximum triangulation and data verification within the time available. However, because of the very wide-ranging nature of the topics addressed in this study, more detailed research may be necessary to verify the exact extent and effects of some of the institutional trends suggested by this report. The information provided in the following pages is thus presented as a preliminary analysis supported by the data thus far gathered, subject to any refinements that may arise based on additional future research.

C. OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

Following this introduction, Part I, the report is structured in three major parts. Each part addresses a sub-set of the major research questions already outlined above.

Part II presents a comprehensive background on the historical and current policy context surrounding early literacy promotion in Rwanda. It begins with a brief discussion of the history of informal and formal educational efforts relating to early literacy, from pre-colonial times to post-independence, focusing on the potential for enduring institutional influence. Next, it turns to a discussion of key policy documents, beginning with some recent historical policies and then providing a summary of each current policy and law that is centrally relevant to early literacy promotion efforts today. Finally, this section discusses research findings regarding potential upcoming programmes and initiatives related to Save the Children’s work in this area.

Part III of this report discusses the key actors and institutional context surrounding early literacy. It begins with a discussion of each of the key stakeholders involved in early literacy promotion efforts, describing what they do and how this relates to early literacy promotion. Next, it discusses the overall cycle and control of planning, budgeting, and implementation at national, regional, and local levels. Third, it turns to the incentives—sometimes aligned and sometimes contradictory—that structure work in early literacy, from the national down to the local levels. Finally, this section

focuses on particular structural issues such as the lines of authority and accountability and the ways in which these may impact early literacy promotion.

Part IV of this report offers recommendations based on the research findings, to civil society organizations and donor agencies hoping to promote education quality issues, and early literacy particularly, in Rwanda. Finally, an appendix section includes the interview protocols used in each different component of the research.

II. HISTORICAL & CURRENT POLICY CONTEXT REGARDING EARLY LITERACY

This Part II of the report provides a comprehensive background on the historical and current policy context surrounding early literacy promotion in Rwanda. The first sections briefly discuss the history of informal and formal educational efforts relating to early literacy, from pre-colonial times to post-independence, focusing on issues with the potential for enduring institutional influence. The next section turns to a discussion of key policy documents, beginning with some recent historical policies and then providing a summary of each current policy and law that is centrally relevant to early literacy promotion efforts today. Finally, a concluding section discusses research findings regarding potential upcoming policies and programmes related to early literacy.

A. HISTORICAL INFLUENCES ON EARLY LITERACY IN RWANDA

Historical experiences shape present-day realities in ways that may not always be readily apparent, making historical analysis an important background for understanding any public policy issue. Such is the case with early literacy promotion in Rwanda. The desire to learn to read, and its attendant socio-economic benefits, was a major motivating factor supporting the original spread of formal schooling in Rwanda and throughout the region. Yet pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence schooling in Rwanda was also strongly influenced by a perspective on education that placed the teacher as the central authority in an oral process of transmitting knowledge, and downplayed independent access to reading materials. After the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, a number of systemic educational reforms were put in place. However, the legacy of teacher-centred instruction with limited use of books has exerted a strong institutional influence that arguably persists to this day.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY AND FORMAL SCHOOLING IN RWANDA: 1800s-1994

Pre-colonial Rwanda was a pre-literate society, with a strong emphasis on oral traditions in its own increasingly formalized educational institutions, the *amatorero*.¹ Prior to colonial intervention, an expanding network of sites for formalized education was beginning to be established in the Rwandan kingdom, with sites at the King's palace and around the compounds of other chiefs. These *amatorero* featured training in warfare, dance, poetry and other arts, for selected youth.² Language skill was highly valued; "every aspect of verbal art was named and consciously mastered" and "the creation, transmission, and differentiation of genres was regulated

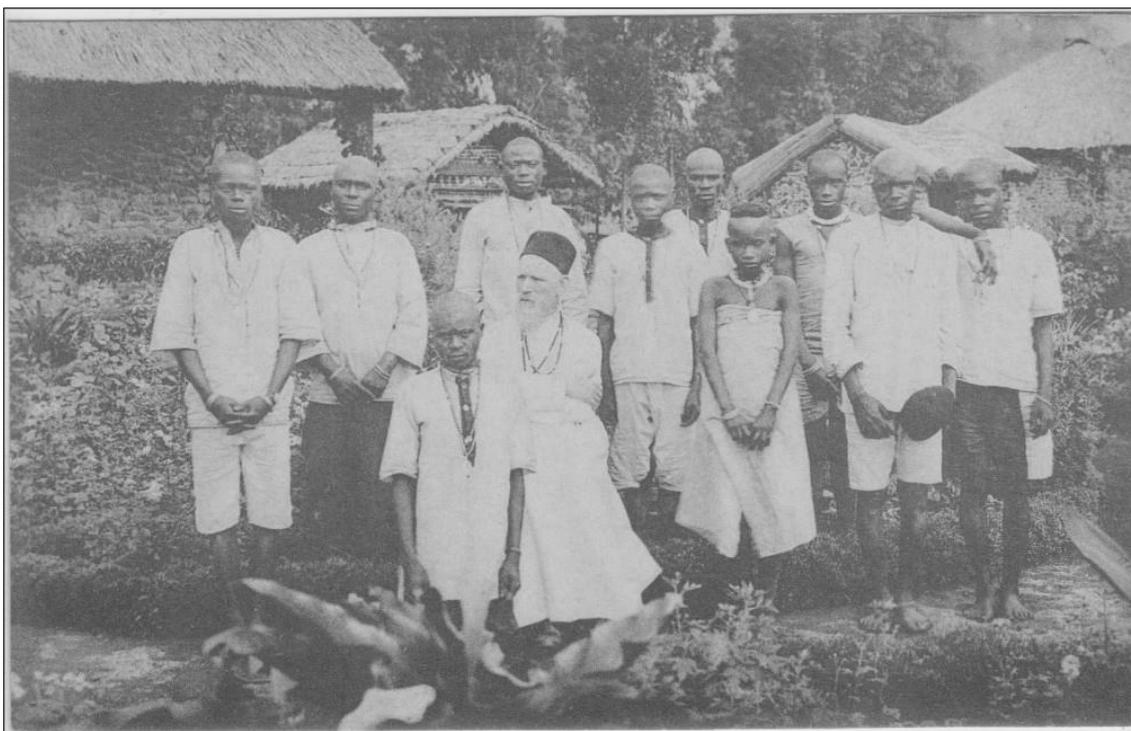
¹ Singular, *itorero*.

² Helen Codere, *The Biography of an African Society: Rwanda 1900-1960, Based on Forty-Eight Rwandan Autobiographies* (Musée Royale de l'Afrique Centrale, 1973); Pierre Erny, *L'éducation Au Rwanda Au Temps Des Rois* (Harmattan, 2005); John Bale, *Imagined Olympians: Body Culture and Colonial Representation in Rwanda* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Doreen Peck, "Review of A. Coupeze and Th. Kamanzi (Ed. And Tr.) *Littérature De Cour Au Rwanda*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33, no. 3 (1970).

by the state”.¹ Written materials did not come to Rwanda, however, until the arrival of the European religious missions that established themselves in the region around the end of the 19th century, on the eve of colonialism.

In colonial “Ruanda-Urundi”, formal schooling was most widely spread by the Catholic Church, which introduced basic literacy and developed an instructional style based on the call-and-response learning of the catechism. In Rwanda, both Catholic and Protestant missions were present from the end of the 19th century, but it was the Catholic “White Fathers” order that had the greatest impact on making education accessible to the masses. By 1923, the Catholic “White Fathers” mission reported 267 elementary schools, with almost 24,000 pupils—although many of these schools were in reality catechetical centres, emphasizing oral call-and-response instruction, and offering only very basic academic preparation.² The colonial governments—first German and then Belgian—in contrast invested very little in schooling institutions,³ and colonial documents show that they actively worked to limit educational access in order to prevent the formation of an educated indigenous movement that could challenge their authority.⁴ Formal schooling and literacy, indeed, soon became highly sought-after among Rwandans as a means for achieving socio-economic mobility.⁵

Figure 2: Catechists with a Priest, Ruanda-Urundi, date unknown



69vertiges

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¹ Karin Barber, *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 59.

² Thomas Jesse Jones, "Phelps Stokes Reports on Education in Africa," (1923), 291.

³ In 1923, for example, the same year as the other figures cited above, there were fewer than 1,000 students enrolled in all colonial government-sponsored primary and secondary schools in the territories of Rwanda and Urundi combined.

⁴ Pierre Erny, *L'école Coloniale Au Rwanda, 1900-1962*, ed. Anonymous, *Etudes Africaines Etudes Africaines* (Harmattan (Firm) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 88.

⁵ Terence Ranger, "African Attempts to Control Education in East and Central Africa 1900-1939," *Past & Present*, no. 35 (1965); Erny, *L'école Coloniale Au Rwanda, 1900-1962*; *L'éducation Au Rwanda Au Temps Des Rois*.

As independence approached, there were increasing efforts to expand basic education, but there were still limitations, and even the higher education offered to the very few did not strongly encourage wide-ranging independent reading. By 1948, more government-planned formality was being introduced into the system, with a new programme of primary education focused on the basics of literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills for the masses. At the same time, the Catholic Church had taken a lead in making reading materials more available in Kinyarwanda, with the publication of periodicals. And whatever the limitations of primary schools, they did become a route to higher education for some, including in the *écoles normales* that were introduced for training primary teachers. However, even these upper-levels of education seem to have been influenced by racist theories of the time, as historical records show that “... it was conceived of as useless to give too much emphasis on discursive and critical reflection; instead, the emphasis was put on passive memorization and recitation by heart...”¹

In post-independence Rwanda, there were attempts at school reform, but there was little systemic change in pedagogical methods due to different sources of resistance. Beginning in 1969, various gestures were attempted towards making schooling more relevant to Rwanda’s social and economic reality. These “ruralisation” policies included some notions of pedagogical change, in which “... the teaching methods should have evolved toward active pedagogy, with a programme adapted to Rwanda’s socio-economic situation”.² But significant segments of the Rwandan population rejected the reforms as imposing on them an inferior education: the academic track with its established teaching methods continued to be associated in the public eye with opportunities for status advancement. At the same time, post-independence educational reformers judged it premature to attempt too radical of a change in teaching methods, arguing that

“...if the training of teachers has not prepared them in other attitudes, if they themselves are asked to repeat knowledge that they have never had to reconstruct, if they have not been psychologically prepared for the confrontation with headstrong students without the protection of the traditional system of discipline, finally, if the poverty of pedagogical materials concentrates all activity of the student on the word of the teacher alone, then it is premature and full of risk to want to innovate and transform the pedagogical relationship. The transformation of the spirit of the Rwandan educational system can only come about slowly by putting into place a new preparation of teachers”.³

This situation remained largely the same over the next two decades, resulting in an education system in which basic literacy was valued for its linkage to socio-economic mobility, but a culture of independent reading and student inquiry had never become strongly entrenched.

CHANGES IN RWANDA’S EDUCATION SYSTEM: 1994-2012

The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and its aftermath represented a time of drastic social disruption that, not surprisingly, had a strong effect on the education system as well. Schools

¹ Erny, 2001, pp. 36-38, my translation from the French)

² Pierre Erny, *L’enseignement Au Rwanda Après L’indépendance* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 2003), 60.

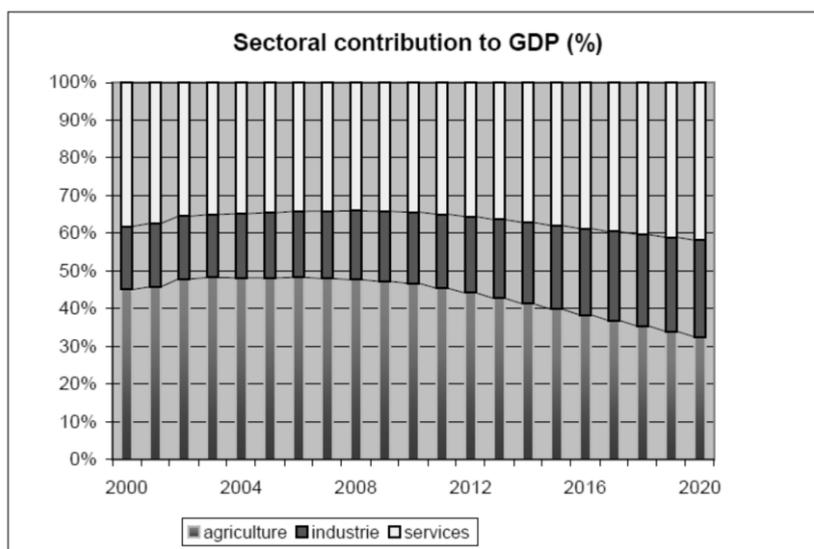
³ Ibid., 81.: from an evaluation report sponsored by the French cooperation agency; my translation from the French.

closed for several months, populations were widely displaced, and the school system lost many experienced school directors and teachers, creating a need to quickly train new members of the teaching force. Once the violence had subsided, there was the lingering problem that access to schooling had always been one of the major sensitivities provoking social and political discontent in Rwanda.

The post-genocide transitional government immediately set about addressing concerns about educational equity by instituting two reforms. The first was to eliminate all ethnic quotas, which had previously been a major factor determining access to higher education. The second was to create a more transparent national examinations system, in order to further eliminate ethnic, regional, and personal favouritism in the education system.¹ Both of these reforms arguably had a greater impact on post-primary education than on early literacy; however, they may have impacted primary students' degree of investment in schooling, knowing that their advancement was more likely than ever to be judged based on their actual academic ability.

In the year 2000, the transitional government created the Rwanda Vision 2020 strategy, with implications for all sectors of Rwandan life—including education.² The overall goal of Vision 2020 is to transform Rwanda into a middle-income country by the year 2020, via a shift from an agricultural- to services-based economy. The Vision 2020 document remains the master guide to all policy-making in Rwanda today, and has informed the preparation of more detailed national plans, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2002-2007), the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy EDPRS I (2008-2012), and the current EDPRS II (2013-2017). The EDPRS paper, in turn, shapes specific strategies like the Education Sector Strategic Plan—addressed in greater detail in the following section.

Figure 3: Vision 2020 Planned Transformation of Economic Activity 2000-2020



A decade after the genocide, the government began considering further measures to increase educational access, with discussion as early as 2003 of establishing a fee-free and obligatory nine-year basic education cycle.³ The Nine Years Basic Education policy was officially promulgated in 2008, introducing three major reforms in order to accomplish an unprecedented increase in access

¹ RNEC, "Rwanda National Examinations Council: Historical Background," Rwanda National Examinations Council, <http://www.rnec.ac.rw/page.php?His>.

² MINECOFIN, "Rwanda Vision 2020," ed. Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (Kigali: Government of Rwanda, 2000).

³ MINEDUC, "Education Sector Policy," ed. MINEDUC (Kigali: Government of Rwanda, 2003).

to post-primary education.¹ **First**, it introduced a country-wide system of double-shifting, in which all students from P1-P6 would study alternately in morning sessions (7:15am-12:15pm) and afternoon sessions (12:45-16:45)—thereby making school facilities and teachers available to a larger number of students.²

Second, the policy proposed a reduction in the core courses to be taught during all nine years, in order to accommodate the reduced hours in the double-shifting system.³ It is notable that the amount of time spent specifically on instruction in Kinyarwanda was originally planned to be decreased significantly, though after some debate the hours were increased again. The table below shows information from the 9YBE proposal, comparing the 1996-2008 lesson allocation to the proposed new system. The right-hand column describes the final 9YBE lesson allocation, according to a recent presentation at the National Curriculum Consultative Conference⁴:

Figure 4: Allocation of lessons compared: pre-9YBE, proposed 9YBE, and final 9YBE policy

Former P1-P3 System		Proposed 9YBE System (P1-3 only)		Final 9YBE # lessons ⁵
Core Examinable Subjects	Lessons	Core Subjects	Lessons	
Kinyarwanda	7	Kinyarwanda	3	7 (4.7hrs)
English	5	English	6	8 (5.3hrs)
French	5	French	3	0
Maths	5	Maths	5	7 (4.7hrs)
Science and Technology	5	General Paper/Social Science	2	4 (2.7hrs)
Moral, Religious, Civic Ed, Art	1 each	Extra-curricular activities	2	4 (2.7hrs)

Third, the Nine Years Basic Education policy introduced teacher specialization, with primary teachers shifting from being entirely responsible for one classroom of students, towards focusing on only two subjects (such as Kinyarwanda/English) by rotating between classrooms. While this change was intended to improve quality by allowing teachers to develop expertise in just two subjects, teachers are often less familiar now with individual students' performance, as they must move among different classrooms throughout the day.⁶

The Nine Years Basic Education Policy also formally introduced English as the new medium of instruction in Rwandan schools. After some discussion and a supplementary Cabinet decision, Kinyarwanda officially remained the medium of instruction for lower primary (P1-P3), but as already noted above, the amount of time allotted specifically for studying Kinyarwanda in those years was reduced in comparison to that of English—**leaving it unclear as to whether students should be learning to read and write in English (8 lessons per week) or in Kinyarwanda (7 lessons per week of formal instruction).** In addition, the shift in language of instruction, a policy that was introduced on a

¹ "Nine Years Basic Education Implementation: Fast Track Strategies," ed. Ministry of Education (Kigali, Rwanda: Republic of Rwanda, 2008).

² Note that the P1-P3 years (the level included within the ARR programme) were already organized in a double-shifting system prior to the introduction of this policy.

³ Though the 9YBE policy originally indicated that these two changes would result in a reduction of hours/week in P1-3, there is conflicting information, with a recent presentation by REB actually showing an *increase* in hours per week.

⁴ Joyce Musabe and Joseph Murekeraho, "The Status of Existing Curriculum," in *National Curriculum Consultative Conference* (Kigali, Rwanda 2013).

