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## CHANGING BEHAVIOR TO ADVANCE LITERACY

How Mureke Dusome SBCC contributed to advancing literacy for children

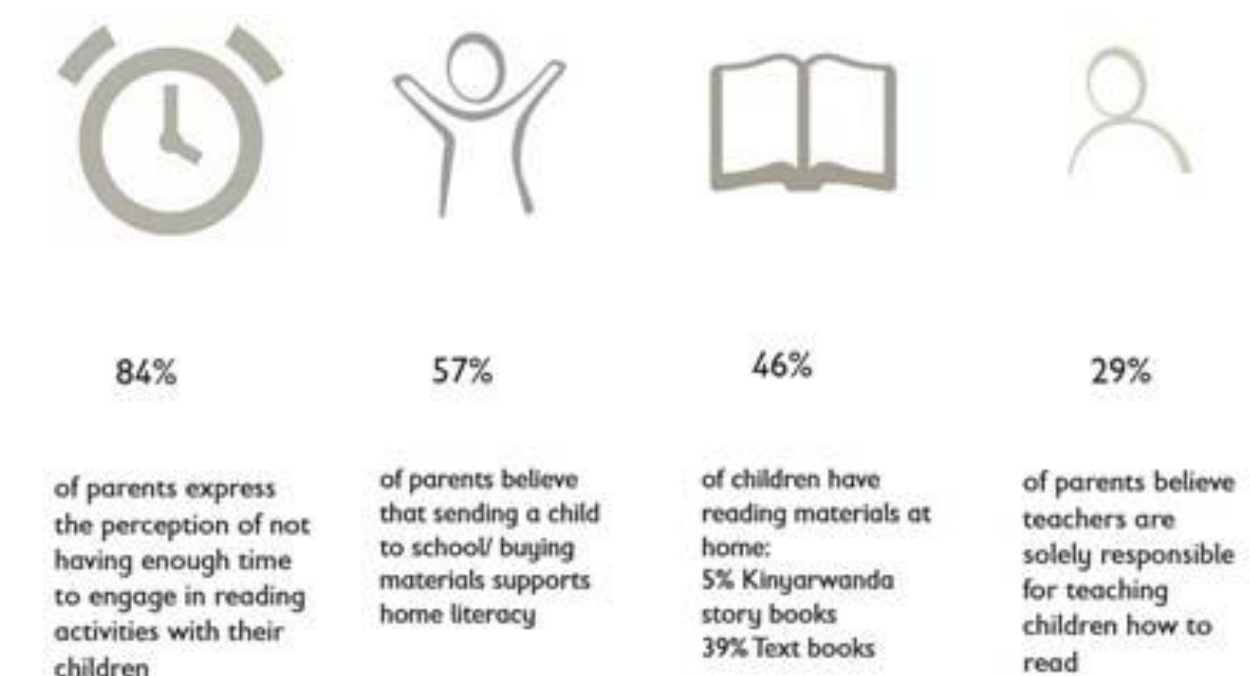


## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The overall objective of Mureke Dusome's Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) strategy is to popularize and promote a culture of reading in Rwanda by creating an environment in which parents, communities, local leaders, civil society actors, government and businesses are supportive of reading among children.

The SBCC strategy draws from the last Rwanda Media Barometers published by the Rwanda Governance Board in 2017 and 2018 that list radio, community meetings, and mobile phones as the most widely used channels to obtain information by Rwandans.

The SBCC strategy addresses the challenges identified by the Mureke Dusome baseline survey on knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) related to school-community partnerships for literacy. The figure below shows key findings.

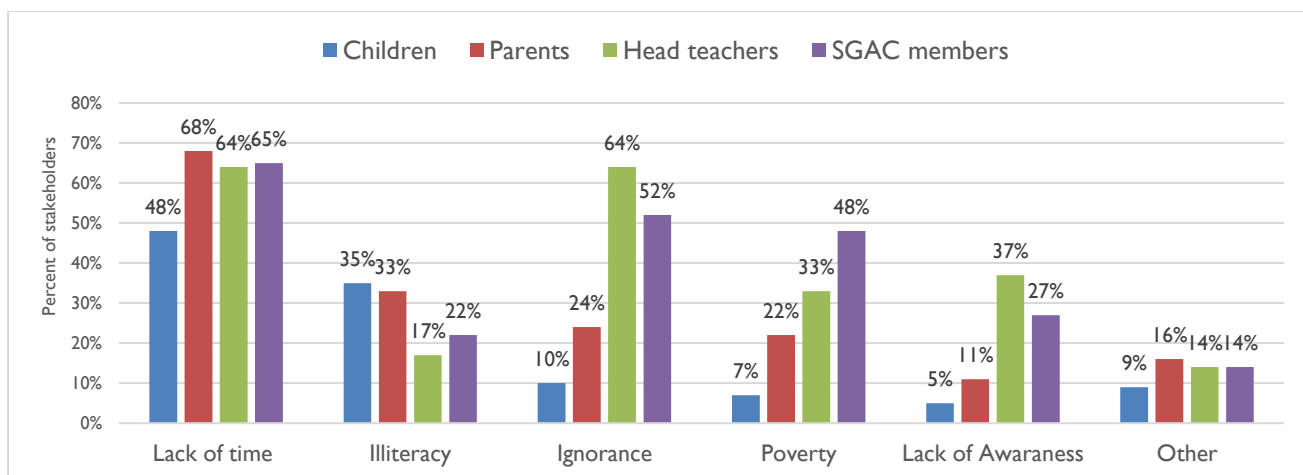


*KAP survey findings summary, according to self-reported data.*

The KAP survey also explored positive and negative predictors among children, parents and School General Assembly Committees (SGACs)<sup>1</sup>. Positive predictors included having Kinyarwanda storybooks at home and having time to read at home and in the community. The KAP survey also identified factors that were perceived to prevent parents from supporting their children's literacy, including lack of time, illiteracy, etc. as can be seen in the graph below.

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<sup>1</sup> SGACs are Rwanda's Parent-Teacher Committee (PTC) equivalent.



Perceived factors that prevent parents from supporting literacy according to different groups surveyed.

## GOALS

The SBCC campaign aimed to expose children from P1 to P3 to positive literacy messages in an effort to improve their knowledge, attitudes and practices related to reading between 2016 to 2021. The messages also intended to change KAP for parents and communities to engender more support for children's reading practices. This would lead children to improve their reading abilities by spending time reading and practicing reading skills in their homes and communities through regular participation in community reading activities such as *Umuganda* Literacy, reading clubs and reading festivals. The goal for parents, whether literate or illiterate, male or female, with or without disabilities, was that they would (1) sit and read with their children at least 15 minutes every day, (2) give children time to attend community reading activities and to read at home every day, and (3) speak with children at home more, including through storytelling, to build up children's vocabulary and comprehension skills.

