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PRESS RELEASE

USAID, REB Expand School Literacy and Numeracy Program Nationwide

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Kigali – Beginning this month, all of the public and government-aided primary schools across the country – more than 2,600 – will receive world-class print and audio materials to support P1 and P2 level English, Kinyarwanda, and mathematics. Developed by the Rwanda Education Board (REB) with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through its Literacy, Language, and Learning (L3) Initiative, the materials aim to support improved quality of primary education in Rwanda. The L3 Initiative is implemented by Education Development Center (EDC).

The L3 initiative will provide detailed teacher guides that illustrate proven strategies for developing children's literacy and numeracy skills. Kinyarwanda teachers will have a collection of illustrated stories to read aloud to children every week, and all children will have their own Kinyarwanda and English materials to read in class and to take home to read with their families. Audio programs for Kinyarwanda, English, and mathematics, which are played in classrooms using simple cell phones and portable speakers, guide teachers and students through interactive, effective lessons using songs, games, chants, and poems. This year, 35,500 teacher guides and story collections, over 12,000 phones and speakers, and 6.3 million student readers will be distributed.

"These materials supplement and enhance the current curriculum to support effective teaching and child-centered learning in primary schools, contributing to quality education in Rwanda," said Dr. Joyce Musabe, head of REB's curriculum department. "All education stakeholders—District and Sector Education Officers, teachers and head teachers, parents and others—should be supportive of this new and exciting shift in Rwandan education."

The materials support the development of key literacy and numeracy skills in a fun and interactive way. Kinyarwanda and English materials emphasize speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, essential in forming the building blocks of early literacy. Audio programs model fluent English speaking as well as effective second language teaching for teachers. In mathematics, materials focus not on memorizing equations and rules, but rather on thinking mathematically and strategically to solve any problem.

"Literacy is the foundation of learning and future prosperity, which is why USAID is investing in the development of quality materials like these, which are not only full of rich content, but include new methods that are exciting for both teachers and students to use," said Peter Malnak,

USAID/Rwanda Mission Director. “We couldn’t be more excited that primary students across the country will now have access to them.”

To ensure that materials respond to the needs of Rwandan children and teachers, materials were piloted in 90 schools in five districts throughout the 2013 academic year. In 2014, those same schools are piloting English, Kinyarwanda, and math materials for P3 level, which will be distributed to primary schools across the country for use in 2015.