⁵ Ibid. Times are averaged by week (varies by group across a two-week period because of double-shifting).

⁶ RCSP, "National Dialogue Report on 12ybe in Rwanda - Draft," (Kigali, Rwanda: Rwanda Civil Society Platform, 2014).

very short timescale, had a significant effect on the quality of teaching throughout the system, as teachers had to rapidly learn a new language to a level high enough for them to offer instruction in it.¹

During the Presidential Campaign of 2010, President Kagame introduced additional major changes into the education system through a new 7-Year Government programme.² In particular, he announced a policy of **Twelve Years Basic Education**, in which for the first time all young Rwandans are conceived of as having the right (though not the obligation) to attend upper secondary schooling. In order to achieve this, educational resources have been shifted towards the expansion of upper secondary institutions, particularly TVET. At the same time, President Kagame formally introduced the topic of Early Childhood Development on the national policy scene for the first time, proclaiming the objective of establishing one ECD centre per sector by 2017.

There have also been other institutional reforms in the past decade and a half that have affected the education sector and early literacy development. One institutional change with far-reaching implications has been Rwanda's policy of decentralization which, in a multi-phase process extending from 2001-2015, is intended to devolve greater responsibility onto regional and local governments.³ Specifically in relation to education, decentralization has involved the transfer of certain responsibilities away from central control under the Ministry of Education and towards Districts, Sectors, and schools themselves. A second institutional change was the introduction, in 2010, of the Rwanda Education Board, as the implementing arm of the Ministry of Education.⁴ Both of these institutional changes are addressed in greater detail in Part III of this report.

¹ Izabela Steflja, "The High Costs and Consequences of Rwanda's Shift in Language Policy from French to English," *Backgrounder* 30, no. May 2012 (2012).

² Paul Kagame, "7-Year Government Programme," (Kigali, Rwanda2010).

³ MINALOC, "National Decentralization Policy," ed. Ministry of Local Government and Social Affairs (Kigali, Rwanda: Republic of Rwanda, 2001).

⁴ *Law Establishing Rwanda Education Board (Reb) and Determining Its Mission, Organisation, and Functioning*, (July 12, 2010).

B. CURRENT NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

A number of current policies, with specific implications for early literacy initiatives from birth to age nine, build on the historical context described in the previous section. This section examines these policies and documents, first briefly summarizing the relevant content of a number of overarching policies, and then examining in greater detail the implications of certain current policies for each age group in the early literacy development years.

OVERARCHING POLICIES

The **Vision 2020 Strategy**, as previously introduced, is the overarching policy shaping all aspects of policy-making in Rwanda today.¹ The Strategy covers the time period from 2000 to 2020 and encompasses six pillars intended to support Rwanda's rise to middle-income status: good governance and a capable state; human resource development and a knowledge-based economy; private sector-led development; infrastructure development; productive, high value, and market-oriented agriculture; and regional and international integration. These are joined by three cross-cutting issues: gender equality; natural resources and the environment; and science, technology and ICT. Education issues such as early literacy are most related to the second pillar, human resource development and a knowledge-based economy, though many of the other pillars and cross-cutting issues also impact on educational issues in some way. As part of the Vision 2020 Strategy, the Rwandan government has committed to achieving the United Nation's **Millennium Development Goals** and the **Education For All** agenda, both of which have an overarching policy influence similar to that of the Vision 2020 Strategy.

The **7-Year Government Programme 2011-2017**, also previously introduced, addresses four pillars: good governance, justice, economy, and social well-being, with a total of 231 detailed goals touching on virtually every aspect of Rwandan life.² Pillar I, good governance relates to early literacy issues primarily through the goals relating to reinforcing Rwanda's system of decentralization, pursuing regional integration, and empowering the media, including the specific objective of increasing the circulation of newspapers in order to "put in place effective strategies to continue imbuing Rwandans to the reading and writing culture, starting with young children."³ Pillar IV, social well-being, includes a programme for education, research, and technology that places special emphasis on improving the quality of education at all levels, along with a number of detailed provisions—such as introducing a nationally-coordinated system for training pre-primary teachers, the goal of establishing a "pilot nursery school" in each sector, and the introduction of 12YBE with a particular emphasis on TVET for the upper secondary years. Pillar IV also includes the goal of completing the building of the national public library, but there is no mention of community-level extensions.

Rwanda's **Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2013-2017** (EDPRS II) is a detailed derivation of the broader Vision 2020 and 7-Year Government Programme goals.⁴ There are

¹ MINECOFIN, "Rwanda Vision 2020."

² Kagame, "7-Year Government Programme."

³ *Ibid.*, par. 59

⁴ Rwanda, "Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy 2013-2018: Shaping Our Development," (Kigali, Rwanda: Republic of Rwanda, 2013).

five Thematic Areas in EDPRS II: economic transformation; rural development; productivity and youth employment; and accountable governance. Productivity and youth employment is the thematic area most related to educational issues, particularly in relation to its Priority Area 1 (of 4), “develop skills and attitudes”, which discusses some general education issues—however, the main focus of this Thematic Area is on skills development in secondary and adult education, rather than on pre-primary and primary education. EDPRS II also identifies a number of Foundational Issues and Cross Cutting Issues. Notable among these is the Foundational Issue of literacy, early childhood development, and basic education and the Cross Cutting Issue of regional integration, with its implications for regional alignment in the education system. Another Cross Cutting Issue, family and gender, focuses more on issues of gender equity, poverty, malnutrition, and family conflicts, than on the cognitive aspects of parenting.

The **Education Sector Strategic Plan for 2013-2017**¹ is a derivation of the EDPRS II, in much the same way that the EDPRS II is a derivation of Vision 2020. The ten Sector Priorities and Outcomes defined in this document primarily draw their justification from the EDPRS II Thematic Area of Productivity and Youth Employment and from the Foundational Issue of Literacy, Early Childhood Development, and Basic Education. Three outcomes of note for ARR include: improved quality and learning outcomes across primary and secondary education; qualified, suitably skilled and motivated teachers and trainers; and improved access to school readiness programmes by 2017/18, accompanied by expanded access to three years of early learning for four-to-six year olds. The ESSP also announces Rwanda’s planned shift to a competency-based curriculum, involving a national process of curriculum revision from pre-primary through secondary, which is currently under way. Though this ESSP has officially been under implementation since 2013, as of this writing it was still undergoing some revisions. Later sections of Part II look more specifically at the implications of the ESSP and these ongoing revisions for pre-primary and primary education.

Each year, the high-level government leadership holds a Leadership Retreat, which produces a document of Resolutions covering a wide range of issues.² The 2014 Leadership Retreat led to nine resolutions specifically related to education. Two of these resolutions are related particularly to improving the quality of education—establishing a monitoring and evaluation system for tracking educational quality, and putting into place an education quality strategic plan with a baseline and desired targets. A further resolution calls for “expedit[ing] the implementation of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy so that by 2017 all primary school going children will have passed through ECD Centres.”

A number of **Laws and Presidential Orders** also govern the education sector. **The Presidential Order No 48/01 of 10/8/2009 Establishing Quality Standards in Education for Nursery, Primary and Secondary Schools** describes the standards that apply to each level of formal education, including school management, the physical environment, teaching aids to be used, curriculum and educational materials that should be available, and teacher competencies. It also lists the responsibilities of the General Inspectorate (now called EQSD), and specifies that the District holds overall responsibility for education within its boundaries. The District is also the primary authority over secondary schools,

¹ MINEDUC, "Education Sector Strategic Plan 2013/14-2017/18," ed. Ministry of Education (Kigali, Rwanda 2013). Two drafts consulted: October 2013 and February 2014.

² GOR, "11th Leadership Retreat Resolutions," (Kigali, Rwanda: Government of Rwanda, 2014).

the Sector over primary schools, and the Cell is responsible for “nursery schools” and parent sensitization. The **Law Governing the Organisation of Education (2011)** briefly describes each level of education, as well as defining the relationship between the government and development partners. Family education is described as focusing on providing knowledge and moral values, while “nursery schools” are described as emphasizing physical and social skills and games, as well as school-readiness. The **Law Governing the Organization and Functioning of Nursery, Primary and Secondary Education (2012)** focuses on the characteristics and administrative structure, curriculum and language, and teacher qualifications for each level of schooling.

Finally, the *Imihigo* (performance contracts for local government officials and other local entities) and Development Plans at the District, Sector, and Cell levels also represent overarching policies shaping multiple aspects of ECD and formal education. Primary policy objectives are articulated in the *imihigo*, through a process that is simultaneously bottom-up and top-down. Although each family, umudugudu, Cell, Sector, and District articulates its own annual objectives, this is largely along the lines of specific policy objectives and budget priorities that have already been established in national policy.¹ The Governors at the Province level undertake a final review of Districts’ *imihigo* objectives, and may introduce last-minute changes.

In the current District *imihigo*, for example, an outcome related to “Education Quality” is universally included; however, it is almost always associated with indicators that have to do with the construction of educational facilities, rather than actual quality-related goals—reflecting the current priority placed on access, and a general propensity to emphasize easily-countable tangible objectives. ECD is also universally included as a District *imihigo* outcome, but targets are often set quite low due to budget constraints. The following table, containing the educational objectives from three different 2013/2014 District *Imihigo* plans, illustrates these points:

Table 1: Sample 2013/2014 Imihigo Objectives in Education from 3 Districts

	Output	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Cost	Source of Funds
GICUMBI	Quality of 12YBE Strengthened	Number of new classrooms and toilets of 9 & 12YBE	412 classrooms and 1761 toilets of 9 & 12YBE constructed	94 Classrooms and 144 toilets of 9 & 12YBE constructed 4 Classrooms in Nyankenke sector constructed	387,058,065 13,000,000	MINEDUC GoR/World Vision/Community participation
	ECD models strengthened	Number of ECD models constructed	109 operational ECDs	3 model ECDs constructed (in Miyove, Cyumba, Rwamiko Sectors)	83,000,000	EAR-AEE/UNICEF/District
	Adult Literacy Strengthened	Number of trained illiterates	4,000 illiterates trained	3,000 illiterates women and men trained	5,500,000	GoR + District

¹ Benjamin Chemouni, "Explaining the Design of the Rwandan Decentralisation: Elite Vulnerability and the Territorial Repartition of Power," *Journal of East African Studies* (Forthcoming, 2014).

	Output	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Cost	Source of Funds
NGORORERO	Quality of Education and Skills Development strengthened	Number of new classrooms constructed	325 classrooms constructed in 9 & 12YBE	62 Classrooms constructed	147,619,227	MINEDUC + District
		% of school dropout	-	0% of school dropout cases	-	-
		Number of ECD Centers equipped	1 (Rususa ECD in progress)	3 ECD (Muhororo ECD center rehabilitated and equipped, Rususa and Kabaya ECD equipped)	22,282,700	MINEDUC+DISTRICT
RUHANGO	Quality of 12YBE Strengthened	Number of classrooms constructed	8 classrooms and 24 toilets for 12YBE are constructed	4 classrooms and 12 toilets for 12YBE constructed	25,000,000	Sector
		Number of schools visited	13 schools visited	20 schools visited	700,000	District
	Illiteracy Rate Reduced	Number of people trained	2,411 illiterate people are trained	New 2012/2993 illiterate people trained	3,000,000	District
	Early Childhood Development (ECD) promoted	ECD operational	2 ECD operational	1 ECD operational in Buhoro	2,000,000	Sector, EAR church

Interestingly, the District, Sector, and Cell Action Plans, which articulate secondary policy objectives and activities, contain a greater variety of educational objectives and some that are more clearly related to quality issues (such as reducing class size and teacher workloads, increasing parents' participation in education meetings, and monitoring acquisition of numeracy and literacy); however since national funds are targeted towards achievement of the primary *imihigo* goals, it is not clear to what extent local governments can pursue these sorts of secondary objectives.¹

These overarching policy documents illustrate a number of recent trends in Rwandan education related to early literacy development. First, there is strong political will to expand educational access at both ends of the basic education system—pre-primary and secondary. However, most discussion of education and cognitive development does not take into account children under the age of 4. Additionally, most of the budgeting for this increased access is currently being targeted towards the secondary years, with pre-primary receiving only minimal funding.

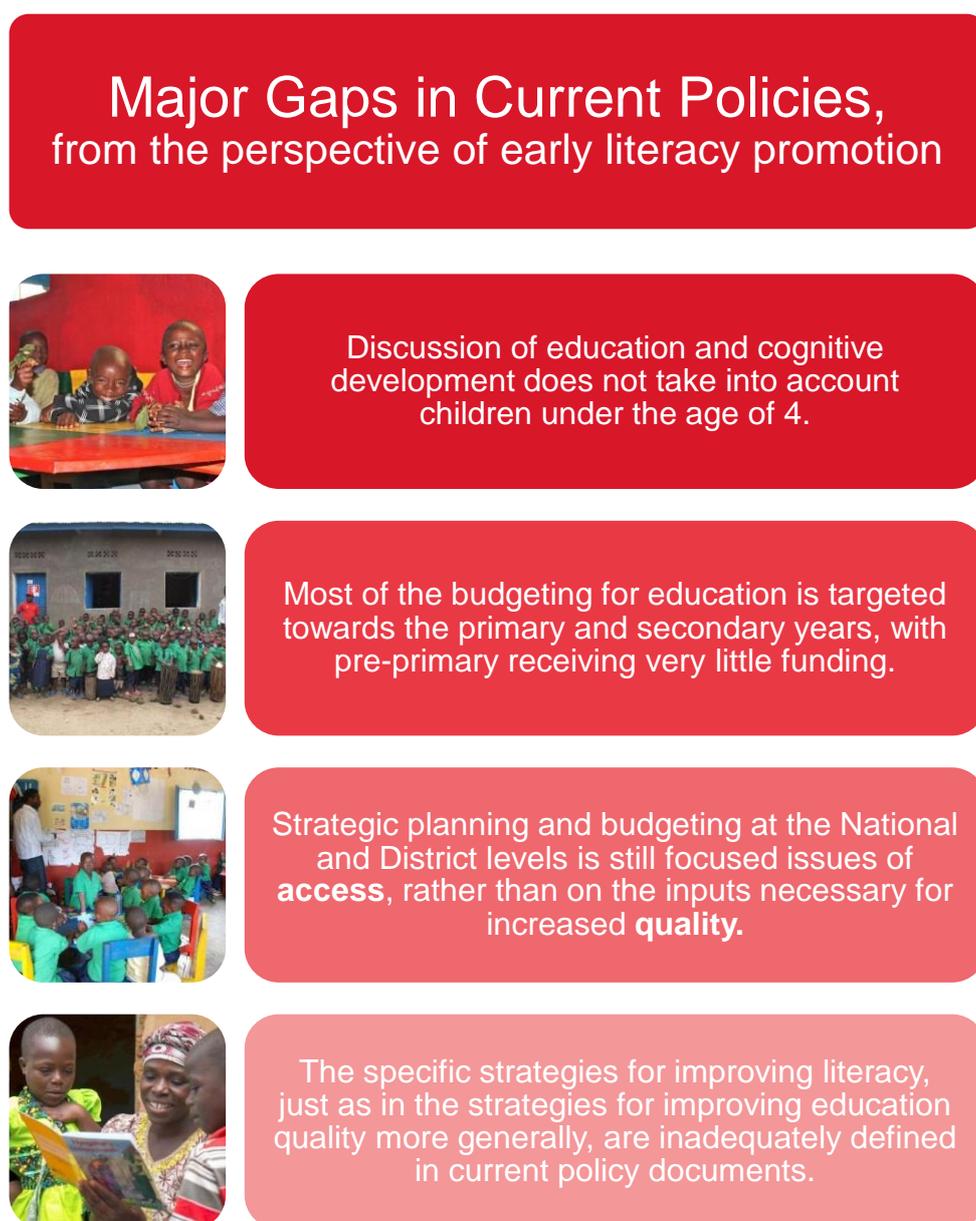
Second, there is a clear shift towards emphasizing quality issues, both at the level of objectives and in the introduction of new systems for measuring quality. However, for the time being most strategic

¹ Note, however, that Districts do seem to have some discretion with using the Education Fund that is passed to the District from the national government and which used to be used for the support of school fees for high-performing disadvantaged students (before the institution of 12YBE).

planning and budgeting is still focused on achieving universal access to 12YBE, rather than on the inputs that are likely necessary for increased quality (investment and improvements in the pre-service and in-service teacher training systems, increased availability of higher quality educational materials, etc).

Third, the promotion of literacy—both early and adult literacy—is now frequently mentioned as an aspect of educational quality and a pre-requisite for Rwanda’s economic growth. However, the specific strategies for improving literacy, just as in the strategies for improving education quality more generally, seem to be inadequately defined.

Figure 5: Major Gaps in Current Policies



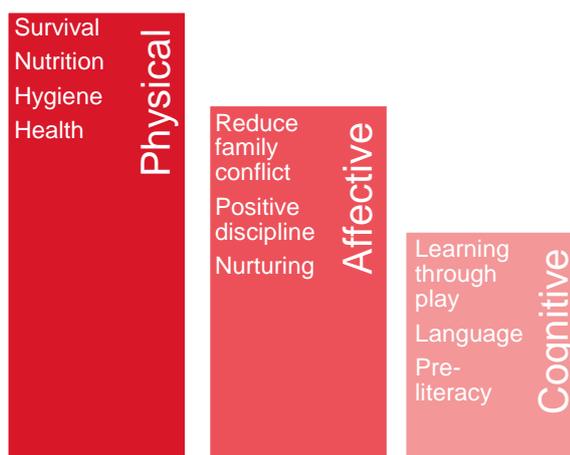
The following pages address these and other policy issues more specifically in relation to the four targets for early literacy promotion emphasized in the ARR program: ages 0-3 and parenting practices; ages 4-6 and centre-based ECD; ages 7-9 and primary school; and the general availability of reading materials.

