

**Soma Annual Literary Competition for Secondary Schools**  
*Round One 2012 Implementation Report*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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E&D Readership and Development Agency popularly known as **Soma**; a not for profit organization whose purpose is to promote readership in its three tier functions: leisure, culture and knowledge concluded its first round of an Annual Short Story Competition for Secondary Schools on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2012. The initiative was designed in 2010 as one of the strategic approaches to promote readership. It specifically aims at: stimulating reading interests among young and reluctant readers by stimulating the generation of relevant, interesting and accessible literature authors by their peers; and advocating for the creation of favourable policies and environments at home, neighbourhoods and schools, that stimulate reading for pleasure and for learning across all ages and without any form of discrimination. The competition also aims at validating young people as creators and creating role models from among them; thus addressing both interest to read and interest to create what to read.

Other than validating, the competition was designed to empower, motivate and mobilise individual students, their schools, parents and the general public to develop an interest to participate in the competition and related initiatives that promote reading; including beefing up and encouraging library use. As such therefore, the prize regime comprised of:

1. A five days creative writing workshop for ten best authors to strengthen their skills and help them perfect their stories with the hope that some of them are motivated and acquire sufficient skills and discipline to become enduring authors; and some of the competing stories reach publishable quality.
2. Individual Book Prizes for five best authors—the overall winner and four runners up (a male and female pair for the first and second runners up as a way to ensure gender balance) prizes.
3. School Library Book prized for overall winner and 1<sup>st</sup> runners up.
4. Cash prizes for overall winner and first and third runners up.

The prize giving ceremony was intended to be a public event attracting school teachers, students, parents, media and the general public; including those involved in literacy and book related endeavours. The event was meant to serve as a platform to validate young authors and their products; announce the second round of the competition; and mobilise public support for the subsequent rounds and replicable offshoots; and ultimately grow into a multi activity and multi agency literary festival in creative writing workshop, sharing of stories and other literary products from this and other initiatives across the country and prize giving are among an array activities celebrating literature as one of the living cultural heritages (East Africa has a literary culture dating back to over 500 hundred years which not all its

residents are aware of; and an even longer and still vibrant orature<sup>1</sup>). Though not well attended by the general public, the event was attended by graced students, teachers and other friends of **Soma**. It was graced with live music from a dynamic Wahapahapa band, poetry recitation by Bashiru Ali a prominent intellectual and poet; and brief speeches from Professor Mulokozi, the lead trainer and special guest who conferred certificates of participation to training workshop participants; and Ms Pili Dumea CBP Director representing judges who also presented prizes to winners.

By design, this competition is also meant to provide a platform to remind citizens of their sovereign responsibility and right to demand from duty bearer accountability on delivering quality education and their collective responsibility to take action to ensure favourable environment for learning in their communities and public schools. This includes making reading part and parcel of the school and community environment by establishing, stocking and popularising the school and community library. These facilities are currently either totally absent or where they exist in form (as in secondary school libraries) for lack useful and relevant content and systems for proper user service. It is also intended to become a launching pad for an annual literary festival to be concretised and promoted in the course of the year and funds permitting, launched during the awarding ceremony of the second round of this competition.

Funding for the bulky of 2012 short story competition for secondary school budget came from the kind contribution of Global Women Fund (GWF); a grant offered as partial funding to facilitate the gender equality and women's strategy of our programme. This was to complement core funding which was expected to be obtained from Open Society East Africa and own generated funds. With shortfalls in internal funds and OSIEA funding not materialising, it is partnership support with the Children Book Project (CBP) and the Goethe Institute that saved the day. The former covered the bulky of the training budget while the latter financed the purchase of book prizes for winners and their schools and paid the honorarium of the lead trainer. **Soma** also received in kind contributions from various experts and service providers who supported the process pro bono and/or rendered their services at a greatly reduced price (as 'labour of love' as one of them described it). This enabled us to cover the bulky of the overall activities necessary for the finalisation of this round of the competition with less than 50% of its. To all our supporters and partners we are very appreciative.

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Micere Mugo's coinage of what others term oral literature.

## IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

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### INTRODUCTION

In 2010 E&D Readership and Development Agency popularly known as **Soma**, a not for profit organization whose purpose is to promote readership for leisure, culture and knowledge initiated an Annual Short Story Competition for Secondary Schools. The competition is one among a ‘cluster’ of the organisation’s strategic interventions focusing on: enhancing the availability of ‘what to read’ which is relevant, interesting and accessible; stimulating reading interests among young and reluctant readers; and advocating for the creation of favourable policies and social environment (at home, neighbourhoods and schools) that stimulate reading for pleasure and for learning across all ages. Specifically the competition is meant to contribute to the generation of interesting and relevant literature for reluctant young readers authored by young people themselves. It is also meant to celebrate young people’s creative endeavours, validate their efforts and stimulate a competitive spirit among them and their communities including their schools. In so doing it is expected to create role models for peers to emulate; while at the same time stimulating national wide discourse on literacy and readership in a way that mobilises interest and galvanizes individual and collective citizens’ agency in creating a reading culture for personal and collective empowerment and life-long learning. This will be complementing government efforts and enhance active citizenship and zeal to hold duty bearers accountable for quality education delivery; which holds a special place in defining our common citizenship and in shaping our own destiny.

Objectives of this initiative have evolved overtime. As originally stated and further articulated read as follows:

1. **To contribute to the corpus of literature authored by young people**, validating their creativity and perspectives (voice, expression and concerns) and providing role models for more young people to attempt to become authors. This initiative emulates what was once an East African Short Story Competition run by the defunct East African Literature Bureau during the first and second decades of independence, which contributed to the many stories for young readers, published in the seventies and early eighties.
2. **To promote reading** by making the competition public when inviting entries and during the prize giving ceremony where, other than cash prizes, winners will receive a book parcels for themselves and for their schools so as to promote libraries (common facility book collections) as a means (among others) for readership promotion in schools; and after, by

promoting their works and mobilising for replicable interventions at school and community levels.

3. **To develop literary skills among participants** by offering authors of the ten best entries the opportunity to participate in a literary youth camp/workshop facilitated by experienced creative writing authors, critics and teachers to help them refine their stories while they learn creative writing techniques, with the aim that by the end of the engagement, at least one third of the stories reach publishable quality and at least two participants become established authors.
4. **To motivate public interest in contributing to (the promotion and financing of) readership activities within their milieu and elsewhere** by using the competition as a platform to rally support from the public to contribute to or assist in mobilising matching funds for its implementation through sponsorships etc.; for prizes, judges and the creative writing workshop as well as motivate donations of additional books and other facilities to the school (and community) libraries; thus creating environments that stimulate learning in schools and communities.

These would be realised through five outputs and outcomes stated as follows:

1. At least 10 students acquire creative writing skills per year (of which at least 50% are girls);
2. At least 3 stories authored by secondary school students are published annually;
3. At least five secondary school students of which at least two are the opposite gender are celebrated and rewarded per year for their creative writing success;
4. At least 2 schools receive a book collection per year for their libraries because of their students' efforts;
5. Tangible local non-state agencies' contributions made annually to literacy initiatives as a direct result of this activity.

## **RATIONALE**

Congruent with the overall mandate of **Soma**, the Annual Short Story Competition for Secondary Schools addresses the general problem of low literacy beyond alphabetism. This and the apparent lack of appreciation (in formal education and in development discourse) of the role extensive reading plays in building capacity for imagination, self-learning and ownership of one's own knowledge acquisition process and practice; stifle the capacity and development of readership skills and culture which are critical moulding persons who are confident, competitive, independent minded and inquisitive. Low readership levels also limit the pace of diffusion of technology and inventions in almost all spheres of life.

Specific to secondary school, the bulky of students experience school as a place where textbooks and exams with predictable answers are the only credible sources of valued knowledge. The library which is pedagogically recognised as the 'surrogate teacher' and key ingredient to a healthy learning environment exists in name only. Throughout their school career, they are hardly ever exposed to literature informed by social realities similar to those experienced by young learners and the turbulences their societies are grappling with. Homes and communities are no recourse.

It is expected that building skills and stimulating interests among young scholars to engage in ideas in a combination of creative imagination and critical commentary of socially phenomena of significant importance to them and their milieu through fiction contributes to the creation of vibrant and democratic young citizens. Ultimately this contributed to building of a vibrant and democratic society whose citizens act on their own behalf and shape their own destinies individually and collectively.

## **APPROACH**

The competition was designed to follow a step-by-step implementation cycle lasting one calendar year; with the following milestones: a) deciding of the theme using a three months participatory process (except for the first round whose theme '**Graft and Grand Corruption**' was internally selected); b) announcing the competition using various communication media; c) receiving and compiling entries; d) judging and appraising (the main weaknesses in the entries; and especially the top ten as inputs to the skills building training); e) inviting the ten best authors to a creative writing workshop; f) creative workshop for ten best authors; and g) announcing winners in a graduation and awarding ceremony. Public engagement, media and fundraising were integral to the process with each milestone providing an opportunity to appraise the state of the art and adjust plans as need be.

