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A vibrant, stylized illustration of a woman reading a book. She is wearing a colorful, patterned headwrap and a long, flowing dress with various geometric and floral patterns in shades of green, blue, red, and yellow. She is holding an open book and looking intently at the pages. The background features a green cabinet with a vase of yellow flowers and a red wooden chest with books on top. One book is titled 'SHOW ME A MOUNTAIN' by KEARY YOUNG, and another is 'WAITING FOR TONE' by ABRAHAM VERGHESE.

The **AFRICAN** **BOOK** Industry

Trends, Challenges &
Opportunities for Growth

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Opportunities for Growth

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Africa's untapped book industry

Thanks to its outstanding literary talent and growing number of success stories, Africa's book industry holds immense potential. Although the continent as a whole still relies heavily on imports and foreign publishing houses, it accounted for 5.4% of the global publishing market in 2023, generating approximately US\$7 billion in revenue annually. This is why, based on appropriate measures and policies in place, the continent's book industry is poised to see market opportunities of up to US\$18.5 billion in the coming years, with educational publishing alone representing a possible US\$13 billion.

For the first time, a comprehensive mapping of the book industry across 54 African countries has been conducted by UNESCO. This analysis highlights the strengths and weaknesses of Africa's book industry at both subregional and continental levels. It also provides valuable insights to inform evidence-based policymaking and strategic planning across the sector.

To unlock this potential, the report proposes strategic recommendations aimed at developing the African book industry, while ensuring that Africans can shape their own narratives and safeguard Africa's cultural and linguistic diversity.

UNESCO calls on policymakers, publishers, booksellers, librarians, authors and their representative organizations to collaborate in transforming Africa's book industry into a key driver for sustainable development.



Africa's
book industry has
the potential to reach
US\$ 18.5
billion revenue
per year

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The **AFRICAN**
BOOK Industry

Trends, Challenges &
Opportunities for Growth

Foreword

This report is a tribute to the immense creativity and skill of Africa's book professionals, novelists, poets and writers of every kind. The continent is filled with diverse linguistic landscapes, rich oral and literary traditions, and evolving contemporary narratives, which together have created a book industry bursting with potential.

From education and science to culture and communication, books are the lifeblood of UNESCO's work. Our World Book Capitals and Creative Cities of Literature serve as beacons for reading and writing, helping bring attention to each individual literary culture. From Port Harcourt in Nigeria to Alexandria in Egypt and Durban in South Africa, African cities have played a crucial role in these initiatives – and next year, Rabat in Morocco will do the same.

For decades, our Organization has been committed to understanding the book and publishing industry and through this, we have learned something essential: that the book industry is a powerful driver of sustainable development.

In Africa, the rise of digital publishing and the growing prominence of local and indigenous languages in literature are reshaping the publishing landscape, which has long been dominated by traditional publishing in English, French and Portuguese. These developments have made literature more accessible, connecting African stories with global audiences and fostering greater inclusion across the continent.

This is of great significance for education in Africa, where eight out of ten children start school in a language that is not their mother tongue. Both digital learning and multilingual education are key pillars of UNESCO's strategy to improve literacy – and increased availability of textbooks and other educational materials online and in a wider range of languages will be essential in achieving this goal.

Despite the richness of Africa's book industry, certain roadblocks prevent it from reaching its full potential. For example, only five of the 54 African States Members of UNESCO have specific laws to regulate and support the book industry. Moreover, Africa is heavily reliant on book imports, which weakens local publishing ecosystems and decreases employment opportunities. Problems also persist at the distribution level – for example, there is only one bookstore for every 116,000 people in Africa – greatly limiting the public's access to reading materials.

The pages that follow illustrate the vibrancy of African creativity and the boundless potential of the continent's book sector. This report highlights in particular the growing participation of women in the book sector and the important role this plays in providing women with a platform to share their voices and shape narratives. Books today are more essential than ever. They provide a space for dialogue, critical thinking and the free exchange of ideas—fundamental pillars of democratic societies. UNESCO reaffirms its commitment to supporting Africa's book industry, ensuring that it continues to inspire, educate and empower.

Audrey Azoulay
Director-General of UNESCO

Contents

	Foreword	4
	Executive summary	7
	Introduction	10
	Acronyms	13
Part 1	TRENDS IN THE AFRICAN BOOK INDUSTRY	15
	A VIBRANT BOOK ECOSYSTEM	16
	A STEADY PROGRESS TOWARDS THE FORMALIZATION OF LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS	18
	A GRADUAL ADAPTATION TO DIGITAL INNOVATION	20
	AN ENCOURAGING COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION	22
Part 2	CHALLENGES FACING THE AFRICAN BOOK INDUSTRY	25
	INSUFFICIENT AND UNSTRUCTURED POLICIES AND SUPPORT MEASURES	26
	Weak policy and regulatory structures	26
	Limited financial and tax incentives	28
	RELIANCE ON FOREIGN BOOK INDUSTRIES	28
	Significant trade imbalance in African publishing	29
	The strategic and lucrative educational market	30
	DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESS TO BOOKS AND READING PROMOTION	31
	LACK OF PUBLISHING REFLECTING THE CONTINENT'S LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY	33
	LACK OF SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES	34
Part 3	STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH	37
	STRENGTHENING INTEGRATED LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS	38
	Developing a National Book Policy (NBP)	40
	Establishing national book development councils (NBDCs)	41
	BUILDING A STRONG DOMESTIC MARKET FOR LOCAL PUBLISHERS	42
	INCREASING ACCESS TO BOOKS AND PROMOTING READERSHIP	45

SUBREGIONAL AND NATIONAL MAPPINGS 49

SUBREGIONAL MAPPINGS 50

CENTRAL AFRICA	51	SOUTHERN AFRICA	54
EASTERN AFRICA	52	WESTERN AFRICA	55
NORTHERN AFRICA	53		

NATIONAL MAPPINGS 56

ALGERIA	57	LIBERIA	146
ANGOLA	60	LIBYA	149
BENIN	64	MADAGASCAR	152
BOTSWANA	67	MALAWI	155
BURKINA FASO	70	MALI	159
BURUNDI	74	MAURITANIA	162
CABO VERDE	77	MAURITIUS	164
CAMEROON	80	MOROCCO	168
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	84	MOZAMBIQUE	172
CHAD	87	NAMIBIA	175
COMOROS	89	NIGER	179
CONGO	91	NIGERIA	182
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	94	RWANDA	187
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	97	SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE	190
DJIBOUTI	100	SENEGAL	193
EGYPT	103	SEYCHELLES	197
EQUATORIAL GUINEA	108	SIERRA LEONE	200
ERITREA	111	SOMALIA	203
ESWATINI	114	SOUTH AFRICA	207
ETHIOPIA	117	SOUTH SUDAN	213
GABON	122	SUDAN	216
GAMBIA	125	TOGO	220
GHANA	128	TUNISIA	223
GUINEA	133	UGANDA	227
GUINEA-BISSAU	136	UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA	231
KENYA	139	ZAMBIA	234
LESOTHO	143	ZIMBABWE	238

ANNEX: Foundations and historical changes in African literatures 243

Executive summary

The African book industry stands at a pivotal moment, shaped by a combination of significant opportunities and systemic challenges. This UNESCO report provides a comprehensive analysis of this industry across the 54 UNESCO African Member States, offering a baseline for policymakers and stakeholders to build upon. The report maps out structural trends, identifies key constraints and presents strategic recommendations to advance the industry's capacity for sustainable growth.

Considering the challenges of collecting data across diverse publishing landscapes, the report draws on a participatory methodology that combines official surveys, local expert insights and desk research to provide the best possible snapshot of the African book industry. Given the informality of part of the sector, however, this study could not gather comprehensive data for models such as self-publishing. As a result, certain subsectors, informal practices and technological developments could not be covered. This means that some of the study's estimates, such as the revenue and the number of jobs in the sector, are likely to be conservative. A fuller approximation that includes the informal sector could be double the estimations provided in this study.

African literature has significantly influenced the global cultural stage through acclaimed authors such as Assia Djebar (Algeria), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria), Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal), Mongo Beti (Cameroon), Naguib Mahfouz (Egypt), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya), Tierno Monenembo (Guinea), and Tsitsi Dangarembga (Zimbabwe).

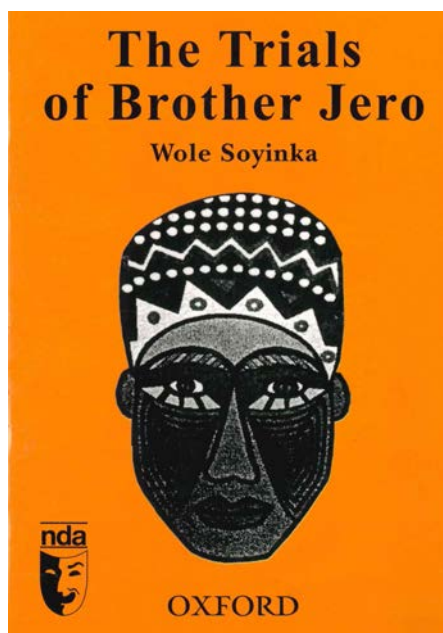
Adaptations of influential African literary works into internationally recognized films, including Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Nigeria), Scholastique Mukasonga's *Notre-Dame du Nil* (Rwanda), Marguerite Abouet's *Aya de Yopougon* (Côte d'Ivoire) and Ousmane Sembène's *Xala* (Senegal), underscore this global reach and relevance. Furthermore, the industry shows a commitment to gender equality through increasing representation of women writers and women publishing professionals, with countries such as Botswana, South Africa and Burundi.

This study estimates that Africa's book industry accounted for an estimated 5.4% of the global book market's revenue of US\$129 billion in 2023¹ despite the fact that the continent represented 18% of the world's population.² Africa's book industry is defined by its lucrative

educational publishing, which comprises approximately 70% of the market. With a net enrolment student population of 329 million, the educational market alone has the potential to reach about US\$13 billion. In countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana and Cameroon, strong domestic educational industries cater to national and regional markets.

Africa's book industry faces a significant trade deficit. In 2023, the continent imported books worth an estimated US\$597 million while exporting books to the value of US\$81 million.³ This represents a staggering deficit of 76% compared with total trade. Regional hubs such as South Africa, Kenya, Egypt, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal serve as export leaders within Africa, yet many countries remain tethered to European publishing houses, particularly in France and the United Kingdom. As a result, Africa's linguistic diversity is not well reflected in publishing: its 2,000 local and indigenous languages are largely overshadowed by English, French and Portuguese. Additionally, Africa faces weak local printing infrastructure, forcing many publishers to outsource printing outside the continent, further increasing costs and reducing competitiveness locally.

Institutional frameworks remain weak. Based on our data collection, only 38% of African countries have a dedicated council or ministerial department responsible for the book and publishing sector. ISBN agencies exist in just 54% of African countries, which complicates trade and exports owing to the administrative burdens of using foreign agencies and the difficulty in tracking books without ISBNs.



Wole Soyinka, Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986. *The Trials of Brother Jero* (Book cover). Public domain



Only five African countries (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania) have developed laws specifically addressing the book publishing industry beyond legal deposit and copyright regulations. However, even in countries with legal frameworks related to the book sector, enforcement remains inconsistent, limiting industry growth and sustainability.

Financial constraints further exacerbate these issues. A lack of structured funding mechanisms has many publishers relying on one-off grants, while 54% of African countries impose standard VAT rates on books, increasing costs for both producers and consumers. Countries such as Botswana, Ghana and Mauritius have implemented innovative levy models to sustain book industry funding. In Botswana, the Levy on Technical Devices Fund (LTDF) collected US\$363,000 in 2023, redistributing these funds to support local authors and publishers.

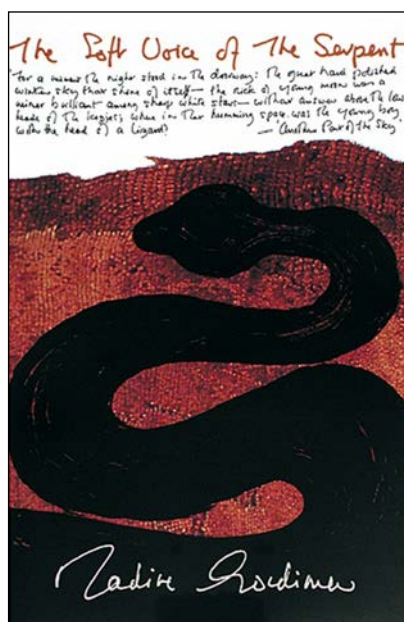
Limited access to books, low literacy rates and weak reading policies present additional barriers. Not taking into account other forms of book distribution present in the informal sector, Africa has approximately 13,000 bookstores that sell books as their primary product. The distribution of these bookstores is highly uneven throughout the continent. Nigeria, the continent's most populous country, has only one bookstore per 50,000 people approximately. Public libraries are even more sparse, with an estimated 8,000 of them serving the entire continent. South Africa leads with 1,949 libraries – yet even here each library serves approximately 40,000 people. Without substantial investments in bookstores, libraries and distribution networks, book accessibility remains a critical challenge.

The book industry also faces a skills gap, with only 20% of African countries offering dedicated publishing

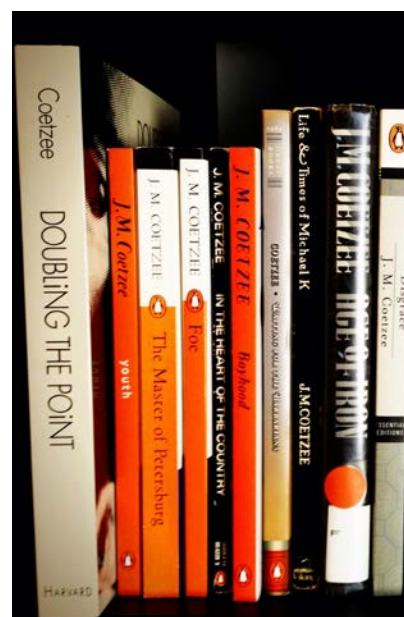
The sector is undeniably evolving. There are new faces, often young people returning from abroad with ideas, motivation and a desire to do things differently. Observing what was being achieved elsewhere, I decided to take the plunge too. However, this evolution remains fragile, because the organizing structures needed to support it are not yet in place. Progress is being made, but on unstable ground.

Souleymane Gueye

Editorial director of Saaraba publishing house,
founder of the *Plumes du Monde* bookshop • Senegal



Nadine Gordimer, Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991. *The Soft Voice of the Serpent* (Book cover). Publisher: S. Fischer Verlag. © Raphie Etgar / Wikimedia.com



John Maxwell Coetzee, Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003. © andessurvivor / Flickr.com

qualifications, leaving much of the continent dependent on informal training and workshops. Industry associations such as the Writers Association of The Gambia provide some technical training, but these efforts remain insufficient in building a competitive workforce.