POLICIES RELATED TO AGE 0-3 AND PARENTING

In the Rwandan policy context, children from birth to age three are currently considered largely the private concern of families and parents. Though Rwanda’s ECD Policy and Integrated ECD Strategic Plan consider the full age range of 0-6 years old, the Education Sector Strategic Plan cited previously only considers children aged 4 and older to be under the domain of formal educational planning. Yet there are a number of recent policies demonstrating increased attention to issues of early childhood development and parenting in the early years, particularly in Rwanda’s health and social sectors. This section summarizes the aspects of these policies that are most relevant to the promotion of early literacy in the 0-3 age group.

For the 0-3 age group, by far the greatest attention is given to issues of physical development—child survival, nutrition, hygiene, and other health issues. Even in the ECD Policy and Integrated ECD Strategic Plan, the most critical goals cited for the early years include reducing infant mortality, preventing stunted growth, reducing malnutrition and child mortality and morbidity, and reducing the incidence of childhood illnesses and diseases due to poor hygiene.¹ Although the Strategic Plan includes language referring to “parents’ and legal guardians’ knowledge, skills and resources to support the development of their children” and “ensur[ing] that infants and toddlers receive nurturing care and developmental services,” it is only for children aged three and older that the Strategic Plan specifically discusses issues of cognitive development.² Early literacy development strategies, such as the benefits of reading aloud to young children, are not mentioned.

Figure 6: Relative attention to physical, affective, and cognitive aspects of ECD ages 0-3, in Rwandan policy documents



Recently, the issue of affective—social and emotional—care has also become more of a policy priority for the 0-3 age group and beyond; however, cognitive development remains an under-recognized aspect of infancy and the early childhood years. The current National Policy for Family Promotion, for example, emphasizes issues such as strengthening family relations and ensuring peace, democracy and security within the family. It also has an objective regarding the promotion of family education; however this seems to refer primarily to adult literacy and parents’ participation in children’s formal education.³ The new Revised Family Policy, currently under cabinet review, further increases the attention on social and emotional issues by centrally emphasizing the importance of

¹ MINEDUC, "Integrated Early Childhood Development Strategic Plan," ed. MINEDUC (Kigali, Rwanda2011).

² Ibid., 9.

³ MIGEPROF, "National Policy for Family Promotion," ed. Ministry of Gender and Promotion of the Family (Kigali, Rwanda2005).

positive parenting approaches and a harmonious family environment.¹ This new policy discusses the importance of establishing systems for educating parents about early childhood care and development, but cognitive interactions again do not receive significant attention.

A final programme impacting parenting and education issues for the 0-3 age group is *umugoroba w'ababyeyi*, or "parents' evening", first initiated in 2010 and expanded nationwide in 2013.² This local gathering for mothers and fathers is intended to take place at least once a month at the umudugudu level.³ Guidance from MIGEPROF suggests focusing on topics such as nutrition, hygiene, and resolving family conflicts. "Helping parents to improve their children's education" is also included as a possible topic, though evidence from interviews suggests that discussion of this topic is currently limited to issues of formal school registration and reducing drop-outs.

POLICIES RELATED TO AGE 4-6 AND ECD

Rwanda's strategic plans for education interventions in Early Childhood Development focus on the 4-6 age range, and more specifically on a single year of pre-primary instruction for age 5-6. As previously discussed, Rwanda's ECD Policy and Integrated ECD Strategic Plan address early childhood development issues from pregnancy or birth through to age six. However, most of the specific planning and activities in this area are currently envisioned under the Education Sector Strategic Plan, which does not have a mandate for children's issues below age four. Furthermore, in the context of significant budget constraints, the ESSP focuses its ECD goals on a one-year school-readiness program for 5 and 6 year olds. Thus, the most systematic interventions in ECD are currently envisioned only for those children just on the cusp of formal school attendance.

Current objectives for ECD provision focus on a school-based pre-primary model. The vision of ECD contained in Rwanda's ECD Policy and Integrated ECD Strategic Plan is holistic, with ECD potentially seen as a site for supporting the provision of a full range of services, including "nurturing care... stimulating play and early learning opportunities, good health care, nutritious and balanced diet, clean water, a hygienic environment, love, safety and security..."⁴ However, again apparently due to budget constraints, the ESSP now envisions that the nationwide rollout of ECD services will be accomplished through the extension of ordinary primary school facilities to accommodate the additional children represented by this age group. The ESSP sets a goal of increasing the current 13% GER in pre-primary to 30%. Given that the 2014 Leadership Retreat Resolutions cited earlier state that, by 2017, "all primary school going children will have passed through ECD Centres", it seems likely that the 30% GER (30% of all eligible children aged 3-6) is expected to translate into nearly 100% enrolment of 5-6 year olds in a one-year pre-primary program, with no formal enrolment expectations for 3 or 4 year olds for the time being.

Notably, the budget for ECD programming from 2013-2017 is focused largely on construction. Despite some conflicting information between the summary tables of Costs per Programme and the

¹ "Revised Family Policy," ed. Ministry of Gender and the Promotion of the Family (Kigali, Rwanda 2013).

² NAWOCO, "Umugoroba W'ababyeyi," ed. National Women Council (Kigali, Rwanda: NAWOCO, 2013).

³ Interview data from this study indicates a range of practices; in some places the gathering occurs weekly; in others monthly; and in others no such gathering is taking place.

⁴ MINEDUC, "Integrated Early Childhood Development Strategic Plan," 4.

detailed Policy Action Matrix,¹ officers in the MINEDUC planning department reported that the ESSP currently envisions a budget for assisting each Sector to construct pre-primary infrastructure in a single school (the 413 schools across the country have already been identified). However, by the end of 2017 it is expected that every Cell will have a school with a pre-primary section, the equivalent of 2,148 schools out of a total of 2,593 primary schools countrywide. It is not clear yet whether a national budget line for construction of these other facilities will be available, and there is likely to be reliance on what is referred to as the ‘unconventional approach’ to construction, which mobilizes community contributions in cash, materials, and labour to accomplish school construction goals. Costs for this construction are being kept as low as possible, since the facilities to be constructed are intended to be similar to ordinary primary school classrooms, with no provisions for special play materials or classroom equipment.²

Parents will continue to be responsible for supporting ECD teachers’/caregivers’ salaries. Up until the most recent draft, the ESSP also envisioned the extension of the “capitation grant”—a small sum given directly to schools for functioning, materials, maintenance, and training based on a per-student head count—to early childhood development facilities. However, the most recent draft of the ESSP states, instead, that “extending the capitation grant to the pre-primary sub-sector *will be explored* during the period of the ESSP”³ (emphasis added). Significantly, the government budget will not support the salaries of ECD/pre-primary teachers—parents will need to contribute in order to cover 100% of these teachers’ salaries, unlike in the 9YBE system. Interviews with local officials, and with NGOs implementing early childhood programming, raised serious questions about the feasibility of expecting parents to support the recurring costs of centre-based ECD.

A new training program for ECD caregivers has been established, and a revised pre-primary curriculum is under development; however, there is little specific discussion of how to ensure high-quality programming within ECD centres and pre-primary classrooms. The ESSP includes policy actions and a budget for training all pre-primary teachers (target: 3034 teachers by 2017), though there has been little concrete discussion of the implications of a lack of salary support for pre-primary teachers—which may lead to low interest in the profession as well as high turnover. The University of Rwanda-College of Education has also just prepared a new curriculum for the Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) that includes a specialization in early childhood development. The tutors who offer this specialization receive a short orientation in this new curriculum; however, there is little else planned to ensure high-quality preparation of future ECD caregivers/teachers. At the time of writing, the College of Education had not yet shared the new TTC curriculum, making it difficult to judge to what extent pre-literacy and literacy skills are addressed as part of the ECD specialization. Also notable is the fact that the lead consulting firm spearheading the national curriculum revision process initially overlooked the issue of pre-primary curriculum, though this oversight has since been corrected by the Rwanda Education Board. Finally, there is no explicit policy language in the ESSP or in the ECD Strategic Plan discussing how quality standards in ECD/pre-primary facilities will be ensured. This suggests that investments in ECD may not lead to the desired preparation in school-readiness, including a potential lack of attention to the development of vital pre-literacy skills.

¹ Large capital expenditures are projected for pre-primary in the summary tables, but this budget is not assigned to the construction output within the Policy Action Matrix.

² Source: interview at MINEDUC, March 5, 2014.

³ MINEDUC, “Education Sector Strategic Plan 2013/14-2017/18,” 54. Feb 2014 Draft.

POLICIES RELATED TO AGE 7-9 AND THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

Both education quality issues in general, and specifically the acquisition of literacy skills, are priority areas for the current Education Sector Strategic Plan in the early primary years. Education quality is one of the three strategic goals identified for the sector, integrated throughout several of the ESSP's ten sector outcomes, and literacy is introduced as a central quality indicator to be measured over the next five years:

“The quality of education relates to all dimensions of a child’s social, physical and emotional development, but at a minimum it can be measured by students’ learning achievement. At primary level, a continued focus will be placed on the acquisition of basic numeracy and literacy in the early grades. The sector aims to increase the percentage of students meeting minimum standards in English, Kinyarwanda and maths in P3, P5 and S2...”¹

To achieve these improvements in literacy skills, the ESSP proposes that teachers will need to have high-quality reading instructional materials and be trained in effective classroom practices to encourage reading, that timetables should allow time each week for the teaching of reading and for personal reading, that students need access to supplementary reading materials, and that there need to be public awareness campaigns regarding the importance and enjoyable aspects of reading. In addition, it proposes that the national system for assessing learning achievement will need to be strengthened to place greater emphasis on standardized measurement of literacy and numeracy skills.²

However, the ESSP monitoring matrix reduces these educational quality issues and strategies to only a few general indicators. Under the principle that what is measured is often what gets done, it is interesting to note that many of the important quality strategies described above—such as teacher training in literacy instruction, school time for reading instruction and independent reading, the availability of supplementary reading materials, and the suggestion of public awareness campaigns—were not directly converted into measurable indicators. Instead, the most relevant indicators include:

- % of students meeting minimum standards in English, Kinyarwanda and maths in P3;
- primary pupil : textbook ratio;
- % of schools with functioning libraries; and
- primary pupil : qualified teacher ratio (where “qualified” is defined as possessing an education-specific credential of the appropriate level, rather than any specific form of supplementary training such as in reading instruction).³

There is very little or no budget for a number of outputs directly related to improving education quality. Although detailed annual targets have been assigned for all of the planned ESSP outputs, not all of them have specific budget figures attached. In relation to education quality and early literacy, there is no particular budget allotment for annual examination and formative assessment implementation; nor for a national system for measuring learning achievement in core subjects.

¹ Ibid., 34.

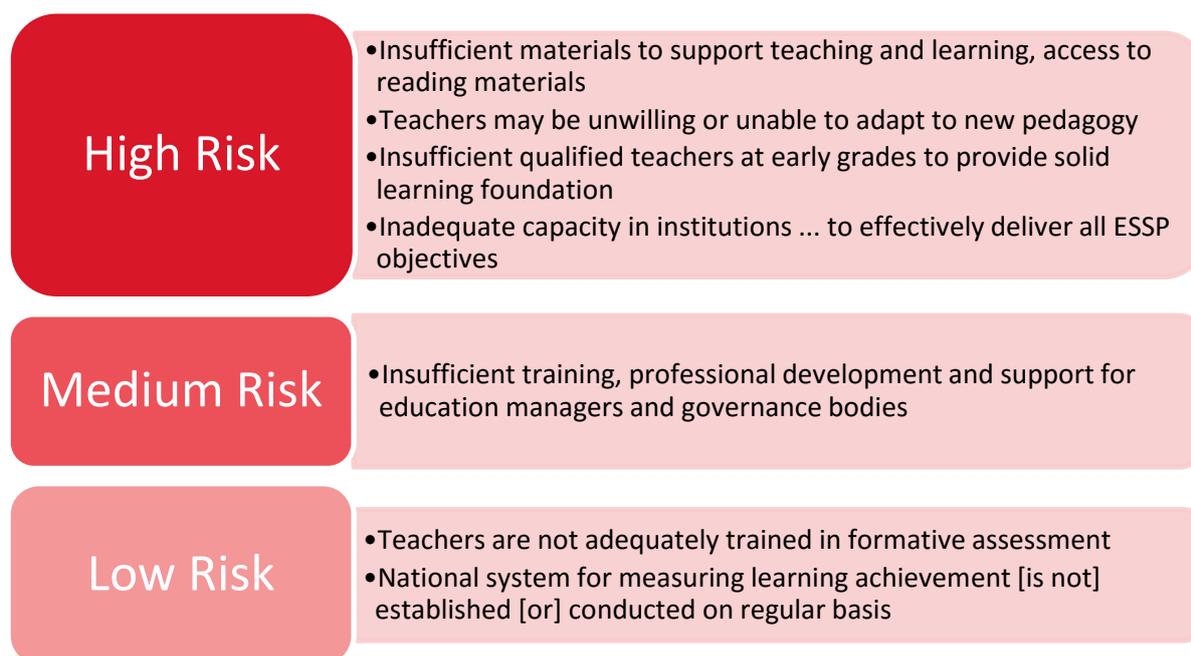
² Ibid., 51.

³ Ibid., 81-2.

There is also no budget allocation for “strengthening the capacity of schools and teachers to use readers in the classroom to build the reading skills of children”—a gap that is exacerbated by the fact that the target numbers indicate only a cumulative total of 250 teachers to be trained in this capacity over the five years of the ESSP.¹

Another sign that the ESSP’s education quality goals may not be fully achieved is the way that the most recent ESSP draft neglects to mention a number of significant risks that were identified at earlier times in the ESSP process. In the risk analysis included in a May 2013 version of the ESSP, seven risks were identified regarding education quality in primary schools (see Figure 6 below).²

Figure 7: Education Quality and Early Literacy-Related Risks Identified in the May 2013 version of the ESSP



However, in a later February 2014 version, most of these risks were no longer mentioned. Only one of these risks was fully retained—“insufficient training, professional development and support for education managers and governance bodies”—with the Capacity Development Fund proposed as a mitigation strategy. A second risk, originally identified as “teachers may be unwilling or unable to adapt to new pedagogy”, is referred to, but the language has been significantly changed to emphasize English-language issues more than the challenges of pedagogical change.³ **The elimination of the majority of the above-mentioned risks from the ESSP document does not mean that they have necessarily been resolved**—especially considering that many of these were originally identified as high-likelihood and high-impact risks. Now they may no longer be given the prominent attention they require.

Furthermore, a new curriculum for training primary school teachers has already been elaborated, yet it contains no major changes regarding language or literacy instruction. The University of Rwanda-College of Education has developed a new curriculum for the Teacher Training Colleges,

¹ Ibid., 96-7.

² Ibid., 76-7. May 2013 Draft.

³ Ibid., 75. Feb 2014 Draft.

which at the time of writing was not yet available for public review. However, interviews indicate that there have been no significant changes in the guidance that is provided to primary teacher trainees in terms of effective methods of literacy instruction. Furthermore, significant changes in the primary curriculum are likely as part of the national curriculum revision process currently underway; yet the College of Education has also indicated that it has no particular plans to revise the TTC curriculum or training approach in response—arguing that the current TTC curriculum is intended to prepare professional teachers who can continually adapt to a changing policy environment.

In summary, education quality and the acquisition of literacy skills in the primary years are high current priorities in Rwanda; however, the detailed planning for achieving these quality advancements seems weak on a number of fronts. Qualitative issues are often much harder to define and plan for in strategic policy-making; yet unless further detailed consideration is given to these areas, significant improvements in issues such as literacy skills may not be achieved.

ACCESS TO READING MATERIALS

The question of how to increase access to supplementary reading materials, both inside schools and beyond, is not yet a well-developed policy issue. The goal of creating a culture of reading in Rwanda was first raised as a national policy issue in 2011-2012, with the establishment of the Rwanda Reads initiative. Bringing a number of development partners on board to emphasize reading issues within their programs, Rwanda Reads began a process of raising awareness regarding the importance of giving children and others access to books. This initiative has led to the incorporation of literacy-promotion language in key policy documents such as the EDPRS II and the current ESSP, as well as the development of new policies such as the recent National Policy for Library Services and the National Book Development Policy currently under development. However, the detailed planning and budgeting for increasing access to and use of books—whether within schools or beyond—remains weak, indicating that this policy issue still needs to be accorded greater attention in order for significant change to be achieved.

The ESSP mentions the importance of providing access to supplementary reading materials; however, this is not given priority in the actual indicators and budgeting. As previously discussed, the ESSP includes an output related to the availability of supplementary reading materials. However, in the detailed Policy Action Matrix that gives targets and budgeting for each output, the issue of access to reading materials is grouped together with the goal of an improved student:textbook ratio. Furthermore, it is only the issue of *textbooks* that is given a detailed target: by 2017, 100% of students are expected to have textbooks, presumably meaning one book per student per subject.¹ Notably, a student:textbook ratio of 1:1, as this goal implies, cannot include supplementary reading material, since by definition the presence of supplementary materials means that there is *more* than one subject-relevant book available to each student. A study recently conducted for Save the Children also identified additional difficulties with efforts to increase the availability of supplementary reading materials—including schools' challenges in interpreting the lists of titles available for purchase, and disproportionate spending emphasizing higher grade reading materials

¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

and non-reading materials rather than books for lower grades.¹ Finally, a study sponsored by USAID revealed that, even in schools that have an adequate supply of books, teachers and students rarely use the books within the classroom.²

The recently-finalized National Policy for Library Services envisions the expansion of a network of community libraries, but specific strategies and budgeting for achieving this objective have not yet been established. The National Policy for Library Services, developed by Rwanda Library Services under MINISPOC, states, as a general principle, that “library and information services must be provided in a manner that is accessible by the public and that complies with the principles of decentralization in administration of service delivery.”³ A decentralized library system implies an attempt to increase access to reading materials throughout the country, and indeed the policy envisions “establish[ing] a system of public libraries and resource centres, supporting communities of all sizes.”⁴ Responsibility for the implementation of the policy is given to Rwanda Library Services; however, the implementation plan includes only very general activities, and does not indicate their respective budget allocations, if any.⁵

The National Book Development Policy currently being created is expected to support the functioning of a stronger publishing sector in Rwanda engaged in regular supply of Kinyarwanda-language supplementary reading materials. As part of its analysis of the current situation, the aforementioned National Policy for Library Services mentions the need for a “National Book Promotion Policy”. Accordingly, the Ministry of Sports and Culture has begun the process of working on this policy, now called the “National Book Development Policy” for the development and promotion of the book sector in Rwanda. Save the Children has been asked by MINISPOC to provide technical assistance in finalizing the policy, an initiative that is currently underway.

C. POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES ON THE HORIZON

There are a number of policies and programmes that are still under discussion or are not yet publicly available, which may have an impact on early literacy initiatives. Although many of these have already been described, for reference these include: the new Revised Family Policy under discussion; possible new developments in the *umugoroba w’ababyeyi* approach; the possibility of creating a new role at the *umudugudu* level for child rights issues, including education; the new curriculum for Rwanda’s Teacher Training Colleges; the national curriculum revision process currently underway; plans in the Education Quality and Standards department at REB to focus the 2014/2015 school inspections on the issues of reading and writing; the new National Book Development Policy; and the new recommendations coming from the DFID-sponsored Capacity Development Fund consultancies.

¹ Sofia Cozzolino, "Children's Book Practice & Policy Baseline," (Kigali, Rwanda: Produce for Save the Children-Rwanda, 2014).

² DeStefano et al., "Early Grade Reading and Mathematics in Rwanda: Final Report," 14.

³ MINISPOC, "National Policy for Library Services," ed. Ministry of Sports and Culture (Kigali, Rwanda: Republic of Rwanda, 2012), 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵ "Implementation Plan for National Policy for Library Services," ed. Ministry of Sports and Culture (Kigali, Rwanda: Republic of Rwanda, 2012).

SUMMARY: THE POLICY CONTEXT SURROUNDING EARLY LITERACY PROMOTION

Part II of this report has focused on the historical and current policy context regarding early literacy in Rwanda. Beginning with a brief discussion of historical factors that have both promoted and impeded the development of literacy in Rwanda, later sections moved on to consider in detail the current and upcoming policy documents and programmes that touch on different aspects of early literacy—from birth to age nine, in schools, homes, and in the broader community.

Some of the major findings of this policy analysis include the following:

Historical Influences on Early Literacy

- Rwanda's formal education system has been strongly influenced by a historical legacy that emphasized popular interest in learning to read through schooling, and yet also downplayed or actively restricted independent access to reading materials at a higher level of literacy.
- Major institutional changes in the education sector since the 1994 Genocide have greatly increased equity and access within the education system, yet so far little has changed in terms of the pedagogy being used in schools.

Current National Policy Context

- Current policies exhibit strong political will to expand educational opportunities both to the youngest children and to youth—however, projected budget expansions are currently targeted towards the secondary school years rather than the 0-6 age range.
- There is also a strong shift towards focusing on education **quality** issues in current policy documents, but **access** continues to take priority for the moment in terms of detailed strategizing and the use of Rwanda's limited available budget.
- Literacy promotion has arisen as a definite focus of policy-making; yet the specific strategies for achieving this objective are not completely thought-out.

Upcoming Policies and Programmes

- A number of policies and programmes on the horizon represent opportunities for further promoting the development of early literacy skills and child-friendly literacy environments.
- The national curriculum revision process, possible upcoming changes in the in-service teacher training system, openings in the area of parenting education, and initiatives in the publishing sector are all upcoming opportunities for influencing early literacy policy and practice.

III. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN EARLY LITERACY

This Part III of the report provides an analysis of the key stakeholders and the institutional context shaping early literacy promotion in Rwanda. The first section offers a brief overview of the main actors linked in some way to issues of early literacy—international, national, regional, and local institutions; civil society organizations; and the private sector. Next, the second section addresses how decision-making regarding planning, budgeting, and implementation are carried out among these sector actors. Finally, the third section analyses in greater detail the systemic lines of authority, accountability, and incentives, and the impact of gaps and contradictions on early literacy promotion.

A. PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN THE AREA OF EARLY LITERACY

A number of different stakeholders interact with early literacy issues in Rwanda, from the international down to local levels, and spanning the spectrum of intergovernmental, governmental, civil society, and private sector actors (see Figure 5 on the following page). This section briefly introduces each of these actors in turn, focusing on the roles and interests that they have in relation to early literacy issues.

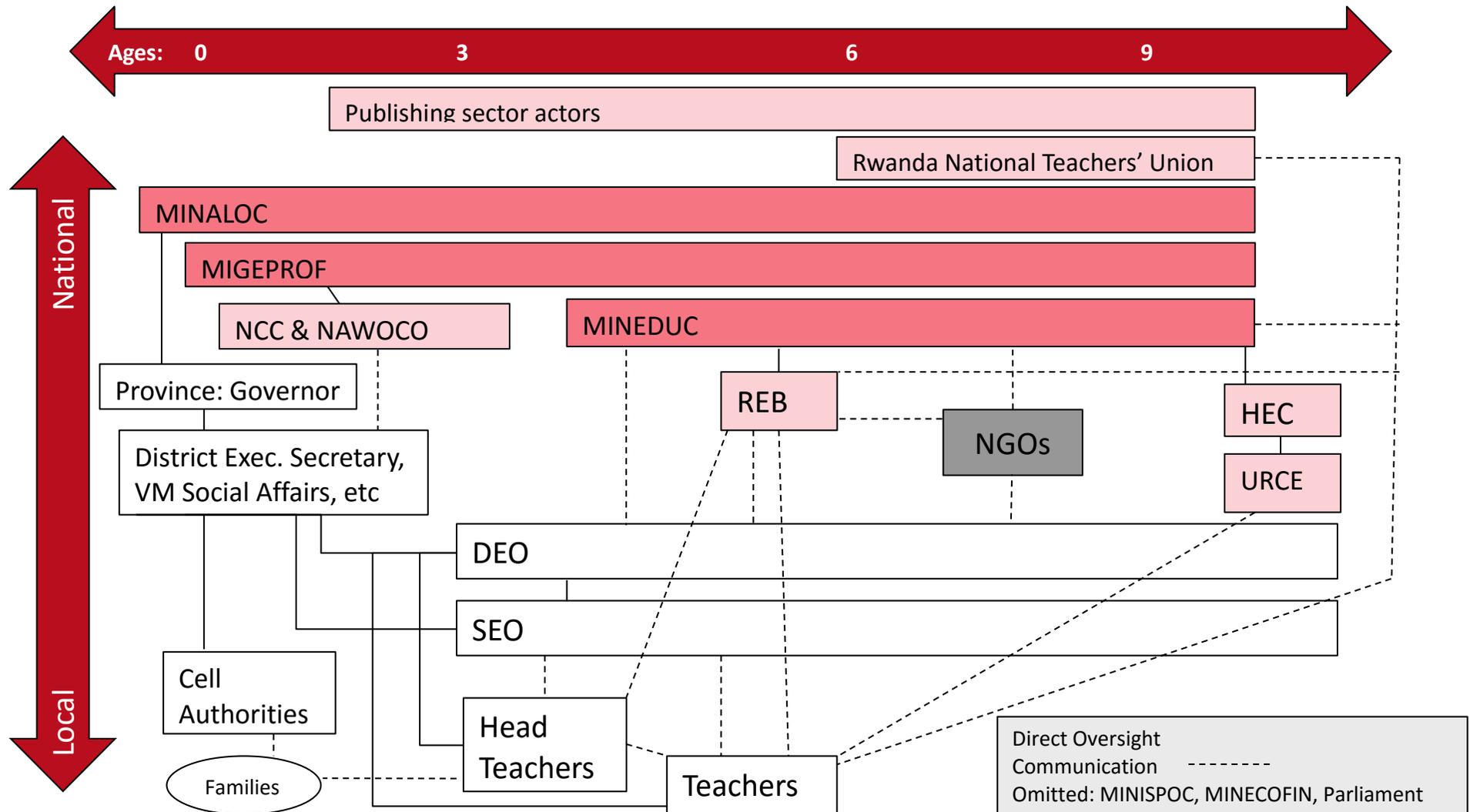
INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

The Rwandan government emphasizes its autonomy and capacity for independently seeking out development solutions. Yet, it is naturally also influenced by membership in a number of organizations and international agreements, many of which touch on educational issues. With regards to the United Nations, Rwanda is an active supporter of the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All agenda, both of which strongly influence its policy-making and objectives in human development and education. Many of the current Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) objectives in fact closely mirror the global Education for All agenda, emphasizing Rwanda's strong ambition to achieve these targets. Rwanda is a member of the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and, since shortly after the adoption of English as Rwanda's new language of instruction, the Commonwealth of Nations. Rwanda's membership in the EAC, in particular, is currently exerting a strong influence on educational policy-making in Rwanda, as Rwanda seeks alignment with other EAC member states on educational issues such as the curriculum, the school calendar, and the number of years to degree.

Another aspect of the international context that affects early literacy promotion in Rwanda is the country's continued need for foreign aid. Although the Rwandan government is actively pursuing a number of strategies to reduce dependence on development aid, direct donor support still constitutes a large percentage of the national budget. Major contributors to education sector funding include DFID, USAID, and UNICEF, with other recent partners including Belgium,



Figure 8: Stakeholders in Early Literacy in Rwanda



the Netherlands, Sweden, and the African Development Bank.¹ The implications of aid dependence were clearly evident in 2012, when a number of donors cut funding in response to UN allegations of Rwandan government involvement in conflict in Eastern D.R. Congo. Rwanda took various measures to meet the shortfall—including the institution of the Agaciro development fund to encourage the Rwandan diaspora, as well as Rwandan residents, to voluntarily contribute funds for national development. Nonetheless, in the current ESSP, the need for additional donor funding is clear—there is currently a 12.7% gap in funding to achieve the current goals, equivalent to about US\$312 million.² This funding gap strongly affects what can be included in sector targets, as illustrated by some of the low or absent budget lines identified in Part II of this report. The ESSP accordingly presents alternative planning scenarios in case of higher or lower funding yields.

GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

Several national government institutions conduct work related to early literacy promotion in Rwanda. The most directly involved include MIGEPROF, MINEDUC, MINISPOC, and MINALOC, while MINECOFIN, the Cabinet, and Parliament play a secondary—but determining—role in approval of policy priorities and budgeting.

The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, MIGEPROF, is the ministry most directly related to parenting issues and the 0-3 age group, though its mandate extends beyond this age to all family and gender issues. Two organs under MIGEPROF, the National Women’s Council (NAWOCO) and the National Commission for Children, oversee the implementation of initiatives related to women, children, and the family. As discussed in Part II of this report, it is NAWOCO that oversees *umugoroba w’ababyeyi*, while NCC focuses on children’s issues including the possibility of establishing an umudugudu-level social worker for issues of children’s rights, including education.

The Ministry of Education, MINEDUC, currently focuses on the formal education of children aged 4 and older, as well as adult informal literacy education. Within MINEDUC, the Directorate General of Education Planning is responsible for all policy issues, through its Basic Education unit (pre-primary through 9YBE and adult literacy), Post-Basic Education unit (upper secondary, TVET, and higher education), and a Special Programmes unit addressing cross-cutting issues. These units and their respective departments contribute inputs for deciding on policy priorities and conduct monitoring and evaluation functions. MINEDUC has a number of agencies responsible for particular aspects of education policy implementation; the two that impact on early literacy issues are the Higher Education Council and the Rwanda Education Board.

The Higher Education Council, one agency under MINEDUC, is responsible for teacher training, via its oversight of the University of Rwanda, College of Education. The College of Education, formerly the Kigali Institute of Education, has long been Rwanda’s central pedagogical institute responsible for the training of secondary school teachers and other education professionals. However, up until

¹ ODI, "Sector Budget Support in Practice: Case Study of the Education Sector in Rwanda," (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2009).

² MINEDUC, "Education Sector Strategic Plan 2013/14-2017/18," 91. February 2014 Draft.

2010 the training of primary school teachers was managed by MINEDUC, through the upper-secondary level Teacher Training Colleges. In 2010, oversight of “teacher education provision for all categories of teachers at all levels ...” was fully transferred to the College of Education (then KIE).¹

The responsibility for overseeing the implementation of pre-primary, primary and secondary education policy is entrusted, in turn, to the MINEDUC agency Rwanda Education Board (REB). REB contains six departments; the four with particular relevance for early literacy issues are listed in Figure 6 below along with their literacy-related functions:

Figure 9: Four Departments of REB with Early Literacy-related Functions

Curricula Production and Materials Distribution (CPMD)

- Producing curricula for pre-primary and primary levels
- Advertising tenders for the production of textbooks & supplementary books; reviewing quality
- Teacher training on new curricula (though see the *gaps* section on this issue)
- Organizing and overseeing materials distribution to schools nationwide

Education Quality and Standards (EQS; previously the Inspectorate)

- Supervising the preparation of education quality standards
- Conducting school inspections on infrastructure, management, and teacher practices

Teacher Development and Management (TDM)

- Facilitating teacher management functions performed by the Districts
- Offering in-service training of teachers, including oversight of School-Based Mentors
- Promoting the development of quality school management and leadership

Examination and Accreditation (EA)

- Coordinating all examinations activities
- Providing learning achievement data towards the evaluation of ESSP indicators (new function)

Although REB and the College of Education interact with the direct implementers of education policy—head teachers and teachers—in a number of ways, it is actually the Ministry of Local Government, MINALOC, that has authority over these actors, through the Districts. Beginning in 2000, Rwanda began undergoing a process of decentralization intended to reinforce the role of district and local government authority.² At the time, there were 12 Provinces and 154 Districts, each with their respective Provincial and District Education Officers.³ In 2006, following a restructuring of the country’s administrative boundaries, the role of Provincial Education Officers was eliminated and District Education Officers were put in place for each of the new 30 Districts; followed in 2011 by the creation of a Sector Education Officer function in each of Rwanda’s 416 Sectors. District Education Officers are formally overseen by the Mayors, who have the power to hire and fire them, and day-to-

¹ Faustin Habineza, "Teacher Training Colleges (Ttcs) and Their Affiliation to Kie," (Kigali, Rwanda: Kigali Institute of Education, 2012), 2.

² MINALOC, "Rwanda: Joint Governance Assessment Report," (Kigali, Rwanda: MINALOC/World Bank, 2008).

³ Hippolyte Fofack, Chukwuma Obidegwu, and Robert Ngong, "Public Expenditure Performance in Rwanda: Evidence from a Public Expenditure Tracking Study in the Health and Education Sectors," *Africa Region Working Paper Series*, no. 25 (2003).

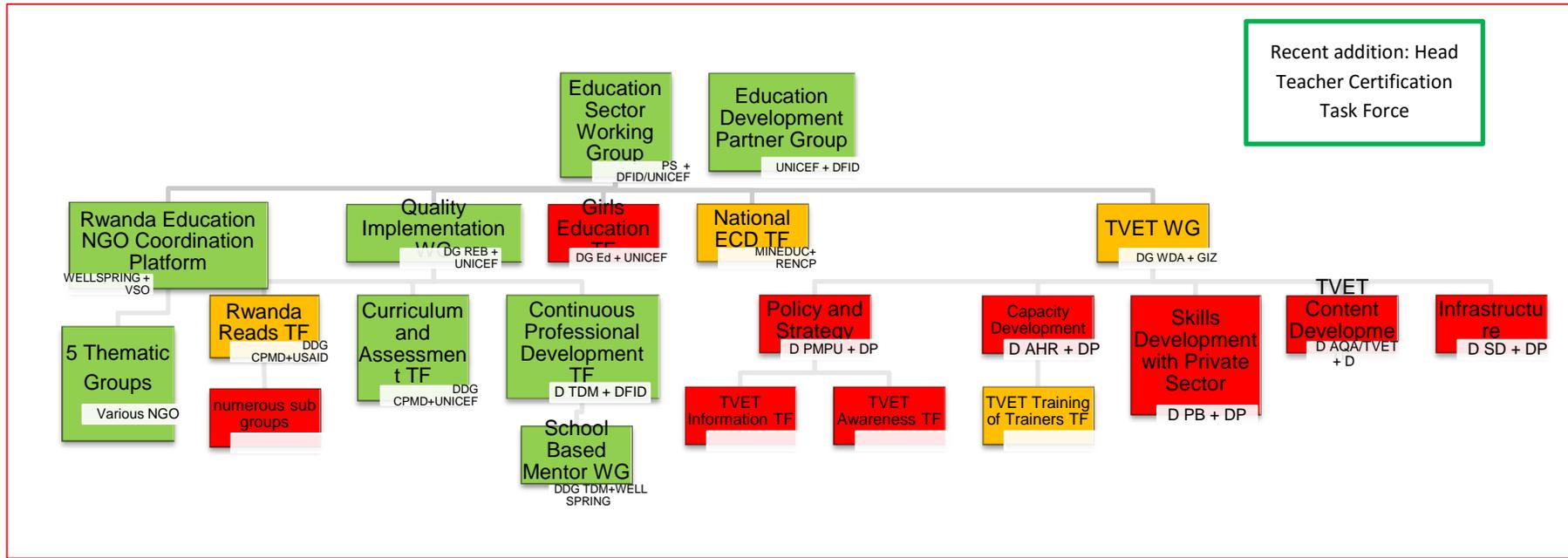
day work is conducted under the authority of the District Executive Secretary. The District Education Officer is responsible for the recruitment and oversight of Head Teachers (school directors) and teachers; along with coordinating education implementation more generally within the entire District, the DEO also has primary responsibility for overseeing secondary education institutions. The Sector Education Officers are similarly under the authority of the Sector Executive Secretary, who reports to the District, and they hold the primary responsibility for overseeing primary schools, as well as generally being responsible for all educational activities within the Sector. At the Cellule level, a Social Affairs Officer is formally responsible for all pre-primary activities within the Cell. The Province has some influence on education plans for all of these levels, particularly through its role in reviewing the District-level *imihigo*.

