

# AFRICAN PUBLISHING REVIEW

A Newsletter of the African Publishers Network

• ISSN: 2665-0959 • VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 1 • MAY 2020



## APNET TO ORGANISE REGIONAL TRAINING FOR TRAINERS IN AFRICA

Regional Training for African Trainers is one training model and initiative of the leadership of African Publishers Network (APNET) which focuses on the training of trainers in the African publishing industry. The idea is that APNET training should reach every nook and cranny of Africa. Hence, it is financially impossible to train all publishers at the national level across Africa. The Board of APNET intends to organise Regional Training for Trainers in Africa and the three-day training will be organised in two batches:

- First batch: Regional Training for Trainers from West, Central and Northern Africa to be held in Abidjan, Côte D'Ivoire.
- Second batch: Regional Training for Trainers from East and Southern Africa to be held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

The recent survey conducted by APNET that involved 31 African countries revealed striking findings. 65% of the countries do not have university publishing training; 61% do not have any short publishing training and 55% of the National Publishers' Associations (NPAs) do not have the capacity to organise workshops for publishers and other stakeholders in the industry. Most of these countries struggle with access to competent indigenous trainers to facilitate workshops for the industry players and hiring the services of external trainers is also expensive. Lack of training for publishers is highly evidenced in the kind of books most of them publish. African Publishers Network therefore intends to help build capacity of publishers to expand quality productivity for the benefit of Africa and beyond.

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#### Editorial Committee Members

- Mr. Nshimirimana Dieudonné (President, Burundian Book Publishers Association)
- Mr. Mpuka Radinku (Exec. Sec., Publishers Association of South Africa)
- Mr. Emmanuel Abiola Abimbola (Exec. Sec., Nigerian Publishers Association)
- Mr. James Odhiambo (Exec. Sec., Kenya Publishers Association)
- Mr. Ernest Oppong (Ag. Exec. Dir., APNET)

## IPA INVITES AFRICAN INNOVATORS TO SOLVE REMOTE LEARNING CHALLENGES AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC OUTBREAK

• • • Source: International Publishers Association

The International Publishers Association (IPA) is offering financial support for African publishing entrepreneurs to overcome the staggering impact of COVID-19 pandemic on education in 2020 and beyond.

Under a four-year USD 800,000 fund administered by the IPA in partnership with Dubai Cares, the UAE-based global philanthropic organisation, the grants for 2020 will be directed towards locally-owned, digital learning innovations to help African students continue their education.

This narrowed focus seeks to address the overnight predominance of homeschooling and remote learning amid the pandemic which, according to UNESCO, has forced 190 countries to close down schools and universities, affecting more than 1.5 billion school-aged children and youth, which represent around 90% of the world's student population.

The winners will be selected by the IPA Africa Publishing Innovation Committee, comprising senior publishing leaders from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tunisia and

South Africa\*. The group is chaired by IPA Vice-President, **Bodour Al Qasimi**, who said:

*'The COVID-19 pandemic has sent young learners and parents scrambling to find workable remote learning solutions with little guidance or support. It is critical that students don't get left behind, especially in African countries where infrastructure and technological challenges are greatest. With the Africa Publishing Innovation Fund the IPA has an opportunity to help improve this picture, by enabling local innovators to provide learning solutions that African schoolchildren and university students need.'*

Commenting on the correlation between the publishing industry and education at the current challenging times, **Dr. Tariq Al Gurg**, Chief Executive Officer at Dubai Cares and Member of its Board of Directors said:

*'The publishing industry plays a pivotal role in education throughout the world, and in such challenging times where COVID-19 has heavily affected education, this role will be eroded if we do*

not put forward innovative solutions that provide easy access to learning resources. As an organisation that focuses on providing access to quality education, we believe we have a critical role to play in ensuring equitable access to distance learning and the necessary resources for all children and youth in the world, especially during emergencies and crises. Through our support to IPA's Africa Publishing Innovation Fund, we seek to encourage entrepreneurs to develop innovative techniques to help students and teachers connect to information reliably and equitably, so learning and teaching practices are transformed because of COVID-19 academic institutions closures.'

The Committee will issue a formal call for applications on 1 June 2020. It will subject applicants to a rigorous vetting process involving a written application, in-person interviews, presentations and multiple feedback sessions. The number of grantees and amounts awarded are at the discretion of the Committee. These will be the second bursaries awarded under a

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4 L-R: Gbadega Adedapo (Nigeria), Dubai Cares's Tariq Al Gurg, the IPA's Bodour Al Qasimi and Hugo Setzer, Lawrence Njagi (Kenya), Brian Wafawarowa (South Africa) and other beneficiaries of the fund





## COUNTRY REPORT OF AFRICAN PUBLISHERS AMID COVID-19 PERIOD

### The Current State of the Publishing Industry in Africa

The recent Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak has had devastating global effects on life, health as well as the economy of almost all sectors, including the publishing industry in Africa. The year 2020 has been very challenging for book publishers across Africa and the world at large due to the aforementioned global pandemic. Comparatively, among all the continents in the world, Africa has the least developed publishing industry relative to technological advancements especially in the area of electronic publishing which serves as an alternative source of income generation for e-book publishers at all times, including lockdown periods such as this.

COVID-19, as indicated in the opening remarks, has affected almost all sectors. Only a few sectors including food and health are functioning in most countries. African governments are putting in place measures to contain the disease and help achieve quality health for their citizens. Other government initiatives include tourism and border closures, fewer international trips, cancellation of cruise lines, airline suspensions, and cancellation of regional and global events. Many African international book fairs have been cancelled and others with dates in the third and fourth quarters of the year are also being considered for cancellation or otherwise.

Educational institutions are closed and many businesses in Africa have been locked down to reduce and prevent further spread of the disease. The closure of schools automatically stops the distribution and sales of physical books because schools are the main clientele of publishers and booksellers which have always focused highly on textbook publishing since it has a specific market. Bookstores are also closed, thus terminating the possibility of selling books.

From the survey, the e-book publishing model is still not well developed among African publishers. Some of the countries have indigenous publishers without e-books while others have just a handful of them. So, African countries with an appreciable number of e-book publishers are few. Practical knowledge and solution to getting more publishers to develop and operate in the electronic book publishing model is the expectation of all African countries. Since e-book publishing in Africa is not as well developed as those of other continents, African publishers are probably the most affected by the pandemic.

A few governments of the countries that responded have plans to create online libraries as well as TV and radio educational programmes for students. However, some of the North African countries face restrictions on electronic book publishing and accessibility.

Some African publishers are benefiting from general support packages by their governments – a few

of the countries have had promises by their governments to buy books from publishers. Others are optimistic that their government would support the industry at the right time. APNET humbly requests all African governments to include the publishing industry in their support packages to minimise the financial risks and keep publishers in operation. With a decreasing income, or even lack of income, expenses, including salaries of workers, office rent, book warehousing costs and other operational expenses of publishing firms keep increasing publishers' liabilities; thus, the need for government's intervention.

