

The Development and Future of Publishing in Africa

12 Years after Arusha I

By Walter Bgoya

In this overview of indigenous publishing in Africa today and the industry's requirements for the future, Walter Bgoya writes: 'Three scenarios for the future of publishing in Africa are easily discernible: one, African publishing playing an insignificant role, the source of books and reading material remaining external, and indigenous publishers playing a mediating role between the "European" publisher/producer and the African book market; second, African publishing becoming modestly successful through a long period of trial and error; and third, African publishing playing its full role following a realisation of its strategic importance in the overall development of a country and its being accorded special support.'

Publishing deserves the status of a strategic industry, Bgoya argues, primarily because of the significance of books in education, and for this vision to be realised 'the first step ... is to work with all component constituencies of the book chain and with government to evolve and establish a national book policy'. Only if there are clear policies in the areas of education, books and language, backed up by practical implementation, will the conditions be created in which indigenous publishing can grow and flourish. Meanwhile, among the practical self-help options that publishers should consider are joint ventures with overseas publishers; a framework for establishing equitable and mutually beneficial joint ventures is appended to the article.

Walter Bgoya has been a publisher for over 25 years. He joined Tanzania Publishing House (TPH) in 1972 as Managing Director and stayed in that position until 1989 when he formed his own company, Mkuki na Nyota Publishers. He was the Co-director of both Arusha I and Arusha II and has worked closely with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation on indigenous publishing as well as on several other issues central to development in Africa. He is a founder member of the African Books Collective (ABC) and a member of its council of management, and he chairs the managing committee (jury) of the Noma Award for publishing in Africa. He has also been active during the formative years of the African Publishers' Network (APNET) and in the Publishers Association of Tanzania (PATA), inter alia, as its vice-president.



This paper sets out to review what transpired in the twelve years since the first Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation Seminar on the Development of Autonomous Publishing Capacity in Africa, which was held in Arusha, Tanzania, in April 1984, and to answer a number of questions leading to the determination of whether autonomous publishing capacity in Africa has been enhanced or not; what can and should be done to improve the situation so as to make African publishing not only viable commercially but also responsive to the needs of a liberating education and culture as the 20th century comes to a close. To start with, it may be useful to summarise the broad consensus of participants in the 1984 seminar on the African publishing situation as it existed then and the recommendations that emerged therefrom.

Publishing in Africa 1984

According to the participants' statement in 1984, 'The majority of publishing houses serving Africa [were] not autonomous. The publishing field [was] dominated by the branches of transnational publishing corporations, all but a few controlled from outside the continent, and by some state publishing houses, which [were] directly or indirectly controlled by governments.'¹ The most active transnationals in publishing in anglophone Africa were Macmillan, Heinemann, Oxford University Press, Nelson Publishers, Evans Brothers and Longman; while the best known state publishing houses were Tanzania Publishing House, Ghana Publishing Corporation, Northern Nigeria Publishing Corporation (all ex-joint ventures with Macmillan), Uganda Publishing House of the Milton Obote Foundation, and the National Education Company of Zambia (NECZAM) of the Kenneth Kaunda Foundation. In Kenya there were two active state publishing companies—the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation and the Kenya Literature Bureau, successor to the East African Literature Bureau which broke up following the demise of the East African Community in 1977.

In the francophone countries the most prominent publishing companies were Editions CLE, established in 1963 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and Nouvelles Editions Africaines (NEA), based in Dakar, which was constituted by the states of Senegal, Ivory Coast and Togo (60 per cent) and five French partners (40 per cent).

The effect of this bias towards transnational publishing was a recurrent theme at the 1984 seminar: 'Because of the infertile soil in which indigenous publishing has had to be nurtured in Africa, transnational publishers have attracted many African writers. In this attraction lies the risk that writers turn to a Western public rather than to readers of their own countries. Their thinking is often forced by expatriate editors to accommodate foreign

and neo-colonialist biases and susceptibilities, thereby depriving it of its deep and unique significance.²

It was not only literary production that was affected. The major interest for the transnational as well as state publishing houses was school textbooks from which, thanks to huge increases in the student populations in the newly independent countries, they made enormous profits. Issues such as the dumping of inappropriate books on schools by the transnational publishers and books hastily written and edited to fit 'national' demands were discussed, as was corruption of government officials who approved and ordered hundreds of thousands of the books published by the foreign transnational companies.

The language issue in African education is not unrelated to the policies of the ex-colonial metropolitan countries to retain their languages as a way of ensuring book purchases from their publishers, amounting to millions of pounds or dollars in business every year. The call by the 1984 seminar on governments to 'encourage ministries responsible to review the content of their textbooks in order to improve or foster the development of sound and accurate textbooks and other educational materials'³ was a result of awareness of the inadequacy, from the standpoint of pedagogy, of the books published for Africa by the transnational houses, which, however, could impress book buyers because of their colourful covers and superior production quality. 'The contents should be in keeping with the realities and aspirations of a cross-section of society, and should not encourage the perpetration of social injustice and inequality', the seminar participants urged.⁴

Obstacles to indigenous and autonomous publishing

The definition of an indigenous and autonomous publishing institution adopted at the seminar, that it should be one 'which is responsible to itself and which exercises the freedom to control its policies, its finances and its management'⁵ contained within it an awareness of the obstacles to realisation of such publishing. The major problem for African publishing houses is the lack of investment and working capital finance. Without finance there can be no ownership and no freedom to control policies and to manage complex issues of an editorial, production or administrative nature.

