

A report on FEMRITE writing for children workshop of 30th- 31st July 2009.

A. The first day 30th July 2009

➤ Morning session.

Welcoming remarks were made by the Femrite program co-ordinator Lilian Tindyebwa and the opening prayer was led by Jennifer Okech.

Expectations:

- Learn to create enjoyable characters
- Learn how to get into the mind of a child
- To be motivated by the workshop
- To get a certificate

Beatrice Lamwaka the facilitator discussed the following topics:

- How to write for children:
 1. Memorable stories
 2. Real characters
 3. Suitable language
 4. Choosing the best point of view
 5. Writing believable setting.

At the end of the session Beatrice together with the participants carried out exercises about making a story line, character description of the main character, Dialogue, Setting description and which language to use for the particular audience.

➤ Afternoon session.

Sarah Kyankya the facilitator discussed about what publishers expect from writers from to style to final product. She explained that, the publisher would expect a writer to have and follow criteria and the story comes out as publishable. In order to manage this the story should be:

- Specific on age target
- Entertaining
- Title should fit the story
- Story with conflict, emotions
- Hold interest
- Create joy to read
- Teach a lesson
- Create hunger for more reading
- Main characters should be children

- Believable characters
- At the end, the conflict should be solved

The facilitator asked and was discussing about where to get a story?

- From our childhood experiences
- What we observe from children around us
- What we read

Sarah Kyankya discussed also about things a writer should do before submitting to the publisher.

- Check spellings
- Vocabulary
- Re-writing the story up to the satisfaction

At the end of this session, questions and contributions were made.

Participants asked Sarah how marketable the local languages are and she mention 9 languages including: Luganda, Lusoga, Lunyankore/Lukiga, Lunyoro/toro, Luo, Ateso, Lugbara, Karamajong etc.

Another question was asked about thematic curriculum, she explained that it is a system adopted from Primary 1 to Primary 4 Where, instead of using textbooks of separate subjects, they use stories based on themes but in a combined book . eg. About health, environment, science. Thus story books are now used instead of separate textbooks in primary.

She advised writers to check into the curriculum, to know the guidelines from the Ministry of Education in order to write and be published filling the gaps in this curriculum.

She advised writers to try writing in local languages since there is a current policy that supports teaching in local languages by the Ministry of Education from Primary 1 to Primary 3.

The first day ended on a hopeful note from female writers who asked to network with fountain publishers in general and Sarah Kyankya in particular for publishing books.

THE SECOND DAY 31St July 2009

➤ Morning session

The recap was read by Uwineza M. Harriet after an opening prayer from Jennifer Okech. Sarah Kyankya the facilitator discussed about what happens into a publishing house. She told us how manuscripts reach the publishers.

- Asked by the publishers on request to the writer
- A proposal by a writer to publisher
- Unsolicited manuscripts

She told the participants that the first and second way manuscripts have a chance of 100% to be published while the unsolicited manuscripts remain pending for a long time as they might not be falling into any current project of the publishers.

Chronological events in a publishing house discussed by sarah K.

- Receive manuscript
- Review
- Send to external evaluator-peer reviewer specialized in the subject
- Comments given to author to revise or refusal by publisher according to the content.
- Revision
- Editing
- Illustrations
- Type set
- Proof reading
- Revision
- Print

The participants asked question and discussed. One of the questions asked was about the funding of the book. Who funds?

- The publishing house, according to their projects
- The author might subsidize too.
- When the book is published the writer gets 10% of loyalty.

Facilitator Beatrice Lamwaka discussed about bringing abstract ideas to life. She read a children's book "Mr. Lincoln's way" by Patricia Polacco. In which she discussed how ideas can be brought into discussion in a smooth and easy story without preaching.

Beatrice Lamwaka led a discussion about which types of ideas the participants had in mind that they wanted to write about. The following were some of the ideas from female writers:

- Growing up with a step mother
- Positive values of the culture
- Child labor
- Politeness

- Tolerance
- Cleanliness
- Children's experience in a post conflict background
- Religion and spirituality
- Co-existence
- Children's curiosity about marriage
- Education
- Values of extended families and their challenges
- Critical thinking
- Self acceptance
- Gender violence
- Human rights
- Sharing
- Prostitutions
- Disabled children
- Stealing is bad

➤ **Afternoon session**

PUBLIC READING

It started at 2:00 and was attended by members of the public who are friends and partners of FEMRITE, both men and women. Among these were a representative from NABOTU and some members of the FEMTIRE reading club.

Welcome remarks were made by Kellen Busingye. She read a nice story "*Mr. Happy*" The first author Jemeo Nanyonjo read part of her published "*Kente's bitter lesson*"

Ten Pupils from Kitante Primary School and ten pupils from St. Martin's Primary school were present and asked different questions to the author and children said that they learn lessons like;

- How to behave with grown ups
- Protection against rape
- Politeness

The second author was Jacky Batanda reading part of her work "The blue mable" which was followed by a long interaction with the participants both pupils and adults alike.

Lilian Tindyebwa welcomed teachers and pupils who had responded to FEMRITE's invitation and summarized the reasons of the workshop:

- Promote children's book writing

- Refining the writers' skills in children books
- Helping writers to get suitable reading materials for children

She on behalf of FEMRITE administration encouraged female writers and writers in general to write as much as possible and good publishable works.

A poetry recital was made by Allen Atutambira about the future of children.

Harriet M. Uwineza made a presentation on the topic of the second session "*The need for children to read Ugandan authored books*" She discussed about the importance of reading books in general, asking the pupils what they get from reading. Pupils gave answers like:

- Critical thinking
- Fun
- Knowledge
- Locations
- Language learning
- Culture etc

She talked about the need for children to read Ugandan authored books as these relate to the children's background. However she said that there was a challenge on the Local book market, where the writers self publish their work without the expertise of publishing house, thus marketing questionable material.

A representative of St.Martin primary school presented the same topic followed by a pupil's representative from Kitante Primary school. The presentations were relevant and well equipped with real local examples.

An open discussion was initiated in which members of FEMRITE and participants gave out recommendations and requests and some information was passed.

- Need to publish a children's stories anthology from this workshop
- 14-17th September there is a book trade fair
- Formation of a children's book association
- Reading the FEMRITE published books and each others books (since all present were writers)
- Support each other

The workshop was closed with get together evening tea, in which pupils mixed with adults to interact, discussions and networks were inspiring.