

SAFAL KISWAHILI PRIZE FOR AFRICAN LITERATURE

2025 Shortlist Announcement

Dar es Salaam, July 20th 2026 — The Safal Kiswahili Prize for African Literature has announced the nine shortlisted manuscripts across three categories — fiction, poetry, and short story collections — ahead of its 10th-anniversary awards ceremony on 24 July in Dar es Salaam.

The Prize is supported by Safal Group, through its subsidiaries Mabati Rolling Mills of Kenya and ALAF Tanzania.

The Safal Kiswahili Prize for African Literature was founded in 2014 by Dr. Lizzy Attree and Dr. Mukoma wa Ngũgĩ to recognize writing in African languages and encourage translation from, between, and into African languages. This year's awards mark the prize's 10th anniversary; it has been awarded every year since 2015, except in 2020, when the awards were paused due to the global Covid pandemic.

Dr. Lizzy Attree said that reaching 10 years is a huge milestone. She further added, “we have awarded over 150,000 USD to over 40 writers and helped to publish more than 20 books. I hope more African languages can be recognized in a similar way, and that this work brings Kiswahili literature to the world.”

Professor Mukoma wa Ngũgĩ pointed to the publishing ecosystem for Kiswahili that has developed over the last decade, connecting winning authors directly with publishers including Mkuki na Nyota and the African Poetry Book Fund (APBF). He added, “We are grateful for Safal, which has set a precedent for African philanthropy that grows African cultures. We challenge African governments and their respective ministries of culture to create an ecosystem for each African language.”

This year, 230 manuscripts were submitted for the awards from seven countries.

The chair of this year's judges' panel, Professor Rayya Timammy from the University of Nairobi, when announcing the judges' decision, noted that the competition for the 2025 Safal Kiswahili Prize for African Literature was exceptionally intense. This was due both to the large

number of manuscripts received and to the exceptional talent demonstrated by the writers who submitted.

Professor Timammy added, “The panel of judges faced a significant challenge in selecting the winners because of the outstanding quality of the submitted works. This undoubtedly demonstrates that literary talent continues to grow and flourish at a remarkable pace.”

Munyao Kilolo, director of the Prize, said that this growth has been consistent over the last 10 years. “In the beginning we had less than 50 submissions, and now we receive submissions in the hundreds each year,” he said. Kilolo further noted that this growth has created a community of writers who support each other beyond the prize through collaborative anthologies and workshops.

Other judges who joined Prof. Rayya Timammy in reading and nominating the manuscripts for the 2025 competition were Dkt. Masoud Mohammed of the State University of Zanzibar, and Prof. Austin Bukenya, formerly of Makerere University.

The successful categories, shortlisted works and authors are:

Fiction

Ziaka Imetoboka - Mathew Theuri Maina (Kenya)

Mwanamkasi Ndio Basi - Salim Hussein Ng'anzi (Tanzania)

Shamba la Mawe - Dickson Damas Mtalaze (Tanzania)

Poetry

Diwani ya Vizikwa Vya Kale - Ali Hilal Ali (Tanzania)

Zigo la Kichwa - Maimuna Hashim Maalim (Tanzania)

Rima la Miiko na Balaa - Lenard Barnaba Mtesigwa (Tanzania)

Short Story Collections

Mbunge Mtarajiwa na Hadithi Nyingine - Dominic Maina Oigo (Kenya)

Koti la Karani na Hadithi Nyingine - Stallone Joyfully (Tanzania)

Siri ya Mama na Hadithi Nyingine - Sophia Said Puta (Tanzania)

Among them, **Mathew Theuri Maina, Ali Hilal Ali, Lenard Barnaba Mtesigwa** and **Stallone Joyfully** have either won or been shortlisted for previous editions of the prize.

The overall winners will be announced at the awards ceremony scheduled for 24th July 2026 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Kiswahili Prize Award Criteria: The prize will be awarded to the best unpublished manuscript or book published within two years of the award year across the categories of fiction (novels and short story collections), poetry, memoir, and graphic novels. The total proposed awards of 15,000 US dollars will be divided as follows:

1st Fiction/Non-fiction prize - USD 5,000

1st Poetry prize – USD 5,000

(2) Runner-up Prizes in any genre– USD 2,500

In addition to the prizes, winning entries will also be considered for publication in Kiswahili by Mkuki na Nyota Publishers in Tanzania while the winning poetry will be translated into English and published by the African Poetry Book Fund.

Notes to Editors

The Safal Group (which include Mabati Rolling Mills Ltd of Kenya and ALAF Limited in Tanzania) is the largest producer of steel roofing on the African continent with 36 operations in 12 countries. www.safalgroup.com

Mabati Rolling Mills Ltd (MRM) is the largest producer of steel roofing in Kenya. Established more than 50 years ago, the company is a leading innovator in its field. MRM led Africa in the

manufacture of coated steel using the most advanced corrosion protection technology available worldwide, and its roofing brands are household names which are known and trusted by millions of consumers. www.mabati.com

The Safal MRM Foundation, based in Kenya, is a philanthropic enterprise of Mabati Rolling Mills and the Safal Group. It founded, and continues to fully manage, both the Mabati Technical Training Institute, and the Mabati Medical Centre, both in Mariakani, Kenya.

www.safalmrmfoundation.org

ALAF Limited (ALAF) is Tanzania's leading steel roofing manufacturer. Established in 1960, ALAF has always been, and continues to be, a key player in the development of the country's construction sector. ALAF is a fully integrated operation, not only making steel roofing, but also producing the metal coated coils used by these roofing operations. ALAF manufactures metal tubing and piping for various applications. alaf.co.tz

Mkuki na Nyota Publishers is an independent, vibrant Tanzanian imprint publishing relevant, progressive, liberating, affordable and entertaining content. Established in 1991, Mkuki na Nyota Publishers emerged in response to the general absence of high quality, independent publishing in Tanzania. Its mission statement is to publish, "Relevant Books, Affordable Books, and Beautiful Books."

The Africa Poetry Fund promotes and advances the development and publication of the poetic arts through its book series, contests, workshops, and seminars and through its collaborations with publishers, festivals, booking agents, colleges, universities, conferences and all other entities that share an interest in the poetic arts of Africa. <http://africanpoetrybf.unl.edu/>

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Director: Munyao Kilolo.

The bi-lingual website is: <https://kiswahiliprize.org>

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