Other obstacles were noted: policy issues, including harsh tax regimes, duties on imported paper and the denial of foreign exchange allocations for machinery and other consumables; censorship; the absence of training institutions; and the generally unfavourable climate in which the industry and its practitioners found themselves. These conspired to reduce further the chances of growth of an African publishing industry.

*Recommendations
from the 1984
seminar*

A number of recommendations and calls for follow-up action were made at the 1984 seminar. While they covered a wide range of issues they can be summarised as follows.

- African governments were called upon to create conditions in which indigenous publishing could thrive. To that end they were urged to dismantle state publishing monopolies which were not only incapable of efficient management of book publishing but which made it impossible for private publishing companies to take root, since they were unable, in the presence of these and of transnational companies, to compete effectively in the textbook market.
- The political and social climate in addition to financial institutions (primarily banks) had to be made conducive to supporting private publishing initiatives, and governments had important responsibilities in bringing this about.
- Other recommendations were addressed to donor organisations and NGOs involved in supporting culture in Africa. Specifically, the seminar called for donor funding of publishing in the form of loan guarantees, provision of equipment, training and research.

**Twelve years after
Arusha I**

Developments since the 1984 seminar have been many and varied. Prior to 1984, there had been commendable efforts by a number of African publishers and non-Africans who were interested in the independent development of African publishing. The Ile-Ife conference in 1973 was, in this respect, key in generating interest in African publishing. After 1984 that interest greatly increased and many African entrepreneurs went into publishing. Well over 40 publishing companies came into existence from 1984 to 1993 and an unknown number have been started since then.

How did the dramatic entry of African entrepreneurs into this field come about? First, there was the departure from Africa of many transnational publishing companies as a result of the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s, usually leaving behind their senior African editors. Second, many individual African would-be-authors, editors, critics and others took up the challenge to undermine the foreign domination of African publishing and started their own companies. Third, with the collapse of most state publishing corporations due to undercapitalisation, politically appointed and ineffective management and unfavourable macro-economic policies, some of their former employees with experience from publishing started their own companies.

The indigenisation of two transnational companies in Kenya (Heinemann and Longman), initially through local interests buying into the company and later buying out all foreign-owned shares, was a major development in African publishing. The fact that in the case of Heinemann, which changed its name to East African Educational Publishers (EAEP), the volume of publishing and the turnover and profitability increased markedly after the buy-out strengthened two arguments: one, that one way to the successful indigenisation of African publishing would be through similar buy-outs of the shares of the transnationals in their former branches; and two, that contrary to conventional wisdom, it is not always true that expatriate management of transnational companies is better than that by local managers. Longhorn—formerly Longman—has continued to do well after the buy-out, confirming the success of the evolution of transnationals into indigenous and autonomous publishing houses in Kenya.

It had been expected that African managers of other branches of the transnational publishing companies would follow the Kenyan example, particularly in Nigeria, but that has not been the case. The reason most often given for this is that due to the difficulties experienced by publishers in Nigeria as a result of the rather chaotic political and economic situation there—shortages of paper and the devaluation of the Naira being two very serious constraints to competition with the transnationals—the local branches of the transnationals have had to depend a great deal on revenue from the sale of book imports from the mother companies and can ill afford to part company at present.

Other forms of ‘indigenisation’ of the transnationals will be discussed further on, but the Kenyan scenario does not appear to have scope for now and the near future for two reasons: one, the success of the EAEP and Longhorn may make Heinemann, Longman and other transnationals less interested in selling than they were before their Kenyanisation, and two, in the new era of ‘liberalisation’ and ‘joint ventures’, indigenisation does not have as much ‘sex appeal’ as it had in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The situation of state publishing companies

State publishing houses in Tanzania, Kenya and Ghana have continued to exist and to perform the same functions as they did before. In some cases, such as the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation and the Kenya Literature Bureau in Kenya, the state has continued to give them the lion’s share of textbook business by approving only their publications and no others for use in schools. In Tanzania, the parastatal publishing company has improved its situation because of a fortuitous insistence on the part of the World Bank and the IMF that ministries repay outstanding debts, and also by winning through the

Pilot Publishing Project (PPP) a tender for publishing some titles for the Ministry of Education with large print runs. Tanzania Publishing House (TPH) is one of the companies to be privatised and it is understood that a management employment buy-out may be in the offing if the workers can put together a down payment of about USD 75,000.

In Zambia, in spite of planned 'liberalisation' and 'privatisation', there are still three public companies involved in publishing: Zambia Educational Publishing House, Printpak (Zambia) Ltd, and Zambia Printing Company and it is not clear when or if in fact it will truly 'liberalise' and 'privatise' by selling the three companies.

*Some important
developments in
African publishing*

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation loan guarantee programme

One of the recommendations of the 1984 seminar was for the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation to carry out feasibility studies on establishing a mechanism that would give loan guarantees, and to define the legal, managerial and organisational structures necessary for establishing such a programme. Two such studies were made for Kenya and Tanzania. However, in 1988, a loan guarantee programme was established for Kenya only, with funding from Ford Foundation (USD 300,000) to cover capital, possible losses, bank expenses and an advisory committee's expenses.

The programme was conceived in order to assist Kenyan publishers to develop relations with banks on a regular basis with the hope that, as the publishers gained the confidence of the banks through regular servicing of the loans, eventually the banks would take on publishing and publishers as bankable businesses and partners.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation has always been cautious in its appraisal of the success and/or failure of the programme. There is no doubt, however, that it has had a considerable impact on Kenyan publishing. A number of publishers who received the guarantees would not have done as well as they did without these. They published more books, improved their management skills and two or three of them have been able to develop independent bilateral relations with the bank without further guarantees from the loan programme. One major and seemingly insurmountable obstacle to the loan guarantee programme is the high interest rates that African banks have been forced to institute as part of countries' structural adjustment programmes. Commercial bank interest rates in Kenya are close to 30 per cent whereas in neighbouring Tanzania, they average 40 per cent. In the circumstances it would be suicidal for a publisher to operate an overdraft facility and the loan guarantee programme would not be feasible.

