Final Report:
Community based barriers and opportunities to promote reading attainment among early grade learners in the rural Southern Province of Rwanda

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21/11/2012
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List of Abbreviations

CES  Cell Executive Secretary
CGDE  Centre for Global Development through Education
CPD  Continuing Professional Development
CWR  Concern Worldwide Rwanda
DEAR  Drop Everything And Read
DEO  District Executive Officer
DFID  Department for International Development
EAC  East Africa Community
EDC  The Educational Development Centre
EFA  Education for All
EGRA  Early Grade Reading Assessment
ESSP  Education Sector Strategic Plan
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GoR  Government of Rwanda
HDI  Human Development Index
IPAR  Institute of Policy Analysis and Research
ITE  Initial Teacher Education
L3  Literacy, Language and Learning Initiative
LARS  Learning Assessment in Rwandan Schools
MDGs  Millennium Development Goals
MINEDUC  Ministry of Education
PTC  Parent Teachers Council
REB  Rwandan Education Board
SAO  Sector Affairs Officer
UPE  Universal Primary Education
USAID  United States Agency for International Development
VSO  Voluntary Service Overseas

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation and to acknowledge the contribution, to the research, of the following:

- The staff of Concern Worldwide Rwanda (CWR) for their support throughout. In particular the Country Director, Tilaye Nigussie and the Deputy director Joanne Smyth.
- The members of the CWR research team who worked tirelessly under the able leadership of David Rugaaju, Education Programme Manager, CWR.
- The Rwandan Education Board and their representative on the research team, Mr. Ngoga Innocent, ICT Officer with REB.
- The staff of the Centre for Global Development through Education (CGDE) at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, and in particular Dr. Gerard Downes.
- The research partners with CWR in the L3 project: The Ministry of Education, EDC, VSO and the IEE.
- USAID for funding the research.
- The various organisations in Rwanda who provided valuable insights to the researcher at pre research design briefing sessions including USAID, EDC, UNICEF and PLAN Rwanda.
- Finally, deep appreciation to the communities, parents, children, Head teachers and teachers who made the research possible by their willing participation in it.
Executive Summary.

Introduction.

This research is part of the Literacy, Language and Learning (L3) initiative, the overall goal of which is to improve Rwandan primary school children’s literacy and numeracy levels. L3, which is funded by USAID, involves a collaborative partnership with The Educational Development Centre (EDC), Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and the International Education Exchange (IEE) working with Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), and Concern Worldwide Rwanda (CWR). Concern Worldwide Rwanda works with the very poorest communities in Rwanda to enable people to achieve significant, lasting improvements in their lives. In education, its objective is ‘Improved quality and access to primary education by the extreme poor’ (CWR, 2011). In this context, CWR has undertaken this research with the objective of identifying communities’ perceptions on reading and the culture of reading; to identify barriers to reading and opportunities to promote reading for children from Primary 1 (P1) to Primary 4 (P4); to identify barriers specific to girls or children from extremely poor households; to identify and analyse teacher motivation factors that impact on their teaching of reading.

The research was led by a senior researcher from The Centre for Global Development through Education (CGDE) based at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Ireland. The CGDE researcher worked in collaboration with a team from CWR and a representative of the Rwandan Education Board (REB). The research was conducted over a five week period from late May to late June 2012.

Research Design and Structure

As the information sought related to the context and culture of reading practices, it was felt that a qualitative approach, involving interviews of key informants, would provide insightful data. Unlike, positivist-orientated, quantitative research which aims, through random sampling, to generalise data from the sample to the population as a whole, qualitative research aims to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon by in-depth research of a smaller purposefully chosen sample. For this reason, generalisability in the traditional sense is not possible. However, context-based extrapolations from the research can be used to aid stakeholders and policymakers in making decisions in regard to situations in similar contexts.

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The insights gained from this type of in-depth investigation can be transferred and used in making decisions about other similar situations in Rwanda.

The research focussed on sectors and communities which were representative of the challenges facing reading development in Rwanda. The sample would therefore be mainly drawn from poor rural communities. Ten rural communities were identified for the research sample. To provide a broader picture, a further two urban communities were also included. One of the urban schools and one of the rural schools were identified as high-achieving schools in the national examinations at P6 level and also achieved very high rankings in the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tests. It was hoped that their inclusion might help to explain why some schools do better than others in reading performance.

The main research tools utilised were semi-structured group interviews with (a) community representatives¹, (b) children from P4 classes, (c) primary school teachers of P1 to P4. Primary school Head teachers were interviewed individually. In each community, a checklist was made of visible reading-related facilities and opportunities within the immediate vicinity of the primary school and its hinterland. Where appropriate, opportunities to follow up community representatives’ interviews with a visit to one of the participating parents’ homes were taken. In these home visits more detailed interviews were conducted with the parent in question and a checklist was compiled of reading facilities and opportunities in the home.

In the twelve sectors chosen for the research, a total of 12 primary Head teachers, 57 P1 to P4 teachers (41 female and 16 male), 80 community representatives (45 mothers and 35 fathers), and 48 P4 children (3 girls and 3 boys in each school) were interviewed. In addition, 5 parents consented to follow up interviews in their homes.

¹ These were parents or guardians of children of primary school going age.
Main Findings and Recommendations

Introduction

The two urban schools were found to have very different characteristics to the rural schools. They were much more advantaged. The urban community was much wealthier than those in rural settings and children had very different experiences in learning to read. They had support at home – very often from parents who were well-educated and could read. For these reasons the findings below are more reflective of the situation in the ten rural schools visited.

(a) Creating a reading friendly environment at home and in the community:

Identified barriers:

- There is no culture of reading in most communities.
- The traditional means of transmitting information and knowledge is orally. Accordingly, reading and writing are introduced practices.
- There are few role models for reading, at home or in the wider community, for children to follow.
- Communities lack basic reading materials, resources and conditions conducive to reading.
- Poverty is still a major barrier to reading.

Identified opportunities:

- Communities recognise the great importance of reading and highly value it.
- Reading is recognised as the way out of poverty and for a better life for children and families.
- There is a demand for learning to read within families and communities.
- All parents have high aspirations for their children and reading is recognised as the means to achieve these.
- Within every community there are people who can read.
**Recommendations:**

- Introduction of a community based reading campaign ‘Reading Champions’, in which those influential in the community who can read would act as mentors and role models for reading. ‘Reading Champions’ to be modelled on the very successful ‘Guardian Angels’ (‘Malaika Mulinzi’) health initiative.
- Training of volunteers in methodologies such as Shared Reading and provision of suitable reading material.
- Adult literacy campaigns to explicitly highlight the connection between adult literacy and children’s success at school and in later life.
- Poster and media campaigns portraying national and international role models reading.
- Recognition, locally and through national media, for those in communities who play a part in promoting reading in their families or in the community.
- The construction by communities, using locally available materials, of community reading/learning centres which should, on completion, be supplied with solar powered lighting. Financial and material support for their on-going sustainability.
- Local authority administrator’s performance contracts should include itemised requirements on the promotion of reading in the community.
- Communities and schools must have access to high quality reading material. Effective mechanisms for giving access to high quality reading materials, to learners of all ages, must be developed. These should include libraries of books and access to newspapers and magazines.

**Identified barriers:**

- Very young children’s early literacy and pre-reading skills are not being developed at home.
There is little evidence, from this research, of story-telling, rhyme reciting or singing songs to young pre-school children.

Most young children are not getting support for reading at home.

Schools are not aware of the need to provide reading experiences for children in the early years of primary school.

There appears to be weak instruction in literacy in the early grades.

Schools do not send books home with young children and homes do not have them.

Schools may not have suitable reading material for younger children.

Parents do not know how to support young children with reading.

There is no clear role for parents in supporting children’s reading.

Reading is not prioritised at home for young children.

Schools are very poor exemplars for the importance of print.

Identified opportunities:

- Many parents are doing the best they know how in supporting children’s reading.
- Parents want to support children’s reading.
- Communities would welcome initiatives to support children’s reading.
- Some educated and literate parents are making sacrifices to ensure that children in the upper reaches of primary school get support in school work at home.
- Some parents read the Bible or the Koran and other religious materials with their children.
- Older students who have progressed to S3 and beyond will be in a position to support reading.
- Children are enthusiastic about reading.
- Children want to read and want support in learning to read.
- Teachers have expressed a wish to be trained in effective reading methodologies.

Recommendations:

- Include a section in parenting courses for new parents on the importance of children’s early literacy skills and ways in which parents can develop these in their child.
- Rwandan stories, songs and rhymes, in Kinyarwanda, suitable for reading to pre-school children should be collected, collated and disseminated to parents and nurseries. Similarly, stories in Kinyarwanda for young school going children are

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needed. Rwandan authors should also be encouraged to create such stories. Care should be taken to critically examine and edit these so that they are of a suitable standard and quality, and reflect contemporary Rwandan values and need.

✓ Sponsorship should be sought from Rwandan companies for production of appropriate and approved reading material for use at home, in the community and at school, in a ‘one-book-one-child (or one-home)’ approach.

✓ The possibility of increasing and extending the circulation of the children’s magazine Hobe, or similar non-religious material, should be investigated.

✓ Models of home reading support for children in the early years of primary school should be drawn up for literate and for non-literate parents and delivered to them.

✓ Head teachers and teachers should receive in-service, continuing professional development (CPD) training, on effective and research based methodologies for developing young children’s reading ability.

✓ Methodologies which involve adults modelling and scaffolding reading through organised activities such as Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) and Shared Reading should be introduced in schools. Literate volunteers should be instructed in the use of Shared Reading in the community.

✓ Schools should compile inventories of suitable recreational storybooks within the school for use by P1 to P3/P4 and identified gaps filled through procurement. School policies and procedures should ensure that suitable books are loaned to children to take home and read. Children’s comprehension of this reading material should be monitored.

✓ Schools should take time to instruct older students from S1 to S3 on ways in which they can support the reading of younger siblings and neighbours’ children. Secondary school students should be encouraged, in the spirit of Umuganda, to provide instruction in reading and English for primary school children during weekends and holidays. Certificates and awards for young instructors should be issued by the District Executive Officer (DEO).

✓ Head teachers and teachers in collaboration with community groups such as the PTC should set about making the school environment print-rich. Sponsorship of paint and materials should be sought from prominent telecommunication companies.
(c) Equity issues with regard to reading:

Identified barriers:

- There is some evidence that girls are still expected to do more chores than boys, especially older girls.
- Some older girls are reported to be late for school, or missing days at school, because of chores.
- In some schools girls are reported to be not performing as well as boys.
- Poverty is still a major barrier for some children in learning to read.
- Some very poor children are being barred from school, by schools, because of the lack of uniforms or shoes.
- Some very poor children miss school because of performing income generating tasks necessary to put food in their families’ bellies.
- There is a great disparity in the opportunity for reading development presented between different schools. This was most apparent in the disparity between the rural schools and the two urban schools researched.

Identified Opportunities:

- Sensitisation of parents, communities and schools to the importance of equity of opportunity for all children seems to be working.
- Gender equity awareness can be built on to develop practice.
- Poor parents want their children to be able to read.
- Some very poor parents make great sacrifices to ensure their children get the opportunity to learn to read.
- Poor children want to be able to read.

Recommendations:

- All initiatives to develop reading, highlighted above, should be scrutinised regularly to ensure the involvement of the most marginalised in society.
- Girls’ and very poor children’s progress needs continuing scrutiny and vigilance. Results, attendance, dropout rate and transfer to secondary school should continue to be monitored and responded to through PTCs.

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Head teachers, teachers and education authorities should acquaint themselves at first hand with the day to day reality of life for the very poor.

Home school liaison officers should be appointed within school staff and, working with the PTC, keep staff informed of children and families who are experiencing major barriers to education. They should work with the PTC to ensure access to education and reading for these children.

School policies with regard to exclusion of children due to issues around uniform, shoes and school materials, meal fees etc. should be reviewed and monitored by SEOs.

Mechanisms for twinning schools in more wealthy and fortunate settings with poorer schools should be explored.

Ways and means of giving access to community radio for all communities and households should be explored.

Children’s views on equity should continue to be listened to.

(d) Strengthening home/school support mechanisms for reading:

Identified barriers:

- Teachers do not feel supported by parents in their efforts to teach reading.
- Teachers feel that many parents are not interested.
- Most parents do not know how to support teachers in their efforts to teach reading.
- The role of parents in supporting reading is not clear.
- Many parents do not meet with teachers to discuss children’s progress.
- Some Head teachers think young children are ‘lazy’.

Identified opportunities:

- Parents have very high regard for the work of teachers in teaching their children to read.
- They consider teachers to be motivated and competent.
- Teachers expressed the wish for more in-service training in English.
- Teachers, themselves, feel motivated, confident and competent in teaching children to read in Kinyarwanda.
- Teachers would like to work with parents to improve children’s reading.

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Some parents would like to speak English and this number is likely to rise.
Most parents attend regular group meetings with Head teachers and/or local community leaders.
PTCs are very active in all schools.

Recommendations:

- Teacher and parent partnerships to promote reading should be fostered. Parents should be encouraged by teachers, through the PTC, to visit their children’s teachers to discuss reading matters and how they can both support the child’s reading.
- The system of meetings already in place in communities should be utilised to bring all interested parties together to sensitise parents and educators on the need for co-operation in promoting children’s reading and on the ways in which this can best be achieved.
- Schools should hold Open Days where parents can be familiarised with the work of the school.
- Competent teachers should be encouraged to provide English language classes for parents.
- Teachers need to be sensitised to community views and to the choices facing very poor families.
- There needs to be a structured dialogue between teachers and parents, perhaps through a type of Community Conversation, to bridge the gap between teachers’ perceptions and community perceptions. Teachers also need to hear the clear message from parents that their work is greatly valued. Mechanisms for communities to formally recognise quality teaching need to be developed.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Concern Worldwide is an international humanitarian organisation dedicated to combating poverty and suffering in 23 of the world’s poorest countries. Concern Worldwide Rwanda (CWR) has been in operation since 1994. It works with the very poorest communities in Rwanda to enable people to achieve significant, lasting improvements in their lives. In education, its objective is ‘Improved quality and access to primary education by the extreme poor’ (CWR, 2011).

Currently, CWR is engaged in a collaborative partnership with The Educational Development Centre (EDC), Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and the International Education Exchange (IEE) working with Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) to improve the quality of literacy teaching and learning through a holistic USAID-funded programme, the Literacy, Language and Learning Initiative (L3). The overall goal of the L3 initiative is to strengthen teaching and learning so that children leave primary school with solid literacy and numeracy skills. It sets out to work with the Ministry of Education to improve the reading of pupils in levels Primary 1 to Primary 4 (P1 to P4). In this context, CWR has undertaken this research to identify communities’ perceptions on reading and the culture of reading; to identify barriers to reading and opportunities to promote reading for children from Primary 1 (P1) to Primary 4 (P4); to identify barriers specific to girls or children from extremely poor households; to analyse teacher motivation factors that impact on their teaching of reading.

This is in keeping with one of Concern Worldwide’s guiding principles of supporting sustainable education based on an understanding of the local context. It is also in line with USAID’s stated belief that improving the quality of education requires a ‘good understanding of the complex cultural and social and political forces at work’ (USAID, 2011).

The research was led by a senior researcher from The Centre for Global Development through Education (CGDE) based at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Ireland. Since its inception in late 2007 the Centre for Global Development through Education has sought to contribute to poverty reduction by enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and educational research in developing countries including Uganda, Lesotho, and Rwanda.
The CGDE researcher worked in collaboration with a team from CWR and a representative of the Rwandan Education Board (REB). The research was conducted over a five week period from late May to late June 2012.

**Week 1.** This involved consultation with various stakeholders to identify the key issues and research questions, a field visit to establish the context for the research, and a review of relevant literature and policy documents.

**Week 2.** The research team fine-tuned and adjusted the research questions in light of information garnered in Week 1, and designed the research instruments. Piloting of the research instruments was undertaken in the field. In light of this, necessary adjustments were made to the instruments.

**Week 3.** The research was undertaken over six days commencing on the Monday and finishing on Tuesday of the following week. There were two teams of researchers enabling two research sectors to be visited per day, making a total of twelve sectors researched.

**Week 4.** As mentioned above, Monday was devoted to research in the field. The remainder of the week was devoted to analysis of the data by the research team, identification of the key findings and their relevance for the research questions.

**Week 5.** The draft report was written by the lead researcher.

An overview of the research findings was presented to the main stakeholders, for their consideration, comments and suggestions, on the Monday after the first draft report was submitted.

The main research tools utilised were semi-structured group interviews with (a) community representatives, (b) children from Primary 4 (P4) classes, (c) primary school teachers of Primary 1 to Primary 4 (P1 to P4). Primary school Head teachers were interviewed individually. In each community, a checklist was made of visible reading-related facilities and opportunities within the immediate vicinity of the primary school and its hinterland. Where appropriate, opportunities to follow up community representatives’ interviews with a visit to one of the participating parents’ homes were taken. In these home visits more detailed interviews were conducted with the parent in question and a checklist was compiled of reading facilities and opportunities in the home.

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In the twelve sectors chosen for the research, a total of 12 primary Head teachers, 57 P1 to P4 teachers (41 female and 16 male), 80 community representatives (45 mothers and 35 fathers), and 48 P4 children (3 girls and 3 boys in each school) were interviewed. In addition, 5 parents consented to follow up interviews in their homes.

The research is presented in the following chapters. Chapter 2 looks at relevant literature and policy documents which informed the research. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology. Chapter 4 presents the key findings from each of the research instruments. Chapter 5 examines the barriers and opportunities to reading, presented in the key findings, and considers their implications for the future of reading development. Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the barriers and opportunities identified, and presents the key recommendations arising from these.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Background
Rwanda is ranked 166 out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) (2010-2012). Almost 60% of the population live below the internationally recognised poverty threshold and more than half of these do not have access to the basic food requirements (CWR, 2012).

However, Rwanda is making great efforts to remedy this situation. It was named in the top 10 fastest growing economies in the world, from 2001 to 2010, with an annual average GDP growth of 7.6% (The Economist, 2011). The Government of Rwanda’s (GoR) Vision 2020 policy document seeks to position Rwanda as a modern, strong, and united nation with a middle income, knowledge base (GoR, 2002).

Improving the standard of education is central to this aspiration. This is crucial, not only to the objective of building a strong knowledge base, but also to the desire for lasting peace and reconciliation, as uneducated societies are more likely to lack unity and are therefore more susceptible to political and/or ethnic fragmentation (Gupta et al., 1998; Ranis et al., 2000). Furthermore, countries which experience low levels of literacy within their populations are less likely to benefit from the opportunities for growth within the global economy (Kim and Kim, 2000).

2.2 Education in Rwanda
In recent years, Rwanda has made great strides with regard to improving the quality of education. It has embraced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Dakar Education for All (EFA) Goals of providing free universal primary education (UPE) for all children and removing barriers to participation for all, particularly for girls and the very poor.

To this end, in 2003, a Nine-Year Basic Education Strategy was initiated and this has resulted in a large increase in the number of children attending school. According to the most recently released data, up to 91.7% of children of school-going age were enrolled in school (IPAR, 2012). To offset the challenges that this poses for the education system, schools were financed to employ some 1,968 extra teachers. This enabled the pupil: teacher ratio to be

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decreased from 74:1 to 65:1. At present the ratio stands at 70:1 (Education Sector Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015 (ESSP) (MINEDUC, 2010).

Since 1995 the Government of Rwanda has adopted a ‘trilingual’ approach to language use. English was introduced as an official language in addition to Kinyarwanda and French. Furthermore, at a cabinet meeting of October 8th, 2008 the Government of Rwanda (GoR) adopted English as the language of instruction, in all public and subsidised private schools (GoR, 2008 as cited in Mukama, 2009). This will enable Rwanda to play a more central role in the East African Community (EAC). In recognition of the need for young children to be able to participate and benefit fully from the early years of education, Kinyarwanda is used as the language of instruction for P1 to P3 and thereafter English is gradually introduced. This is in line with the international evidence for the efficacy of using young children’s mother tongue as the language of instruction (Holland et al., 2012; Gove and Cvelich, 2011; Hardman et al., 2008). Learning is enhanced for children when they can use their own cultural experiences to become active participants in the learning process (Dembele, 2003). Children are more motivated and at ease with learning when there is a strong connection between the culture experienced at home and that experienced in the school context (Tahir et al, 2005; Trudell, 2005).

The Ministry of Education’s (MINEDUC) Education Sector Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015 (ESSP) for Rwanda continues to prioritise improving the quality of education. There have been many recent advances in the Rwandan education system. For example, in 2007 the transition rate from primary to secondary school was only 54.6%, however this had risen to 93.8 % by 2010 and the primary promotion rate in the same year was 74.6% (MINEDUC, 2012).

Rwanda’s education system still faces a number of challenges. It appears that over 8% (100% - 91.7%) of children are not enrolled in schools (IPAR, 2012). In a 2010 study of Learning Assessment in Rwandan Schools (LARS) undertaken by the Government of Rwanda, 37% of students failed to meet expectations in literacy. Preliminary findings from an assessment of P4 and P6 children’s oral reading fluency in Kinyarwanda using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) concludes that ‘even after three years of instruction 13% of P4 students could not read a single word of a P2 – P3 text’, and another 13% were reading at a level well
below the accepted level for fluency (USAID, 2012). Children from illiterate families fared worse in reading than those who had someone in the family who could read. The USAID research report concludes that most children in primary schools are not being adequately taught the necessary skills for decoding and comprehending text in both Kinyarwanda and English (USAID, 2012) (see footnote below).

2.3 Equity
Equity of educational achievement for girls and very poor children remains a key concern for Rwandan educational policy makers (MINEDUC 2010). National sensitisation programmes have been set up to promote equality of education for girls. Girls’ access to basic education is on a par with that of boys’ but their attainment levels are not as high as that of their male counterparts (Bernard and Ngarukiye, 2011; MINEDUC, 2010). Reasons cited for this include teaching practices which are not gender sensitive (MINEDUC, 2010) and inadequate study time at home due to girls being required to do extra domestic chores (Bernard and Ngarukiye, 2011; Asemota and Randell, 2011). In the 2009 National Examination, 60.7% of the top achievers were boys and only 39.3% were girls (MINEDUC, 2010).

The very poor are confronted with similar challenges. Major improvements have been made in increasing the very poor’s access to basic education (MINEDUC, 2010) but school attendance and drop-out figures, due to the need to engage in income generating activities for the family, remain high (CWR, 2012). Poverty still remains one of the ‘single most influential impediments to a fully inclusive education system in Rwanda’ (Bernard and Ngarukiye, 2011). Factors such as the extra costs associated with education, parents’ poor literacy levels and their low capacity for supporting early childhood development all affect poor children’s educational achievement.