## **SUMMING UP THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS FOR ROUND ONE**

The implementation of round one of this competition can be roughly divided into three distinct phases: The **initial phase** starting from the time competition was announced to the closing date; the **critical phase** involving the compilation of entries, short listing, judging and training workshop (with their sub processes); and the **final phase** that includes graduation and awarding ceremony in which winners were announced to the public, implementation appraisal and preparing for the second round. Reporting to ourselves, to our present and potential partners, supporters and other critical and strategic publics fall under the final phase.

## **Initial phase**

The start of this initiative was not a smooth one. For various reasons, including incomplete and interrupted funding regimes, it was forced to span across three calendar years; 2010 to 2012. The closing date was extended twice. The first extension was from June 2010 to March 2011 where we closed with only 22 entries (from 6 girls, 14 boys and 2 undisclosed) and absolutely no funds for follow up activities. The process was stalled briefly to give room to reorganise and continue with fundraising. It is during this time that we formulated and submitted proposals to two international organisations: Open Society East Africa and Global Fund for Women for an additional strategy to encourage girls to participate. Subsequently, we made the final call. It involved writing specifically to heads of schools to announce the extended call and urging them to encourage girls to participate (this included targeting girls and co-education schools). This happened in tandem with an effort to reach out those who had already submitted their entries giving them a chance to revise resubmit or substitute; and an additional call through social media and network of relevant NGOs. As a result we received seventy three entries in total as against only twenty seven we received in the last call inclusive of the extensions and follow up calls. At the close of the final call, we had in our list 73 entries in total: sixty (60) or 82.2% authored by girls. To safeguard gender equity principles, we adjusted the strategy once again in a way that the runners up positions would be shared by gender (one girl one boy each for first and second runners up). So as not to diminish the credibility of the competition we did not diminish the originally announced value of the prizes each individual holding these positions receives notwithstanding the budgetary implications.

## **Critical Phase**

The process of compiling entries, short listing, judging and training was indeed critical in terms of speed and creativity given the timeframe, diversity of activities given our human and financial resource base at the time. Faced with the choice to extend the process further or tide it up with less ambition, we chose the latter. We intensified our efforts to mobilise budgetary and in kind support, adjusting the plans and budget almost on daily basis. We also convened an advisory committee which gave us invaluable insights and encouragement throughout this period. Goethe Institute and CBP extended their support that filled in the budgetary gap enough for the process to be completed. With a part time program officer on board, who performed her duties as a full time employee most of the time, we were able to do much with less. Compilation of entries was done internally. It involved listing all entries by date of receipt, name, gender, school, address (postal, email and

phone number of the school and personal where provided), number of words, genre and scholastic status—which level at the time of submission. Judging and training was done by external panels.

Judges comprised of three people, one man and two women. The team brought on board diverse experiences relevant to the task: language and Kiswahili literature teachers (former and current), a publisher, authors, management of readership programs with creative writing and training components. Judging criteria were as stated (in Kiswahili) in the competition announcement:

1. Dhamira: Mapambano dhidi ya ufishadi na rushwa ‘rushwa na ufishadi ni masuala yanayoibuka mara kwa mara katika mijadala ya kijamii. Athari zake kiuchumi na kiutamaduni zinatishia kudidimiza aadili, utangamano na mstakabali wanchi yetu...’
2. Utazu: Hadithi fupi isiyoziidi maneno 5000
3. Lugha: Kiswahili
4. Vigezo: Tumia lugha nyepesi, fasaha, yenye vionjo vya kisanaa; visa na wahusika wa kuaminika; uwe na mvuto kwa wasomaji vijana; itemize vigezo vyote vya hadithi ya kubuni

Judges were expected requested to:

1. Convene a meeting to develop a marking scheme based on the criteria highlighted above;
2. Develop and implement a judging strategy that will be fair and transparent;
3. List the winning stories in hierarchical order from the overall best to the tenth best;
4. Compile a list of general weaknesses that trainers should pay attention to during creative writing skills building workshop for authors of 10 best stories;
5. Compile and present to **Soma** relevant observations, lessons and/or recommendations for improvement in the subsequent rounds.