The model, on the other hand, has shown itself to be basically sound, and in countries where interest rates are manageable it could work quite well. It is understood that with special Central Bank dispensation, businesses in Kenya can borrow money from foreign banks and operate on the basis of interest rates prevailing in the countries of the lending banks. But unless amounts repayable are fixed at the local equivalent of the borrowed currency at the time of borrowing, this alternative could not work either. Many companies in Tanzania went bust after institution of the structural adjustment programme (SAP) because having borrowed in foreign currencies when the exchange rates were reasonable, they found themselves—after devaluation of the shilling—indebted ten or twenty times the amount they had originally borrowed; with the interest accruing on the new principal, they had no way out.

The African Books Collective (ABC)

One of the problems for African publishing was always the lack of a market for books from Africa in Europe, North America and elsewhere outside Africa. Past efforts by well-meaning but unprofessional agents (NGOs and individual book sellers) did very little to promote African books and the terms of trade were not at all favourable to African publishers.

Exporting their books to these markets was the only way in which African publishers could earn hard currency, but African publishers were cut off almost completely from this source. It was in recognition of the potential for exporting their books to these markets and for easing the access of librarians in those countries to African books that a number of African publishers got together in 1985 to set up an organisation that would sell and promote their books overseas. In 1990 the African Books Collective began trading. Thanks to support from a number of donor organisations, which have provided funds for administration and for some promotional activities, ABC has been a great success and has earned and transferred to a number of African publishers significant revenues in foreign currency. This, in turn, has enabled the publishers to purchase equipment that they needed—computers, fax machines, etc.—as well as to pay royalties in foreign currency whenever this has been necessary. With a total turnover of USD 200,000 in 1995 and better books (production and design) from its members, ABC is poised to do even better for its members in the coming years.

The Bellagio Conference on Publishing and Development in the Third World

The success of major initiatives such as the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation loan guarantee programme, the African Books Collective and the involvement of a number of donors in their funding was a contributing factor to the strong African component of the first conference on Publishing and Devel-

opment in the Third World, held at Bellagio, Italy in February 1991. After Arusha I, this was the next benchmark conference on publishing. Although it covered Asia and Africa, it was the latter that generated the greatest interest and from which new initiatives grew. The conference covered all aspects of publishing but most notable were questions relating to the role of transnational publishers in Africa, government policies that tend to hinder rather than promote publishing, and other obstacles to indigenous publishing including fiscal policies (taxes, duties), state publishing monopolies, the lack of capital and trained personnel and the conduct of multilateral agencies such as the World Bank.

The conference prepared a report that covered two categories of concerns, those at the micro and those at the macro level, and recommended concrete steps not only for improving the situation but also for developing an analytical framework for a better understanding of the issues. The most important outcome of the conference was the realisation that piecemeal solutions were not likely to succeed; that a continental organisation focusing on cooperation, on the one hand, between African 'doers' and international 'donors', and, on the other, among donors or doers (as and when required), stood the best chance of mobilising resources within and outside Africa in support of publishing.

The African Publishers' Network

The African Publishers' Network (APNET) was born out of the Bellagio Conference. The immediate tasks that APNET set itself were to mobilise African publishers through their national publishers associations, to build a representative organisational structure that would get everyone involved and to carry out projects that would benefit as many publishers as possible in every member country. Where there were no national publishers associations, APNET has encouraged their formation and given all necessary support to the publishers seeking to form an association.

Training was singled out as the most crucial input and courses in the various publishing functions were organised on a regional basis. Substantial resources were allocated for training of trainers, and an African Publishing Institute (API) to be responsible for all the training programmes is in place. Other activities which APNET has organised to the advantage of African publishers are: publication in English, French and Portuguese of the *African Publishing Review*, which is a vehicle for the exchange of ideas, and features articles, reviews and announcements; managing of buyers' and sellers' meetings; participation in international book fairs and organisation of exhibitions of books by African publishers in these events; and making informa-

tion from such bodies as the World Bank known to member associations. The establishment of an African Publishing Resource Centre that will house the Hans Zell collection of materials on publishing in Africa for over 30 years in Harare will provide invaluable assistance to African and other researchers on publishing in Africa.

There can be no question that the appearance of APNET on the publishing scene has been one of the most significant events for publishing in Africa from a continental and regional perspective. APNET has not only mobilised African publishers to come together in order to work for practical solutions to common and concrete problems—providing training, establishing publishers' associations, supporting book fairs, etc. It has done more. In a very tangible way it has begun to address the continental context in which publishing is or is not happening. Through various actions at the level of individual governments and through alliances it has created with international donor organisations and multilateral institutions that carry considerable influence with African states and statesmen, African publishers and publishing have moved to centre stage and their many years of isolation in the past appear to be over.

Other NGO support

Partly as a result of the Bellagio Conference and alongside the work of APNET, some significant NGO projects that have had a positive impact on books and reading have been started in a number of African countries. A good example is the Tanzanian Children's Book Project, which was initiated with the Canadian Organisation for Development through Education (CODE) funding and as a result of which close to 80 titles were published in the last five years. Not only did the project buy 3,000 copies out of a print-run of 5,000, thereby guaranteeing the publisher break-even, and the author a royalty paid on time; it also organised training for authors, editors, publishers and artists, and helped set up children's book writer associations at national and regional levels. The project supplied paper at cost, making it possible not only to control costs and prices but also to ensure, in a situation of erratic paper supplies, that the project's books would be out on time. The Children's Book Project has been a resounding success not only in terms of titles printed but also in the steady improvement of the quality of design, layout, illustration and printing.