2.4 Parental influences on children’s school achievement.
International research indicates that parental involvement has a positive impact on children’s academic development (Fan & Williams, 2010; Powell-Smith et al., 2000). The importance

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2 Full details of this research can be accessed at: https://www.eddataglobal.org/.../Rwanda_EGRA-EGMA-SSME_...
of parents’ involvement in the education of their children is an essential element in effective education (Fan & Williams, 2010; Epstein, 2001).

Children’s early literacy experiences at home are important factors in determining their early success at school (Purcell-Gates, 1995). These early literacy experiences may include parents telling stories, singing songs, reciting rhymes and, of course, reading stories. Children whose parents engage in early literacy activities with them such as story-telling and reading are more likely to be successful in their early school education (Scarborough et al., 1991; Snow et al., 1998). These early literacy experiences help to develop a child’s phonemic and phonological awareness and print awareness thus building the foundation for future mastery of reading. There is a clear link between children’s early literacy activities, with their parents, and their success in school (Leseman and de Jong, 1998; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Encouragingly, if parents understand the importance of this early support and are supplied with the means to provide it they are likely to engage in beneficial literacy development activities with their children (Snow et al., 1998). Ruterana (2011) found a low level of engagement by Rwandan families in their children’s reading activities due to a lack of understanding of its importance and a lack of the time and the means to help. However, Ruterana (2011) also found an eagerness among these families to learn how to help children.

There is much evidence to show that children’s early pre-school literacy development is a major determinant of future attainment levels in education generally (Dickinson and Tabors, 2002; Valdez-Menacha and Whitehurst, 1992). ‘Early grade reading competence is critical for continued retention and success in future grades’ (USAID, 2011). If a child does not succeed in mastering reading in primary school they are likely to experience very limited educational attainment with consequent negative implications for life-long earnings (USAID, 2011; Needlman et al., 2002).

However, reading is dependent on the socio-cultural setting. Societal values and attitudes to literacy have a major impact on the literacy activities and experiences of children (Kennedy et al., 2006). Parents’ dispositions and attitudes to education and reading have a strong influence on children’s behaviours and attitudes to education (Cole, 1996). An understanding

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3 Phonemes are the individual sounds in spoken words. Phonemic awareness is the ability to distinguish between these different basic sounds in our spoken language. Phonemic awareness is considered a prerequisite for successfully learning to read. Phonological awareness includes phonemic awareness and also awareness of larger spoken units such as syllables and words which rhyme.

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of the socio-cultural setting and the values, attitudes and practices in a community are important prerequisites for developing literacy practices (Risko and Walker-Dalhouse, 2007). Ruterana has identified a ‘limited reading culture in Rwanda’ due mainly to the colonial and post-colonial system of education, the tradition of oral communication in Rwanda and the lack of reading resources. The need to involve parents more in creating a nurturing environment for developing children’s emergent literacy, through teacher-parent partnerships, was highlighted in the study (Ruterana, 2012).

For children of school-going age, the relationship between home and school in supporting reading development is crucial. It has been asserted that the nature of the relationship between school and home exerts more influence on a child’s ability to read than the quality of the teaching received (Weigel et al., 2005). For children who come from socially and economically disadvantaged families a positive working relationship between home and school is very important (Lin, 2003). However, not all homes within a socioeconomic grouping will display the same disposition to supporting literacy. Parental levels of literacy will often have a significant influence on the value they place on supporting children’s literacy development (Fitzgerald and Needleman, 1991).

2.5 Teacher motivation.
The level and quality of teacher education is widely acknowledged to be fundamental to the success or otherwise of any education system (Fullan, 1993; GoR, 2007). Teacher motivation is one of the elements which impacts on the quality of teaching. It is one of the most important reasons for a school’s lack of success (Brophy, 1983). For this reason, developing a skilled and motivated teacher workforce in Rwanda is a key target in the ESSP (MINEDUC, 2010). Teacher motivation is known to be influenced by a variety of factors including poor pay, lack of professional support and a perception of not being valued by the community and society at large (VSO, 2002; Hall and Langton 2006). Research indicates that many primary school teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Rwanda, are poorly motivated (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007). Despite teachers’ perceptions that they are not valued, there is evidence to suggest that in many instances society holds teachers in high regard (Johnson and Hallgarten, 2002). This also appears to be the case in Rwanda where ‘teaching is generally quite well respected in most Rwandan communities’ (Bennell and Ntagaramba, 2008).
Teacher commitment is high despite the poor pay and conditions. When teachers feel respected by the community the home-school relationship improves (VSO, 2002).
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Arising from the objectives of the research and with reference to the available literature the primary research question was: ‘What can be done in communities to raise standards of reading for all children?’ The key embedded questions were: ‘What are the values, attitudes and practices within communities with regard to reading in general and young children’s reading in particular?; ‘What is the situation with regard to equity of access to reading support for girls and the very poor in communities?; and ‘Are teachers motivated to teach reading?’.

A qualitative approach was deemed most suitable to answer these questions. Qualitative research has the purpose of examining people’s ‘words, actions in narrative and descriptive ways more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). As the information sought related to the context and culture of reading practices, it was felt that a qualitative approach, involving interviews of key informants, would provide insightful data. Unlike, positivist-orientated, quantitative research which aims, through random sampling, to generalise data from the sample to the population as a whole, qualitative research aims to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon by in-depth research of a smaller purposefully chosen sample. For this reason, generalisability in the traditional sense is not possible. ‘A small sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many’ (Merriam, 2002). However, context-based extrapolations from the research can be used to aid stakeholders and policymakers in making decisions in regard to situations in similar contexts. The knowledge we gain from an in-depth investigation of a particular situation can be used to make decisions in other similar situations (Merriam, 2002).

3.2 Research Design.

According to Bernard (1973) a community can be defined by three characteristics: locale, common ties and social interaction. In this study the sector, with the primary school at its centre, was identified as meeting these requirements.
The key informants capable of providing the information required were identified as being: (a) community representatives drawn from parents (and guardians) of children attending the local primary school; (b) Head teachers; (c) teachers of reading to young children; and (d) young children. It was decided to focus the research on communities which were representative of the challenges facing reading development in Rwanda. The sample would therefore be mainly drawn from poor rural communities. Ten rural communities were identified for the research sample. To provide a broader picture, a further two urban communities were also included. One of the urban schools and one of the rural schools were identified as high-achieving schools in the national examinations at P6 level and also achieved very high rankings in the EGRA assessment tests. It was hoped that their inclusion might help to explain why some schools do better than others in reading performance. Since knowledgeable people who were in a position to throw light on the research questions were required, a purposive sampling strategy was used. This entails targeting groups which would be in a position to give the researchers in depth insights and information for the research sample (Cohen et al., 2007).

3.3 Rationale for choice of survey area

The study is aimed at providing an insight to the communities’ perceptions and views on the different issues linked to literacy, equity and teacher motivation.

The identification of area of geographical focus was guided by the need to dedicate sufficient time to be spent at given individual sites for the period of six working days for the scale and scope of the research. Consequently Southern Province was opted for as the area of focus based on the following key reasons:

a. high levels of poverty associated with this area (to get an insight to the challenges for the poorest);

b. literacy levels and enrolment rates (to get perspectives on the relationship of these factors and perceptions, practices and barriers to literacy acquisition);

c. Concern has a presence in this area (facilitating a purposeful sampling approach to ensure the information collected is as useful as possible). The network of support workers on the ground which CWR has built up over the years was felt to be ideal for
providing ‘gatekeepers’ who could secure access to schools and, through a ‘snowball’
effect, access to community representatives.

The following outline provides further information on the considerations in this selection
process.

The level of poverty was a key criterion in the geographic selection to allow the study to
provide useful insights to potential community contributions to equity in education
particularly among the extreme poor. The third integrated household living conditions survey
(EICV3, National Institute of Statistics Rwanda, 2011) provides recent indicators on the level
of poverty in Rwanda. The following two Figures have been taken from that report (available

The following table (Figure 1) shows that, although there has been positive progress since
EICV 2, the Southern Province still has the highest percentage of people, 31.1%, living in
extreme poverty.

![Figure 1 Percentage of the population living in extreme poverty in Rwanda](image)

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The map below, taken from the EICV3 report, provides a breakdown of the prevalence of extreme poverty by district in Rwanda:

![Map of Rwanda showing prevalence of extreme poverty by district. The darker the colour, the more prevalent is extreme poverty in that district. It can be seen that the districts of Nyaruguru and Gisagara (indicated by yellow arrows) are among those with the highest levels of extreme poverty.](image)

**Figure 2 Poverty in Rwanda by District, 2010/11**

In the above map of Rwanda, the darker the colour the more prevalent is extreme poverty in that district. It can be seen that the districts of Nyaruguru and Gisagara (indicated by yellow arrows) are among those with the highest levels of extreme poverty.

The second important consideration in the geographic selection is level of performance for literacy. To find information in this regard, the team consulted the Learning Assessment in Rwandan Schools (LARS), carried out by the Ministry of Education. The LARS report provides the following data on the average literacy levels in schools across Rwanda:

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Figure 3 Average literacy score in Grade 4, as measured by LARS, by district in Rwanda (2011)
The chart above Figure 3 shows the average literacy scores in Grade 4 classes across Rwanda as measured by LARS. Average percentage scores for literacy are presented by district. The average literacy score for Rwanda, at just under 50% as measured in the LARS test, is shown by the green bar in the middle of the chart. The districts above the green bar on the chart are below the national average for literacy. The districts identified earlier as having high levels of poverty feature within the lowest performers in terms of literacy score. Nyaruguru, had the lowest literacy scores in Rwanda (36% approximately) and Gisagara had the third lowest (39% approximately). The districts with the highest literacy scores at Grade 4 level are shown in the bottom half of the chart. Bugesera district, which is also the current L3 Initiative pilot district, happens to have the third highest literacy score for Grade 4 as in indicated in the above figure.

The research team further took into consideration the need to get aspects of urban/semi-urban situations as well as rural ones in terms of literacy. So in this regard the team chose a high-score school in the urban/semi-urban locations and a high-score rural one.

Finally, although the data above highlights issues of poverty and low literacy performance, in other districts, the research team also considered practical aspects such as distance, time and access to people on the ground that could facilitate the identification of research participants.

For these reasons, the research focused on the districts of Nyaruguru, Gisagara, Bugesera and Huye. Huye district was included because, like Bugesera, it provided urban, suburban and rural settings and also because it had high performing and low performing schools as measured by LARS and by EGRA.

3.4 The Research Instruments
The research instruments comprised of semi-structured group interviews with (a) community representatives\(^4\) (see Appendix A); (b) children from Primary 4 (P4) classes (see Appendix

\(^4\) A respected educationalist with local knowledge was recruited to visit research sights in advance of the research and identify community representatives who would be willing to be interviewed by the researchers. The criteria for selection were that they had to have, or be guardians of, children of primary school going age. Members of the PTC were naturally eligible but the majority had to be non PTC members (to ensure as wide a representation of the community as possible). Between 6 and 12 community representatives per sight were required (the ideal number for group interviews is between 4 and 12 (Cohen et al., 2007)). Having a minimum of 6 would allow for no-shows on the day.

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B); (c) primary school teachers of Primary 1 (P1) to Primary 4 (P4) pupils (see Appendix C). Primary school Head teachers were interviewed individually (See Appendix D). Interviews allow responses by interviewees to be easily and immediately probed and explored and a better understanding of the situation ascertained (Patton, 2002; Anderson, 1998).

Additionally, in each sector or community, a checklist was made of visible reading-related facilities and opportunities within the community (see Appendix G). For this purpose, the immediate vicinity of the primary school and its hinterland was selected. A zone within a 200-300 metres radius of the school was chosen. Where appropriate, opportunities to follow up community representatives’ interviews with a home visit to one of the participating parents’ homes were taken. In these household visits more detailed interviews were conducted with the parent in question and a checklist was compiled of reading facilities and opportunities in the home (see Appendix H).

The research instruments were designed after consultation with various stakeholders, to identify the key issues and research questions, a field visit to establish the context for the research, and a review of relevant literature and policy documents. The research team fine-tuned and adjusted the interview questions and structure in light of information garnered. Questions in the semi-structured interview schedule were designed to be lead-in questions, after which the interviewers would probe and elicit in-depth responses. All interviewers asked the same basic questions in order. Thus ensuring that comparability of results was increased and that data was complete for each interview. This also reduced the effect and bias of having individual interviewers. It will also allow decision makers to review the instrumentation used in the research (Patton 1980). Each of the interview schedules can be seen in Appendices A - D. Interview questions were grouped according to the key themes emerging from the research questions and in light of feedback received from research partners and other stakeholders. This form of pre-coding facilitates ease of organisation and subsequent analysis of the data (Patton 1980). Interviews were digitally recorded and, as a back-up, each interviewer also kept field notes of interviewees’ responses.

To ensure reliability, piloting of the research instruments was undertaken in the field in two different sectors. Particular attention was paid to the wording of questions which might be leading or result in acquiescence on the part of the interviewees. The translation from English to Kinyarwanda was also monitored for reliability and accuracy. In light of this, necessary
adjustments were made to the instruments. Adjustments made included the clarification of unclear questions, or the rephrasing of the question structure to get to the kernel of the question. Repetitive-type questions were eliminated, while other areas of enquiry were concentrated upon to collect richer data. The language used in some questions was adjusted to overcome difficulties arising from the fact that the interviews would be conducted in Kinyarwanda. To try to ensure as much validity as possible, an interactive training workshop in qualitative research was conducted with the research team, led by the senior researcher. Issues such as researchers’ personal bias and the effect of the interviewers’ perceived status on respondents’ answers were explored. The need to eliminate, as far as possible, factors which might affect the validity of the data, such as preconceptions, misconceptions and misunderstandings were also examined. Time was also spent developing the interviewing and probing techniques of the research team.

The research was undertaken over six days with twelve sectors in total being researched. There were two teams of researchers enabling two research sectors to be visited per day. Each team of researchers was divided into two sub-teams comprising of two researchers in each. Two interviewers per team would add to the reliability of the data (Cohen et al., 2007). One sub-team interviewed the community representatives and the Head teacher. They also conducted the home visits and completed the home check-list. The other sub-team interviewed the teachers and the children, and carried out the community check-list. The CGDE researcher was accompanied by two Rwandan interpreters, one to ask questions in Kinyarwanda and the other to translate on the spot.

Before conducting interviews, potential interviewees were informed of the purpose and nature of the research. The beneficence of the research was pointed out and they were assured of absolute confidentiality and anonymity. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time or to refuse to answer a question if they so wished. Candidates were then asked for their consent. As interviews were to be digitally recorded, participants were informed as to the purpose of this and again asked if they consented to the interviews being recorded. Three groups of teachers did not consent and so their interviews

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5 Beneficence refers to a concept in research ethics, according to which the researcher should have the welfare of the research participant as a goal or objective of any clinical trial.
were not digitally recorded. Each group of researchers also kept independent written research notes. In these, interviewees’ responses were noted. To choose children for the children’s interviews the researchers sought permission from the Head teacher and the class teacher (in loco parentis\textsuperscript{6}). Researchers then held a discussion with the whole class on a topic of general interest, not related to the research theme. During the course of this discussion, children who were active participants in the discussion were identified and from these three girls and three boys were invited to participate in the group interview. Six or seven, is considered the optimum size for children’s group interviews (Cohen et al., 2007). The interviews were conducted without the presence of the teacher. Before the interview, the six children were equally assured of absolute confidentiality and anonymity. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time or to refuse to answer a question if they so wished. They were informed of the purpose of the digital recorder and asked for their consent to be interviewed. At the end of the interviews, time was taken to reassure the children of how good their answers were and what help they had been to the interviewers. Their teachers were also told, in front of the children, how good the children had been.

In the twelve sectors chosen for the research, a total of 12 primary Head teachers, 57 P1 to P4 teachers (41 female and 16 male), 80 community representatives (45 mothers and 35 fathers), and 48 P4 children (3 girls and 3 boys in each school) were interviewed. In addition, 5 parents consented to follow up interviews in their homes.

\subsection*{3.5 Data Analysis}

Immediately after each interview, to ensure fidelity and to capture the data while fresh, interviewers conferred with their interview notes and with each other to conduct initial analysis of the data, and identify, agree and record the key findings from the interview. This process of data transformation and reduction (Miles and Huberman, 1994) involved segmenting, summarising and coding responses. For the purpose of coding the data gathered,

\footnote{\textit{in loco parentis} is a Latin term meaning in the place of, or in the role of, a parent.}

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the pre-coding, undertaken at the interview design stage, greatly aids the process (Patton, 1980).

Digital recordings were listened to, to ensure accuracy of the interview notes and the accuracy of the translation from Kinyarwanda. Illustrative quotes from the interviews were transcribed and translated into English. For group interviews, it is the view of the whole group and not that of the individual which is the unit of analysis (Cohen et al., 2007) and care had to be taken to select quotations that were reflective of the views and sentiments of the whole group and not just those of the individual. Care had also to be taken not to select quotations that suited the particular preferences of the interviewer or that presented a neater picture (Gillham, 2000). Quotations selected for inclusion in the findings were therefore utterances from individuals which illustrated, exemplified or elaborated on a view expressed by the group as a whole. As highlighted previously, in keeping with best ethical research practice and the need to have respondents answer freely and candidly (Cohen et al., 2007), all respondents were guaranteed absolute anonymity and confidentiality. For this reason, quotations presented in the research findings (Chapter 4) are not attributed to or identifiable with either individuals or groups.

Where it proved logistically difficult to complete the process of data reduction immediately after the interviews it was completed as soon after as possible.

Each evening, the entire research team met to finalise their findings for that day and to photocopy them for central compilation and storage. Issues arising from the day’s research were aired and implications for the following days noted. Further data reduction (Miles and Huberman, 1994) was conducted involving the entire research team. Data was organised, assembled and displayed before the whole group and the collective data was further coded, summarised and categorised. Themes and patterns were identified and memos taken to elaborate on concepts and to aid the development of propositions (Punch, 2009). This process of analysis in the early stages and throughout the data collection process assists the process of theory generation (Cohen et al., 2007).

On completion of the six days of research, the research team convened for four days in Kigali to further analyse the data. Miles and Huberman’s (1994) three stage process of data analysis, was continued:

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(1) Data reduction. The process of data reduction begun in the field was continued. Each sub-
team reviewed their findings from each of the six days of interview and identified the overall 
key findings i.e. those findings which occurred with consistent frequency. Noteworthy 
exceptions or outliers (Creswell, 2009) to the key findings, worthy of mention, were also 
identified and agreed.

(2) Data display. The sub-groups of researchers who had conducted interviews with the same 
cohorts of interviewees (i.e. community representatives and Head teachers or teachers and 
children) met to display and share their key findings and to agree overall findings, and 
note-worthy exceptions and outliers. Following this process, the findings were displayed on 
flip charts and analysed by the entire team leading to further reduction and transformation 
where necessary. These repeated and iterative displays of data were intended to enhance the 
quality of the research findings (Punch, 2009).

(3) Drawing and verifying conclusions. Concurrent with the above stages and also to 
conclude the analysis, the implications of the findings were discussed and elaborated on. 
Previous analysis was integrated. Conclusions were drawn and displayed for agreed 
verification by all the interviewers involved. Findings from the different interview groups 
were triangulated with each other (see Appendix E).

During the five home visits, the parents were encouraged to tell their own family’s story 
regarding reading practices. An open-ended questioning style was used. These interviews 
were conducted in Kinyarwanda. Participants gave their consent to be interviewed after 
receiving assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. They were digitally recorded. Notes 
were also taken by the interviewers. Interviews were translated into English and reviewed by 
the interviewers present to check for accuracy. Three of them were written up in a narrative 
style based on the interviews and observations made. The narratives were double checked for 
accuracy by all researchers directly involved. They are presented later in Chapter 5, as mini 
case studies. These are included to further illuminate the findings and to provide some deeper 
insights into circumstances on the ground. As guaranteed to the participants, pseudonyms are 
used.

Detailed data analysis of the community and home checked lists was not carried out as the 
samples were deemed to be inadequate for this purpose. Nevertheless, they provided a very 
useful aide memoire for the researchers to remind them of what was observed in the field.

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They may also be of interest to those planning further research in this area and have therefore been included in tabular form in the findings or in the Appendices.

3.6 Conclusion

It should be noted that there are limitations to this kind of research, some generic, others specific. Qualitative research is of its very nature subjective. However, the process of analysis put in place was meant to ensure that there was not an over-reliance on individual or group responses but cross-corroboration of data results. One of the challenges of undertaking this research is the fact that the data collective can only be interpreted as indicative of what is happening on the ground. No generalisations can be made about the research topic *per se* across the whole population of Rwanda. The research sample was purposive and was not intended to be a representative sample of the whole population. However, internal consistencies and common trends can be elicited from the data, to form the basis of our understanding of issues pertaining to young children’s acquisition of reading. The insights gained from this type of in-depth investigation can be transferred and used in making decisions about other similar situations in Rwanda. In Chapter 4, key findings for each set of interviews are presented separately, without commentary. Commentary and discussion of the implications of the findings follows in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4: Findings from the Research

4.1 Introduction
This chapter presents the key findings from the various research instruments, namely: (1) the community representatives’ group interviews; (2) the Head teachers’ interviews; (3) the P4 teachers’ group interviews; and (4) the group interviews with children. The key findings are those which were identified and agreed by all of the researchers following analysis of the interviews. Information from observations made in the community and from visits to a number of households will also be summarised and presented at the end of this chapter.

The key findings from the various interviews are presented separately, starting with the findings from the community representatives’ interviews. They are presented without commentary from the report writer. This is done for the purpose of making it clear for the reader the information which was found with each research tool. Discussion and commentary on the implications of the findings will follow in Chapter 5. Throughout this section, the findings are illuminated by the inclusion of representative and illustrative quotes from the interviewees. These quotes are in ‘italics’. They are translated into English and also presented in the original Kinyarwanda. It should be noted that throughout this and following chapters any reference to ‘communities’ ‘parents’ ‘schools’ etc. refers to those that participated in the research.

4.2 Community Representatives Interviews.

The key findings from the community representative interviews are presented below under five themes: (1) Community Values Attitudes and Practices with Regard to Reading; (2) Community Values Attitudes and Practices with Regard To Children's Reading; (3) Equity Issues; (4) Barriers to Children Learning to Read; and (5) Opportunities to Promote Children's Reading. Finally, suggestions from the community representatives for initiatives to promote reading are presented.
4.2.1 Community Values Attitudes and Practices with Regard to Reading.

