



Save the Children

GROWING THE LOCAL BOOK INDUSTRY

The experience of a publishing collaborative in Rwanda

In Rwanda, Save the Children collaborated with education ministries, publishing industry stakeholders, schools, book sellers and libraries in order to strengthen existing systems and increase output and availability of quality local language children's books. This **'whole chain' approach** addresses every step of a book's journey from authorship to child and emphasizes the need for **sustainable, profitable industries** which will **guarantee availability** of local-language, contextually relevant reading materials to support a culture of reading in the long term.

REPLICATING THE APPROACH

- 1 Conduct a local book audit.** Collect titles or information from book sellers and publishers to understand the existing capacities of the industry and market demands. The ease with which one can determine what is available tests the book chain.
- 2 Offer trainings and ongoing mentoring to the publishing industry** and its constituent parts: authors, illustrators, editors, designers and publishers. Initially trainings focus on general children's book development. Over time, trainings focus on more specific skills.
- 3 Support the establishment of communities of practice for each constituent part of the industry.** For example, writer's cafés, local publishers' associations, etc.
- 4 Develop and share quality guidance** to evaluate the age and cultural appropriateness of story drafts as well as the quality of writing and illustration and the physical production standards. When necessary, create guidelines that are relevant to different categories: picture books, levelled readers, concept books, early chapter books, etc.
- 5 Establish a book review committee** to review new story drafts and provide feedback to publishers on how to improve the books before going to print. The committee also identifies and endorses books that meet minimum quality standards.
- 6 Make advance purchase commitments to support local publishers** to produce new titles in the knowledge that their titles will be purchased when they are brought to market. Require publishers to print a larger quantity than the advance market commitment to stimulate the supply chain
- 7 Develop partnerships with other child-focused development actors to co-procure titles,** thereby increasing the quantity of the orders and decreasing the unit prices of new titles.
- 8 Support publishers to identify distribution points and enhance their marketing capacities.** Begin exploring support to book sellers, if appropriate.
- 9 Gradually phase out financial and technical support to publishers** as they transition to more independent businesses comprising a functional professional collaborative.
- 10 Encourage publishers to set up a national professional consortium,** ideally drawing on organisations representing its constituent parts, that serves as an advocacy platform to continuously promote the growth of the industry and align the collective's goals to national, continental and global book sector strategic objectives.

ONGOING CONSIDERATIONS

✓ Engage in advocacy.

Some key priorities to advocate for:

- Validation of a National Book Policy
 - Allocation of funds for book buying within government education budgets
 - Strengthening of the public library network
 - Increased support for the local publishing sector through government incentives such as tax exemption on paper; entrepreneurship programs and country representation in continental and global book events, etc.
- ✓ **Make continuous effort to stimulate demand for the newly developed books.** Effective strategies include supporting book campaigns, book fairs, linking publishers with retailers, urging for other organizations to procure books and engaging the media to publicize books.
- ✓ **Invest in research to strengthen the evidence base for the approach.** Studies could investigate children's readership preferences or the impact of the local publishing industry on job growth, for example youth employment.
- ✓ **Support publishers to expand their networks.** Encourage them to buy rights to contextually appropriate stories for translation as well as seek to sell rights internationally.
- ✓ **Provide technical input on book use.**
- Incorporate guidance on effective book use within teacher training programs to ensure schools have the support and skills necessary to use and manage books.
 - Involve the local education board in capacity-building initiatives to positively influence its process for approving storybooks for classroom use.
 - Develop guidance to support parents to use books at home with their children and ensure that children have access to books outside of school.
- ✓ **Become the trusted partner and thought leader in children's book development.** Provide ongoing technical support to book sector actors, Government of Rwanda and development partners.