## THE MESSAGE

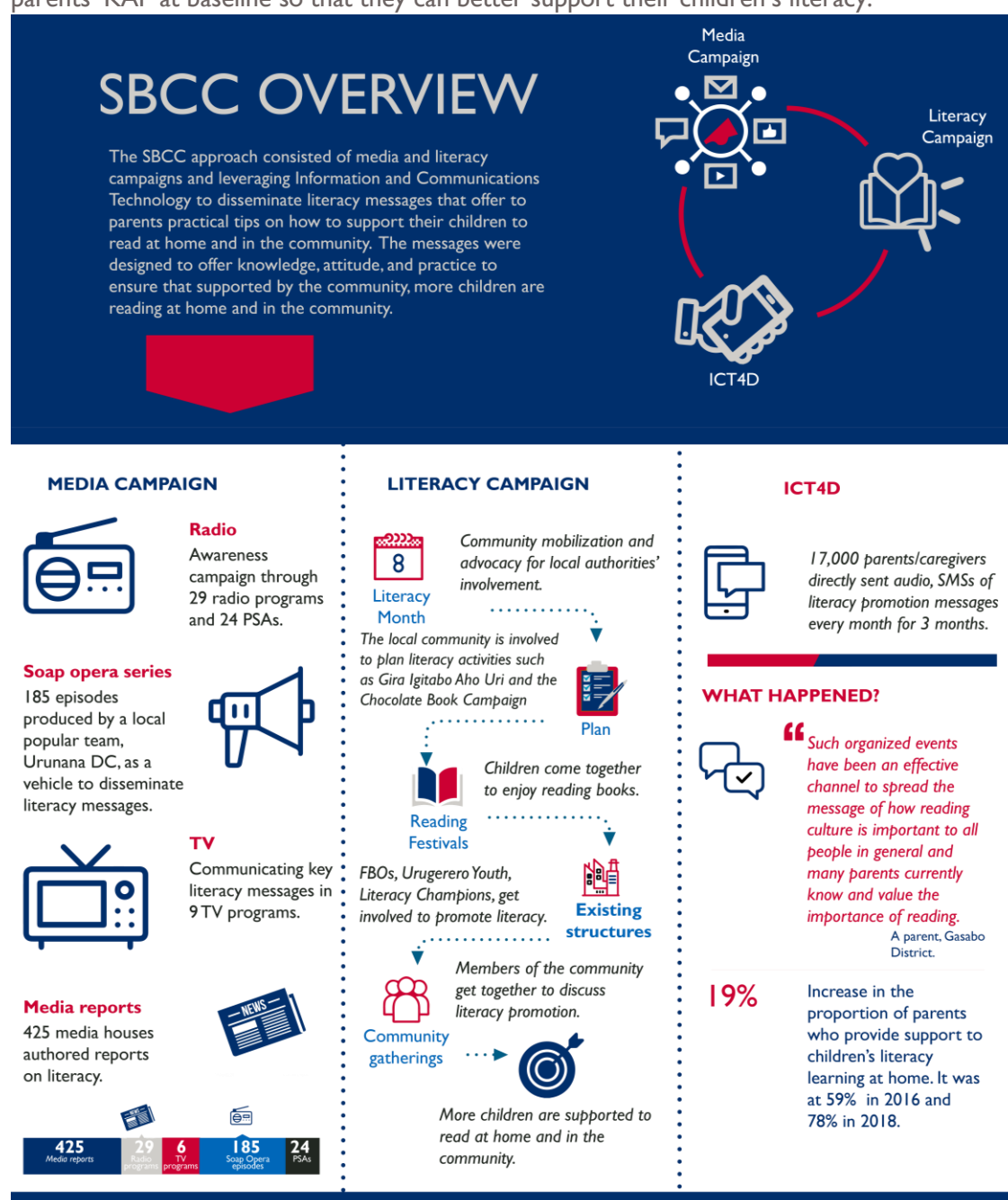
The target groups for Mureke Dusome messages are parents, caregivers, children, Head Teachers (HTs), teachers, School General Assembly Committees, and local leaders. The messages were designed to respond to barriers preventing (1) children from participating in reading activities at home and in the community, and (2) parents from supporting their children in reading at home and in the community. (The message table is found in Annex 1).

## APPROACHES

Mureke Dusome developed a multipronged approach to reach the varied target groups, including:

- A media campaign (using radio, TV, print and online media)
- ICT-4D : SMS/IVR & Social Media
- Literacy campaigns (that advocated for local authorities to get more involved in literacy promotion through the Soma Rwanda platform, formerly known as Rwanda Reads)
- Literacy events (reading festivals, competitions, etc.)
- Coordination through existing structures, such as *Umuganda*, the National *Itorero* Commission, & Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs)
- Policy dialogue for systems strengthening

The following is an overview of Mureke Dusome's SBCC approaches to address the needs found in parents' KAP at baseline so that they can better support their children's literacy.



A summary of the SBCC approach.

## MEDIA CAMPAIGN

From 2016 through 2018, select media houses received on-going training to ensure their buy-in, maintain their awareness of literacy issues, and encourage them to continue communicating key Mureke Dusome literacy messages through community radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, and TV programs. To ensure their sense of ownership, journalists were asked to develop and agree to simple guidelines on how their media houses would air or publish literacy messages. They identified key programs and opportunities for airing, broadcasting and covering literacy messages and recommended that Mureke Dusome engage senior editors in all its initiatives aimed at building the

capacity of journalists for improved impact and sustainability, since senior editors often make decisions about which stories get published.

Media tours for trained journalists were conducted to allow them to witness issues around literacy and the impact of Mureke Dusome's interventions and then produce news reports to share with the wider population. The media tours were designed to allow Mureke Dusome to influence the reports produced by journalists, specifically focusing on pushing parents to get involved in supporting their children's literacy.

As a part of the response to COVID-19, Mureke Dusome continued to disseminate literacy promotion messages using traditional media (radio and TV) to offer parents practical tips on how they can continue to support their children to read and learn at home and prepare for their eventual return to school.

### Media Type Distribution

Based on the Rwanda Media Barometer 2018 findings, the Mureke Dusome team decided to use a variety of approaches at different intensity levels, including radio PSAs and soap opera series (80%), print articles (5%), TV (10%) and online media (5%).

The table below shows how the media was engaged. Overall in 5 years, 530 media pieces were produced:

<b>Media Type/Year</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Media Tour</b>	0	1	1	0	0	2
<b>Training</b>	1	2 (53 participants)	1 (14 participants)	0	0	4
<b>Rwanda Broadcasting Agency publication/broadcast</b>	0	11 episodes of Itetero Children Radio Program	0	0	11	22
	0	2 Family oriented Radio programs	4	0	1	7
	0	3 TV programs	2 TV show/ audio-visual fillers	0	4	9
	0	10 PSAs	11 PSAs	0	3	24



<i>Media reports</i>	46	67 <sup>2</sup>	155 <sup>3</sup>	157	37	462
<b>Overall total</b>						<b>530</b>

*Media engagement table.*

## RADIO

The predominance of radio as the most available and accessible media source in Rwanda has been documented in several studies. According to the last Rwanda Media Barometer published by the Rwanda Governance Board in October 2018, radio remains the most used media channel, accessed by nearly 9 in 10 citizens. Over the last few decades, Rwandan households have increasingly embraced the practice of listening to radio programs through radio sets or electronic radio receiver enabled devices, mainly cellphones. Within this context, radio was used as the main channel for mass communication to disseminate literacy messages in the Mureke Dusome SBCC approach.