All of these local government officials fall under the province of MINALOC, though there is no specific linkage between MINALOC and the District Education Officer. Officials interviewed at MINALOC said that although the Directorate of Community Development and Social Welfare is the most related to education, it does not address education issues or the role of DEOs directly. The Ministry of Public Service and Labour (MIFOTRA) may also intervene on issues of hiring, firing and suspensions according to public sector labour laws. District and Sector Education Officers are therefore not directly under the authority of either MINALOC or MINEDUC, although they must coordinate together on many different issues.

Beyond the education sector specifically, the Ministry of Sports and Culture (MINISPOC) has a broad mandate over publications and books, as part of its cultural functions. Currently, it is the MINISPOC agency Rwanda Library Services (RLS) that is directly concerned with promoting a culture of reading in Rwanda, playing a lead role in envisioning the expansion of library services throughout the country, and now also leading the efforts to establish a National Book Development Policy in collaboration with Rwanda's publishing sector. The creation of a new agency, the Rwanda Archives and Library Services Authority (RALSA), with a stronger institutional basis for overseeing publications and library issues, is currently under consideration by the Senate within Parliament.

The line Ministries of MIGEPROF, MINEDUC, MINALOC, and MINISPOC all take primary responsibility for policy development; however, final decision-making is also controlled by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), the Cabinet, and Parliament. As will be discussed in further detail in the second section of this part of the report, Ministries must negotiate their proposed policy budgets—and therefore their goals—with MINECOFIN. Ultimately, because of its power to determine priorities for the government's limited financial resources, MINECOFIN can have strong influence over policy-making in any of these Ministries. The Prime Minister and Cabinet, in turn, are responsible for advising the line Ministries and giving final approval before policies are published. Finally, Parliament is responsible for any legislative aspects of policies, such as the creation of new institutions and legal frameworks—all of which can be reshaped during Parliamentary debate.

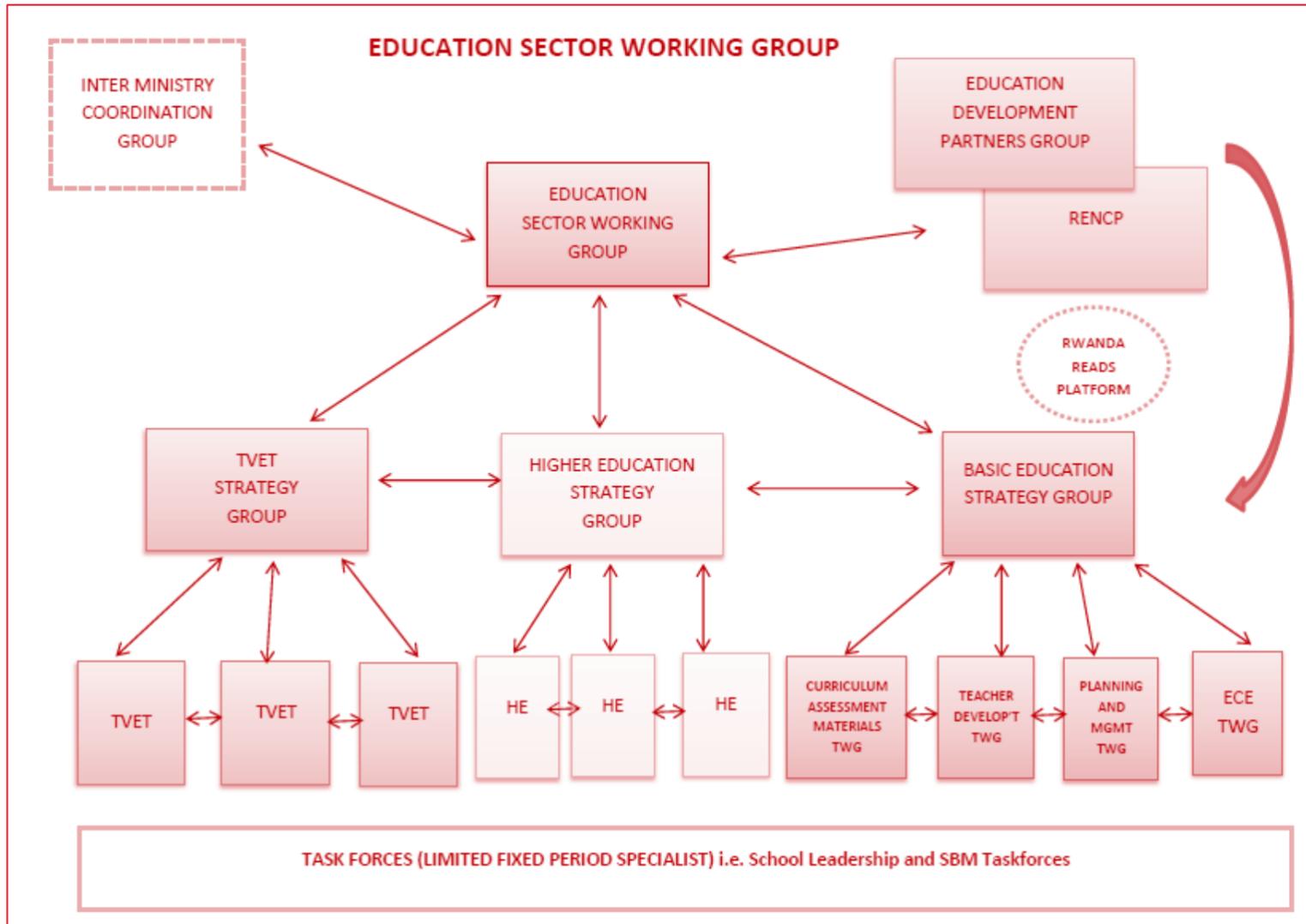
Figure 10: 2013 Rwanda Education Sector Coordination Structure Review: Sector Working Groups¹



Some or all of the following criteria apply			
Colour Key - Denoting level of functionality	Functioning well	Partially functional	Not functional
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear mandate • Active membership • Effective co-chairing • Regular meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less clear mandate • Less active membership • Co-chairing weak • Infrequent meetings, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No agreed mandate • Unclear membership • Co-chairing not working • Not meeting

¹ Source: Roger Cunningham and Claver Yisa, "Review of the Education Sector Coordination: An Assessment of the Mechanisms and Configuration of Sector Working Groups and Recommendations for Change," (Kenilworth, UK: Sasa Hivi Ltd, 2013), 8. (Head Teacher Certification Task Force added).

Figure 11: New Education Sector Coordination Structure (as of 2014)



CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Development partners—donors and NGOs—are highly involved in Rwanda’s education sector, and coordinate with government agencies. A review of the education sector coordination mechanisms was carried out in 2013, finding that the structure was too complex with too many separate groups—a number of which had only partial or very low levels of functioning.¹ Figure 10 on the preceding page illustrates this evaluation of the former structure of coordination, while Figure 11 shows the newly-approved structure of coordination that is just now beginning to be operational. In the new structure (much as before), the major donor agencies as well as selected NGOs participate in the Education Development Partners Group (EDPG). The EDPG links with the broader Rwanda Education NGO Coordination Platform (RENCP), which has working groups focused on issues such as Early Childhood Care and Development, Community Involvement, and Teacher Development and Educational Leadership. The Development Partners and RENCP chair organization are invited to participate in the high-level Education Sector Working Group meetings, which are attended by Ministry leadership and donor agency representatives. Below the Education Sector Working Group, there are three specialized groups: The Basic Education Strategy Group; the TVET Strategy Group; and the Higher Education Strategy Group. These Groups, in turn, have (or potentially have) Technical Working Groups below them.

The Joint Review of the Education Sector meetings help to link together government and civil society actors. These review meetings, which happen twice annually (one to review mid-term progress and one to plan for the following year) are open to “Government Ministries and agencies, donors, as well as to participants from civil society, teachers, students, teachers’ associations and local NGOs.”² Participants at the Joint Reviews discuss education sector performance over the preceding year, as well as how to address the main challenges that have arisen, and produce a summary report of the proceedings.³

Within this education coordination structure, a number of NGOs focus on ECD and on teacher training and pedagogy; though very few combine these areas with a specific focus on early literacy. NGOs with projects focusing on the area of ECD include (in addition to Save the Children): ADRA, Care International, Global Communities (formerly CHF International), Hope Rwanda, Imbuto Foundation, Kunda Umwana, Millenium Villages Project, Plan International Rwanda, Red een Kind (Help a Child), Strive Foundation, Umuhuza, VSO, and the Wellspring Foundation for Education. Notably, Imbuto Foundation has included a Community Education Worker in its programme, an example that may become a model for the umudugudu-level child rights role being considered in MIGEPROF’s upcoming Family Policy. In addition, UNICEF has stepped forward to develop a network of model ECD centres that can be used to demonstrate a best-practices approach to offering integrated ECD services. There are likely to be many religious organizations that also offer ECD

¹ Ibid.

² Bruno Versailles, "Rwanda: The Development of Sector Strategies," in *ODI Budget Strengthening Initiative: Country Learning Notes* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2012).

³ MINEDUC, "Forward-Looking Joint Review of the Education Sector: Summary Report," (Kigali, Rwanda: Ministry of Education, 2013).

programming, and in some cases churches are also used as sites for community-based ECD services. Many of the above organizations promote traditional centre-based approaches to ECD. However, some focus on alternative methods such as parenting education, neighbour collaborations, and playgroups. Although these organisations are naturally concerned with the quality of ECD programming they offer, most do not have a specific research-based approach to promoting pre-literacy and early literacy; in many cases, they are still occupied with the more basic tasks of equipping centres, ensuring the stable presence of a teacher/caregiver, providing them with basic short training courses, and encouraging parent participation—without going into great detail as to the teaching methods being used during the actual day-to-day operation of the centres/programmes. UNICEF is now leading an initiative to conduct an inventory of these organisations' interventions in order to collect and share information about effective approaches.

NGOs with projects focusing on teacher training and pedagogy in the primary years include (in addition to Save the Children): the British Council, FHI360, Information Training and Outreach Centre of Africa (ITOCA; an IfE project), One Laptop per Child Rwanda, Red een Kind (Help a Child), STEM Rwanda, USAID/EDC-L3, VSO, the Wellspring Foundation for Education, World Vision, the University of Bristol (an IfE project), and Plan International Rwanda, among others.¹ Most of these organizations focus on teacher training in English, ICT, and student-centred or active pedagogy—often combining all three together. Only EDC-L3 and Save the Children also have a specific focus on literacy instruction.

NGOs with projects focusing directly on early literacy and book availability include USAID/EDC-L3, Grace Rwanda, and ITOCA (in addition to Save the Children). The L3 (Literacy, Language, and Learning) initiative focuses on the primary school years 1-4, with teacher training and materials development focused particularly on reading, numeracy, and English. L3 also has a small library initiative using community book banks. A number of NGOs also have small library-promotion activities; Grace Rwanda, for example, supports the establishment of mini-libraries in schools and classrooms throughout Muhanga District, and also plans to establish 21 District Youth Centres with libraries. ITOCA, mentioned above, has an Innovation for Education Fund project to train teacher librarians, beginning focusing on staff at the College of Education and seven TTCs.

Save the Children's programme Advancing the Right to Read, in particular its components RCBI, First Read, and ELMI, demonstrates a uniquely holistic approach to early literacy promotion that is not being duplicated by any other organisation working in Rwanda. The RCBI component of ARR, with its direct approach to supporting the Rwandan publishing sector, is appreciated by other development partners as an important initiative that could help to address many of the local publishing constraints faced by both government institutions and NGOs. Though some organisations offer parenting education interventions as part of the above-mentioned programs, First Read is unique in its focus on teaching parents about the importance—and feasibility—of developing pre-literacy and literacy skills within the home. As already mentioned, ELMI is one of the few or only ECD

¹ The DFID-supported Innovation for Education Fund funds 26 small-scale educational innovations in Rwanda. "Innovation for Education," Ministry of Education, <http://www.mineduc.gov.rw/spip.php?rubrique33>.

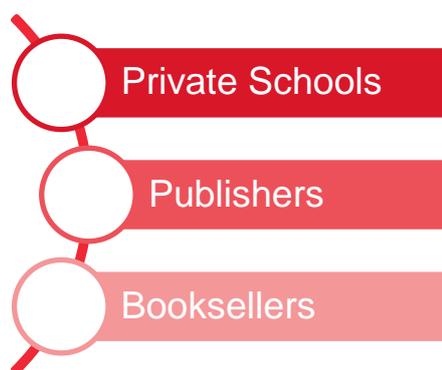
interventions to focus strongly on the research-based teaching methodologies employed to promote early literacy and math initiatives within the ECD centre environment.

Only the Literacy Boost component of Advancing the Right to Read seems less distinct from the approaches of other organizations—particularly USAID/EDC-L3—working within primary schools, although its approaches to teacher training and community action do have unique features not found in the USAID/EDC-L3 project. These features include building teachers’ in-depth understanding of how to support literacy development, beyond just the application of a certain package of materials; training both literate and illiterate parents in skills they can use to develop their children’s reading abilities; and the pairing of weekly reading clubs with community book banks. **Overall, there is no other programme in Rwanda that, like ARR, addresses the full 0-9 age range in such a comprehensive way, with initiatives that encompass the full spectrum of family, community, school, and private sector.**

Another civil society actor impacting early literacy is the Rwanda National Teachers Union (SNER—Sindicat National des Enseignants au Rwanda). The SNER has existed since 1996 and currently has some 50,000 teachers as members. The Union focuses on issues affecting teachers in public primary and secondary schools.

PRIVATE SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders in the private sector that interact with early literacy issues include privately-owned ECD centres and primary schools, as well as all of the actors within the publishing sector. Most ECD services are currently private or NGO-run, and there are also many private primary schools in the country. While NGOs with ECD and primary programmes are represented through RENCP, there is no particular representation of private schools on the Education Sector Working Group or in any other form of lobbying organisation.



The publishing sector includes a number of private stakeholders that can impact the quality of early literacy promotion in Rwanda. Stakeholders in the publishing sector include the Rwandan Publishers and Booksellers’ Association; the Rwandan Society of Authors (and various other private authors’ associations); and the Rwandan Printers’ Association (inactive). There are no collective organisations at the moment for illustrators, graphics designers, or libraries.¹

The low number of private booksellers also impacts the availability of reading materials in Rwanda. Booksellers face such severe market constraints that there are ten or fewer book shops in the whole country.² Booksellers are not included in any part of the current chain of publicly-financed book provision to schools, since publishers directly win government tenders, contract out for

¹ Cozzolino, "Children's Book Practice & Policy Baseline."

² Ibid.

printing, and manage regional book deliveries. In addition, because there is not yet a strong culture of reading in Rwanda, few book shops can develop a strong enough customer base to meet their costs.

Overall, it is clear that donors and civil society actors have a much greater influence over Rwandan education policy issues, than do private sector actors.

B. THE “BUSINESS CYCLE” OF PLANNING, BUDGETING, AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Rwandan government’s “business cycle” of planning, budgeting, and implementation happens on the basis of both multi-year and annual plans. Overarching policies, such as the current Education Sector Strategic Plan, determine policy priorities and budgeting over a several-year period. Within those broad periods, major shifts are unlikely to occur.¹ These multi-year plans are implemented in year-by-year stages, however, with more detailed planning and budgeting happening at each point. The fiscal year (the calendar applicable for policy implementation) extends from July to June. The planning cycle begins several months prior to that, with discussions about the next year’s priorities and budgeting from the beginning of each calendar year. Once the line Ministries have re-determined their costing in detail, this annual budget proposal must then be negotiated with MINECOFIN, for finalization before July.

A range of government and civil society stakeholders play a role in the planning process, with national government agencies taking a strong lead. The line Ministries (such as MINEDUC and MIGEPROF) begin the planning process with a strong position on their priorities. However, there is an effort to provide fora to the Districts, civil society organisations, and donors—including the various Working Groups and Task Forces introduced in previous sections—for contributing their own input. These interactions do sometimes lead to shifts in priority over time, especially when there is widespread agreement among different sector actors and consistent repeated messaging over time regarding the importance of a particular topic, such as occurred in the case of introducing Early Childhood Development as a policy priority. Such influence, however, is not guaranteed.

Moving from the national to the regional and local levels, analyses of the District *imihigo* show that they essentially follow national guidance from sectoral plans and their budgets, although there is not always strong understanding of sector priorities. Districts may decide to put more emphasis on some goals than others, or perhaps even add a few additional goals particularly relevant to their context, but significant deviation or innovation is rare or non-existent.² This is at least in part because Districts have no control over local sources of revenue, with the result that resources are usually only available in relation to national policy priorities. At more local levels, Sectors are in charge of managing funds specifically related to school construction, while schools also have control over the money received from the capitation grants.³ Cellules have essentially no budget under their control, though they are often asked to mobilize the population to make contributions for specific *imihigo* objectives, such as the construction of extra classrooms. As noted in Part II of this report, Districts, Sectors, and Cells may have secondary objectives that are expressed in their Action Plans, rather than in the *Imihigo*, but often without specific sources of funding attached for their realisation.