Digital technologies have become critical catalysts, reshaping the publishing landscape. Senegal's Nouvelles Éditions Numériques Africaines (NENA) and Ghana's Akoobooks are pioneers in e-book and audiobook publishing, while platforms such as Librairies du Maroc in Morocco offer extensive digital catalogues, facilitating broader access and reducing traditional distribution barriers.

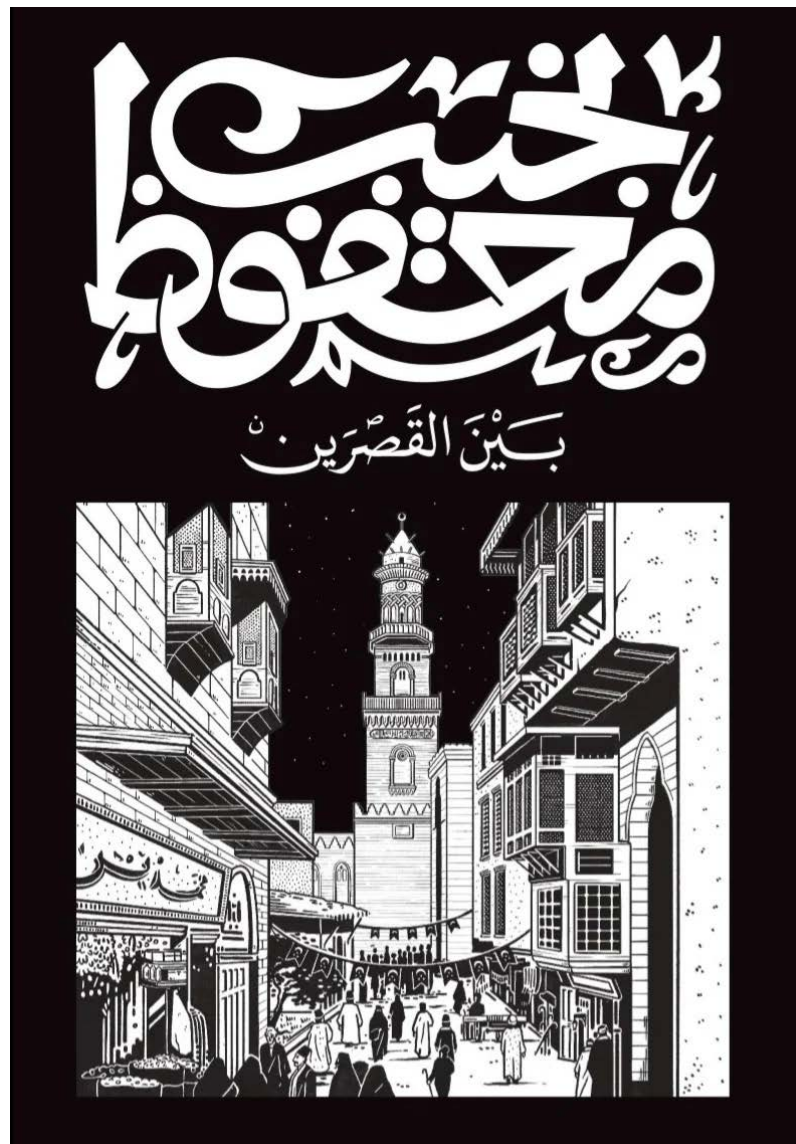
Literary festivals and book fairs increasingly enhance the international visibility of African literature. Egypt's Cairo International Book Fair, Morocco's Salon international de l'édition et du livre de Rabat, Côte d'Ivoire's Salon international du livre d'Abidjan and Nigeria's Aké Arts and Book Festival are globally recognised. Similarly, a diversity of literary prizes such as Mali's Prix Ahmed Baba and Uganda's Babishai Niwe Poetry Award underscore the continent's growing recognition of literary excellence. With around 200 professional associations identified at the national level, professional stakeholder organizations significantly bolster the sector, actively advocating for policy reform, copyright enforcement and professionalization.

At the continental level, the African Publishers Network (APNET), the Association des éditeurs francophones au Sud du Sahara (Afrilivres), the Pan-African Writers Association and the Pan African Booksellers Association (PABA), strive to contribute substantially to the industry development, capacity-building and market expansion.

To build on the continent's strengths, the report proposes clear strategic recommendations that emphasize strengthening institutional frameworks, increasing local capacity and facilitating regional collaboration. For instance, establishing comprehensive national book laws and policies aligned with broader educational, cultural and industrial objectives, and embedding publishing within national industrial policy action plans where appropriate, are critical for sustained development. Creating national book development councils in countries lacking such bodies can further strengthen governance and coordination, and the oversight of sector-specific initiatives.

Beyond the above, the report recommends consolidating domestic and regional markets while reducing reliance on foreign entities. Key policy proposals include the establishment of foreign investment regulations, the creation of national ISBN agencies and the provision of export subsidies to support regional market expansion. Harmonizing regional trade through the African Union's flagship initiative, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), could also enhance cross-border cooperation and significantly boost the intra-African book trade.

Strengthening distribution networks, supporting booksellers and investing in public library infrastructure – particularly in rural and underserved areas – are also identified as key strategies to promote literacy, lifelong learning and cultural preservation. National reading campaigns, informed by regular reading surveys (currently



Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988. *Palace Walk* (Book cover) © Diwan Publishing, Egypt

almost non-existent), are required to foster a culture of reading. Public library legislation is essential to standardize services and ensure equitable access. Additionally, the support of digital publishing and platforms presents an opportunity to overcome traditional barriers to access, particularly in rural communities.

In short, by structuring the book's value chain, reducing reliance on foreign publishers and promoting local content, Africa's book publishing industry could emerge as a vital industry for economic development, job creation and cultural empowerment.

NOTES

1. Statista. 2024. *Global Book Publishing Revenue 2018-2023*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/307299/global-book-publishing-revenue/> (Accessed 11 February 2025.)
2. United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division. 2022. *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results*. New York: United Nations. <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/products/witstats/seratab1.pdf> (Accessed 22 April 2025.)
3. United Nations. 2024. UN Comtrade Database: *Imports of Printed Books, Brochures, Leaflets, and Similar Printed Matter (HS 490199)*, 2023. *Compiled Data for Africa* (Accessed 22 March 2025.)

Introduction

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In June 2024 UNESCO launched an exploratory study on the book industry in Africa, as part of its commitment to the diversity of cultural expressions and as a contribution to the development of dynamic cultural and creative industries (CCIs) on the continent. This initiative follows previous UNESCO publications on the film industry in Africa (2021) and the fashion sector in Africa (2023).

The results of the study on the book industry are presented in this report, which provides a comprehensive mapping across 54 countries, detailing structural trends and key indicators for the industry. The report goes on to offer strategic recommendations aimed at guiding the formulation of policies that stimulate industry growth at the continental, subregional and national levels.

The report's overarching goal is to provide governments, policymakers and industry stakeholders with an evidence-based understanding of the African book industry. To this end, it offers concrete data, policy guidance and regional insights in support of a road map for the development of Africa's book industry. It also provides a snapshot of the industry in 2023, which serves primarily as a baseline study and makes no pretence of covering trends over time.

GLOBAL OUTLOOK FOR THE AFRICAN BOOK INDUSTRY

Interest in the CCIs as key economic drivers has grown globally over the past twenty years. In 2022, UNESCO estimated that the creative industries generated annual revenues of US\$2.3 trillion globally, contributing 3.1% of global gross domestic product (GDP).¹ According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD's) *Creative Economy Outlook 2024*, CCIs contribute between 0.5% and 7.3% of GDP and employ between 0.5% and 12.5% of the workforce.²

In contrast, the book industry lacks consolidated global data. Nevertheless, documentary research shows that the book industry generated an estimated US\$129 billion worldwide in 2023.³ This study estimates that Africa's book publishing industry generated approximately US\$7 billion in the same period, far behind the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO's) estimates for the United States of America (US\$28.1 billion), Germany (US\$9.9 billion), Japan (US\$9.3 billion), India (US\$9.1 billion).⁴

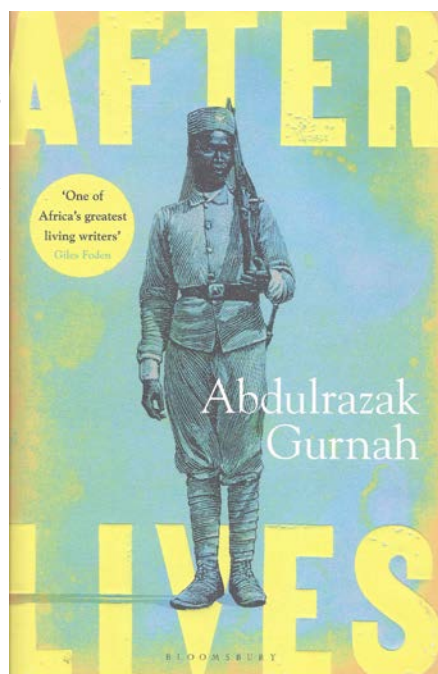
The continent's relatively low share of global publishing revenue must be understood in light of historical disruptions to its book industries. In the decades following independence, a number of African countries actively supported local publishing through investments in education, curriculum development and national book policies. However, in some African countries, these gains were significantly curtailed by the austerity measures of International Monetary Fund (IMF) Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s

and 1990s, which forced many governments to reduce public spending on the educational and cultural sectors. While these programmes did not apply to all African countries, this retrenchment weakened national support for publishing in some countries, stalling the development of the industry and contributing to the disparities seen today across the region.

More recently, several initiatives aimed at growing Africa's book industry have reflected increasing investment interest in the sector. The African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), for instance, introduced the CANEX Book Factory in 2023, to highlight Africa's book value chain. This was alongside its CANEX Prize for Publishing in Africa, which offers prizes in support of literary excellence. These initiatives nevertheless remain fragmented, which limits their collective impact. Coordinating these efforts with governments and the book professionals could expedite industry growth, streamline funding and enhance long-term benefits for African publishers.

LEGAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY FRAMEWORKS

Across Africa the book industry benefits from international treaties that protect intellectual property and improve access to literature, shaping its growth amid challenges. These agreements, administered beyond UNESCO by organizations such as WIPO and the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization, ARIPO (to name just a couple), support local publishing industries and expand market opportunities.



UNESCO plays a significant role in promoting cultural access and diversity through its treaties. The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), which supports cultural diversity in the creative industries, has been acceded to by 88% of the 54 UNESCO African Member States considered in this study.⁵ WIPO oversees key treaties that influence copyright and intellectual property laws in Africa. The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886), which ensures global protection for authors' works, has been ratified by 87% of African countries, while the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property (1883) has a participation rate of 93% among African countries. Meanwhile, 43% of African countries are parties to the WIPO Copyright Treaty (1996), which extends copyright protection to digital works. The Marrakesh Treaty (2013), which facilitates access to books for the visually impaired, was ratified by 67% of countries of the continent.⁶ At the regional level, the Lusaka Agreement (1976), established by ARIPO, works to harmonize intellectual property laws among African countries. With 40.74% of African countries as members, this agreement facilitates greater collaboration between, and consistency among, IP regulations across the region.

DEFINITIONS FOR THE BOOK INDUSTRY

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions are provided as working interpretations and are not intended to be exhaustive or universally applicable.

The **book** is a printed or electronic non-periodical publication that is usually made available to the public. Traditionally referring to physical print publications, the term 'book' now encompasses a book in all its formats – audiobook, e-book, etc. This definition is further extended to include multiple distribution channels; and various access devices such as digital platforms, for instance e-readers, electronic tablets and mobile phones.

Book publishing involves the selection, production and distribution of a book, transforming raw manuscripts into finished works that eventually reach readers. Publishers add value at multiple stages, including editing, design, marketing, distribution and intellectual property management. Publishers usually make a financial investment in a book and take calculated risks by bringing it to market.

The **book industry** refers to the comprehensive network of activities, bodies and institutions involved in the creation, production, distribution and commercialization of books and other materials. It encompasses the entire book publishing value chain, including writing, editorial development, printing, digital conversion, marketing, sales, reader engagement, and more. The industry includes authors, publishers, translators, illustrators, librarians, printers, distributors, booksellers and digital platforms, each of them contributing to the availability and accessibility of books in all their formats.

The **book value chain** refers to the sequence of interconnected processes and stakeholders involved in the life cycle of a book, from its initial conception to its final consumption by readers. It captures the entire publishing system, in which multiple players contribute to the creation, production, distribution and utilization of books in various formats – print, digital and audio. Diagram 1 in Part 3 of the report illustrates the book value chain.

Educational publishing refers to a branch of the book publishing focused on creating content tailored for educational settings, including primary and secondary schools, higher education institutions, and professional training programmes. It encompasses a wide range of materials such as textbooks, indexes and abstracts, study guides, and digital learning tools and platforms.

Book development refers to the strategic growth of a country's book publishing, and entails increasing the volume and diversity of published works while improving their production and distribution.

It covers the policies, infrastructure and initiatives that enhance publishing, market access and readership. Governments, institutions and industry associations collaborate to drive book development through investment, capacity-building and regulatory frameworks to strengthen the industry and increase access to books.

National book development council refers to a governmental or semi-governmental body dedicated to coordinating and supporting the book publishing through policy formulation, financial incentives and industry structuration. It is a coordinating and advisory forum for both government and book professionals, and all major stakeholders are represented there.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

In June 2024, UNESCO sent out a primarily quantitative survey in both English and French (with space for additional qualitative comments) to industry stakeholders and national authority in all 54 African UNESCO Member States. This survey focused on data from the year 2023, with some data collected for 2021 and 2022. A 90% response rate from national authority was achieved, and responses were also received from multiple industry stakeholders such as publishers, booksellers and librarians.

Despite the official responses received from national authority, quantitative data remain scarce for many countries. The publishing industries in Africa also vary vastly across different subregions. Countries with stronger publishing infrastructure are more likely than smaller book markets to have structured data. To overcome this challenge, the research and drafting process for this report was designed to be highly participatory and collaborative, with 39 regional and local experts from Africa working on the study. The aim of this method was to reflect the reality on the ground as closely as possible. The reader should note, however, that in many cases the numbers presented are estimates arrived at by experts based on their direct field knowledge. Throughout the report, the signalling of all such estimates is conveyed through the use of words such as 'approximately', 'about', or 'estimation'.

The research methodology for all contributors involved the following:

- A review of existing local and regional studies on the subject.
- Desk research based on news, academic articles and other online resources.
- A detailed online quantitative questionnaire shared with governments and stakeholders in 54 African UNESCO Member States.

When official data were not available, stakeholders and experts involved in the drafting of national mappings were encouraged to provide estimates based on their knowledge in the field, which underwent peer review.

- Personal and semi-structured interviews conducted by local experts with relevant stakeholders.
- Interviews with, and feedback from, a reference group put together by the drafting team for the regional and continental analysis.
- A peer review by book-publishing-industry experts.