### Radio Programs

Targeted 15 minute radio programs (children and family program slots) were used to disseminate literacy messages, supplemented by broadcast and print news. 29 radio programs were produced over the course of 5 years.

### Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

PSAs were produced and aired at Rwanda Broadcasting Agency to disseminate literacy messages targeting parents, children, teachers and local leaders, based on the key messages (see Annex 1). 24 PSAs were produced and disseminated during the life of project.

### Urunana Soap Opera

In 2016, Mureke Dusome identified the Urunana radio soap opera series, produced by Urunana DC, as a vehicle to disseminate literacy messages. A total of 185 Urunana episodes containing Mureke Dusome's literacy messages were produced and broadcast on Radio Rwanda and Radio Ten.

To achieve this, Mureke Dusome attended Urunana DC workshops to ensure proper incorporation of literacy messages into the series. Key messages were attached to particular Urunana characters and woven into the soap opera storyline for alignment to the objectives, goals, and expected outcomes of the SBCC approach.

Mureke Dusome also attended Urunana DC's quarterly script meetings to review the content of previously aired episodes and to discuss the quality, flow, and messaging for the upcoming episodes. To ensure gender inclusion, Mureke Dusome invited a local NGO, the Rwanda Men's Resource Centre, to two of the meetings. Key findings of the KAP survey were also taken into account when adjusting the materials and storylines to ensure they contained positive gender and social inclusion messages.

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<sup>2</sup> Including 12 news articles produced specifically from a media field visit.

<sup>3</sup> Including 7 media reports from a field visit.

Audience surveys and feedback collection tools were designed to evaluate the effectiveness of disseminating literacy messages through the Urunana DC soap opera. One of the challenges identified was that some women were not able to listen to the episodes as men tended to be the ones in control of the household radios and/or cell phones with radio functionality. Based on this and other feedback, live community performances called Community Outreach Theater were added to the approach. The performances were held in 5 districts across Rwanda to spread and reinforce the literacy messages that had been received through the soap opera. The performances reached approximately 33,000 people countrywide, with more than 60% being female. The table below shows the overall activities conducted with Urunana DC.

	<b>FY2016</b>	<b>FY2017</b>	<b>FY2018</b>	<b>FY2019</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Episodes</i>	26	71	75	13	<b>185</b>
<i>Content/messages development workshop</i>	1	0	1	0	<b>2</b>
<i>Long-term story lining workshop</i>	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
<i>Script meetings</i>	5	11	9	0	<b>25</b>
<i>Audience survey</i>	3	5	5	2	<b>15</b>
<i>Messages and calls</i>	31	46	0	28	<b>105</b>
<i>Listeners competition</i>	0	0	2	1	<b>3</b>
<i>Community outreach theater</i>	0	0	5	0	<b>1</b>

*Engagement with Urunana DC.*

## PRINT AND ONLINE MEDIA

In print media, most publications are not regular, having low reach and small readership that is largely concentrated in the capital. In recent years, there has been a shift toward online media outlets. As described under the Media Campaign section, print and online media organizations were invited to cover reading activities and published hundreds of articles over the life of the project.

## TV

In comparison, TV is the least accessible media tool according to the same Rwanda Media Barometer. Mureke Dusome did not use TV to reach large audiences with literacy messages but instead only purposively used TV to reach specific audiences and intents. For example, TV is a more widespread medium in urban areas and is especially appropriate for advocacy. Thus, mainly under *Soma Rwanda*, TV live talk shows were organized to target decision makers.

## ICT 4D

### SMS & IVR

In order to reach parents with more targeted and practical messaging, Mureke Dusome decided to collaborate with Viamo to send messages to parents with cell phones.

Viamo is a platform deployed on the MTN telecom network. In collaboration with MTN, one of Rwanda's two largest mobile telephone services providers, Viamo combines the use of SMS and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) channels to spread information to end-users to reach and engage both urban and rural populations, especially rural women. Launched in February 2018 in Rwanda, the platform has been accessed to date by over 1.4 million MTN customers in Rwanda, an average of 800,000 calls per month, of which women make up to 44%.

The Viamo platform has menus for different topics including education. To access those menus, an MTN subscriber dials 845 and follows instructions to access the literacy messages uploaded on this platform as audio recordings. Mureke Dusome uploaded 10 audio literacy messages, urging parents and teachers to support children to improve their literacy skills. Viamo sends push messages as advertisements to all MTN subscribers of these services and urges them to dial 845 for information of their choice available on the platform. Results from this three-month pilot can be found in the sidebar.

#### **Key Highlights on ICT4D**

Total calls for education content  
29,712

Total number of individual callers  
22,832

Total number of Viamo listeners (*a listener is someone who stays on the line to hear the message*)  
17,217

Conversion rate  
75%. *The conversion rate is the percentage of callers that stay on the line to become listeners*

**61.7% of listeners were parents, & 38.3% were teachers**

In addition, as part of the response to COVID-19, Mureke Dusome collaborated with Viamo to call parents to listen to audio message and send text messages of practical tips on how parents can support their children to read at home. During this period, 2 calls and 2 SMSs were sent to parents per month: 16,949 parents/caregivers were reached by these messages.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

During the lockdown, a social media component was added to the SBCC campaign. It consisted of sharing literacy messages in short audio and animated video formats to Sector Education Officers and journalists covering the National Reading Campaign through WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter.

## **LITERACY CAMPAIGNS**

Mureke Dusome supported several literacy campaigns, which involved collaborating with the local community and/or other partners to organize events to spur education officials to support their municipalities in promoting a culture of reading. Practically, they were encouraged to organize literacy events (reading festivals and literacy competitions), popularize the *Umuganda* Literacy initiative, ensure FBO involvement to promote literacy, and keep literacy at the forefront of discussions in everyday life of Rwandans throughout the year and especially during National Literacy Month.

## **BOOK CAMPAIGNS**

Mureke Dusome has worked with book sector and government actors to organize literacy campaign events with the aim to promote books and a culture of reading. The events are mainly the Annual



Book Fairs, Annual Book Exhibitions, the Chocolate Book Campaign (2016-2017), the Gira Igitabo Campaign (2017), and the National Reading Campaign (2020).

### **Chocolate Book Campaign**

Mureke Dusome, in partnership with Arise Education, a social responsibility-driven business centered on promoting the culture of reading by providing quality educational materials and educational activities that enhance the well-being of children, organized a countrywide campaign dubbed, the Chocolate Book Campaign.

The objectives of the campaign were:

- Raising awareness on the availability, accessibility and affordability of quality, age-appropriate, locally made Kinyarwanda books;
- Engaging parents to buy Kinyarwanda children's storybooks;
- Mobilizing prominent figures to co-author books with children.

