

## Written for Rwandans, by Rwandans

*A national writing competition encourages Rwandans of all ages to write stories and poems for children.*



1 Secondary students support primary students with their writing

The value of reading is clear. Reading is the foundation of learning, in school and beyond, and those who are able to read are more successful financially and otherwise than those who can't.

But in order to learn to read, and to continue to grow as a reader, access to a variety of appropriate, relevant reading materials is required, and in many Rwandan schools, reading materials are lacking.

Theodore Mboneza, an education inspector from the Rwanda Education Board (REB) in the capital Kigali, has seen the challenges in primary classrooms first hand. "There is no culture of reading in our schools," he says. "We need to work on it."

In response, USAID teamed up with REB to hold Andika Rwanda, or Rwanda Writes, Rwanda's first national competition for writing stories and poems for children. All Rwandans, from grade 1 and up, were encouraged to participate. With the amount and quality of stories and poems submitted, Rwandan classrooms will not be lacking in reading materials for long. Participants, who came from each of Rwanda's 30 districts and from more than 600 schools, submitted over 3,300 stories and poems.

There were poems about how beautiful Rwanda is, about love for parents and friends, and the importance of dreaming big and going to school. Stories were set in Rwandan villages and towns. Some had animals found in the forests. Others had princes and queens, village chiefs, and children going to school.

Twelve were selected for professional publication in a combined volume, which will be distributed to primary schools across the country, providing children with interesting, age-appropriate reading materials written specifically for them by their peers and communities.

"It will be a motivation for other children to try their best to do the same," says Mboneza, who sat on the national jury for the final selection. "This is a book written by Rwandans for Rwandans."

The winners will be awarded in September.