

## PRESS RELEASE

Text Book Centre (TBC) Hosts Second Annual Penmanship Awards to Celebrate Kenyan Authors and the Growing Reading Culture



**Photo:** L-R Dawn Makena, Head of Books, Text Book Centre; Mr. Chetan Rughani, Chief Operations Officer of Text Book Centre; hand the Lifetime Award plaque to Professor Eddah Gachukia, founder of the Riara Group of Schools, for her significant contribution to education and for founding of Riara Schools and accomplished author.

**Nairobi, Kenya – 14 May 2026** – Text Book Centre (TBC) hosted the Second Annual Penmanship Awards at the Jain Bhavan Auditorium in Loresho, bringing together authors, publishers, educators, students, and literary stakeholders to celebrate Kenyan storytelling under the theme “Across Ages, Across Pages”. The awards build on the success of the inaugural edition which was launched during TBC’s 60th anniversary.

These awards come at a time when the global and African publishing industries are witnessing new energy. According to industry reports, the global book publishing revenues are expected to witness growth due to educational publishing, children's books, and increased interest in local content.

In Africa, rising literacy rates, growing middle-class populations, and developing education systems are fuelling demand for books, especially the locally published titles. In Kenya, educational and trade publishing remain important growth segments. The Kenyan government is planning an increase in the education budget to KES 767 billion for the 2026/27 financial year as per the approved 2026 Budget Policy Statement (BPS) by Parliament. Stakeholders in the education and publishing industries anticipate an increase in investment in learning infrastructure and educational materials.

Commenting during the event, **Sachin Varma, CEO of Text Book Centre**, said, *"Each year we run the Penmanship Awards, we lower the barrier for one more writer who might otherwise never have known this platform existed. Each year, the network of people committed to Kenyan literary talent grows a little larger and a little stronger. That compounding effect, small each year and significant over a decade, is exactly how ecosystems are built."*

In earlier remarks made during the programme, **Prof. Miriam Maranga-Musonye** from the University of Nairobi underscored the crucial role that literature plays in society, saying, *"Literature serves as the basis for promoting and localizing storytelling."* *"Communities can see themselves, their histories, and their futures reflected in their literature,"* she remarked. Prof. Maranga-Musonye lauded the Text Book Centre for initiating this program, saying that significance lies in the celebration of the art of storytelling not just as entertainment but as one of the oldest and most important aspects of human survival.

Reiterating the need for the players in the sector to collaborate and create sustainable and resilient ecosystems that will help spur growth for Kenya's literary future, she emphasized that it is necessary to encourage younger people to nurture penmanship.

Further enriching the discussion around the business of books, was a discussion panel that brought together the Chairman of the Kenya Publishers Association, **Mr. Musyoki Muli**, author **Chris Madison**; and **Sharon Banda**, Operations Director, East African Educational Publishers, discussing the journey "From Manuscript to Marketplace" and highlighting some of the exciting opportunities for African writers.

The TBC Penmanship Awards celebrated outstanding authors and literary contributors across a wide range of categories, including adult literature, teen and children's books, junior authors, school libraries, and lifetime achievement recognition. Among the notable winners were media personality Janet Mbugua for her book *My First Time*; Dr. Anuradha Khoda for *Noah and the Rainbow Promise Series 2*; and Jackson Biko for his book *Big Little Fights*. The event also honoured Professor Eddah Gachukia with a Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of her immense contribution to education and for founding the Riarua Group of Schools, which has continued to stand out as a centre of excellence. In addition, the late Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was posthumously recognised for his remarkable global contribution to African literature.

The theme Across Ages, Across Pages was brought to life with a special award for boys and girls under 13 years old who have written and published books. These included Joseph Laight from Potter House School with the book - *The Big Tomato*, Joseph Yohan Ayiro from Woodcreek Schools with his book - *Inside Africa* and sisters Maya and Nia Muchiri from Kiota School, with their book - *KYLA to the land of Magic*

**Joy Okumu, Head of Retail at Text Book Centre**, closed the ceremony by thanking all partners, authors, and readers for their unwavering support, adding, "A strong reading culture takes collaborative efforts among writers, publishers, schools, libraries, and readers." Through the Penmanship Awards, Text Book Centre is committed to fostering Kenya's literary development. We remain committed to supporting Kenyan authors, encouraging them to start young as embodied in our special award for boys and girls under 13 years; strengthening reading culture; and contributing significantly to the development of the country's educational landscape."

### **About Text Book Centre**

*Text Book Centre (TBC) Kenya is a book, stationery, IT and Art supplies retail store based in Nairobi Kenya, with over 60 years of retail prowess across Nairobi, founded in 1964 as a partnership between two businessmen, Mr. S V Shah and Mr. M J Rughani. TBC has 15 branches in Kenya plus an online platform (textbookcentre.com). TBC has been a retail market leader in Books, Stationery and Art. We have gained our footing for Tech products, where we already receive the general perception of selling genuine, brand-new products. We have fostered strong partnerships with local and international publishers, authors, and Schools across the country.*

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