Though the IMF had indicated earlier in March 2020 that the impact of COVID-19 on global growth was difficult to predict, the IMF is certain that 2020 growth will slow down significantly from the projected 3.3% to rates far below the 2019 outturn of 2.9%. The *United Nations Economic Commission for Africa* (UNECA) predicts that the Africa 2020 projected GDP growth will drop by 1.4% from 3.2% to 1.8% as a result of COVID-19. The World Bank estimates that a 1% decline in developing countries' growth rates traps an additional 20 million people into poverty (*Ministry of Finance's Statement to the Parliament of Ghana, March 30, 2020*).

Likewise, it is difficult for APNET, NPAs or any foreign body to quantitatively predict the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the publishing industry in Africa. However, the following outlines the adverse impact of the disease on the publishing industry which justifies the support of government and any interested organisation:

- Drastic decline of revenue due to little or no sales of books and decline in remittances;
- Disruptions in national and global supply chains with a drop in value creation and delays in the shipment of major printing materials, books and other publishing materials;
- Stoppage of ongoing publishing projects and a reduction in the quantity of published titles due to the attendant disincentives to publish;
- Slowdown in investments and the potential lay-off of workers if this unfortunate situation persists;
- Significant job losses for businesses, big and small;
- Unanticipated increases in health spending and high prices of other goods and services;
- Higher debt burden on publishers and stakeholders in the publishing industry; and
- Potential collapse of publishing firms.

Many African publishers are generously providing free e-books to support governments' reading projects. However, it is important to note that some countries including the Czech Republic, the National Municipal Library is buying 10 million CZK worth of books (e-books inclusive) from Czech publishers. This is an equivalent of 370,000 EUR. NPAs can advocate for such book procurement by government.

Below are snapshots of reports from publishers' associations/publishers of African countries. The report contains snapshots of the effects of COVID-19 on publishers, the contributions of publishers

in the promotion of reading in the lockdown period, the collaborative role of governments to develop reading and or learning platforms and whether there are support packages from governments to help minimise the financial risks of publishers, booksellers and other stakeholders in the industry.

## ALGERIA

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in Algeria, it is not only publishers that are locked down but also printing firms and bookstores. There is no opportunity to sell either physical books or e-books due to some payment issues in the country. As a result of this situation, all the publishing firms are facing very serious problems, since they must pay their employees and pay for all other operational expenses without undertaking any commercial activities such as book distribution and book fairs during this period. According to Mr Mustapha Kallab Debbih, President, National Organisation of Book Publishers in Algeria, 'Our organisation, the National Organisation of Book Publishers in Algeria (ONEL), tried to encourage people to read books during this time by thinking of some price reductions and other offers, but the lockdown made this very difficult. Unfortunately, till now, there is no support from the Algerian government to publishers, so Algerian publishers must face their destiny alone.'

## BENIN

As at today, Beninese publishers are not engaged in anything due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Meetings among publishers and writers

have decreased significantly. According to booksellers, sales have dropped tremendously because of the containment and distribution has dropped too. In the case of electronic publishing, online sale of electronic works varies from one publisher to another. Publishers in Benin have no measures for online libraries to enhance reading during the COVID-19 period. Mr Gerard D. Houessou, President, Publishers Association of Benin submits that 'Publishers adhere to strict compliance by the Beninese government. However, the government has done nothing special for publishers in these trying times. Each publisher is left to fend for themselves in order to avoid the coronavirus.'

## BURUNDI

According to Mr Dieudonné Nshimirimana, President, Burundi Publishers Association (BUPA), 'Publishers are not locked down, but we cannot organise some activities, especially the World Book and Copyright Day as usual. Books are still sold in the country but our main customers were foreigners who have left Burundi last week. We are setting up a publishers' meeting to organise this activity. No support from the government to publishers during and after the COVID-19.'

## CAMEROON

Publishers are not locked down in Cameroon. They are subject to the same requirements as all activities in a Coronavirus situation and there are no exclusive measures taken against publishers.

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## WIPO ORGANISES MENTORSHIP PROGRAMMES FOR SOME AFRICAN PUBLISHERS

• • • Source: Sherine Greiss, WIPO



Some Participating Mentees and Mentors in the WIPO Mentorship Programme

The Publishers' Circle initiative was undertaken by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) following the conclusion of the High-Level Regional Conference on the Publishing Industry in Africa and its Role in Education and Economic Growth that took place in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in 2017. The initiative seeks to support the publishing industry in developing countries through new forms of cooperation and joint projects with public and private partners in order to develop a viable, globally connected and effective publishing sector.

The activities in the framework of the Publishers Circle contribute directly to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) Quality Education and SDG 17 Partnership for the Goal through the reinforcement of the copyright framework as a solid basis for publishers and authors.

A charter expressing the engagements of stakeholders was developed by WIPO and was signed by 99 governments and non-governmental organisations, publishers, libraries and other partners, by the

end of 2019, indicating a broad support and engagement for the initiative from all regions and from different stakeholders. Thirty-six signatures were collected from Africa, including APNET and OAPI.

As part of the Charter's commitment, five mentorship programmes were launched involving African publishers from Burundi, Cameroon, Liberia and Madagascar, partnered with the following publishers: O'Brien Press in Ireland, La Croisée des Chemins and Yanbow al kitab in Morocco and the Hodder Education Group in the United Kingdom. WIPO coordinated these performance-coaching programmes, which aimed at developing long-term partnerships, transfer of practical knowledge and raising professional standards.

The programme of the performance coaching was prepared in accordance with the participants' expressed interests and identified challenges. It combined topics of practical value including a mixture of managerial, regulatory, legal and technology steps and processes. It covered to the publication process, company management,

branding and design, rights management, marketing, customer relations, contracts with foreign authors and many others. It included visits to various departments, including the printing shop, creative design, smart lab and other relevant departments.

Mentoring publishers who volunteered to take part at WIPO's initiative did not spare any efforts to share their knowledge and experience both at the technical as well as the managerial level. They organised tours for their mentees to other publishers and their warehouses in the city.

The performance-coaching programme achieved its main objective - it facilitated the transfer of knowledge to five publishers from African countries who received top information on the educational publishing business in Morocco, Ireland, and the United Kingdom and advice on how to address their current problems.

The WIPO Secretariat played the role of a facilitator. This also proved to be a success as WIPO's participation was considered as

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## APNET HOLDS A PROGRAMME AT THE 2019 FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR



Speakers Attentively Listening to Questions from the Audience

APNET organised a programme titled “*Collaboration for Development of Publishing Potentials in Africa*” at the International Stage (Hall 5.1) of the Frankfurt Book Fair on Friday 18th October, 2019; 12:00 to 1:00pm.

The programme involved presentations of insightful facilitators: APNET Chairman, Mr Samuel Kolawole; the President of International Publishers Association (IPA), Mr Hugo Setzer; the IPA Vice President, Bodour Al Qasimi and the Chair of the Africa Action Plan Committee, Mr Lawrence Njagi. The purpose of the programme was to make presentations to the participants across the world on the publishing potentials in Africa and the IPA Africa Conference series.