Communities greatly value reading. A unanimous key finding among all of the community representatives groups interviewed is that reading is greatly valued by all communities and has a very high value within the community in general. Communities see reading as the key to individual, family and community development (urufungozo). Individuals greatly value it for self-development, overcoming poverty and leading better lives:

Reading is the key to knowledge

Gusoma ni urufunguzo rw’ubwenge

They see that those around them who can read have a better life and can be leaders in their community. It is felt that those who cannot read ‘live in ignorance’, unable to access information and knowledge.

The community gives great importance to reading because they know that those who have a better life today are those who went to school and learned to read.

Usanga abantu baha agaciro gusoma kuko baziko abantu babaye ho nezaubu ari abize bazi no gusoma

Reading is therefore seen as very important. It was pointed out that the extent to which communities value reading is evident in the number of people who go to adult literacy classes, where they are available. Even older people in the community attend adult literacy classes.

People value reading because even the old people go to adult literacy centres to learn to read.

Abantu baha agaciro gusoma kuko n’abakuze usanga bajya aho bigira gusoma no kwandika

On a day-to-day basis, being able to read enables one to read signposts, newspapers and communications from schools and government bodies, for example, information brochures on ‘reproductive health’.

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When you can read, it is easy to watch the sign post and know where to go
Iyo uzi gusoma birakorohera kureba icyapa ukamenya aho ujya

Reading is coming from ignorance and becoming wise
Gusoma ni ukuva mu bujiji ukaba umuhanga

Those who cannot read are reported to have low self-esteem because they are constantly reliant on others, who can read, to provide them with important information. Being unable to read exposes one to being ‘marginalised’. People in the community see reading as empowering them to take control of their own lives and to control what they themselves do in life. A big consideration for parents in the community is that, if they were able to read, they would be able to help their children to learn to read.

The community representatives acknowledge that there are some in the community who do not value reading, however, these are very few in number. They perceive that this lack of value for reading stems from individual ignorance. They think it may also be attributable to the fact that these people did not have a proper education themselves and never learned to read.

It might be because they themselves have not learned. Most are farmers and don’t know the value of reading /education
Kuberako nabo ubwabo batize. Abenshi muribo ni abahinzi baba batazi agaciro ko kwiga gusoma.

Most people, in the communities visited for this research, do not read. That is, there is little or no ‘culture’ or habit of reading in most communities. Most people in communities cannot read Kinyarwanda and almost all cannot read English. In addition, there are few or no reading materials available in the community or in individual households. Where reading materials were said to be available in households, it emerged that they were almost always the Bible or some religious leaflets and pamphlets. One community had access to a district
newspaper/newsletter but the majority had no such materials. They used to be available but not any longer. Some communities expressed the wish to have available reading materials.

We wish that the authorities can help us to get the newspapers or even have the newspaper sellers come down to our area because we could even buy the newspapers ourselves.

Turifuza ko abayobozi badufasha kugirango tubone ibinyamakuru ndetse n’abashoramari bakamanuka bakagera iwacu, ibinyamakuru twabigura cyane.

For those who could read, apart from the absence of reading materials, the lack of light in the hours of darkness posed a problem. A number of households in one community had recently received solar lighting but, by and large, for the majority of households, from sunset to sunrise there is darkness, apart from the light of a candle or a kerosene lamp, where available and affordable. One of the community representatives interviewed, who had received solar lighting, consented to have three of the researchers visit her home (Case Study 1). This is Solange’s story (as with all case studies a pseudonym is used):

Solange has seven children. One is working as a house girl in Kigali. An older boy is also working in general jobs in Kigali but she doesn't know exactly what or where. A third child lives with grandparents in another Rwandan province. Her four children who live at home are a boy aged 17, twin girls aged 12 and a two-year-old son. There is no husband in the household.

She now has three children in school, the 17-year-old who is in S3 and the twins in P5. She finds it very hard to keep the children in school. She gets part-time jobs occasionally such as cutting vegetables or working on a building site as a porter. For this she earns between 500 and 1000 Rwandan francs (€0.65 - €1.30) per day. She has one rabbit, one hen and a small plot of land to grow some vegetables for her family. She doesn't have to pay any fees for primary education but secondary education costs 7800 Rwandan francs per term. School uniforms cost 8800 Rwandan francs for secondary and 3000 Rwandan francs for primary school uniforms. Solange also has to pay for other incidental expenses such as exercise books and school materials. She finds it is ‘most difficult to pay for everything’. Apart from the financial challenge of being a single parent, she often finds it difficult to get time to do all the household chores. This is mainly because she has to prepare the children to go to school and to tend her small vegetable patch. To overcome this, she sends one of the twins to school in the morning and the other in the afternoon. In this way, there is always one at home to help with the household chores.

She supports her children’s education by providing materials, pens etc and other items required by the school such as mops and hoes. Her children love going to school. She encourages them. She tells them to go on time or they will get sent back home and she will...
beat them. She considers reading to be:

'the foundation of well-being because when they get knowledge to read they can get knowledge to develop themselves...When you compare those who can read and write with those who cannot, (you can see that) those who can read are responsible people who have a direction in life'"

In the evening when the children are home from school they have some activities and chores to do. Then Solange reminds them to do homework in the living room where there are two benches and a table. Sometimes during the evening she exchanges some riddles with her children.

Solang herself finished primary school and can read Kinyarwanda. She is therefore able to help the twins when their homework is in Kinyarwanda. She cannot help with secondary school work but her 17-year-old son helps the whole family with English. Solange would like to be able to speak English. She wants her son to continue his studies and to have a better life. He says he would like to study right up to university level. He is fond of languages and literature and would like to travel.

Solang visits the school regularly, especially when school fees are due. At that time, she goes to plea for an extension of payment of the fees. Feeding the children is her priority, so, she feeds them and then tries to find extra money for the fees. She finds it easy to talk to the teachers; they are friendly. She knows them all and she is able to meet them and ask them about her children's progress.

Two months ago the house received solar lighting as part of a scheme. She is so happy to get light. Torches used to get broken regularly. The solar light is much better. She has one bulb in the living room and another in the bedroom. She can now manage to do things during the night which she previously had to do during the day such as washing clothes. And, of course, the solar light is great for the children to do their revision. Apart from the school books which they bring home there is no other reading material in the house.

Regarding reading in the community, she believes that people know the importance of reading but because of poverty they cannot help their children. She sacrifices herself to help her children go to school especially her 17-year-old son because ‘he is clever’. She would love to have support for her son to continue with his studies as far as university level. ‘Once a child has reached that higher level he can get higher development and in turn help the family’.

Another major reason cited for the lack of reading in communities, among those who can read, was the lack of time. In quite a number of community interviews, the point was made that, especially for very poor households, all the time, effort and energy is devoted to catering for the basic essentials - putting food on the table. This leaves no time for ‘unessential’ activities such as reading. Other life demands are perceived as being much more important than reading.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
The only exceptions to these findings were the two urban communities. The situation in the two urban communities was different to that which was encountered in the rural ones. Most of the urban households have electricity and the wealthier households have reading materials. There appears to be a higher level of literacy and practice of reading in the urban community.

4.2.2 Community Values Attitudes and Practices with Regard to Children’s Reading.
A key finding from the community interviews is that they all want their children to be able to read. The overriding reason for this, and one which was repeated over and over again, is that parents want their children to have better lives than they themselves. They want them to rise to a ‘higher level’.

*That in the future after being educated, our children will rise to a higher level than their parents*

*Mu gihe kizaza, abana bacu nibaba barize bazaba bari ku rugero rwiza rurenze ababyeyi babo*

They perceive that reading will enable their children to overcome ignorance and poverty. They mention similar reasons for wanting their children to be able to read as they cite for themselves, namely, to give them access to information and knowledge, for personal and vocational development, to empower their children so that they will not be ‘marginalised’ in life. A further important consideration mentioned is that the child who is able to read will be able to help the family with functional reading and literacy - the family will therefore be self-sufficient in reading and not reliant on others.

*If you don’t know how to read, you regret this so you push your child to learn how to read. If you don’t know how to read, you can ask your child to read for you.*

*Iyo utazi gusoma birakubabaza cyane ndetse ukanabyicuza, bigatuma ukangurira umwana wawe kwiga gusoma. Iyo utazi gusoma ushobora kubwira umwana wawr kujya agusomera.*

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
I don’t know how to read myself but because I have educated my child and he knows how to read, he is able to select my patient file or even the vaccination card from other documents in case I need them.

Nanjye sinzi gusoma ariko kuko umwana wanjye namwohereje kwiga akamanya gusoma, iyo nkeneye ifishi yanjye yo kwa muganga ndetse n’igipande cyo gukingiza, abintoranyiriza mu zindi mpapuro.

Parents also report that their children are keen to learn to read. They themselves want to be successful. Some children from very poor families are said to work extra hard in school in order to lift themselves out of poverty.

Many young children in P1 to P3/P4 are not supported in reading at home. Most parents, we were told, do not help their young children with reading at home. The main reasons for this are their own illiteracy, and a lack of knowledge of how to help with reading. Most parents feel helpless with regard to supporting children with reading. In addition to these practical reasons there is an attitudinal factor, affecting reading support, which emerged in the interviews. There is a marked difference in practice, in supporting children with their reading and school work, between those in the lower classes and those in P5 – P6. In some instances the change in practice occurs in P4. There is some support for children in the higher classes whereas there is little or none for those in the lower classes. The main reason which emerged for this variation in practice is that communities perceive that reading begins during or after P4. By and large, parents do not appreciate the need and importance of supporting young children in reading. They don't perceive younger children as being ready to learn to read.

We aren't doing a lot for the young children especially those under ten years because you find that they are unable to help themselves read.

Aba abo hasi cyane, munsi yimyaka 10 bo ntabintu byinshi bakora kuko usanga baba badashoboye kwifasha gusoma.

Young children don’t read, they do whatever they want.

Abatoya ntibasoma bakora ibyo bishakiye
This attitudinal factor does not seem to be confined to families alone. Community representatives report that young children do not bring any reading materials or work home from school. Some young children bring exercise books home but, in general, it appears that schools only give books to children in P4 and above. According to community representatives, the perception appears to be that older pupils are the only ones able to make good use of the books, to read them and to look after them responsibly. In the main, there is no expectation that younger children in P1 to P3/P4 would make good use of books or treat them with care. Children in P1 to P3/P4 are not perceived as ready for reading. Parents also consider that younger children do not do any reading in school. In fact, some interviewees commented that schools do not have enough books for young children.

Another reason cited for the lack of support for young children is the lack of time on the part of parents and children. In the case of parents, as previously mentioned, the priority is providing the basic necessities for life. In the case of the children, there is no time left after performing household chores to do anything other than eat and sleep. And, for those households with no artificial light reading is impossible after dark. By and large, those children who attend the morning shift in school do chores in the afternoon and those who attend the afternoon shift do chores in the morning. Typical chores mentioned include fetching jerry cans of water, collecting firewood, sweeping the house and compound, taking care of younger siblings, taking animals to graze and harvesting food for the table. In the case of the poorest children, these chores extend to engaging in income-generating activities such as harvesting, portering and attending market.

_Sometimes they are hungry. Parents send them out to get part-time jobs so that they can get enough to eat._

_Rimwe na rimwe baba bashonje. Ababyei babohereza gushaka ibiraka kugirango babashe kubona ibyo kurya bihagije._

This has clear implications for attendance, absenteeism and dropout from school. Indeed, in some communities it was reported that there is very poor attendance in school on the two market days per week.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Even if parents felt the need to support young children in reading, there are few, if any, reading materials at home. It should be noted, that there are some notable exceptions to the above general practices. There are parents who go to great lengths to ensure that their children are able to read. They make great sacrifices for their children. For example, take the case of Sarah and her husband below (Case Study 2).

| Sarah lives in a remote and beautiful rural part of Rwanda. Although beautiful, the area has high levels of poverty. Sarah has six children, all girls. The eldest is 17 and was fortunate to get a partial scholarship for a boarding school in Bugasare after coming top in the district in the National exams. She is now in S4. The other children are a 16-year-old in S1, a 14-year-old in P5, a 10-year-old in P4, a six-year-old in P1 and a five-year-old who goes to nursery school. |
| Sarah’s husband is away from home, for three months at a time, looking for work because there is no work for him in the local community. This arrangement has been in operation for the last four years since the eldest girl went to secondary school. At that time, both parents sat down and discussed the options and decided that the only way they could afford to send her to secondary school was for the husband to ‘follow the work’. They agreed there was no other option ‘we couldn't just sit and watch our daughter not go to school’ and there was no opportunity for work where they live. He mostly finds work on building sites as a labourer. He comes home every three months with money for the school fees. He doesn't manage to send money at any other time. While he is away, Sarah provides for the family by growing some crops. These include beans, maize, cassava, and soya beans. She also has a cow which she received through the 'one cow per family' programme. It produces enough milk for the family but not enough to sell. She also has a goat and a hen. She is almost self-sufficient for food except if she wants meat or fish. She buys meat at 1200 Rwandan francs per kilo twice a year, at Christmas and Easter. She doesn't trade or sell any of her vegetables but Sarah finds money for other essentials by digging for other farmers. For this kind of work she is paid 500 Rwandan francs (€0.65) for working from 6 a.m. until noon. |
| The total school fees for the two girls at secondary school, including transport comes to 130,000 Rwandan francs per term, uniforms cost 20,000 Rwandan francs for the secondary school girls and a total of 6000 Rwandan francs for the primary school girls. There are no primary school fees. The children are not fed at school but come home for lunch. Sarah says school fees are the biggest challenge she faces. They are the reason why her husband is away from home for so much time. She misses him a lot. She cannot visit him because she cannot leave the house and the children. |
| Sarah herself completed eight years in primary school and then went on to do three years in vocational school, concentrating on farming and tailoring. She says that in her time there was a belief that if a girl attended a vocational school she was 'either a prostitute or her family couldn't control her'. She says she never listened to that kind of talk because she always |
Dr Marty Hollan knew the importance of education. She loves learning and is thankful that she was lucky to have met and married her husband who also values school and education. She would have liked to have gone further in education herself but blames the circumstances at the time for preventing her from reaching her potential. She can read Kinyarwanda. She cannot speak or read English but would like to learn. She can, and does, support her primary school children if the homework is in Kinyarwanda. Apart from buying her children uniforms and books, Sarah also provides light for study by way of a small paraffin lamp. She spends 100 Rwandan francs to buy enough fuel for two nights for this. She and her daughters gather in the living space to read. The problem is lack of reading material. She can read the schoolbooks with the children if they are in Kinyarwanda otherwise there is nothing in the house to read but a Bible and some gospel books. These she likes to read to the children. If she doesn't have money for paraffin, the children go to sleep without reading. They also like to listen to the radio which has the advantage of not requiring light. She tries to limit the chores the children have to do, such as fetching a small jerry can of water, so that they have time for reading and listening to the radio.

Sarah is passionate about education and reading. She tells her children and other people that she was not able to receive a full education because of circumstances when she was younger but now things are better. So, she tells her children to avail of the opportunities. Her children respond by applying themselves to their school work. She feels that her children are successful in school because both parents have instilled a culture and positive attitude to reading and learning in their children.

Sarah is an adviser on the Parent Teacher Council (PTC). She was elected by parents and is completing her second year in office. New elections are due shortly as the PTC has a two-year term of office. Sarah is confident that she will be re-elected. Part of her role in the PTC is to keep in touch with teachers and know what is going on. She meets regularly with the teachers of her children. She constantly monitors her children's progress and is 'always aware of what is going on'. She really loves the PTC work and is motivated by it. She particularly likes the training they received from Concern.

She feels that things could be improved dramatically for the community if the school got a library and effort was made to provide out-of-school support for reading. ‘If homes had electricity it would help children with revision’.

Sarah and her husband’s dedication and sacrifice shows what can be achieved if parents are focussed and strongly committed to their children’s education. It appears that one of the prerequisites is the passion for education in one or both of the parents. This they instil in their children.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Very many are those who went to school but didn’t finish and don’t want their children to turn out the same. Those who have some education themselves.

A number of better-educated parents ensure that they make time to sit down with their children and read whatever is available with them, if only the Bible. These parents set aside some money to purchase kerosene for reading lamps or to purchase candles for reading.

If you have 3 to 4 children it is not easy to get everything for them but it is your responsibility to provide, to work extra. In the mind when you decide to do it you can do it.

Other parents simply encourage their children to read so that they will not have to endure the hardship faced by their parents.

Others still, employ pragmatic and simple solutions to the problems posed by poverty:

Again, the urban schools in the research were atypical with regard to resources at home and parents’ ability to support reading. However, even in these cases the general attitude that reading begins in the latter stages of primary school was evident. Here, young children generally do not get reading material to bring home from school, but they do get time and

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
support from parents for reading. Most children, in the urban settings researched, are not expected to do chores. They are given time to play, watch television and in the cases where they have well educated professional parents, time to read their own books. Some of the parents interviewed even reported hiring individuals to support their children with reading after school.

There is little or no practice of storytelling or singing to young children at home. Most community representatives had difficulty responding to a question on practices with regard to singing and telling stories and rhymes to young children. This includes very young pre-school children and children in the early years of schooling. Parents did not appear to make a connection between the practice of singing or telling stories to young children and reading.

_These children are too young. They can’t tell them stories because they can’t hear. They just play with them, holding them in their arms._

_Abana bato cyane harimo n’impinja ntitubacira imigani kuko batumva, turabakinisha tubafashe mu ntoki._

When pressed, a typical response was that there used to be a culture of storytelling and singing songs to children but it has mostly faded away and is not widespread - only a few still practice it.

_That culture is no longer there, life style has changed and people don’t get time._

_Uwo muco ntukibaho, imibereho yarahindutse abantu ntibakibona umwanya._

Many parents are not aware of any stories and rhymes to tell our songs to sing which might be suitable for young children. They were able to tell the researcher's riddles but said that these were mostly reserved for older children who would be in a position to understand them and respond. It is clear that the communities, encountered during the research, do not give any importance to storytelling or song-singing to children. Again, time was mentioned as a restricting factor. It was pointed out by the interviewees that in the evening men meet to socialise while women are left to do the housework at home.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
That culture is there but it is mainly done by the women at night given that the men aren’t around. We men don’t usually get time because most of the times during the evenings we go out to the centre, pubs and drinking places to meet and interact with peers.

Uwo muco uraha cyane cyane abagore nibo bakunda kubikora mu ijoro kuko abagabo baba badahari. Nk’abagabo ntidukunda kubona uwo mwanya kubera akenshi tuba natwe twagiye gufata kamwe tuganira na bagenzi bacu ku ga centre.

Most parents consider that teachers have the main role in teaching reading to children. Parents see their role as providing materials, sending children to school and then, possibly, following up on attendance, behaviour and discipline in school. This view is most prevalent in the poorer communities and among those who are less well educated themselves. In most cases, parents are unable to identify a clear role for themselves in supporting reading and learning generally. The level of support given to children by parents seems to be directly proportional to the level of formal education which parents have received and/or to the level of sensitisation parents are exposed to. PTC representatives among the parents have a greater awareness of the role of parents, as in the case of Sarah earlier (Case Study 2). The level of support which parents accept as their role is also dependent on their ability to support and whether they had the means or the skill to do so. To a large extent, there is a lack of understanding of the role of parents in supporting their children in reading proficiency. Parents, for the most part, seem unaware of the need to listen to children reading, read along with the child, question the child on what has been read etc.

4.2.3 Equity Issues

Parents expressed an equal vision for their daughters’ and sons’ education and future. They want their daughters and sons equally to be able to read well. All have the wish that their children will be successful in life. They typically wish for them to be leaders in society, teachers, doctors, soldiers etc. The career vision is the same for girls and boys. They want them to be happy and self-sufficient, without having to depend on others for information and knowledge. Being able to read is part of the vision. In particular, they want their daughters and sons to be able to support their own families when they get married and to be able to support their own children in reading. It was apparent for some of the poorer communities
interviewed, that the vision and ambition for their children was very much related to the functional literacy necessary for community activities such as local commerce, working with co-operatives, dealing in the market etc. In terms of supporting their vision for their children, parents again claim that this is done by sending them to school with the necessary materials, encouragement and follow-up with the school. There is no mention of supporting them with reading or home work.

The very poor are reported to have the same vision for their children as others. All those interviewed felt, however, that the very poor lack the means to make the vision a reality.

_The poor families wish their children to be successful but they don’t have means._

_N’imiryango ikennyeye yifuzako abana babo batera imbere ariko nta bushobozi bafite._

_All the parents have equally good vision for their children even the poor ones despite the fact that for them they have no means to help them to achieve it._

_Buri umubyeyi wese ndetse ni umukene afite icyerekezo kimwe ku mwana we arikontabushobozi_

They lack the material resources, the literacy required, and they have more basic priorities. As one parent commented:

_What will children eat if we spend money on school materials?_

_Amafaranga nituyagura ibikoresho se mubona bzarya iki?_

It was noted that some very poor families cannot send their children to school because the children are hungry or they do not have the necessary materials such as shoes.
The children are motivated but due to the poverty, they are discouraged because they don’t have all the necessary school materials and are always worried of what they will eat once they get home.

Abana bafite ubushake ariko kubera ubukene bacika integer kubera ibikoresho by’ishuri ndetse no guhangayikira icyo bari burye bbageze mu rugo.

The question of whether a child could go to school without shoes seems to depend on the individual school. In one school visited, most of the children were witnessed to be barefoot. There was no stigma attached to being barefooted. In other schools it seems that children who come to school without shoes are turned away. There is evidence of some inequality of treatment for the very poor with regard to shoes and uniforms. For some, lack of these basic requirements acts as a barrier to education and learning to read, intentionally or unintentionally.

Parents report that practices at home and in school are the same for girls and boys. They maintain that girls and boys are treated equally. It was mentioned in one community that some girls arrive late to school because they are doing extra chores. So, the claimed equality of treatment may not be universal. Teachers are reported by parents as treating girls and boys equally in class. They have equal use of resources, equal time and equal work to do.

Very poor children are also reported to be equally treated in the community and in school. It may be significant that there are no reports, from community representatives, when directly asked, of any inequality of treatment for girls, boys and the very poor. The fact that, in at least some communities, poor children are known to be turned away from school for not having shoes and that girls in some communities arrive late to school, due to extra chores at home, would indicate that there is indeed some inequality present. So it appears that, there has been an awareness raising but that the uptake and practice of certain ideas needs to be improved. Policy and practice with regard to equity for girls and very poor children may not yet be fully aligned.
4.2.4 Barriers to Children Learning to Read.

Community representatives were asked what the barriers to children learning to read were. As community representatives see it, there are a number of barriers to children's reading within the community. In most cases there is no one at home to help with reading. Many parents are illiterate and are unable, or do not feel able, to help. Exceptions to this are the cases where older siblings are able to read or where neighbour's children help.