The report provides a set of figures at the beginning of every national mapping, detailing quantitative data gathered for the year 2023. These figures are the basis for the subregional and the continental data. It should be noted, however, that the study counts only specific types of bookstores and libraries. It considers only bookstores that sell books as their primary product, thus excluding other points of sale such as supermarkets, stationery stores, street stalls, etc. The study also considers only libraries that are accessible to the public, thus excluding school and university libraries, and libraries in other academic institutions. Additionally, owing to the lack of data in many countries, employment figures for the book publishing industry in those countries were estimated using a standardized formula developed in consultation with book development experts.⁷

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The focus of the study is on book publishing, bookselling and libraries, and the report does not, therefore, cover the entire book value chain. Key commercial subsectors, including the paper and print industries, are not directly included in the scope of the study. Other aspects not covered are academic, vocational and technical

publishing, and university presses, even though they are essential to knowledge production and innovation.

Notably, self-publishing constitutes another key component of the book publishing industry in Africa that has not been addressed. The characteristic informality of this model of publishing exacerbated the issue of data scarcity already experienced in the industry. Authors' use of global digital platforms such as Amazon's direct publishing or other print-on-demand services requires a data-collection method different from the one used here. The other methods available to study this crucial development in the industry were not within this report's scope; and the study is thus unable to provide an overview of what is an important and evolving publishing model on the continent.

The informality prevalent in Africa's book publishing industry, as in many other creative industries, makes it difficult to collect verified data. Informal areas of the sector also give rise to diverse – and sometimes highly innovative – models of production, distribution and consumption. These may include, for example, authors publishing their novels serially via WhatsApp; or flash fiction made easily digestible through the use of mobile screens. However, these models are not captured in this study, which is based on a structured and formalized model of the industry.

The necessary delineation of the report's scope within the formal sector also leaves out further examination of authors' roles. As a result, some of the study's estimates, such as the number of jobs in the sector, are likely to be conservative. A fuller approximation including the informal sector might double the estimations provided in this study.

Lastly, the emergence of large language model (LLM)-based artificial intelligence (AI) has instigated re-evaluations of many creative and cultural industries, including the book publishing industry.

The emergence and rapid adoption of such technologies have disrupted parts of the book value chain, for example editorial work and translation, and necessitated new regulations around copyright enforcement. However, as many governments and industries around the world are only beginning to reckon with the impact of LLMs, trends are only starting to emerge. At this stage, only limited verifiable data have been generated, and there are no firm recommendations available that push beyond best guesses and speculation. As a result, while this study covers developments in digital innovation and AI on the African continent, it does not include extensive analysis of the impact of AI on the book publishing industry. Dynamic developments such as self-publishing, AI and innovative digital practices each require and merit dedicated studies that fully explore emerging trends and their implications.

NOTES

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2. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. 2024. <https://unctad.org/publication/creative-economy-outlook-2024> (Accessed 22 April 2025.)

3. Statista. 2024. *Global Book Publishing Revenue 2018-2023*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/307299/global-book-publishing-revenue/#statisticContainer> (Accessed 11 February 2025.)

4. World Intellectual Property Organization. 2023. *The Global Publishing Industry in 2022*. Geneva: WIPO. <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo-pub-1064-2023-2-en-the-global-publishing-industry-in-2022.pdf> (Accessed 22 April 2025.)

5. UNESCO. Fonds international pour la diversité culturelle. 2024. https://www.unesco.org/creativity/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/04/list_eligible_countries_ifcd_15_call_2024_en_0.pdf (Accessed 22 April 2025.)

6. WIPO. 'WIPO-administered treaties'. <https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/> (Accessed 22 April 2025.)

7. Job numbers in the sector at national level are estimated at 4 per publisher, 1 per bookstore, 3 per library, and 4 per number of titles for other stakeholders involved in the production of a title (author, illustrator, designer, translator, printer, etc.)

Acronyms

ACALAN	African Academy of Languages
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AI	Artificial intelligence
APNET	African Publishers Network
ARIPO	African Regional Intellectual Property Organization
CANEX	Creative Africa Nexus
CCIs	Cultural and creative industries
CREPLA	Centre régional de promotion du livre en Afrique au sud du Sahara
CRM	Collective rights management
GDP	Gross domestic product
IFRRO	International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organizations
IPAP	Industrial policy action plan
ISBN	International standard book number
LLM	Large language model
LTDF	Levy on Technical Devices Fund
NBDC	National book development council
NBP	National book policy
NLP	Natural Language Processing
NENA	Nouvelles Éditions Numériques Africaines
RROs	Reproduction rights organizations
SIC	Standard industry classification
SMMEs	Small, medium and micro enterprises
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VAT	Value added tax
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization





Part 1

Trends in the African book industry

Part 1 presents trends in the African book industry, based on data collection carried out for the purpose of this study.

A VIBRANT BOOK ECOSYSTEM



Publishing houses
6,400



Titles published
86,000



Bookstores
13,000



Public libraries
8,000



Festivals and book fairs
270



Professional associations
200

It is fair to presume that a continent of 1.44 billion people speaking 2,000 languages (approximately one-third of the world's languages)¹ across 12 million square miles would have a rich diversity of stories to tell. The continent's history of storytelling includes enduring oral traditions; exemplary manuscript cultures – such as those represented by the *Prisse Papyrus* of Egypt (dating back to 1800 BE); the *Ge'ez* manuscripts of Ethiopia (from the fourth century CE) and the *Timbuktu* manuscripts of Mali (from the fourteenth century); and a robust adoption of the printing press after its introduction primarily by European missionaries (starting from the 18th century).

As of 2023, the book industry on the continent had evolved to include approximately 6,400 publishers producing some 86,000 titles per annum; 13,000 physical bookstores; 8,000 public libraries; 270 literary festivals and book fairs; and 200 professional associations.

Despite challenges in areas such as funding and distribution, local and diasporic authors are reclaiming their

narratives and finding innovative ways to share their stories. This dynamic engagement on various platforms, digital or otherwise, is leading to a thriving contemporary scene for the book publishing, one that encompasses both literary and educational works.

The continent has continually produced a treasure trove of African writing. Its contribution ranges across canonical authors such as Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), Camara Laye (Guinea), Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya), Okot p'Bitek (Uganda), Pepetela (Angola) and Tayeb Salih (Sudan); global bestsellers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria), Hisham Matar (Libya), Ishmael Beah (Sierra Leone), Mohamed Mbougar Sarr (Senegal) and Tahar Ben Jelloun (Morocco); Nobel laureates such as Abdulrazak Gurnah (Tanzania), Nadine Gordimer (South Africa), Naguib Mahfouz (Egypt) and Wole Soyinka (Nigeria); and literary prizewinners such as Ahmadou Kourouma (Côte d'Ivoire), Fiston Mwanza Mujila (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Germano Almeida (Cabo Verde), Kangni Alem (Togo), Mbarek Ould Beyrouk (Mauritania) and Tierno Monénembo (Guinea). Just as significant are its many engaged and talented writer-activists, among them Ali Zamir (Comoros), Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana), Assia Djebar (Algeria), Djaili Amadou Amal (Cameroon), Hawad (Niger), Monique Ilboudo (Burkina Faso), Paulina Chiziane (Mozambique) and Tsitsi Dangarembga (Zimbabwe). More recently, innovative digital novelists have been making an appearance, such as Alexander Nderitu (Kenya), whose open-access digital novel *When the Whirlwind Passes* has been Africa's most downloaded book since 2020.²

In South Africa, children's literature, young adult (YA) books and graphic novels (inspired particularly by Japanese Manga) are steadily growing in popularity.



Comic book authors can currently publish online. They are no longer dependent on traditional publishers, who are often based in Europe. They take the initiative of publishing their own books, without waiting to be spotted. They are no longer dependent on the goodwill of traditional publishers, nor are they waiting to be discovered.

Joëlle Épée Mandengue

Cartoonist, comic strip author, founder of the *Bilili BD Festival* • Guinea Conakry

In the Central African Republic, graphic novelist Didier Kassai has gained international acclaim for works such as *Tempête sur Bangui* and *A House Without Windows*, both of them part of a collaborative project with British photojournalist Marc Ellison that explores the lives of Bangui's street children.

Further highlighting the expanding opportunities in graphic novels, the Bilili Fest in Brazzaville brings together local and international authors of comics, 2D cartoons, cosplay, and digital and physical publishing.³ In the same vein, we are witnessing a rise in children's literature production throughout French-speaking Africa, including Madagascar. These growth areas bode well for trade book publishing on the continent.

Although educational publishing dominates Africa's book market, accounting for an estimated 70% of industry output across most regions, Northern Africa's industry already has a strong focus on trade publishing. In Egypt, educational publishing comprises only 7% of total industry production.⁴



This focus on trade publishing, supported by substantial government investment, has enabled Egypt and Algeria to host the continent's largest international book fairs – key indicators of a thriving sector.

At least 270 literary festivals and book fairs were hosted across the continent in 2023 alone. New fairs emerge every year, as attested to by Djibouti's first-ever book fair in 2024; Togo's Youth Book Fair, first held in 2024; Gabon's Libreville International Children's Book Fair, first held in 2023; and Equatorial Guinea's Malabo and Bata book fairs, held in 2022 and 2023 respectively.

Furthermore, the number of local awards signals that the industry is vibrant: awards require an organized

literary ecosystem capable of submitting and judging books; private sector or government investment for the prize money; and demand for quality literature. The 2024 introduction of the CANEX Prize for Publishing in Africa, a homegrown initiative by the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) under its CANEX (Creative African Nexus) programme, serves as an example of the growth in local awards. The prize was officially launched in Egypt, while the inaugural award ceremony was held in Algeria. It is awarded to the publisher of the best trade book across three genres: fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

Regional awards further underscore this vibrancy. The Wole Soyinka Prize

for Literature in Africa, begun in 2005, is a biennial pan-African writing prize for the best literary work produced by an African in English or French.⁵ The Prix Voix d'Afriques, established in 2020, is intended for debut French-speaking authors under 30 who have never been published before and who reside on the African continent.⁶

The continent also hosts many national awards, such as the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature in Kenya (running since 1972) and the José Craveirinha Prize for literature (Prémio José Craveirinha de Literatura) since 2003. The Rentrée littéraire du Mali (The Mali's literary season), a festival which has been running for 15 years and features several prizes including the Prix Ahmed Baba, crowns several authors from the continent each year. At a more local level, the Guinea High School Literary Prize (Prix littéraire des lycéens de Guinée) was launched in 2024 at the the International Children's Book Fair (Salon international du livre jeunesse). Based on Guinea's strong focus on promoting literacy among youths and marginalised groups, its capital city Conakry was designated UNESCO World Book Capital in 2017.⁷ In 2023, it was Accra, Ghana's, to be appointed World Book Capital.

African literature has also had an impact on the global stage through powerful book-to-film adaptations. Chinua Achebe's groundbreaking novel *Things Fall Apart* was first adapted into a film in 1971 and then into a Nigerian television series in the 1980s. Ousmane Sembène's *Xala* (Senegal) was adapted to film by Sembène himself and screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1975. Yasmina Khadra's *What the Day Owes the Night* brought Algeria's struggle for independence to film in 2012. The 1986 film *Sarraounia*, which takes place in Niger and was based on Abdoulaye Mamani's novel of the same name, received critical acclaim and won the first prize at the Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou.



Scholastique Mukasonga's *Our Lady of the Nile* (Rwanda) was adapted as a feature film in 2019 and won Best Film at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2020.

A popular graphic novel series, *Aya of Yop City* by Marguerite Abouet (Côte d'Ivoire), was adapted into an animated film in 2013 and nominated for Best Animated Film at the César Awards in 2014. Streaming platforms such as Netflix and Showmax have brought William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer's book *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (Malawi) and Dudu Busani-Dube's *Hlomu The Wife* book series (South Africa) to screens. The series *Les coups de la vie*, based on the books by Anzata Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire) is a huge success on Canal+ TV channel.

The African book industry is also shaped by collaboration within the region. Northern Africa serves as a strong example: there, collaboration across language groups has fostered a thriving book publishing, leveraging regional cooperation and alignment among players in the Middle Eastern and Northern African (MENA) market. Publishing houses such as East African Educational Publishers Ltd and West African Book Publishers Ltd also contribute to the fostering of relations between book publishing professionals within the subregion. Other examples of collaboration on the continent include two memorandums of understanding on cultural cooperation signed between Egypt and Sierra Leone, and Egypt and Burundi, covering the areas of publishing, authorship and translation in the period 2021-2024. Other parts of the continent have realized the benefit of collaboration. Among Lusophone countries, Guinea-Bissau and Angola signed a Protocol on Technical Cooperation and Exchange in the Field of Social Communication in 1995, covering aspects related to copyright. Gambia's alliance with the Pan-African Writers Association and

The CANEX Prize is all about believing in the power of publishing on the continent. What sets this award apart is our focus – we celebrate and honour the publisher, while also recognizing the author. Quality matters – we have to raise the bar – especially in children's literature. We can't keep putting out low-quality work. Our stories deserve better.

Dr Eghosa Imasuen
Co-founder of Narrative Press and
organiser of the CANEX Prize,
interviewed on 27 November 2024.

the Senegalese Writers Association, and its participation in initiatives such as the Senegambia Book Prize, have afforded Gambian writers a greater number of opportunities.

These collaborations also include campaigns to promote reading, which often involve governmental entities and civil society partners across many countries. For example, Liberia worked with the International Literacy Association (ILA) to train teachers and fund reading and literacy initiatives in the country.⁸ Other notable examples of campaigns launched within countries to promote reading include Chad's national campaign, the 'Month of Books and Reading' (le Mois du livre et de la lecture), whose eighth edition took place in 2024; Somalia's 'Somaliland Moving Library' (launched in 2011); and Morocco's 'Arab Reading Challenge' (launched in 2015/2016), a competition which uses an interactive and enjoyable approach to encourage reading among children and youths between the ages of 8 and 18. In South Sudan, the 'Korbandi Cultural Salon' (2014 onwards) has employed television to promote books and engage adult audiences who lack access to libraries.

A STEADY PROGRESS TOWARDS THE FORMALIZATION OF LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS



Copyright/Intellectual property
91% of countries



Legal deposit laws
57% of countries



Public coordinating institution
39% of countries



National ISBN agency
54% of countries



Public funding investment
33% of countries

The vibrancy of the book publishing industry is supported by the existence of legal frameworks across most countries on the continent, especially in the form of laws pertaining to copyright and legal deposit.