Judges adopted the process suggested in their TORS with minor adjustments. They developed a marking scheme with a list of indicators for each of the attributes they were given and allotted standard weight to each of them. Then they divided among themselves equal number of shortlisted entries (seven entries were not stories so they were disqualified; and three were from authors who were not students at the time of submission) to read individually and make a selection of 10 outstanding stories. They made another round in which they swapped the selected stories so that each read more 10 stories they hadn't read before and selected the best seven. This gave them the best 21 stories from which to make a final selection based on score sheets. The ten best were entries from eight girls and two boys from the last call and first call respectively.



General strength of the entries according to judge is that majority of contestants adhered to the theme and genre. The general weakness was in the mastery of creative writing craft. Many of the stories had many undeveloped characters, some of whom had no role in propelling the story. There were language usage mistakes, underdeveloped plots with weak or illogical conflicts, more preaching than letting the story unfold, little or no originality, little dialogue, little or inappropriate use of imagery. In terms of content, authors did not research their stories. This made it difficult for them to tell a rounded story. They thus resorted to sweeping and banal statements, arguments and conclusions; full of cliché. A number of gender related weaknesses were also observed including invisibilising, stereotyping and silencing women characters. Male characters were also stereotyped in most stories. These observations were used in developing terms of reference for trainers.

The training team was lead by a professor of Kiswahili literature, himself an author of juvenile literature with vast experience in designing training packages and training budding writers. It comprised of four persons two women and two men; each possessing wide experiences with gender equality approaches and active interest in trasformative portray of women in literature. The workshop was residential attended by seven budding writers, all girls. The two male students authors of 2010 entries were in college and did not wish to participate in the training while one of the ten best authors did not respond to our invitation; and nor did her school.

The workshop aimed at equipping budding authors with the requisite writing skills to enable them a) continue to write with more confidence and skills; and b) rewrite and improve their stories for possible publication. The content comprised as well basic knowledge and information on copyright, publishing contracts; and criteria used to review manuscripts for publication. The workshop was conducted in Kiswahili and was delivered in a combination of short interactive presentations, discussion, individual and group practical work.

Prior to the workshop, trainers received and read the 10 winning manuscripts. They used their own critical evaluation and inputs of judges to prepare workshop content tailored to specific needs of the trainees. The team agreed on the mode of operation including workshop schedule and allocation of training topics. They visited the workshop venue to inspect the space and facilities; and made a list of stationeries and references they would require. Student participants arrived a day before the start of the workshop scheduled to commence 3/12/2012. They hailed from various schools: Saint Fransisca in Mbeya (one participant), Baobab Girls in Bagamoyo (three participants), Machame and Masama Girls in Hai District (one and two participants respectively). Those who did not participate were from Azania in Dar es salaam (two) and Morogoro Secondary (onen).

The workshop started with a theoretical discussion on the process of writing, attributes and qualities of an author, concepts of “short story”, “novel” and “novella.” In the afternoon participants were introduced to the principles and techniques of fiction writing which continued to the second day. On Wednesday they were introduced to manuscript evaluation in the morning and worked in group to evaluate each other’s manuscripts in the afternoon through to tea time the following morning. The rest of the day was devoted to group presentations followed by inputs by the Trainers and general discussion. In the evening the participants worked on improving their manuscripts. On Friday, the final day of the workshop, students continued to work on their manuscripts until tea-time. They also filled evaluation forms and worked on preparations for the closing and prize giving ceremony which took place in the evening of the same day. Some of the students volunteered to recite poems and read excerpts from their manuscripts at the function.

Workshop evaluation was done using a pre-prepared evaluation form. The outcome is summarised below:

**Content:** all participants said they grasped four out of seven topics covered very well. One participant had moderate grasp of the concepts of ‘a short story’, ‘novel’ and ‘novella’. Four had a similar rating for the topics ‘copyright’ and ‘publishing contracts’; and two on ‘manuscript review’ (practical). All of them said the practical work they did to review each other’s works and to improve their own improved their skills very much. The tool sought additional recommendations; which a few gave. These included: exposure to a variety of story books (four); more emphasis on principles of fiction writing (two); trainers to assess comprehension (one); to be shown in published literary work how each creative writing principle covered is employed (one); to be helped to get published (one); more time allocated to learning about copyright and publishing contracts (three); more practical work (two)<sup>2</sup>.

**Learning environment and logistics:** They were all pleased with the training environment and logistics. The venue, Cefa Hostel, food and security received the highest scores from all participants. A few wanted a break every 80 minutes; a few recommended early notification while a couple wanted a city tour to be included in the programme.

**Suggested topics for the second round:** effects of globalisation on the lives of Tanzanians (1); poverty (3), drug abuse (2), HIV & AIDS (1), romantic/sexual relations at adolescence (2), role of men in society (1), gender awareness among young people (1).

