

The role of the Literacy, Language and Learning Initiative's (L3) Community Libraries in promoting a culture of reading in Rwandan communities



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**The role of the Literacy, Language and  
Learning Initiative's (L3)  
Community Libraries  
in promoting a culture of reading in  
Rwandan communities**

*By Dieudonne Bugingo & Origene Rutayasire*

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*“Every library is a centre for international understanding.”*

Andre Maurois

## Abstract

The USAID-funded Literacy, Language and Learning Initiative (L3) Community Libraries (CLs) aims to put books in the hands of children, parents and community members. L3, working closely with community partners, establishes libraries across the country in the most rural and lowest-income communities, where there are few opportunities to access rich and enjoyable reading materials. Volunteers, community-based civil society organizations, churches, and other partners mobilize and organize communities to manage and use libraries well. Each library contains Kinyarwanda and English books, at a variety of reading levels and on a variety of topics.

The expected results from each established community library were the following:

- Increased availability and access to quality reading materials in the community.
- Promotion of greater parent/community involvement in students' reading.
- Raised awareness by students, parents and communities in the importance of reading and the enjoyment of reading.

USAID, Rwanda Education Board (REB), and L3 officially launched the CL Initiative in December 2012 at a ceremony at the REB Curriculum Pedagogical Materials Development and Distribution Dept. (CPMD). In 2012 and 2013, Peace Corps volunteers at seven sites piloted the initiative across the country. Informed by this experience, the rollout of the initiative then followed and the initiative was extended to civil society organizations. L3 conducted regular site visits to monitor library implementation and provide support as needed.

This study was carried out by L3 in order to assess, identify and evaluate the role of the CLs in promoting a culture of reading in their communities, after four years of implementation. L3 wanted to investigate and understand local communities' perceptions, beliefs and behaviour concerning the CLs. Did the CLs promote a culture of reading in their communities and, if so, how was this achieved? L3 also wanted to investigate the extent to which the CLs' work achieved the original objectives of its initiative and its expected results?

This paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is a general overview describing the research questions, the site and the setting. The second chapter reviews the current literature on community libraries and literacy in Rwanda. The third chapter details the methodology, including the research design, data analysis procedures, ethics, and limitations of the study. The fourth chapter provides summaries of the themes that emerged from the data analysis. The fifth and last chapter includes a concluding discussion of the findings and recommendations for the future of community libraries in Rwanda.

## Acknowledgement

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Dieudonne Bugingo  
Origene Rutayasire

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## Acronyms

<b>CL Initiative</b>	Community Library Initiative
<b>CPMD</b>	Curricular and Pedagogical Materials Development
<b>DG</b>	Director General
<b>DDG</b>	Deputy Director General
<b>DEO</b>	District Education Officers
<b>EDC</b>	Education Development Center, Inc.
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>L3</b>	Literacy, Language and Learning Initiative
<b>MINEDUC</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MINISPOC</b>	Ministry of Sports and Culture
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NGO</b>	Non Governmental Organization
<b>P1-6</b>	Primary One to Six
<b>PCV</b>	Peace Corps volunteer
<b>PTC</b>	Parent Teacher Committee
<b>REB</b>	Rwanda Education Board
<b>SEO</b>	Sector Education Officers
<b>TAC</b>	Textbook Approval Committee
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development

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## Chapter One: Background

Since 2011, the USAID-funded Literacy, Language and Learning (L3) Initiative's goal has been to assist Rwanda's Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) in the implementation of a comprehensive national early literacy programme. L3's goal is to strengthen teaching and learning in Rwanda so that children will leave primary school with solid literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching a nation to read and write requires a sustainable infrastructure. This infrastructure requires strong school management, leadership and community engagement as well as continuous professional development and appropriate teaching materials for teachers and appropriate reading materials for children.

A growing body of research shows that children need access to books both inside and outside of school to become literate. Empowering children to select their own reading texts and allowing them to exert some control over their environment for independent and cooperative reading activities increases the confidence of students and gives them a sense of reading competence, which, in turn, can positively affect their achievement (Paris, Wasik & Turner, 1996). Children who grow up in a literate home environment are at an advantage when entering school and are more likely to be successful throughout their formal schooling than their peers from non- or semi-literate home environments (Stiftung Lesen, 2004). And finally, the amount of time spent reading and the amount read are important. A student who reads for 21 minutes per day outside of school will read almost 2 million words per year, whereas a student who reads for less than a minute per day outside of school, will read only 8,000 to 21,000 words per year. Children become fluent readers when they have the opportunities to practice reading. Without appropriate access to books, children can be taught to read, but will not develop the habit of reading (Holdaway, 1979). Children who grow up in a literate home environment are at an advantage when entering school and are more likely to be successful throughout formal schooling than their peers from non- or semi-literate home environments (Stiftung Lesen, 2004: 30). Parents have to be encouraged to read to their children as part of their everyday life. Furthermore, parents have to be a good example by being active readers themselves.

The Government of Rwanda (GOR) acknowledges that achieving Rwanda's social and economic development goals is largely dependent upon its most valuable resource – its people. A culture of reading can play a significant role in achieving the government's objectives set out in Vision 2020 by empowering the citizens of Rwanda to independently seek and access print materials. Therefore, providing quality education to all is a key priority, and literacy is regarded as a key factor that will facilitate the development of Rwanda's human resources and the transition to a knowledge-based economy. The government has identified improved quality and learning outcomes across primary and secondary education as a national goal. In an effort to develop and foster a culture of reading among children and adults throughout Rwanda, MINEDUC through the Rwanda Education Board (REB) and in cooperation with a number of development partners (DPs) launched the four-year Rwanda Reads initiative in July 2012.

At the same time, L3, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and REB, initiated the establishment of Community Libraries (CLs) across Rwanda. The Community Libraries (CLs) initiatives aimed to provide interesting reading materials for all interests and for all ages, providing the resources to support a culture of reading in the home and community. The CLs initiative plays a key role in creating a literate environment and promoting literacy among community members, not just for children but for all ages and all literacy levels. L3 worked closely with community partners, volunteers, civil society organisations and churches to establish 85 CLs in rural and low-income communities, enabling community members to access rich and enjoyable reading materials. The expected results from each established community library were the following:

- Increased availability and access to quality reading materials in the community.
- Promotion of greater parent/community involvement in students' reading.
- Raised awareness by students, parents and communities in the importance of reading and the enjoyment of reading.

Each CL contained approximately 1,200 Kinyarwanda and English books, at a variety of reading levels and on a variety of topics. The library collection included anthologies, traditional Rwandan stories, picture books and simple illustrated storybooks as well as short novels for secondary students and adults. Titles were critically reviewed before inclusion in the libraries to ensure REB approved them for use in schools and also to check that they were in line with Rwandan culture, values and interests.

Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) played a crucial role in the establishment of CLs in Rwanda, through the initial pilot, the volunteers helped with:

- Garnering community support for the initiative
- Identifying community structures best placed and willing to take on the task of managing the library
- Helping to design a sustainable, low cost systems for managing the library, including keeping track of where the books are and who has signed them out
- Putting in place a system for transporting the mobile library from the community to community
- Putting in place training activities on how to care for books in all targeted communities
- Putting in place activities in all targeted communities to promote the use of the library and encourage reading

Through regular meetings with the L3 Parent and Equity Task Leader, PCVs were able to share and identify best practices, challenges and lessons learned. L3's Parent and Equity Task Leader worked closely with the communities to ensure that the communities had the knowledge, skills and attitudes to host a library in their community. The L3 Parent and Equity Task Leader, Monitoring and Evaluating Department and Programme Implementation Team conducted regular visits to the CLs to report on progress and challenges experienced by the CLs. USAID, REB and L3 officially launched the CL initiative in December 2012 at a special ceremony held at the grounds of the REB Curriculum Pedagogical Materials Development (CPMD) department.