*World Bank
interventions in
publishing in Africa*

Book Sector Studies

The World Bank's involvement in book issues in African countries is centred around 'provision' rather than 'production'. It is not within the scope of this article to make a detailed study of the World Bank in all countries in Africa

in which it has been involved in one way or another in providing books in schools. However, the Bank's current position, which, simply stated, is that it is only interested in putting books on the children's desks and has no interest in assisting local publishers (apart from a 15 per cent price advantage over foreign bidders), makes it quite clear that it does not have a 'developmental' attitude towards African publishing.

Yet, the World Bank has been very much in search of a role in improving education in sub-Saharan African countries and specifically identified textbooks as the single most important educational tool for this task. The World Bank and other donor organisations have commissioned a large number of Book Sector Studies—in all 48 (as of April 1996) have been done since 1988 when the first one was carried out by Anthony Read of International Book Development (IBD) in England.

The World Bank's interventions in education have been in three distinct phases. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s textbook provision was a minor component of the World Bank's educational support. The conclusion drawn from its research from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s was that 'provision of textbooks is one of the most cost-effective ways of raising learning achievements in resource-scarce schooling environments'. From 16 per cent between 1974 and 1978, support for textbooks within overall support to education rose to 32 per cent between 1979 and 1983, to 59 per cent between 1984 and 1991 and to 72 per cent by 1995. These three four-year periods were characterised by: support for acquisition of production equipment such as printing machines and materials; support, through government institutes of curriculum development, for the writing, publishing and distribution of books; and, in the latest phase, provision of loans to governments for them to source books from private publishers internationally through competitive bidding. The 15 per cent advantage over the lowest foreign bidder is of little help in situations where there is little or no publishing in the first place.

There can be no doubt that Book Sector Studies contributed to the World Bank's policies and practices in the last two generations of World Bank interventions and many African publishers and other observers are of the view that these studies did not promote indigenous African publishing. The position held by the Bank, that it is not its primary objective to support the development of local publishing firms, was seen by African publishers as aiming at promoting the business of publishers from the US, Britain and France, and keeping African publishers out of the big money. Book Sector Studies provided the rationale for this policy, arguing as they did on static

grounds that there were no local African publishers who could undertake to publish the books that were needed in their countries. The fact that the studies were done by one person and that the input of African publishers was nil or only marginal reinforced the view of the one-sidedness of the studies.

A great deal has been written in support of and against this World Bank policy. In 1992 an APNET delegation visited Washington to meet World Bank officials and to discuss the implications of their policy for African publishing. It raised questions about the availability and sustainability of books based on foreign procurement and argued for a reappraisal of the policy in favour of active support for African publishers as the only guarantee for the future of textbooks and general books in Africa. The World Bank does not appear to be about to change its policy, although some aspects of the dialogue with African publishers are receiving attention. In Tanzania, in the Eighth IDA negotiations, SIDA, which was contributing a big share of the book sector support, prevailed over the World Bank by insisting on local publishers being the only ones to participate in local competitive bidding (LCB) for the supply of primary school textbooks.

Publishing and structural adjustment

The overriding feature of the economies of African countries in the period between 1984 and today, was how they adjusted their economies in line with IMF/World Bank conditions for credits to meet the ever-widening gaps between government revenue and expenditures. However salutary the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) may eventually turn out to be for African economies, in respect of book publishing they have only aggravated an already difficult situation. Devaluation of currencies resulted in unaffordable price increases in all the requirements of the printing industry—paper, spare parts and other consumables—for publishers and printers. Production plummeted and high book prices resulted in drastic cuts in purchases by libraries and other institutions. Parents could not afford to buy books for their children and books for leisure reading were unaffordable or unavailable. One of the conditions of the SAPs was a reduction in expenditure on social services, including education. For Tanzania the education budget as a percentage of the total national budget dropped from 13.8 per cent (which was already inadequate) in 1977/78 to 6.45 per cent in 1988/89. The decline in the health sector financing was even more dismal, from 7.3 per cent of the national budget in 1977/78 to 4.4 per cent in 1985/86 and 4.6 in 1989/90.

Another feature of structural adjustment programmes was high interest rates (currently at 40 per cent in Tanzania), which does not make borrowing for the publishing industry and for a great many others a practical option. The

cumulative effect on the local publishing industries was devastating. In Nigeria, indigenous publishers who had benefited from the military regime's decree in 1973 that all foreign publishing companies had to be 60 per cent Nigerian-owned found themselves unable to sustain their publishing for lack of resources. The competition they had given to transnational publishers was wiped out because unlike the latter they had no foreign currency to buy paper and to guarantee prices between award of tender and delivery as the Naira was forever going down. The transnational publishers on the other hand did not experience that problem as they dealt in stable currencies. They had the best of both worlds; they obtained, on exchange, more and more Naira for their local costs and imported all their requirements at stable prices from international suppliers.

Many of the state publishing houses collapsed or nearly did so, as much if not more as a result of this turn in the economies of their countries as because of bad management and/or corruption. Corruption itself was greatly exacerbated by the collapse in the real value of wages, especially for middle-level government officials and in parastatal institutions.