Chocolate Book Campaign events:

- Campaign Launch: This event took place in the Kigali Car Free Zone on November 18, 2016. Among the participants were Better World, Rwanda Academy of Language and Culture, USAID Soma Umenye, different publishers, media and other book sector actors. There was also a children's book exhibition, where the public could buy books, and a reading tent for children who wanted to read books for free. Among the media that covered the event were TV10, igihe.com, Kigali Today, and Umuseke.
- Musanze Reading Weekend: This event, which doubled as the Rwanda Reads Book Sector Learning Event, included a book exhibition and a reading tent for children. The Reading Weekend served as a platform to share the messages of the Chocolate Book Campaign. Eighty-six children (59F, 27M) attended this event and read books in the reading tent.
- Muhanga Chocolate Book Campaign: This three-day event included a panel discussion on the importance of promoting the culture of reading among children, a book exhibition, and a reading tent for children. One hundred and forty-eight children (62F, 86M) attended and came to read books in the reading tent. Sixty-two participants attended the panel discussion (26F, 36M).

The lessons of the Chocolate Book Campaign informed a launch of a nationwide Gira Igitabo Aho Uri Campaign.

### **Gira Igitabo Aho Uri Campaign**



*With Gira Igitabo Aho Uri campaign, reading materials were availed in buses.*

Arise Education, in partnership with MINEDUC, MINISPOC and Mureke Dusome, launched Gira Igitabo Aho Uri Campaign in November 2017 to mobilize the community, leaders, private sector companies, employers, and employees to recognize the importance of books, especially books on culture, as a source of information, a platform for excellence in academics and career, and a pleasurable activity; and to gift books to children, friends and families.

During the campaign, the community and parents were sensitized to create reading spaces for families and communities, and this was modeled by providing book banks on a number of buses that traveled from the capital to other parts of the country. The campaign also provided space to work with public figures to co-author stories with children to promote reading and writing; people were sensitized to move from an oral storytelling culture by encouraging them to write their stories down; and messages were shared that aimed at moving parents to stop assuming that books are meant to be free of charge and start putting it in their household budgets.

The campaign was carried out across the country, particularly targeting Musanze District in Northern Province, Karongi District in Western Province, Kayanza District in Eastern Province, and Nyanza District in Southern Province. The campaign reached a total of 539,539 people<sup>4</sup>.

## The National Reading Campaign



Photo: USAID Soma Umenye

*The Permanent Secretary of MINEDUC, USAID Mission Director, Mayor of Burera District, a child and a parent are cutting the ribbon as a symbol to officially launch the year-long reading campaign "Make Time for Reading!"*

The National Reading Campaign was officially opened on 5th February 2020 and aimed at sharing messages on how parents and teachers, can support their children to improve reading skills at home and in school through festivals of reading; posters for classrooms; children featured prominently in campaign materials; media and community radio broadcasts; and engagement with the “school community” through SGAC members and school open days and events.

The National Reading Campaign had 3 phases:

### Phase 1: Books in Schools

The first phase focused on the provision of textbooks and libraries in schools and readers for children to take home. Featuring a national launch at which the Government demonstrated its commitment to delivery, the media and communications focused on the materials and their use. With a strong message on parental responsibility, the emphasis was on getting early grade children reading, at school and home with practical advice on how to support learners. Campaign resources for schools and districts described best early grade reading practices and encouraged complementary activities in Phase 2.

### Phase 2: Festivals of Reading

Phase 2 was designed to be more activity driven at the local level with districts, communities, and schools given support to stage their own events and activities in support of early grade reading.

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<sup>4</sup> 432,000 passengers in Northern Province, 86,400 passengers in Western Province, 12,096 passengers in Eastern Province, 8,064 in City of Kigali and 979 passengers in Southern Province.

With the onset of COVID-19, this phase was substituted with conducting a media campaign for parents to continue supporting their children's literacy.

### **Phase 3: Celebrating the Change Makers**

This phase aimed at recognizing those who have made commitments to early grade reading, in schools, communities, and districts. Local awards and celebration events prominently featured teachers and schoolchildren who are making an impact (many of whom can be identified through LEGRA). This phase also put in place preparations for the next intake of schoolchildren in the academic year 2021, with a campaign strand encouraging parents to get their pre-school children ready for reading.

## **NATIONAL LITERACY MONTH**

Mureke Dusome is the secretariat of *Soma Rwanda*, a Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) led platform that aims at developing and fostering a culture of reading among children and adults in Rwanda. The platform brings together different actors within the literacy space, including local civil society organizations, national and international NGOs, donors, private sector companies, and government representatives to discuss literacy.

In 2016, Rwanda's Ministry of Education declared September to be National Literacy Month in order to conduct a nationwide literacy promotion campaign; the month, which is launched on International Literacy Day on September 8<sup>th</sup>, was coordinated by Mureke Dusome, under the authority of the Rwanda Education Board (REB), and served to remind the international community and Rwandans that literacy is a human right and the foundation of all learning.

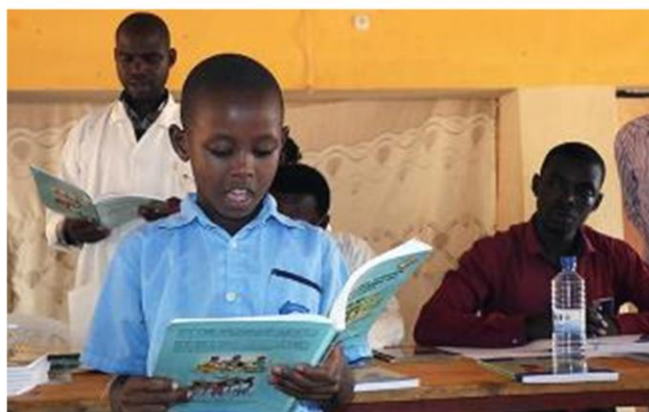
Seizing this opportunity, Mureke Dusome lobbied and advocated with the wider Government of Rwanda to take a more leading role in literacy promotion activities during the month, since REB, as a Ministry of Education implementing agency, had less authority to directly engage with other ministries. Since 2019, the Ministry of Education has led the month's celebration and continues to ensure that literacy becomes a cross ministerial issue; currently, the Ministry of Youth and Culture and the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC) have joined literacy promotion efforts as a result.

Throughout the month, members of *Soma Rwanda* organize literacy promotion activities, including reading festivals, writing competitions and awards ceremonies, book discussions, digital literacy events, field visits to showcase best practices on literacy, book fairs, grand openings of community libraries, and book launches. Save the Children together with Umuhuza pursued various channels to ensure literacy messages could be shared with children and families during the month, including by:

- Collaborating with the previous Ministry of Sports and Culture and the Ministry of Education to share messages with MINALOC who is responsible for *Umuganda* activities;
- Sharing messages through publishing partner Arise Education and with Province Governors (who work under MINALOC) while preparing the Gira Igitabo campaign events in Eastern, Western, and Southern Provinces;
- Sharing messages with Literacy Champion representatives via SMS for them to pass on to the Literacy Champions in their sector to collaborate with local leaders to cascade messages.

## **READING FESTIVALS & OTHER EVENTS**

Mureke Dusome used different channels to mobilize sector and district education officials, Head



*In partnership with schools and the community, reading festivals were organized.*

Teachers and other local leaders to organize and conduct literacy activities and events. Consequently, initiatives were organized in addition to reading clubs and *Umuganda* Literacy (see below). These initiatives often took place during the celebration of National Literacy Month and included reading festivals, and meetings to sensitize community members to support literacy. Communities also organized reading festivals and competitions.