**Suggested methodology:** all participants preferred a combination of lectures, discussion and practical work over lecture method and learning by doing.

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<sup>2</sup> Participants could make as many suggestions as they wanted/or space allowed or skip if they had no suggestion to make.

## Final Phase

Finally at the end of a long and challenging process we arrived at the peak, marked by the workshop closing and awarding ceremony; and a time to look back and take stock of lessons and chart out the way forward. The two male runners up joined in. The ceremony took place at **Soma** Book Cafe; attended by students and teachers of some of the winners' schools, media and other friends of the book; including representatives of Goethe Institute and CBP and steering committee members. Certificates of participation were conferred to the seven participants and monetary and book prizes presented to the winners as detailed in Table 1 below:

**Table 1:** *Short Story Competition for Secondary Schools Prize Structure*

POSITION	DESIGNATES	AWARDS
1 <sup>ST</sup> Prize	One overall Winner	A school library book collection worth T. Shillings One Million Shillings (1,000,000/=), their own book parcel worth T. Shillings Five Hundred Thousand (500,000/=) and a cash prize of T. Shillings Five Hundred Thousand (500,000/=)
2 <sup>ND</sup> Prize	Two 1 <sup>st</sup> runners up (1 girl, 1 boy)	Each a school library book collection worth T. Shillings Five Hundred Thousand (500,000/=), a personal library book parcel worth T. Shillings Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand (250,000/=) and a cash prize of T. Shillings Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand (250,000/=)
3 <sup>RD</sup> Prize	Two 2 <sup>nd</sup> runners up (1 girl, 1 boy)	Each a personal book collection worth 250,000/- and a cash prize of T. Shillings 100,000/-

The ceremony was intended to be a big public event meant to serve as a platform to validate young authors and their products; announce the second round of the competition; and mobilise public support for the subsequent rounds and replicable offshoots. Ultimately it intended to grow in size and diversity until it becomes a multi agency literary festival in which sub products of this competition combine with an array of other expressions and products celebrating literature as one of the living cultural heritages (East Africa has a literary culture dating back to over 500 hundred years which not all its residents are aware of; and an even longer and still vibrant orature<sup>3</sup>). This time round however we had to make do with a relatively low key ceremony, not so well attended by the general public. It was enlivened by live music from a dynamic Wahapahapa band; poetry recitation by Bashiru Ali a prominent intellectual and poet; a comedy show by a pair of underground artists and poetry and readings from the students. Professor Mulokozi, the lead trainer was the special guest who conferred certificates of participation to workshop participants; and Ms Pili Dumea CBP Director

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<sup>3</sup> Professor Micere Mugo's coinage of what others term oral literature.

represented judges. She presented prizes to winners. They each made brief presentations on the relevance of the initiative in general, each elaborating on the process based on their own perspectives and the respective roles each played. The media and documentation was consistent from the first day of the workshop. The event and events preceding it were thus covered in two television and one radio station; and radio and three daily news papers. A videographer we assigned to cover the events produced eight tapes of raw images and one 20 minutes CD for dissemination in various ways for lesson sharing and advocacy.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS**

This process gave us many challenges and lessons. Number one, how do you deal with a situation when you have raised expectations and you find yourself unable to fulfil those expectations due to funding limitations? This was our biggest test; and though it took us three years to pull through this round of the competition, we are left inspired and energized. In the course of implementing it, we have built valued linkages and partnerships with organisations and individual who offered a helping hand even when their baskets were half full; we have learnt how to do a lot with little; we have perseverance; and what it means to work under pressure with a number of overlapping deadlines; worthy lessons for a young organisation. Ultimately, we delivered quality outputs.

### **Outputs and Outcomes**

Outputs for this round of the competition can be summarised as follows:

1. Training modules for budding fiction writers in Kiswahili which can be adapted to train similar groups;
2. 73 secondary school students showed interest in creative writing with 63 writing fiction;
3. 7 students enhanced their skills through intensive engagement with both theoretical and practical aspects of writing fiction;
4. Key lessons on the scope, approach, outcomes and how to organize a literary competition and its training component generated (incorporating recommendations participants and implementers throughout the process);
5. The beginning of a data base on budding and promising authors (and data base expansion of resourceful organisations and individuals) for future use by **Soma** and other interested stakeholders; and key milestones documented for future use.
6. Seven potentially publishable manuscripts if and when improved;
7. Five secondary school students (three girls and two boys)celebrated and rewarded for best performance in creative writing;

8. Two secondary schools received a book collection for their libraries because of their students' efforts (the overall winner and first female runner up came from one school);
9. State and non state actors (local and international, institutional and individual) extended valuable financial and in kind support to the implementation of this initiative.

