

For immediate release

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90 primary schools to receive comprehensive literacy support program

This month, 90 primary schools in five districts across the country will receive a comprehensive literacy support package for primary 1 and 2. The literacy package is one part of the next phase in the rollout of the USAID-funded Literacy, Language, and Learning (L3) Initiative, which partners with the Rwanda Education Board (REB) to enhance teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy.

By engaging students with stories, songs, and games as well as supporting teaching and learning with technology, the program aims to enhance literacy skills both in Kinyarwanda and English.

"Reading is essential for further learning," says Dr. Joyce Musabe, head of REB's curriculum department. "REB and L3 have produced class instructional materials, which are designed to support teachers in effectively building the foundational reading skills that children need."

The literacy support package consists of detailed teachers guides, student reading books, and Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI) programs, which guide teachers and students through fun, engaging lessons using songs, games, and chants.

In addition, the P1 and P2 Kinyarwanda package includes beautifully illustrated storybooks for teachers to read aloud to students each week. Embedded in the stories are the letters, letter-sound combinations, or other language elements that students will study that week.

"Stories are enjoyable for children and get them interested in reading. Reading stories also allows children to encounter new language in a meaningful context," says Dr. Musabe. "This shows children that reading is purposeful."

The program emphasizes awareness of the different sounds in words as well as the ability to match those sounds to letters or groups of letters. After studying one letter-sound combination, teachers may ask students to identify objects or written words containing that sound.

"A child's awareness of the individual sounds in words is a stronger predictor of long-term reading and spelling success than variables such as intelligence, vocabulary knowledge, and socioeconomic status," says Sofia Cozzolino, L3 English materials developer.

To increase the speed at which students can match letters to sounds, lessons begin with various games, such as one called Buzz. When the buzz sounds, the teacher points to a letter, combination of letters, or a commonly-used word written on the board. Students must quickly call out their name or the sound they make.

"This game helps children to speedily recognize letters, letter combinations, and words," says L3 Kinyarwanda materials developer Caroline Dusabe. "Rather than struggling to piece each letter and word together, readers who can quickly recognize letters and words are able to focus on understanding the meaning of what they're reading."

Along with these literacy instructional materials, REB and L3 will also distribute materials for a comprehensive numeracy support program and will train teachers on new instructional techniques and the use of all materials. By 2016, this program will benefit primary grades 1 through 4 in all public primary schools across the country.

Funded by USAID, the L3 program is being implemented by Education Development Center, with assistance from partners including Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), Concern Worldwide, International Education Exchange, and the Peace Corps.

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