¹ They have been known to happen, however, such as with the surprise introduction of 12YBE by the new regime in 2010/2011, midway through EDPRS I.

² Chemouni, "Explaining the Design of the Rwandan Decentralisation: Elite Vulnerability and the Territorial Repartition of Power." Our interviews confirmed this general conclusion, though local officials were not critical of this dynamic; they simply seemed to accept that they needed to follow national guidance.

³ TIR, "Rwanda Public Expenditure Tracking Survey in Education (9ybe)," (Kigali, Rwanda: Transparency International Rwanda, 2012).

The following chart, compiled for an Overseas Development Institute study, provides more detailed information on Rwanda’s budgeting calendar and the range of actors involved:

Figure 12: Detailed Rwandan Budget Calendar¹

TIMEFRAME	MINECOFIN	LINE MINISTRIES	DISTRICTS	NON-STATE ACTORS/DEV PARTNERS	CABINET/ PARLIAMENT
July	Update of macro-framework	Preparation of financial statements	Preparation of financial statements		
August	Preparation of budget execution report	Preparation of annual reports	Preparation of annual reports		Cabinet retreat and approval of BOP
	Preparation of budget outlook paper				
September	Issuance of First Budget Call Circular to communicate Sector MTEFs and request for preparation of Sector BFPs	Review of Ministerial expenditures	Review of District expenditures	Preparation of District expenditure reviews	
October	National budget consultative workshop to officially launch the budget process	Joint Sector Review & preparation of Sector BFPs	District Expenditure Review & preparation of District BFPs	Participation to the National Budget consultative workshop	
	Local government consultative workshop				
November	Training of budget staff on new utilities of SmartGov	Participation in the JBR	Consultation with Ministries on District BFPs	Participation in the JBR	
	Joint Budget Review (JBR) & update of macro-framework				
December	Issuance of the second Budget Call Circular with revised MTEF & agency ceilings	Training of Budget Officers on the use of SmartGov		Participation to the SWG Retreat	Approval of Revised Budget by Cabinet
	Preparation & submission of the Revised Budget to Cabinet	SWG Retreat to consolidate Sector BFPs			
January	Submission of Revised Budget to Parliament	Online Budget Submission by Budget Agencies	Estimation of district resources and preparation of District Budgets	Communication of Indicative Commitments	Approval of Revised Budget by the Parliament
	Inter-Ministerial Consultative Meeting on Budget Priorities & Resource Allocations	Revised budget data input in the SmartGov			
February	Beginning of the EAC Pre-Budget Consultations process		Budget data input in the SmartGov		
	Preparation & submission of the National BFP and draft Budget to Cabinet				
March					Cabinet approval of the BFP and Draft Budget
April	BFP presented to Parliament not later than April 5		District Council scrutiny and approval of Annual Budget	Participation in the JBR	Discussion of the BFP and the Draft Budget by the Parliament
	Draft Budget submitted to Parliament				
	Communicate the draft budget estimates to CBMs				
May	Joint Budget Review	Participation in the JBR			
	EAC Ministerial Consultations on tax policy issues				
June	Preparation of the Budget Speech and finalisation of the draft Budget				
	Presentation of the draft Budget to Parliament				
				Communication of firm commitments	Approval of the Budget

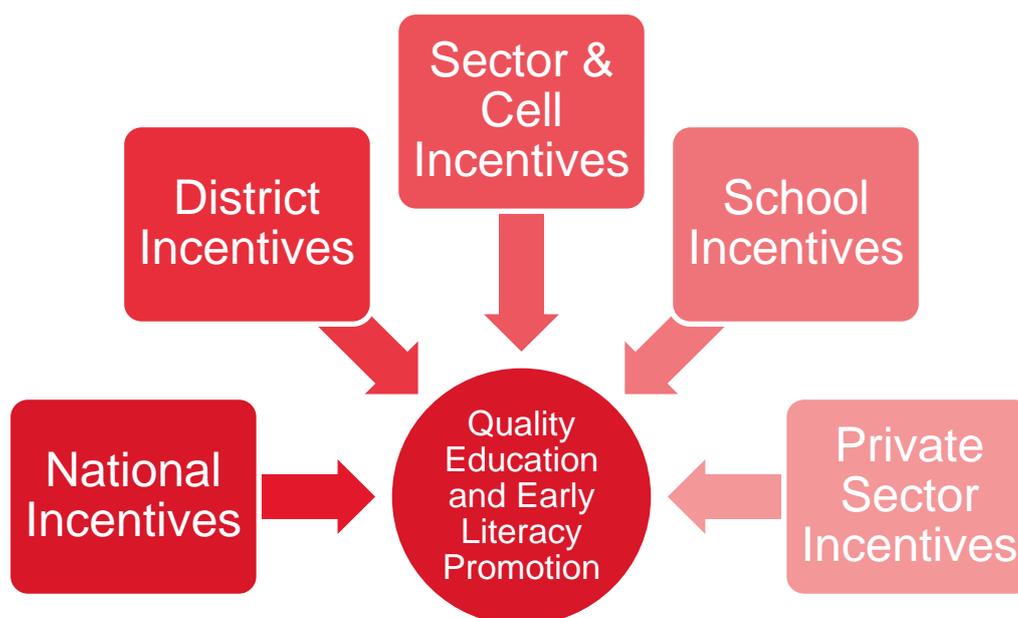
As already noted, planning in Rwanda takes place in a context of budget constraints and continued (though comparatively reduced since the 1990s) aid dependence. In addition to the national Ministries, the Office of the President, Prime Minister, and the Cabinet also have influence over priority-setting, as does MINECOFIN. The strong negotiating position of MINECOFIN, which often leads to changes in the priorities originally determined by the line Ministries, comes from the overall budget constraints that Rwanda faces—constraints that can be exacerbated during periods of regional or global economic recession, and/or withdrawals of donor funds. For further information on these issues, see the section on “International Stakeholders”, above.

¹ Versailles, "Rwanda: The Development of Sector Strategies," 6.

C. THE INFLUENCE OF INCENTIVES

Not only rational plans and policies, but also the incentives facing different actors, shape the implementation of early literacy promotion efforts. The research for this study investigated the types of actions for which key sector actors receive praise or criticism, benefits or disadvantages. This section highlights these issues at the National, District, Sector, Cell, and School levels.

Figure 13: The Influence of Incentives



ALIGNMENT IN INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL-LEVEL INCENTIVES

At the national level, Rwanda’s incentives seem largely aligned with international literacy-promotion goals. In general, the Rwandan government as a whole is strongly interested in achieving and maintaining international legitimacy—on which much private sector investment and donor aid depends. This interest in international legitimacy has undoubtedly helped fuel Rwanda’s already strong commitment to development goals, with the added effect of encouraging alignment with international standards and programmes, such as the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. The extent to which early literacy is a priority in international development discourse—that is to say, an important priority, but not the only one—is largely reflected within Rwanda itself at the moment. Just as on the international scene, the need for developing a stronger culture of literacy is explicitly recognized in Rwanda, and yet it must compete with other important goals such as the budget demands of guaranteeing universal access to basic education.

The staff within national government agencies also have incentives to work hard towards national policy goals, given the strong political pressure in Rwanda to meet targets and objectives, once they have been set out. Within Ministries, as in any large bureaucratic institution, there may sometimes be the tendency to ignore disconfirming information or alternative ideas from lower-level employees—yet, because of the government’s system of performance review, high-level officials

know that they will be held publicly accountable for poor results, giving them a reason to stay informed and push their staff to work hard. Actual staff performance depends strongly on the managerial capacities of particular Directors of departments and units, however, with some offices where staff seem to have few requirements to structure their daily work, and other government offices that are highly over-worked due to ambitious objectives and under-staffing.

MIXED INCENTIVES IN DISTRICTS, SECTORS, AND CELLS

At the District level, District Education Officers (DEOs) are most strongly praised for tangible, countable achievements which are closely linked to *imihigo* goals and indicators. The *imihigo* are subject to a public national review process, in which the President himself calls to account individual officials who seem to have been unsuccessful at meeting their targets. This process has been widely recognized as having led to significant development progress on a number of fronts.

However, there may also be some ways in which the performance contract approach has counter-productive results. On the one hand, the pressures surrounding the *imihigo* system may sometimes cause undesirable effects. There has been some suggestion, for example, that this system may place pressure on District officials to “adjust” their figures in order to receive a more favourable *imihigo* evaluation¹ (this possibility, cited in the research literature on Rwanda’s decentralisation process, was neither confirmed nor disconfirmed in interviews for this study). Alternatively, District officials may place strong pressure on Sector and Cell officials—who in turn may place strong pressures on families—to achieve objectives that may in fact be too ambitious for the local reality. Plans to continue community contributions for ECD and primary classroom construction and the likely increase in demands for parental contributions to ECD teacher salaries, for example, should be examined from this perspective, as the pressure to achieve *imihigo* goals may place an unsustainable financial burden on families.

Furthermore, the *imihigo* currently tend to emphasize objectives that are easily translatable into tangible/countable indicators, often leaving quality indicators aside. Easily quantifiable indicators—such as the number of classrooms constructed, the number of qualified teachers hired (where “qualified” simply means that they have the appropriate education-related credential), and equalizing male/female enrolment numbers—are easier both to monitor and to use for public demonstrations of achievement, than qualitative indicators. This emphasis, however, may prevent District officials from exploring or working on the more subtle

“This quantitative emphasis may prevent District officials from exploring or working on the more subtle issues that are also critical to areas such as early literacy promotion and education quality, such as whether or not teachers actually have the appropriate skills—not just credentials—to achieve learning objectives.”

¹ Chemouni, "Explaining the Design of the Rwandan Decentralisation: Elite Vulnerability and the Territorial Repartition of Power."

issues that are also critical to early literacy promotion and education quality, such as whether or not teachers actually have the appropriate *skills*—not just credentials—to achieve learning objectives. It is also linked to District officials' difficulties with understanding or appreciating the significance of more qualitative programmes implemented by NGOs, which were sometimes characterized in interviews for this study as “invisible” or “just meetings”. However, there was also some indication that DEOs may be recognized for qualitative efforts that in some way go beyond what is “ordinarily” part of their job—such as making special efforts to visit schools, a practice that is still seen as fairly unusual among DEOs. The national *imihigo* review also often praises Districts that have employed innovative and cost-effective approaches to achieving goals.¹

“Examination performance of the schools within their Sector or Cell was also a key issue, offering the potential for either strong praise or strong critique. However, no goals related to examination scores are included in the *imihigo* documents reviewed.”

Incentives at the Sector and Cellule levels are largely similar to those at the District level, with the exception that they have additional constraints in terms of the budget and resources available. Sector Education Officers and Cellule Authorities alike mentioned that they received praise for achieving targets despite their very limited budgets, particularly in relation to the number of classrooms constructed, and for achieving high parental participation or contributions to construction activities. Examination performance of the schools within their Sector or Cell was also a key issue, offering the potential for either strong praise or strong critique. Interestingly, however, no goals related to examination scores are included in the *imihigo* documents reviewed, despite the fact that the current ESSP contains specific targets for increasing the percentage of students achieving at least minimum proficiency in literacy and numeracy.

Some SEOs, like some DEOs, also reported being praised for their efforts to visit schools—a job that is formally part of their attributions, but which usually requires sacrifice of personal funds, since SEOs are rarely given a budget for transport or communications. In addition, school visits may conflict with other work—not always education-related—assigned to SEOs by their direct supervisors, the Sector Executive Secretaries. Finally, Cellule officials also mentioned that they may receive praise for their efforts at parent mobilization, such as achieving high ECD and school enrolment and reducing drop-out cases, which they said often must be dealt with at the level of individual households. Cellule officials, like SEOs, have no budget for transport and communication.

SCHOOL-LEVEL AND PRIVATE SECTOR INCENTIVES

At the school level, achieving high examinations scores is the key quality-related incentive, though there are others that may counteract this effect. Like SEOs and Cellule authorities, Head Teachers and teachers reported receiving strong praise—or criticism—related to school construction achievements and overall school or subject examination scores. They may also be critiqued for

¹ Rwanda, "Districts Imihigo Evaluation Report," (Kigali, Rwanda: Republic of Rwanda, 2013).

having too many students repeat the year, given that reduction in repetition is a major education sector goal. However, rather than this influencing improved quality, it may often have the opposite effect of encouraging teachers towards automatic promotion even in cases where students have not met basic standards of proficiency.¹ Even more specifically related to literacy, some interviews for this study indicated that teachers may be asked to be the guarantor for lending out school books, making teachers reluctant to give books to their students in case students lose or damage them and teachers are required to pay for replacements.

This study has not identified any particular way, however, in which the interests of private school owners have a systemic impact on early literacy promotion in Rwanda. Curricular changes may have an impact on private schools, as they may be legally required—or just encouraged by parents—to adopt new standards in order to match the public system. The large and partially public-funded increase in ECD/pre-primary facilities that is planned during this ESSP may also have an impact on demand for private ECD facilities. However, neither of these considerations has generated any organized response from private ECD services and primary schools (such as seeking input on the curriculum revision process, influencing the siting of public facilities to reduce competition, or requests from private ECD centres for a share of public funding).

Private sector stakeholders—such as private school owners and publishers—may also have incentives that conflict with policy goals. The publishing sector includes a number of private stakeholders that can impact the quality of early literacy promotion in Rwanda. Publishers, in particular, have influence over the quality of books available in Rwanda. There are international, regional, and a few local publishers operating in Rwanda, primarily developing books in response to government tenders. However, a recent study found that the incentives of the tender and Textbook Approval process are structured in such a way as to encourage low investments in quality (recruitment of less experienced authors, fewer illustrations, minimum possible printing standards within the government requirements) because more expensive books are rarely approved by REB's Textbook Approval Committee.² In addition, the international publishers who often win tenders have an incentive to lower their costs by simply translating books they have developed for other countries, whether or not they are truly relevant to the Rwandan context.

The above examples of counterproductive or mixed incentives, while not deterministic, are likely to have a systemic effect on early literacy promotion and other quality issues. The next section turns to another analysis of systemic effects—gaps and contradictions in the lines of authority and accountability.

¹ RCSP, "National Dialogue Report on 12ybe in Rwanda - Draft."

² Cozzolino, "Children's Book Practice & Policy Baseline."

D. INSTITUTIONAL GAPS & CONTRADICTIONS

There is much in Rwanda's education sector that works very well. Rwanda is widely praised for its efforts to achieve the Education for All objectives, including its ambitious decision to expand universal schooling access beyond basic education into upper secondary. Rwanda's enrolment figures are some of the highest in the region, as are its successes in achieving gender parity. The education sector is also recognized, within the Rwandan government, as one of the strongest sectors in terms of its level of activity and capacity to engage in detailed planning.

"There is much in Rwanda's education sector that works very well. Yet these achievements do not exclude the possibility of making further improvements."

Yet these achievements do not exclude the possibility of making further improvements. One function of this report is to identify those areas where gaps and contradictions in incentives and lines of authority may be impeding progress in early literacy promotion. Many of the gaps and contradictions identified during the research for this report have been recognized by a number of sector actors themselves, and some have been included in the Ministry of Education's own requests for Capacity Development consultancies. A separate study on education decentralization in Kigali's three districts highlighted, for example, issues such as "ineffective management...unclear demarcation of responsibilities, weak coordination of institutions and untrained staff...poor monitoring and evaluation processes, work overload, and powerlessness" as some of the major challenges identified by DEOs, SEOs, and Head Teachers.¹ Echoing some of these observations, this section focuses on five areas of major systemic gaps and contradictions related to the promotion of early literacy in Rwanda:



¹ Dan Imaniraho, "Decentralized Supervision of Schools in Kigali City: Issues and Challenges," *Journal of Education and Practice* 2, no. 1 (2011).

GUIDANCE OF DEOS AND SEOS

District and Sector Education Officers have major managerial and technical functions; yet they do not receive any specialized preparation for this work. A decentralized system of educational management is common in many countries. But the position of regional education supervisor is usually reserved for an experienced manager with a Masters or PhD degree, often earned specifically in the field of educational leadership and management. In contrast, within Rwanda, DEOs and SEOs typically only hold a Bachelor’s degree, in an educational field but rarely with any studies related to education policy and management, and they may not even have significant personal experience as teachers or school directors. While this does not exclude the possibility that some DEOs and SEOs are highly capable and knowledgeable, it seems likely that they need some additional technical training and guidance to perform their work to high quality standards.

The greatest influence exercised on DEOs’ and SEOs’ work comes from District and Sector Executive Secretaries, who themselves have no particular expertise in education. DEOs and SEOs are hired under the District Mayors and their work is supervised by—and often planned according to the priorities of—Executive Secretaries who have little technical knowledge of the education sector. On the one hand, as noted previously, this may mean that the Executive Secretaries ask DEOs and SEOs to perform assignments that are unrelated to education, and which take time away from their education-related functions. Another effect is that Executive Secretaries may not prioritize education when determining the allocation of internal budgets and resources. For example, many of the SEOs interviewed for this study explained how the small budget for “functioning” given to their Sector office might be used up for the needs of other sectors, particularly agricultural extension services, without ever considering the transport and communication needs of the SEO, who is called on to visit schools. Furthermore, Executive Secretaries often do not have the knowledge necessary to guide or judge the effectiveness of DEOs’ and SEO’s work, and District and Sector Education Committees also vary considerably in their ability to give technical guidance.