It is our expectation that if carefully and intensively followed up, achievements so far will result into the following concrete **outcomes and impact:**

1. Enhanced awareness and interest on literature and creative expression among students and teachers in the participating schools, and some of the non-participating schools;
2. Encouragement to other organizations to get involved in supporting young writers and related readership and literacy for empowerment initiatives;
3. Social, economic and educational impact in the long run (enhancement of reading, enrichment of the cultural life of the young people, and the accompanying social and economic benefits);
4. Systematic media alliance in promoting literature and creative communication.

## **Challenges**

It is **Soma's** first experience in implementing a nation-wide writing competition. Much as its various components relate with our regular activities, the success of this initiative depended on several interlinked variables that require intensive follow up, mobilisation and networking; and observance of a strict schedule. Mobilising resources for each and every component within the planned timeframe proved to be one of the major challenges. The most outstanding challenges experienced and efforts to mitigate them are as follows:

**Budget constraints:** this initiative was set in motion with promised funding from two sources which for various reasons did not materialise. After several fundraising efforts including internal income generation; in 2011, we received a grant from the GFW (for the 2012 planning cycle); meant to strengthen our gender component. Waiting for response for a funding proposal submitted to Open Society East Africa (OSIEA), we continued implementing GFW supported activities (which included a small but significant institutional capacity component). Budget gaps remaining to be filled were for: training, prizes, awarding ceremony, and media (and public engagement). Talks with the Goethe Institute indicated possible cooperation in the training, preferably with a cultural exchange component. OSIEA fund did not materialise, and despite many requests we did not attract another

funding source. At the time we were considering half measure options to finalise this round, the Goethe Institute made its contribution of funds for book prizes and lead trainer's honorarium; the Children Book Project (CBP) took over the whole training budget in response to a last minute partnership request. It is our hope that partnership with each of the three organisations will continued in subsequent rounds. In the meantime, conversation is ongoing with Open Society to consider supporting this and our other youth initiatives in the current planning cycle. Other fundraising strategies are focusing on local corporate social responsibility programmes and strengthening our internal income generating units.

**Communication:** For reasons explained above, activities which were originally planned to be implemented in a span of six months had to materialise within a period slightly over two months. There was therefore not enough time to communicate with all the schools and pupils who participated in the competition. This was made more complex by the fact that some students who submitted the first 22 entries had already graduated; and some contestants only gave their school postal addresses. Efforts were however made to reach school heads and most assisted in tracking their past students and assisting the top ten to participate in the training with written school and/or parents' consent. Prior communication to ensure our schedule did not interfere with school and other student specific schedules was also not done. As a result our schedule clashed with exams for some schools and school holidays for some.

**Public engagement and media:** this activity was meant to be used to mobilise public and action to promote readership. As such therefore, at every stage in its process; intensive and well crafted public engagement strategies are important. Announcing the competition ought to have been accompanied by intensive media engagement to ensure inclusiveness but also raising public awareness on the state of readership, its relationship with low quality in education and why citizens should be interested to act; drawing parallels with the competition and its many sub-activities as one of the ways to act. Media is also critical at the time of compiling stories—how many, what quality, how many schools and other important nuances such as gender, age, type of schools (endowment) etc. once again mobilising public interest. Further is required prior to, during and after the awarding ceremony during which period new partnerships should be forged, existing ones consolidated; and synergic initiatives recognised and encouraged. Given the time constraints and limited funds, little could be done in this area. To mitigate this, we ensured media coverage of the training and awarding ceremony with extensive internal documentation (text and visual, with live examples from the training workshop and testimonials from students, trainers, organisers) to be used for follow up advocacy and public engagement.

Participation by the public in the final closing and prize-giving ceremony was below expectation; which as noted by the lead trainer who has vast experience in organising cultural and literary events is “a perennial

Tanzanian scourge when it comes to matters of books and culture”. He suggested and we concur, that greater “sensitization and publicity is needed in future events”. Other than having to stretch to December, thus competing for attention with end of the year processes, the awarding ceremony initially planned to coincide with the Book Week also suffered from the latter’s cancellation at the eleventh hour. Since it is planned to build towards the staging of an annual literary festival, it is high time it was planned to exist independently, preferably adopting one of the international literacy and/or literature related dates. This is what we will strive to achieve as we plan and mobilise for the implementation of the second round.