Mr Kolawole highlighted present collaborations APNET has had so far with bodies which include IPA, World Intellectual Property Organ-

isation (WIPO), Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), Turkish Publishers Association and other international book fairs which constitute Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (ADIBF), Frankfurt Book Fair and Sharjah International Book Fair. He underscored the relevance of collaboration and some past APNET’s collaborations:

*“Collaboration has always been a powerful tool and strategy to execute projects which could not have been possible as an individual organisation. African Publishers Network (APNET), established in 1992 and operates as a pan-African network of 42 national publishers’ associations and publishing communities in Africa, has had some successes collaborating with organisations which include UNESCO (reading campaigns); Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), (Capacity building, gathering of statistical data and research);*

*Some African universities to hold African Publishing Institute and have worked with the following on research and consultancies (World Bank, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), UNESCO, Donors to African Education (DAE), and the British Overseas Development Agency (ODA). It must be noted that Africa has a huge publishing market with so many untapped publishing potentials.”*

APNET Chairman noted that the present collaborations will help in the following publishing areas: training, book promotion, distribution and sales, printing, copyright, advocacy and partnerships among publishers.

I am happy to see that the collaboration between IPA and APNET is being materialised so quickly after the landmark agreement signed last June. I would also like to thank everybody involved in the organisation of this event for bringing this topic to the Frankfurt Book Fair. Across global fora, discussions about Africa are taking place. The world recognises this continent’s importance and potential.

IPA President, Mr. Hugo Setzer made a presentation on “*The importance and the future of publishing of the African continent in general*”. He indicated that:

*“I am happy to see that the collaboration between IPA and APNET is being materialised so quickly after the landmark agreement signed last June. I would also like to thank everybody involved in the organisation of this event for bringing this topic to the Frankfurt*

*Book Fair. Across global fora, discussions about Africa are taking place. The world recognises this continent's importance and potential.*

*Another opportunity to consider for Africa's future is something inherent to its history: multilingualism. Professor Ngugi wa Thiong'o's keynote speech in Nairobi was not only a rhetorical delight, but also an enlightenment: "monolingualism is the carbon monoxide of cultures [...]", he said, "multilingualism the oxygen of cultures". The moral value of multilingualism is something that we, as publishers, have to work hard to preserve. Furthermore, I am now convinced that multilingualism also represents a great business opportunity for publishers. There are more people eager to read and write in African languages, the mother tongues of many millions, than there are in consolidated publishing markets, such as Sweden or Norway. Multilingualism is both part of Africa's historical identity and an opportunity in its future. What better time for such realisation than in 2019, declared as the International Year of the Indigenous Languages by the United Nations.*

*Another worry has to do with the ability to read. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the average literacy rate among people aged 15 or above is of 59%. It is the region in the world with the lowest average and, within it, there are countries with even lower numbers (World Bank). That is why we need to work on different projects on the ground, like those that are underway thanks to our alliance with Dubai Cares."*

IPA Vice President, Bodour Al Qasimi talked about "What IPA is doing in the direction with the African Seminar Series". She recounted the history of the IPA Regional Seminars and highlighted the second edition of the IPA Regional Seminar in Nairobi which congregated publishers and other stakeholders across Africa and other foreign countries. Her presentation involved the contributions of the IPA Regional Conference Series and the plans of IPA for the publishing industry. IPA Vice President concluded that "*The future of the publishing industry in Africa is bright*"

Chairman of the IPA Africa Action Plan Committee, Mr. Lawrence Njagi focused on the promotion of indigenous languages of book projects and other impacts that have been achieved by the IPA Regional Seminar in Nairobi. The programme was well attended by book industry players across the world.

The leadership of African Publishers Network (APNET) took a bold decision to secure and pay for a 24sqm stand for collective exhibition in the 71st Frankfurt Book Fair scheduled from 16th – 20th October, 2019. The national publishers' associations such as Ghana Book Publishers Association, Nigeria Publishers Association and Kenya Publishers Association; and Graines de Pensees from Togo exhibited at a token fee. The purpose is to help African publishers and publishers' associations to participate in international book fairs at a subsidised cost to enhance trade promotion and explore business opportunities at the fair.

After the programme APNET celebrated Africa Day in our stand. Some African publishers together with some foreign participants came around for interaction and refreshment. That was an initiative to enhance the presence of APNET in Frankfurt Book Fair after some years of absence and to draw people's attention to African books.

The programme attracted the attendance of stakeholders in the book business interested in Africa and those interested in exploring the potentials of book publishing on the continent. The leadership of APNET also extended their appreciation to the past and present President and the Vice President of Vice President of IPA for their contributions to the development of publishing in Africa especially through the IPA Conference Series. Also, Star Publishing in Singapore and Quarterfold Printabilities in India were also honoured for their financial support to APNET.

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Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in May 2019 between Dubai Cares, part of Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives, and the International Publishers Association (IPA), the world's largest trade association for publishers.

In 2019, five African projects each won \$20,000 from the fund, while a library restoration was allocated \$50,000. Currently, half of these awards have been paid, with the remaining funds to be released when the pandemic is over.







APNET'S Collective Exhibition – Exhibitors interacting with some visitors

## APNET REACTIVATES ITS PARTNERSHIP WITH BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR

APNET re-established its partnership with Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF) after some years of absence as exhibitors in the Fair. APNET was given a complimentary stand and other support for collective exhibition in the Bologna Children's Book Fair which was originally scheduled for 30<sup>th</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2020.

The 57th Bologna Children's Book Fair was postponed to May 4 to 7 because of the COVID-19 outbreak and was eventually cancelled due to a spike in the Coronavirus cases. "BCBF anticipated to bring more than 1,400 exhibitors and some 30,000 trade publishing and professionals to Bologna, the fair is considered the world's most influential in children's and young-adult content." (Publishing Perspectives). The BCBF organisers look forward to meeting you online in a few weeks – and in Bologna from 12 to 15 April, 2021.

APNET was also to participate in the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair (ADIBF) with the support of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, the organisers of the ADIBFT. They have been supporting the participation of APNET in ADIBF since 2018. The Fair which was to take place from 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2020 has been postponed to 23<sup>rd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2021.

## APNET TO ORGANISE COLLECTIVE EXHIBITION AT THE 2020 FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR

The leadership of African Publishers Network (APNET) has secured a big stand for collective exhibition in the 72<sup>nd</sup> Frankfurt Book Fair scheduled from 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2020. The national publishers' associations and publishers are invited to register under APNET as a co-exhibitor. The purpose is to help promote trade for African publishers, publishers' associations and stakeholders in the publishing industry with the international publishing industry; and to participate in international book fairs at a subsidised cost to explore business opportunities at the fair.

There will be a second edition of APNET's programme on the international stage and Africa Day will also be celebrated in our stand. That was an initiative to enhance global visibility of African books, services and publishers.

Based on current information available, we expect the Frank-

furt Buchmesse to continue to take place from 14 to 18 October 2020. At the present time, we cannot foresee what health measures will apply in October, but our whole team is working steadily on planning halls, programmes and projects based on the idea that we will be able to host everyone in the fall. We are aware that a trade fair involves economic risks for all parties involved and we will therefore make decisions in the interests of our customers with regard to all measures and further planning. You can be assured that we will keep our communication on this subject consistently up-to-date and transparent (Juergen Boos, Director of Frankfurter Buchmesse, about the current situation).