In general, interview participants suggested that no one in the community helps children with reading. There are people who could help with reading, including older members of the community and younger members who have just completed their secondary school education. In general, however, people who could help do not because they don't get paid for it.

They are not willing because they would not get paid but they are there.

Barahari ariko ntibashaka kubikora (nta bushake) kuko batakwishyura.

They are available. Those who completed secondary education but haven’t got any employment yet but always money is a problem.

Barahari barangije amashuri. yisumbuye batarabona akazi ariko ikibazo ni amafaranga.

When asked how the community could help, the most common reply was that they could help by contributing to the building of classrooms etc. Other barriers that were mentioned corresponded with those given in the section on values attitudes and practices, i.e. the lack of a culture of reading, parents not knowing how to help, lack of materials, the time required for chores, the lack of light at home and the lack of any suitable space within the community with light.

Additionally, it was reported that not all parents communicate well with the school. They only go to school when summoned to talk to the Head teacher on issues such as attendance and behaviour. Parents generally do not communicate with schools regarding children's
progress and school work. It is stated that some parents do not follow up on absenteeism and truancy.

The lack of role models for reading within the community is a particular problem. Community representatives claim that even those who can read within the community, do not do so. In one community, it was stated that:

Many parents here are able to read but they don’t have that culture of reading.

Ababyeyi beshi hano ni abazi gusoma ariko uwo muco wo gusoma ntawo bafite.

Children are good at imitating what they see or, in this case, what they do not see.

We all know that children are good at following examples, once they see other people not reading they also tend not to.

Tuzi ko abana bigana cyane, iyo babonye n’abandi badasoma , nabo ntibabikora.

Again, poverty is listed as a key barrier to reading within the community. The very poor have other priorities.

4.2.5 Opportunities to Promote Children's Reading

Community representatives were asked to identify initiatives or opportunities within the community for supporting children's reading development. In most cases, this elicited a very limited response. With a few notable exceptions, the typical answer was that there are no initiatives and few opportunities within the community. Analysis of the data, however, would indicate that this is not necessarily the case. Many of the responses given by the community representatives, within the course of the interview, can be seen as providing opportunities for supporting children's reading development. For example, within households, we are told that some older siblings can read. Indeed, in all the communities, there are parents who can read Kinyarwanda and there are a few who like to read the Bible. Additionally, parents’ aspirations for their children to be able to read can be seen as an opportunity.
Myself I do not know how to read but my children do and they start knowing English. I will find all means so that they can go on studying.

Njye sinzi gusoma ariko abana banjye barabizi, bamaze no kumenya icyongereza numva nashaka ubushobozi bagakomeza.

The encouragement that some parents give their children and the time and energy they devote to providing resources and materials for their children's education, including kerosene and candles for reading at night, can be seen as an example and an opportunity. Children's enthusiasm for reading and learning in general is a positive. A major opportunity within the community lies in the strength of the PTC system. Parents reported instances where the PTC followed up on children who were frequently missing school and, in collaboration with the village leaders, persuaded parents to send their children to school. PTCs in general seem to be very proactive within communities and a valuable link between the school and the community.

Within individual communities, mention was made of some simple examples of initiatives undertaken by community members to support reading. These ranged from a neighbour's child helping with reading to secondary school students who organised classes in English for primary school students during the long holidays (see Case Study 3 of Consolas School, below).

Consolas School has an enrolment of almost 700 pupils from P1 to P6. It is situated in a remote and poor rural area of Southern Rwanda. There is a very good community spirit in the area. Most parents are reported as being very interested in reading and greatly value reading for their children. This is reflected in the number of people who attend adult literacy classes in the area. It is also reflected in the parents’ desire for their children to be successful in life, through education, and to have a better life than themselves. Children in the school face the same barriers to reading as encountered elsewhere namely, parents not being able to read, parents who do not know how to help with reading, no reading material at home, no light at home etc.

Opportunities to promote reading exist in a number of ways. There is a Catholic children's newspaper, Hobe, which costs 100 Rwandan francs which most children buy once a term. In the community, it is common for older brothers and sisters to help younger siblings to read. We were given an example of a P6 child helping a neighbour's younger children with reading.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
‘Han umubeyei umwe utazi gusoma wasabye umuturanyi we ko abana be bajya bamufashirita uze gusubiramo a masomo arabimwemerera. Jbi byaaje kumvgirira a kamaro kuko nyuma duteraniye mu muni mukun w’abana, twasanze amanita ye yanyonggereye ugereranyije n’ayo yan yabonye ubushize’

Essentially, a parent, who was unable to read, asked his neighbour for help with his son’s reading. The neighbour agreed to allow his P6 child to help the son. The support proved to be very beneficial because at the end of term the son’s performance had improved.

Perhaps the most striking example of this community spirit, however, was the case of older students in the local secondary school helping primary school children to read English during the school holidays. Three secondary students from S6, who are members of the local community, approached the local sector office and the PTC of their own volition and asked if they could teach English to children in the primary school during the school holidays. Rooms were organised in the school for this purpose and access was granted to them. Classes were conducted one day a week over the entire period of the long end-of-year holiday. The primary school children were reported to love this initiative and to value it greatly because they really wanted to learn English. They received a much more intensive exposure to English than the 40 minutes a day allocated during the school term. This intensive exposure was reported to have been very beneficial for their competence in English. Parents were delighted that their children were gainfully employed in learning English and also because it reduced the likelihood of any ‘delinquency’ setting in through boredom and lack of motivation.

The three secondary school students did this work voluntarily. Without being able to interview them, it is not possible to determine their motive but it seems to have been a mix of altruism and community spirit. They are also reported to have gained from the personal experience of organising and engaging in such a venture and to have fine-tuned their own skills in English through the process of teaching it. Whatever the reason, it was an initiative which was well received within the community. Such an initiative may be replicable elsewhere.

It should be noted that some of the communities visited had P1 to S3 classes in the school. These older students would have good reading levels. The researchers also heard about students from a higher level institution supporting a community reading initiative in an urban school. This example may also provide a model for support in locations with such institutions in the vicinity.

In all of the communities a number of children attend Sunday afternoon religious instruction sessions at the local church. The existence of such sessions in communities, the availability and willingness of adults to provide instruction and the eagerness of some children to attend may provide a model and opportunity for reading instruction. Many of the parents interviewed commented on how highly valued adult literacy classes are. Parents who benefit from such classes may be in a better position to support young readers.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Schools obviously offer many opportunities for developing reading ability throughout the course of the school day. When asked about teacher motivation to teach reading, community representatives were very positive and unanimous in their praise for teachers’ commitment and dedication to teaching reading.

_We respect teachers because they do a great job. We send children unable to read but after a short time you find them reading the invitations for you._

_Abarezi turabubaha kuko bakora akazi gakomeye, twohereza abna ku ishuri ntacyo bazi ariko nyuma y'igihe gito ukabona barabasha kugusomera._

They acknowledge that it is part of a teacher’s job for which they are trained but point out also that even though teachers sometimes work in difficult circumstances, they never fail to support the children in school. Indeed, some teachers were mentioned as being particularly vigilant with regard to at-risk children and following up with home if there is a problem with attendance.

_Teachers are motivated. When a child spends two days without attending class, the teachers requests you to come and explain why._

_Abarimu barabyishimiye cyane, Iyo umwana amaze iminsi ibiri ataza ku ishuri mwalimu agutumaho ukamubwira impamvu_

Schools have books and, in the case of one school, access was granted to books for P5 and P6 students during the holidays. In a couple of schools parents reported that bi-monthly meetings were held between the Head teacher and all parents in the community.

_Once in two weeks, the Head teacher calls parents for a meeting where they discuss about learning and discipline. Any one of the two parents (father or mother) can attend but ladies are the most present._

_Rimwe mu byumweru bibiri diregiteri ahamagara ababyeyi bakaza mu nama bakavuga ibiyanye n’imyigire ndetse n’imyitwarire. Umunyeyi ubonetse (Umugabo cyangwa umugore) niwe uza ariko akenshi hitaba ababgore._

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Granted, these meetings are mostly to discuss infrastructure, funding, attendance and behaviour issues but the fact that they take place on a regular basis, and are attended by many of the parents in those communities, must count as an opportunity.

4.2.7 Community Suggestions
Community representatives made a number of suggestions for improving reading. These included the following: providing materials, books, appropriate reading materials and uniforms for children who are in need; providing libraries in schools and communities; providing a facility with light within the community where people could go to read at night; to make newspapers available in communities; to encourage parents and teachers to work closer together; and sensitisation of all stakeholders regarding the need for improving reading.

4.3 Head teacher Interviews
Head teachers were interviewed to determine their view of values and attitudes, and reading practices within the broader community and within their schools. The key findings from these interviews are presented below.

4.3.1 Head teachers’ perceptions of community values, attitudes and practices with regard to reading.
The majority of Head teachers reported that there is no culture of reading in the community. Most people do not read. One explained that Rwandans like to express themselves and to learn through social discourse, not through reading. They expressed the view that most households have no, or very little, reading material, with the exception, perhaps, of the Bible and some Christian books. The same applies to the broader community. Of course, as previously highlighted in the community interviews, illiteracy plays a big part. Most people cannot read Kinyarwanda and those who can read English, among the adults, are almost non-existent. The exception to this would be recent secondary school and third level graduates and some people within urban communities. Head teachers also confirmed that poverty plays a big role. People who are poor have other preoccupations. As one Head teacher put it, ‘they cannot choose to do reading when they cannot feed their children’. As in most communities,
it is reported that there are some who just don't have 'the right mentality or attitude' and are 'simply not interested' in reading. For some people, it was claimed, the attitude seems to be that, despite the fact that they cannot read, they are doing fine.

4.3.2 Community values, attitudes and practices with regard to young children's reading.
Head teachers report that there is no specific support for children's reading from parents or from the community. Parents feel that their role is to (1) provide materials, (2) send children to school, (3) attend school meetings, and (4) follow-up on attendance and behaviour. This largely concurs with the view expressed by the parents themselves in the community interviews. Parents leave the responsibility for all school issues and learning to the teachers. Head teachers expressed the view that this was largely due to illiteracy and 'ignorance'.

You can’t give what you don’t have. If you can’t read you can’t teach yours how to read.

Ntawe utanga icyo adafite. Niba utazi gusoma ntabwo yakwigisha abe gusoma.

The fact that the role of parents in teaching reading is not clear is not helpful, not merely for research purposes. Within every community there are exceptions. There are parents who help children with reading as best they can. These are mostly literate parents who value education and reading. Very many of them went to school, but for various reasons didn't finish and don't want that to happen to their children. In one urban school, the Head teacher reported that many parents do take an interest in their children's reading and homework. Some even go to the trouble of paying for extra tuition for their children. This statement was corroborated in interviews with the community representatives. However, that is not to imply that urban schools and communities do not have problems of their own.

Most of the parents in urban areas are business people and don’t have time to follow up on their children’s schooling, therefore, children do not concentrate.

Ababyeyi benshi bo mu mugi n’abacuruzi nta mwanya wo kwita ku bana bigatuma abana badakurikira

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
4.3.3 Head teachers' values, attitudes and practices with regard to young children's reading

There is a prevalent attitude among Head teachers that children below P5/P4 are not ready for reading. They expressed the view that children below this age (or class) group are not able, or cannot help themselves to read. Also, they are not responsible with books and therefore cannot be trusted with them. They feel that children from P5 are able for self-directed learning. They are more discerning and able to identify the need for learning to read. Researchers were told by two Head teachers that younger children, especially those in P1, are 'lazy' and 'negligent'.

Children in P1 to P3/P4 do not get books to take home from school, for the above reasons. Another reason given was that there are not enough books in some schools. In many schools, we were told, there are few or no books that are appropriate for the younger children. There are subject text books available but no reading books or storybooks for children.

Head teachers claim that there is not enough time devoted to teaching reading in P1 to P3/P4. The split shift has reduced the length of the school day for pupils. It was claimed that this factor has resulted in 'less time being devoted to reading'. Time was also lost due to the introduction of specialist teachers. There is more time required for changeover from one class to the next. Therefore, it appears currently that the time devoted to reading approximates to about 40 minutes per day and some days even less than that. Another factor influencing the quality of the teaching of reading which Head teachers referred to is the high pupil: teacher ratio. This results in less time being devoted to individuals’ reading.

Head teachers report that, by and large, teachers are motivated and interested in teaching reading. They are also very competent in teaching reading skills. The Head teachers explain that it is part of a teacher’s duty and job description. It was also part of their training to become teachers. Additionally, those who teach reading are selected based on their competence to teach reading. This is especially true for Kinyarwanda, which is their mother tongue. It is not so true when it comes to English. A number of Head teachers commented that teachers of English are mainly chosen on their ability to speak English. They are not necessarily chosen on their ability to teach English as an additional language. All Head teachers agree that teachers of English need further training.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
On the teacher’s side, they don’t have knowledge of how to teach English to a child who doesn’t have it. They try, not 100%, but they need training

Abarimu kuruhande rwabo ntibafite ubumenyi bwo kwigisha icyongereza, umwana utakizi baragerageza nubwo Atari 100%. Ahubwo bakeneye guhugurwa

The recruitment of teachers is based on their ability to speak English, not on being able to teach it.

Abalimu duha akazi ko kwigisha icyongereza si uko baba barize kwigisha ahubwo ni ukp baba bazi kukivuga.

4.3.4 Equity Issues
The majority of Head teachers stated that girls are performing as well as boys. This is largely attributed to the sensitisation programme. According to the Head teachers interviewed, girls are seen to be responding to government policy. They feel the need to do better than previously. One Head teacher said that in the national exams in 2011 girls had taken the top spots in the school.

In some classes, some of the top spots are taken by girls.

Mu mashuri amwe namwe, imyanya yimbere ibaari iya abakobwa.

However, in two other cases, having stated that girls were doing as well as boys, when pressed, Head teachers produced statistics which contradicted the statement. In the first instance in the 2011 national exams, average performance for boys was 46% whereas for girls it was 38%. More encouragingly, in the context of girls’ performance, the dropout rate for girls in that year was 14 girls as opposed to 21 boys dropping out of school (It is acknowledged, of course, that this is 35 too many. The fact that more boys are dropping out needs to be further investigated.). In the second case, the class reading tests from P1 to P4 indicated that girls were averaging 47% and boys 55%. Some Head teachers perceived that young girls in P1 to P3/P4 do as well as boys but as they get older their performance falls behind that of boys. Reasons cited for this included the fact that girls do more household chores as they get older; they are more easily distracted by outside influences such as ‘mobile phones’; they feel the need to earn money and go looking for work such as in the market or

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
child-minding. Despite this, Head teachers maintain that girls and boys have equal access to learning in school and the community.

With regards to the very poor children in the community, Head Teachers believe that they have the same interest in attending school but some families have great difficulty providing basic materials, uniforms and food for their children. As one Head teacher put it, 'it's what's in your stomach that works'.

4.3.5 Barriers to Reading

Head teachers were asked to identify barriers to learning to read within the community. They mostly reiterated points which had previously been made with some extra elaboration. The main barriers mentioned were:

Parents do not help with reading. This is mainly attributed to illiteracy, not knowing how to help, not feeling able to help, and the role of parents not being clear.

*Parents do not support children with reading because they do not see other neighbours doing so.*

*Ababyeyi ntibafasha abana babo gusoma kuko baba babona n’abandi baturanyi batabikora.*

One of the Head teachers who previously said that children were 'lazy', claimed that some parents have 'no will' to educate their children or have them learn to read.

Children do not practise reading at home. Many reach home tired after walking long distances. They then have to do chores. There are no materials for reading at home, no light, and very little space. Many are also hungry.

There is no culture of reading in the community and therefore no role model at home or in the community. It was pointed out that children copy what they see.

Poverty again plays a major role. Families lack the means to provide materials. Sometimes families are hungry and parents send their children to get part-time jobs so that they can get enough money to provide food for the family.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Many children don't attend school on market days. Then, when you ask why they did not attend class, if it is during the morning hours they respond that they will come in the afternoon. The ones you meet in the afternoon say that they have been to class in the morning.

Ku minsi yisoko abana benshi ntibaza ku ishuri, iyo uhuye nabo mugitondo ukababaza impamvu batari ku ishuri bagusubiza ko baza nyuma ya saasite abo muhuye nyuma ya saa site bakubwira ko bari ku ishuri mu gitondo

4.3.6 Opportunities to Promote Reading

The Head teachers were also asked to identify opportunities for improving children's reading. Opportunities they listed included the following:

- Within some homes parents can read Kinyarwanda. Also, there are older brothers and sisters who can read and who could support their younger siblings in learning to read. There are also people in the community who can read. Mostly these people don't help because they don't get paid. Many parents attend school meetings every two weeks which shows a high level of interest in education. Head teachers maintain that, due to sensitisation programmes, parental attitudes are changing.

- Children are reported to be enthusiastic about learning to read. They see those families around them who are unable to read not doing well. Therefore, they are keen to learn to read. They want books to read. In two schools where the children’s magazine Hobe is made available there is a big up-take by the children.

- Within schools themselves, Head teachers identify many opportunities for further supporting reading. Schools have books and are confident they can get more books if required. The Ministry of Education provides a capitation grant for all pupils to enable purchasing of books. Teachers are motivated and well trained to teach reading in Kinyarwanda.

- In addition, some interesting initiatives were brought to the attention of the researchers. Some teachers are reported to lend storybooks to P5 and P6 pupils and to monitor if the pupils read and understand them. This was extended to include the Head teacher lending books during the school holidays. In one high performing urban school, there is a school policy to set aside time in each school day for pupils to develop their communication skills through presenting projects etc.
• In another school, teachers took the initiative to teach the community English. However, it has to be acknowledged this was a short-lived initiative due to lack of community attendance. Nonetheless, it shows a willingness on the part of the teachers to help the community.

• The central location of schools within communities, and the fact that there is often much available land within the school environs, presents an opportunity, perhaps through *Umuganda*, the national day of community service on the last Saturday of each month, to construct libraries, community resource centres or whatever the community requires.

4.3.7 Head teachers’ Suggestions

Head teachers suggested that the following are needed to develop reading in communities and children:

• The establishment of well-equipped social-cultural/reading centres in each community with reading materials, newspapers etc. Libraries are also needed in schools and communities.

• Parents need to be sensitised as to how to support children with reading. They also need to be sensitised regarding the need to liaise/communicate more with teachers in how to support their children.

• Teachers need more training in teaching English and schools need more classrooms so that ultimately the teacher: pupil ratio can be reduced. One Head teacher suggested that pupil inter-school correspondence within Rwanda should be encouraged as should reading competitions.
4.4. Teachers’ Group Interview Findings
This section presents the main findings from group interviews conducted with teachers of reading to P1 – P4. A semi-structured group interview format was used. The key findings are presented below.

4.4.1 Teachers’ perceptions of community values, attitudes and practices with regard to reading.
Most of the teachers maintain that they do not get any support from the community or parents in helping children to learn to read.

Parents are not helping us in teaching how to read. It is only a teacher’s task.

Tubona ababyeyi batadufasha mu bijyanye no gusoma, mwalimu niwe wigeragereza

Parents do not visit the school to see how their children are doing. They do not help children to do their homework and do not allocate time at home for reading. Most parents do not provide enough school materials for their children. There is a general feeling among teachers that most parents do not value reading.

They help us with nothing. Parents are not interested. They are careless.

Ntacyo badufasha kuko ababyeyi babaye terera iyo.

The teachers consider that both parents and teachers have a key role in teaching children to read and should work together to this end. The learning process at school should be based on the foundation gained from the family.

Educating children needs collaboration between teachers and parents in order for them to achieve something in the interest of the child.

Kurera ni ubufatanye, umubye yi na mwalimu baba bakwiye kuzuzanya kugirango bagire icy obageza ku mwana.

They believe, however, that the community does not value reading or education. An exception to these findings were the two urban schools. Teachers, however, feel motivated to teach reading. As they point out, they teach children who are the future of the country: the next generation of Rwandans.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
We feel motivated to teach reading because the children that we teach are the future of our country.

Dufite ubushake bwo kwigisha gusoma kubera ko abana twigisha aribo Rwanda rw’ejo.

They are keen to have a positive influence on the educational transformation of children. They like teaching reading and feel competent to do so. They see reading as the base for all other education and since teaching is their vocation and they have been trained in the methodologies, they see it as their task to ensure that children learn to read. This is necessary for children to improve their knowledge. With regard to homework, teachers say that they give P4 children texts and ask them to find new words. Children in P1 are typically requested to write out the vowels and consonants for homework.

For us, primary one teachers, it is difficult to teach Kinyarwanda where we have a mixture of small and capital letters. Pupils are supposed to learn all of them and to differentiate those letters. That is why they reach Primary 3 not able to read.

4.4.2 Equity Issues.

By and large, the teachers feel that girls are performing as well as boys. This is mainly due to the various campaigns which have been conducted throughout the country to promote equality in girls’ education. This has had a major influence on communities who now exhibit positive behaviours with regard to girls’ education. In particular, girls perform well in the lower levels of primary school because they are not yet involved in household chores. Children from poorer families, in general, are not performing as well as others. These suffer from hunger, lack of parental guidance, and lack of basic materials including presentable clothes. They often suffer from isolation and self-exclusion from school.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
4.4.3 Barriers to reading identified by teachers.

Barriers within the home identified by teachers include: the lack of reading materials; the ‘ignorance’ of parents; the low value the parents accord to education and their negative attitude to reading; parents do not prioritise education; homes do not have suitable places with light for reading; difficult circumstances at home including families which are headed by children.

If all children could have reading books so that for example a Kinyarwanda teacher can ask them to read a certain text at home then be able ask them questions about it the following day or teach the vocabulary contained in it.

Absennteeism from school affects children's reading attainment as does their lack of concentration when they are in school. For girls specifically, household chores are seen by teachers as a barrier to learning to read. They also identified that girls have a higher dropout rate from school.

Barriers within the community identified include: the lack of a reading culture in the community; the lack of reading materials; the lack of a suitable place with light where children may read; some children are involved in child labour and other commercial activities.

Barriers within the school identified by teachers include: the high teacher: pupil ratio; the way that the curriculum is designed and structured; the way reading lessons are scheduled during the day; there are insufficient storybooks at school; the continuous changes in education and curriculum; the fact that some children are promoted to the next class despite their failure or low performance; and the need, expressed by the teachers themselves, that they need more training in methodology to effectively teach reading.

4.4.4 Opportunities to promote reading identified by teachers.

Teachers see opportunities in the fact that some families have someone who is able to read and willing to help the younger children learn to read. They believe that there are some individuals in the community who could help with reading. There are others in the
community who have the power to influence parents with regard to good reading support practices.