### **Lessons and follow ups**

***Support to round one participants and mobilising:*** As a follow up for this round we will consolidate data thus far generated so as to respond to all participants who made their entries and encourage them to continue writing. For those who participated in the training we plan to facilitate an online forum for them to continue supporting each other and seeking assistance from their trainers and other literary gurus. We plan to make a call for the second round early reaching out to those who did not succeed, encouraging them to try again, and to those who participated in the training workshop to mobilise friends and colleagues to participate. Special appeals will be made to school heads of girls’ and ward schools (which are the least endowed in the country) to encourage their students to participate.

***Implementation and public engagement tools:*** We will further streamline data and information collected and systematise implementation guides and refine our monitoring tools and appraisal frameworks. We also intend to use the experience and information generated to design and produce various public engagement inputs and IEC materials to be used for public engagement and sharing lessons with old and new partners.

***Building partnerships and fundraising for round two:*** as rightly observed by the lead trainer, the “success of this (training) workshop shows that it was a worthwhile endeavour which should be done again in future... for this reason... **Soma** should endeavour to reach more sponsors (I suspect that some would-be sponsors had no idea that such a workshop was being organized)”. We intend to build lasting partnerships with those who cooperated with us and supported us throughout the extended implementation of the first round and reach out to other potential local and international partners and donors. This will be complemented with efforts to mobilise support from corporate and individuals within various local publics and internal fundraising through our internal income generating units. Much as we were able to complete this round with less than half of the planned budget, we had to compromise a number of critical inputs such as

media and communication. We therefore need to carefully scrutinise our budget implementation and workout a cost effective budget which takes into consideration all critical inputs. Key milestones for round two are: consolidating lessons and using them to design follow up action and budget (January/February); feedback to participants, supporters and partners (January/ February); financial mobilisation (starting from January); participatory theme selection (December 2012 to March 2013); announcement of the competition and mobilisation of public interest (March to July). The critical and final phase activities will be detailed as part of the design of round two and shared later this month; together with a detailed report of budget implementation (part of ongoing and outsourced closing of annual accounts and audit).

- Future competitions should give more room to the participants to select the themes and subject matter for their stories rather than confining them to one theme as was the case this year;
- This year all the participants (in the workshop) were girls; boys did not show up. This may have been a logistical rather than gender problem. The issue of logistics should receive more attention in future;
- Although the training lasted for 5 days, I noted that, with a tighter schedule, 4 days would have sufficed. In future Soma should look into that possibility, which could also be a cost-saving measure.

## **1.0 CONCLUSION**

It was an honour and a pleasure for me to work with Soma on this venture. I like it, and I will continue to support it whenever I can because it is creative. I do hope more people and organization will opt to offer their support so that the competitions and workshops can become a regular, annual or bi-annual, feature of Soma activities. I wish to express my gratitude to the co-Trainers, Ms. Pili Dumea and Mr. R. Mabala for their willingness to assist at short notice, and for their valuable input in the training. My thanks and congratulations to the seven youthful participants who made it to the venue; they were all serious, attentive, lively and very eager to learn. I learned a thing or two from them. Finally, my thanks and congratulations to Ms. Demere Kitunga and her colleagues, whose foresight, dedication and perseverance made it possible to hold the workshop.



With the intention put in motion a participatory process for the theme for the second round, participants of the first round who made it to the training workshop were invited to make their suggestions. This will be followed up by more calls for a theme from secondary school students using during the first two months of 2013 just before the call for the second round in March 2013.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

A tracking tool has been designed to monitor timely implementation and tracking of all elements required to be put in place at every implementation stage. These are reported to advisory committee and key milestones are also documented visually for future use in reporting, archiving and media. Financial records are well kept for proper accounting to the various funders, board and for institutional knowledge. Periodic progress reports are made for internal sharing and accountability. Design of the workshop will have a built in participants evaluation which will feed into the final report, together with views of the judges, workshop facilitators and audience of the award winning ceremony. Feedback from participants will be sought using a simple questionnaire enclosed with a letter informing them of the outcome of the competition (until such a time that we receive too many entries that can respond directly to shortlisted contestants).

- **Dissemination and follow up support**

The winning entry will be serialized in *Soma* literary magazine and outstanding ones will be compiled into an anthology jointly published by **Soma** and a willing publishing associate with prior informed consent of the authors (with their copyrights protected). Sponsorships will be solicited for bulky purchase of the publications of the anthology for free distribution to secondary schools, college and public libraries so as to access this novel literature to a wide audience.