APNET is still monitoring the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and will make a decision on whether to participate in this year's Frankfurt Book Fair or not because our health is of out-most importance.





## PHYSICAL BOOKS STILL OUTSELL E-BOOKS – AND HERE’S WHY

Source: CNBC by Lucy Handley

Do you prefer reading an e-book or a physical version? It might be a surprise, but for most people, old school print on paper still wins.

Publishers of books in all formats made almost \$26 billion in revenue last year in the U.S., with print making up \$22.6 billion and e-books taking \$2.04 billion, according to the Association of American Publishers’ annual report 2019. Those figures include trade and educational books, as well as fiction.

While digital media has disrupted other industries such as news publishing and the music business, people still love to own physical books, according to Meryl Halls, managing director of the Booksellers’ Association in the U.K.

“I think the e-book bubble has burst somewhat, sales are flattening off, I think the physical object is very appealing. Publishers are producing incredibly gorgeous books, so the cover designs are often gorgeous, they’re beautiful objects,” she told CNBC.

People love to display what they’ve read, she added. “The book lover loves to have a record of what they’ve read, and it’s about signaling to the rest of the world. It’s about decorating your home, it’s about collecting, I guess, because people are com-



pletists aren’t they, they want to have that to indicate about themselves.”

Genres that do well in print include nature, cookery and children’s books, while people prefer to read crime, romantic novels and thrillers via e-reader, according to Nielsen Book International.

It’s more than a decade since Amazon launched the Kindle, and for Halls, there is also a hunger for information and a desire to escape the screen. “It’s partly the political landscape, people are looking for escape, but they are also looking for information. So, they are coming to print for a whole, quite a complex mess of reasons and I think ... it’s harder to have an emotional relationship with what you’re reading if it’s on an e-reader.”

While millennials are sometimes blamed for killing industries, it’s actually younger people who appear to be popularising print. Sixty-three percent of physical book sales in the U.K. are to people under the age of 44, while 52% of e-book sales are to those over 45, according to Nielsen.

It’s a similar picture in the U.S., where 75% of people aged 18 to 29 claimed to have read a physical book in 2017, higher than the average of 67%, according to Pew Research.

Not every author is a fan of e-books: “The Catcher in the Rye” author JD Salinger famously resisted digital media and information sharing online, but in August his estate agreed to publish his work as e-books

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The pandemic has had negative effects on the book industry in Cameroon: a slowdown in the monitoring of current editorial projects, a decline in the submission of texts for publishing, a complete cancellation of physical book promotion activities, and a considerable reduction in the purchase of books. However, some pockets of book sales remain. Jean-Claude Awono, of Efrikiya Publishing House argues that having people confined causes them to come back to the conference and solicit books. ‘We have thus benefited from visits by expatriates, mainly selected in Cameroon, who take the opportunity to know what is happening in terms of literature in the country. Our digital partner also reports a craze at the conference that is doing something to increase sales figures.’

Regarding online libraries, publishers were not contacted by government. However, there are many links from online libraries that circulate in social networks. For the moment, no government support action for publishers is envisaged anywhere. Perhaps measures will be taken to support the publishing industry; this is not certain for the moment.

## CONGO

Publishers in Congo cannot work or do anything due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was reported that there is no technology to do electronic publishing in Congo and therefore would need the technology to publish digitally. The Congolese government does not support publishers but publishers are hoping for a better future.

## CÔTE D’IVOIRE (IVORY COAST)

With regard to Côte D’Ivoire, like other countries, COVID-19 impacts the socio-economic environment of the country in all its compartments. The publishing and book industry is specifically affected by this global pandemic. Obviously, the survival of publishers is seriously threatened by the health crisis. With the schools closed and bookstores practically no longer running, the risk of technical unemployment and cessation of activities threatens the sector. The slowdown in all the activities of the education system prevents bookstores from being active by making sales to the point that some have already freed some of their staff. The sale of books in electronic version is not yet dynamic for various reasons. At the same time, Mr Anges Félix N’Dakpri, President, Cote D’Ivoire Publishers Association, is not sure that this is a priority at this time for the population. ‘The government has promised support measures for all economic operators. We are waiting to see! By experience and by prudence, we want to plead with the government for a sectorial emergency plan to support the publishing and book industry.’

## EGYPT

All educational institutions and organisations are closed in Egypt. The Egyptian government has put measures in place to bring everything under control. Some of the publishers have eBooks and some of them have created free online reading platforms on their web-

sites while others are selling their ebooks via other hosts which include Jumia and Amazon. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education have promised to buy books from all Egyptian publishers. According to Mr Mohamed Ibrahim Radi, Executive Director, Egyptian Publishers’ Association, the Egyptian Publishers’ Association is waiting for this promise to be fulfilled.

## GABON

In Gabon, publishing firms closed a few days after schools closed because of the Coronavirus. The main clientele and bookstores are also closed since publishers’ activities are linked to the school programme. Publishers have not developed electronic books, but this is also an opportunity to explore. ‘There is no book policy here, no support for publishers, and certainly no Coronavirus,’ Mrs Sylvie NTSAME, President, Alliance of Publishers of Central Africa reports.

## GHANA

The lockdown of two regions, Greater Accra and Greater Kumasi, which are the leading regions with the highest commercial activities in Ghana has been lifted, though there is a probability of a future lockdown if the infections increase. All schools remain closed until further notice by government. The publishing industry is adversely affected and publishers in Ghana with closed offices are currently working from home. Some publishing activities including marketing, sales and promotion of books have been halted and bookshops closed.





For over a year now, textbook publishers have not sold textbooks from kindergarten to primary level (KG-Primary 6) because a new curriculum was introduced in April 2019 and publishers were not given the opportunity to sell off the existing textbooks. Currently, KG-P6 textbooks are being developed and some have been submitted to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) for assessment pending approval. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation as income generating activities come to a halt.

Very few Ghanaian publishers have online eBook portals on their websites to sell eBooks to Ghanaians while others sell their eBooks on international online bookstores to the global market. The Ghana Library Authority (GhLA), a government agency in charge of public libraries and reading under the Ministry of Education, has launched a digital online reading platform and is inviting publishers, authors and owners of literary rights to donate reading materials (fiction, non-fiction and journals) for people to read freely.

Mr Asare Konadu Yamoah, President, Ghana Publishers Association (GPA) reports that the government has prepared a Coronavirus Alleviation Programme (CAP) to address the disruption in economic activities, the hardship of the people, and to rescue and revitalise industries. The Central Bank of Ghana has made available a minimum of one billion Ghana Cedis (GH¢1 billion equivalent to US\$182,000,000) to households and businesses, particularly small and medium scale enterprises. The commercial banks are, in addition, responding to the Bank of Ghana's 1.5% decrease in the policy rate and 2% in reserve requirement with a three

billion-cedi (GH¢3 billion equivalent to US\$550,458,000) facility to support industries especially in the pharmaceutical, hospitality, service and manufacturing sectors. Publishing is a service-oriented industry which per the understanding of the Ghana Publishers Association falls under the service sector; however, the Association will seek clarification and advocate for publishers' share of the amount. The government is providing additional relief, such as extension of the tax filing date from April to June; a two per cent (2%) reduction of interest rates by banks, effective 1st April 2020. Most of the government supports are general which are also to the benefit of publishers.