*The reality is that when the local administration put an emphasis on something, it is valued by parents.*

*Burya ikivuzwe n’ubuyobozi kigira agaciro gakomeye.*

In addition, they say that most children enjoy reading. Teachers are willing and feel confident to teach reading and some schools have enough books. Another opportunity lies in the fact that most of the communities have regular meetings chaired by both local leaders and religious leaders. These could provide channels for sensitisation on reading issues. Not to be forgotten is the fact that primary education is free.

### 4.4.5 Suggestions from the teachers include:

Teachers should be trained in new methodologies for teaching reading. The teacher: pupil ratio should be reduced. Young children should be able to avail of appropriate storybooks. The standard for progression from one class to the next should be revised; the collaboration between teachers and parents and the community in general should be improved; parents should allocate enough time to reading at home and help with homework.

### 4.5 Findings from Group Interviews with P4 Children

#### 4.5.1 Children’s thoughts on reading.

They all stated that they are able to read (it wasn't possible to establish if this was correct for all children interviewed but, in the few cases where it was possible to check, the children could indeed read Kinyarwanda). They like and enjoy reading. They consider that reading is important and useful for them. They value reading because it will enable them to improve their knowledge and achieve their vision. They acknowledged the importance of reading from gaining access to information. Being able to read will enable them to pass their school exams and go on to participate in the development of Rwanda. Being able to read will give them value in the community and enable them to help their families.
The children, typically, expressed the wish to be doctors, teachers, local leaders, nurses and soldiers when they grow up. There was some difference in the career aspirations of children depending on whether they came from urban or more remote rural areas. Their career wishes seemed to be connected to the types of occupations which they see in their community. For example, those in more remote rural areas tended to opt for jobs in farming, community projects, in teaching, or to be village leaders. They all acknowledged the necessity to be able to read to achieve their career ambitions. Being unable to read would have major consequences. They would be unable to find work and might become ‘street children’. They would be ‘outcasts of society’. Some children pointed out that they would not be able to comply with the administrative rules of society. Both boys and girls acknowledged that is necessary for them to be able to read in order to be successful in achieving their life goals and to have a better future.

Children's reading habits.

Some of the children claim to read at home.

*When I take time to read at home, the following day I go to school able to respond to the teacher’s questions. In addition to that, it helps me to answer the test questions.*

*Iyo ndi mu rugo nkasoma ikinyarwanda ejo iyo ngeze mu ishuri mwalimu akambaza mbasha gusubiza ndetse no mu kizamini bikamfasha gusubiza ibibazo batubajije.*

With the exception of children in those urban settings who have storybooks and newspapers, and those who have *Hobe*, the main source of reading material at home was the Bible and other religious materials. School notebooks and textbooks, when provided, were also mentioned as a source of reading material.

Most children do not read at home. This is due to the lack of reading materials, the lack of a suitable place with light for reading and having to do household chores. There is also no place in the community that is suitable for reading. They would all like to be able to read at home. Some take advantage of any opportunity they can to read.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
For us because we are residing near the sector office, and it has electricity, in the evening hours, we go there with a chair, and sit and read.

Twe kuberako dutuye hafi y’umurege kandi hari umuriro, ku mugoroba turagenda tugashyirayo agatebe ubundi tugasoma.

Most of the children say they have family members who are able to read: parents, brothers, sisters or cousins. Some of them get ‘help’ in reading from these family members. The help, when available, usually comes in the form of advice on how to succeed in school and advice on revising what has been learned in school. The help does not seem to extend to actually sitting down and helping the children with their reading. Other children, who do not get any support at home, say they are the only ones in the house who are able to read. Their parents cannot read and are not able to support them in their reading. All the children say that they could do with help with reading. It would make their life better and they in turn would be able to help others. They acknowledge the help that teachers give them in school. A very few have neighbours who help them. Children in urban settings have a greater likelihood of higher reading achievement having educated parents who can help them and in some cases students from a local third level institution who assist them as part of a community project.

Barriers to reading.

The children were able to identify a number of barriers to reading, namely: the lack of support at home; the lack of enough time for reading at home due to household chores having to be done; the lack of a suitable place in the community, with light, for reading and the lack of reading materials.

Children’s thoughts on equity in education:

All children feel that girls and boys should be treated equally. Both boys and girls confirm that girls face different obstacles in learning to read. Girls have more household chores. For example, they often have to look after young babies.

You find in most cases the girls are hindered in their learning process due to the fact that they are much involved in household chores or taking care of their young brothers. For the poor children they are not motivated in learning. Sometimes they don’t see its value and it is very common to see them excluded in social context, with a low self-esteem due to the lack of adequate clothing or lack of parental support.

Usanga abana b’abakobwa akenshi baba babangamiwe kwiga kuko kenshi usanga ababyeyi babasibya ngo babafashe mu mirimo yo mu rugo cyangwa ngo bite kuri

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Children talked of parents sending boys to school and deciding to keep the girl at home to do chores. As a result, some girls drop out of school. In some cases, parents are reported, through 'ignorance', not to be supportive of girls. Children told the researchers that some parents believe that investing in girls’ education is to make other families rich (i.e. when they get married, they would bring their education with them for the benefit of the family they marry into).

Most of the parents consider giving to a child girl an opportunity to study is a loss as this will make another family rich

Ababyeyi benshi bafata ko kwigisha umwana w’umukobwa ari ugukiza indi miryango azashakamo

The children interviewed displayed a high sense of social justice and awareness of the needs of the very poor in society. They are aware that children from very poor families have a high rate of absenteeism from school due to a lack of parental guidance and support. They believe that their parents do not value education. The children interviewed felt that there is a high rate of dropout from school amongst these children. These children are also seen to suffer from hunger, to lack the basic medical treatments necessary due to having no medical insurance and, in general, to suffer from inadequate living conditions. They often have to engage in child labour to help their families survive. Unfortunately, according to the children interviewed, some schools do not recognize very poor children's special educational needs.

Sometimes when poor children come to school without shoes, teachers send them back home. Then some of them dropout of school.

Abana babakene iyo baje ku ishuri batambaye inkweto, abalimu barabirukana bagahita bata ishuri.

They suffer from social exclusion and have very poor prospects for the future. The children interviewed are keenly aware that poor children have the same rights as anyone else. It is their right to be able to read. They deserve to be provided with the opportunity to learn to read. Being able to read would help them to acquire appropriate behaviours.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
We would like to see poor children being supported with school materials and be able to borrow books then learn how to read.

Turasaba ko abana b’abakene bahabwa ibikoresho by’ishuri nk; amakaye, bagatizwa n’ibitabo bakaminya gusoma batagize ibibazo.

Children's suggestions for improving reading.

Children expressed the following ideas for improving their reading experiences:

Parents should provide enough time for reading when children are at home. Parents and guardians should help them with homework and revision. Parents should also provide enough materials and books for their children. They should also provide light at home so that children can read and revise.

We wish to get enough and different types of book so that we can read well. We also recommend having a nice and suitable place for reading. We request parents to help their children to read and provide them with reading materials.

Twifuza ko shuri baduha ibitabo byinshi kandi bitandukanye byo gusoma, bakadushyiriraho naho gusomera, ababyeyi nabo bagashishikarira gufasha abana babo gusoma kandi bakabashakira ibyo gusoma.

The children suggest that schools should get libraries. Schools should also lend reading books to children. Schools should also be friendly places for poor children.

The fact of a child to be from a poor family it is difficult for him to get the basic needs and this lead him to drop out of school and then become a street child or a delinquent.

Kuba umwana aba mu muryango ukenye akenshi ntabona ibyibanze bikamutera agahinda kwiga bikamunanira akenshi agahitamo kuva mu ishuli bityo akaba yaba inzererezi cyangwa ikirara.

Everyone should be sensitive to children's rights.

Poor children have to know how to read because it is their right as it is for other children.

Abana b’abakene bagomba kumenya gusoma kuko ari uburenganzira bwa buri wese.

Finally, for their part, they suggest, that children should make every effort to develop their reading skills.

(N.B. A summary of the key findings from each of the cohorts of interviews can be found in Appendix E.)

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Household Checklist.

Below are the findings from the checklist carried out in the five households visited. The availability of items relating to reading in each household were recorded in the checklist:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Home 1</th>
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<th>Home 3</th>
<th>Home 4</th>
<th>Home 5</th>
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Figure 4 Findings from household literacy checklists

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A table of findings from the checklist of print within the community can be found in Appendix G (the checklist is presented in Appendix F). In summary, the school environments were almost entirely without printed materials. There were generally no signs, no names on doors, no mission statement displayed, no notice board etc. Where there was print evident it was usually the national exam results stuck to the inside of a window.

Outside the schools, within the immediate vicinity, the situation varied greatly from community to community. Many had some road signs and other signage in evidence while other communities had not. The two urban settings had a high incidence of print and reading materials in close proximity to the school.
Chapter 5: Overcoming Barriers to Young Children’s Reading: Opportunities, Implications and Suggestions.

5.1 Introduction.
Research was carried out in 12 communities, ten rural and two urban. One rural school and one urban school were chosen because of their high rankings in EGRA assessment tests. The two urban schools were found to have very different characteristics to the rural schools. They were much more advantaged. The urban community was much wealthier than those in rural settings and children had very different experiences in learning to read. They had support at home – very often from parents who were well-educated and could read. The challenges facing the majority of these children were more to do with excessive watching of television or being distracted by the local cinema hall and mobile phones. For these reasons the findings below are more reflective of the situation in the ten rural schools visited. The findings below are drawn from the various interviews from the case studies and from observation checklists. Where terms such as ‘communities’, ‘parents’, ‘schools’ etc. are used they refer to those who participated in the research. In referring to carers, the term ‘parent’ is used throughout but it is acknowledged that this may in a number of cases be a guardian or other primary carer.

There was a very strong correlation between the findings from the community representatives and the Head teachers and to a lesser extent from the teachers and children.

5.2 Home and Community Barriers:
Community representatives, Head teachers and teachers agree that there is no culture or habit of reading in communities. This is in line with Ruterana (2012) who also identified a limited culture of reading in Rwanda. Children’s experiences would largely support this finding. There are few role models within the community for reading. The culture in Rwanda is for people to express themselves and educate themselves through talking, not through reading. The traditional medium of instruction or the means of transmitting information and knowledge in most of Africa is oral history. So, reading and writing are introduced practices. Many people in the community cannot read and those who can rarely do so. Reading is not a priority in people’s day to day lives. There is very little need to read. When the need arises, neighbours who can read are called upon to assist. In homes and in the wider community there are little or no reading materials except some Bibles and other religious materials. Home and community checklists confirm that many rural communities are almost devoid of print in their environment. There are few, if any, road signs, shop signs, advertisements,
posters, notice boards etc. This applies across the community including the environments of all the schools visited. The communities researched are, therefore, print-starved environments.

As also indicated in the Bernard and Ngarukiye (2011) study, poverty is seen as a major barrier to reading and education in general. There are many within the community who are so poor that they spend all their time just trying to feed their families. For them, reading is a long way down the list of priorities in their day to day struggle to exist. They still have the same hopes for their children as anyone else, to be successful in life and work, but they do not have the means to achieve it.

5.3 Opportunities in Home and Community
Parents and the community at large know the importance of reading for self and community development. They know that to be able to read offers great opportunities for them and particularly for their children. Reading is one of the ways out of poverty and the lives they lead at present. The desire to read across the community is illustrated by the number of older community members who attend adult literacy classes. To be able to read is one way to become emancipated and empowered. They are keenly aware that, in order for their children to achieve success in life they will need to be able to read. Like parents anywhere in the world, Rwandan parents have great hopes and expectations for their children. They want them to be doctors, teachers, and leaders of society. Reading is the key to this – the key to knowledge.

Within every community, within our research sample, there are exceptions to the rule. There are those parents and community members who can read and do read occasionally, this is often restricted to the Bible and other religious brochures. For the greater number of these the reading ability is in Kinyarwanda. There are some elders in the community who can read and then there are those younger members of the community who are in secondary school or college or who have recently graduated who can read in Kinyarwanda, and some who can also read in English.
5.4 Implications for the Way Forward
There is a demand for learning to read within families and communities. Communities are
open to, and would welcome, initiatives designed to promote reading. It is an open door
waiting to be pushed. Ruterana (2011) also found that families were excited about reading
initiatives.

Community and parental aspirations and practice are not yet aligned with regard to reading.
There is a great need to encourage the practice of reading in the community. The sensitisation
of the community with regards to the value of reading seems, with a few exceptions, to have
been largely successful. The emphasis now needs to shift towards practical solutions and
initiatives. We need to promote a culture of reading in the community. Those who do read
need to be held up as role models for others. Those who can read, but do not, need to be
encouraged to do so. Those in positions of respect and authority need to be sensitised to the
importance of reading in the community and encouraged to set an example. Role models are
needed. Ways should be identified to provide communities with reading materials. The
communities’ strength in oral communication could be harnessed for further communicating
messages regarding the importance of reading and the means to develop reading – through
meetings about promoting reading; the need/importance of telling stories to children etc.
Those involved in adult literacy promotion should reinforce the message that one can support
one’s child better if one can read oneself.

Poverty stands in the way of many parents’ wish for their children to be able to read. Any
community initiative on reading must stand alongside a long term plan to eradicate poverty.
However, the motivation of the poor to overcome poverty can be given support by
reinforcing the message that high achievement in reading can result in high achievement in
life. It is one of the main ways out of the poverty trap. Many within the community have
taken this message to heart already, including children, but ways need to be found to
propagate the message among those on the margins. If they are church goers or attend other
places of religious worship such as mosques this may provide the platform. Individuals,

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within the community, who are influential in the lives of the very poor and marginalised, need to be mobilised.

5.5 Barriers to Children’s Reading
For most children there is no role model for reading at home or in the community. Children are great imitators, they will copy what they see. If people in the community do not read then it is hard to blame children for following suit. Even with the will which children have to be able to read, this is difficult to achieve without support from home.

It is well known that children’s reading ability does not happen over-night or when they go to school. The ability to read requires a solid foundation in pre-reading skills such as phonemic and phonological awareness, oral vocabulary, listening skills, visual tracking skills etc. These can be developed in young children from the time they are born. Customs, in various societies, of singing songs and reciting rhymes to young children feed into the need for very young children to start developing these skills of aural discrimination. Experiencing songs, rhymes and stories from a very young age helps to fine tune children’s phonological skills and to develop their range of oral vocabulary. Aural comprehension skills are also developed in the process. These are all skills which add to a child’s reading readiness when they eventually meet real books.

If the stories which they encounter in these early stages of development also come from a real book, then the child is more likely to develop a love of reading and books. For this reason, one can find in well stocked children’s book shops, in western or developed countries, books for parents to read to and with infant children. There are bath time waterproof books, sensory books for children to touch and feel; pop-up books to excite and engage young children, ‘big books’ for shared reading with groups of very young children, and many more. All of these books are colourfully illustrated and highly visual. Their role is to capture the child’s interest, to fire their imagination, and ultimately, to develop their interest in stories and books. They provide early opportunities of reading for pleasure. The child will begin to connect the pleasurable experience, of listening to stories, to books, and the print therein. They will make the connection, well before they are able to read, that books convey meaning; that print has meaning; that books and print equate to pleasurable experiences and are something to cherish.

From the research it is clear that the vast majority of children are having none of these early literacy and pre-reading experiences at home. This, almost certainly, affects their later

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reading ability and development (Dickinson and Tabors, 2002; Purcell-Gates, 1995). In the case of phonological processing alone, it is recognised in international reading research that children who go to school with poor phonemic awareness are at risk of reading failure (Lyon 2003), with obvious negative consequences for their educational career. Parents do not know the value of such activities for their infants’ development. Young children are considered too immature to benefit from such experiences. There is little or no storytelling, song singing or rhyming for young children. Indeed, when asked, parents interviewed had difficulty recalling any such stories or songs. When pressed, parents could tell some riddles but acknowledged that these were for older children, ten years plus, who would be able for them. From what the researchers were told, there used to be a culture of storytelling in the past but it seems to have all but disappeared.

When children reach school going age they face further barriers at home and from school. Evidence from the interviews indicates that there is a prevalent view in the community, which is also shared by Head teachers and teachers, that children below P3 or P4 are not ready for reading. This is reflected in the fact that schools do not send reading books home for these children to read and parents, generally, do not expect young children to do any reading at home. It also seems to be reflected in the reading curriculum for P1 to P3/P4 which we are told involves work such as recognition of vowels and consonants. ‘Real book’ experiences seem to be non-existent for this group of children. Internationally it is recognised that the skills of reading are best developed alongside real reading experiences (Pressley, 2002). Children learn to read best by having a broad range of real reading experiences.

...rather than seeing reading as a technical skill acquired through systematic instruction in discrete skills by the time that a child reaches third-grade, we see reading as a developmental process in which skills and strategies are best learned in the context of authentic engagements with texts. In this model, skills and strategies continue to develop as learners encounter new texts and tasks across the spectrum of schooling and beyond. What counts as evidence of reading achievement in this model is, above all, comprehension attended by the reader’s ability to acquire and use various strategies appropriately and flexibly.

(Braunger and Lewis 2006, p. 17)

Advocates of skills-based systematic synthetic phonics instruction would acknowledge the need for children to experience reading for pleasure and meaning (Rowe, 2005; Camilli et al., 2003; Shanahan, 2002). Young children need much exposure to a wide and varied range of

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interesting reading material. Ideally, these reading materials need to be graduated in terms of reading difficulty, with a gentle gradient between books from one level of difficulty to the next. Each level should provide a range of material to appeal to all children.

There is a question as to whether schools actually have any reading books for children in P1 to P3/P4.

Homes do not have children’s reading books, nor is there any other age appropriate material for them to read. If there were such materials available from school or elsewhere there is little likelihood that the majority of children would get help in reading them. Parents are not aware of the need, or do not know how, to support children in their reading. By and large, apart from well-educated parents and those who are proactive in groups such as the PTC, parents feel that teachers have the responsibility for children learning to read. Parents see their role, where resources permit, to equip children with materials for school, send them to school and follow-up on behaviour and discipline. For older children, this responsibility may extend to ensuring they do whatever revision or homework is required by the school. By and large, illiterate parents feel quite helpless when it comes to supporting children with any form of school work.

In addition to the issues above, in many instances there is no one at home able to read and by extension, it is perceived, able to help with reading. Children have chores to do after school such as fetching jerry cans of water, collecting firewood, tending animals and sweeping the compound. They or their parents have no time for reading – especially since it gets dark early and most homes do not have any light for reading. This scenario seems to apply equally to children attending morning or afternoon shifts. The word ‘parents’ is mentioned above but in reality the words ‘mother’ or ‘female caregiver’ should be substituted because community and Head teachers both point out that it is the female role to stay at home and do the household chores and caring for the children while the men meet elsewhere to ‘socialise’. Men generally do not see it as their role to support children in the evening.

As mentioned previously communities and schools have little or no print in evidence. This is particularly surprising in schools where the importance of a ‘print-rich’ environment should be well known to educators. The schools environments visited, like the communities they serve, are print-starved environments. There is no functional print in the school environment in Kinyarwanda or English. There are no notice boards, no school mission statement painted

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on a wall, no directional signs, no room names, teacher names, no print at all except perhaps for the faded national examination results taped to the inside of a window. Opportunities to create a print rich environment in schools using locally available materials are not being grasped. Meaningful print, such as alphabet or days of the week charts could easily be created using commonly available materials like rice sacks and some paint. Displayed print does not have to include commercially produced products. Indeed, charts, displays and labels produced from locally available materials will often be more relevant and meaningful to children than commercial products. What was not within the scope of this research to establish but what seems a strong likelihood from casual observation is that the insides of classrooms are little better.

5.6 Opportunities for Children’s Reading
Parents want their children to be able to read. Within parents’ limited understanding of their role in supporting children in reading, most are doing the best they can. They are equipping them for school and sending them to school. They are ensuring that they behave. A few of the more educated parents are making efforts to do some reading with their children in the evening and even going so far as to go to extra lengths, working longer and harder, to provide money for kerosene lamps or candles for reading. Granted, this is mostly for older children in P5 to P6 but at least the practice is there, in some cases.

With the increase in children progressing to P9 grade within the education system, a greater number of older children will be in a position to support their parents, younger siblings and neighbours in reading; both in Kinyarwanda and in English.

Children are enthusiastic about reading. They appreciate the importance of it and want support in being able to read. They all have ambitions in life for which being able to read well is a prerequisite. Generally, they don’t read at home but they would if conditions were right. Some have parents, relatives, siblings or neighbours who can read.

5.7 Implications for the Way Forward
Communities would welcome any initiative that would help their children learn to read. There is a demand from parents for children to be able to read. Investment in this would be money well spent.

Parents must be educated with regard to their role in supporting reading. There is a very clear need to educate parents on the importance of pre-school and early school support for reading.

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Parenting styles which would contribute to children’s pre-reading abilities and skills need to be identified, promoted and fostered within communities. The importance of telling stories, singing songs, rhyming and talking to very young children needs to be transmitted to parents. Channels for communicating this message need to be identified, especially to those new parents who do not yet have a child in the school system. There needs to be a strong emphasis on involvement of mothers and fathers. The message that both parents need to share responsibility for children’s development from birth, if they are to be successful in learning and in life, must be delivered. It is acknowledged that this may require societal change beyond the scope of this particular project.

Parents need to be sensitised on the importance of creating time to support children with reading and for children to read. Many parents are able to prioritise and make time for going to church on Sunday or the mosque on Friday. So the precedent is there for making time when the imperative is strong enough. So, if a convincing argument is made, parents should be able to prioritise reading also. They need to be sensitised on the need for a new level of support for reading to achieve their vision for their children. The connection between reading achievement and later success, wealth and well-being in life, needs to be made explicitly clear, especially for those whose children are poor attenders at school. The need for an understanding, among some, of deferred gratification arises. The long term benefits of literacy in terms of reducing poverty, malnutrition and infant mortality need to be highlighted.

Strategies for parents to support children in their reading need to be made clear for both literate and illiterate parents. The negative feelings that poorly educated parents have regarding their inability to support children with reading need to be overcome. These parents should be instructed in practical strategies to employ with their children e.g. actively listening to their child reading, talking to the child about what they have read and what they thought of it, questioning/discussion about content, storyline, characters etc. Parents should also talk to teachers about child’s reading and through discussion with teachers monitor the child’s progress in reading.

Older siblings, who have progressed to S3 grade, may provide the opportunity for developing home based reading initiatives. Older siblings should be instructed on how they can best support their younger brothers and sisters. For example, they could be introduced to the

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‘shared reading’ model. They should be educated on how best to help, and encouraged to do so. They should be enlightened on the impact they could have on their siblings learning and by extension on the fortunes of their whole family; and on the importance of being role models in reading.