A majority of countries have legal frameworks related to their book industries, including laws governing legal deposit and copyright. Indeed, copyright regimes are almost universal on the continent, with a few exceptions. Some 91% of countries report having a law on copyright that protects authorial rights. Currently, copyrights organizations and writers and publishers associations of 16 African countries are members of the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO), demonstrating a growing commitment to collective rights management (CRM) as a tool in the professionalization of the industry.⁹ CRM systems uphold key industry standards and provide a fast and effective way of upgrading the industry. Organizations such as the IFRRO and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) support Africa's efforts in this regard through a project aiming to modernize intellectual property laws by integrating CRM systems and other measures into them.

Regarding legal deposit, 57% of countries have laws or decrees related to this issue, which is vital for the preservation of national heritage and to create a comprehensive depository of published works. This, in turn, facilitates data management and sector monitoring.

As for public investment in the book publishing industry, 33% of countries indicate its existence. While data on the total amount of public investment in the region or in any individual country are scarce, specific examples exist. In Ethiopia, approximately US\$20.5 million was invested in building the Abrehot Library, the largest library in the country, which opened in 2022.¹⁰ South Africa invested an annual amount of US\$54.86 million, with US\$54 million of the total earmarked specifically for the expansion of public library infrastructure. Senegal established a Publishing Support Fund in 2004, under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture. In 2020, using a budget of some US\$968,000 (600 million CFA francs), the Fund supported 300 writers,

65 publishing houses, 35 printers, 20 bookstores, 20 associations and 53 regional libraries and reading centres through the production and distribution of 365 titles.¹¹ In 2023, Botswana contributed US\$464,000 to the industry in various ways.

In general, when it comes to governmental coordinating institutions, the book sector in African countries is overseen by a ministry. Typically, the industry falls under the larger purview of a ministry of culture or a ministry of education. At the same time, 21 countries have departments dedicated to the sector. In some instances, the responsibility for the sector is further devolved to an arts and culture council, as is the case with the National Kiswahili Council within the Ministry of Culture in Tanzania. In other instances, a dedicated branch is responsible for book publishing. Such is the case in Côte d'Ivoire, where the Direction du livre et de la lecture (Directorate of Book and Reading) exists within the Ministry of Culture; or with Ghana's National Book Development

Council, which falls within the mandate of the Ministry of Education. Aligning books and publishing with cultural ministries ensures their integration into national development strategies, thereby supporting sustainable growth.

Another important institutional cornerstone is the ISBN agency. About half of the countries on the continent (29) have an ISBN agency, while the rest use ISBN agencies located abroad, notably in France or Portugal. National ISBN agencies are often, although not necessarily, housed within a country's national library. These agencies play the crucial role of assigning unique identifiers to books, thus facilitating book publishing and trade within and outside the continent. Similarly to legal deposit, ISBNs are used for cataloguing and classifying books to enable effective data management and monitoring of the book sector.

In some instances, existing coordinating bodies led by industry associations and professional associations play a role in supporting the country's copyright enforcement or national book plan. Around 200 professional associations operating at the country level – averaging three per country – underscore civil society's strong commitment to the book industry. Their presence serves as clear evidence of a sector striving to transition from informal practices to a structured, sustainable and globally competitive framework. For example, ZimCopy in Zimbabwe, the Copyright Society of Botswana (COSBOTS) and the Mozambican Association of Authors (Sociedade Moçambicana de Autores – SOMAS) defend and manage creators' economic rights. Recently, SOMAS played a significant role in advocating for the new Copyright and Related Rights Law (Law No. 9/2022).

Publishers' associations across the continent advocate for industry growth by lobbying for supportive policies and a conducive business environment, while also promoting transparent procurement policies for textbooks and library materials.



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Moreover, they ensure opportunities for networking and collaboration through initiatives such as book fairs. Madagascar's Antananarivo Book Fair, organized by the Association of Malagasy Publishers (Association des Éditeurs de Madagascar – AEDIM), is a case in point. Meanwhile, writers' associations actively promote reading and writing. For instance, the Association poétique et littéraire du Niger (APOL-Niger) has organized the Niger Book and Arts Market (MALAN) since 2022. Where these professional formations are weak or absent, policy reforms and support measures are unlikely to drive meaningful progress.

A GRADUAL ADAPTATION TO DIGITAL INNOVATION

Despite limited support for widespread digital roll-out, several countries are making remarkable progress in adopting and leveraging digital technologies, especially in digital publishing. In Mauritius, Thomson Digital, a subsidiary of Thomson Press India, stands out as a key player in the digital transformation of publishing. It offers comprehensive services and solutions – including e-book production, digital publishing platforms and editorial services – and supports academic, trade and educational publishers both locally and globally. Senegal is home to one of the continent's digital publishing pioneers, Nouvelles Éditions Numériques Africaines (NENA). Established in 2008, NENA has published thousands of e-books and audiobooks in African literature, law, and the social sciences. Its flagship initiative, the African Digital Bookshop (ADB), serves as a hub for African works, with thematic digital libraries available online and offline through subscription models. Xania, translated as 'Knowledge', is a Kenyan digital publishing platform. The app was launched in 2024 by Goelway LLC to help African authors reach a wider digital audience.

In the current context, readers no longer need to go looking for books: it is up to books to come to readers. Book promotion can no longer be limited to traditional events. Creation and innovation are needed in order to generate interest.

Pauline Ongono

Librarian, literary communicator, organizer of literary events, proofreader • Cameroon

StreetLib Sao Tome & Principe is a publishing portal through which authors and publishers in Sao Tome and Principe are able to distribute their books digitally around the world without having to pay up-front fees.

Sophisticated and emerging online distribution platforms, both multinational and homegrown, are slowly reshaping Africa's publishing landscape. In Central Africa, platforms such as Cameroon's Afribookhub focuses on providing free e-books on African literature. The Zebra Comics (webtoon) platform has an international reach that extends far beyond the continent. In Eastern Africa, the high rate of smartphone adoption in Kenya has fostered platforms such as Xania, a self-publishing platform, whereas South Africa's Snapplify is a leader in educational content distribution. In Western Africa, YouScribe (a platform based in France) supports self-publishing and distributes e-books to francophone audiences, while Northern Africa's Arabookverse focuses on Arabic-speaking users. The digital platform Librairies du Maroc was launched in 2021 in Morocco, with thousands of print and digital books listed in its catalogue. In Benin, online platforms such as Bookconekt offer home delivery as well as digital lending of e-books and audiobooks.

In Cameroon, Adinkra is a platform dedicated to children's books. Although audiobook adoption is still limited on the continent, services such as Ghana's Akoobooks, FCAudioEdit in Togo and Livox in Tunisia publish and stream African audiobooks, while Nigeria's Genti provides audiomedias in 22 Nigerian and African languages.

Young people have also leveraged lessons learned during the Covid-19 pandemic to create online book clubs – with popular hosts, podcasters, bloggers and vloggers reviewing books via various social-media platforms. The #BookTok hashtag alone had over 200 billion impressions globally by the end of 2024.¹² Popular online brands include Brittle Paper (a literary magazine founded by a Nigerian academic based in the United States of America), AFREADA (a literary magazine based in London/Nigeria), The Cheeky Natives (a podcast based in South Africa), Doek (a literary magazine based in Namibia), Writing Africa (a blog, podcast and YouTube channel based in Kenya) and Bilmasri (a podcast based in Egypt).

Digital platforms have also been used to expand the public's access to books, especially educational books. Seychelles has embraced digital platforms for both educational and recreational purposes. The myON online platform provides students with a personalized library of over 6,000 enhanced digital books, fostering literacy and engagement among young readers. The Seychelles National Library offers an e-book borrowing service through its portal and the Libby app, making digital literature more accessible to the public. In Namibia, the app 'Namibia Reads' is made available for anyone in the country with internet access.

It is a digital library curated for young children, giving them access to narrated and illustrated e-books. In Somalia, the 2024 launch of the Somali Books Online mobile app (available on Android) marked a significant step forward in providing free access to Somali literature. In Eastern Africa, the establishment of the National Academic Digital Library of Ethiopia (NADLE) underscores the country's commitment to enhancing digital access to books.

The integration of digital content into education has shown promise and is most widely adopted through digital libraries. Across the continent over the last three years, nearly 50 tenders were issued for e-library solutions, targeting mostly higher education, vocational training and government departments.

Globally, AI has revolutionized key aspects of publishing, offering unparalleled tools for activities such as manuscript drafting and editing; creating artificial voices with specific accents for audiobooks; and developing predictive analytics to identify market trends. Homegrown innovations on the AI front are also occurring on the continent.

Smart Africa, made up of 40 African heads of state and government, initiated the Artificial Intelligence for Africa Blueprint, which focuses on fostering AI solutions 'made in Africa for Africa'.¹³ Based on localized AI technologies to address the unique challenges faced by African industries, the blueprint serves as a framework for ethical AI governance, inclusivity and collaboration. In particular, AI brings opportunities for translation, boosting the cross-border travel of books.

Africa's linguistic diversity has also inspired regional AI innovations. In Eastern Africa, Kenya-based Abantu AI leverages AI models such as ChatGPT for speech-to-text and language-learning applications for local and indigenous African languages.

Table 1

Examples of digital platforms in Africa

Company	Usage
Afribookhub	Access to free African literature e-books and academic books for educational purposes. Based in Cameroon.
African Storybook	Widely used for early literacy development in multiple African languages. Based in South Africa.
Akoobooks	Publisher and digital streaming platform for Black/African audiobooks. Based in Ghana.
Arabookverse	Arabic audiobook publisher and distributor of Arabic audiobooks and e-books.
Bookconekt	Online bookstore, digital library, virtual marketplace for new and used books. Based in Benin.
Egyptian Knowledge Bank	Free government resource for educational and academic purposes. Based in Egypt.
eKitabu	Provides accessible digital content such as e-books for inclusive education in Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda. Based in Kenya.
Genti	Platform that showcases African audiobooks and more in African languages and voices. Mobile app on Android and Apple. Based in Nigeria.
Kytabu	Innovative textbook content. Leasing app allowing students to rent textbooks or specific curriculum material on their devices, paid via mobile money. Based in Kenya.
Librairies du Maroc	Online platform collaborating with a network of independent bookstores across the country to provide a wide selection of titles. Based in Morocco.
Muna Kalati	African eBooks, audiobooks and animations for kids. Based in Ghana.
myON	Student-centered digital library by the Seychelles Ministry of Education. Based in Seychelles.
Namibia Reads	Digital library curated for young children. Based in Namibia.
Snapplify	Privately owned, paid-for resource based in South Africa. Caters to millions of students and thousands of schools. Largest educational platform in Africa.
Somali Books Online	Digital library of Somali literature. Mobile app on Android. Based in Somalia.
VitalSource Bookshelf	More than 20,000 university prescribed textbooks and e-learning solutions. Based in South Africa.
Xania	Digital bookstore, self-publishing platform, print-on-demand services. Based in Kenya.

Source: UNESCO.

In Northern Africa, a significant advancement is the ArEn-LLM, a large language model specifically designed to handle code-switched Egyptian Arabic-English text.^{14,15,16} In Western Africa, and further upstream in the pipeline for developing AI models, Nigerian researchers are working on natural language processing (NLP) tools for languages such as the Nigerian language Igala. NLP teaches computers to understand and work with human language, by enabling them to recognise named entities (e.g. place names) or parts of speech (e.g. adjectives versus nouns). These examples represent just a selection of AI-related developments on the continent and do not cover every possible application or form of artificial intelligence.

AN ENCOURAGING COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

Long under-represented in a literary world historically shaped by male voices, African women are now gaining greater visibility as more of their works are being published and recognized on the global stage. This rising prominence is reflected in the global success of authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria), whose novels have sold hundreds of thousands of copies worldwide. Writers such as Djaili Amadou Amal (Cameroon), NoViolet Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), and Paulina Chiziane (Mozambique) have garnered major literary accolades – including Booker Prize nominations, the Camões Prize and the Prix Goncourt des lycéens – underscoring the growing influence of African women's voices. Pioneers such as Assia Djebar (Algeria) and Mariama Bâ (Senegal) laid the groundwork for this flourishing movement, earning the wide readership and critical acclaim that continue to inspire new generations.

Although the representation of women in the book sector in Africa varies significantly, with only a few countries providing data on women's employment, many countries report, anecdotally, a meaningful participation of women. In terms of countries with statistical data, South Africa and Botswana lead the way, with 73% and 70% respectively. These high percentages are commensurate with those for countries such as the United Kingdom.¹⁷ Textbook procurement policies that include women's employment as a criterion have helped achieve these high numbers. Burundi is the country next in line, with women employees at 45%, followed by Egypt and Gambia, where women represent 40% of the total.

Several countries have also established women-focused organizations and awards, highlighting the importance of inclusivity. The growing recognition of women's contributions to literature is reflected in initiatives such as Burkina Faso's association of women writers, Mots d'elles, Uganda's women writers association, FEMRITE, the Zambia Women Writers Association and the Zimbabwe Women Writers, which provide platforms for female authors to showcase their work. Mali's Network of Women Writers of Mali and its Diaspora actively supports and promotes women writers locally and internationally. The League of African Women Writers, founded in Morocco in 2023 and developing its network throughout Africa, is driving the creation of local associations such as those in Madagascar. Several publishing houses focused on promoting women writers have been established, for example South Sudan's Niles House (started in 2024) and South Africa's Modjaji Books (started in 2007), which publishes women writers exclusively.



There is a real buzz surrounding women writers in Burkina Faso today. A few years ago there were barely a dozen of them, but there are now over two hundred. However writing is not enough: publishing is still expensive, and getting a book into circulation is another matter. Without relay points, training and resources, books very quickly disappear.

Rose Kouévi

Woman writer and initiator of the Salon International Féminin du Livre de Ouagadougou (SIFLO) • Burkina Faso

Many countries celebrate women through dedicated awards. Chad's Prix de la Plume féminine (awarded since 2020) honours female literary talent, while Tunisia's Zoubeida Bechir Prize, established in 1995, recognises exceptional contributions by women writers.¹⁸ Ghana hosts the Aidoo-Snyder Book Prize, established in 2004 and awarded by the Women's Caucus of the African Studies Association, which honours scholarly and creative works that prioritise African women's experiences.¹⁹

Many countries have also made progress in catering for the visually impaired. As of 2024, 23 African countries have committed to the Marrakesh Treaty, underscoring their dedication to enabling access to published works for individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print-disabled.²⁰ Some countries have libraries and resource centres dedicated to serving the blind and the visually impaired, which provide essential support for literacy and access to information.

In South Africa, the South African Library for the Blind is a statutory body dedicated to providing library and information services to blind and print-handicapped readers across the nation. It also extends its services to other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, thus playing a critical role in ensuring accessibility. In Kenya, the Kenya National Library Service integrates services for the blind across its branches, including Braille materials and audiobooks, thereby enhancing its role as both a public and a national library. In Cameroon, the library Le Pavillon Blanc is a library dedicated to the socio-professional integration of people with visual impairment. The library of the Ethiopian National Association of the Blind in Addis Ababa offers materials in accessible formats to support visually impaired individuals in the country. In Guinea, Éditions Ganndal is expanding access to children's books by publishing titles simultaneously in print, digital, audio and braille formats to reach a wider audience.