## GUINEA

The publishing industry is not officially locked down but like most other businesses, the book sector is very affected. And this will last for many months to come. According to Mr Aliou Sow, CEO, Editions Ganndal, 'there are some opportunities to sell our eBooks with international partners, namely Worldreader and Youscribe.' Editions Ganndal has also created a free library online to help students and other young readers to access free reading opportunities during the COVID-19 confinement (<http://editionsганndal.blogspot.com>). There is no support from the government to the publishing sector and the promise of government does not include cultural industries and publishers.

## KENYA

Mr James Odhiambo, Executive Secretary, Kenya Publishers Association states that about 90% of the staff of publishing firms including essential workers and specifically publication and editorial teams may be working either from home or the office because publishers are going to have grade 5 submissions this year. Electronic books can be sold at the moment but not physical books, since most bookshops are closed. Most publishers have their own portals and some are contributing through the Kenya Education Cloud that allows learners to access content free of charge. The books were donated to the Kenya Education Cloud that is managed by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development under the Ministry of Education for the period of the COVID-19 after which negotiations will continue. Mr Lawrence Njagi, President, Kenya Publishers Association also reports that the support government has given is to insist that debts owed by the Ministry of Education be paid to Publishers immediately. Other supports include reduction of taxes especially PAYE, reduced corporate tax from 30% to 25% and reduction of VAT from 16% to 14%. Revenue Authority has been ordered to make VAT refunds immediately to free cash they have been holding.

## MALAWI

A lockdown has just been declared effective from 18th April for 21 days. But since February, when COVID-19 became apparent and schools were shut down, no book

• Continue on page 15



The Regional Training seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To train trainers in Africa; enhance their competence and skills for future training of publishers and other stakeholders in their respective countries.
- To increase the number of competent trainers in the African publishing industry.
- To empower National Publishers Associations (NPAs) to organise workshops at a reduced cost to build the capacity of publishers.
- To build the list of APNET Faculty of certified trainers for future training in other African countries.

The strategy is that the trained participants would go back to their respective countries and train the publishers and other stakeholders there on the training areas from the APNET's workshops. APNET will put in place monitoring and evaluation system in place to ensure that after the Regional Training National Publishers' Associations (NPAs) sponsor the national workshops for the benefit of publishers. Training materials will be given to the participants to help in their training of publishers and other stakeholders in their respective countries and certificates will be issued to them.

The publishers association will nominate a person (trainee) to APNET with the following qualities for training:

- The recommended trainee could be a publisher or lecturer with publishing experience (not amateur in publishing).
- The trainee should be ready to put himself/ herself up for duty when needed by the NPA or APNET.
- The trainee should have communication skills and should have the capacity to facilitate workshops.

The Regional Training in Abidjan would have been held if not the disruption of the Coronavirus. However, suitable dates will be announced later when the world becomes free from the global disease.

The training would involve highly experienced and insightful facilitators; it would be practice-oriented with demonstrations to cover the various expected training needs and would involve the following areas:

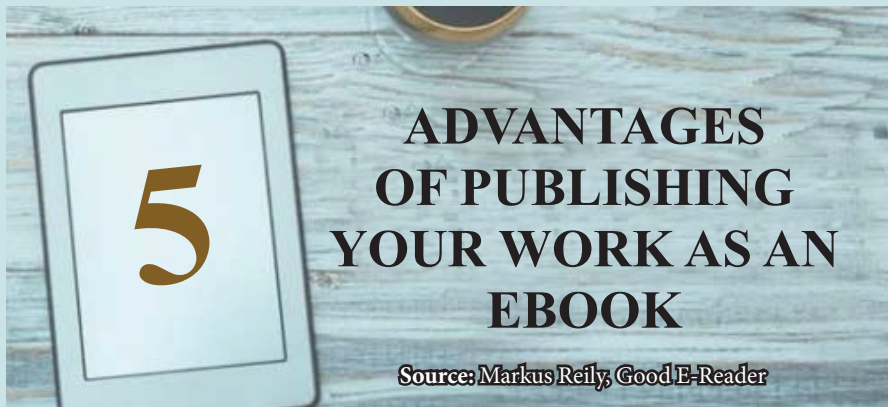
- Legal Aspects of Publishing/ Copyright
- Learning Best Practices of Publishing Processes/Management
- Insights into Electronic Publishing
- Rights & Licenses
- Setting up a Sustainable Profitable Publishing House
- Formation and/or strengthening of Reprographic Rights Organisations (RROs)

APNET acknowledges the financial support of Kopinor Development Fund and Sharjah Book Authority for regional training in Côte D'Ivoire and Tanzania respectively.

for the first time. Salinger's son Matt said a letter from a woman with a hand-related disability who found physical books hard to handle had convinced him to make his books available, according to a report in the Guardian.

As for the future of books, all formats will continue to be in demand, according to Jacks Thomas, director of The London Book Fair. "People always need knowledge and people always need stories, so from that point of view, the very core of the book industry I am sure is very strong. I'll be really interested to see what the classroom of the future is because I think that will dictate a huge amount as to how future generations will engage with the written word ... Or will it be the spoken word, but it will still be stories and it will still be knowledge, those aspects of books will still need to be curated. So, I think that the book, in whatever format, has a strong future," she told CNBC.





A lot of authors are shy when it comes to the idea of publishing their work as an eBook. There's something nostalgic about a print book – for some people it's the smell of paper, for some people it's just nice to mark their progress with the turn of each page.

Even so, eBooks are rapidly becoming more popular as a form of self-publishing. There are numerous advantages to publishing digitally rather than in print, and a few of these are outlined below.

### 1) It's Really Easy

There are numerous platforms which allow you to publish and market your work as an eBook. The process of self-publishing in print – or finding someone who will publish you – can seem daunting. Being able to take matters into your own hands and get your work out there with just a few clicks is a real breath of fresh air. Beyond this, it makes it much easier to re-publish or edit your work if you decide to make changes. Kindle Direct Publishing, Kobo Writing Life or Nook Press are all viable.

### 2) Be Your Own Marketing Team

Electronic publishing allows you to take full control of the market-

ing process and decide on what kind of direction you want to take, as well as who you want to sell your book to. This can cut a lot of costs, it helps you to accurately track your sales performance. As you become more familiar with the process, you'll become far more knowledgeable.

You'll understand your product better than any marketing team ever will. You'll know who to pitch it to and with every further book you publish, you'll be able to refine your approach and learn from your past experiences. A strong marketing method for a culturally powerful item such as a book is 'movement marketing'. This method was codified by Scott Goodson, founder of Strawberry Frog, back in 1999 and has proved highly successful to self-publishers like you. Start by learning more about movement marketing.