Most children are open to initiatives to improve their reading. This positive disposition needs to be availed of. Practical initiatives, such as peer tutoring, shared reading, cross-age buddy systems and mentoring systems, need to be identified immediately and implemented in communities and schools. A supply of appropriate materials for younger pupils needs to be made available by schools on a daily basis for children to take home and read. In tandem with this young children and families should be given guidelines on how to take care of books. If they have never had the experience of books at home, it cannot be assumed that they will know how to care for them. Schools should also monitor what children are reading and whether it is being understood. Is the reading book pitched at the appropriate reading and interest level for the child?

Heads teachers and class teachers must be educated on the importance of developing and supporting reading for young children. It seems that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses, in this regard, are required for all teachers. Recent curriculum changes in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses in the area of language methodology and practice which include up to date instructional practices are a welcome step in the right direction. Newly qualified teachers will soon be equipped with the knowledge and expertise to enable their pupils to become autonomous readers. Teachers already in the field also need to be provided with this knowledge and expertise through CPD. Erroneous ideas regarding children’s reading readiness need to be addressed. The absolute importance and need for a focussed skills-based approach to literacy instruction involving skills development in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension strategies must be emphasised. This approach has strong research evidence to support it (NICHD 2000) and is recommended in a number of highly regarded international reports (Rose 2006; Rowe 2005). Alongside a systematic skills-based approach, children also need to experience a broad range of real reading experiences (Braunger and Lewis 2006) involving relevant and interesting reading material. Reading and writing are mutually supportive. The role of writing in developing reading (Pressley 2001) needs to be emphasised.
Some questions which remain to be answered. A re-examination of the curriculum is required to identify possible barriers to early reading development. It is important to establish if the early years’ curriculum, which devotes three full years to the study of letter-sound combinations is giving an incorrect message, with regard to when young children can and should be expected to read and understand simple stories or texts, or whether the message is being misinterpreted by Heads and teachers. Is the reading curriculum relevant to young children’s lived experiences? Is there a need for a Rwandan version of the Thematic Curriculum, recently successfully introduced for P1 to P3 in Uganda.\(^7\) Are modern methodologies to promote a culture of reading in school such as DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) being promoted?\(^8\)

Schools must supply suitable readers for P1 to P3/4 pupils to take home daily. There need to be suitable books for this age range in Kinyarwanda. The recent tender issued by the Rwanda Education Board to increase the number of Kinyarwanda titles on the list of approved school books, and in particular for P1 to P3 is a welcome development. Publishers need to respond by producing quality instructional and recreational reading material in Kinyarwanda for P1 – P3/P4. This will help in changing the apparent prioritisation by schools of purchasing books suitable for P4/P5 to P6. The absence of suitable books for P1 – P3/P4 reinforces the perception that young children are not ready to benefit from books. If a school doesn’t have suitable books for younger pupils, the perception that they are not ready for the available books is proven to be correct - a self-fulfilling prophecy! Reading practices in school were not researched but need to be examined. For example, do teachers read to children? Do

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\(^7\) From 2007 to 2009, a new Thematic Curriculum was introduced in Uganda for children from Primary 1 to Primary 3. The language of instruction for this curriculum was the local language. The Thematic Curriculum embraces a child-centred methodology based on themes relating to the children’s own experiences, prior knowledge and needs, e.g. Our School and Our Home. Through these themes, sub-themes and strands, core competencies and related skills are developed including literacy, numeracy, and life skills. The child-centred methodologies promoted in the Thematic Curriculum include: participatory and co-operative activities and group work; hands on activities where children learn by doing; and the use of locally sourced instructional materials. In the Thematic Curriculum teachers are encouraged to value children’s contributions and adapt lessons to reflect their interests, abilities and concerns. Continuous assessment and monitoring of children’s understanding and competencies in the core skills is integral to the Thematic Curriculum.

\(^8\) DEAR, or silent sustained reading (SSR) involves time being set aside in the school day for all pupils and adults (Head teacher, teachers etc.) to engage in voluntary silent reading. It aims to promote an interest in reading for pleasure and to develop expertise in reading through the practice of reading. It requires a supply of relevant reading material. It also assumes that children have been taught the skills of reading and are reading material appropriate to their reading ability and level.

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children in P1 to P3/P4 get any experience of reading in class stories either individually or as a group/big book activity? If reading exposure does not start until P4/P5, that is clearly too late.

School authorities need to be educated/re-educated on importance of suitable reading materials for children from P1 to P3/P4. School policy must include statement on how books will be lent to younger pupils and how learning will be monitored. Schools should also consider mechanism for lending out books during the holiday periods. School policy should also register and state clearly, the importance of early literacy, emergent literacy, reading readiness and print rich environments. It should be remembered, in this context, that school environments showed no evidence of an appreciation of the importance of print on the part of the educators therein. They are print-starved. There is an implicit message that print is not important, that print has no value. This needs to be rectified. Every opportunity possible, for creating meaningful print, within the environs of the school and beyond, needs to be seized.

The culture of story-telling to young children, in Rwandan culture, needs to be re-ignited. There is a need to collect, collating, compile and print children’s stories, songs and rhymes in Kinyarwanda which reflect contemporary Rwandan values and need. Care should be taken to critically examine and edit these so that they are of a suitable standard and quality. They should be scrutinised by Ministry of Education experts on gender and equality to ensure that the key messages promote equality, tolerance and conflict resolution and to avoid messages that reinforce negative stereotypes or gender-based violence. They should then be disseminated to parents, communities and schools through whatever means possible. In consideration of sustainability, development of all materials should be carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The long term goal should be to integrate reading materials into government book provision, rather than introducing new schemes of work that only well-resourced schools and families can afford.

A further point, beyond the scope of this research, which needs investigation, is the practice in nursery schools with regard to pre-reading activities. If, as reported in the literature, many engage in primary school practices, the implications for the development of children’s pre-reading and emergent literacy skills are worryingly clear.

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5.8 Equity in learning to read:

5.8.1 Barriers to Girls’ and Very poor Children’s Reading:
Parents and Head teachers report that all children are treated equally in school and community and that girls and boys are doing equally well in schools, however, teachers and children tell a different story. Older girls are reported to do more chores and some are kept at home to do so. Results in some school may indicate that girls are not doing as well as boys. Children perceive that some parents do not value girls’ education and that girls’ dropout rate is higher than boys.

Poverty is still a serious barrier, in learning to read, for many children. Very poor parents are faced with stark choices between trying to provide the necessary materials to enable their children to go to school and providing the food to keep starvation at bay. In some cases in attempting to meet these conflicting demands they fail in both regards. Provision of uniforms and shoes for school can be the stumbling block that makes the difference between attendance and none attendance (see Case Study 4 below). Furthermore, there is no consistency of approach between different schools in similar circumstances. In one school we witnessed a large proportion of the school population going barefooted whereas, in another, we were told of children being turned away from school for not having shoes. There appears to be no consistency in rules from one school to another school. Inclusive practices in schools which do not exclude children for not having uniform or shoes need to be used as examples for other schools.

Very poor children are sometimes kept from school to engage in income generating activities to keep the family in basic essentials. In other cases, they do not go to school because of hunger. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1987) comes to mind when thinking of the plight of some of these families. They exist at the bottom level of Maslow’s pyramid of needs, where the basic human needs have to be met before they can have any chance of reaching the next level, never mind ever reaching the zenith of self-actualisation. They are a long way from that!

5.8.2 Opportunities for Girls’ and Very poor Children’s Reading
The sensitisation of parents and Head teachers with regard to the need to have equity of opportunity for girls and very poor children seems to be working in the case of those interviewed. This can be built on to ensure that it works across the board, in practice. Very
poor parents have the same aspirations as anyone else for their children’s future. When barriers to learning created by poverty are removed they will be in a position to prioritise actions to achieve their vision. This will be very difficult, however, while extreme poverty persists. Some parents make extreme sacrifices to ensure that their children learn to read. They work extra-long hours to earn enough to buy necessary materials and provide kerosene for light for reading. Some parents are separated as one travels afar to find work (see previous Case Study 2). These families prove that it can be done and may serve as a model to others. This is not to deny the fact that, for many, circumstances conspire to make it almost impossible for them to ensure that their children learn to read. Take for example the case of Uwimana below:

Uwimana lives with her five children in a humble four roomed house. There is no electricity or running water. The nearest source of free water is a 30 minutes’ walk away in the deep valley beyond her home, although, there is a tap close by where water can be bought for 15 RF per jerry can. She has no radio. She says she has never seen a television and laughs good naturedly when I ask if she has a mobile phone – ‘never’. Light is provided by an oil lamp or candles when she can afford them. In the living room is a good bench which looks as if it may have once belonged in a waiting room of some sort and a solid table.

She has a 15-year-old girl in S1 and a 14-year-old boy in P4. Her 11-year-old boy should be in P3 but isn’t attending school at the moment. The two remaining girls are 9 and 8 years of age and are in P3 and P1 respectively. Uwimana’s husband has been in prison for the last eight years. He is serving a 15 year sentence for a conviction of ‘conducting people to their deaths’ and taking people's property during the genocide. Uwimana is a farmer and grows beans, sweet potatoes and cassava in a small plot of land beside her house. She hasn't enough to sell anything in the market except maybe a couple of litres of beans if she needs some money for urgent supplies for the children such as books or paraffin for the lamp. She has two goats on her land which a neighbour lent her in order to provide manure for her vegetable patch. The vegetables from her plot of land provide the only diet for Uwimana and her children. She never has milk, eggs, meat or fish to feed the children and herself; just the vegetables she grows herself. She used to be part of a cooperative which would come together and dig land for farmers and then share the proceeds amongst themselves. This enabled her to put aside the money for school fees, books and other materials. Unfortunately, four months ago she stood on the sharp stump of a maize plant. It went through her foot and she spent some time in hospital. She still has a bandage around her bare foot and she cannot put any weight on that foot. The wound is obviously taking a long time to heal. Since the injury, she hasn't been able to tend her plot of land. She tells us that ‘Christian neighbours’ have dug her fields and planted beans for her.

One unfortunate side-effect of Uwimana’s stay in hospital was that when she returned home she found that her 11-year-old son was not in school. He had been turned away because he had no uniform. Since then she has been unable to find the money to buy a uniform and so the child remains at home. The 14-year-old son is fortunate to have a godfather who provided his uniform and books. Her daughter in S1 was also ‘chased from school’ and sent

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home to get school fees and a uniform while her mother was in hospital. Upon her release from hospital, Uwimana sent her daughter back to the school to explain the situation. The school have given Uwimana’s daughter a reprieve but the fees are still due and the daughter is expected to get a uniform soon. Uwimana doesn't know what she will do. The secondary school fees are 4000 Rwandan francs per term. And uniforms for her son and daughter will cost in total approximately 12,000 Rwandan francs. In real terms, this would require the earnings from a full month of continuous paid work being devoted entirely to this. Even when she worked with the cooperative, the jobs were infrequent and the money was not sufficient to pay for the secondary school uniform. In Uwimana's current position things are even more desperate. At the moment she has no way of finding the money necessary for fees and uniforms. Since the injury her place has been taken in the cooperative by another lady. Uwimana is hoping that when she gets better she might have an opportunity to re-join the group.

Uwimana can read Kinyarwanda. She got as far as P6 in primary school ‘before that genocide’ but had to drop out when her father died and she was required ‘to take up the hoe and cultivate alongside her mother’. She never got the chance to sit the national exams. Nevertheless, she is very committed to providing an education for her family ‘Getting learning is very good. However much we are poor we must try to send our children to school’. She believes being able to read is very good as it enables one to gain access to information. She likes to read the Bible to her children but doesn't have one herself and has to borrow it from a neighbour. She has no other reading material in the house. Her primary school children never bring books home from school to read. They sometimes bring home some maths problems and if she is able she helps them with those. Her contact with the school is mainly when she summoned by the Headmaster due to the children misbehaving and if so she disciplines. There are regular meetings for all parents in the school every two weeks and she used to go but hasn't since her injury.

She really hopes that, whatever challenges might be faced, her children will be able to complete secondary school. Her daughter had to repeat S1 but Uwimana maintains this was not due to lack of ability or work but because she started late due to not having a uniform and other essentials. She hopes that when they finish school children will go on to become doctors, teachers or carpenters. She would particularly like one of them to be a doctor as she has recently experienced the value of medicine. Asked if this was a realistic hope she said that the boy in P4 came seventh in his class and that her S1 girl ‘performs well’ although she doesn't have a report for her. She didn't get one because she didn't pay the fees.

Asked what could make learning better for her children she stated that the most essential thing was for school authorities to follow up with families on children who miss school and find out why. Also, they should ensure that children do their homework. On her part, she says she can follow up on her child and, when they get work from school, ensure that they really do it. She could work with the schools ‘to find beneficial solutions’ to any problems which might arise.

Uwimana has strong religious convictions. In her living room she has two little posters hanging from the wall which she bought some time back for 50 Rwandan francs each. Poignantly the one on the left translates, from Kinyarwanda, as ‘If the solution to your problems is delayed, be patient. It is not that the Lord has failed you it is that it is not the right time’. Uwimana prays daily that the right time will come soon.
No more than seven or eight kilometres away as the crow flies, in an urban setting is the Holy Name school (not its real name - a pseudonym). The Holy Name is considered a very successful school having climbed in recent years to near the top of the ranking in the Rwandan National Exams for P6. Much of this can be attributed to the dynamic and energetic Head teacher who took over the helm three years ago. There are other factors, of course, not least the level of support from the staff and from the mostly very well educated, and in many cases affluent, parents. See the details below in Case Study 5.

The Holy Name school has a Nursery, P1 to P6 and a Secondary School all on one campus. It is centrally located in one of the larger towns in Rwanda. Scores from national tests rank the primary school as one of the top ten performing in the country. As one approaches the school, the beautiful and well maintained flowering gardens make an immediate impression. Children arrive with their parents, to start the school day, beautifully attired in their smart school uniforms and well-polished shoes. The schools large central courtyard is well laid out in manicured lawn and geometrically designed intersecting low hedges. On all sides are well constructed and substantial school buildings.

The Head teacher is an energetic and well-organised gentleman with a good command of English. When he took over as Head teacher in 2009 only six students succeeded in the national exams. Since then performances have been steadily rising. In 2010, 25 students succeeded in the national exams. The first thing he did was to sit down with parents and decide what to do. A system of weekly reporting of students’ progress was initiated within the school and parents were given a progress report every month. An after-school study and revision hour was established for P4 to P6 students from 5pm to 6pm each day and Saturday school opened for all children from P1 to P6. For these extra tuition hours, parents pay 5000 Rwandan francs per term, per child to pay the teachers for their time. Most of the parents have jobs in different institutions in town such as the University, banks, government offices, the hospital, schools or are shopkeepers so they can afford to pay for this extra tuition for their children. The Head teacher reports that some parents are poor and in a few cases they cultivate the school garden to earn the entitlement to have their children attend for extra tuition. In addition to the 5000 Rwandan francs already mentioned all parents are expected to make an annual subscription of 300 Rwandan francs for insurance and 700 Rwandan francs for school expenses such as photocopying. In the very few cases were parents are unable to pay, if they can provide justification, from the local authority, for not paying they are excused the payment.

Normally teachers working double shifts are entitled to nine periods of rest but teachers in this school do not take them. Instead, they divide the classes between all teachers thus enabling a more favourable teacher pupil ratio. On average there are about 35 pupils per class. Teachers are motivated to facilitate this because of the extra money they earn in the after-school activities.

With reference to literacy, pupils are not only taught to read but are also given a chance to develop the ability to communicate. In a typical school day with five periods of learning one is normally devoted to allowing pupils to express themselves through presentations and projects etc. The school is part of the 'One Laptop per Child' initiative and there are 204

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laptops for children from P4 to P6. The majority of children also by the Catholic children's newspaper, Hobe, each term. Most parents are able to read and write although some do not understand English, so, they are able, by and large, to help their children with reading at home. They are particularly able to help in Kinyarwanda and the Head teacher estimates that 85% of parents in the school help their children to read and write. They also help them with homework. Most of the children in the school do not have to do chores when they get home. As one parent explained 'when they get home from school they get time to rest, watch a bit of TV and then get time for revision before dinner and sleep.

Overall, the Head teacher maintains that girls are not performing as well as boys. The school tries its best to help them succeed but the Head teacher feels that girls are more distracted by outside influences than are boys. He gives the example that most of the children who have mobile phones are girls. He also believes that parents use the girls more at home than the boys i.e. if there is something to be done at home 'they say the girl must do it'.

Despite the extra support in reading that parents provide for the children in this school, the Head teacher believes that there is no culture of reading in Rwanda. 'Rwandans like to talk but not to read. They get information through conversation'.

To support reading development, the Head teacher suggests that the town badly needs a public library. This was also suggested by the community representatives interviewed. The Head teacher also suggests that some kind of reading competition among children could be motivating. He further suggests that the national test should have a section which involves reading, not reading related to coursework but a broader assessment of reading ability.

The parents interviewed were all delighted to have their children attend this school. They say 'anyone would be'. One parent, a teacher in another primary school nearby, said that she preferred her children to come to this school, rather than her own, because of the very good reputation of the school and the strength of the teaching. The school is very good for following up on children's progress and contacting parents quickly if there is an issue. In addition to all that the school offers, she, like a lot of parents she knows, pays for individualised extra tuition for her children at home.

The disparity of opportunity between Uwimana's family and the children of the Holy Name school could hardly be more striking and this in schools no more than a bicycle ride from each other.

5.9 Implications for the Way Forward
The gender equity sensitisation message seems to be working – leading us to believe that any new sensitisation campaign on reading has a good chance of success. Parents and most Head teachers interviewed, have clearly benefitted from the gender equity sensitisation campaign but there still remains work to be done in improving practice in some areas. Old cultural habits die hard. Girls’ progress needs continuing scrutiny and vigilance. Results, dropout rate and transfer to secondary school for girls and very poor children should continue to be monitored. The children interviewed made some interesting observations with regard to

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equity. Their voices should be listened to. The children’s sense of social justice is very impressive. There needs to be continuing vigilance and monitoring at home and at school to ensure that equity is about practice which reflects policy. Sector and village procedures for identifying and supporting very poor families with uniforms, shoes, materials etc. need to be reviewed. Schools and the Sector Affairs Officer (SAO) need to work together to identify the poorest within communities who need support, and co-ordinate support from outside agencies to ensure that efforts are not being replicated. The recently completed Ubudebe ranking may be very useful in this regard. Clearly, some very poor need more supported. There is a disparity in some schools regarding policy over shoes and uniforms. Sensitisation of school authorities, Head teachers, PTCs to the reality for the very poorest in society is necessary. If not already doing so, school authorities should make it part of their work to visit the homes of the very poor and discuss the day to day reality of their lives and their hopes for their children. Home school liaison officers should be appointed within the staff of schools to liaise with PTCs and aid identification and communication with parents in dire circumstances and to work with the school staff to meet the learning needs of the children of these families.

In tandem with measures to eradicate poverty, poor parents whose children are frequently absent from school should continue to be encouraged and supported in sending their children to school regularly. To realise that through reading and education anything is possible. They should be helped to make the connection between reading ability and achievement in life. Reading can lead to wealth in the long term and should be prioritised in the short term. Children’s motivation to rise out of poverty should be harnessed to this end.

Many poor families do listen to the radio and this can be a great source of education about the value of reading. Those who do not have radios should be supplied with basic, solar powered sets if funds can be found to do so.

Children’s sense of social justice gives great hope. Schemes should be investigated whereby more affluent schools could ‘partner’ poorer schools and help to support the children there. This needs some careful thought and planning but it doesn’t seem beyond the realms of possibility that when more wealthy children have finished with their personal reading material they could pass it on to poorer children in the other school. This may even be possible within communities. Possibilities for ‘partnered’ schools sharing resources should be explored. Secondary students who live but a bike ride away from less fortunate communities

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could be encouraged to give weekend or holiday lessons/support to their younger peers. As in
the example previously cited of such a practice in Consolas school (Case Study 3). There is
much to be explored here. Planting the seed of an idea in the right place may be all that is
required.

5.10 Home/School Relationship Barriers
Parents do not actively participate in supporting their children with reading. They leave that
to the teachers. Parents’ interpretation of support, where it exists, equates to equipping and
sending children to school and following up on behaviour issues. Teachers do not feel
supported by parents in their efforts to teach their children reading. Some parents are reported
as not having the right mentality and not being interested. Most, parents rarely visit the
school to talk to the class teacher about their child’s progress. Indeed, most are reported by
teachers to not even bother picking up the end of year report card for their children.

Many parents cannot read. Those who can, in most cases, only read in Kinyarwanda. Most
parents who can read do not know how to support their children’s reading. Those parents who
are illiterate feel helpless to support their children’s reading.

Most parents cannot speak or understand English so will have even greater difficulty
supporting their children as they progress to P4 and beyond.

The previously mentioned, attitude among Head teachers that children below P4 /P5 are not
ready for reading is obviously a barrier to home/school efforts to support reading. The fact
that most parents hold similar views clearly doesn’t help. The resulting practice of not giving
P1 to P3/P4 children books to take home from school is a major barrier to their reading
advancement. The belief expressed by two Head teachers that children are ‘lazy’, especially
younger children is not helpful! This type of view needs to be challenged.

5.11 Opportunities in Home/School Relationship
Parents speak highly of the teachers’ commitment and professionalism in teaching reading.
They hold a much higher opinion of the teachers than the teachers’ seem to think. They feel
that the teachers are motivated to teach reading and competent to do so. They also feel that

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teachers are fair and equal in their treatment of all children in class. Teachers for their part confirm that they are motivated to teach reading. They feel competent and confident in doing so. This notion, however, seems to be at odds with current practice in teaching reading to young children and the poor scores in literacy achieved by many pupils, as measured by LARS and EGRA. It also conflicts somewhat with teachers’ expressed wish for more training. Teachers’ positivity with regards to reading instruction, however, does offer the possibility for productive CPD in this area. The teachers interviewed also consider that both parents and teachers have a key role in teaching children to read and should work together to this end. This is also something to be built on.

Some teachers’ competence in speaking and reading English is good. Some, parents for their part, expressed a wish to learn to speak English. The number wishing to do so is likely to increase as more children progress to P4 and start to learn English.

While parents do not meet with teachers often, in some cases they do attend regular meetings called by the Head teacher. These may be as frequent as twice a month. Most communities have regular meetings chaired by both local leaders and religious leaders which are also well attended. PTCs are very active in all schools and provide a great opportunity for further developing parent-teacher contact.