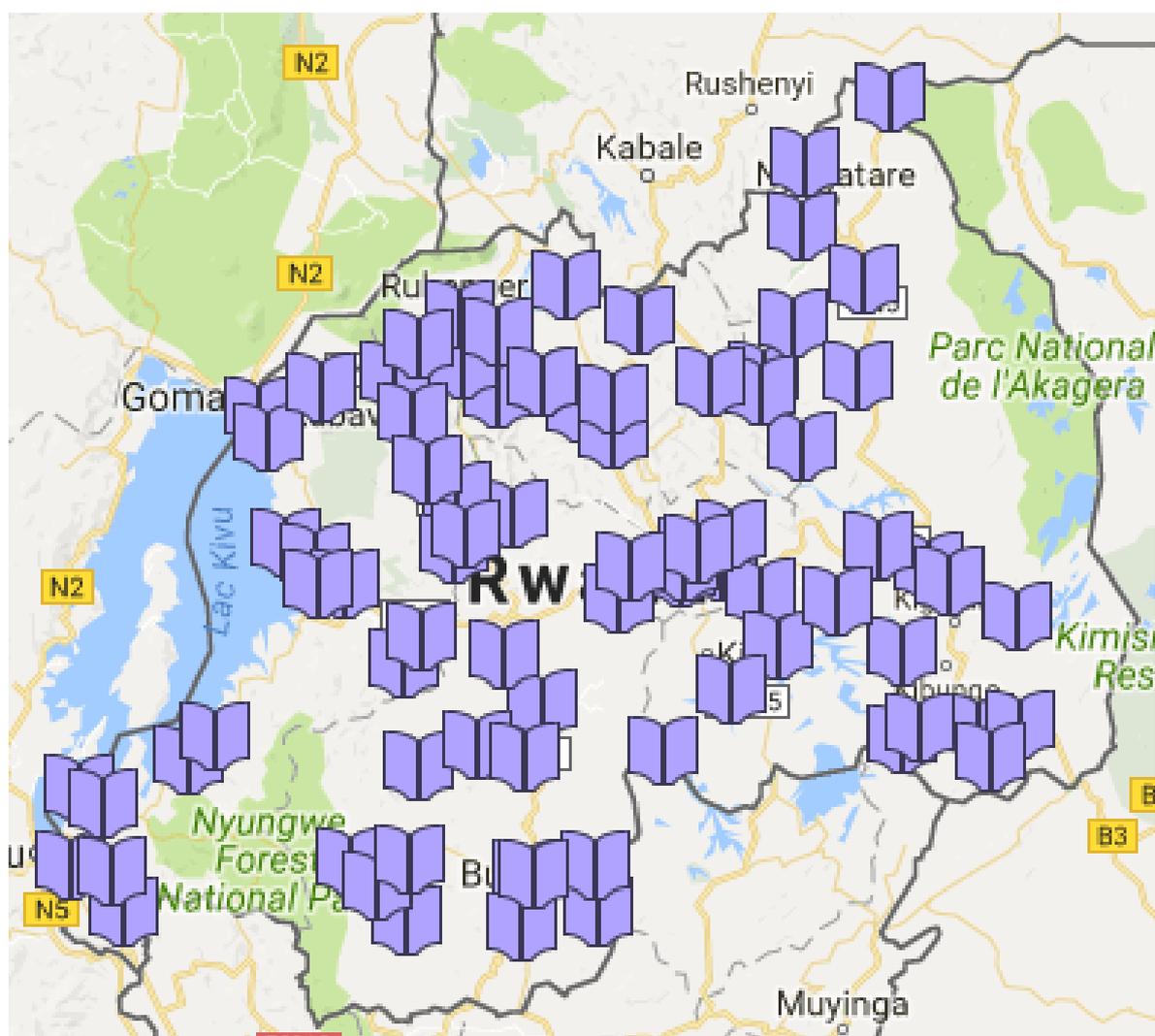
## 85 Community mobile libraries books 'distribution

#	District	Sector	Village	CML BOOKS		Andika Rwanda books
				Kinyarwanda	English	
1	BUGESERA	JURU		146	1066	
2	BUGESERA	RUHUHA	RUHUHA	144	831	
3	BURERA	GATEBE	MUSENDA	118	835	
4	BURERA	RWERERE	GACUNDURA	171	875	
5	GAKENKE	GAKENKE	RUSAGARA	132	870	
6	GAKENKE	JANJA	GATWA	178	873	
7	GASABO	KINYINYA	KAGUGU	175	853	
8	GATSIBO	GATSIBO	MUGERA	166	840	
9	GATSIBO	GATSIBO	NYAGAHANGA	217	856	
10	GATSIBO	KABARORE	KARENGE	132	885	
11	GATSIBO	KABARORE	SIMBWA	144	846	
12	GATSIBO	KAGEYO	BUSETSA	0	234	0
13	GATSIBO	MUHURA	TABA	115	869	
14	GICUMBI	CYURU		54	1036	
15	GISAGARA	GIKONKO	GIKONKO	168	833	
16	GISAGARA	MAMBA	MUYAGA	192	843	
17	GISAGARA	MAMBA		104	986	
18	GISAGARA CML			986	104	
19	HUYE	NGOMA	BUTARE	173	849	
20	HUYE	NGOMA	KABUTARE	140	856	
21	KAMONYI	GACURABWEMGE	KIGEMBE	185	845	
22	KARONGI	GASHALI	TONGATI	155	859	
23	KARONGI	MURUNDI	KAREBA	150	766	
24	KAYONZA	KABARE	RUBIMBA	124	847	
25	KAYONZA	KABARE	RUBUMBA	141	856	0
26	KAYONZA	KABARONDO	CYABAJWA	142	810	
27	KAYONZA	RURAMIRA	UMUBUGA	111	0	
28	KICUKIRO	KANOMBE	KABEZA	204	854	
29	KICUKIRO	MASAKA	CYIMO	182	833	
30	KIREHE	KIGINA	RUHANGA	182	856	
31	KIREHE	KIREHE	GAHAMA	170	858	
32	KIREHE	MUSAZA	MUSAZA	221	911	20
33	KIREHE	NASHO	RUGOMA	183	870	
34	MUHANGA	KIBANGU		107	769	
35	MUSANZE	BUSOGO	GISESERO	170	870	
36	MUSANZE	MUHOZA	KIGOMBE	183	853	
37	MUSANZE	RWAZA	KABUSHINGE	185	862	
38	NYAGATARE	KABARORE	MATIMBA	173	859	

#	District	Sector	CML BOOKS		Andika Rwanda books	
			Village	Kinyarwanda		English
39	NGOMA	JARAMA	HANIKA	150	0	0
40	NGOMA	JARAMA		159	1028	
41	NGOMA	KAREMBO		115	1034	
42	NGOMA	MUTENDERI		48	913	
43	NGOMA CML			913	48	
44	NGORORERO	MUHORORO	MYIHA	174	870	
45	NGORORERO	NGORORERO	RUSUSA	870	170	
46	NGORORERO	MATYAZO		125	859	
47	NGORORERO CML			144	37	
48	NYABIHU	MUKAMIRA	TABA	172	854	
49	NYABIHU	RAMBURA	NYUNDO	181	862	
50	NYABIHU	SHYIRA	KANYAMITANA	108	784	
51	NYAGATARE	KARANGAZI	KIZIRAKOME	180	877	
52	NYAGATARE	MATIMBA	MATIMBA	170	856	
53	NYAGATARE	RWEMPASHYA		123	917	
54	NYAGATARE	RUKOMO		123	884	
55	NYAMAGABE	UWINKINGI	KIBYAGIRA	150	1033	20
56	NYAMAGABE	KITABI		135	1052	
57	NYAMAGABE	TARE		115	786	
58	NYAMASHEKE	KANJONGO	KIBOGORA	12	66	
59	NYAMASHEKE	KIBOGORA	KIBOGORA	146	845	
60	NYAMASHEKE	KANJONGO		108	783	
61	NYANZA	CYABAKAMYI	KARAMA	163	853	
62	NYANZA	KIGOMA	GASORO	171	864	
63	NYARUGENGE	MUHIMA	RUGENGE	137	856	
64	NYARUGENGE	NYAMIRAMBO	MUMENA	120	828	
65	NYARUGURU	KIBEHO	MPANDA	116	977	20
66	NYARUGURU	KIBEHO	NYUNDO	149	850	
67	RUBAVU	GISENYI	AMAHORO	118	792	
68	RUBAVU	KANZENZE	KANYIRABIGOGO	189	812	0
69	RUBAVU	NYAMYUMBA	RUBONA	170	881	
70	RUHANGO	BYIMANA	MPANDA	173	857	
71	RUHANGO	RUHANGO	NYAMAGANA	200	879	
72	RULINDO	BASE	RWAMAHWA	148	892	
73	RULINDO	BUREGA	TABA	140	836	
74	RULINDO	BUSHOKI	GASIZA	170	870	
75	RULINDO	BUSHOKI	NYIRANGARAMA	170	850	
76	RUSIZI	GASHONGA		114	781	
77	RUSIZI	GIHUNDWE	BURUNGA	176	855	

#	District	Sector	Village	CML BOOKS		Andika Rwanda books
				Kinyarwanda	English	
78	RUSIZI	KAMEMBE	RUGANDA	170	860	
79	RUSIZI	MUGANZA	SHARA	170	843	
80	RUSIZI	NKOMBO	ISHWA	188	871	
81	RUTSIRO	BONEZA	REMERA	170	870	
82	RUTSIRO	MUSHUBATI	BUMBA	183	870	
83	RUTSIRO	MUSHUBATI	CYARUSERA	170	870	
84	RUTSIRO	MUSHUBATI	SURE	162	826	
85	RWAMAGANA	MUNYAGA	RWERU	192	831	
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>15,073</b>	<b>67,550</b>	<b>60</b>
						<b>82,683</b>

Illustration 1: Distribution of 85 CLs across Rwanda



## Rationale for the research

This research was carried out by L3 in order to assess, identify and evaluate the role of the CLs in promoting a culture of reading in their communities. After four years of implementation of the CLs initiative, the researchers wanted to investigate and understand local communities' perceptions, beliefs

and practices towards the CLs. Did the CLs promote a culture of reading in their communities and if so how was this achieved? The researchers also wanted to investigate the extent that the CLs contributed to the original objectives of the CLs initiative and its originally forecast expected results? This was important as understanding the community specific benefits of the CLs in the context of Rwandan communities could help inform education stakeholders on how to sustain the best practices and results achieved through the CLs initiative. The results of the study could furthermore serve as a reference for shaping future programming related to strengthening the culture of reading through community literacy initiatives.

## Central research questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

- Do community libraries promote a culture of reading in their communities?
- Who attends community libraries and why?
- Do local communities have reading preferences and if so what are they?

## General and embedded questions

While considering the central questions above, the researchers also pondered a number of sub-questions, such as:

- How do local communities run their community libraries?
- What challenges are affecting the community libraries?
- What opportunities are there to sustain community libraries in the future?