### 3) It's Really Cheap

With print media, there are costs every step of the way in publishing. Aside from the cost of printing and binding, distribution also requires significant time and money, and if you're working with a publisher, there are labor costs which end up driving the price of the book up. Virtually all of this is eliminated by publish-

ing as an eBook, and this allows you to sell at a far more attractive price without denting your profits.

### 4) Accessibility

Many readers will use e-Readers such as the Amazon Kindle, one of the major benefits being that people can now carry a whole library anywhere. This means that even if someone chose to take one book with them when they go to the cafe, they're also taking your book. It's also possible to read eBooks on a laptop or even a smartphone, making it easier for people to remember to pick up and read without trying to remember where they left the book.

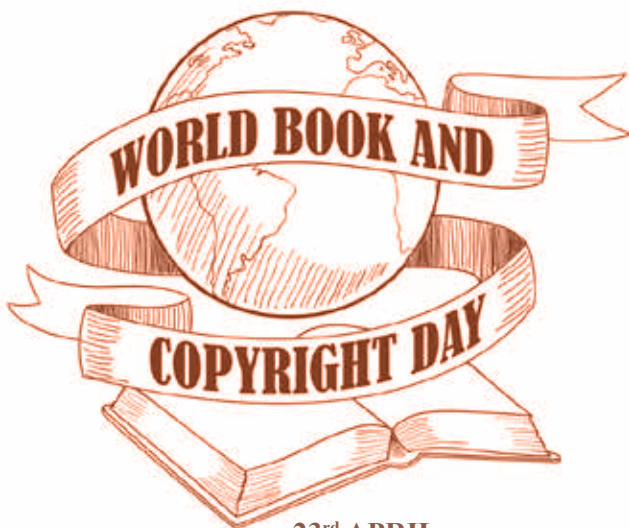
The sales process is also much more accessible. Unlike with a physical bookshop, readers can buy your book from the comfort of their own homes without having to wait for delivery.

### 5) Sustainability

As the environmental crisis intensifies, sustainability is of paramount importance. Publishing your book electronically means less use of paper as well as all the materials and processes that go into producing a print book. As awareness of environmental issues grows, there may be a strong shift towards people purchasing eBooks for this reason.

Take control of your beloved book's distribution and marketing by choosing to publish your work as an eBook today. Plus it helps you to save on costs and trees!





23<sup>rd</sup> APRIL

## APNET's STATEMENT ISSUED ON THE WORLD BOOK AND COPYRIGHT DAY

– Samuel Kolawole, APNET Chairman

**A**frican Publishers Network (APNET) comes to you on this ceremonial day, 23rd April to mark the World Book and Copyright Day. First of all, we extend our solemn greetings to all member-national publishers' associations (NPAs), publishers, stakeholders in the publishing industry, students, public bodies and all book lovers in Africa and the world at large. We are all saddened by the unfortunate outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic which is claiming the lives of some people and our thoughts are with those who have been affected but we are hopeful that this global disease will soon be a thing of the past.

This International Book Day instituted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1995 is observed by millions of people in over 100 countries, in hundreds of voluntary organisations, schools, public bodies, professional groups and private businesses. APNET and the African fraternity joining the world to celebrate this Day gives us the opportunity to acknowledge the impacts of books, reading and copyright to the development of the educational system and the economy. This is the time to pause for the industry and policy makers to reflect on the origin, contributions and challenges of players of the publishing industry in Africa relative to books, reading and copyright.

The publishing of African books has undergone a lot of developmental stages from the Colonial Era (from mid-18th Century to early 20th Century which was influenced

by Foreign Missionaries), Post-Independence Era (mid-20th Century dominated by African governments) and Modern Era from late 20th Century to date which is being dominated by private publishers. There has been a massive improvement in the publishing of books in Africa in each stage and now Africa can boast of quality books comparable to quality foreign books. The gap of books published is books in indigenous languages. Based on this, APNET encourages publishers to create markets for books in indigenous languages and publish to meet the needs of readers and government.

Also, publishing is dynamic and keeps developing as the world embraces technological advancement on daily basis. Therefore one modern publishing model that complements traditional publishing is electronic publishing. Surveys conducted by APNET over the years indicate that many African publishers are not publishing online due to a number of factors including fear of piracy, lack of knowledge and interest as well as inadequate training.

As we celebrate World Book and Copyright Day, it is fair to emphasise the importance of reading as a tool that motivates not only the reader but the author and the publisher and ultimately results in the development of readers and every country. Publishers have a role to play in promoting reading and/ or establishing partnerships to promote reading especially among children through to young adults. Reading underpins development in every country.

Piracy has been an age-long global “parasite” to the owners and rightful users of books and other intellectual property. It drains the owners of intellectual property of their economic gains and serves as a great disincentive to creativity. A number of causes for book piracy for instance, has been given by publishers which include poor distribution of books, high prices of books, entangled book chain and lack of functional national book policy. However, the main cause of book piracy that is mostly

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sales activities have taken place. Publishers were in the middle of developing primary school materials, but submission dates have been postponed and publishers are unable to conduct meetings with authors due to the ban on gatherings above five people.

According to Mrs Molini Linda Masamba, President, Book Publishers Association of Malawi, 'There is no publisher in Malawi with eBooks, therefore online sales and online libraries are nonexistent. Currently, there is no government support to any industry, but even if there was, it is doubtful that our industry would benefit. It is never acknowledged by government.'

## MALI

Mr Hamidou Konaté, President, Malian Book Publishers Association reports that the situation in Mali is the same with what is happening in other African countries. It is very bad and there is no support from government as at now. Publishing online is not functioning. Bookshops are closed and publishers are staying home. Publishers are still waiting for the situation to become better.

## MOROCCO

Bookstores and publishers are locked down. Only grocers, chemists and hospitals are open. Everything has come to a halt. eBooks and selling online in Morocco are not developed. There are very few online sellers: one in Casablanca and the other in Rabat. It is not

possible at all to receive eBooks from abroad. The Professional Union of Publishers of Morocco is working with the Ministry of Culture that is responsible in order to find solutions to this limitation of accessing eBooks globally. A programme of aids will be ready soon and the publishing industry just had a new Minister of Culture who is very active and wants to work and collaborate with publishers to enhance the industry. Publishers are working with the ministry to develop an electronic library but it is not likely to be ready soon. However, the Ministry of Culture will buy books once the online library is ready. The national library is open to some online books and some publishers put some of their books online or on their Facebook page. Mrs Amina Hachimi Alaoui, an active member, Professional Union of Publishers of Morocco concludes that the government has paid the salary of employees of small structures about US\$200 for each employee. The new Minister of Culture has released arrears in support of the cultural industries (US\$133000). This support give oxygen in these times of quarantine.

## NIGER

Malam Abdou Bako, Founding Member, Network of Independent Publishers of Niger, provides an insight to the situation in Niger. According to him, 'We cannot say that publishers are locked down at the moment but our activities have slowed down significantly. For my part, I sold my books mainly in national languages to NGOs that carry out literacy programmes. And now all the NGOs are no longer working because of the pandemic.