In addition, Mureke Dusome, through its book sector work, supported various Book Exhibitions (see the Book Campaigns section) which not only brought visibility to the high quality local language books available through our support of local publishers, but it also raised awareness about the importance of reading and of buying books for children.

## LEVERAGING EXISTING STRUCTURES

### UMUGANDA LITERACY

The 2018 Rwanda Media Barometer lists community gatherings among the top 2 information channels for citizenry, with 9 in 10 Rwandans reporting that they obtained information from community meetings in the last 12 months. *Umuganda*, Rwanda's monthly community service day, is one of these influential community gatherings. *Umuganda* Literacy, an initiative that brings together children and youth to encourage the development of a community-wide culture of reading, happens in parallel with *Umuganda* community service activities. *Umuganda* Literacy is facilitated by an adult volunteer and is structured so that children can read storybooks while parents and caregivers are participating in *Umuganda* community work. This supports parents to fully commit to *Umuganda* while knowing that their children are engaged in age-appropriate learning activities.



*Local authorities participated in Umuganda Literacy; here, the Mayor of Gisagara District is awarding a book to a girl who won a reading festival during Umuganda Literacy.*

Mureke Dusome launched *Umuganda* Literacy in school communities in 2016. In 2019, Mureke Dusome advocated for the Ministry of Education, with the support of the Ministry of Local Government, to direct all districts to organize this activity as part of the National Literacy Month celebrations. District and sector education officials were tasked with the responsibility of planning and supervising the *Umuganda* Literacy initiative. The Ministry of Education, through the Ministry of Local Government, shared a Mureke Dusome-produced guide with districts about organizing *Umuganda* Literacy for children. The synergized effort of the Government of Rwanda, schools and local communities to promote literacy was realized on September 28, 2019 during National Literacy



Month when *Umuganda* Literacy was simultaneously celebrated in all 30 districts of Rwanda. Literacy messages were also shared with adults during community-wide meetings after *Umuganda*. While local government authorities mainly led this activity in the districts, high-level Government of Rwanda officials also attended *Umuganda* Literacy.

Reports sent from the 30 identified sites indicate that 4,938 children attended *Umuganda* Literacy on September 28, 2019. Based on the success of this activity, the Ministry of Education requested that *Soma Rwanda* develop strategies for the government to take the initiative to scale, as well as strategies for its sustainability. While Mureke Dusome first initiated *Umuganda Literacy* activities, it has now been taken over for future leadership by the government itself.

To further sustain this activity, Mureke Dusome is advocating for the Government of Rwanda to adopt this initiative into its policy framework and programs, including district development plans and performance contracts. Before the COVID-19 outbreak and under *Soma Rwanda*, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government were leading efforts to conducting a quarterly nationwide *Umuganda* Literacy. Unfortunately, due to lockdown measures, this activity was put on hold.

### URUGERERO YOUTH SERVICE

Mureke Dusome worked with the National *Itorero* Commission<sup>5</sup> (NIC) to leverage *Urugerero*, a National Youth Service that engages youth after they graduate from secondary school. Every year, the service lasts for 6 months and youth participate in community activities depending on identified needs. With the engagement of the NIC, *Urugerero* Youth Volunteers participated in the dissemination of literacy messages between 2017 and 2020. Across 12 districts, 880 Youth Volunteers participated in this service and used community meetings to disseminate messages.

### FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Throughout implementation, Mureke Dusome collaborated with various faith-based organizations (FBOs) to support the dissemination of key literacy messaging through existing forums and meetings.

#### **Collaboration with the Catholic Church and the Pentecostal Church Association**

In 2018, Mureke Dusome reached out to two of the biggest FBOs in Rwanda, the Catholic Church Education Secretariat (known by its French acronym as SNEC) and the Pentecostal Church Association, known as ADEPR (Association des Églises de Pentecôte du Rwanda). The approach aimed at increasing the reach of key Mureke Dusome SBCC literacy messages to parents and children through the two churches' widespread network of worshipers and their presence in the education system. A significant number of Mureke Dusome reading clubs are happening in schools supported by FBOs in all 30 districts. According to anecdotal evidence, many of the FBOs are also spreading literacy messages through their church services.

Mureke Dusome leveraged SNEC's and ADEPR's mandate to disseminate literacy messages. Since SNEC has a mandate to coordinate efforts to improve education between the Government of Rwanda, the Catholic Church, and schools, teachers, parents and students, Mureke Dusome worked

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<sup>5</sup> The National *Itorero* Commission is the structure in charge of promoting national values and civic education.

with Diocese-level priests in charge of education at schools associated with the Catholic Church to identify activities to disseminate literacy messages. Mureke Dusome also reached children in

ADEPR's Sunday schools in 5 regions, 424 parishes, and 3,280 chapels.



*Churches participated in reading festivals; here, an archbishop of Kigali Diocese is awarding a child a bible and reading materials.*

The message shared to the FBOs centered on (1) encouraging parents to model reading and to buy reading materials for their children, and (2) encouraging Head Teachers in church supported schools to work closely with Literacy Champions in villages and to take an active role in organizing literacy activities including during National Literacy Month and church literacy month/weeks.

### **Collaboration with the Anglican Church**

Various Mureke Dusome assessment reports showed that men's engagement to improve children's literacy was not optimal. As a response measure, in 2020-2021, Mureke Dusome collaborated with the Anglican Church Fathers' Union to reach out to men and specifically targeted this group with practical messages outlining how men should be more involved to promote children's literacy at home, at church, and in the community. Generally, the Fathers' Union members agreed to revive Sunday Schools and add a component with a reading activity outside of the routine bible reading sessions. In addition, Fathers' Union men's groups to promote literacy were created to ensure that literacy promotion activities are discussed at the Union level and to allow for planning in how to continue to be lead advocates of literacy promotion in the community.

### **PARENTS' AWARENESS WORKSHOPS VIA MULTIPLE STRUCTURES AND PARTNERS**

Through collaboration with the National *Itorero* Commission, faith-based organizations and Uwezo Youth Empowerment, Mureke Dusome organized Parents' Awareness Workshops to share practical tips for supporting their children's reading at home and to sensitize them on the benefits of reading.

- **Urugerero Youth Volunteers** work with local leaders to organize workshops for parents or use organized community meetings to share the literacy messages.
- **Trained FBO representatives** organize parental awareness workshops to spread key literacy messages and tips with parents in their churches and vicinities.
- In 2020, **Uwezo Youth Empowerment** engaged **Youth Volunteers with Disabilities** to conduct awareness workshops for parents of children with disabilities in 5 districts. Parents participated in a series of 5 monthly workshops, giving them opportunities to learn the importance of reading for their children and how to support them with their individual needs.



## **SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING FOR SUSTAINING LITERACY PROMOTION <sup>6</sup>**

In addition to all of the above methods cited, the SBCC for literacy campaign sought to not only directly influence individuals' literacy KAP but also to establish systems that would continue to promote a culture of reading throughout Rwanda long after the life of the project.