These efforts echo continental and global commitments, such as the African Union's support for women's empowerment and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on gender equality and inclusion.



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Physics

Student Textbook
Grade 11

 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ministry of Education

Part 2

Challenges facing the African book industry

Part 2 of this report presents the main challenges facing the African book industry - challenges that might be addressed through the policy recommendations featured in Part 3.

INSUFFICIENT AND UNSTRUCTURED POLICIES AND SUPPORT MEASURES

90% of countries do not have laws that address the book publishing industry specifically.

46% of countries do not have a domestic ISBN agency.

26% of countries do not appear to have tax incentives for the book and publishing sector.

Despite the existence of primary legal frameworks in most African countries, policies and support measures remain insufficient and unstructured for a truly sustainable industry. Strengthening these frameworks will be key to unlocking the industry's full potential.

WEAK POLICY AND REGULATORY STRUCTURES

Among the countries that reported the presence of legislation dedicated to the book industry in the survey undertaken for this study, few had laws that went beyond primary legal functions such as establishing a legal deposit or enforcing copyright. Indeed, if legal deposit, copyright and the establishment of dedicated institutions (e.g. national libraries) are excluded, only five countries had adopted dedicated laws for the formalization and development of the book industry. These were Algeria, where Law No. 15-13 on the book market was adopted in 2015; Côte d'Ivoire, where Law No. 2015-540, adopted in 2015, aims to promote and professionalize the entire book chain, regulate prices and specify state support; Burkina Faso, where Law No. 049-2019/AN, adopted in 2019, prioritizes the book publishing sector as a key contributor to national economic development and provides guidelines to structure and formalize the entire book chain

through the active involvement of the State, while providing for financial and technical support, the promotion of works in French and local and indigenous languages, and also digital publishing; Cameroon, where Law No. 2021/024, adopted in 2021, organizes and promotes the book publishing industry; and, more recently, Mauritania, where Law No. 2023-022 on the book and publishing sector was adopted in 2023. This situation means that 90% of countries do not have legislation designed specifically to support the book industry.

Moreover, while copyright and legal deposit regimes exist in many countries, enforcement remains weak. As mentioned by many national authority and industry stakeholders, piracy continues to be a pervasive barrier to growth across the continent. Challenges in relation to legislation on, and enforcement of, copyright are exacerbated by the rapid evolution of distribution technologies. The book industry has raised concerns about AI's unauthorized use of copyrighted texts and has highlighted both risks to authorship and the threatened devaluation of creative works. The unregulated scraping of literary content for AI training datasets has emerged as a pressing issue, threatening traditional structures of intellectual property protection.

Several countries, however, have made headway on this difficult issue through legal and policy measures to fight piracy. In Rwanda, educational institutions and public libraries have actively promoted legal access to books by implementing collective licensing agreements and formal partnerships with publishers, thereby reducing reliance on pirated materials. Since 2006, Côte d'Ivoire has enforced anti-piracy measures through its Brigade for the Fight Against Fraud and Piracy of Cultural Works (Brigade de Lutte contre la Fraude et la Piraterie des Oeuvres Culturelles), operating under the

Ministry of Culture and Francophonie, to combat the illegal reproduction and distribution of cultural works, including books.

As already indicated, while some countries have a governmental coordinating institution for the book sector, this is often part of a larger mandate for culture and is generally overseen by a ministry. Based on our data collection, 61% of countries do not have departments responsible exclusively for the book sector, or other dedicated entities that manage and unify efforts across the entire book value chain. Such dedicated institutions are essential for bringing together stakeholders to address, collectively, the complex challenge of increasing access to books. Conversely, some countries have placed the industry within education ministries as they consider the textbook market and the book to be educational. However, this approach has often led to focus being placed on an increase in literacy rather than literary development. Since building a sustainable book industry falls outside education ministries' core mandate, limited resources are dedicated to promoting a publishing sector as a viable economic market. Revitalizing the book publishing industry requires a realignment of government departments to enable the prioritization of mandates for the book sector.

Approximately 46% of countries still lack a domestic ISBN agency, a critical infrastructure for standardizing a country's publishing industry. The absence of a local ISBN agency means that some books are published without an ISBN, which disconnects them from the global book market and reduces their potential for export. In many cases, publishers have to rely on external agencies such as the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (Agence Francophone pour la Numérotation Internationale du Livre – AFNIL),



which then categorize these publishers' books as originating from the broader francophone region. This arrangement misrepresents a book's country of origin, diluting its unique geographical and cultural identity. Obtaining ISBNs from a foreign agency also increases cost owing to currency exchange rates and administrative fees, and necessitates longer timelines. Most African countries with domestic ISBN agencies offer ISBN services free of charge. It needs to be noted that some domestic agencies do impose a fee, which can create barriers for smaller or independent publishers.

Having an ISBN agency within the country not only allows for a more accurate national bibliographic record – it is also crucial for the continued advancement of the book publishing industry. The effective management of ISBNs offers an opportunity to address the scarcity of reliable data in Africa's publishing industry. Data scarcity is the issue most commonly identified by surveyed national authority, with 74% of them unable to provide data on the number of titles published in 2023 or earlier years. With proper systems in place, ISBN data can support annual reporting on the number of publishers, titles, book formats and publication languages, helping to close critical information gaps.

The lack of data on activities within the book value chain makes it difficult for governments to understand and address gaps within the industry, or to propose evidence-based policies. Furthermore, it complicates the enforcement of existing laws, such as those that protect copyright. Without a centralised system to collect and manage data, it is also difficult to organise the book publishing industry across different parts of the value chain. As a result, opportunities for connection and collaboration are lost.

Relative to the size of the continent, I would not say we are in a very prolific period of African writing talent. We are, however, in a prolific period of visibility and representation of African writing talent. Hypervisibility can often exaggerate the voice of the few, creating false jubilation which then masks the voice of the multitude that are still not getting heard or published. We certainly have more visibility. I welcome this for the few African writers on the global stage writing fantastical, imaginative and diverse stories across gender, class, sexuality and genre lines. Yet, I do not want to ever confuse the ruse for the reality of proliferation.

Bibi Bakare-Yusuf

Academic, writer, editor and co-founder of Cassava Republic Press • Nigeria

Interviewed by Yinka Adegoke in 'Africa's Literature Is Finally Getting Visibility But Isn't Prolific Yet'. SEMAFOR, 11 June 2023.



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If we don't have the data, we don't have the power to move forward together. Good data is the basis of greater collaboration in the publishing industry on the continent.

Mercy Kirui

Senior Manager of Publishing Content at eKitabu, Nairobi • Kenya

Interview 26 November 2024

LIMITED FINANCIAL AND TAX INCENTIVES

Various financial and funding mechanisms exist for the book publishing sector, but they remain inconsistent and insufficient to address the industry's needs in full. While 74% of countries report the existence of tax incentives in the survey conducted for this study, these often concern reductions in import duties for books – and not, for example, in the importation of printing materials (which would decrease costs in production and thus for readers). Even major publishing countries still impose VAT on books at the standard rate of up to 16%.

Quantitative data on funding by governments are limited, but qualitative data obtained through the survey for this report suggest that most stakeholders across the continent perceive government investment to be inadequate. Although grants exist, they tend to be one-off funding opportunities and are unreliable for long-term sustainable operation.

To overcome a lack of public investment, some countries, such as Botswana, Ghana and Mauritius, utilize levy models from reproductive rights management organizations (RROs) to fund their book publishing sectors. In Botswana, the Companies and Intellectual Property Authority (CIPA) administers the Levy on Technical Devices Fund (LTDF). The fund collects levies on imported and locally manufactured devices capable of copying protected materials, such as CDs, DVDs, cell phones, photocopiers and scanners. In 2023, the LTDF distributed US\$363,000 in support of authors and publishers.¹ This model mirrors the levy systems managed by CRM organizations, providing an income stream from levying copy devices.

South Africa employs a different kind of government levy, with the Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998 mandating that employers contribute 1% of their payroll toward skills development. These funds are managed by the Sector Education and Training Authorities, which finance education, training and development initiatives within the publishing industry to ensure its growth and expansion.

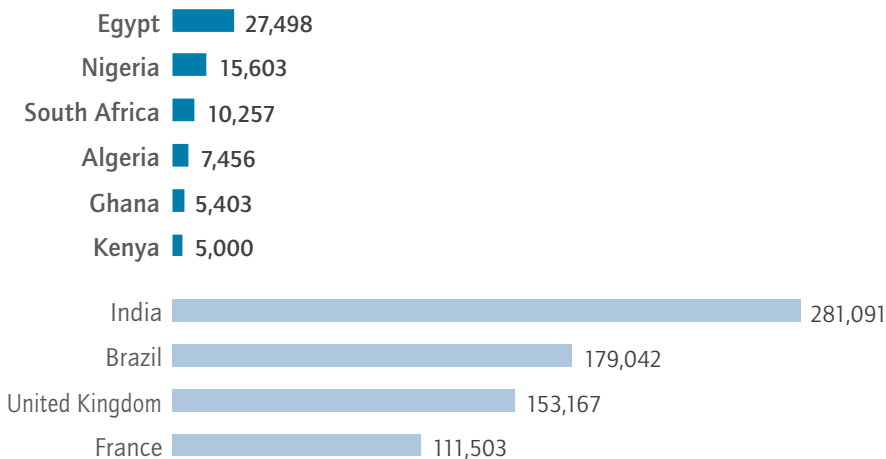
RELIANCE ON FOREIGN BOOK INDUSTRIES

The underperformance of Africa's domestic book industry can, in part, be attributed to their heavy reliance on foreign book industries, a pattern reflected in persistent trade imbalances where book imports far exceed exports. This dependence is particularly pronounced in the educational sector – which accounts for up to 70% of the book market – representing a major missed opportunity for local publishers to capture a lucrative and foundational segment.

This reliance has constrained the full growth potential of Africa's book industry, which, despite notable productivity in many countries, remains underrepresented on the global stage. Africa's book industry is productive, although unevenly so, but it still takes up a much smaller global market share in proportion to the continent's population size. In 2023, based on our data collection, Africa had approximately 6,400 book publishers producing 86,000 titles, generating approximately US\$7 billion in revenue, which is only 5.4% of the US\$129 billion in total global market share.²

Chart 1

Comparative production output, number of titles (2023)



Source: UNESCO.



Indigenous publishing is integral to national identity and development: cultural, social, and economic. Such publishing reflects a people's history and experience, belief systems, and their concomitant expressions through language, writing, and art. In turn, a people's interaction with other cultures is informed by their published work. Publishing preserves, enhances, and develops a society's culture and its interaction with others.

Walter Bgoya

Distinguished veteran in African publishing and founder of *Mkuki na Nyota Publishers* • United Republic of Tanzania

This contrasts with the fact that Africa made up 18% of the global population in 2023.³ Africa's publishing output is a fraction of global publishing activity, lagging behind that of both other developing countries and developed countries (see Chart 1). Globally, production in countries such as India, the United Kingdom and Brazil is significantly higher, with India producing 281,091 and Brazil producing 179,042 titles annually.^{4,5,6,7,8}

This comparison allows us to highlight the potential for growth, even for the most productive countries (in terms of titles published) in the region. The continent's title production and revenue are driven by a few leading countries, with Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, Algeria, Ghana and Kenya being the top contributors. Table 2, based on our data collection, provides the details:

Table 2

Top publishing countries in Africa by title production (2023)

	Countries	Number of titles
1	Egypt	27,498
2	Nigeria	15,603
3	South Africa	10,257
4	Algeria	7,456
5	Ghana	5,403
6	Kenya	5,000
7	Tunisia	3,000
8	Uganda	1,523
9	Morocco	1,493
10	Zimbabwe	1,000

Source: UNESCO.

When it comes to digital publishing in the formal book sector, adoption remains low. Although a country such as Egypt has 33% of its titles available in digital formats, and 15% of Zimbabwe's title output is in digital formats, digital publishing accounts for an estimated 1%–2% of total output in many other countries.

The scarcity of locally produced publications has made many African countries heavily reliant on imported books and learning materials. This dependence on imports is especially evident in the educational subsector, where foreign publishers often dominate. As a result, trade imbalances persist, highlighting the economic and strategic consequences of limited investment in domestic book publishing.

SIGNIFICANT TRADE IMBALANCE IN AFRICAN PUBLISHING

Systemic challenges continue to hinder growth, with a major challenge being the lack of infrastructure and investment support for domestic industries, leading, as already mentioned,

to a heavy reliance on foreign players and imports. This outflow of approximately US\$516 million annually represents lost GDP and job opportunities in Africa. This is evident in a continent-wide trade deficit of 76% for books. The United Nations Comtrade database shows total trade in annual imports of US\$597 million versus annual exports of US\$81 million in 2023.⁹

Africa's trade imbalances in the book publishing stem from reliance on both regional and external publishing hubs. South Africa is the primary import source for countries such as Botswana and Namibia, while Kenya, Egypt, Ghana, Senegal, Tunisia and Uganda serve as key exporters within the continent. However, the most significant contributor to the trade deficit is entanglement with former colonial powers such as France, Portugal and the United Kingdom, with France ranking as the top supplier for at least eight African countries.

The trade deficit extends across the entire book value chain. Many African countries import not only finished books but also printing equipment and raw materials, resulting in significantly increased production costs. Limited domestic printing capacity forces many industries to outsource printing to countries such as India (a top import source for at least three African countries), whose lower costs make offshore production more viable. This reliance on foreign imports weakens the industry's resilience, exposing it to currency fluctuations and economic instability.

The government still favours books produced abroad because of their quality. This creates a loss of income for publishers who rely on local printing works.

Richard Ali

Author, lawyer, cultural entrepreneur • Democratic Republic of the Congo



Libraries strengthen their holdings, but often with imported books. That is not the way to support the local ecosystem. In rural areas, ask a young person to name a Togolese author, and they'll struggle to name one. Yves Emmanuel Dogbé is sometimes evoked, but that's it.

Simon de Saint-Dzokotoe
Journalist, teacher and writer, founder of the association *Lire au Togo* • Togo

THE STRATEGIC AND LUCRATIVE EDUCATIONAL MARKET

Educational publishing represents the most lucrative and formalized segment of Africa's book industry, yet it too is marked by a significant trade deficit driven by reliance on foreign publishers and imports. Across the continent, ministries of education oversee curriculum development and textbook procurement, with the survey for this study showing that at least 63% of African countries provide free school textbooks through state-led publishing and local publishers (or imports when domestic capacity falls short). While Djibouti, Egypt, Madagascar, Mali, Malawi and Tunisia run state-led publishing programmes, nations such as Cabo Verde, Liberia, Lesotho, Namibia, Niger and Togo rely heavily on imports. In contrast, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa boast strong publishing that not only meet domestic demand but also supply neighbouring markets.