So no book sales, neither physical nor digital. In my case, I contacted my partners (YouScribe) to allow me to give an access link to my few children books for free during this period of COVID-19 as my way of contributing to literacy. In addition to this, the Ministry of Culture of Niger contacted publishers to make a donation of books which will be made available to confined COVID-19 patients. I am actively providing as many as a hundred titles, all genres combined, to support that initiative. For the moment, the government has not thought of us in the sense of helping us specifically. The measures taken by the government for all businesses also affect us, in particular, the reduction in synthetic taxes with regard to its payment with the extension until the end of June.'

## NIGERIA

Currently, Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, is suffering a major economic blow and fast experiencing a huge crisis as result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its adverse impact, particularly among local publishers, cannot be over-emphasized. At the time of putting up this report, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) recorded the total confirmed cases in Nigeria as 627 with over 20 deaths, notable among which was the death of the Chief of Staff to the President of Nigeria. A very sad development to the nation! Hence, while observing all guidelines to curb the virus, proactive efforts are being made to support contact tracing, testing and to reduce further transmission.



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overlooked is ignorance or lack of knowledge of the Book Industry players themselves and the general public of copyright violation implications as well as lack of enforcement. This advances deliberate impunity by pirates to expand their illegal business. Copyright remains relevant because the rights of literary owners should be protected to sustain the publishing industry. Though the copyright laws are there; publishers need to strategically put in place measures with the help of Copyright Offices in each African country to resolve some of the challenges enumerated above.

NPAs should constantly advocate for national book policy to regulate and sanitise the publishing industry. The industry has made a lot of tremendous contributions to education and literacy in Africa and the profession of publishers remain essential to the development of Africa.

On behalf of the Board of APNET, I wish to commend all African publishers for publishing quality books in the midst of business risks. We are also aware of the challenges publishers in each African country are going through. Let's keep striving for our governments to appreciate the relevance of this neglected industry.

Long live APNET and Members!  
Long live African publishers!!

In order to curtail the spread of the virus, there have been lockdowns in most states within the federation for a specific number of days with further extensions in the periods. Publishers in the book industry in Nigeria have been compliant with the stay-at-home directive of the government since they also value the safety and well-being of everyone in society.

The federal government through the president also ordered that all schools from the

elementary to tertiary levels should remain closed until further notice. Several working groups have been constituted to develop and deploy response strategies for the education sector to cater for educational needs at an emergency level. Some states in the country have designed and started implementing on-the-air learning programmes to make up for the gaps created by the absence of physically attending classes. By extension, bookshops and publishing firms in some states in the country where there are lockdowns are closed while some publishing firms are yet to completely shut down operations as they adopt a *Work from Home* policy.

The disruption of business activities has dastardly affected the book industry in the area of operations, revenue, budgeting and planning since COVID-19 became a challenge especially for an industry that largely (over 75%) focuses on churning out physical products. The cessation of movement, the introduction of physical distancing measures and the prohibition of mass gatherings have halted the publishing business outlook in Nigeria, placing stakeholders' investment and employees' jobs at risk. The decision to close educational

institutions and schools in the attempt to contain the pandemic has led to the interruption of the physical distribution, marketing, sale and distribution of books. This has negatively impacted sales and caused a downturn in revenue and ROI for publishers. Although digital/electronic books have started experiencing a demand spike as many people try to engage themselves at a time like this, the few digital publishers that specialise in the sale of eBooks are not left out in the crisis as transactions and operations are still limited.

The government, through the Central Bank of Nigeria, has put in place fiscal, monetary and micro-financial strategies, stimulus packages and intervention funds for various categories of enterprises from small to medium and micro in form of loans and loan repayment waivers to ease the pains of restrictive policies and cushion the economic effects of the lockdown. The Nigerian Publishers Association according to its President, Gbadega Adedapo, is working closely with members to complement the effort of government by providing printed and electronic educative materials for circulation to sensitise the citizenry on necessary precautions to stop the spread of COVID-19 among many other support gestures that individual publishers have extended to their immediate business environment.

The book industry currently craves and advocates that the book sector should be considered and prioritised in the economic stimulus programme of the government. This is not only to sustain the education sector and associated businesses but also to ensure a quick recovery from the economic shocks.



## RWANDA

Publishers are locked down and only essential businesses are going on in Rwanda. Only digital publishing can continue and that is quasi non-existent in Rwanda. Only very few publishers have a very small portion of their content accessible online. So far, there has been no specific government support for the publishing industry, Mr Isaie Mico Myiza, Chairman, Rwanda Children's Book Organisation (RCBO) reports.

## SENEGAL

The President of Senegalese Association of Publishers, Mrs. Aminata Sy highlights that all the players of the publishing industry are slowed down because of confinement. Only a few booksellers operate and the publishing sector is not very developed in Senegal. The government has promised to support culture during this difficult period. Publishers are under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and are expecting the promise to be fulfilled.

## SIERRA LEONE

Publishers are free to do their work as far as the business climate allows. According to Sierra Leone Writers Series Publishers (SLWS), one of the leading publishers in the country, 'Writers have time to start, continue and/or complete their manuscripts. We have received more submissions than before for the same period.' A children's book development workshop organised by CODE Canada in partnership with PEN Sierra Leone was held in early April and ended a day before a three-day lockdown imposed by

government. The few bookshops in Sierra Leone are open for business till evening. There is a 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew. More eBooks are being previewed. WhatsApp versions of books are made with the consent of authors and shared freely. There is no support from government to publishers to minimise risks now, Mr Mohamed Sheriff, Immediate Past President, PEN Centre Sierra Leone concludes.

## SOUTH AFRICA

Publishers in South Africa are under COVID-19 lockdown. The effects of the lockdown on the publishing industry is that, like the rest of the citizens, it helps to stop the spread of the virus and therefore saves the lives of people involved in the industry. However, there is no doubt that a prolonged lockdown period will adversely affect publishers' viability, leading to a decline in income and employment. There is no opportunity to sell physical/printed books in South Africa as books do not fall under the category of essential services in the country's COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

The online sale of e-books has always been in existence and continues to happen even though the volumes are less than those of printed books. According to Mpuka Radinku, Executive Director, Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA), on April 17, 2020, PASA wrote a letter addressed to the Ministries of Trade and Industry, Basic Education and Higher Education, Science and Technology to request them to reclassify books as an essential service to enable publishers to support education. 'We await their responses.' Individual publishers

have made digital editions of their materials available on their own websites with some of the links on the PASA website at <http://publishsa.co.za/industry-news/covid-19>. To date there has not been any support specifically designed for publishers by government to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. It is also fair to say that government did set up the Relief Fund which is meant to support all businesses in distress.