In these circumstances, to make international competitive bidding a condition for awarding publishing contracts was in effect to eliminate African publishers altogether. For African publishing to have the chance to develop, it was not sufficient merely to level the playing field, without matching the strength of the players. The fact that African publishing had not developed in the era of unchecked foreign domination in the first 20 years of independence should have been sufficient argument against continued dependency on book imports. Sustainability of book provision—watchword for any serious planning—cannot be expected without deliberate efforts to strengthen indigenous publishers (where they exist) and to assist in their creation (where they do not exist).

Many of the features of structural adjustment programmes have gone far in undermining initiatives such as the loan guarantee programme that were conceived in order to give a boost to African publishers. Major interventions that were set up to 'correct' the situation sought to do so by externally derived inputs. The beneficiaries were first and foremost suppliers from Western countries. The money that was injected into Africa for books in fact went right back to publishers in those countries. British publishing companies followed IBD consultants carrying out book sector studies and set up agents in those countries, not to carry out local publishing but to play the role of compradores on their behalf. In a few situations genuine joint ventures between transnational and indigenous publishers have been established but

Table 1 Book exports from the UK to sub-Saharan Africa 1989–1994 (in GBP)

Year	Book exports	Year	Book exports
1989	£ 38,955,832	1992	£ 52,255,000
1990	£ 45,086,385	1993	£ 58,843,000
1991	£ 48,229,735	1994	£ 57,416,000

Source: From Export Sales, Extract from 1993 Book Trade Year Book and The Publishers Association, Book Trade Year for export sales 1992–94.

they are few and far between and are not likely to become the main feature of African publishing in the short run.

After looking at what transpired between 1984 and 1996, is it possible to conclude that there has been ‘development’ of African publishing? The easiest way to determine this would be to use the quantitative yardstick and to answer the question; were more books published in Africa by indigenous publishers? Regrettably, due to the paucity of data one cannot state categorically that this is or is not so.

Book provision versus book development

It must be emphatically stated that book provision is not book development. By advancing credits to government to purchase books the World Bank made it possible in the late 1980s to improve the book situation in schools in sub-Saharan Africa where ratios of children to books had deteriorated to as low as 10:1 or even 20:1. International donor organisations made similar, or, in some countries, even larger contributions in the form of grants. Statistical data on country situations is patchy, but one indicator of increased book availability in African countries is rising book imports from traditional sources (ex-colonial powers—the UK and France) and from the United States and Canada.

In Tanzania the support of international donors, in particular Sweden, continued to be important in providing inputs for printing and binding textbooks. More recently, in the Eighth IDA project, SIDA took the most important step in promoting the development of Tanzanian publishing by providing funds for textbook publishing under local competitive bidding (LCB) in which only Tanzania or joint venture publishers could take part. A Pilot Publishing Project (PPP) was initiated and a Finnish company—Opifer—was recruited (through international bidding) by SIDA to work

Table 2 Annual financial allocations for textbook publishing 1994/95–1998/99 (in 1,000 Swedish Kronor)

	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
<i>Book Production</i>					
Primary	2,445	2,000	2,000	2,000	1,500
Teacher	55	50	50	50	30
Secondary	550	500	500	400	300
<i>Pilot Project for Publishing</i>					
Primary/Teacher	2,195	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,500
Secondary	950	1,900	1,900	2,000	2,100
<i>Total</i>	6,140	9,450	9,450	9,450	9,450

Source: MOEC/SIDA: 7 SEK = USD 1.00

with Tanzanian publishers so as to enable them to meet the conditions of LCB. The project, which has entered its third phase, has been greatly appreciated.

For publishers, money under PPP constitutes real support. However, it is understood by all that the PPP is only a transition from state publishing to an open, competitive, commercial system. Whereas, at present, publishers bid for manuscripts written by the Tanzania Institute of Education, it is government policy that as soon as possible the system should be fully liberalised and that the whole publishing process should be in the hands of publishers. In his 1997 budget speech, the Minister of Education stated that it was now government policy to allow as many books as are available on the market to compete as long as they have been approved. A textbook Approval Committee within the Ministry of Education and criteria for approval are to be set up shortly.

Needless to say this process is complex because it involves decisions about who ultimately holds the purse strings. A fully liberalised system would put funds at the primary school level or at the community level. Neither option is without difficulties given the legacy of concentration of decision-making and financial power at the centre, on the one hand, and the lack of experience at the local level on the other.

Book provision and book development are, of course, not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they can be mutually supportive. Clearly, however, book provision from external sources ought to be a short-term, emergency operation. The shortage of books in schools and libraries is such that in some countries (Tanzania included) without book donations there would be no new books. Many public libraries are so starved of cash that they go for many years without any budget for acquisitions.

Organisations such as the UK's Book Aid International (BAI), Canada's CODE and American ones that make regular book donations play a useful role as long as the programmes are demand-driven. BAI, which between 1990 and 1995 donated books to Africa worth £7,638,739, supported two other worthwhile projects: the Inter-African Book Support Scheme (IBIS) in which selected books from African publishers are purchased and sent to libraries in African countries; and the Publishers' Resource Pack through which African publishers associations and individual publishing houses have been given collections of excellent reference books on all aspects of publishing, including design, editing, marketing, financial management, and copyright.

International copyright

In the last few years there has been a great push by the international book publishers, with the support of their governments, to get all countries not yet members of the International Copyright Conventions to sign up. Many countries, especially in Asia, where violations of copyright were rampant, were threatened with retaliatory measures unless they curbed the activities of those of their citizens who pirated foreign works. In Africa, debate about copyright has always been centred around two aspects: the internal aspect, which is about the protection of writers' and publishers' exclusive rights to income from the sale of their works; and the external aspect, which is about African countries gaining legal access to international educational materials without having to pay fees (or paying only low fees).