Meanwhile, in Eswatini and the Central African Republic, foreign publishers such as Macmillan Eswatini and Hachette International hold exclusive contracts to produce textbooks for the primary and middle school levels. The arrangement underscores the challenges posed by a lack of transparent procurement practices.

These exclusive agreements limit local publishers' potential to develop, innovate, and create jobs, effectively stifling the growth of local book industries. This is true especially because educational books tend to comprise the majority of publishing revenue for local publishers. Furthermore, they reflect a misalignment in policy: the focus of education ministries is to fulfill immediate curricular needs and not necessarily to drive the growth of local publishing sectors.

Estimating the potential market value of educational publishing in Africa for 2023¹⁰ reveals further significant data limitations. Based on the United Nations Population Division's *World Population Prospects 2022*,¹¹ the UNESCO Institute for Statistics' *Education Data 2021–2023*,¹² and a World Bank report on tertiary education, total school enrolment in Africa reached 329 million students.¹³ Assuming a 1:1 textbook-to-student ratio as a target in line with World Bank and UNESCO recommendations,¹⁴ seven (7) textbooks per primary student and eight (8) textbooks per secondary student are required.¹⁵ With an average textbook price of US\$5.50,¹⁶ the market value is estimated to be US\$13 billion–US\$7.8 billion at the primary and US\$5.2 billion at the secondary levels. This US\$13 billion reflects the potential worth if every student had one physical textbook per subject, highlighting the scale of opportunity. Furthermore, the US\$13 billion potential does not reflect further opportunities in the digital sphere, which would increase the projected market value. However, calculating potential revenue in this context would require a separate case study taking into account differences in costing model, infrastructural requirements and pedagogical considerations. If the educational market makes up 70% of the industry and has a US\$13 billion potential, then the whole industry can be projected to reach at least US\$18.5 billion.

Textbooks are pivotal to educational attainment, aligning with Aspiration 1 of the African Union's Agenda 2063 – 'a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development'.¹⁷ At the African Union's Fifth Specialised Technical Committee on Education, Science, and Technology (STC-EST 5) in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on 8 December 2024, the Nouakchott Declaration launched the Decade of Accelerated Education (2025–2034), committing to transformative policies such as compulsory education and increased funding of 4%–7% of GDP.¹⁸

A strong public-private partnership between African governments and the book industry stakeholders can bridge these gaps, leveraging public funding to strengthen and professionalize locally owned publishers rather than relying heavily on imports and foreign-owned publishing houses. This strategic approach could build a self-reliant book industry capable of meeting Africa's growing book demands, ensuring that education investments drive both learning outcomes and economic development. By harnessing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and fostering regional collaboration, countries with a stronger book sector such as Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa could support capacity-building in weaker markets, turning regional disparities into opportunities for collective growth.

The publishing industry is suffering greatly from the rising cost of raw materials. Publishers don't have the resources to follow through on projects. I often discuss this issue with them, and the same difficulties are mentioned by all.

Bachir Tamer
Executive Director of the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco • Morocco

DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESS TO BOOKS AND READING PROMOTION



Bookstores
13,000
or people per bookstore **116,000**



Public libraries
8,000
or people per public library **189,000**

A viable book industry relies on a market of book readers and book buyers. A lack of sustained reading-promotion activities and limited access to books remain pressing challenges in many of the continent's countries.

Access to books is facilitated primarily by the private sector – through bookstores; and by the government – through public library infrastructure. Data collection carried out for this study shows that the number of bookstores is 1.6 times greater than that of public libraries: approximately 13,000 bookstores across the continent serve Africa's vast population, compared with approximately 8,000 public libraries.

This disparity is concerning, especially since the cost of books relative to income per capita poses a significant barrier to access. Public libraries, as gateways to free reading opportunities, are critical to inspiring book reading and cultivating a culture of intellectual curiosity. This potential remains largely untapped owing to inadequate government investment in library infrastructure, leaving large segments of communities without adequate access to these critical resources.

Regarding libraries, South Africa leads the continent with 1,949 libraries – supported by a substantial annual government

investment of US\$54 million. However, perhaps the more accurate data point from which to evaluate public access to books through libraries is library per capita. From that angle, Cabo Verde leads the continent at about 6,500 people per library, with Comoros and Tunisia next at 25,000 people per library. From this perspective, South Africa's library infrastructure services its population at 32,000 people per library.

At the continental level, as an average, a single library serves 189,000 people. In approximately 70% of the continent, each library has to service more than 100,000 people, while 16% of countries have a ratio of more than 1 million people per library. An analysis of the continent's largest populations – Nigeria, Ethiopia and Egypt – highlights significant gaps in library infrastructure relative to population size.

Nigeria, the continent's most populous nation with over 228 million people, has just 316 libraries, resulting in an estimated ratio of 720,000 people per library. Ethiopia (129 million people) fares slightly better with 448 libraries, equating to 290,000 people per library. Egypt (115 million people) has 924 public libraries, resulting in a ratio of 124,000 people per library. Severe underinvestment in public library infrastructure is starkly evident on much of the continent, where access to libraries remains critically limited. Another consequence of limited investment in public libraries is a reduced opportunity for private sector development through the supply of goods and services to these institutions.

Table 3 identifies the ten countries with the most favourable public library per capita ratios.



Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa. © Africanstar / Shutterstock.com*

Table 3

Countries with ten best public library per capita ratios

	Countries	No. of people per public library
1	Cabo Verde	6,500
2	Comoros	25,000
3	Tunisia	25,500
4	South Africa	32,000
5	Eritrea	36,000
6	Senegal	36,200
7	Congo	44,200
8	Namibia	45,000
9	Botswana	55,000
10	Djibouti	58,000

Source: UNESCO.

Table 4

Countries with ten best bookstore per capita ratios

	Countries	No. of people per bookstore
1	Kenya	14,000
2	Mauritius	19,000
3	Seychelles	24,000
4	Morocco	31,000
5	Eswatini	32,000
6	Cabo Verde	44,000
7	Nigeria	51,000
8	Congo	63,000
9	Ghana	72,000
10	Sao Tome and Principe	77,000

Source: UNESCO.

In much of francophone African countries, some public libraries are established through partnerships between the government and the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), which launched the Centres for Reading and Cultural Animation (Centres de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle - CLAC) programme in 1985. These centres provide libraries, multimedia equipment and spaces for cultural events, functioning as vital communal hubs for education, cultural exchange and community engagement.

Regarding bookstores, bookstore infrastructure remains inadequate to support the book publishing industry's development. At the continental level, 1 bookstore serves 116,000 people. Nigeria heads the continent with 4,458 bookstores, but with a population of over 228 million, this equates to just 1 bookstore per 51,000 people. Kenya follows with 4,000 bookstores, a comparatively higher bookstore density of 1 bookstore per 14,000 people. Morocco has 1,218 bookstores (1 bookstore per 31,000 people) and Ethiopia, the most populous country in Eastern Africa, has 800 bookstores (1 bookstore per 161,000 people). Table 4 identifies the ten top countries for bookstores per capita.

The distribution of e-books has not advanced at a rapid enough pace to result in the meaningful expansion of book accessibility and distribution. Nevertheless, there has been a discernible increase in investment in e-library content, even if the transition to digital formats is still a slow process.

Beyond physical infrastructure, efforts to promote reading actively remain weak in many countries. National strategies dedicated to reading promotion are largely absent, with only a few countries, such as Cabo Verde, implementing a formal National Reading Plan.



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Most initiatives are small-scale and inconsistent, and heavily reliant on donor funding and non-governmental organizations. These efforts fall short of what is needed, as building a reading culture requires sustained, multifaceted interventions aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours toward books and reading.

Governments across Africa frequently conduct literacy campaigns. These efforts, however, typically prioritize basic literacy over reading for pleasure. Integrating reading-for-pleasure initiatives within existing frameworks – for instance the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) or UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring reports – could help policymakers recognize leisure reading as a foundational component of national literacy strategies.

Although these efforts have been a focus for African countries for decades, data on national book reading habits are limited and very little information is available on reading surveys, with several Arabic-speaking countries and South Africa being the exceptions. The 2017 *Reading Index*,¹⁹ launched by the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation (MBRF) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), surveyed 148,000 individuals across 22 Arab states. In Northern Africa, Egypt and Morocco led the region with an average of 27 books read per year, followed by Tunisia and Algeria with 22 books, Sudan with 14 books, and Libya with 10 books. In South Africa, the 2023 *National Reading Survey*²⁰ provided significant insights into South African reading habits. Only 17% of adults were committed readers, while 63% of households did not own a single leisure reading book. Some 17% of the population used libraries, with 8% borrowing books from them. In a positive trend

among families, 52% of adults reported that they read with their children. Notably, the 16–24 age group saw the greatest growth in book reading between 2006²¹ and 2016²², signalling the presence of potential future book buyers.

Consumer insight studies, periodically implemented in the form of book reading surveys, are important sources of data for the development of effective national reading policies, permitting the diagnosis of areas of greatest need and highlighting areas of greatest potential for growth. Data from book reading surveys would also be highly informative for stakeholders within the book industry, ensuring that they are publishing titles that cater to the preferences of different readers.

LACK OF PUBLISHING REFLECTING THE CONTINENT’S LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Data on the number of titles published in languages of European origin versus local and indigenous languages are scarce, yet 17 countries provided percentages in their responses to this study’s survey. Of these, 7 (41%) reported that titles in local and indigenous languages accounted for 30% or less of their total output. Many of the countries where the majority of published titles are in local and indigenous languages are in Northern Africa. The percentage of publishing in local and indigenous languages across the continent is likely to be smaller than the 30% figure, especially since the 17 countries that have data to report tend to be countries with stronger book industries.

The strong presence of foreign entities in Africa’s book value chain also inhibits the publishing of books reflecting the continent’s great linguistic diversity. Books produced on the continent are



In East Africa, more books are now being published in Kiswahili, showing the rising impact of local languages in shaping the publishing landscape.

James Murua

Blogger, journalist and media consultant
• Kenya

written predominantly in European languages, with English and French dominating, followed by Portuguese. Much of Africa remains linguistically tied to Europe more than 60 years after independence, and this has extended the continent’s function as an export market for Western-published books.

Despite many hurdles, however, some book industries in Africa have found inroads when it comes to the problem of publishing in local and indigenous languages. Mauritius and Seychelles exemplify governmental interventions aimed at preserving and promoting local and indigenous languages. In Seychelles, the establishment of the Seychelles Creole Academy has been pivotal in promoting the Creole language in literature and academic works. The Academy provides technical and financial assistance to local authors writing in Seychellois Creole. Similarly, in Mauritius, the President’s Fund for Creative Writing actively supports creative writing in all languages spoken in the country, including Creole. These initiatives highlight a structured approach to integrating Creole into the nation’s cultural and literary landscape, serving as a model for the promotion of linguistic diversity in Africa. In Madagascar, local children’s publishing is increasingly promoting bilingualism (Malagasy/French) and, in some cases, publishing exclusively in Malagasy.



We are trying to promote the importance of metadata in South Africa. We want book products to be discoverable using international standard metadata language.

Mpuka Radinku

Executive Director of the Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA) • South Africa

In South Africa, several initiatives are working to establish structured international standards that enhance the availability of books across countries and languages. One such effort is led by the Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA), which has been driving a metadata project that is centred on the widespread adoption of ONIX (XML-based metadata) and the standards of the Thema global subject classification system (to improve book discoverability and distribution). This locally driven approach ensures that language and regional considerations are reflected on a global scale, addressing biases that often limit accessibility. Another key player in advancing local and indigenous language literature is the Puku Children's Literature Foundation (Puku), which has launched Pukupedia, South Africa's first comprehensive database of children's literature. This initiative aims to improve the visibility and accessibility of books in local and indigenous languages, helping to bridge the gap in representation. As a crucial step in this project, a metadata capturing portal is being developed to compile information on children's books in all 11 official South African languages, fostering greater discoverability and cultural inclusivity in the literary space.²³

Furthermore, the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) was established in 2000 to promote the

development and use of African languages alongside European languages. The academy emphasizes the identification and promotion of vehicular cross-border languages, the aims being to strengthen linguistic and cultural unity, optimize resources and reduce costs. African governments may consider leveraging ACALAN's framework to localize similar policies, which can then be further enhanced through regional collaboration. This approach can draw inspiration from Northern Africa's successful industry collaboration, achieved in part as a result of a shared linguistic framework.²⁴ Pan-African collaborations can expedite efforts to relocate and grow every part of the book value chain at home – if not domestically, then within the region.

LACK OF SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Africa's book industry exhibits substantial disparities in training and development, with the bigger publishing countries displaying formal professional programmes. Many others rely heavily on workshops and informal learning. Gaps exist in formal training programmes for many areas of the book value chain, especially in editing, digital innovation and marketing.

Most university-level programmes on the continent tend to prioritize library sciences and creative writing, with a few in linguistics or cultural studies indirectly supporting publishing. Only 20% of African countries – such as Benin, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, and Zimbabwe – offer dedicated publishing degrees. Elsewhere, the University of Zambia integrates creative writing and editorial skills training into its curriculum,

while the University of Botswana enhances scriptwriting skills through workshops. The University of Djibouti provides degrees for archivists and documentalists, and the University of Namibia offers a diploma in information science that includes a publishing module.

Owing to the lack of university degrees and formalized training, industry stakeholders in many countries have taken matters into their own hands. Seminars enhancing technical writing and copyright awareness are conducted for writers and publishers by the Writers Association of The Gambia in partnership with the National Centre for Arts and Culture. Associations such as the Association of Ivorian Publishers (Association des Editeurs Ivoiriens – ASSEDI) in Côte d'Ivoire organize workshops on editorial management and copyright law. In Madagascar, professional training for authors, publishers, booksellers and librarians has been implemented through the Educational Resources Programme led by the Institut français and the French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement – AFD). Botswana's National Arts Council supports scriptwriting training, while Poda-Poda Stories in Sierra Leone recently launched its first writing fellowship to nurture emerging authors. The association Friends of Literature (Amis de la littérature – ADELIT) occasionally organizes writing workshops for youths in Chad.

More cross-border efforts also exist. Until 2015, the African Centre for Training in Publishing and Distribution (CAFED), a programme of the Organisation internationale de la francophonie (OIF), played a key role in strengthening the skills of African publishers and graphic designers.



Benin's book ecosystem is evolving, but training remains the weak link. A solid industry can't be founded without trained professionals. One doesn't just declare oneself a writer or editor overnight. Serious training is needed at all levels of the book industry chain.

Joël Glèlè

Poet, author and founder of the *Journées poétiques du Bénin* • Benin

It was known particularly for publishing the *Manuel pratique d'édition pour l'Afrique francophone* (Practical Publishing Manual for Francophone Africa), a guide organized into practical sheets detailing the different stages of the publishing process and specifically tailored to the realities and needs of the book sector in francophone Africa.