# Chapter Two: Literature Review

## Introduction

The aim of the literature review was to analyse critically the published sources, i.e. the literature, on community libraries (CLs) in Africa. Prior to developing the research questions, the researchers conducted a review of the available literature in order to gain a thorough understanding of the history and experiences of past and existing CLs, to identify similar work done within the area and to identify knowledge gaps that might demand further investigation. A body of research exists (Rosenberg, 1993; Mostert, 1998; Alemna, 1995; Stilwell, 1989) examining the history, workings and importance of CLs. The following review provides an overview of the research. This chapter, discusses the role of libraries in the creation of a literate environment. Definitions of libraries are provided and the key characteristics of CLs are discussed. The chapter also describes how CLs are implemented in various countries and communities, including in Rwanda. The role of the library staff is also analysed. A conclusions section summarizes the main findings of the literature review.

## The role of libraries in the creation of literate environments

The existence of libraries can be traced back thousands of years. Libraries are traditionally seen as places set apart for books and other material for reading, viewing, listening, study or reference, as a room, set of rooms or as a building, where books may be read or borrowed. Modern libraries are constantly evolving to provide more services than just a place to read or borrow books. According to Krolak (2005): “Modern libraries are unfolding the community’s learning potential by providing information on community issues, such as health, employment, continuing education and local history.” The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto of 1949, revised in 1972 and 1994, states: “The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.” (UNESCO, 1994). The Manifesto embodies UNESCO’s belief in the public library “as a living force for education, culture and information, as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women” (UNESCO, 1994). The Manifesto maintains that library services are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Krolak (2005) opines that equitable access to information is essential to enable educated and informed citizens to participate in a democratic global community. UNESCO encourages national and local governments to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries to inspire lifelong learning and to enrich the entire community. The term ‘community library’ differs from one author to another according to Dent and Yannotta (2005). Epsen (2009) citing Mostert (1998) identifies and lists the criteria for CLs, stating that the library should:

“Be established at the request of the community, fully co-operate with it and be included in participative management. It should provide information linked to the everyday lives of the community members, and staff that are known to and trusted by the community should provide face-to-face contact to solve the user’s problem.”

## Community libraries in Africa

Community libraries can be static or mobile – travelling from one place to another. Mobile libraries have operated on the African continent since the 1940s and now operate in at least 15 countries, Epsen (2009) citing Ward (1996). Mobile libraries provide library services to villages and city suburbs that lack the funds or spaces to build a permanent library and therefore do not usually have access to books. A few examples of mobile CLs include: Camel library service in Kenya, Donkey drawn mobile library in Zimbabwe, Kudopusta horse library in Indonesia, and Elephant libraries in Thailand. The success of CLs, mobile or otherwise, in Africa is varied. Often these libraries were set up under unfavourable conditions, explains Rosenberg, (1993) as quoted by (Mostert, 2001):

“Originating from the initiative of a group from the community or an aid agency, their birth is followed by a year or two of rapid growth and a good deal of local publicity and attention. This is followed by a period of slow decline, accompanied by theft, the departure of the initiators, loss of interest among staff and users – the library still exists but signs of life are barely discernible. Sometimes this period continues indefinitely, but often a final stage is reached when all remaining books are removed, stolen, or damaged beyond repair and the premises and staff are allocated to another activity.”

The decline of CLs can be linked to a number of reasons (Krolak, 2005). These include lack of funds, lack of professional staff, irrelevant material, a colonial mode of librarianship, lack of appropriate training opportunities, lack of needs analysis, ICT challenges, inappropriate buildings and the lack of cooperation or a national information policy. It is not unusual, according to Krolak (2005), to find “rows of outdated textbooks on American or British politics or history, and books in foreign, often former colonial languages in local public libraries, or highly scientific books in a primary school library. Apart from the fact that many such books are culturally irrelevant, their use poses the danger of fostering a euro-centric bias.” As mentioned above, Krolak purports that a colonial model of librarianship (Anglo–American model) is often used but that using such a model in Africa is ill advised: “Many librarians are trained in the Anglo–American tradition and many donor agencies and expatriates are using this model, which is mainly based on the model of a European or North American literate society. But alternative and locally appropriate models are emerging and should be supported.” Mostert (2001) maintains that before establishing a service it is crucial to carry out a needs analysis in order to ensure the library is set up in such a way that is tailored to the community’s needs. In addition to a needs analysis, continuing monitoring and evaluation with active community participation is also crucial to ensure that the library services remain relevant.

Kempson (1986) lists three guidelines that should be considered when establishing a community library:

1. Community information services should not solely be based on the provision of printed materials, as many rural users are not used to utilising printed materials, because so little of such material exists in the community.
2. Community information services of any type should be rooted in the community and, for the most part, facilitated by members of that community.
3. The services should be a channel for transferring information both to and from the local community.

Kempson argues that community library services should not be imposed from outside the community. Neither should they be based solely on the Western concept of a library (Mostert, 1998). Libraries established using this concept are geared towards a literate middle class and exclude the newly literate and those who cannot read or write. Many libraries have been established without first conducting a professional needs analysis of the community, resulting in an information service based upon assumptions and not on actual needs (Mostert, 1998). These libraries often isolate themselves from the general public.

## Rwanda context for the study

Rwanda has a total population of more than 11 million people. The fourth Population and Housing Census in Rwanda (EICV 4) conducted in August 2012 (shows that 68% of the Rwandan population aged 15 years and above were literate, while this figure was 64.4% in 2002. However, there remains a gender disparity, with the female adult literacy rate being 64.7% (according to EICV 4 compared to the male adult literacy rate of 75.7%). The census shows geographic disparities, with much higher literacy rates being found in Kigali city (86.7%), while the Southern Province has the lowest literacy rates (65.7%). The Government of Rwanda and its development partners are actively engaged in promoting the development of a reading culture to increase literacy among the Rwandan population in general. In an effort to develop and foster a culture of reading among children and adults throughout Rwanda, the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) through the Rwanda Education Board (REB) and in cooperation with the development partners (DPs) launched the four-year Rwanda Reads initiative in July 2012. The Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) II, Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) and 7-Year Government Programme emphasise Rwanda's ambition to become a knowledge-based and technology-led economy. Public Libraries are intended to play a key role in promoting a knowledge-based society as mentioned in EDPRS.

The Rwanda Library Services (RLS) operates under the Ministry of Sports and Culture (MINISPOC). RLS is responsible for ensuring that library policies and programmes are implemented as well as for advocating for establishment of other public and CLs across the country. A policy document titled *Policy Regarding Libraries in Rwanda* has been developed by MINISPOC (2012). This policy document aims to lay down mechanisms and an appropriate framework for gathering all the published documents and promoting a culture of reading. According to the policy:

“Public Libraries are institutions open to the general public providing a lending service, created either by a public institution or a private institution or individual, with the purpose of providing access to information with no restriction whatsoever on the management and use of that information... Collections in public libraries do not refer only to information related to the national environment as national libraries do, but to information in general ranging from academics, politics, economics, sports, culture, social welfare to leisure.”

Rwanda's first public library officially opened on 21 June, 2012, by the First Lady of the Republic of Rwanda, H.E. Jeannette Kagame, whose opening address reinforced the Government of Rwanda's

commitment to building a culture of reading: “I believe that this is the first of many libraries which will be built in this country, creating a safe and creative space upon which we can build a culture of reading among Rwandans – young and old.”

Furthermore, in the words of Rwanda’s First Lady: “The public library is available to all, regardless of age, skill level or ability to pay. According to policy regarding libraries in Rwanda, the mission of a public library is to provide easy access to information through facilitating and promoting public reading and providing a basis for the local book industry to expand.”

### L3 Community Library Initiative

The L3 Community Library (CL) initiative aims to put books in the hands of children, parents and community members. L3, working closely with community partners, has established libraries across the country in the most rural and low-income communities, where there is little opportunity to otherwise access rich and enjoyable reading materials. Volunteers, community-based civil society organisations, churches and other partners have mobilised and organised communities to help the communities use the libraries well. Each library contains both Kinyarwanda and English books, at a variety of reading levels and on a variety of topics.

### Building a culture of reading in Rwanda

In 2012, approximately at the same time the first L3 Community Libraries were launched, Pierre Canisius Ruterana published a thesis on *Developing a Culture of Reading in Rwanda* (Ruterana, 2012). Ruterana investigated the status of the reading culture, family literacy practices, print literacy and oral literacy in Rwanda. Four themes that inhibit the creation of a culture of reading emerged from his research:

- Lack of a reading culture,
- Insufficient reading materials and resources to acquire them,
- An education system that did not instill into students the love and habit of reading throughout their schooling, and
- The predominance of an oral tradition in most families over a reading and writing tradition.

Ruterana (2012) maintained “The promotion of a reading culture goes hand in hand with access to books and other reading materials”. According to his thesis, public libraries are vital and constitute important cultural tools to germinate the seed for reading. “The success of the reading culture will depend on assistance given to Rwandan readers through reading campaigns and the promotion of books, and [the] establishment of libraries in the vicinity of the population.” He suggests that it has a potential to sensitise parents and all literacy development stakeholders, and raise their awareness on the importance of home literacy practices in children’s early lives and success in education.

## The role of the librarian and library staff

The library staff are as important as books in a library to attract users as well as to make the library helpful and useful to its patrons. According to Smith (2011), library staff have a number of roles and responsibilities, including:

- Interacting with library users,
- Helping people find information,
- Helping people with research,
- Supporting people to use the technology within the library,
- Organising and running events and activities,
- Working with schools and organisations,
- Managing the library,
- Managing the library's resources,
- Taking care of other council services provided through libraries.