Much has been written about this subject and within the community of African publishers and their international supporters there is a growing volume of research into the question, although by and large the overwhelming opinion tends to support blanket application of the copyright law. While there is agreement about the need for scrupulous respect of copyright within each country, the history of the publishing industry would tend to show that at certain levels of development each country has taken from the international intellectual community whatever it has needed to set its own course of development. Reference has often been made to the fact that in the 19th century, the United States—then a fledgling nation—was the biggest book pi-

rate in the world, freely printing European works, without requesting permission or making any payments. The US publishing industry was successfully established on the back of piracy. Whether or not the requirements of international copyright law are observed has depended in practice on whether a developing country considers it worthwhile to flout the law while it builds its own publishing capacity. Usually when such a country attains that capacity, their vested interest lies in observation of the law.

The middle ground would be for the protocols of the law on compulsory licensing to be applied effectively so that African countries are able to access educational materials easily and quickly on applying for such a dispensation.

The future of publishing in Africa

Three scenarios for the future of publishing in Africa are easily discernible: one, African publishing playing an insignificant role, the source of books and reading material remaining external, and indigenous publishers playing a mediating role between the 'European' publisher/producer and the African book market; second, African publishing becoming modestly successful through a long period of trial and error; and third, African publishing playing its full role following a realisation of its strategic importance in the overall development of a country and its being accorded special support of the kind that is detailed in the next section.

But first, why should publishing be accorded the status of a strategic industry? Primarily because of the significance of books in education. Recent development literature (World Bank and other) is replete with assertions about human capital as the key to development and the critical contribution of textbooks to education, especially in countries where teachers are few and are handicapped by lack of opportunities for self-improvement; where classrooms are too big and the home does not contribute to the child's educational development as a result of the family's own lack of education.

The East Asian 'miracle'—lessons for us

In all attempts to explain the East Asian 'miracle' one factor remains constant: high investment in human capital.⁶ East Asian countries are credited with long having had education that focused on primary and secondary schooling, in turn generating a rapid increase in labour force skills. Advocates of an unfettered free market are surprised (probably even upset) that in addition to effective education policies, governments in the East Asian countries 'also intervened to foster development, often systematically and through multiple channels including "targeted and subsidised credit to selected industries ... protection of domestic substitutes, subsidies to declining industries"' and so on.⁷ In great contrast, the SAP policy is to lump all in-

dustries into one category and advocate their being sold off at give-away prices or simply allowed to collapse if they are not profitable within a short time frame, without any consideration of what steps could be taken to make them profitable.

This is not a defence of loss-making public enterprises that are a drain on the state and inevitably on the taxpayer. It is only to caution against the almost religious fanaticism for the free market even when confronted with successful models of state intervention such as those made by governments of East Asian countries.

Can publishing in Africa become a strategic industry?

Whether this question can be answered in the affirmative will depend on, first, whether African states and their tenders are prepared to make education the pillar of their economic and social policies—which may be begging the question, why didn't they do so in the past; and second, whether individuals and people's organisations (civil society) can accelerate the pace of education through private schools and universities and in the process build up the kind of pressure that would then push governments similarly to accord education that priority.

The first step towards according publishing the status of a strategic industry is to work with all component constituencies of the book chain and with government to evolve and to establish a national book policy. In the past, efforts to establish National Book Development Councils succeeded in only a few countries and even then only to a limited extent. One reason for this may have been the absence of national book policies that would provide backing, or where a Book Development Council (BDC) was a legal entity, would provide financial and human resources so as to enable it to perform the functions for which it was established. The tendency of BDCs to become large bureaucracies and to perform restrictive roles vis-à-vis publishers—seeking to act as censorship boards—did not make them attractive to the publishing industry. Furthermore, in the absence of professional organisations throughout the book trade—associations of publishers, booksellers, printers and librarians—it was not possible to carry out a meaningful dialogue with government, and even less to impress upon it the seriousness of the issue.

Towards a national book policy

It is not necessary to 'reinvent the wheel' as far as models for a national book policy are concerned. The basic objectives of such a policy are:

- to mobilise and give support to all elements comprising the book chain so as to ensure their best contribution to the production, dissemination and use of books;

- to give guidelines on the question of language in publishing so as to ensure that the greatest number of people are served;
- to develop and give support to all actors so as to develop, ensure the highest quality of books, in their content as in their form;
- to ensure that all activities connected with publishing and dissemination of books are seen as part of the education of the nation, and are incorporated in the development;
- to establish the book industry as a strategic industry and gain public recognition of it as such.

While existing models of successful national book policies can provide inspiration and guidance, the business of developing a national book policy should be taken up by professional associations of the industry in each country and brought up for public debate. The importance of such a debate cannot be sufficiently underscored. Only through such a debate can civil society as well as ordinary people be brought in to give their ideas and support, thereby broadening the base of concerned citizens. The larger the constituency, the more likely that government will listen. It is imperative to work with parliamentarians and win their support for the idea of national book policies and to evolve strategies leading to passage of necessary legislation to that end. But legislation is one thing; realisation of the ends for which a national book policy is established will need commitment and hard work, and that will fall first and foremost on the agents in the book chain. In many countries, the national publishers association is best placed to play the leading role.