Training programmes are also organized, on a regular basis, by regional and international professional associations such as Afrilivres, the International Alliance of Independent Publishers and the Association internationale des libraires francophones.

The situation highlights a void in formal education and training for national book industries in many parts of the continent. It also emphasises the need for national governments – alongside educational institutions – to invest in formalized academic pathways in publishing so as to foster a professionalized and innovative workforce.

NOTES

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Part 3

Strategic opportunities for growth

The following sections offer a series of recommendations aimed at addressing the challenges outlined in Part 2.

Their implementation will, naturally, depend on each country's unique context and needs.

STRENGTHENING INTEGRATED LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

As a producer of content, the book industry is at the centre of a network of related industries, such as paper manufacturing, printing, publishing, bookbinding, typesetting, bookselling, distribution, authoring and editing – which together are referred to as the ‘book value chain’. The ‘book sector’ is the wider network of everything to do with books. It focuses on the interdependence and interrelatedness of all aspects of book production and consumption, and covers individual readers, libraries, NGOs, commercial organizations and government departments. Diagram 1 illustrates a traditional book publishing value chain.

Although this study did not map the entire book value chain, countries such as Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa do have complete value chains. Incentives for upstream industries, such as printing and paper, are not included here but should be explored by governments, as these sectors are key employment drivers. Meanwhile, many other African countries operate within regional or global value chains, having their books printed and finished elsewhere owing to limited local infrastructure.

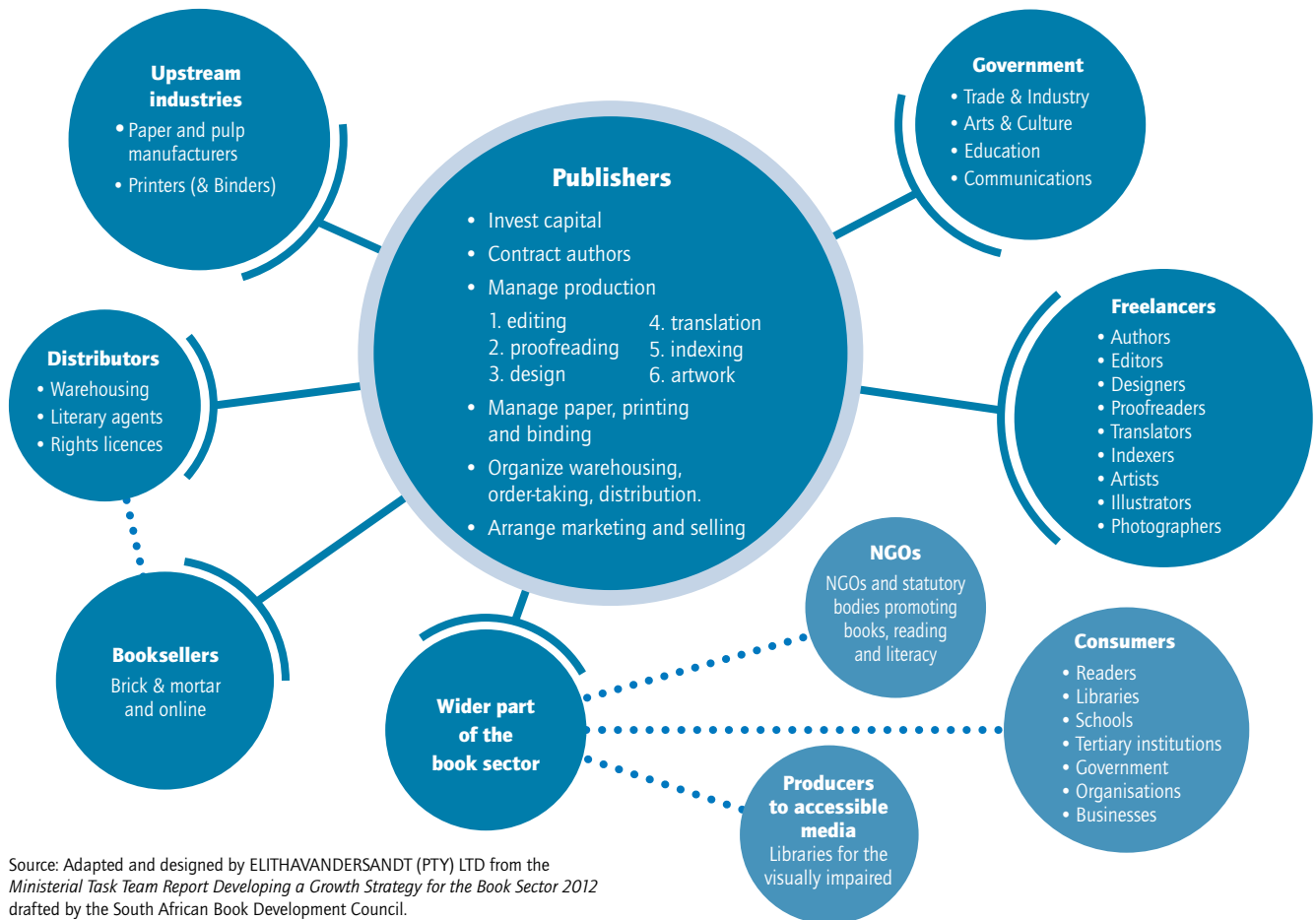
The significance of job creation deserves its own emphasis. With Africa’s growing focus on education and literacy, and its booming youth population, the demand for textbooks, children’s books and other reading materials will increase.

This trend is evidenced by the inaugural African Children’s Book Publishers Forum, held in Lomé, Togo, in 2025. This pan-African forum brought together 51 publishers from 16 African countries. Further to this, the developing nature of the industry offers promising potential for growth. As the industry evolves, develops and matures through structuration and targeted investment, it has the capacity to generate a wide range of jobs.

Moreover, the industry spans diverse segments requiring both skilled and semi-skilled labour, thereby offering opportunities for formal employment and entrepreneurship. Diagram 2 depicts most of the traditional jobs to be found in a book publishing house.

Diagram 1

The traditional book publishing value chain



Source: Adapted and designed by ELITHAVANDERSANDT (PTY) LTD from the Ministerial Task Team Report *Developing a Growth Strategy for the Book Sector 2012* drafted by the South African Book Development Council.



A people that writes means a nation that refuses to forget. Books are a fundamental tool for preserving memory, transmitting values and building a strong cultural identity. Without a solid book industry policy, this work remains fragile.

Boubé Hama

Writer, publisher and director of *Nouvelles Éditions du Sahel*, promoter of the *Niger Book and Arts Market* • Niger

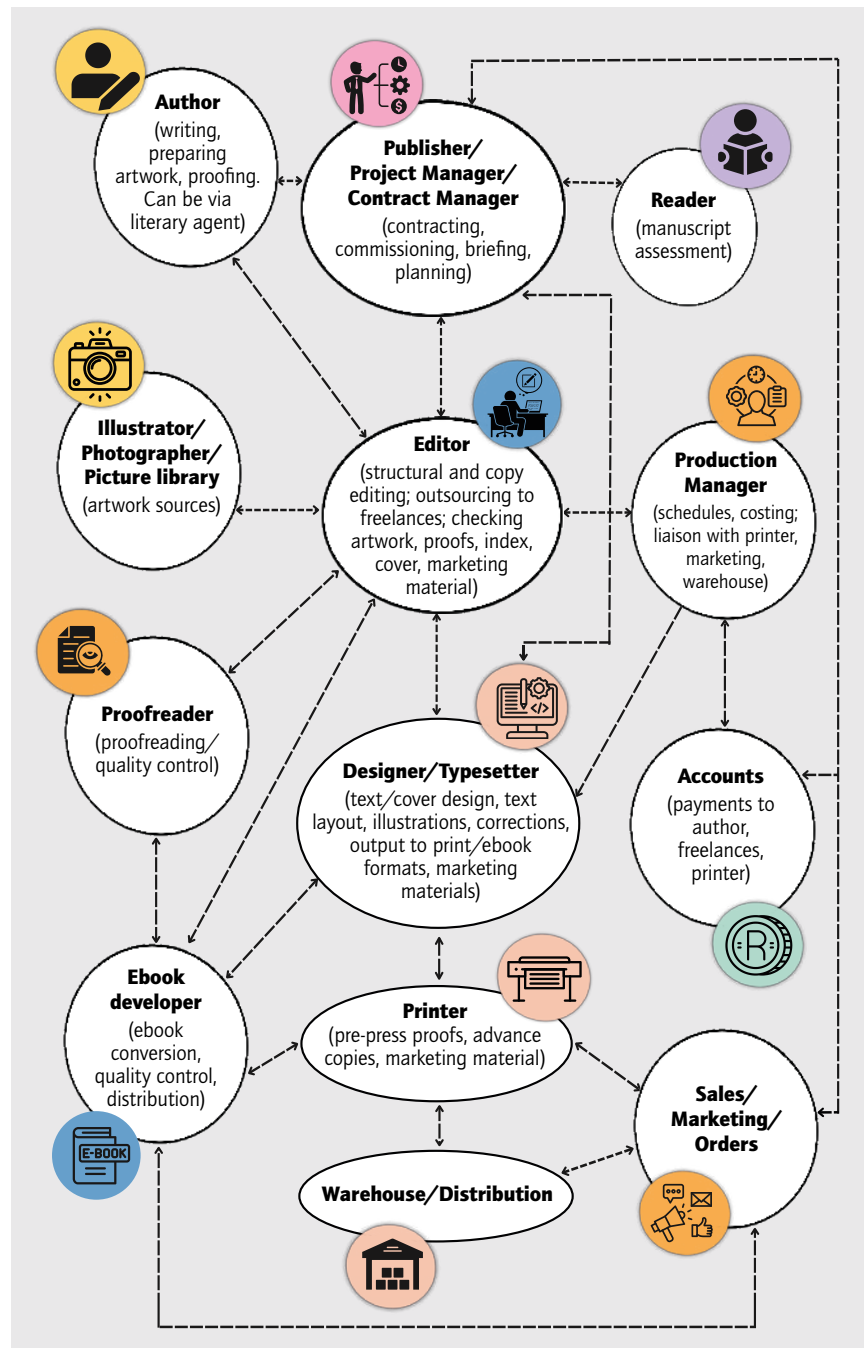
Formalizing the industry, consolidating the domestic market and increasing access to books can meaningfully increase employment, market productivity and annual revenue throughout the book industry on the continent. A strong local publishing industry is also essential in safeguarding Africa's cultural expressions, ensuring that Africans own and tell their stories, and shape their own narratives.

As governments increasingly recognize the creative industries for the economic opportunities they offer and look to diversify their economies, concrete action is required.

The challenges highlighted in Part 2 illustrate the need for a more structured and coordinated enabling institutional environment for the industry, one with its own dedicated laws, policies and measures – and capable of covering the entire book value chain.

Diagram 2

Full range of traditional jobs in a book publishing house



Source: Adapted for lecture notes by Isabelle Delvare, based on the 3rd edition of *The Australian Editing Handbook* (2014) by E. Flann, B. Hill and L. Wang.

DEVELOPING A NATIONAL BOOK POLICY (NBP)

A national book policy (NBP) is a set of guiding principles meant to create a thriving literary sector that promotes creativity, ensures equitable access to books and supports the long-term sustainability of the book industry. UNESCO's 1997 publication, *National Book Policy: A guide for users in the field*, still serves as a valuable resource for practitioners, offering detailed guiding principles to support the development of a strong and sustainable book industry.



National Book Policy (NBP)

- ▶ Promoting national literary production
- ▶ Strengthening national publishing
- ▶ Facilitating book circulation
- ▶ Protecting literary heritage
- ▶ Upholding authors' rights
- ▶ Financial incentives for the industry
- ▶ Continuous capacity-building
- ▶ Expanding access to books and information
- ▶ Cultural promotion through books
- ▶ Support for infrastructure and resources

A National Book Policy is capable of delivering a wide range of benefits within each country's unique context:

Promoting national literary production. This is essential to ensuring that local authors' voices are heard; and that national book industries reflect local and indigenous intellectual and cultural expression. By creating an environment in which local writers can thrive, a national book policy strengthens a country's literary identity.

Strengthening national publishing, which involves developing the publishing and printing infrastructures to meet educational and cultural needs while maintaining high-quality, diverse and affordable book production. A strong support for national book publishing is key to sustaining a vibrant book culture that serves both local and international audiences.

Facilitating book circulation, which ensures that books reach readers both within and beyond national borders. This can be achieved through preferential tariffs, simplified regulations and initiatives that promote reading habits, making books more accessible to the general public.

Protecting literary heritage. This is necessary to safeguard national bibliographic and documentary assets. Legal deposit systems, library development and archival maintenance all contribute to preserving the country's intellectual and cultural legacy for future generations. National ISBN agencies can also be created to ensure reliable bibliographic records.

Upholding authors' rights. This issue requires strong national legislation and adherence to international agreements to protect the moral and economic interests of writers and other creators. By ensuring fair remuneration and intellectual property protection, a book policy supports an environment in which creativity can flourish.

Financial incentives for the industry. These help to sustain the book sector by providing preferential lending policies and tax benefits. Such measures support all players in the book production and distribution chain, from writers and publishers to booksellers and librarians, ensuring a thriving system.

Continuous capacity-building, which is vital to the long-term growth of the book industry. Establishing educational and training programmes for professionals in publishing, printing, distribution and bookselling ensures that the sector remains competitive and adaptable to changing industry demands.

Expanding access to books and information, which requires national strategies that promote a culture of reading, enhance book availability, and strengthen library and bookseller networks. Ensuring equitable access to books, especially in underserved communities, is fundamental to literacy development and lifelong learning. Innovative digital platforms can be leveraged to expand access, especially in rural areas.

Cultural promotion through books. This creates a deeper appreciation of literature by engaging the mass media, organizing book fairs, and integrating books into regional and global cultural initiatives. It also ensures that books remain central to cultural expressions and national identities.

Support for infrastructure and resources, which is essential for the sustainable development of the book industry. Ensuring the availability of raw materials, capital investment, and technological advancements in publishing and distribution, allows for a resilient and self-sufficient book sector.

ESTABLISHING NATIONAL BOOK DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS (NBDCs)

The nature of the book industry, with its diverse – and sometimes divergent – stakeholders requires strong coordinating capacity to drive multiple strategies and coordinate multiple stakeholders. Dedicated organizations, such as national book development councils (NBDCs), offer a proven framework for addressing systemic publishing challenges. By centralizing coordination, formulating actionable policies and mobilizing resources, these councils are capable of unlocking the industry's potential, thus contributing to literacy, cultural preservation and economic growth. An NBDC is also the institution best suited to manage the implementation of an industrial policy action plan (IPAP) for the book sector. The establishment of NBDCs will enable governments to whom such a structure is suited to address fragmentation and the lack of support in the book industry.