Since 2017, Mureke Dusome has supported the Ministry of Education to develop a National Literacy Policy and its accompanying Strategic and Implementation Plan. In August 2019, the Permanent Secretary of MINEDUC led a validation workshop of the National Literacy Policy and its strategic and implementation plan. The policy is finalized and awaits the approval process by the cabinet. The development process was led by the Ministry of Education and was enriched by input, expertise, and collaboration of other ministries, government agencies, local leaders, teachers, parents, the private sector, civil society, faith-based organizations, and development partners committed to supporting literacy development in Rwanda. With this policy, the Ministry of Education commits to guiding a process of elevating literacy development to a national priority; this national priority is to be supported by all sectors and stakeholders in order to achieve the policy vision of a literate society that supports the development of emergent, early and higher-order literacy skills for all.

Other systems strengthening activities include:

- A Memorandum of Understanding between Umuhuza Organization and the National Itorero Commission: This MoU has informed a strategy to include literacy promotion in annual plans of the Commission starting 2020.
- A Memorandum of Understanding between Umuhuza and 20 local FBOs across 5 districts: 288 Volunteers from these local FBOs were trained and conducted Reading Awareness workshop sessions to 6,750 parents.
- Collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and direct engagement of district staff in charge of planning in order to encourage district and sector plans to include literacy activities in their annual plans.

The excerpt below (from Mureke Dusome's Performance Evaluation) explains some of the national level coordination and advocacy activities that Mureke Dusome engaged in to sustain literacy promotion activities over time.

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<sup>6</sup> The passage is an excerpt from the Mureke Dusome Performance Evaluation report.

Under *Soma Rwanda*, Mureke Dusome sought to capitalize on the power, capacity and enthusiasm of individuals within the education sector, even at the highest levels of government such as the Minister of State in Charge of Primary and Secondary Education:

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*“The persona of the Minister of State and his personal investment in bringing together a diverse group of actors who now understand their individual and collective role in literacy promotion and its prioritization in Rwanda was absolutely critical.”*

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According to many respondents, one of the most promising systems-based results of Mureke Dusome was the project’s efforts to co-develop Rwanda’s first National Literacy Policy.

Similar to the National Literacy Policy, Mureke Dusome plays a pivotal role in establishing the *Soma Rwanda* Steering Committee (previously known as Rwanda Reads). It is the only platform in Rwanda that regularly brings together different actors within the literacy space, straddling local civil society organizations, national and international NGOs, donors, private sector companies and government representatives. Periodic meetings are now co-chaired by the Minister of State on behalf of MINEDUC. This was seen as a necessary and positive shift from the previous set up, in which REB was the co-chair, because of the potential for the Minister of State to engage directly in a cross-ministerial approach. Whereas REB is an implementing agency, MINEDUC can interface more effectively with other ministries such as MINISPOC and MINALOC. This recent change has not only raised the profile of *Soma Rwanda* but has significantly increased its strategic potential to advocate and systematize change within the education sector.

## WHAT HAPPENED?

Using annual reports, the Knowledge, Attitudes, & Practices Midline Evaluation, and other research, the Mureke Dusome project sought to determine the results of these SBCC approaches to date. The following sections discuss some of those results.

### EXPOSURE TO LITERACY MESSAGING

In October 2019, Mureke Dusome conducted a Focus Group Discussion to ask parents about literacy messages. Parents in the meeting confirmed that they had been exposed to literacy messages encouraging them to support their children's literacy at home and in the community. 49.3% of parents/caregivers said they had heard literacy messages on the radio (Urunana included), as shown in the table below. Overall, 54.4% of respondents said that they got information related to literacy through media channels selected by Mureke Dusome, which means they had been exposed to the key literacy messages listed in Annex I.

<i>Medium Channel</i>	<i># of respondents</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Radio</i>	38	49.3
<i>Gathering</i>	11	14.2
<i>TV</i>	4	5.1
<i>LCs</i>	9	11.6
<i>Churches</i>	2	2.5
<i>Others</i>	13	16
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>77</b>	

*Parents' source of information medium (data from Focus Group Discussions, November 2019).*

## KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE CHANGES

### KNOWLEDGE & ATTITUDES

On the whole, parents', caregivers', school leaders', and School General Assembly Committee (SGAC) leaders' generic literacy knowledge and attitudes started at a high point from the beginning of the project, though it's possible some of this is due to social desirability bias. The proportion of parents with positive attitudes regarding reading and the importance of providing support to children's learning was high at both baseline (99.3% in 2016) and midline (98% in 2018). Moreover, the percentage of parents who said that they believed that it is important for a child to be exposed to books and other writing from a young age, and the percentage that agreed that parents and teachers should work together to teach reading stayed constant between the baseline and the midline at 99%. Data on these indicators were collected through Mureke Dusome's KAP Midterm Evaluation conducted in Q2 FY2018.

However, other stakeholders indicated that parental attitudes and knowledge about literacy had improved over the life of the project. For example, the Mureke Dusome Performance Evaluation suggests that SGAC and school leader respondents seemed to indicate that there was room for growth in continuing to improve parents' and caregivers' specific literacy knowledge about the value of literacy, and they felt Mureke Dusome messaging helped shift parental attitudes more broadly; for example, one respondent stated:

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*"Parents' attitudes and knowledge were changed by the program intervention. They currently give value to literacy and learnt the importance of the reading club and books. Actually, parents' understanding on value of reading was improved."*<sup>7</sup>

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Additionally, parents themselves testified about learning of the importance of caring for books through sensitization activities conducted by Save the Children's partner organization, *Urunana DC*:

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<sup>7</sup> A quote from the Mureke Dusome Performance Evaluation from a Head Teacher, Ruhango District.

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*“The most important thing is that Urunana encourages parents not to tear children’s books as they used to do before when searching for paper to smoke cigarettes.”<sup>8</sup>*

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## PRACTICES

Over the life of the project, shifts in stakeholders’ literacy practices have also been noted. For example, in 2017, less children than expected (only 82,643 nationwide, including 39,668 boys, and 42,975 girls) attended *Umuganda* Literacy activities because some local authorities did not support the events. In addition, some parents required their children to do chores on the weekends, which prevented them from attending *Umuganda* Literacy on a Saturday. After exposure to the SBCC messages, this number increased to 740,684 (including 356,935 boys and, 383,749 girls) in 2018. Local leaders were also able to capitalize on such events to share key messages concerning literacy, fostering greater buy-in and collective ownership of literacy promotion activities. One Sector Education Officer, in Mureke Dusome’s Performance Evaluation, confirmed that:

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*“Such organized events have been the effective channel to spread the message of how reading culture is important to all people in general and many parents currently know and value the importance of reading.”<sup>9</sup>*

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In the same study, a parent testified the following:

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*Mureke Dusome successfully identified community structures which could be leveraged for literacy like Umuganda – traditionally used for physically laborious tasks. But Mureke Dusome showed that the time could be used to productively engage children in reading too. This changed the mindset of how to capitalize on this time for children too, not just adults.”<sup>10</sup>*

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Behavior change was not limited to children and parents. The support of faith-based organizations was also sometimes enlisted, including through the use of churches to host reading clubs, or religious leaders ‘preaching’ about the importance of literacy to their congregations, thereby increasing the attendance of children at reading clubs and encouraging parents to read to their children:

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<sup>8</sup> The quote is borrowed from the Mureke Dusome Performance Evaluation report and attributed to a Sector Education Officer, Burera District.