Financing publishing: the immediate future

In addition to projects that have been identified in the past—loan guarantee schemes, buy-back for guaranteed purchases, overseas marketing and distribution, and joint venture development—there is still a need for concerted exploration by all partners in the current African publishing process, to find effective new ways of putting publishing on a sound financial footing. New ways may mean in fact extending the scope of some of the older projects. For instance, in the Children's Book Project, three-fifths of a comparatively short print run (5,000 copies) were bought. So far there is no similar project for fiction although it is very much in demand. If the print runs were much greater than 5,000 and a higher profit margin was built in for the publisher, it would be one way of building up the publishers' financial base.

Likewise, it is certain that the potential of the loan guarantee scheme has not been fully investigated. There is no reason why the huge amounts of money that institutions such as the World Bank have put into doubtful projects so readily could not have been invested in strengthening publishing. The ques-

tion is really one of the Bank working systematically and on a long-term basis with publishers and other actors in the book chain, in the realisation that most African publishers are not fully equipped to meet the demands of the industry; by so doing, the World Bank will itself help to ensure that expectations of African publishing, currently unrealised, are steadily fulfilled.

Publishing cooperatives

One possible way of raising financial resources for publishing that has not been studied sufficiently is for several small publishers to club together to publish books, series or courses with the potential for adoption on educational curricula. It is clear that whatever resources individual publishers are able to raise would be multiplied by forming publishing cooperatives. Although there are considerable management constraints on such projects, these are not insurmountable. Experience of international competitive bidding for textbooks in Tanzania in line with the World Bank requirements would suggest that cooperation between two or three publishers would reduce the burden on individual publishers, at the same time as enhancing their collective competitiveness. Although no successful model can be quoted to date, this is an area that merits further study.

Joint ventures

Joint ventures between investors from developed economies and entrepreneurs in the less-developed countries seem to be the most favoured approach for attracting investors. The fact that both partners gain from such ventures guarantees transfer of technology and skills. There are nevertheless possible pitfalls if the partners collaborating are not quite clear about or convinced of the benefits of those partnerships: this is particularly so for the Southern partner. An Appendix to this article suggests for discussion a model framework that could be the basis of a joint venture in publishing.

Publishing, culture and development

Debates and discussions on publishing in the last few years have been dominated by 'market' considerations. They have been about making publishing viable; about financing, distribution and training. Not surprisingly they have also been largely about textbook publishing. All other publishing has been marginalised; indeed the way it is treated is that it can only develop if publishers first have the bread-and-butter educational books. It is the icing on the cake, others are inclined to say. Although these points of view are understandable, the pervading economism does call for challenge.

Textbook publishing should not obscure the need for all other publishing and especially of fiction, poetry, plays and other genres of literature. In the Bellagio book, *The Muse of Modernity* (1996), cultural activists in the field

of cinema, music, video, radio and museums write about development from their perspectives. A contribution by the author of this article, on 'Publishing and Culture', discusses publishing away from the textbook not as a commodity like every other commodity but within the context of the cultural imperatives of development. One of the key factors identified as responsible for the decline of literary book publishing is the demise of so many literary journals during the 1980s. This has resulted in a dearth of publishing outlets for writers in general, and young and as yet unknown or inexperienced writers in particular, and has probably also led to a stifling of creative writing. Much of the early work of the now 'big' names in African literature was first published in a number of then-flourishing literary magazines, but today there are fewer and few publishing facilities of this sort. This is of course a lamentable state of affairs. Many of the well-known magazines of the 1960s and the 1970s, such as *Black Orpheus*, *Transition*, *Zuka*, *Busara*, *Marang*, and *New Culture*, have dried up. *Transition* is now published in New York but does not resemble at all the old *Transition*.

There are encouraging signs that another period of intellectual renaissance is at hand, thanks in part to the liberation of South Africa—the last part of the continent to be free—and quite honestly because things sank so low they can only go up now. New technologies, especially desk-top publishing, are making it possible to cut down costs and to do a great deal in house that was not possible not so long ago. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that journals of the calibre of the ones pointed out above will be able to survive in the economic situation that prevails unless they are underwritten by a committed donor or group of donors.

A number of factors are coming to make the non-print media very much more accessible than in the past: the so-called 'democratisation' of media and culture through electronic channels in turn tends to impact on the print media in a way that enhances production and creativity. Certainly, censorship may soon become obsolete as a practical possibility.

The language issue

Publishing in African languages is a crucial issue in the cultural context, but also has important implications for African publishing as such. The basic issue is that in any one African country, by most observers' reckoning, less than 20 per cent of the population can speak English, French or Portuguese, and even fewer would be literate enough to read a book in those languages. The implication therefore, at least in respect of non-education publishing, is that publishers are not developing what is potentially, in publishing terms—quite apart from cultural considerations—their largest market. The present

weak performance of books in national languages is traceable to official policies in favour of foreign languages—both institutional and in terms of status. It is fair to say that the slowness in the development of the reading habit is partly attributable to a lack of genuine literacy and proficiency in the relevant foreign languages; and at the same time, over-dependence on foreign languages is undermining both national language development and publishing. In my view, fundamental human and societal values are being undermined, and the mass of African people are being disempowered. Indigenous publishing will have to take account of this issue, which should also be central to discussions of national book policies.

Some years back, Wole Soyinka proposed that Swahili should be developed as the African lingua franca. That was before he won the Nobel Prize. It would be welcome if he would now make the same call and join Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his support of publishing in African languages.

The writer and the publisher: the need for a 'New Deal'

A strong case can be made for the holding of a conference at which writers and publishers would meet to discuss, in the light of their experience and of developments over the last 20 or so years, what needs to be done so as to arrive at a New Deal that would strengthen professional relationships and provide common approaches which are currently lacking. Authors and publishers know more now about their professions than they did 20 years ago. In the past, each side viewed the other with suspicion, and although this attitude has not been altogether eliminated, there is now sufficient knowledge of the demands of both professions for more enlightened and constructive debates to take place. The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation could appropriately provide such a forum, as one part of the follow-up to these discussions.