- **Public engagement and fundraising<sup>4</sup>**

The prize giving ceremony for one round will be a media platform to promote the initiative and engage the public through media. This will continue all through the subsequent year, with a specific focus for the year. For the 2013 round, other than fundraising for core competition activities, we are also focusing on supporting the serialisation of the winning stories in **Soma** magazine and the introduction of a **literacy trophy** to be competed for by schools and/or communities a functional school and/or community library. The trophy may include a substantial book collection to satisfy the identified reading needs and other library facilities such as computers/internet services to broaden user services, enhance access and digital aided literacy. It is meant to not only promote

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<sup>4</sup> Formulation of a detailed strategy for activities conceptualised under this step will be further elaborated this month and during the first month of next year in consultation with identified sponsor/sponsors.

competitiveness at the level of the individual but to also draw in communities and schools while broadening the base and agency in promoting literacy and quality education.

Private and public institutions supporting this initiative will be making a contribution to a tangible and sustainable social project with direct benefits to individual students, their schools and their communities in ways that each makes an effort to make it a reality; thus values and cherishes the end result. In essence, this initiative stimulates self drive and secures that whatever is won by contestants; is linked to their own initial contribution; and therefore is truly ‘owned’ and will be nurtured by them. The activities therein and its sponsors will be part of public discourse all through the year. For that purpose, our media strategy needs to be systematic; preferably linked with an all year round radio and television popular program whose sponsor will be solicited from among identified sponsors of this project.

To consolidated the literary competition; making sure its gender and public engagement components are well articulated as a launching pad to: i) rallying public support to initiate and support the existence of school libraries; and ii) ensuring more girls (and boys) participate and encourage others to do the same; iii) those trained in each cohort become enduring authors; and iv) at least three stories among the ten best are published each year—first using our own platforms—**Soma** literary magazine and our website but eventually we are thinking of starting an anthology of short stories coming out of this activity, preferably in partnership with an existing publishing house.

## 2013 PLAN AND BUDGET

**Table 2** presents the budget estimate for the 2013 round; based on 2012 implementation.

**Table 2: 2013 Budget estimates**

<b>S/ N</b>	<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>Unit Cost</b>	<b>Total Budget</b>
<b>SUB-PROJECTI: ROUND TWO SHORT STORY COMPETITION</b>			
1.	<b>Announcement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• media adverts</li> <li>• design, production and distribution of a poster and leaflet with instructions to schools and other organisations serving secondary schools and physical and cyber</li> </ul>	Lump sum	USD 1500

	public spaces • advert in specialised publications (magazines and newsletters)		
2.	<b>Prizes:</b> • Overall winner • Two 1st Runners up • Two 2nd Runners up	1,000 1,000 500	USD 2500
3.	<b>Judging:</b> • Transport and honoraria judges (Usd 200 x 3 x 3 days) • Venue, stationary and logistics	1,800 250	USD 2050
4.	<b>Creative Writing Workshop:</b> • Transport to & fro (average Usd 25 x 6 x2) assuming 6 out of 10 participants are from upcountry; and at least 1 has to travel by plane. • Workshop venue (5 days x 50 Usd) • Accommodation (Usd 50 x10x 6 days) • per diem (Usd 15 x 10x 7 days) • Transport and honoraria facilitators(Usd 200x2x7 days).Inclusive of reading participants entries, preparation of training outline and workshop report • Workshop venue (Usd 50 x 5day)s • Stationary (and ref. material)	300 250 3,000 1,050 2,800 250 500	USD 8150
4.	Prize giving event (venue, speakers, media and artistic interventions)	Usd 2,000	USD 2000
5.	Media coordination	500	USD 500
6.	Documentation (video and still pictures shooting and editing, raporteuring)	700	USD 700
7.	Coordination logistics and administration (Lump sum)	500	USD 500
8.	<i>Sub-Total</i>		<i>USD 17,900</i>
9.	Incidental Costs (5% of budget)		USD 895
10.	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>USD 18,795<sup>5</sup></b>

## Conclusions and Follow up

<sup>5</sup> Budget lines for other follow ups such as the Literacy Trophy and radio/TV program will be detailed separately as soon as we identify a sponsor.

Our conclusions are based on our own experience of success and challenges of implementing this activity as against the expected results in the context within which we operated as well as structured and unstructured feedback of others who participated in one way or another in the whole exercise: judges, trainers, winners, non winners, service providers, media and the general public, including schools and parents with participating students as well as supporting agencies.