## SUDAN

El Faith Mohammed Elhassan, President, Sudanese Publishers Association reports that during the month of March, the role of publishers was normal in Sudan until the end of March and the beginning of April when the ban on selling and roaming was imposed on all commercial places, including publishing houses and activities. The ban started for certain hours during the month of March, and during the ban, the selling of physical books in libraries was active but when the hours of the ban increased, physical book sales and other publishing activities stopped. Unfortunately, electronic publishing is very weak in Sudan whether it is paid or otherwise. Publishers could not activate electronic sales before the health conditions exploded

## TANZANIA

Publishers are not locked down. The government has not locked down economic activities. Only schools, colleges and universities are closed down. The government only stressed the importance of observing all precautions like hands hygiene, social distancing and wearing of masks. All community





activities have to observe hands hygiene and social distancing.

Since schools have been closed down, there are no purchases by schools. Very few parents visit bookshops. The market that was already too small has dried up altogether due to the closure of schools. Only about two publishers have their own eBook platforms. These publishers market non-curriculum-based books on those platforms. Most of the publishers do use platforms hosted by third parties, mostly abroad. Most of the books marketed through those platforms are “trade” and not curriculum-based. The reason for this is that eBook sales for school books are still insignificant in the country.

The Tanzania Institute of Education established an e-library for all its books. It is their own library and that is where they keep their books for now – though they do not have a list that covers all subjects. The e-library was meant for use by schools through a small fee. Being a government institution, since COVID-19, the fee aspect was removed and teachers and pupils/students can now access it for free, but the traffic data of visitors to their library is not available.

There is no government support to publishers. According to Gabriel Kitua, President, Publishers Association of Tanzania (PATA) they ‘are still in dialogue with the government and publishers met with the Commissioner of Education who advised that we write down and send the challenges he learned at that meeting to the Ministry of Education. He later confirmed that the Permanent Secretary had assigned the issues to the commissioner for action. Apart from that,

we are still waiting on any action from their side. Since the advent of COVID-19, when following up, we have been told that they are busy with the pandemic and its impact on closed schools. I can respond that there is no support for now and after the pandemic to publishers.’

## TOGO

Publishers in Togo are not really locked down. They are still working but there are no more meetings with authors and most other clients. Publishers work via social networks, essentially WhatsApp. Of course, it is quite bad for the publishing industry because publishers and booksellers cannot sell books even through bookstores since everybody is focused on basic needs. Bookstores do not pay publishers for books sold because of the present condition. It is quite difficult to sell physical books and publishers do not have many eBooks. However, we are doing some sensitisation on COVID-19 and encouraging people to read during the lockdown. Publishers, including Graines de Pensées, are also donating books to children in the neighbourhoods and to some associations including those working with women in prison, Mrs Christianie Tchotcho Ekue, Founder, Graines de Pensées & Mrs Yasmîn Issaka-Coubageat, Editor and Co-founder, Graines de Pensées report.

No online national library has been launched for people to have access to books and read. So far, government has not announced any support for the publishing sector but some artists, publishers and authors are working on a document to lobby for this.

## UGANDA

Ugandan publishers are fully locked down and there are no book publishing activities taking place. However, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) is planning lessons on radio and TV. As a result, the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) has been asked to prepare materials for those lessons. It is very difficult to think about selling books both online and physically when schools are closed. The problem is that in Uganda very few publishers have digital books, hence there is very little electronic book circulating online to libraries. At the beginning of the closure, a few parents bought some books but ever since the economy slowed down, all buying and selling have dried up. Some schools already had online platforms with their students and they have lessons online while others are waiting for government’s educational programmes on TV and radio. The government is supporting mainly the health sector and the vulnerable people and not private entrepreneurs like publishers, Mr Musoke Majwega, President, Ugandan Publishers Association & Mrs Vicky Sentamu, Secretary General, Uganda Publishers Association report.

## ZAMBIA

The publishing sector across the country has already seen a huge drop in anticipated revenue for 2020 due to the COVID-19 crisis. The model that works for publishers is having events for authors to launch books and boost sales. As Dr Mwape Sunday, Director, Standards & Curriculum, Zambia &



Mr Anson Banda, President, Book Publishers Association of Zambia (BPAZ) report, the information from many is that many publishers and booksellers are locked down especially when presidential directives were made.

There are very few publishers that have stepped up the innovation to sell books on electronic platforms but things are generally on standstill! However, some publishers are trying to come up with ways they can assist the Ministry of General Education in reaching out to learners and teachers in providing e-learning materials. Selling physical books has stalled at the moment, and eBooks have not been ventured into by publishers, except for one or two NGOs, though not on a large scale, around Lusaka. Online libraries are not there. However, there is a Kenyan NGO that is trying to introduce this but only in local languages. This is something that needs to be tackled. Many are having this conversation but limitations abound. Few publishers are working with PDFs, Amazon among others, but limitations in connectivity and limited tools in ICT especially those who have been in publishing and not printing digitally are challenges.

During the COVID-19 period, not much commitment has been made despite assurances to share measures by the Minister of Arts and Culture. The government has made a general commitment through the Bank of Zambia to make funds available through banks to be accessed by businesses as loans to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. This is general to all sectors, not exclusively as measures to support the publishing industry. As one of the emerging publishers remarked recently, *'There are serious fi-*

*nancial and logistical difficulties confronting publishers, yet Zambian publishers like Sotrane need to step up to supporting society in general as well as their communities with many initiatives during the global COVID-19 crisis.'*

There is no government support. Right now, the government is planning to start delivering lessons on radio and TV but they have not engaged publishers on this. Only individual publishers are trying to ask the government on how they can help. COVID-19 is a wake-up call! The solutions being found in reaching out to the teacher and learner should not be abandoned after this pandemic, but should be improved upon and used even when things are back to normal!

## ZIMBABWE

Publishers in Zimbabwe are locked down. The effect is that with a lockdown on schools, revenue dries up. The development of new products including printing is slowed down. The selling of physical books has stopped completely for the duration of the lockdown. However, as Mrs Natsai Gurupira, Chairperson, Zimbabwe Book Publishers Association (ZBPA) argues, there is much scope now more than ever before for the sale of eBooks. In instances where eBooks are available, publishers are providing these through their websites and during this lockdown some selected titles are being provided for free. Some online libraries are making arrangements with publishers to avail the reading public of eBooks. At the moment, the government has not yet provided any form of support. The government has not come up with an e-book library. The biggest mobile

operator in the country has started an electronic library but they are paying for the eBooks. As the epidemic progresses and the government in turn continues to make an assessment of the impact on the economy, publishers wait to see if support will be made available to the publishing industry.

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guarantee for credibility, high-level engagement by an Agency of the United Nations (UN) and a testimony for commitment to the problems of small and medium sized publishing businesses. The Organisation's future role in the future will be to ensure sustainability through monitoring of the action plan implementation, maintaining contacts with participants and surveying the pace of implementation of the knowledge acquired. Other formats for follow up should be explored.

In addition to the mentorship programme, an analysis has been undertaken with regard to the use of identifiers in the publishing industry with the view of focusing WIPO's assistance in the areas where the highest impact can be achieved to assist creators, publishers and users in the developing world.

Finally, a tool on negotiating publishing contracts is being drafted and will be offered to publishers from developing countries as a practical guide and as background and reference material.





**NEWSLETTER**

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