In conclusion, we think it is time to bring back the debate to where it belongs: to the book as a weapon of liberation, to literature as the soul of the people, and people as the objective of development. It should, therefore, matter what is published and it should matter that resources are brought back to the dreamers, so that they too are heard. Those who build castles in the air should also be listened to, for as a Spanish saying goes, 'if you cannot even build a castle in the air you certainly cannot build it on the ground'.

Notes

1. 'Towards Autonomous Publishing Capacity in Africa', *Development Dialogue* 1984:1-2, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, Sweden, pp. 137–140.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle, Economic Growth and Public Policy*, Washington DC, 1993.
7. *Ibid.*

Appendix

Framework for establishing equitable and mutually beneficial joint ventures in publishing in Africa

1. Whereas it is normal business practice for contracting parties who agree to form joint ventures to advance their business interest according to their shares in investment, experience in the publishing business in Africa has shown that in the past transnational publishing companies, even while investing minority shares, were the main beneficiaries of these ventures to the disadvantage of the local partners.
2. Not unusually, the African partner was saddled with the losses while the foreign partner took more than his share of the profit through management fees and over-generous salaries and benefits to the foreign Managing Directors and other expatriate staff.
3. As the joint ventures were established with state or parastatal companies the consequences of the break-up of those ventures may not have been as devastating as they would have been if the local partner was a small publisher with all his or her savings tied up in the venture.
4. In the present and future situation in which joint ventures are more likely to be between foreign companies (big and small) and local ones of small to medium size, and where financial resources are unequal, it will be necessary for both parties to be absolutely clear as to the advantages and disadvantages of entering into joint ventures. In particular, as the foreign partner is likely to be the stronger financially, it will not be advisable to rush into any agreement before the contributions according to each partner's strengths and weaknesses are assessed and taken note of.

5. The strengths of the African publisher would tend to be: knowledge of the local publishing situation, contacts with responsible officials in curriculum development institutes, the Ministry of Education and other government bodies; knowledge of indigenous languages (important where local language publishing is developing); and knowledge of sources of authors, editors, illustrators, etc.

6. Where the African publishing partner is well established with a staff (trained and competent) and a basic infrastructure—an office, some capital assets and above all a backlist—a proper valuation of assets and goodwill should be undertaken and included in the final shareholding.

7. Where it is deemed necessary to establish a new company (and this may be preferable) rather than restructure the African publishing company, it may be necessary to build the new company on the basis of a publishing programme comprising series of books or courses (in the case of educational publishing).

In this regard:

- (i) both parties must agree on the manuscripts to be published in order to protect each other from loss and recrimination should the end product not sell;
- (ii) the African partner should be the leader in identifying areas of book needs, finding writers and editorial teams;
- (iii) the foreign partner (with expertise) should work side by side with the African partner in instituting management and organisational systems (where identified as weak) to ensure adherence to schedules and deadlines and to constitute part of the training component, one advantage to the African partner in a joint venture; and
- (iv) as far as possible all pre-press work—typesetting (except where special characters are not available locally), layout and design—should be done in Africa unless there are clear advantages for doing it in the country of the foreign partner such as urgency and price. This would be one way to develop skills in Africa.

8. The division of financial responsibilities needs careful consideration. While the share of small/medium partner will depend on publishers' financial strength, in the prevailing situation it is likely that the African partner will not be in a position to match the financial resources of the foreign partner. However, in order to retain equal say in the management of the joint venture, one proposed format could be the following:

The foreign partner pays for/covers:

- (i) a retainer fee for the commissioning or administering of manuscripts;
- (ii) printing and marketing costs;
- (iii) 50 per cent of the overheads of the company.

The local partner provides/pays for:

- (i) an office, basic secretarial staff, basic office furniture and machines (typewriters/word processors);
- (ii) DTP (text processing) if available;
- (iii) a warehouse (or other space to store books). As the joint venture develops and stock increases it would be necessary to have a warehouse facility.

9. Profit-sharing

- (i) Based on annual accounts, profits would be shared equally after the deduction of costs (printing, overheads, royalties) and less say 80 per cent which should go into building a reserve fund.
- (ii) The foreign partner may choose either to repatriate the profit or to plough it back into the company; however, in view of the subsequent costs of printing, the reinvestment option would be the more attractive for the company and for exchange control department.
- (iii) In Year Five of operations the accumulated reserves may be sufficient to carry the budget for new titles without the foreign partner having to pay. At that time, a truly joint venture company would have evolved in a manner that enhances the development of indigenous publishing capacity.

10. There are certain basic conditions for the success of joint publishing ventures in Africa:

- Even though the partners in joint ventures in Africa, in the past, were transnational companies and state corporations, there have been other models of cooperation between African publishers—big and small—and European/American companies. These have taken the form of co-publications. They have usually benefited both parties because of the lower unit costs of larger print runs, and in some cases the African partner's copies have been priced on a run-on cost basis.
- Co-publication arrangements have worked best when the negotiating individuals knew one another, and there was trust between them and professional competence on both sides.
- Where such trust and professionalism were absent, there were inevitably problems, which usually put an end to other possible projects. For this reason it is recommended that those wishing to go into joint ventures should know their prospective partners well and have trust in them.
- It is for this reason too that a cautious project-by-project approach would have better chances of success than rushing headlong into fully-fledged joint companies.