Chapman (2010) emphasised how librarians put a great deal of time and effort into learning how best to provide and facilitate access to information, knowledge, literature, culture and learning of all kinds. The librarian and the library staff are key to ensuring a useful interaction with users that helps to firmly connect the library to the community.

## Conclusions

This review of the literature underlines the importance of CLs in education and information. It outlined the potential of CLs, when used efficiently and effectively, as a community learning and information resource. Research shows that CLs contribute to individual and community development, including specifically the socially disadvantaged and marginalised members of the community. Commentators stress the efficacy of CLs to reach out to address and fill communities' information needs. They conclude that a needs assessment should be carried out prior to the establishment of a library, as this is critical to ensure the success of the library. As noted, there is no one solution to the problem of providing library services to small isolated communities. Mobile libraries work well in some situations but they are no longer the only option to be considered. Library managers need to assess the needs and the best possibilities for their own particular communities. The main findings of the literature review show that there is still a lot to do to ensure that the CLs play their full role in the communities and that community members receive the full benefits from them.

# Chapter Three: Methodology

## Introduction

This chapter describes, justifies and elaborates on the research methods and methodology used during this study.

## Research design

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of L3 Community Libraries (CLs) in promoting a reading culture in their respective communities. The study aimed to collect community members' opinions and experiences of the L3 CLs, to identify who was accessing the libraries and why and to discuss the local communities reading preferences. In order to ascertain how the CLs were run, the management structure of the CLs was also examined. Library managers were invited to share their views and experiences of the challenges and opportunities of managing CLs.

This study subscribed to a qualitative design with exploratory inquiry. The overall aim of the qualitative research was to understand a certain societal behaviour, to explain its *raison d'être* and to provide answers to any related concerns.

## Site and setting

The research was conducted in 30 L3 CLs (one per district). Each library had been operational for over 1 year and had received the L3 Community Library package. In total, 30 focus group discussions were held in July 2016, involving 244 participants (112 female and 132 male between 14 years to 65 years.) During the study, it was found that the majority of the libraries were managed by faith-based organizations, followed by local leaderships, while a few libraries were managed by a faith-based organisation or civil society in partnership with the local leadership. The graph below portrays the details on how the thirty community libraries are managed.

Graph 1: Management of sampled community libraries (n=30)

## Research instruments

The research instruments included a semi-structured interview protocol conducted through focus group discussions and an observation checklist. Focus groups discussions were organised as they permitted the spontaneity of interaction among participants. Participants included sector officials, Community Library managers and community members. The researchers facilitated the focus group discussions. The interaction between the facilitator and participants allowed for probing the issues in depth and enabled the group to address issues as they arose, and the opportunity for participants to elaborate on their responses when more information or clarification was required.

The interview questions reflected the research questions and were framed around community reading practices, the level of awareness among the community about the library, and the challenges and

opportunities faced by the CLs.

An observation checklist was designed to be completed during the researcher's visit to the community library. This was used to collect data on observable features of the CLs; for example, the management of reading materials, the library infrastructure and the lending and attendance records.

## Data analysis and triangulation

The process of data analysis involved examining the library records, reading and reflecting through field notes and observing the CLs. The research team employed thematic analysis strategies. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within the data. This includes identifying participants' responses that were linked by a common theme or idea. During the analysis, a coding framework was devised. This coding framework assisted the researchers to examine the participants' responses, checking for corroboration of themes and information that would support their findings. Herein, the findings are structured in terms of the main themes that emerged from the analysis process. This method is referred to as 'triangulation'. Triangulation is an approach that is highly recommended for qualitative research. Triangulation involves collecting data in many ways rather than relying solely on one approach. It is based on the notion that good research should not rely on any single source of data, interview or observation.

## Research ethics

At the start of each focus group discussion, the purpose and the nature of the research were explained. Participants were assured of the absolute confidentiality of their responses and their own anonymity. In addition, they were asked for their consent to participate and were informed of their right to withdraw from the discussion at any time or to refuse to answer any question if they wished, as their participation was entirely voluntary.

## Potential limitations of the study

The researchers are aware that this research concerns 30 unique CLs, and as such, the findings from the research do not necessarily mean that similar findings would occur in every library in every community across Rwanda. Other factors may also impact the success of the study; these include the researchers' interest in the study, and the participant's desire to please the researchers.

## Conclusions

This chapter outlined a description of the research sites and settings, the participants and the data sources. It provided a description of the qualitative research, identified the sources of potential data and summarised the method of triangulation that was used. Potential limitations of the study were identified.

# Chapter Four: Summary of the Findings

## Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the research. Throughout this section, the findings are illuminated with the inclusion of quotes from the participants. These quotes are in italics; note, they are translated into English, but the original quote in Kinyarwanda is also presented.

The findings are summarised as per the themes related to the research questions, namely:

- Communities' attitudes to reading.
- Access to reading materials and reading preferences.
- Impact of the community library in their communities.
- Innovation and adaptation of community libraries.
- Challenges and opportunities for the community libraries.

## Communities' Attitudes to Reading

In every focus group discussion, participants unanimously agreed that their community regarded the ability to read with high value and that it was important for community development. In most of the discussions held, participants noted that the community library was a community asset, one which could be used by all categories of people as the only means of accessing reading materials, and thus allowing them to engage in reading for both recreational and academic use.

*"People in this community know the value of reading because they see it as a pillar of development; even a parent who does not know how to read wants his children to be able to read."* Participant in the focus group discussion at Mushubati Community Library.

*(Abantu b'ino bazi agaciro ko gusoma kandi babona ko ari inkingi y'iterambere ryabo. N'umubyeyi utabizi aba yifuza ko abana be babimenya.)*

*"The residents of this community are aware that being able to read is important in their life, even though they do not usually have time to practice reading because they are so busy in their daily life or lack the materials to read."* Participant in the focus group discussion at Rwaza Community Library.

*(Abatuye muri aka gace bazi ko kumenya gusoma bifite akamaro gakomeye mu buzima bwabo n'ubwo bwose baba batabyitabira bitewe n'uko baba bahugiye mu mirimo yabo ya buri muni cyangwa se ntibabone ibyo basoma.)*

*"This library is an asset to us. It was established to support schools in this community. It can be used by various categories of community members: children, youth and adults."* Participant in the focus group discussion at Mwange Community Library.

*(Iri somero ni umutungo twabonye ryaje ryunganira amashuri kandi akarusho ni uko rikoresha n'ibyiciro byose by'abatwaga: abana, urubyiruko ndetse n'abakuze.)*

*"This library was a response to the lack of reading materials and is suitable for use by all categories of community members. Adults now have access to reading materials that they could not afford otherwise, while for children, the library supplements what they learn at school."* Participant in the focus group discussion at Nasho Community Library.

*(Iri somero ryaje ari igisubizo kuko rikoresha n'ibyiciro by'abatwaga, abakuze babashije*

*kubona ibyo basoma kuko ntabyabonekaga aha, naho abana ribunganira mu kwiga neza ibyo bahabwa ku ishuri.)*

Some participants noted that the community library had brought community members together with the common purpose of improving the reading culture in their community. Participants acknowledged that the success of their community library depended on a cross-sector partnership between community members, civil society, local leadership and schools.

*“This library awakened the sense of partnership and the need to jointly invest our efforts in promoting the culture of reading in our community. To be successful, we see that there is a need for a partnership between the schools, parents, civil society and local leadership at the sector, cell and village levels.”* Focus group discussion at Gashali Karongi Community Library.

*(Iri somero ryatubukijemo ingamba zo kwerekana ko tugomba gufatanya mu guteza imbere umuco wo gusoma mu baturage. Aha tubona ko hagomba ubufatanye bw’inzego zitandukanye: ababyeyi, amashuri, imiryango yigenga ndetse n’ubuyobozi kuva ku Murenge, ku Kagali kugera ku Mudugudu.)*

*“Since the establishment of this community library, the sector leadership felt the need to partner with other stakeholders to promote a culture of reading in our community.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Nasho Community Library.

*(Kuva iri somero ryashingwa, nk’ubuyobozi, twasanze ari ngombwa ko haba ubufatanye mu kuribyaza umusaruro himakazwa umuco wo gusoma mu baturage.)*

Participants in all 30 focus group discussions unanimously acknowledged that reading is valued in the community and is seen as a vital pillar for community development, but they also confirmed that reading is usually not a priority for the majority of families, especially for adults who have to earn their living.

*“Really, people in this community know the value of reading, they believe that reading is important for their development, but the problem is that reading is not seen as a priority as they have other assignments in their life; this hampers the effectiveness of this community library.”* Participant at the focus group discussion at Mpanda Community Library.

*(Rwose abaturage b’ino bazi akamaro ko gusoma kandi bazi ko ari ingenzi mu iterambere. Cyakora ntibihabwa agaciro kuko usanga abantu hari izindi nshingano abantu bitaho bityo ntibabibonere umwanya. Ibi na byo bibangamira imikorere myiza y’iri somero.)*

## Access to Reading Materials and Reading Preferences

Access to reading materials varied from library to library. The researchers observed that the location, size and infrastructure of the library as well as the existence of a management system played important roles in the availability and access to reading materials in the community. Of the 30 libraries visited, 24 libraries had mechanisms in place to record the reading materials borrowed. Similarly, the same libraries had in place a management committee responsible for the planning and implementation of library activities. The management committee in most cases were composed of local teachers, faith-based organisations’ representatives and local leaders. Of those 24 libraries, 19 were also recording the sex of the borrowers and their estimated age. The majority of the libraries visited also allowed community members to borrow books to read at home. Sixteen libraries were even able to offer community members a place to read books at the library.