<sup>9</sup> The quote is borrowed from the Mureke Dusome Performance Evaluation report and attributed to a Sector Education Officer, Gasabo District.

<sup>10</sup> A parent quoted from the Mureke Dusome Performance Evaluation report.

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*“The high priest of Gahara Parish mobilized parents in announcements in the masses he gave; he has really played a good role in the Mureke Dusome reading club. Parents also nowadays come to borrow books for their children.”<sup>11</sup>*

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Other key findings on improved literacy practices, as found in the KAP Midterm, include:

- 46.1% increase in the proportion of Head Teachers implementing the 'practice' of taking specific actions to improve students' literacy outcomes, such as encouraging children to participate in reading activities after school and to borrow their favorite books from the school library to read at home. The rate was at 42%<sup>12</sup> in 2016 and 88.1% in 2018<sup>13</sup>.
- 19% increase in the proportion of parents who report to provide support to children's literacy learning at home. It was at 59%<sup>14</sup> in 2016 and 78% in 2018.
- 9% increase in the proportion of students who reported having visited a school-community library in the last week. It was at 10.7% in 2016 and 20% in 2018.

Moreover, the average time children spent reading or learning about reading outside of school in the last week was found to be 26 minutes<sup>15</sup> in 2018, which was higher than the target that year (20 min). Additionally, many respondents to the Mureke Dusome Performance Evaluation agreed that parental engagement has subsequently improved. For example, one respondent said:

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*“The Mureke Dusome intervention has been effective in this district in terms of early literacy promotion through reading clubs and partnership between parents and school leadership. And this partnership has been impactful in these areas - parents are now involved in their children's learning. At school, children are supported by teachers and at home, parents take the lead. A learning process is no longer the school's responsibility only but also parents'. This partnership has also been promoted through training that Mureke Dusome provided to teachers and*

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<sup>11</sup> KI, Head Teacher, Kirehe District

<sup>12</sup> Mureke Dusome collected data for this indicator through phone interviews. Among 812 HTs that were interviewed, 733 reported that they had implemented at least three practices of taking specific actions to improve students literacy outcomes.

<sup>13</sup> During Mureke Dusome's phone interviews with LCs, 88.1% of Head Teachers/SGACs (319 out of 362) are reported by LCs to implement at least three literacy-related practices to improve students' literacy outcomes in their communities.

<sup>14</sup> Based on social desirability bias, we think this percentage is too high.

<sup>15</sup> In 2017, Mureke Dusome revised how this indicator is calculated so that it more accurately captures time children spend reading at home. Mureke Dusome added to the KAP survey more questions related to how many minutes/hours per week the child spends in community reading activities (then divide by 7 to get average time per day). The project narrowed down the response intervals on how long they read each day from (less than an hour, 1-2hrs, 2-3hrs, 3-4hrs, 4-5hrs, more than 5hrs) to (never, 1-10mn, 11-20mn, 21-30mn, 31mn-1hr, more than 1hr).

*committee members who went to sensitize others in the community to be more involved in their children's learning and reading.”<sup>16</sup>*

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Another said:

*“Parents’ involvement has increased. They have understood that the success of their children at school is not only for school’s responsibility, but they also have a role to play. We could not have been able to strengthen SGACs without the contribution of Mureke Dusome.”<sup>17</sup>*

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Therefore, there has been some evidence that Mureke Dusome activities, including its SBCC campaign, have contributed to some degree to improved literacy KAP of stakeholders in Rwanda.

## **CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED**

This being the first SBCC for literacy strategy of its kind across the global Save the Children movement, there were many different challenges encountered and lessons learned:

- Most importantly, the SBCC strategy did not set specific goals with evaluation mechanisms specific to each of the SBCC approaches; this meant that it was difficult for the project to determine which SBCC approach was most effective in the context. The main evaluation was the KAP survey, which targeted general knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to literacy but did not isolate which SBCC mechanisms may have been most effective in shifting participants’ practices.
  - o Future projects should ensure to set aside enough evaluation funding and to designate time for MEAL / Research staff with expertise in evaluating SBCC approaches to be able to effectively evaluate how each approach contributed to achieving the overall strategy's objectives, so adjustments can be made based on the effectiveness of each approach.
- For cases where changes in practice are the most essential desired change, SBCC messages should be sure to provide very practical suggestions for stakeholders. For example, initial messages in the Mureke Dusome project were found to only convince parents to send their children to reading clubs but did less to empower them with specific activities they could implement themselves with their children; later these messages were revised to be more practical.
  - o In addition to having specific evaluation mechanisms for each SBCC approach, the messages should be piloted and tested early on, before rolling them out at a larger scale.
- The original SBCC messages did not speak practically to disability inclusion and how specifically men should be involved in promoting their children's literacy at home.

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<sup>16</sup> KI, District Director of Education, Gasabo District

<sup>17</sup> KI, District Director of Education, Ngororero District



- The number of parents of children with disabilities who attended community reading events was low in 2018 (747) and still low (2,938) in 2019.
- Some local media houses were incapable of conducting audience research to accurately segment listeners by programming – e.g. determine the primetime audience for news, adverts – making it was difficult to estimate the reach of Mureke Dusome PSAs and literacy promotion news reports. This is due to lack of enough resources for conducting these listenership surveys.
- In a survey conducted in 2020, the majority (53% parents and 77% children) who reported hearing or reading literacy and learning messages, got them through radio while 7% of parents got interactive voice messages and calls from SCI staff. When respondents were asked which channel, they would like to hear literacy and learning messages from, 15% indicated that they prefer to get literacy and learning messages on their phone as short messages because most of the time they are not available at home where they can access radio or TV and 8% suggest community meetings.

As a result of these lessons learned, the SBCC strategy was revised in 2019/2020 to better respond to these issues, and the project planned to include parents' evening meetings (rated at 68% by the Rwanda Media Barometer) as one of the approaches to disseminate literacy messages.

- In 2020 and 2021, parent reading awareness workshops were conducted by local faith-based organizations in 5 districts. In the same districts, Youth Volunteers with Disabilities, through local partner Uwezo Youth Empowerment, also conducted workshops for parents of children with disabilities and their children to ensure children with disabilities are better supported to learn literacy skills at home and in the community. Mureke Dusome plans to learn lessons from the challenges and successes of these revised approaches later in 2021.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### GENERAL

- Test out messaging with different stakeholder groups early in the process to ensure that the messages are not only clear but practical and powerful; develop messages targeted to different audiences and adjust the channels of dissemination based on the target audience.
- Focus on strategies to reach parents of children with disabilities.
- Develop a myriad of mechanisms for spreading key literacy messages because radio on its own is not enough; other avenues to potentially pursue include community theater, liaising with volunteers and local and government leaders to spread messaging at community meetings/events; parent workshops; social media posts including animated videos that can be easily shared; print and TV broadcasts; etc.
- Relatedly, SBCC for literacy must not be conducted in a silo by the Communications team; rather, all aspects of the project should be involved in finding ways to disseminate the key messages through their stakeholder groups. For example, Mureke Dusome discovered synergies with the publishing industry by collaborating across project work streams.
- For each approach used in the SBCC approach, there should be a clear behavior change to track over time. Set indicators that measure the level of success throughout the project lifetime for each. When the targets/indicators are general and not attached to a specific approach, it is hard to identify what has worked and what has not worked. The Monitoring and Evaluation team ought to be involved to set indicators to measure each SBCC goal.