DEOs receive some communications from MINEDUC, but no Ministry has a function of regular guidance or oversight over their work. As noted earlier, DEOs and SEOs are government employees, hired and fired under MINALOC and following MIFOTRA public service labour laws. Yet MINALOC has no particular personnel to liaise with the DEOs, even within the Ministry unit that focuses on social affairs in local governance; instead, MINALOC considers DEOs to be largely MINEDUC’s responsibility. There is one employee in the MINEDUC Planning Department who has a primary function of communicating with the DEOs, and who recently organized a several-day meeting for DEOs particularly in order to discuss District budgets. However, this relationship is largely focused on reporting and budgeting issues, rather than the details of quality education implementation. Additionally, MINEDUC does not appear to actually distribute printed copies of its major policies to the DEOs—their knowledge of policy issues

“DEOs receive some communications from MINEDUC, but no Ministry has a function of regular guidance or oversight over their work.”

largely depends on the summaries they have heard during meetings, and on DEOs' own individual initiative in personally seeking out full copies of policies online or from national government offices.

Each department within REB has specific topics about which they communicate regularly with DEOs; however these communications focus more on logistical issues than on quality education implementation. The TDM department within REB works with the DEOs in the selection of in-service training sites and participants, and involves the DEOs in the hiring of School Based Mentors. Under TDM, the School Leadership and Management Unit has also produced a Head Teacher recruitment guide to help DEOs select qualified candidates; yet no one at REB has the authority to ensure that DEOs actually use the guide and its standards in their hiring processes. CPMD coordinates textbook and book distribution through the DEOs, but there is no feedback mechanism from schools to DEOs and back to CPMD regarding the quality of the materials received. EQS regularly shares information gained from inspections on school problems; yet EQS does not play any determining role in how DEOs choose to respond to the situation, and many DEOs appear not to have a systematic way of ensuring school improvement when problems are identified. Some technical-level staff in REB also noted that it could facilitate their work to have more direct official channels of communication, either themselves or through the Deputy Director Generals of their departments.

SEOs, for their part, are largely left out of this system of communication with MINEDUC and REB, except to the extent that DEOs pass on information to them, or NGOs include them in special meetings and trainings. SEOs generally must depend on the DEOs above them, and on their own Executive Secretaries, for information-sharing—as a result they are generally much less well-informed about national policies and guidance than the DEOs, even though it is the SEOs who have the most direct responsibility for liaising with schools. The SEOs included in this study, for example, had either never heard of the ESSP, or were not aware of its content. SEOs are, however, sometimes included in meetings and trainings hosted by NGOs, which helps to make up for this gap.

It is notable that MINEDUC has requested support in District Development Planning, as well as requesting an overall Functional Review, as part of the Capacity Development Fund consultancies, indicating that there is an internal recognition of the need to strengthen support to DEOs and other local officials working on education issues.¹

OVERSIGHT OF QUALITY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND TEACHING

Oversight of quality school management and teaching is impacted by many of the same institutional gaps identified in the previous section, and more. These gaps exist at the level of communications between the pre-service training system and REB's role in overseeing education policy implementation; gaps between REB and school oversight at the District and Sector levels; and gaps in the approach to in-service training itself.

“Interviews indicated almost a complete lack of coordination between the pre-service and in-service training systems.”

¹ Mott MacDonald, "Rwanda Education Capacity Needs Assessment," (Kigali, Rwanda: DFID, 2012).

Interviews indicated almost a complete lack of institutional coordination between the College of Education, which is responsible for pre-service training, and REB, which is responsible for in-service implementation and quality assurance. As illustrated by the institutional schematic presented earlier (Figure 5), there is no official institutional connection—neither at the level of oversight nor official channels of communication—between REB and the University of Rwanda-College of Education. Yet two linked aspects of education quality, pre-service training and in-service implementation, are divided between these two institutions. For example, there is no official link between the College of Education and the School Leadership and Management Unit of TDM, which is responsible for overseeing the quality of Head Teachers. In order for the SLM Unit to pursue a system of Head Teacher certification, a completely new steering committee and task force had to be established just for this issue—one illustration of why there was such proliferation of working groups in the education sector prior to the recent sector review. Likewise, if the TDM or EQS departments were to see a system-wide problem with certain aspects of teacher quality, there is no feedback mechanism for TDM or EQS to influence the College of Education’s approach to teacher training.¹

Finally, the CPMD department is responsible for the development of curricula; yet there is no system of consultation between CPMD and the College of Education regarding the implications of new curricula for pre-service training. Tellingly, although the current national curriculum revision process is planned to involve a significantly different competence-based approach, College of Education faculty interviewed did not have any particular plans to revise the TTC or Faculty of Education curriculum in order to respond to the new demands that would be placed on teachers—since their pre-service curriculum offered a general professional level of training, they reasoned, teachers should be able to adapt to any policy changes on their own. Yet CPMD staff, for their part, thought that adaptations in pre-service training would be absolutely necessary for achieving quality implementation of the revised curriculum.

Furthermore, as noted in the previous section, REB is charged with in-service policy implementation issues, but it is the SEOs that are the direct liaisons with schools—and they have little connection with REB. Technicians at the EQS department of REB recalled that when the position of SEO was first planned, they assumed that SEOs would be asked to assist with school inspections. EQS’ own institutional guidelines were in part based on this assumption—indicating that every school and every teacher in the country should receive regular and repeated inspection visits—something that the EQS staff cannot accomplish on their own. However, because SEOs were hired under the decentralized model of local governance, it quickly became apparent that they would not be able to significantly expand the function of school inspections. On the one hand, SEOs were placed under the direct supervision of Sector Executive Secretaries, who may ask SEOs to spend some of their time assisting with non-education-related work. On the other

“SEOs receive no funds to facilitate transport and communication, making every trip to visit schools a sacrifice of part of their personal salary.”

¹ There is only one officer at TDM responsible for a linkage with the College of Education, and that role is focused on the issue of workforce needs and the number of teachers to be trained.

hand, as noted earlier, SEOs by and large receive no funds to facilitate transport and communication, making every trip to visit schools a sacrifice of part of their personal salary. An NGO consulted even reported that SEOs in one District were being told by Head Teachers that SEOs had no real authority over them, arguing that since they “earned” more (a similar salary, plus additional funds for Head Teachers to facilitate their work), the SEOs were in fact not their superiors.

SEOs and DEOs have some difficulty holding Head Teachers or teachers accountable for poor performance. In addition to the case cited above, in which some Head Teachers claimed that SEOs had no authority over them, it can be difficult for SEOs and DEOs to follow up on cases of poor school management. In one example cited during this research, a Head Teacher was reported by both the SEO concerned and by an EQS inspector for very poor school management. Without consulting EQS or other agencies at REB, the DEO of the District first tried to move the Head Teacher to another school to see if there would be some improvement. When that failed, the DEO suspended the Head Teacher. Yet at this point MIFOTRA intervened, since Head Teachers are public employees, and reinstated the Head Teacher while investigations were being conducted. When the investigation confirmed incompetence and wrongdoing, the Head Teacher was again suspended, only to be reinstated again after the period of suspension allowed under the public labour laws had passed. This Head Teacher is now managing the same school as before, without any particular plan on the part of REB, the DEO, or the SEO as to how to improve his capacities. On the other side, Head Teachers also mentioned during this research that it can be difficult for them to take action regarding poorly performing teachers, given that it is not always easy for a Head Teacher to prove teacher incompetence.¹ Some cases were cited in which teachers refused outright to change their practices, saying they had never yet been sanctioned by the District.

There are other gaps in the current in-service training approach, which impact teacher quality in areas such as early literacy and beyond. A number of interviewees for this study mentioned that there is no mentorship system to help new teachers learn how to perform their daily work. There seems to be some recognition that this needs to be addressed, however, since the period for teacher practice before graduation from the TTC has recently been extended. Another issue for in-service training is the introduction of new or revised curriculum and materials. Although CPMD does consider the issue of teacher training in its plans, it rarely has a budget for more than just a training of trainers—who usually are not given any particular follow-up funds to help them visit schools and train other teachers. Textbook publishers are also apparently supposed to offer training in the new materials they create, but this does not happen in practice. Finally, the TDM department does have a program of in-service training during school holidays and through the School-Based Mentors programme; however, for the moment the focus of these efforts is on English, science, and pedagogy—leaving out nearly every other area of teacher professional development, including guidance in effective literacy instruction.

QUALITY OVERSIGHT OF ECCD

¹ On the other hand, they said that it is much easier to have a teacher fired for legal violations, such as abuse of minors—if witnesses come forward.

There is almost a 100% gap in oversight of ECD quality. Rwanda has a diverse array of actors offering ECD services—private and parent-run facilities, at least fourteen local and international organizations offering a variety of programmes in different parts of the country, and now increasingly the attachment of pre-primary classrooms to existing public primary schools. Yet there is a significant gap in oversight of the quality of these different ECD services, both at the level of local officials and at the level of national coordination.

“There is almost a 100% gap in oversight of ECCD quality.”

Local oversight of ECD services is entrusted to Cellule authorities; yet they receive no particular training as to how to do this work. Local authorities in many cellules do the best they can to mobilize parent participation in ECD, but with no budget or training in ECD issues, they themselves acknowledge that this is the limit of their efforts. Even the rare cellule authorities who may try to visit and follow up on ECD services receive no guidelines regarding how to distinguish quality programming from that which needs improvement—and it is unclear how they would be able to enforce quality improvement even if they were to recognize the need. The ESSP decision that ECD services should be expanded by attaching pre-primary classrooms to existing primary schools may facilitate somewhat the issue of quality oversight, yet it must be noted that Head Teachers themselves also have no training in evaluating quality ECD programming.

At the national level, ECD coordination is only partially functional and does not have a good mechanism for linking with on-the-ground oversight. The Basic Education unit of MINEDUC serves as the lead agency for ECD issues, and has at least one officer overseeing the monitoring and evaluation of ECD indicators. However, the Task Force on ECD,¹ which is intended to link major government and non-governmental actors together to oversee ECD policy and implementation issues, was classified in a recent review as only “partially functional”, with an unclear mandate, less active membership, and infrequent meetings.² At the level of REB, neither the TDM nor the EQS departments include ECD in their quality oversight functions. **Because of these gaps in quality ECD oversight at both the local and national levels, ECD implementation is largely left up to the internal management of private facilities and NGOs.**

PARENTING EDUCATION

The structures for supporting parenting education in Rwanda are still at the very early stages of development. As noted earlier, current Rwandan parenting education interventions are particularly focused on nutrition and health, with increasing attention to affective issues, but the ways in which parents can support the cognitive development of their children—particularly in the early years—are still largely unexplored by existing policies and institutions. The strongest structure currently supporting parenting education and its linkage with early childhood development is the role of

¹ It is unclear whether, in the newly-approved structure for education coordination (see Figure 8), the ECE Technical Working Group is intended to replace the ECD Task Force called for in the ECD Strategic Plan.

² Cunningham and Yisa, "Review of the Education Sector Coordination: An Assessment of the Mechanisms and Configuration of Sector Working Groups and Recommendations for Change," 8.

Community Health Worker, established at the umudugudu level under the initiative of MINISANTE. MIGEPROF is currently considering the possibility of establishing a similar role for a Community Child Rights or Child Protection Worker, which may contain within it some education-related functions. There is some possibility that the Imbuto Foundation's work with specifically education-focused Community Education Workers in three districts might also influence the nature of the role that MIGEPROF eventually promotes. Finally, *umugoroba w'ababyeyi* exists as a potentially effective forum for reaching parents across the country, although these meetings have not yet been established in every umudugudu, and there is as yet no meeting-by-meeting guide that could assist parents in deepening their knowledge on particular parenting issues, such as how they could support the development of early literacy skills in their children.

“Significant work still needs to be done for parenting education to be comprehensive and effective.”

For parenting education to be comprehensive and effective in Rwanda, significant work still needs to be done at an institutional level. *Umugoroba w'ababyeyi* and the proposals contained in the new Family Policy, currently under cabinet consideration, both represent significant opportunities for such institutional strengthening, but they do not yet address the full range of physical-affective-cognitive aspects of child-raising with which parents may need assistance.

ACCESS TO QUALITY READING MATERIALS

The importance of increasing access to reading materials has become a nationally-recognized issue. In 2011-2012, the Rwanda Reads initiative began a process of raising national awareness as to the importance of systematically addressing the availability of books and the development of a reading culture throughout Rwanda. Rwanda Reads activities were intended to be conducted by creating consensus and shaping the programmes of Rwanda's development partners, through broad coordination with the MINISPOC agency Rwanda Library Services.

Many of the institutional gaps related to access to quality reading materials have been summarized in the National Policy for Library Services. The National Policy for Library Services, published shortly after the launch of Rwanda Reads, identifies many of the gaps in knowledge, laws, and institutional structures that would need to be addressed in order to effectively support the development of a reading culture:

“... despite the existence of libraries and lucrative initiatives aimed at promoting libraries in Rwanda, there is no legal and Institutional framework available to cater for coordinated development of these information institutions. [...] In addition, there is no local professional organization to unite all people working or interested in Library work, advance libraries and service as well as improve the standard of librarianship.”¹

In particular, the policy lists the following constraints:

¹ MINISPOC, "National Policy for Library Services," 3.

- Inadequate budgets that limit appropriate acquisition of materials [...];
- Inadequate staff and with the majority being untrained and unskilled affecting the overall service efficiency and delivery;
- Underdeveloped publishing industry making the acquisition of information sources expensive. In addition, the weak publishing industry worsens the country's dependence on external sources of information limiting availability of the much needed local information;
- Absence of institutional and legal framework to ensure coordinated development;
- Poor reading culture accelerated by oral tradition, illiteracy and lack of reading materials;
- Absence of professional associations in the country to bring together librarians, archivists, and information scientists.¹

It is also notable that there has been no background study that could provide complete information as to the library services currently being offered in different areas throughout the study by the public sector, private initiatives, and NGO programming.²

Since the identification of these gaps, work has begun to address many of them. A law establishing the new Rwanda Archives and Library Services Authority, an institution intended to replace RLS with a stronger and more comprehensive legal and institutional foundation, is currently under consideration by the Senate at Parliament. Furthermore, Save the Children is providing technical assistance to MINISPOC and the current RLS in the elaboration of a new National Book Development Policy. Further initiatives to address the afore-mentioned constraints are likely to emerge from these two current initiatives.

At the level of higher education, there are institutional gaps in nearly all of the specializations needed for developing quality books.³ Rwanda currently has a shortage of university programming in creative writing, editing, graphic design, and librarianship. Degree programs in these areas would be needed in order for Rwanda's publishing sector to reach a more professional level of standards.

Other institutional gaps still exist regarding the selection and use of reading materials within formal schools. As mentioned earlier, the current public tender process for books to be made available to schools incentivizes the production of lower-quality books and often favours international publishers who may not develop nationally-relevant content. Once the books are approved and published, furthermore, there are additional issues with how schools choose and use them. Schools receive a capitation grant that, in part, can go towards the purchase of reading materials. However, this system does not yet work as smoothly as it could.

“Recent studies of the use of the capitation grants suggest that schools may not be using these funds to effectively make reading materials available at school.”

¹ Ibid., 6.

² Cozzolino, "Children's Book Practice & Policy Baseline."

³ Ibid.

Recent studies of the use of these grants suggest that schools may not be using these funds to effectively make reading materials available at school.¹ These studies identified several trends:

First, some of the funds intended for reading materials may be diverted to infrastructure expenses that schools consider more urgent. Second, the ordering forms that schools are given for choosing the titles they want to order give no information as to the specific reading level or content of the books available. Third, schools seem to spend more on reading materials for higher grades, than for early primary school where reading skills are first being developed, explaining that “children are not able to read before P3”. Fourth, schools may use these funds to purchase other supplementary materials (such as maps and dictionaries) rather than storybooks that could be used for reading practice. Fifth, schools tend to prefer purchasing many copies of a particular book, rather than a

“Even when books are available in schools, teachers and students rarely use them.”

variety of books that could be used for independent reading. Sixth, and most importantly, even when these books are available in schools, teachers and students rarely use them. Books may remain within libraries, or sometimes even within locked storage rooms, without ever being read within the classroom or without being made available for students to take home.

To improve access to quality reading materials, therefore, gaps must be addressed at multiple levels: national legal frameworks and institutions, mechanisms for promoting the proliferation and use of community-level libraries, the national tendering process and other issues in the Rwandan publishing sector, and finally the ways in which books are selected and used within schools.

¹ TIR, "Rwanda Public Expenditure Tracking Survey in Education (9ybe); Cozzolino, "Children's Book Practice & Policy Baseline."

SUMMARY: THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT SURROUNDING EARLY LITERACY PROMOTION

Part III of this report has focused on the institutional context and key stakeholders interacting with early literacy promotion in Rwanda. The first section offered a review of the principal actors in the area of early literacy—including international, national and local government, civil society, and private sector stakeholders. Section two moved on to discuss Rwanda’s cycle of planning, budgeting and implementation, as well as the most influential players in the ways decisions are made. Section three discussed the incentives that shape the promotion of early literacy in Rwanda. Finally, the last section discussed institutional gaps and contradictions.

Some of the major findings of this institutional analysis include the following:

Principal Actors in Early Literacy

- Major international influences include UN commitments, intergovernmental bodies such as the EAC, and shifting dynamics in foreign aid.
- Government stakeholders include MIGEPROF; MINEDUC; MINALOC; Provinces, Districts and Sectors; MINISPOC; MINECOFIN; the Cabinet, and Parliament.
- A number of civil society organizations work on issues of ECD and on teacher training and pedagogy, but few combine these areas with a specific focus on early literacy.
- Private sector stakeholders include privately owned ECD centres and primary schools, publishers, booksellers, authors, printers, and illustrators.

Planning, Budgeting, and Implementation

- Overarching policies such as the ESSP determine priorities and budgeting over a several-year period, within which major shifts are unlikely to occur.
- Annual planning typically begins around the start of the calendar year; plans and budgets extend from July to June of the following year.
- National government agencies take a strong lead in the planning process, with a range of local government and civil society stakeholders also playing a role.
- Budget constraints and aid dependence strongly influence decision-making.