Reading preferences varied across the sample, but some common themes did emerge. Overall, the

participants perceived a change in the reading habits of the community after the establishment of the library in their community. Participants observed an increase in the number of children who came to read at the libraries or to borrow the reading materials to read at home; they also observed an increase in adults and young people expressing an interest in reading.

*“We have a variety of reading materials, including Kinyarwanda and English reading collections, although the majority of the materials are in English. Most of the people who use the community library are young people because they are the ones who are most interested in reading and, secondly, they are the ones who like to try to read English material. For adult people, when they look for reading material other than in Kinyarwanda, they tend to look for French materials or other reading materials that relate to their routine activities.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Masaka Community Library.

*(Dufite ibitabo binyuranye haba iby’Ikinyarwanda ndetse n’ icyongereza ari na byo byinshi. Usanga ababikoresha cyane ari urubyiruko kubera ko usanga ari bo bafite inyota yo gusoma byo kwishimisha. Indi mpamvu usanga akenshi uru byiruko aribo bagerageza gusoma icyongereza. Abakuru bo, ku ndimi z’amahanga usanga baza bashaka ibitabo byandise mu gifaransa cyangwa se akenshi ibitabo bibigisha ibigendanye n’imirimo yabo ya buri muni.)*

*“This library is mainly used by students attending schools in this sector, while the out-of-school youth are mainly interested in visiting this library to learn traffic codes or for handcraft reading materials.”* Participant at the focus group discussion at Mwange Community Library.

*(Isomero ryacu, akenshi usanga ryitabirwa n’urubyiruko rw’abanyeshuri ari muri uyu murenge, urubyiruko rutiga rwo akenshi usanga baba bafite inyota yo gusoma ibitabo byigisha amategeko y’umuganda. Abakuru bo bagaragaza inyota yo gusoma ibitabo byigisha ibigendanye n’ibyigisha iby’imibereho yo mu buzima busanzwe.)*

*“Usually people in this community like to read religious materials, and I realised that we used to sell at least 150 booklets a week; people are still coming in to buy books, but in addition, as they become aware of the availability of materials in the community library, they have started to come to borrow books to read; they are generally interested in reading.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Rwaza Community Library.

*(Ubundi akenshi, abantu b’ino cyane abakuru, bo basomaga ibitabo ahanini bigendanye n’inyigisho za kiriziya. Akenshi nabashaga kugurisha udutabo hafi 150 mu cyumweru. Abantu baracyakomeza kugura ariko noneho kubera ko bazi ko na bino bihari na byo baza kubitira, ukabona bagaragaza iyo nyota yo gusoma.)*

*“There has been a positive change in how people visit this library for reading purposes. First off, we see people who devote their time and come to read. Children come to read here or to borrow a book to take home. Adult people, in most cases, borrow a book and they take it home for a limited time. They borrow a book, and once they have finished reading it, they come to borrow a second one. On a daily basis, we have at least 60 people visiting the library.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Kanjongo Community Library.

*(Hari impinduka zigaragara ku bantu bagana iri somero. Icyamba abantu bakoresha umwanya bawo bakaza bagatira udutabo, abana bo bagasomera hano, abakuru bo bakabicyura kubera umwanya, kubera ibitabo bimwe na bimwe biba bishimishije. Usanga baza bakabitwara bakagenda bagasoma cyarangira bakakigarura bagatira ikindi. Nko ku muni twakira byibura abantu mirongo itandatu.)*

*“People come for service at Parish, but when they are waiting, they go to the library to borrow books to read; it has become a trend to look for a book to read instead of sitting doing nothing.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Mwange Community Library.

*(Abantu baraza, mu gihe bategereje guhabwa service zabazanye, bakajya gutira ibitabo bakaba basoma. Bimaze kuba umuco ko aho kugira ngo abe yicaye ntacyo akora, ajya mu isomero*

*gutira igitabo agasoma.)*

*“This library boosted the reading culture among students attending schools in this community, especially students in P4, P5, P6 and students in secondary schools, who, in most cases, lack reading materials and so are interested to come here to borrow books to read. We also take other reading materials to EFA Nyagahanga, where those materials are mainly used.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Nyagahanga Community Library.

*(Iri somero ryazamuye inyota yo gusoma mu rubyiruko rwo mu mashuri aturanye na ryo. Baba abana bo mu mashuri abanza cyane cyane abo mu myaka yo mu wa gatanu, mu wa kane ndetse no mu wa gatandatu akenshi ubona badafite ibitabo bihagije byo gusoma, barabikoresha cyane. Ibindi byo, tubijyana muri Secondaire ya EFA Nyagahanga aho usanga abana babisoma cyane.)*

*“There is an increased culture of reading in this community, not only students but also adults come to read or borrow books to read at home.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Nasho Community Library.

*(Ubona hari inyota yo gusoma mu batuye hafi aha, usibye n’abana ujya kubona ukabona abantu bakuru baje gusoma cyangwa se gutira ibitabo byo gusoma.)*

## Impact of the community library in their communities

At all 30 CLs, participants recognised various results stemming from the establishment of L3 CLs in their communities. As discussed above, all the focus group discussions ascertained that the CLs boosted the availability of reading materials in the community, which had previously usually faced a dearth of reading materials.

*“Though there is now a good school programme of giving reading materials to students, the reading materials are usually only given to students in low grades, so this library boosted the availability of reading materials for students in the higher classes and for people out of schools.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Ruramira Community Library.

*(N’ubwo bwose ku mashuri hari gahunda nziza yo guha abana ibitabo, bigarukira mu myaka yo hasi gusa. Iri somero ryongereye ibitabo aho dutuye, amahirwe yo kubona ibyo gusoma ariyongera ku banyeshuri biga mu myaka yo hejuru ndetse no ku bandi batiga.)*

*“We acknowledge that this library allowed people in this community to have access to reading materials, thus they learn new things.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Gikonko Community Library.

*(Twe tubona iri somero rifasha abaturiye hano kubona ibyo basoma bityo bakarushaho kwihugura.)*

*“Students in primary and secondary schools and even students from higher learning institutions living in this sector use this library as it contains reading materials not found or that are in short supply in our schools. The library has become a response to the shortage of reading materials in our sector.”* Participant attending the focus group discussion at Kanjongo Community Library.

*(Abanyeshuri bo mu mashuri atandukanye kuva mu mashuri abanza, ayisumbuye ndetse ndetse na Kaminuza batuye muri uno murenge, bakoresha cyane cyane ibitabo byo muri iri somero. Ryaje ryunganira ibitabo akenshi usanga bidahagije mu mashuri. Ryabaye igisubizo.)*

In the majority of the CLs visited, girls were observed to be the most regular attendees of the established CLs. When asked why this was happening, participants attributed it to two possible reasons:

- Widespread change in parental attitude of giving equal chance and opportunity to boys and

girls, such that subsequently girls are being given the chance to go to school and to take part in other educational activities organized in the community.

- Young males tend to be more involved in money-oriented activities and reading may not be a priority for them.

Given that the majority of reading materials available in the CLs are in English, participants revealed that the CLs are often seen to be more relevant to young adults and children given the nature of the reading materials available. The attendance records also provide further evidence of this, where it can be seen that in the majority of the libraries most borrowers were aged below 25 years old.

Participants also noted that the availability of English materials increased the interest in the youth and students to learn English. It was noted that students in grade five and six and secondary school students use the English materials available at community library to learn English.

*“Our students at GS Masaka mostly use the English reading materials from the community library, and to assess what they have learnt from them, we request them to summarise and share the content with other students in the class.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Masaka Community Library.

*(Twebwe ku ishuri, abana bacu bakoresha cyane ibitabo byo gusoma by’icyongereza noneho bagakora impine bagasangiza bagenzi babo ibyo basomyemo.)*

Others participants from other areas commented that the English materials are also being used by adults interested in learning English, as the testimonies below highlight:

*“We thought that the English materials in this library were not going to be used, so we were surprised to see the business people in this community, after being informed of this library, established an evening class where they learn English using the materials from this library.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Mushubati Community Library.

*(Twe twatekerezaga ko ibitabo by’icyongereza ko bitazakoresha ariko twatunguwe no kubona abacuruzi b’ino nyuma yo kumenya iri somero ko rihari barashinze ishuri ryo kwigamo icyongereza aho baza gutira ibi bitabo bakabyifashisha.)*

*“We have an English evening class; we frequently use English materials available in this community library. Our students frequently come to borrow them, they read them and share what they have read with their colleagues; those English materials greatly helped them to improve their level of English.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Club PESCT Nyamirambo.

*(Tugira ishuri ryigisha icyongereza. Ibi bitabo turabyifashisha cyane, usanga abanyeshuri twigisha bakuze baza kubitira kandi bafite inyota yo gusangiza abandi ibyo basomye. Ibi bibongerera umuco wo gukunda gusoma.)*

## Innovation and adaptation of community libraries

At three CLs, namely Matyazo, Gicwamba and Nasho, the community libraries activities were linked with socio-economic development initiatives aimed at promoting the community members’ well-being and community literacy levels.

*“We used to come here to read and we often met; we had an idea to devise a project that we could undertake together. We set up an association, and we learnt how to improve our banana*

*plantation. We now have a cooperative of the best farmers in the local banana plantations.”*

Participant in the focus group discussion at Matyazo Community Library.