**SPECIFIC TO ICT4D**

- Pre and post exposure questions should be asked to measure knowledge change.
- There are opportunities for cross promotion with radio programming.
- Conduct an IVR impact survey with listeners.
- Track social media coverage through views, likes, shares, etc.

## ANNEX I: MESSAGE TABLE

### ORIGINAL MESSAGES:

	Knowledge	Attitude	Practice
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reading is the foundation of all future learning and academic success. Parents play an important role in supporting children as they learn to read.</li> <li>– Skills children need to develop in order to learn to read:</li> <li>– Know alphabet/letter names (count letters, etc.)</li> <li>– Know the sounds letters/syllables make (anything about the sounds, blends, etc.)</li> <li>– Print knowledge (direction of text, turning pages, pointing to words)</li> <li>– Basic language skills (e.g. understand and know some/enough words [vocabulary], know the grammatical structure of a language, etc.)</li> <li>– Ability to read quickly....[something that gets at fluency but in an understandable way for parents/ what parents are likely to say] (read sentences, read</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Model reading and writing in everyday life.</li> <li>–</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ensure your child reads for at least a few minutes every day. Make sure boys and girls both have time to read at home.</li> <li>– Write a shopping list and read it together at the store as you check off items.</li> <li>– Promoting early literacy is the work of many:</li> <li>– Visit your child's teacher to discuss progress and ways you can work together to support your child's reading. Thank the teacher for his/her hard work</li> <li>– Reading to or with the child (books or other print/electronic materials)</li> <li>– Provide time for the child to listen to books being read by others or to read with others or on their own</li> <li>– Ask the child to practice writing letters/words/texts</li> <li>– Speak/talk with the child and encourage him/her to speak with others</li> <li>– Ask the child to practice the alphabet/letters/syllables</li> <li>– Help the child to learn new words</li> </ul>

**Illiterate  
parents**

- quickly enough to understand, etc.)]
- Reading comprehension skills/strategies (understand what they read, understand story structure, can ask questions about a text, make personal connections to a story, make predictions while reading a story, etc.)

- Reading is the foundation of all future learning and academic success.

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- Sing songs with children (especially, teaching them new songs)
- Buy books for children
- Ensure children borrow books
- Allow children to attend reading clubs and/or a community library
- Make reading materials for their children
- Ensure a conducive reading environment (count as correct if they mention: light, reading corner/space, adequate nutrition/meals, ensure a peaceful environment in the home [no conflict], etc.)
- If you are not able to read well, encourage your child to talk to you about the pictures as they turn pages, sing with them, and tell them stories.
- Sit and read with your child for at least 15 minutes every day. If you are not able to read well, encourage your child to talk to you about the pictures as they turn pages and explain to them new words. If you do not have a book at home, sing to/with them, tell them stories and

*Children  
and  
youth*

- Reading is the foundation of all future learning and academic success. It is a process that begins from infancy.
- The more you read, the more you will know. Books make you intelligent and help you learn new things.

- Reading is fun! You can experience exciting stories about children like you or learn about far-away places.

encourage them to tell you stories.

- Make time to read every day.
- You can choose a book to read alone, with friends, or with family.

Find a reading buddy. Make time to read together and help each other improve your reading.

*Teacher  
s  
and  
SGACs*

- Reading is the foundation of all future learning and academic success. It is a process that begins from infancy.
- Support children at all ages with reading. The earlier a child starts developing reading habits, the better!

- Encourage parents to visit to discuss their child's progress. Talk about how you can work together to support the child's reading development.

- Participate in reading events in your community. Visit libraries or bookshops to learn about what reading materials are available.
- In pre-primary and primary levels, make time for reading every day. In younger classes, you should read books aloud to children so they learn to love reading.

- Let students of all ages use books in class and take them home. Ensure boys, girls and children with disabilities are given the support they need.
- Make your classroom print -rich by hanging displays, words and charts on the walls. Children will benefit

**Local  
leaders**

- Reading is the foundation of all future learning and academic success. It is directly linked to Rwanda achieving development goals.

- Be a role model for reading in your community. Read in public places, carry a book with you and talk to others about what you are reading.

from seeing print all around them.

- Use opportunities such as *Umuganda* and other meetings to sensitize communities on the importance of reading.
- Inform them that reading helps us be skilled, informed, and to develop ourselves, communities and country.
- Discuss with your community how to set reading goals. Plan regular open meetings to discuss progress.
- Partner with a local school or library to organize reading events, festivals or competitions.

**MESSAGES ADDED/REVISED: PRACTICAL MESSAGES SPECIFIC TO COVID-19 PERIOD  
(AND INCORPORATING OUR MIDTERM LEARNINGS)**

- Parent, you can support your child's learning by knowing the education broadcast schedules and ensuring that your child tunes in every time. Make sure that your child sits in a quiet place without disturbance during lesson time. Where possible, listen to the lesson with your child to be able to support for exercises. When the lesson ends, look for ways to apply what they're learning at home. For example, if the lesson is reviewing concepts of money, talk to your child about the cost of household items and engage them to keep track of spending habits if any.
- Parent, beware that reading is the foundation of all future learning and academic success. If a child is busy in reading, it protects her/him from harmful things. In this period of stay at home, set at least 15 minutes for your child to read every day. If you are not able to read well, encourage your child to talk to you about the pictures as he/she turns pages, read for you, then explain to him/her new words. If you do not have books at home, you can:
- Talk to your child about letters of the alphabet and ask him/her to tell words that contain those letters;
- Ask the child to write and read sentences with new learnt vocabulary words;
- Ask the child to retell a story he/she has read in school or in reading club;
- Ask the child to write his own invented story with illustrations if he/she is able, then read the story to you;



- *If applicable, ask information about digital books that you can help your child read using a smart phone or a computer;*
- *Create letter/syllable cards or short storybooks, helping your child read and write sentences, developing language through storytelling, songs, or teaching them new words;*
- *Parent, beware that helping your child get new knowledge does not stop you to accomplish your other duties. Even when you are busy:*
- *Talk to the child about the work you are doing, ask what you start with, how you proceed until the work is done;*
- *Sing to your child and ask him/ her to tell you the sounds and words he heard from the song;*
- *Tell your child a folktale and discuss with him about the tale;*
- *Ask your child to retell a story he has read;*
- *Use riddles;*
- *Ask the child to name objects in the home or objects you are using, support him/her when necessary;*
- *Ask the child to tell you about what he/ she learnt in the radio lesson;*
- *Children, with or without disability, for rich or poor families, it is your right to be given and demand time for reading at home. Children, you are responsible for taking care of your books, reading is fun! You can experience exciting stories about children like you or learn about far-away places. The more you read, the more you will know. Books make you intelligent and help you learn new things.*

## **ANNEX 2: ANIMATED VIDEOS**

- Supporting children to take care of their books
- Fostering supportive home learning environments Part 1
- Fostering supportive home learning environments animation Part 2