5.12 Implications for the Way Forward

Teachers and parents should work together in partnership to promote reading in communities and schools. Teachers and parents should meet regularly to discuss progress in reading. These meetings should concentrate on achievements and needs, not on discipline issues. The system of meetings already in place in communities should be utilised to bring all interested parties together to sensitize parents and educators on the need for co-operation in promoting children’s reading and on the ways in which this can best be achieved. Influential persons in communities such as church leaders, cell executive secretaries (CES), village leaders should be encouraged to participate and encourage participation by parents. School facilities could be made available for parent/teacher initiatives. PTCs can also be used as a channel to convey the message and to co-ordinate initiatives.

Teacher’s motivation and confidence in teaching Kinyarwanda should be capitalised on. They should be encouraged to provide support and give guidance to parents in how to support their
children’s reading. There is also great potential for competent teachers to provide English language classes for parents.

Teachers’ have a different view of community values and attitudes to reading than those expressed by community representatives. Perhaps teachers don’t appreciate the hardship that some parents face. Teachers are the product of communities themselves but perhaps their own parents were the more educated in their community or were those most committed to educational advancement. Teachers need to be sensitised to community views and to the choices facing very poor families. A member of staff with responsibility for home school liaison could help to communicate these messages through the PTC. There needs to be a structured dialogue between teachers and parents, perhaps through a type of Community Conversation, to bridge the gap between teachers’ perceptions and community perceptions. Teachers also need to hear the clear message from parents that their work is greatly valued. Mechanisms for communities to formally recognise quality teaching need to be developed.

Head teachers and parents need to be educated as to the importance of their role in promoting children’s early literacy and reading. They need to be shown mechanisms and methodologies for supporting this. Schools need to radically change policies with regard to sending reading material home with young children. Parents need to be enlightened as to the reasons for this and the form of support expected from them. The role of parents with regard to school and their children’s learning needs to be clarified for all stakeholders – parents, community, PTC, Head teacher and teachers.

The belief expressed by two Head teachers that children are ‘lazy’, especially younger children, is not worthy of leaders in education and needs to change.

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Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations.

6.1 Introduction
This research set out to identify the barriers to learning to read for young children in the early years of the primary school and to identify opportunities for overcoming the barriers. The previous chapter discussed the implications of the barriers and opportunities identified in the research. This chapter will present the main recommendations arising from that discussion. The recommendations will be presented under the four headings, namely: Creating a reading friendly environment at home and in the community; Supporting and enhancing young children’s reading experiences; Equity issues with regard to reading; and, Strengthening home/school support mechanisms for reading. Each set of recommendations is preceded by a brief summary of the main barriers and opportunities identified in the research.

6.2 Creating a reading friendly environment at home and in the community:

6.2.1 Identified barriers:
- There is no culture of reading in most communities.
- The traditional means of transmitting information and knowledge is orally. Accordingly, reading and writing are introduced practices.
- There are few role models for reading, at home or in the wider community, for children to follow.
- Communities lack basic reading materials, resources and conditions conducive to reading.
- Most communities and homes are print-starved environments.
- Poverty is still a major barrier to reading.

6.2.2 Identified opportunities:
- Communities recognise the great importance of reading and highly value it.
- Reading is recognised as the way out of poverty and for a better life for children and families.
- There is a demand for learning to read within families and communities.
- All parents have high aspirations for their children and reading is recognised as the means to achieve these.
- Within every community there are people who can read.

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6.2.3 Recommendations:

(1) The First Lady’s health initiative ‘Guardian Angels’ (‘Malaika Mulinzi’) should be used as a model for a community based reading campaign. Influential people in each community who can read should be encouraged to act as mentors and reading role models for others in the community. These could be for example village leaders, PTC members, or others in the community who can read and are willing to help. Younger people who have learned to read should be encouraged to participate. This idea could be promoted by Umuganda co-ordinators supported by the Executive of the Cell and Sector. The PTC could have a major role in co-ordinating the work. A working title for this initiative could be ‘Reading Champions’. Such an initiative would fit very comfortably with the Rwandan Education Board’s recently launched campaign, ‘Rwanda Reads’.

(2) Those who can read in communities should be provided with reading material and encouraged to set aside time to read to the community and to children in the evening and at weekends. Suitable reading materials for these activities would be those which have a high interest level for participants. The community reading/learning centre to be the focal point for this activity. Volunteers should be trained in methodologies which promote and support children’s reading such as Shared Reading. Shared Reading is an activity which benefits children’s reading fluency, word recognition and, as a consequence, comprehension (NICHD 2000).

(3) Adult literacy initiatives should continue to be promoted and their availability increased. Those involved in adult literacy promotion should reinforce the message that one can support one’s child better in reading if one can read oneself. Adult literacy promotional drives should highlight the connection between reading ability and success/wealth in later life. Those who can read have greater opportunities for employment and wealth generation than those who cannot read. Infant mortality rates and poverty are reduced in literate societies. The connection needs to be made explicit. Family benefits of reading are long term and far outweigh other short term considerations. Having recommended this, it has to be fully acknowledged that there are some very poor families for whom this message carries no meaning or relevance, as short term considerations are about survival.

(4) Prominent Rwandan role models for reading should be identified and portrayed reading. These could be sports stars, pop stars, media personalities etc. If possible
they could even include international personalities of the stature of Nelson Mandela and Barak Obama. The best role models of all would be The Rwandan President and The First Lady.

(5) Local role models, and those who have played a part in promoting reading, either in their families or in the community should be identified, nominated by the community and acknowledged at Umuganda meetings. This could be extended to being interviewed on radio. To this end, journalists, news agencies, and radio and television media companies need to be targeted and encouraged to pursue and highlight examples of good practice in promoting reading. National recognition for exemplary practices is required. The highly popular radio phone-in platforms could also be conduits of information on good practices. The Urunana Theatre Group which makes radio productions featuring current issues should be encouraged to feature reading as one of the issues of importance in their productions. Travelling Theatre groups should also be encouraged to promote reading in their dramas.

(6) Communities should be encouraged, through Umuganda, to construct bungalow style community reading/learning centres, in central locations such as school grounds, using locally available material. On completion they should be provided with affordable, easy to use and maintain, solar powered lighting for these centres. They should be supported financially and materially in maintaining and sustaining these centres.

(7) Local authority administrator’s performance contracts should include itemised requirements on the promotion of reading in the community.

(8) Communities and schools need access to high quality reading material; reading material which is attractive, interesting and graduated in levels of difficulty so that individuals can have access to recreational reading material which they can read at a success level. There is a need for libraries of recreational reading books to be made available for school and community use. These libraries should have a suitable range of literacy materials for adults, and for children of all ages. Libraries in themselves, however, are not enough. The important thing is to get the books into the hands of learners of all ages. Models of best practice in using libraries to provide continuing and sustainable access for school children and adults to quality reading experiences should be researched, identified and developed. Otherwise there is a danger of

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libraries becoming ‘white elephants’. In the interim, schools should collect appropriate reading materials for loaning to children and families.

(9) Newspaper companies should be encouraged to supply community reading/learning centres with copies of newspapers and magazines. If this proves uneconomical, mechanisms should be found for collecting used newspapers, magazines and books from suitable sources (companies, embassies, hotels, airport lounges etc) and distributing them to reading/learning centres. The possibilities and logistics of an international dimension to this should be investigated.

6.3 Supporting and enhancing young children’s reading experiences:

6.3.1 Identified barriers:

- Very young children’s early literacy and pre-reading skills are not being developed at home.
- There is little evidence, from this research, of story-telling, rhyme reciting or singing songs to young pre-school children.
- Most young children are not getting support for reading at home.
- Schools are not aware of the need to provide reading experiences for children in the early years of primary school.
- There appears to be weak instruction in literacy in the early grades.
- Schools do not send books home with young children and homes do not have them.
- Schools may not have suitable reading material for younger children.
- Parents do not know how to support young children with reading.
- There is no clear role for parents in supporting children’s reading.
- Reading is not prioritised at home for young children.
- Schools are very poor exemplars for the importance of print.

6.3.2 Identified opportunities:

- Many parents are doing the best they know how in supporting children’s reading.
- Parents want to support children’s reading.
- Communities would welcome initiatives to support children’s reading.

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Some educated and literate parents are making sacrifices to ensure that children in the upper reaches of primary school get support in school work at home.

Some parents read the Bible or the Koran and other religious materials with their children.

Older students who have progressed to S3 and beyond will be in a position to support reading.

Children are enthusiastic about reading.

Children want to read and want support in learning to read.

Teachers have expressed a wish to be trained in effective reading methodologies.

6.3.3 Recommendations:

(10) Parenting programmes for new parents must include clear messages and education on the importance of early literacy. Parents must be encouraged to talk, tell stories, sing, and recite rhymes to their infant children. Channels for promoting this message need to be identified, especially for younger parents who do not yet have a child in the school system.

(11) Rwandan stories, songs and rhymes, in Kinyarwanda, suitable for reading to pre-school children should be collected, collated and disseminated to parents and nurseries. Stories, songs, rhymes and rhyming games, suitable for young school going children, should also be collected, collated and disseminated to parents and schools in oral and in printed form. In the absence of sufficient of these, consideration should be given to the creation of these by Rwandan authors. Highly regarded international children’s favourites that have cross cultural appeal should be translated to Kinyarwanda if not already available. Parents should be taught rhymes and songs for use with their children. Repetitive action rhymes are particularly useful for young children e.g. Old MacDonald Had a Farm.

(12) Potential sources of sponsorship for children’s reading books should be identified. Rwandan companies with an interest in having a literate population for their product e.g. communication companies, should be approached with regard to subsidising production of appropriate and approved reading material for use by children at home, in community reading/learning centres and in school. Local cooperatives may also wish to support community reading initiatives. A ‘one book one
family’ or ‘one book one child’ campaign might sound appealing to potential sponsors.

(13) The possibility of increasing and extending the circulation of the children’s magazine Hobe, or similar non-religious material, should be investigated.

(14) Models of home reading support for children in the early years of primary school should be drawn up for literate and for non-literate parents. Head teachers, teachers, PTC members and village leaders should be instructed in their use. These models of support should then be demonstrated to parents at meetings organised by Head teachers and community leaders. Community and church leaders should be encouraged to promote the message of the importance of supporting young children’s reading.

(15) Head teachers and teachers should receive in-service, continuing professional development (CPD) training, on effective research based methodologies for developing young children’s reading ability. The most effective instruction in reading involves phonemic and phonological awareness training, a systematic phonics programme and a structured use of texts (Hatcher et al 2006). Young children’s vocabulary, fluency and comprehension need to be explicitly developed (NICHD 2000). The role of writing in developing reading needs to be emphasised. Classrooms need to be stimulating print-rich environments in which children’s own work is cherished and displayed. The most important factor in the effectiveness of the teaching of reading is the quality of the instruction (Braunger and Lewis 2006). Therefore, it is imperative that all teachers are given high quality CPD in this area.

(16) Schools should be familiarised with methodologies that involve adults modelling and scaffolding reading through organised activities such as Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) and Shared Reading. Schools should be encouraged to promote the Shared Reading model of support for emergent readers among community members and volunteers who can read. So that they can use the model, where appropriate, for supporting children’s reading in the community.

(17) Schools should compile inventories of suitable recreational storybooks within the school for use by P1 to P3/P4. Where gaps are identified, appropriate books should be purchased at the first opportunity. School policies should include details of procedures for loaning books to children, informing children and parents of how to care for books, and monitoring children’s understanding of what they have read.

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(18) Schools should take time to instruct older students from S1 to S3 on ways in which they can support the reading of younger siblings and neighbours’ children. Secondary school students should be encouraged, in the spirit of Umuganda, to provide instruction in reading and English for primary school children during weekends and holidays. Certificates and awards for young instructors should be issued by the District Executive Officer (DEO).

(19) Head teachers and teachers in collaboration with community groups such as the PTC should set about making the school environment print-rich. This could include the creation of a notice board, the display of the school mission statement, direction signs, name signs etc. External walls, doors, fences, trees etc. could be used. Reading advocacy signs in Kinyarwanda and English, highlighting the importance of reading, should be produced and displayed prominently. Rwandan proverbs and sayings should also be produced and displayed. If possible, simple templates of useful signage, proverbs, sayings in Kinyarwanda with translations in English should be produced and shared among schools. Perhaps well-known Rwandan telecommunication companies could be persuaded to supply yellow, red and blue paint for these initiatives. In due course, this initiative should be extended to the wider community starting with directional signs within the community e.g. ‘This way to the Sector Office’.

6.4 Equity issues with regard to reading:

6.4.1 Identified barriers:

- There is some evidence that girls are still expected to do more chores than boys, especially older girls.
- Some older girls are late for school, or missing days at school, because of chores.
- In some schools girls are still not performing as well as boys.
- Poverty is still a major barrier for some children in learning to read.
- Some very poor children are being barred from school, by schools, because of the lack of uniforms or shoes.
- Some very poor children miss school because of performing income generating tasks necessary to put food in their families’ bellies.
- There is a great disparity in the opportunity for reading development presented between different schools. This is most apparent in the urban - rural divide.

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
6.4.2 Identified Opportunities:

- Sensitisation of parents, communities and schools to the importance of equity of opportunity for all children seems to be working.
- Gender equity awareness can be built on to develop practice.
- Poor parents want their children to be able to read.
- Some very poor parents make great sacrifices to ensure their children get the opportunity to learn to read.
- Poor children want to be able to read.

6.4.3 Recommendations:

(20) All initiatives to develop reading, highlighted above, should be scrutinised regularly to ensure the involvement of the most marginalised in society.

(21) Girls’ progress needs continuing scrutiny and vigilance. Results, attendance, dropout rate and transfer to secondary school for girls and very poor children should continue to be monitored and responded to through PTCs.

(22) Head teachers, teachers and education authorities should acquaint themselves at first hand with the day to day reality of life for the very poor.

(23) Home school liaison officers should be appointed within school staff. Part of their role should be to work with the PTC to keep all school staff informed of children and families who are experiencing major barriers to education through poverty and to ensure access to education and reading for these children.

(24) School policies with regard to exclusion of children due to issues around uniform, shoes and school materials, meal fees etc. should be reviewed and monitored by SEOs.

(25) Mechanisms for twinning schools in more wealthy and fortunate settings with poorer schools should be explored. Such twinning initiatives may enable the passing on of surplus resources, unneeded uniforms, shoes etc. Where schools are in close proximity it may provide the opportunity for individual tutoring at weekends and holidays – to the benefit and enlightenment of all involved.

(26) Ways and means of giving access to community radio for all communities and households should be explored.

(27) Children’s views on equity should continue to be listened to.
6.5 Strengthening home/school support mechanisms for reading:

6.5.1 Identified barriers:
- Teachers do not feel supported by parents in their efforts to teach reading.
- Teachers feel that many parents are not interested.
- Most parents do not know how to support teachers in their efforts to teach reading.
- The role of parents in supporting reading is not clear.
- Many parents do not meet with teachers to discuss children’s progress.
- Some Head teachers think young children are ‘lazy’.

6.5.2 Identified opportunities:
- Parents have very high regard for the work of teachers in teaching their children to read.
- They consider teachers to be motivated and competent.
- Teachers expressed the wish for more in-service training in English.
- Teachers, themselves, feel motivated, confident and competent in teaching children to read in Kinyarwanda. This, despite the fact that the methodologies used appear to be poor.
- Teachers would like to work with parents to improve children’s reading.
- Some parents would like to speak English and this number is likely to rise.
- Most parents attend regular group meetings with Head teachers and/or local community leaders.
- PTCs are very active in all schools.

6.5.3 Recommendations:

(26) Teacher and parent partnerships to promote reading should be fostered. Parents should be encouraged by teachers, through the PTC, to visit their children’s teachers to discuss reading matters and to agree ways in which they can work together to support and encourage the child’s reading.

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The system of meetings already in place in communities should be utilised to bring all interested parties together to sensitle parents and educators on the need for co-operation in promoting children’s reading and on the ways in which this can best be achieved.

Schools should hold Open Days where parents can be familiarised with the work of the school.

Competent teachers should be encouraged to provide English language classes for parents.

Teachers need to be sensitised to community views and to the choices facing very poor families.

There needs to be a structured dialogue between teachers and parents, perhaps through a type of Community Conversation, to bridge the gap between teachers’ perceptions and community perceptions. Teachers also need to hear the clear message from parents that their work is greatly valued. Mechanisms for communities to formally recognise quality teaching need to be developed.
References


Dr Marty Holland, November 2012


Dr Marty Holland, November 2012


Dr Marty Holland, November 2012


Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Appendix A: Community representatives semi-structured group interview.

Before interview:
(1) Inform participants of the reason for the interview and how the results will be used; assure them of the confidentiality and anonymity of what they say and the importance of their contribution. Tell them that the interview will be recorded and that this is in order to capture all their ideas (but they will not be identified from the recordings).
(2) Assure them that they can withdraw from the interview at any time and don't have to answer a question if they don't wish to
(3) Ask if they give their consent to be interviewed

Make it clear that we want to know what people in the community generally do and think – what the current practices and perceptions are in the community – not necessarily just what the interviewees do!

Mbere yo gutangira ikiganiro:
(1) Mubizeze ko umwirondoro wabo uzagirwa ibanga, ibitekerezo byabo byose ko ari ingirakamaro kandi ko ari ibanga nta handi bizakoreshawa usibye ku mpamvu z’ubu bushakashatsi. Ni ngombwa kubasobanurira ko harakoreshwa ibyuma bifata amajwi kandi hakandikwa ibitekerezo batanze kugirango byose bizitabweho mu gukora isesengura ry’ibyavuye mu bushakashatsi ariko kandi ko umwirondoro wabo utazagaragazwa bituruts’e ku byaba byafashwe mu majwi.
(2) Mubabaze niba bemeye ku bushake bwabo kugira uruhare mu gutanga ibitekerezo muri ubu bushakashatsi.

Musobanure neza ko ubu bushakashatsi bugamije kumenya ibikorwa ndetse n’ibitekerezo muri rusange bya communauté: Imigirire ndetse n’imitekerereze kubijyanye no gusoma no kwandika ko atari ibikorwa n’ibitekerezo by’abagize itsinda.
**Theme: (1) What are the community’s attitudes to, and perceptions of, literacy?**

**Ingingo: (1) Imitekerereze n’imyitwariye bya communaute ku bijyanye no gusoma no kwandika**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Question/ Ikibazo nyamukuru</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Do communities value literacy?**

**Agaciro Communauté iha gusoma no kwandika.**

What do you think about reading? Why?

*Mutekereze iki ku bijyanye no gusoma? Ku izihe mpamvu?*

Do you think reading has value in this community? Why?

*Mutekereza ko gusoma byaba bifite akamaro aho mutuye? Kubera zihe mpamvu?*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are there any people in the community who don’t think reading is valuable? Who &amp; Why?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Aho mutuye haba abantu batekereza ko kumenya gusoma nta kamaro bifite? Ni bande? Kubere izihe mpamvu baba batekereza gutyo?</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day to day, what do people read and for what purpose?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Mu buzima bwa buri munsi; ni iki abantu baba bakunda gusoma? Kubera izihe mpamvu musoma?</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's your vision for your sons' future?</td>
<td>Warm up if needed: Do you have boys? Do you have girls?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ni ikihe cyerekezo mufitiye abana banyu b’abahungu?</em></td>
<td><em>Mwaba mufite abana b’abahungu n’abakobwa?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's your vision for your daughters' future?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ni ikihe cyerekezo mufitiye abana banyu b’abakobwa?</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you do to achieve this? Girls/Boys</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ni iki mukora ngo mufashe abana banyu kugera kuri icyo cyerekezo baba babifuriza?</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does this apply to children from the poorest households? (vision and actions)</td>
<td>Ese n'imiryango ikennyeyaba ibikorera n'abana babo?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is responsible for children learning to read?</td>
<td>Anyone else?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutekereza ko ari inde ushinzwe gufasha abana kumenya gusoma? Nta wundi?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the community have a role? What is it?</td>
<td>Hari uruhare abaturage muri rusange bagira? Ni uruhe?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How can illiterate parents help their children with reading?  
*Ababyeyi batazi gusoma no kwandika bafasha bate abana babo kwiga gusoma?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: (2) What are the barriers to children’s literacy?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingingo ya 3: <em>Inzitizi zibangamira gusoma, kwandika no kubara</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is there a practice in the community of telling stories or singing songs to the very young children? What songs; stories? Why? When?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Aho mutuye hari umuco ababyeyi bagira wo gucira abana imigani no kubaririmbira? Kubera iki bikorwa? Babikora ryari?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do parents help children (in primary school) to read? If no <em>why</em>? If yes <em>how</em>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ese ababyeyi bafasha abana babo biga mu mashuli abanza ku kumenya gusoma? Niba ari oya, kubera iki batabikora? Niba ari yego bikorwa bite?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is there anyone else to help with reading?

*Haba hari undi ujya ufasha abana kwiga gusoma?*

What typically happens in the time between children come home from school and go to bed?

*Iyo umwana ageze murugo avuye ku ishuli, akora iki mbere y’uko aryama?*

Is any reading done? Why/why not?

*Ese hari gahunda yo gusoma ikorwa? Kubera iyihe mpamvu bikorwa? Ni kubera iyihe mpamvu bidakorwa?*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do children have something to read at home? Ese hari ibintu byo gusoma abana babona mu urugo?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do they bring something to read from school? Ese abana baba batahana byo basoma babivanye ku ishuli?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a suitable space and light for reading? Why and why not? Ese mu rugo haba hari ahantu heza kandi hafite urumuri abana bashobora gusomera? Kubera iki hadahari?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a place, outside of home and school, where children could go to read? Usibye mu rugo no ku ishuri haba hari ahandi hantu abana bashobora gusomera?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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What kinds of reading materials are available in this community?

*Ni ibihe bintu bishobora gusomwa biboneka aho mutuye?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: (3) What are the opportunities for improving reading?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ingingo ya gatatu: Amahirwe ahari yateze imbere gusoma</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are there any community initiatives to support learning to read? Describe. Suggestions?

*Haba hari ingamba n’ibikorwa bya communauté biteze imbere gusoma. Ni izihe? Ni ibihe byifuzo watanga?*

Are there individuals within the community who would be able and willing to help? How?

*Ese haba hari abantu muri communauté baba bashobora gufasha muri gahunda zo gusoma no kwandika?*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: (4) What is the level of teacher motivation to teach reading?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ingingo ya kane: Uburyo abarimu bashishikajwe kandi bishimira kwigisha gusoma.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are teachers motivated (interested/committed) to teach reading?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ese mubona abarimu bishimira kandi bashishikajwe no kwigisha gusoma no kwandika?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How? And Why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Gute kandi kubera izihe mpamvu?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are boys, girls and very poor children given equal opportunities to learn to read?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ese abakobwa, abahungu ndetsa n’abana bavuka mu miryango ikennyye cyane baba bahabwa amahirwe yo kwiga gusoma?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can communities do to motivate (help teachers) to teach reading?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ese communauté yaba yakora iki mu gufasha abarimu muri gahunda zo kwigisha gusoma no kubara?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
What can teachers do to help (motivate) communities to support reading and writing?