*(Twe twazaga tuje hano tuje gusoma. Uko tuhahirira kenshi, tugira igitekerezo cyo kureba undi mushinga ubyara inyungu twakora ukaduhaza. Twatangiyeye gutyo dushinga ishyirahamwe dutangira kwigishyamba guhinga urutoki rwa kijyambere none ubu dufite koperative y'intangarugero mu guhinga urutoki.)*

*“Due to this community library, we thought to add additional services: we are now selling stationery and we have also added Internet connectivity, this eased service for the people in this community and the community library improved as we now generate some income to sustain it.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Nasho Community Library.

*(Kubera iri somero, twatekereje gushyiramo izindi service zikenewe, dushyiramo ibya papeteri, byorohereje na connection ya internet. Byorohereje imirimo abatuye ino aha kandi bituma isomero ryacu rigenda ritera imbere kubera ubushobozi.)*

*“Due to this library, the youth in this community learnt traffic codes from the materials available in this library, most of them achieved their provisional driving license.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Gicwamba Community Library.

*(Kubera iri somero, urubiruko rw'ino aha rwihuguye mu mategeko y'umuhanda. Abenshi bibafasha kubona impushya z'agateganyo zo gutwara ibinyabiziga.)*

The establishment of CLs also prompted the establishment of additional education services in the communities, such as adult literacy programmes targeting illiterate people?, the creation of nursery schools in the case of Gicwamba Community Library in Nyagatare District and community outreach programmes on the importance of reading at Rwaza, Nasho and Masaka Community libraries. Many participants testified that the libraries played an important role in developing social cohesion as well as responding to changes in the community at the same time. In some cases, participants reported that the libraries were having an economic impact on the community.

*“After the establishment of this library, some people who used to visit it had an idea to establish a nursery school as they realised that the library contained some materials suitable for nursery schools.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Gicwamba Community Library.

*(Iri somero rimaze gutangira, abazaga gusoma bagize igitekerezo cyo gushinga ishuri ry'inshuke kuko twahereyeho dukoresha tumwe mu dutabo twabonaga muri iri somero.)*

*“We used the reading materials available in the library to also carry out community outreach work through Umuganda, and we encourage community members to read. We realised that people had become more interested in reading, and the new challenge now is to meet the demand for additional materials as we currently lack them but community members continue requesting more reading materials.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Nyagahanga Community Library.

*(Twifashishije ibitabo, twakoze ubukanguramba bwo gushishikariza abantu gusoma, tuyana ibitabo mu muganda tugashishikariza abaturage gusoma. Twabonye byaratanze umusaruro imbogamizi twagize ni uko ahubwo ibitabo biba bike kuko usanga babitwishyuzi)*

*“This library stimulated the interest in reading among people in this community; we even set up a class for adult learning to help people who are illiterate. We now have a performance contract aimed at helping people to effectively use the library and to encourage them to become involved in reading activities.”* Gashali Sector Executive Secretary attending the focus group discussion at Gashali Community Library.

*(Iri somero ryabyukije inyota yo gusoma, duhereye ku bitabo birimo, twatangije ishuri twigishirizamo abakuze batari bazi gusoma ndetse tunabishyira mu mihigo y'umurenge wacu.)*

At all 30 CLs, participants recognised that students who frequently visit the library to read also performed well at school. Specifically, this was reported by teachers who participated in the focus group discussion at Masaka, Nyagahanga, Muganza, Kitabi, Mushubati and Kanjongo communities.

*“You find that students who frequently use the materials in this library perform better compared to other students.”* Participant attending the focus group discussion at Kanjongo Community Library.

*(Usanga abana bitabira iri somero mu mashuri bagira amanota meza ugereranije n’abandi.)*

*“I used to be in eighth place in P6 where I am now attending, but now as I frequently use this library, I am always the first in our class, because I learn new things that supplement what we learn in our class.”* Participant attending the focus group discussion at Nasho Community Library.

*(Njye nabaga uwa munani mu ishuri aho niga mu wa gatandatu ariko kubera ko nza gusoma hano muri library amanota yange yariyongereye ubu nsingaye mba uwa mbere kubera ko kuza hano mbona ibindi bitabo byunganira ibyo twiga mu ishuri.)*

*“This library brought a positive change in the performances of students attending school in this community, whereby students who frequently use this library perform well at school. In addition, there is a positive change on how students use the school library, this stems from the reading habits they got after the establishment of this community library.”* Participant attending the focus group discussion at Mwange Community Library.

*(Iri somero ryazanye impinduka mu mitsindire y’abana biga mu mashuri y’ino aha. Abana barikoresha kenshi baratsinda, kubera inyota yo gusoma bungutse. Kubera iri somero, usanga hagaragara ubwitabire mu gukoresha ibitabo biri mu isomero ryo ku ishuri.)*

*“This library stimulated the reading culture among adults and children. Due to there not being enough reading materials, the community members established two additional community libraries in this sector to supplement this one.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Masaka Community Library.

*(Iri somero ryacu ryatubereye imbarutso yakanguye umuco wo gusoma mu bakuru no mu bana, kubera ko ibitabo bidahagije kandi iri somero rikaba ari rimwe mu murenge, hari abagize igitekerezo maze batangiza amasomero nk’aya abiri ngo yunganire iri.)*

*“This community library has a high attendance during the holidays. This allows students to continue learning even out of school.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Rambura Community Library.

*(Iri somero rikoreshwa cyane n’abanyeshuri cyane iyo bari mu biruhuko. Usanga ribaye aho kwigira bityo bagakomeza kwihugura ndetse natwe bikatworohera kubitaho mu gihe k’ibiruhuko.)*

## Challenges and Opportunities

As part of the focus group discussion, participants were asked about the long-term plans or sustainability of their community library. During the discussion, participants revealed many insights into the challenges and opportunities experienced by the CLs. In summary, the key points were that the long-term future of the libraries depend on:

- Strong management and ongoing community sensitisation;
- The availability of appropriate materials;
- Additional training for library volunteers.

## Strong management and ongoing community sensitisation

All the participants agreed that strong leadership and a motivated management committee was necessary to sustain and maintain active libraries into the future. Many participants attributed the success of their CLs to the commitment and involvement of various community stakeholders, including but not limited to local leaders, civil society representatives and community members.

The researchers found that there was a relationship between the level of community involvement and the success of the library. The researchers were reminded of the old adage: *You only get as much out of life as you put into it* – the same could be said for the CLs.

At all 30 CLs, local and church leaders had informed community members of the existence of the libraries and the importance of reading, and on top of this, they invited the community to visit the libraries. These information sessions were held at Umugandas and at community meetings at the sector or at cell level and also through church services. It was noted that some libraries conducted these community sensitization sessions more vigorously than others. All the focus group discussions reported that the sustainability of the CLs depended on a continuous effort on community sensitization and by mobilising the community members to come to the community library for reading purposes.

Some libraries also made available reading and study spaces at the libraries, as well as providing shelves for books and having the books well-arranged and on display for easy browsing. This was found at 28 CLs out of the 30 visited. Other libraries had engaged youth volunteers, who work at the library on a rotating basis. These volunteers were found at Muganza, Matyazo, Nasho, Rwaza, Janja and Kanjongo Community Libraries. In Matyazo, Gicwamba, Nasho, Mushubuti, Mpanda, Muganza, Kitabi, Gikongo, Kivugiza, Kanjongo, Masaka, Mwange, Nyagahanga Mushubati and Janja Community Libraries, a management committee had been elected to coordinate all the CL activities in their area.

In some districts, local leaderships had demonstrated their involvement and commitment to improving the culture of reading. At three CLs, namely Gashali, Nasho and Gikonko, local leaders at the sector level had established a performance contract stipulating the efforts needed to alleviate illiteracy and to also encourage literate people to engage in reading activities at the community library.

A common theme in all the focus group discussions was the availability of local, contextual and suitable reading materials to maintain the CLs. Many participants commented that more reading materials were needed and that there were not enough Kinyarwanda books available to sustain the interest of the older members of the community. Participants in all 30 focus group discussions unanimously reported that the established CLs lack contextualised reading materials given that most of the available materials were in English, whereas the libraries were typically established in communities where the majority of people are not proficient in English and where Kinyarwanda reading materials would be relevant for all age groups.

*“The main challenge we have at this library is the lack of Kinyarwanda reading materials, the available ones are not enough; people in this community are not proficient in English, therefore we find some of the English materials are not used.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Gicwamba Community Library.

*(Ikibazo dufite cyane cyane ni ukubona ibitabo mu rurimi rw’ Ikinyarwanda. Ibihari ni bike ku buryo usanga bidahagije. Ibyinshi ni icyongereza kandi abantu benshi b’ino ntibakizi, usanga bimwe mu bitabo byo mu cyongereza bidakoreshewa.)*

*“The reading materials available in this community are not contextualised to the needs of the*

community members. You find in most cases, people are looking for reading materials that relate to their routine daily life, or people are looking for newspapers, which are not available in this community library.” (Participant in focus group discussion at Rambura Community Library) (Ibitabo dufite muri iri somero ntabwo bihuye n’ibyo abaturage bino bakeneye, usanga akenshi abaturage bakeneye ibitabo bihuye n’ubuzima bwabo bwa buri muni, abandi na bo usanga bakeneye ibinyamakuru kandi usanga bitari muri iri somero.)