The Influence of Incentives on Early Literacy Promotion

- At the national level, Rwanda's incentives are largely aligned with international goals, and national government staff work hard to achieve policy objectives.
- At the District and Sector levels, officials are most praised for tangible, countable achievements that appear in the *imihigo* goals and indicators. The *imihigo* currently often leave out more qualitative activities and objectives.
- Sector Education Officers receive no budget for transport or communications, a counter-incentive to the work they could do in visiting schools.
- Sector, Cell, and school officials can be strongly praised or critiqued for examination scores, but these are not included as quality objectives in the *imihigo*.
- The most significant issue of private-sector incentives is the way that the current textbook approval process rewards low quality investments in book publishing.

Institutional Gaps and Contradictions

- District and Sector Education Officers have major managerial and technical functions; yet they do not receive any specialized preparation for this work, and they are not adequately supported by the institutional structures currently in place.
- Quality school management and teaching is affected by institutional gaps between pre-service training and in-service follow-up, between REB and the DEOs/SEOs, and by perceived limitations in the authority of DEOs and SEOs over schools.
- There is almost a 100% gap in oversight of ECD quality, given that the authorities technically in charge--at the cellule level--have no background in ECD issues, and national coordinating bodies are not yet strongly functional.
- The structures for supporting parenting education in Rwanda are still at the very early stages of development and additional inputs would be needed to ensure the incorporation of cognitive development issues in parenting programmes.
- Many of the institutional gaps related to access to quality reading materials have been summarized in the National Policy for Library Services and work on these has begun; however, there is a shortage of university-level specializations in book sector professional skills, and there are also problems with the selection and use of reading materials within schools, an issue that is not yet widely understood.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

This final Part IV offers recommendations based on the findings presented in this report. The recommendations given here focus particularly on the kinds of policy and institutional advocacy that civil society organizations and donor agencies could engage in, to have the greatest impact on early literacy promotion in Rwanda and on education quality goals more generally.

Figure 14: Recommendations for Policy and Institutional Solutions to Promoting Early Literacy in Rwanda

ECCD: 0-3 Parenting Education

- Call greater attention to the importance of cognitive development in the 0-3 age range, collaborating with:
 - The MIGEPROF Technical Working Group on Positive Parenting (to be established if the new Family Policy is approved by Cabinet);
 - NAWOCO, in elaborating more specific guides for *umugoroba w'ababyeyi*, including one focused on early literacy issues.
- Support training for parents, whether literate or illiterate, in simple activities to encourage pre-literacy and literacy abilities in their young children.

ECE: 4-6 Access and Quality

- Support the improved functioning of the newly-renamed ECE Technical Working Group, promoting more coherent strategic planning and oversight.
- Propose a system for quality oversight of ECE involving:
 - Inclusion of ECE inspections in the responsibilities of REB-EQS and the SEOs
 - A training system to help Cell authorities become more capable of exercising their role as the primary officials in charge of ECE oversight.
- Advocate for innovative cost-effective measures to expand access to ECE in the short-term, such as parenting education programs, neighborhood childcare cooperatives, and playgroups.
- Strategically plan for how to achieve future increases in funding for early childhood appropriate facilities (including play materials) and for the recurring costs of ECE (such as caregiver salaries).

Early Literacy Curriculum

- Ensure that developing early literacy skills is a focus of particular attention during the national curriculum review process, for both the ECE and Primary school levels.
- Prepare seminars for the relevant curriculum subject panels, presenting the methods and achievements of early literacy programmes currently being implemented by NGOs in Rwanda.
- Chosen literacy development approaches for the new national curriculum--in terms of methods, recommended activities, and time to be dedicated to reading--should be clearly based on the most recent international research.

Teacher Training

- Include specific practical training in early literacy instruction, and in the use of books in the classroom, as part of the pre-service instruction given to both ECE and primary teachers.
- Improve collaborative linkages between the University of Rwanda-College of Education and the Rwanda Education Board, in order to increase coherence among: pre-service training, education policies, in-service professional development, and quality oversight efforts.
- Advocate for a robust and funded plan for pre-service and in-service teacher training in relation to the new national curriculum, both in general and in relation to early literacy in particular.
- Strengthen the permanent in-service training strategy through collaborations with the Teacher Development Technical Working Group and the REB Teacher Development and Management department.

Education Quality Oversight

- Help District planners learn how to include explicitly quality-related education objectives in the District *imihigo*, such as:
 - Targets related to minimum student performance on examinations that measure literacy and other basic skills
 - Measurements of teachers' skills or their participation in ongoing professional development training opportunities
 - Key quality-related inputs, such as the availability and use of books within classrooms
- Work with the REB-EQS department on what to observe during their planned 2014/15 round of literacy-focused inspections, including developing:
 - specific follow-up strategies to address any weaknesses observed, including
 - methods of reporting to DEOs and SEOs, and
 - a system of ensuring continual support for the weakest schools and teachers.
- Provide SEOs with dedicated funds for transport and communication, and clear guidance regarding how many ECE/school visits to accomplish per month and what to do during those visits.

Book Availability

- Ensure that ECE centres and classrooms are equipped with book banks.
- Improve the process of book selection in schools, by providing more detailed descriptions and/or samples of titles available.
- Provide training to ECE caregivers and Head Teachers throughout the country regarding the importance of using books in the classroom, and practical library and classroom management methods to make free reading possible.
- Support MINISPOC and RLS/RALSA in the execution of the National Policy for Library Services, including developing a more detailed implementation plan and raising funds for the expansion of a network of community libraries.
- Explore the possibility of tax incentives for a public-private model of community libraries, in which a small library could be paired with a *secrétariat publique* or with a local *boutique* in order for business profits to be able to pay the salary of the person overseeing the adjoined library section.

CONCLUSION

This report has offered a political economy analysis of the promotion of early literacy and education quality objectives in Rwanda, on policy and institutional issues. Rwanda is justifiably praised for its significant achievements in education since 1994, for the strength of its educational planning processes, and for its admirable efforts to expand access to education to all children and youth. While recognizing these accomplishments, this report has explored which aspects of educational institutions and policy-making could be even further improved, in order to advance education quality in general in Rwanda, and in particular in order to promote the development of basic pre-literacy and literacy skills in the critical early childhood years, from birth to age nine.

In particular, this report has found that new or enhanced efforts in six specific areas could make a difference in early literacy promotion in Rwanda. For the 0-3 age range, much can be done in the area of **parenting education** in order to promote parents' understanding of how to support their children's early cognitive development. For the 4-6 age range, improved national and local systems of strategic planning and oversight could capitalize on Rwanda's determination to expand **early childhood education** services. The same applies to **quality oversight in primary schools**, where improvements are needed in District planning, the inspection system, and the connections between these and the work of District and Sector Education Officers. For both the early childhood and primary years, further efforts in **curriculum development** and in **teacher training** could help ensure that children have ample opportunities to practice reading throughout the school day. And finally, efforts to increase the availability of quality Kinyarwanda-language **reading materials** in schools and in the community can support the developing abilities of both children and newly-literate adults.

As Rwandan institutions move forward to put these recommendations into practice, in collaboration with Rwanda's development partners, they have the potential to make a lasting systemic impact on early literacy promotion in Rwanda, working towards the goal of ensuring that all children leave school able to read.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Following are the general interview protocols used for each type of interview. For the donor agencies, civil society organizations, and national government institutions, questions were tailored or added to cover particularly relevant activities in each individual case.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: DONOR AGENCIES

Note: Donor Agency interviews were typically shorter than interviews elsewhere, due to time constraints. Three key questions were thus selected for the interview protocols, and added to when time permitted.

1. If Save the Children wanted to advocate for policy changes or different budgetary allocations in the areas of early literacy, early childhood education, curriculum in either of these areas, primary teacher training, book publication, and/or parenting education –
 - a. When might there next be an opening for such policy advocacy?
 - b. What would be the most important connections to pursue?
2. Are there any upcoming policies or programs on the horizon touching on these areas, which Save the Children might not be aware of?
3. Do you have any insights into the potential institutional gaps (gaps in authority, accountability, follow-up) between policy-making and implementation in any of these areas?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

1. What government institutions do you typically interact with in your work in the education sector? Can you give some specific examples of your experiences with these institutions?
2. Who do you see as the most influential institutions/units/individuals in terms of shaping education policy, for example in [ECCD, early literacy, teacher training]?
3. How are budgets decided on, in relation to these policies?
4. Once policies have been decided, for example in [ECCD, early literacy, teacher training, parenting education], what is your understanding of how implementation is carried out?
5. Do you feel that policy implementation is effectively ensured? How, or Why not?
6. In your experience, are there any particular gaps in accountability or authority in the education sector? Can you give some examples?
7. In your experience, are there any instances in which people's incentives (what they are praised or rewarded for) are at cross-purposes with effective operation of the education sector?
8. What sorts of changes in policy or institutional structure would you most like to advocate for, if any?
9. Are there any upcoming policy or institutional changes that you have heard might be happening related to the education sector?

10. Before we close, Save the Children is also interested in gathering some feedback on its work. Are you aware of Save the Children's programming in early literacy? If so, what is your impression of the quality of their work?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS: STAFF IN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

1. What would you say are the most important priorities right now for education that your institution is responsible for?
2. What are the policies or documents that give you guidance about what to do in these areas?
 - a. [If there are any we do not have] We weren't aware of [X document] before, would it be possible to see a copy?
3. Does your institution have any responsibility for literacy issues around the country?
 - a. What about for ECD?
 - b. Teacher training?
 - c. Parenting and community education?
4. How are budgets decided on in relation to your priorities and plans?
5. Are there any of your priorities that you think you will easily be able to achieve? Are there any that seem more difficult? Why?
6. When your institution has new policies or programs to introduce, how do you do this?
 - a. To whom do you give instructions or guidance?
 - b. Is it easy or difficult for you to find out whether they are following your instructions? How do you do this?
7. Are there any new policies or programs related to early literacy, ECD, or teacher training coming up on the horizon?
 - a. Who is promoting these, which major institutions or officials?
8. Before we close, Save the Children is also interested in gathering some feedback on its work. Have you heard of their work in this area? What do you know about it? What do you think of it?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICERS

1. What would you say are the most important priorities right now for education in your District?
2. Who sets these priorities, or how were they decided?
3. Does the District imihigo include all of them, or a part of them?
4. Would it be possible for us to see this year's imihigo so that we can learn more about your priorities? Do you also have available the imihigo from the past two years?
5. How are budgets decided on in relation to your priorities and plans?
6. [If literacy has not already been mentioned] Do you have any particular goals related to literacy issues, or do you have more urgent things to focus on right now?
 - a. What do you think needs to be done, in terms of promoting literacy?
 - b. Have you already been able to make progress in some of these areas? How?

7. [If ECD has not already been mentioned] Do you have any particular goals related to ECD, or do you have more urgent things to focus on right now?
 - a. Do you mostly focus on ECD centers?
 - b. Do you also have any kinds of community-level initiatives or ways of interacting with parents?
8. [If parenting education has not already been mentioned] Do you have any particular goals related to parenting education or family education?
9. Who do you have to oversee to make sure that your plans are put into place? How do you oversee them?
10. Are there any of your priorities that you think you will easily be able to achieve? Are there any that seem more difficult? Why?
11. Does anyone ever recognize your efforts if you do a particularly good job?
 - a. How or when does this happen?
 - b. What kinds of things are they most likely to praise you for?
12. Before we close, Save the Children is also interested in gathering some feedback on its work. What do you know about their work in this area? What do you think of it?

[Additional questions introduced after the research had begun, in response to early findings]

13. What was your participation in the elaboration of the ESSP? How did you collaborate with MINEDUC on this issue?
14. What are your perceptions regarding the specific approaches used by NGOs in your District, such as parenting education, teacher training, or school clubs?
 - a. What is their impact on education, if there is one?
 - b. Do you plan on borrowing these approaches to use them in other sectors?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: SECTOR EDUCATION OFFICERS

1. What would you say are the most important priorities right now for education in your Sector?
2. Who sets these priorities, or how were they decided?
3. Do you have some sort of formal planning document for your Sector? Are all of your main education priorities included in the plan, or just some of them?
 - a. Would it be possible for us to see this year's plan so that we can learn more about your priorities? Do you also have available plans from the past two years?
4. How are budgets decided on in relation to your priorities and plans?
5. [If literacy has not already been mentioned] Do you have any particular goals related to literacy issues, or do you have more urgent things to focus on right now?
 - a. What do you think needs to be done, in terms of promoting literacy?
 - b. Have you already been able to make progress in some of these areas? How?
6. [If ECD has not already been mentioned] Do you have any particular goals related to ECD, or do you have more urgent things to focus on right now?
 - a. Do you mostly focus on ECD centers?

- b. Do you also have any kinds of community-level initiatives or ways of interacting with parents?
7. [If parenting education has not already been mentioned] Do you have any particular goals related to parenting education or family education?
8. Who do you have to oversee to make sure that your plans are put into place? How do you oversee them?
9. Are there any of your priorities that you think you will easily be able to achieve? Are there any that seem more difficult? Why?
10. Does anyone ever recognize your efforts if you do a particularly good job?
 - a. How or when does this happen?
 - b. What kinds of things are they most likely to praise you for?
11. Before, we close, Save the Children is also interested in gathering some feedback on its work. What do you know about their work in this area? What do you think of it?

[Additional questions introduced after the research had begun, in response to early findings]

12. Do you have other partners in education here? If yes, what are your perceptions regarding the specific approaches used by NGOs in your Sector?
13. How do you stay aware of new policies or other information in the field of education? Is there a line of communication between you and MINEDUC? How?
14. What do you know about the new ESSP?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: CELLULE EXECUTIVE/SOCIAL AFFAIRS OFFICER

1. What would you say are the most important priorities right now for families and children in your Cellule?
2. Who sets these priorities, or how were they decided?
3. Do you have some sort of formal planning document for your Cellule? Are all of your main priorities for families and children included in the plan, or just some of them?
 - a. Would it be possible for us to see this year's plan so that we can learn more about your priorities? Do you also have available plans from the past two years?
4. How are budgets decided on in relation to your priorities and plans?
5. [If literacy has not already been mentioned] Do you have any particular goals related to literacy issues, or do you have more urgent things to focus on right now?
 - a. What do you think needs to be done, in terms of promoting literacy?
 - b. Have you already been able to make progress in some of these areas? How?
6. [If ECD has not already been mentioned] Do you have any particular goals related to ECD, or do you have more urgent things to focus on right now?
 - a. Do you mostly focus on ECD centers?
 - b. Do you also have any kinds of community-level initiatives or ways of interacting with parents?
7. [If parenting education has not already been mentioned] Do you have any particular goals related to parenting education or family education, or do you have more urgent things to focus on right now?

- a. [If yes], what are your goals? How do you hope to achieve them?
- b. [If no], is any other organization or institution working on these issues?
8. Who do you have to oversee to make sure that your plans are put into place? How do you oversee them?
9. Are there any of your priorities that you think you will easily be able to achieve? Are there any that seem more difficult? Why?
10. Does anyone ever recognize your efforts if you do a particularly good job?
 - a. How or when does this happen?
 - b. What kinds of things are they most likely to praise you for?
11. Before we close, Save the Children is also interested in gathering some feedback on its work. What do you know about their work in this area? What do you think of it?

FACT-CHECKING DISCUSSIONS WITH MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL POPULATION

When time permitted, supplementary conversations were carried out with a few local residents met on the roads in the cellules visited in order to verify or gain further information on issues covered in the formal interview with the Cellule authority.

Topics covered:

- Umugoroba w'abayeyi: level of awareness, whether it is functional and how often, who attends, and what topics are discussed
- ECD: whether there are centres or other types of programmes, the level of participation, whether parents contribute in some way and how
- Other educational activities that parents participate in

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: HEAD TEACHERS

1. What would you say are the most important priorities right now for your school?
2. Who sets these priorities, or how were they decided?
3. Do you have some sort of formal planning document for your school? Are all of your main priorities included in the plan, or just some of them?
 - a. Would it be possible for us to see this year's plan so that we can learn more about your priorities? Do you also have available plans from the past two years?
4. How are budgets decided on in relation to your priorities and plans?
5. [If literacy has not already been mentioned] Do you have any particular goals related to literacy issues, or do you have more urgent things to focus on right now?
 - a. What do you think needs to be done, in terms of promoting literacy?
 - b. Have you already been able to make progress in some of these areas? How?
 - c. Have you ever watched how your teachers teach reading? When is the last time you saw them teaching about this topic?
 - d. Do you think there is anything about their teaching of reading that needs to change? Have you given them any advice? Do they follow it?
6. What kinds of interactions do you usually have with the parents of your students? When?

- a. Do you feel that parents are involved in their children's literacy development? Are they involved in their children's education generally?
 - b. Have you ever been able to give them some advice about how to educate their children at home?
 - c. If so, what kinds of advice did you give them? Do you think they follow it? What kinds of help would they need to be able to better follow your advice?
7. Are there any of your priorities for the school that you think you will easily be able to achieve? Are there any that seem more difficult? Why?
 8. Does anyone ever recognize your efforts if you do a particularly good job?
 - a. How or when does this happen?
 - b. What kinds of things are they most likely to praise you for?
 9. Before we close, Save the Children is also interested in gathering some feedback on its work. What do you know about their work in this area? What do you think of it?

FACT-CHECKING DISCUSSIONS WITH TEACHERS

When time permitted, supplementary conversations were carried out with one to three teachers at the schools visited in order to gain further information on issues covered in the formal interview with the Head Teacher.

Topics covered:

1. How teachers teach reading; objectives; methods for encouraging children to read; challenges they face in promoting reading
2. Verification regarding Head Teachers' statements about book availability and use
3. Interactions with parents