Thank the respondents in your own way!!
Before interview:
(1) Inform the children that you are trying to find ways of making reading and writing easier and better for them; assure them that what they say will be between us. Tell them that the interview will be recorded and that this is in order to capture all their ideas. 
(2) Assure them that they can withdraw from the interview at any time and do not have to answer a question if they do not wish to. And that there are no right or wrong answers – what they think is what is important? 
(3) Ask if they would like to take part in the interview (consent).

Mbere yo gutangira ikiganiro
1. Sobanurira abana ko uri kugerageza kubabonera uburyo bwarushaho kuborohereza ibijyane no kwandika no kubara, basobanurire ko ibyo muganira biri hagati yawe nabo gusa, kandi wifuza kubifata mu majwi kugirango urusheho gufata byose mwaganiriye ntugire igitekerezo wibagirwa.

2. Bizeze ko bashora kuva mu biganiro igihe cyose babishaka kandi ko bashobora kudasubiza ibibazo bumva batifuza gusubiza, ikindi ko ntagisubizo kiricyo n’ikitaricyo ko ibyo batekereza aribyo bifite akamaro.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Questions / Ibibazo by’iremezo</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **What do you think about reading?**  
*Mutekereza iki ku bijyanye no gusoma no kwandika?*  
How many of you can read?  
*Ni bande murimwe bazi gusoma?* |       |
| Do you like and enjoy reading?  
*Ese mwaba mukunda kandi mwishimira gusoma?* |       |
| Is it important to be able to read? Why?  
*Byaba bifite akamaro kuba uzi gusoma? kubera iki?* |       |
| What would you like to do when you grow up?  
*Niki wifuza kuzaba numara gukura?* |       |
| Would you have to be able to read to do that?  
*Utekereza ko ugomba kuba uzi gusoma kugirango ubigereho?* |       |
| If you cannot read what could you do when you grow up? Would you like that?  
*Uramutse utazi gusoma neza byazagenda gute ubaye mukuru? Waba ubyifuza?* |       |
Is it important for boys to be able to read for their future?

*Ni ngombwa kumenya gusoma ku bana b'abahungu kugira ngo bazagere ku byo bifuza mu gihe kizaza?*

Is it important for girls to be able to read for their future?

*Ni ngombwa kumenya gusoma ku bana b'abakobwa kugira ngo bazagere ku byo bifuza mu gihe kizaza*

**Reading habits**

*Ibijyanye numuco wo gusoma*

Do you read at home? Have you anything to read at home? What? (explore)

*Mwaba musoma murugo?*  
*Haba hari ibintu mufite byo gusoma mu rugo?*  
*Ni ibiki?*

Can anyone at home read? What do they read?  
*Haba hari umuntu murugo uzi gusoma? ni ibiki bakunda gusoma?*

Is there anywhere in the community where you can get something to read? Where? What?  
*Haba hari ahantu hafi yaho mutuye haboneka ibyo gusoma ? Ni hehe? Nibiki byo gusoma bihaboneka?*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should very poor children in the community be able to read? Why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ese abana bavuka mu miryango ikenny cyane nabo baba bashobora kumenya gusoma neza?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading support**

Who helps you to learn to read?

*Ninde ubafasha kwiga gusoma?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you get help at home with reading? (Why not?).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Haba hari ubufasha bwo gusoma ubona mu rugo? Kubera iki ntabwo ubona?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who helps at home? How do they help?

*Ninde ubafasha murugo? Nikubuhe buryo bagufasha?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think children would like to get help with reading at home? Why/Why not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Utekerezako abana bose baba bakeneye guhabwa ubufasha mu gusoma igihe bari mu rugo? Kubera izihe mpamvu?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Is there anyone in the community who could help you with reading and writing?

_Haba hari umuntu muri communaute ushobora kugufasha mu gusoma no kwandika?_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: (2) What are the barriers to children’s literacy?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

When you were young, did anyone at home tell you stories or sing you songs? Who? What kind of stories and songs?

_Ukiri muto haba hari umuntu murugo wakubariraga inkuru cyangwa ngo akuririmbi? Ninde? nizihe nkuru cyangwa indirimo?_

Do your parents tell stories, rhymes or sing to your younger brothers and sisters? What?

_Ababyeyi bawe bajya babarira barumuna bawe nabashiki bawe, inkuru, imivugo cyangwa uturirimbo?_


---

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What type of things do you do when you get home from school? (play? chores?)  
Nibihe bintu ukora iyo ugeze murugo uvuye ku ishuli? Gukina?...

Do you bring anything home from school to read? What? If not, Why not?  
Haribintu ujya uvana ku ishuli ukajya kubisomera murugo? nibiki? niba ntabyo uza ni kubera iki?

At home, do you have any place for reading and writing? Where? Is it quiet?  
Murugo ugira ahantu habugenewe ho gusomera no kwandika? ni hehe? haratuje?

Do you have light? What type of light? Is it bright enough for reading?  
Mufite urumuri? nubuhe bwoko bwurumuri? ruramurika bihagije byfasha gusoma?

Is there anywhere in the community that you can go that has light for reading? Do you go there to read? Why not?  
Haba hari ahantu habugenewe aho mutuye hari urumuri musomera? ujya ujyayo gusoma? kubera iki utajyayo?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: (3) What are the opportunities for improving literacy?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What could be done to make it easier for all children to learn to read?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Niki gishobora gukorwa kugirango byorohere abana bose kwiga gusoma?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N.B. When finished, thank the children and tell them how good they have been. Send them away happy. Go back into the classroom with them and thank the teacher. Tell the teacher how good the children were !!!!!!!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Appendix C: Teachers’ semi-structured group interview.

Inyoborabiganiro mu matsinda y’abalimu /

Before interview:
(1) Inform participants of the reason for the interview and what will the results will be used for; assure them of the confidentiality and anonymity of what they say and the importance of their contribution. Tell them that the interview will be recorded and that this is in order to capture all their ideas (but they will not be identified from the recordings).
(2) Assure them that they can withdraw from the interview at any time and do not have to answer a question if they do not wish to.
(3) Ask if they give their consent to be interviewed.

Make it clear that we want to know what people in the community generally do and think – what the current practices and perceptions are in the community – not, necessarily, just what the interviewees do.

Mbere yo gutangira ikiganiro:
(1) Musobanurire abo mugiye kugirana ikiganiro ku mpamvu y’ubushakashatsi ndetse n’uko ibizavamo bizakoreshwa. Mubizeze ko umwirondoro wabo uzagirwa ibanga, ibitekerezo byabo byose ko ari ingirakamaro kandi ko ari ibanga nta handi bizakoreshawa usibye ku mpamvu z’ubu bushakashatsi.
Ni ngombwa kubasobanurira ko harakoreshwa ibyuma bifata amajwi kandi hakandikwa ibitekerezo batanze kugirango byose bizilabweho mu gukora isesengura ry’ibyavuye mu bushakashatsi ariko kandi ko umwirondoro wabo utazagaragazwa biturutse ku byaba byafashwe mu majwi.
(2) Musobanururie abagize itsinda ko bafite uburenganzira bwo kwemera kugira uruhare mu biganiro, ko bafite uburenganzira bwo kuba bava mu itsinda kandi ko bafite uburenganzira bwo gutanga no kudatanga ibitekerezo ku ngingo runaka yateganijwe.
(3) Mubabaze niba bemeye ku bushake bwabo kugira uruhare mu gutanga ibitekerezo muri ubu bushakashatsi.

Musobanure neza ko ubu bushakashatsi bugamije kumenya ibikorwa ndetse n’ibitekerezo muri rusange bya communauté: Imigirire ndetse nimitekerereze kubijyanye no gusoma no kwandika ko atari ibikorwa n’ibitekerezo by’abagize itsinda.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ibibazo byingenzi</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is the level of teacher motivation to teach reading?
Ni ku ruhe rugero abalimu bahagaze mu bijyanye n’ubushake bwo kwigisha gusoma?

Do you like teaching reading?
Mwaba mukunda kwigisha gusoma?

Do you feel competent and confident in teaching reading? If not, why not? What reasons?

Do you feel motivated to teach reading? Why/why not?
Mwumva mushishikariye kwigisha gusoma? Kubera iki?

Are girls performing as well as boys in reading? If not, why not?
Ese abana babakobwa
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you get help from the community or parents?</td>
<td>How? Why/Why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ababyeyi cyangwa abaturage muri rusange bajya babafasha? Babafasha bate?</td>
<td>kubera izihe mpamvu?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should they help? Is it their job</td>
<td>Ubusanzwe se bakagombye kugira uruhare? Byaba ari inshingano zabo??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could communities and parents do to help?</td>
<td>Ni iki abaturage cyangw ababyeyi bakwiye gukora ngo babafashe mubijyanye no kwigisha gusoma?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any community initiatives to help teachers?</td>
<td>Haba hari ibikorwa abaturage bakora (bibwirije) kugirango bunganire abalimu?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the barriers to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
**reading for children arising from:**

- **Homes?**
- **Within children themselves?**
- **Within the schools?**
- **Within the community?**

**What are the opportunities to reading for children arising from:**

- **Homes?**
- **Within children themselves?**
- **Within the schools?**
- **Within the community?**

---

**Thank the teachers!!**

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Appendix D: Head Teacher’s semi-structured interview.

Inyoborabiganiro n’umuyobozi w’ishuli

Before interview:
(1) Inform participant of the reason for the interview and what the results will be used for; assure him/her of the confidentiality and anonymity of what is said and the importance of his/her contribution. Tell the Head that the interview will be recorded and that this is in order to capture all the ideas (but he/she will not be identified from the recordings).
(2) Assure participants that they can withdraw from the interview at any time and do not have to answer a question if they do not wish to.
(3) Ask for their consent to be interviewed.

Make it clear that we want to know what people in the community generally do and think – what the current practices and perceptions are in the community – not necessarily just what the interviewee does.

Mbere yo gutangira ikiganiro:
(1) Musobanurire abo mugiye kugirana ikiganiro ku mpamvu y’ubushakashatsi ndetse n’uko ibizavamo bizakoreshwa. Mubizeze ko umwirondoro wabo uzagirwa ibanga, ibitekerezo byabo byose ko ari ingirakamaro kandi ko ari ibanga nta handi bizakoreshawa usibye ku mpamvu z’ubu bushakashatsi.
Ni ngombwa kubasobanurira ko harakoreshe wa byuma bifuza amajwi kandi hakandikwa ibitekerezo banane kugirango byose bizitabweho mu gukora isesengura ry’ibyavuye mu bushakashatsi ariko kandi ko umwirondoro wabo utazagaragazwa biturutse ku byaba byafashwe mu majwi.
(2) Musobanururie abagize itsinda ko bafite uburenganzira bwo kwemera kugira uruhare mu biganiro, ko bafite uburenganzira bwo kuba bava mu itsinda kandi ko bafite uburenganzira bwo gutanga no kudatanga ibitekerezo ku ngingo runaka yateganijwe.
(3) Mubabaze niba bemeye ku bushake bwabo kugira uruhare mu gutanga ibitekerezo muri ubu bushakashatsi.

Musobanure neza ko ubu bushakashatsi bugamije kumenya ibikorwa ndetse n’ibitekerezo muri rusange bya communauté: Imigirire ndetse n’imitekerereze kubijyanye no gusoma .

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Question/Ibibazo nyamukuru</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What is the level of teacher motivation to teach reading? Do teachers feel motivated to teach reading? Why/why not?

*Ni ku ruhe rugero abalimu bahagaze mu bijanye n’ubushake bwo kwigisha gusoma? Ubona abarimu bashishikazwa no kwigisha gusoma? Kubera iki?*

Do teachers like teaching reading?

*Ese abarimu bakunda kwigisha gusoma?*

Do they feel competent and confident in teaching reading? If not, why not? What reasons?

*Ese abarimu bumva bifiyi icyizere mu kwigisha gusoma no kwandika? Ni ba ari oya kuberiki ari ntacyo? Ni izihe mpamvu?*

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Are girls performing as well as boys in reading? If not, why not?

_Ese abana babakobwa batsinda neza kimwe n’abahungu mu bijyanye gusoma? Niba ari oya kubera iki?

Do teachers get help from the community or parents to support reading? How? Why/Why not?

Should they help? Is it their job?

_Ubusanzwe ababyeyi n’abaturage muri rusange bafasha abarimu mu kwigisha gusoma? Gute? Kuki bikorwa? Kuki bidakorwa?

_Ese ubundi bakagombye kubafasha? Byaba ari inshingano zabo?

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What could communities and parents do to help teachers?

*Ni iki abaturage cyangwa se ababyyi bakwiye gukora ngo bfashe abarimu mubijyanye no kwigisha gusoma?*

Are there any community initiatives to help teachers to teach reading?

*Haba hari ibikorwa abaturage(ababyyi batuye ino aha) bakora bibwirije kugirango bunganire abalimu mubijyanye gusoma?*

*Ni izihe mbogamizi zibangamira abana mu kumenya gusoma zituruka:*

- e. Mu ngo iwabo?
- f. Mu bana ubwabo?
- g. Ku ishuli?
- h. Aho batuye?

*What are the barriers to reading for children arising from:*

- e. Homes?
- f. Within children themselves?
- g. Within the schools?
- h. Within the community?
Thank the Head Teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ni ayahe mahirwe ahari yafasha abana mu kumenya gusoma aturuka:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e. Mu ngo iwabo?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Mu bana ubwabo?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Ku ishuli?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Aho batuye?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the opportunities for supporting reading for children arising from:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e. Homes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Within children themselves?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Within the schools?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Within the community?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
### Appendix E: Key findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Head teachers’ perception</th>
<th>Teachers’ perception</th>
<th>Children perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Community values and attitudes** | - Communities greatly value reading  
- They want their children to be able to read | - There is no culture of reading in community  
- Most people in community do not read | - Teachers state that they do not get any help or support from parents  
- There is a general feeling that most parents do not value reading.  
- Teachers consider that both parents and teachers have a key role in teaching children to read and should work together to this end. | **Thoughts about reading:**  
- They are able to read, they like and enjoy it. And reading is important and useful for them.  
- They know that they should be able to read in order to achieve their vision  
- They are aware of the negative consequences of not being able to read  
- Both boys and girls acknowledged that it is necessary for them to be able to read |
| **Practices** | - A very high proportion of the community do not read  
- Homes do not have reading materials  
- Communities do not have reading materials | - Communities do not value reading  
- There are no community initiatives to help teachers | **Reading habits:**  
- Some of the children claimed to read at home. Available reading materials are usually the Bible or religious pamphlets  
- Most do not read at home  
- There is nothing to read and no one to help  
- Most of the children have no suitable place in their home or community with light for reading |
| **Values, attitudes and** | - They want their children to be able to read  
- No specific support for children reading from | - Teachers feel motivated to teach | **Reading support:**  
- Some have relatives who help |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>practices with regard to children’s reading</strong></th>
<th>parents or community</th>
<th>reading</th>
<th>them in reading at home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>read</td>
<td>Head teachers personal views and school practices:</td>
<td>- They like teaching reading</td>
<td>- Others have no support in reading at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- P1 – P3/P4 children not supported in reading at home</td>
<td>- An attitude is prevalent among Head teachers that children below P4/P5 are not ready for reading</td>
<td>- Teachers feel confident and competent to teach reading</td>
<td>- All children confirm that they need help with reading at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Little or no story telling or singing to young children</td>
<td>- By and large, teachers are motivated, interested and competent in teaching reading, especially Kinyarwanda.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Children in urban settings have a much more favourable experience with regard to support, materials, resources etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Most parents consider that teachers have the main role in teaching reading</td>
<td>- English teaching is evolving and teachers need more training.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Not enough time devoted to teaching reading to P1 to P3/P4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- P1 to P3/P4 do not get books to take home from school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Equity vision**

- Parents expressed an equal vision for their daughters’ and sons’ education and future
- The very poor are reported to have the same vision for their children

- Most Head teachers stated that girls are performing as well as boys
- Most very poor children have the same interest in attending school

- Teachers expressed the belief that girls perform as well as boys, especially in the lower classes
- Children from poorer families, in general, are not performing as well as others.

- Children have a strong sense of social justice
- They believe that all children deserve to be treated equally
- Children feel that poor children should be enabled to read

**Equity practice**

- Parents report that practices are the same at home for girls and boys
- Girls and boys are treated equally in school
- Very poor children are treated equally in school and community

- Girls and boys have equal access to learning reading/education

- Teachers believe that older girls get more chores than boys
- For girls specifically, household chores are seen by teachers as a barrier to learning to read
- Girls have a higher dropout rate from School

- Girls have more household chores.
- Girls have a higher school dropout rate
- Some parents are not supportive of girls education

**Barriers/challenges**

**Home:**
- In most cases no one at home to help with reading
- In general, no one in community helps children with reading
- Parents don’t know the

**Home & Community:**
- Parents do not value reading
- Children do not help with reading
- Children do not practise reading at home

**Barriers identified by Head teachers:**
- Barriers identified by teachers:
  **Home:**
- Parents do not value reading and have a negative attitude to it
- Lack of reading materials
- Homes do not have suitable places

**Barriers to reading identified by children:**
- Lack of support at home
- Lack of enough time for reading at home due to household chores having to be done
- Lack of a suitable place at
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of helping</th>
<th>Community:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Parents don’t know how to help</td>
<td>-Absence of role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Parents don’t know how to help</td>
<td>-Attitudes, values, and practices. E.g., no culture of reading, cannot read, lack of materials (light, space, time: for both parents and children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Not all parents communicate well with school</td>
<td>-No culture or role model at home or in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-No culture or role model at home or in community</td>
<td>with light for reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Poverty</td>
<td>-Difficult circumstances at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-No reading materials at home or in community</td>
<td>including families which are headed by children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>Children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>-Absenceism from school affects children's reading attainment as does their lack of concentration when they are in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>-Some children are involved in child labour and other commercial activities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>-Lack of a reading culture in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>-Lack of reading materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>-Lack of a suitable place with light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>where children may read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>-High teacher : pupil ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>-Curriculum design, structure and delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community.</td>
<td>-Continuous changes in education and curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
**Opportunities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Some parents can read Kinyarwanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Older siblings can help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parents aspirations are high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Enthusiasm for reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Motivation to overcome poverty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- PTC initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Examples of support initiatives (individual &amp; groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adult literacy valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Church practices may</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Opportunities identified by Head teachers:

**Home:**
- Older brothers and sisters who can read
- Some parents can read
- Many parents attend meetings at school every 2 weeks
- Parents attitudes are changing

**Children:**
- Children’s enthusiasm for learning to read
- Children interested in children’s magazines for entertainment

**Community:**
- There are people in the communities who can read
- Church interest in

Opportunities identified by teachers:

**Home:**
- Some parents/homes do support children with reading

**Children:**
- Most children enjoy reading

**Community:**
- There are some individuals in the community who could help with reading
- Most communities have regular meetings chaired by both local leaders and religious leaders

**Schools:**
- Teachers are willing and feel confident to teach reading
- Some schools have enough books

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
| Provide opportunity (Hobe, platform, meetings) - Umuganda | School: - Committed & motivated to teach reading - Some school initiatives - Regular meetings with parents every 2 weeks in some schools | School/education promotion - Community support, PTC etc. **School:** - Schools have books and are confident they can get books Some positive school initiatives - Teachers interest and motivation to teach reading - Schools have enough teachers - An increasing number of 9YBE so more secondary school student to help younger pupils - Availability of land within school environs to enable through *umuganda* the construction of libraries, community resource centres etc…. - Easy control access to school **Some initiatives identified within schools & communities:** - A case of university / higher institution students supporting pupils outside of school | - Primary education is free. |
- Teachers in one school who taught the community English
- Some schools are lending P5 – P6 books and monitoring understanding
- School which lends P5 to P6 books during the holidays

| Suggestions | -Provide materials, appropriate reading books and uniforms for children who are in need  
-Provide libraries in schools and communities  
-Provide a facility with light within the community where people could go to read at night  
-Make newspapers available in communities  
-Encourage parents and teachers to work closer together  
-Sensitisation of all stakeholders regarding | -Establishment of well-equipped social cultural / reading centres for community  
-Education (sensitisation) of parents on how to support reading. A clear message needed  
-More training of teachers on --English as an Additional Language (EAL)  
-More reading materials – News papers  
-More classrooms needed and lower pupil : teacher ratio  
- Reading competitions  
-Encourage inter-school correspondence( within Rwanda- cheap, not international model) | -Teachers should be trained in new methodologies for teaching reading  
-The teacher pupil ratio should be reduced  
-Young children should be able to avail of appropriate storybooks  
-The standard for progression from one class to the next should be revised  
-Collaboration between teachers and parents and the community in general should be improved  
-Parents should allocate enough time to reading at home and help | -Parents should provide enough time for reading when children are at home.  
-Parents and guardians should help them with homework and revision. Parents should also provide enough materials and books for their children. They should also provide light at home so that children can read and revise.  
-Schools should get libraries.  
-Schools should also lend reading books to children.  
-Schools should be friendly places for poor children.  
-Everyone should be sensitive to children's rights.  
-For their part, children should make every effort to develop their reading skills. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>the need for improving reading</th>
<th>-Libraries needed – Schools and community -Parents and teachers should communicate more.</th>
<th>in homework</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Dr Marty Holland, November 2012
Appendix F: Community: Literacy friendly environment check list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Noted (Yes/No)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road signs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop names</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticeboard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community space</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable for reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaded</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>dry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day-light in space</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial light</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Other available facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>TV</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile phone</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phone signal</td>
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<tr>
<td>other</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix G: Community checklist summary findings

Findings from the community checklist on literacy friendly environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Print</th>
<th>Notice board</th>
<th>Advertisements</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Community space suitable for reading</th>
<th>Other available facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road signs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop names</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notice board</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Internet</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>Many signs</td>
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<td>Mobile phone</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Mobile phone signal</td>
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<td>Day light in space</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artificial light</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Yes: Present
- No: Absent
- Many: Present in multiple locations
Appendix H: Home: Literacy friendly environment check list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Noted (Yes/No)</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Reading material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>books</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>magazines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>newspapers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food labels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pamphlets &amp; brochures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible/Koran</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing material</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>pen</td>
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<tr>
<td>pencil</td>
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<td>other</td>
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<td>Reading and writing facilities</td>
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<td>desk</td>
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<td>table</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chair or bench</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clean, flat surface</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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