“It’s not that people in this community do not like or are not interested in reading, in most cases the challenge is to find what material to read. The materials available in this library are mostly in English or in French. We lack Kinyarwanda materials. As an example, children lack the Kinyarwanda story book, Hobe magazine, while the youth would prefer to look for age-appropriate reading materials that mainly focus on teaching handcraft or related to reproductive health, whereas adults would prefer to look for reading materials that could positively change their lives.” Participant in the focus group discussion at Rwaza Community Library.

(Ntabwo ari uko abaturage badakunda cyangwa se badafite inyota yo gusoma, ahanini ikibazo kiba kubona ibyo basoma. Ibitabo akenshi usanga biboneka biba biri mu ndimi z’amahanga. Ibitabo by’ Ikiyirwanda ni byo abantu baba bakenye. Urugero: Abana bakunda udutabo tw’inkuru, utunyamakuru nka za Hobe, urubyiruko nabo ugasanga barifuza ibigendanye n’imyaka yabo, akenshi bababakenye ibitabo bibigisha ku buzima bw’imyorokere ndetse n’ibigendanye n’imyuga. Naho abakuru bo, baba bashimishwa n’ibitabo byabafasha guhindura ubuzima bwabo.)

The researchers observed that some libraries had started adding to the reading materials in their respective libraries. In particular, libraries supported by faith-based organisations had responded to this need by supplying additional reading materials, e.g. through partnership with various magazines, such as Ni Nyampinga, Hobe, Kinyamateka and Imvaho, and also French reading collections. Many participants explained that this was a direct response to requests from their community members and based on the needs of their particular community.

“We try our best to increase the reading materials available to this community; this can help keep up the momentum of people visiting the library. Yes, it is not an easy task, but we realised that it is the only way to make this library more effective.” Participant in the focus group at Muganza- Cimerwa Community Library.

(Dukora ibishoboka byose ngo twongere umubare w’ibitabo biri mu isomer. Ibi bituma abarigana badacika intege mu gusoma kuko akenshi babonamo ibitandukanye. Ntibyoroshye ariko twasanze ari bwo buryo bwonyine bwo kugira ngo iri somero rirusheho gukora neza.)

“In most cases, they are reading materials that are requested by people visiting this library, we chose to seek out additional materials. The availability of Ni Nyampinga magazine increased the attendance of the youth readers, whereas the availability of French materials increased the attendance of adult people.” Participant in the focus group at Masaka Community Library.

(Kubera ko akenshi hari ibitabo abantu baza bashakira ugasanga ntitubifite, twahisemo gushakisha ahatandukanye twongeramo ibindi. Ibitabo, ibinyamakuru bya “Ni Nyampinga” byongereye ubwitabire bw’urubyiruko ruza kubisoma, naho iby’igifaransa byongera umubare w’abakuzi baza babishakira.)

The researchers also asked participants if they saw any opportunities for their libraries. The lack of ICT equipment and lack of access or connectivity to the Internet were also reported as widespread challenges hindering the greater effectiveness of the community library. All the focus group discussions suggested that the availability of ICT equipment and Internet connectivity would increase the attendance of people in the CLs as ICT would increase the availability of resources and allow additional educational

activities to take place.

## Additional Training for Library Volunteers

The lack of training available to management committees for the CLs was also reported as a challenge impeding the long-term sustainability of the CLs. Even where management committees exist, many people had not received training in the management of the libraries, although Kitabi, Nyirangarama, Mutenderi, Rambura, Muramba, Mpanda, Kanjongo and Nasho had received training from the Kigali Public Library Service. Many participants also expressed that they were under-equipped with the relevant skills to help them ensure that the libraries are effectively used.

*“Among the challenges we face is the skills issue on how to properly manage the library. There are lots of activities that are not undertaken at this library, whereas if implemented they would provide positive results. We lack skills in management of the reading materials, how to support people visiting the library and also how to undertake community outreach activities aimed at promoting a culture of reading.”* Participant in the focus group discussion at Rwaza Community Library.

*(Mu mbogamizi duhura na zo kuba abacunga iri somero nta bumenyi buhagije bafite. Hari byinshi bidakorwa kandi byakabaye bitanga umusaruro. Ingero z’ubumenyi tubura ni uburyo bwo gucunga neza ibitabo, uburyo bwo kwakira abagana isomero ndetse no kubakurikirana hanyuma n’uburyo twategura ibikorwa bigamije gushishikariza abantu umuco wo gusoma bifashishije iri somero.)*

## Conclusion

This chapter summarized the general findings of the research. The first section summarizes community attitudes to the importance of reading, the second identifies aspects that influenced community reading preferences and access to materials, and the last section describes the challenges and opportunities experienced by the community libraries in the study.

# Chapter Five: Recommendations

## Introduction

The following chapter concludes this report. A summary of the research is presented, and findings of the study are discussed and interpreted; in some cases quotations have been inserted to illustrate and support the findings. Recommendations for the future implementation of community libraries, which might be generalisable to other similar rural settings, based on the findings will be discussed. Recommendations for further research end the chapter.

## Main Findings

The research was carried out in order to assess, identify and evaluate the role of the L3 community libraries in promoting a culture of reading in their communities. The researchers noted that all communities recognised the current political will to promote a reading culture in Rwanda. Participants regularly expressed the importance of building a reading culture in their communities as a means to drive Rwanda towards a knowledge-based economy. All communities recognised the potential of a community library to contribute to building a culture of reading in their communities.

*“There is a political will to promote the reading culture and have a knowledge-based economy. We have to consider that political will in promoting the reading culture in our community. This community library is an asset which could enhance that reading culture needed by the Government among Rwandans.”* Participant attending the focus group discussion at Gishali community library.

*[“Hari ubushake bwa Leta mu kwimakaza umuco wo gusoma ndetse no kugira ubukungu bushingiye ku bantu bize. Ubwo bushake dukwiye kubushingiraho twimakaza umuco wo gusoma aho dutuye. Iri somero ni kimwe mu kimwe mu bikorwa bigamije guteza imbere uwo muco wo gusoma Leta yifuza mu banyarwanda.”]*

The attendance records, where available, and the findings gathered through the focus group discussions showed that children and adults were attending the libraries for many reasons including: reading for enjoyment, accessing information, learning new skills and languages, meeting others with similar interests and supplementing what they were learning in school and university. As Ruterana (2012) observed, the establishment of community libraries was considered by many participants as a “cultural tool to germinate the seed for reading”. It was also reported that many schools and teachers in the community were promoting and encouraging pupils to access the community library. Similarly, parents were encouraging their children to read at the library. The researchers concluded that the majority of the L3 community libraries in the study were reaching their original objectives:

- Increased availability and access to quality reading materials in the community.
- Promotion of greater parent/community involvement in students’ reading.
- Raised awareness by students, parents and communities of the importance of reading and the enjoyment of reading.

While the L3 community libraries were seen as a welcome community resource and asset to help build a culture of reading, the majority of the participants acknowledged that neither political will nor the provision of a mobile? library was enough to build a culture of reading in their communities; the participation of local leaders was identified as key to developing a culture of reading. Participants in

the focus group discussion acknowledged that the structure of local leadership is an opportunity for community mobilisation towards the culture of reading.

*“If the local leaders own the community libraries activities, there will be positive results on the culture of reading.”* Participant in focus group at Ruramira community library.

*[“Kuba hari ubuyobozi bwegerejwe abaturage ku nzego zitandukanye ni amahirwe akomeya yafasha mu bukanguramba ndetse no guteza imbere ibikorwa by’isomero. Abayobozi ku nzego zitandukanye; ibikorwa by’isomero babigize ibyabo byatanga umusaruro mu kwimakaza umuco wo gusoma’.”]*

Library managers reiterated time and time again that there was still a need for local leaders to promote the importance of reading in the community to encourage people to make it a priority, especially for adults who have to earn a living and have limited time to access and read materials from the community libraries. The researchers observed that community library volunteers took their roles and responsibilities very seriously. Staffing libraries was also identified as a challenge in some areas. Volunteers are the most important resource community libraries have. The ability of people to work willingly together for the betterment of their community and themselves is a valuable resource. All focus group participants requested additional training and support on how to run the library. The groups identified the following areas where they needed support: community outreach, maintaining the library and identifying suitable reading materials for library users.

The lack of suitable reading materials and additional resources, especially for senior community members, was also presented as both a challenge and an opportunity. Many participants commented that the provision of French and additional Kinyarwanda reading materials would attract all members of the community to use the library. Others noted that the English materials were only in demand by the younger members of the community. Some libraries had started to provide additional materials in Kinyarwanda and French and it had proven popular with the communities where this was happening. Most libraries reported that community members were interested in accessing information and communication technology (ICT) resources.

As the focus group discussions revealed, many participants had already identified locally grown solutions to the problems, opportunities and challenges faced by their communities. Participants recognised that there are various means and opportunities by which community mobilisation on the importance of reading could be effectively achieved, for example, messaging through the local schools and Umuganda. Some libraries were adapting their services to the needs of their community and opening the library when the community would most likely be available. The researchers observed alternative and local appropriate library models emerging and being supported by their communities.

## Recommendations

Following the findings of the challenges and opportunities highlighted during the focus group discussions, the following list of recommendations is based on the common recurring themes suggested by the participants:

## Increased availability of titles in local languages and electronic resources

Community libraries must cater for their community members' needs and reading preferences and stock according to those needs. Libraries should contain Kinyarwanda, French and English reading materials. Participants reported a strong demand for Kinyarwanda materials from their members. A community needs assessment prior to the establishment of the library should be conducted to capture the community's interests and ensure the long-term sustainability and demand for a community library. All focus groups suggested that libraries should be equipped with ICT resources. Participants noted that many young people in the communities wanted to access information on the internet, look up online resources or access online journals, magazines and social media. In order to meet the needs of the individual community and provide a basic condition for lifelong learning, inquiry and the cultural development of the individual and social groups, these resources should be provided.

### **Community involvement in running and promoting libraries, community mobilisation and outreach activities**

Guidelines and training should be given to local leaders on the implementation of Government policies and strategies aimed at boosting the culture of reading in general. There is a need to set up strategies for monitoring the performance of community libraries, and following up the effectiveness of community libraries should be one of the priorities of local leadership. Related performance contracts should reflect these priorities.

## Libraries need to be flexible to the needs of the community

Often the location and opening hours of the library inhibited the participation of adults, who have other priorities. There are various social spaces within the community that could be used in carrying out the mobilisation for reading culture and attending the community library. These gatherings include community work, mothers' evening sessions, community general assemblies and church sessions. These gatherings could serve as opportunities for community library-related activities.

## Regular training for community libraries volunteers

To improve the quality of community libraries' practices, there is a need to build the capacity of management committees and enhance the volunteerism approach by engaging the youth in the management of libraries. Similarly, people in the community who are passionate and interested in promoting the culture of reading (for example retired teachers) should be identified and engaged in playing a key role in the promotion of the culture of reading and invested in community libraries activities.

## Limitations of the study and future research

The researchers are aware that this research concerns 30 unique community libraries in Rwanda. The researchers only interviewed people directly involved in the community libraries; therefore, in order to gain a greater understanding of the community's attitude to the library, other community members

should be included in the study and interviewed. As the sample may be biased already towards people in favour of the community libraries initiative as users or practitioners, future research should include people who do not attend community libraries, so other views can be considered. Possible areas for further research include:

Do factors such as age, sex and socio-economic background correlate with reading habits, language preference, perception of reading, and library use?

The effect that library used has on children's' school performance including reading performance.

## Conclusion

This paper shows the potential as well as the challenges for the involvement of L3 community libraries in building a culture of reading in Rwanda. It is hoped that the findings will provide a better understanding of the role of community libraries as part of the overall L3 Initiative.

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# Annexes

## Community Mobile Library Monitoring Tool

Date of monitoring: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part 1: Status of Community Mobile libraries

When it has been established: \_\_\_\_\_

CSO managing the CML: \_\_\_\_\_

Opening hours and days: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Geographical location:

District: \_\_\_\_\_ Sector: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/Village: \_\_\_\_\_

#### CML located in premises of:

a Church \_\_\_ ; School \_\_\_ ; an Administrative Office ( Cell/ Sector): \_\_\_ ; an CBO office \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_ .

Precise where \_\_\_\_\_

#### CML is managed by:

- Church
- Sector/
- Civil society organization
- Others

### Part 2: Statistics on community members who use the CML in last three months

	Youngest		Adults			Total
	Between 10-15 years of age	Between 16-21 years	Between 22-27 years	Between 28-35 years	More than 34 years	
Male						
Female						
Total						

### Part 3: Community Mobile Library Performance

A.CML Performance	
A1. CML checkout system?	1. Registering in a document 2. Using registration forms 3. Other 4. we don't register
A2. CML books keeping	1. Kept in a specific room 2. kept in shelves 3. kept in boxes
A3. Apart from L3, have you received any books from other supporting organization/institution?	1. Yes 2. No

A4. If yes, how many have you received?	A4.1 1. ≤ 100 2. > 100
From which organization?	A4.2 3. Local NGO 4. INGO 5. Government institution
A5. Have you received any training?	1.Yes 2. No
A6.If yes, who trained you?	1. PC Volunteer or other volunteer 2. National Library Services 3. Other
A7. How many times?	1. Once 2. Twice 3. More than twice
A8. Are books in CML numbered?	1.Yes 2. No

#### Part 4. Use of community mobile library

B1. In which category belong many of your readers?	1. Adults 2. Youngest (10-21) 3. others
B2. Approximately, how many books are given out per day?	1. 1-5 2. 6-10 3. More than 10
B3. Among the books you've lent, which of them are most popular?	1. Kinyarwanda titles 2. English titles 3. Both Kinyarwanda and English titles
B4. How many of most popular books are read per day?	1. 1-5 2. 6-10 3. > 10
B5. Approximately, what is the number of missing books?	1. 1-10 2. 11-30 3. > 30
B6. Do you know why are they missing?	1. Stolen 2. Borrowed and delayed in getting them back 3. Don't know

<p>B7. Which domain of books the readers are mostly claiming for?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ICT and Science</li> <li>2. Woodworking</li> <li>3. Cultivation</li> <li>4. Animal husbandry</li> <li>5. Engine repair manuals</li> <li>6. Painting/art</li> <li>7. Electricity</li> <li>8. How to build an oven</li> <li>9. Recipes/cooking/nutrition</li> <li>10. Dictionaries (English dictionaries in English; English/French to Kinyarwanda)</li> <li>11. Religious</li> <li>12. Business</li> <li>13. Other domains</li> </ol>
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### Part 5: Local authorities support

<p>C1. Is the District Education Officer informed about the CML?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>
<p>C2. Have he/she visited the CML?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>
<p>C3. If yes, what have been his/her recommendations?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Liaise with people in the community who have strong relationships with and experience in the community.</li> <li>2. Community library to be used as a local social development tool</li> <li>3. Make the library a source of information</li> <li>4. Others</li> <li>5. None</li> </ol>
<p>C4. Has he/she brought any support to CML implementations?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>
<p>C5. Does Sector Officials help you in management of CML?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>
<p>C6. Among Sector Officials, who mostly support CML?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sector Executive Secretary</li> <li>2. Sector Education Officer</li> <li>3. Sector Officer in Charge of Social Affairs</li> </ol>

C6. Support given by Sector Official	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide advice on effective management of CML</li> <li>2. Sensitize the community members to attend CML for reading,</li> <li>3. Provide reading materials to CML</li> <li>4. Work with committee in CML management of</li> </ol>
C7. Recommendations given by Sector Officials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Liaise with people in the community who have strong relationships with and experience in the community.</li> <li>2. Community library to be used as a local social development tool</li> <li>3. Make the library a source of information</li> <li>4. Others .....</li> <li>5. None</li> </ol>

#### D. Community member awareness, ownership and interest

D1. Have you ever heard about “Community Mobile Library (CML)”?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>
D2. If yes, how did you know it?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. From PC /other volunteer</li> <li>2. Local authority</li> <li>3. Religious</li> <li>4. Other .....</li> </ol>
D3. Have you ever visited the library?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>
D4. How many times in last month ( 30 days)?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1-5</li> <li>2. 6-10</li> <li>3. More than 10</li> </ol>
D5. Have you ever borrowed a book?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>
D6. If yes, how many times?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1-5</li> <li>2. 6-10</li> <li>3. &gt; 10</li> </ol>
D7. If ever borrowed, was it for you or for someone else?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For himself</li> <li>2. For his child(ren) or relative(s)</li> <li>3. Other</li> </ol>
D8. Do you think library is important?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>
D9. If Yes, why do you think it is important?	

D9. Tell me to whom belongs the library books?	1. Community 2. Other than the community
D10. What do you do to keep books safe?	1. Get hands washed 2. Not writing, 3. Not bending/breaking of spines, 4. Other .....
D11. What would you recommend for the CML to improve access and its use?	1. Relocate the CML 2. Adding French titles 3. Adding book topics of interest to adults 4. More Kinyarwanda titles 5. Library activities of interest to adults 6. Adding newspapers 7. Others .....
D12. Are community adults members informed about the existence of the community library?	1.Yes 2. No
D13. Are community adults members informed about the existence of the community library?	1.Yes 2. No
D15. Any activity of community member's interest?	1.Yes, for Adults 2.Yes, for Youth 3.Yes, for Adults and youth 4.No

### E. Conclusion & Recommendations

E1. Before the starting of the community mobile library, did exist other books facilities (Libraries)?	1.Yes 2. No
E2. If yes, where were they come from?	1. School 2. Church 3. Local governance structure 4. Other
E3. Were people borrowing books before?	1.Yes 2. No
E4. Are people borrowing books after CML has been established?	1.Yes 2. No

E5. If no, what do you recommend to improvement CML usage?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Local governance involvement</li> <li>2. Introducing adult literacy programs</li> <li>3. More sensitization on use of community library</li> <li>4. Activities of interest to adults</li> <li>5. Others</li> <li>6. Don't know</li> </ol>
E6. What do you think is the main challenge to CML implementation (implementer)?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of local governance involvement and ownership</li> <li>2. Lack of a culture of reading</li> <li>3. Lack of community members invested</li> <li>4. Others .....</li> </ol>
E7. Which Problems encountered when using CML? (People, Beneficiaries)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Few interesting Kinyarwanda titles</li> <li>2. Lack of French titles</li> <li>3. CML opening hours</li> <li>4. Not allowed to borrow books</li> <li>5. Other .....</li> </ol>

**E. Observed impact of CML**

***- How the CML has helped to increase the culture of reading?***

***-What are the observed changes in reading culture observed due to the CML?***

***-How the CML is helping students from neighboring community to improve their reading skills?***

***Other features for discussion;***

- *Local leadership involvement*
  - 
  -
- *Sustainability*
  - 
  -
- *Students visiting the library in the afternoon,*
  - 
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- *Frequency of visit*