Establishing National Book Development Councils (NBDCs)

- ▶ Unifying stakeholders across the value chain
- ▶ Ensuring civil society participation
- ▶ Formulating a comprehensive national book policy and its monitoring
- ▶ Establishing data-collection systems and monitoring
- ▶ Establishing subregional committees

The existence of a dedicated governmental coordinating institution such as an NBDC would allow for the following actions:

Unifying stakeholders across the value chain: Governments establish NBDCs to coordinate effectively the efforts of publishers, writers, booksellers, librarians, reading organizations and relevant government entities. These councils play a critical role in creating synergies across the book value chain, harmonizing the often competing and divergent objectives of stakeholders. NBDCs are best positioned to mediate a clash of interests among various components of the book industry, providing a common platform for discussions and consultations with the private sector.

Ensuring civil society participation: An NBDC can become a coordinating body to gather industry stakeholders and the representatives of national professional associations on a regular basis. This ensures civil society participation and buy-in for any government policies related to the sector.

Formulating a comprehensive national book policy and its monitoring: A core responsibility of an NBDC is to develop and implement a national book policy that addresses the unique needs of the country. An NBDC is best positioned to fix the targets and priorities for the sector in accordance with the changing needs of the country's population and industry stakeholders. It is also best able to focus the attention of all concerned parties, within both the government and the private sector, on developing the book industry.

Establishing data-collection systems and monitoring: The scarcity of data for the book industry is an endemic problem across the continent, inhibiting the effectiveness of any initiatives or policies owing to a lack of knowledge about the sector.



The most difficult aspect is not the public. It's existing without support, convincing partners that culture deserves to be taken seriously.

Rosny Lesage Souaga

Writer, poet, journalist and cultural stakeholder • Gabon

An NBDC will have the necessary autonomy to play the critical role of being a centralised data-collection entity that monitors the sector and ensures consistency over the long term.

Establishing subregional committees: Subregional NBDC committees could be set up as key structures capable of addressing fragmentation within Africa's publishing industries; and would be given the authority to bring about greater subregional cohesion. These committees would serve as platforms for shared learning, collaborative programming and coordinated action within each of Africa's subregions. Regional committees could include regional bodies such as the African Publishers Network (APNET), the Réseau des éditeurs en Afrique subsaharienne francophone (Afrilivres), the Pan-African Writers Association and the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO), among others, to drive synergies and align efforts.

Specific activities enacted by NBDCs would vary from country to country, depending on the national book policy plans drafted. These activities could range from the more effective enforcement of copyright laws to instituting awards for authors. Ghana's National Book Development Council, a governmental agency under the Ministry of Education that is fully funded by the government,¹ might be one example for the implementation of such a coordinating institution on the continent.

BUILDING A STRONG DOMESTIC MARKET FOR LOCAL PUBLISHERS

To drive sustainable growth and job creation, African national book industries would need to consolidate strong domestic and regional markets while reducing reliance on foreign organizations and imports.

The promise of investment through initiatives such as the African Development Bank's study on developing financing frameworks for the cultural and creative industries (CCIs)² and the African Union's Plan of Action, which advocates for increased national budget allocations and supportive policy reforms,³ presents future opportunities. This sets the stage for African governments to reshape ownership within the book sector, advancing local capacity for cultural expressions while boosting national economies.

This momentum provides African governments with the opportunity to shift ownership within the book sector toward local publishers, thereby strengthening domestic book industries. Governments could also establish preferential policies for locally owned publishing houses and implement regulatory frameworks that prioritize local and indigenous content, particularly for the educational market. In addition, local publishers should be given easier access to the lucrative textbook market, which is currently dominated by multinational publishers or their subsidiaries.



Building a strong domestic market for local publishers

- ▶ A dedicated foreign investment policy
- ▶ Industrial Policy Action Plans (IPAPs)
- ▶ The domestic allocation of ISBNs
- ▶ Export subsidy programmes
- ▶ A local, decentralized instructional materials procurement system
- ▶ Enterprise development
- ▶ Investment in formalized educational programmes and training
- ▶ Financial support
- ▶ Support for the children's book market

The following preferential policies for domestic companies would begin to strengthen the capacities of African book industries at home, reducing their reliance on foreign organizations and imports:

A dedicated foreign investment policy to protect and promote the diversity of the book industry. Such a policy would ensure that investments are directed toward building a strong and sustainable local publishing. Furthermore, it would prevent the absorption of small, thriving local publishers into large, foreign-owned entities, thus preserving the competitiveness of the domestic industry.

Industrial Policy Action Plans (IPAPs), or similar, to include the book industry within each country's industrial framework. IPAPs serve as strategic frameworks designed to stimulate growth and development in targeted sectors.

They may be well suited to Africa's book industry precisely because the industry is underperforming yet holds significant untapped potential. They are also particularly relevant because the industry is highly fragmented, requiring stakeholder alignment and public-private collaboration around a shared vision of more local books. As a priority sector, the book industry will benefit from a coordinated approach that aligns policies and programmes while ensuring structured monitoring and evaluation for long-term impact. Given its complexity, as depicted in Diagram 1, and its importance, the industry requires this level of rigour and strategic oversight.

South Africa has recently adopted such a policy for the creative industries. Known as the Creative Industries Masterplan,⁴ it has a dedicated Publishing Action Plan⁵ to fast-track development in the book industry. In this Masterplan process, the creative industries have been identified as one of seven priority sectors for growing the country's economy.⁶ Similarly, Angola has included the promotion of cultural and creative industries as a key component of its National Development Plan (2018-2022), in conjunction with a 'Train for Trade II' programme that enhances the economic potential of these industries through capacity-building and improved infrastructure.^{7,8}

The domestic allocation of ISBNs within national libraries would reduce reliance on foreign institutions for what is a core function. This would address the challenges of transient ISBN agencies operating within publishing associations, as is the case in some countries, and would strengthen the infrastructure needed to support the local book industry. Additionally, it would produce annual bibliographic reports to document and map the state of the publishing industry, thereby ensuring the preservation and accessibility of the nation's cultural and literary assets.



Export subsidy programmes to enhance export development activities for local publishers. These would guide publishers through a phased progression, starting from being export-aware (i.e. having some understanding of exporting but lacking foundational skills) to becoming fully export-ready (i.e. equipped with the necessary basics and capable of being supported in the development of their export marketing and distribution plans). These programmes can provide funding, promotional support and logistical assistance to improve access to regional markets. Subsidies can include support for writers and publishers to attend book fairs and literary festivals across Africa, with funding support prioritizing regional collaboration. To further expand export opportunities, subsidies can also cover reduced transportation costs for finished books entering other African markets, addressing logistical expenses such as freight charges. Priority would be given to African-published books, to strengthen capacity in less developed countries by leveraging imports from other African markets, and to facilitate intra-regional trade and continental industry growth. Industry associations that conduct market research would be subsidized to develop industry insights and export-related information for target countries. This would also entail the creation of export catalogues showcasing local books.

A local, decentralized instructional materials procurement system to allow schools to procure textbooks and supplementary reading materials directly from local bookshops in their area. This would support the growth of local booksellers and strengthen community-based book-distribution networks. Furthermore, domestic markets need to be progressively consolidated and strengthened as their reliance on foreign organizations is reduced over time.

Children's literature is the real driving force behind publishing. Not only are children's books the most widely consulted books worldwide, but they also represent the book industry's most lucrative sector. Consequently, neglecting this area in Africa would be a fundamental mistake and would be tantamount to ignoring an essential pillar of publishing. It is therefore imperative to pay particular attention to the children's book ecosystem and to its stakeholders. This will ensure the overall development of the book sector in Africa.

Christian Elongué

Children's literature entrepreneur • Senegal



Akwendje Festival © Analógicos Media

The following recommendations are some of the key policies and measures, based on the findings of this study, that are crucial for capacity building in Africa's domestic book industries:

Enterprise development: This type of programme provides grants and

consulting services to support small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs), or emerging publishers, in developing the necessary professional business skills and knowledge. SMMEs can also be prioritized through preferential procurement policies and dedicated funding mechanisms in order to assure their growth.



Publishing in national languages is a crucial lever for enhancing cultural identity and making literature accessible in rural areas.

Seydou Nourou Ndiaye

Local publisher and director of *Éditions Papyrus Afrique* • Senegal

Investment in formalized educational programmes and training: Investment in training will be facilitated when book publishing is recognised as a distinct economic activity within the Standard Industry Classification (SIC) system. This will ensure that the industry is recognized in national skills development plans and included in funding allocations. Without formal classification, it will continue to struggle to secure targeted investment or policy support, and the serious gaps in workforce training and professional development will remain unaddressed. Its inclusion in the SIC system is thus a necessary first step in professionalizing the industry.

Dedicated and structured degree programmes will further professionalize the industry, equipping students with the necessary technical expertise and a deep understanding of the creative and practical aspects of publishing.

Public-private partnerships are also essential to upskilling the publishing industry. Formalized partnerships between governments, regional professional associations such as APNET and Afrilivres, and local industry associations, would enhance and expand existing efforts.

By combining higher education, regional cooperation and structured partnerships, Africa can create

a sustainable framework for training, professionalization and long-term growth in publishing.

Financial support: This should cover all subsectors of the publishing value chain and include provisions for training and translation. Depending on each country's specific needs, priority could be given to, for example, the skilled writing of educational materials, children's books for leisure, or writing in the local and indigenous languages. Moreover, subsidies should be provided for writing residencies that give different aspiring writers the opportunity to develop their skills, thus encouraging diversity across genres and disciplines.

Support for the children's book market: The demand for children's literature, graphic novels and comics is steadily increasing across Africa, supported by the growth of strong, specialised publishers in this field over the past decade.

Globally, the children's book market is expected to have grown at a compound annual growth rate of 5.5% between 2018 and 2028. This growth is driven by rising literacy rates, an expanding readership among children aged 2 to 12 and the growing popularity of books as educational gifts promoting family activities, with e-books playing a significant role. With adequate support and financial investment, Africa has the potential to become a significant contributor to this market segment.⁹

Support for local and indigenous language publishing: Targeted support has to be provided for the development of publishing in African languages, particularly those with broad cross-border reach (e.g. Kiswahili, Hausa, Pular and Bambara). Investing in these languages can significantly expand regional markets, promote linguistic diversity and strengthen cultural identities.



*Vitabu vya Kiswahili (Swahili books) by Rachel Strohm © Rachel Strohm/Flickr.com**



Books, especially literary ones, are sparking real interest, and you can see it in the buzz around book fairs. It's the youth leading this charge, with emerging voices pushing their way through. The movement is coming from the ground. But here's the problem – there's no real distribution network to back them.

Dr Ibrahima Aya

Publisher • Mali

Interview with editorial team 11 December 2024

INCREASING ACCESS TO BOOKS AND PROMOTING READERSHIP

The promotion of reading is fundamental to the development of the book industry, as it directly influences its every facet.



Increasing access to books and promoting readership

- ▶ Developing distribution and bookselling networks
- ▶ Elaborating legal frameworks for public libraries
- ▶ Conducting periodic national surveys on book reading
- ▶ Launching national reading campaigns
- ▶ Increasing access to books through digital transformation

The following are possible means of expanding the role of reading on the continent:

Developing distribution and bookselling networks: Distribution networks and public libraries are vital in promoting reading and providing access to knowledge, especially in areas with limited resources. In particular, investments in public library infrastructure are key to advancing education, creating employment opportunities and driving economic development. By enhancing literacy, supporting lifelong learning and equipping citizens with the skills needed for Africa's transformation, such efforts contribute directly to achieving the goals outlined in the African Union's *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*.

Book purchase schemes for the government that make use of booksellers rather than publishers could be established, with the aim of supporting a greater number of booksellers and expanding their distribution networks. This scheme might also prioritise books in local and indigenous languages, to support local writing and local authors. Moreover, to streamline operations and enhance efficiency, booksellers could receive business support for eCommerce development, electronic communication systems, inventory management technology and bibliographic data tools.

There have been renewed efforts to drive the enactment of national book policies by countries such as Malawi, South Africa and Madagascar, coming off the back of the drafting of the Continental Book and Reading Policies for Africa, which was attended by 12 countries. Besides promoting local and indigenous publishing and supporting cultural preservation, such efforts are in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (which promotes quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for children).¹⁰

Individual countries have also renewed their efforts to promote book reading. In Senegal, the Ministry of Culture organised a national forum on books and reading with the participation of all stakeholders in 2025.¹¹

Elaborating legal frameworks for public libraries: Regulatory frameworks need to be elaborated to standardize the delivery of public library services nationwide, address disparities in access, and establish clear principles for governance and funding. Such frameworks should aim to establish a strong public library network in all parts of the country, but especially in rural areas. They provide the legal foundation for the establishment and funding of public libraries, and mandate free or affordable access to books.

Conducting periodic national surveys on book reading: The basic framework for a national reading survey has been developed based on various studies, such as those of the Book Industry Study Group¹²; and on information from the All Media Products Survey.¹³ The results of national reading surveys ensure that any reading-promotion policies are data-driven.

Consumer insight studies, in the form of national book reading surveys, play a vital role in understanding reading habits. They shed light on, among other things, the reasons why people read, the types of books to produce, the factors that shape buying decisions and where libraries should be established. These insights are critical in developing effective policies and strategic interventions. A focused approach, informed by market behaviour and market gaps, allows for the identification of priority areas, ensuring that resources and efforts are directed where they are most needed to achieve meaningful results.



© Chidy Young / Unsplash.com



Offering a range of audio books is also a way of firing people's imagination. Book production needs sound, and images ... using the different media to the full.

Selma Guettaf

Poet, author, journalist,
writing workshop facilitator • France

Launching national reading campaigns:

The national book reading campaign is a deliberate and strategic initiative aimed at engaging society in a conversation about the impacts of low reading levels, while encouraging and supporting reading that is not typically part of daily life. Primarily media-based, the campaign delivers impactful messaging to promote reading and provides practical guidance and activities to inspire a culture of book reading. A key component is the involvement of celebrities and well-known figures, who act as influencers to amplify the campaign's message. Like national campaigns urging citizens to save water, for example, the campaign will seek to embed reading and books into everyday life. Such campaigns benefit from being informed by the results of reading surveys.

Increasing access to books through digital transformation:

Strategies to increase access to books should leverage new digital formats to reach Africa's large youth populations (the median age of Africa's population is below the global median of 30 years). The market penetration of digital products in Africa is highly dependent on access to devices and the quality of connectivity, and internet penetration via mobile phone has increased dramatically in Africa since 2015, to the point where African youths are now more likely to engage with texts, particularly schoolbooks and leisure content, in digital format via smartphone. These developments signal opportunities for book sector growth in the digital space, including opportunities to promote reading that bypass some of the issues of access particularly for those in rural areas.



When resources are injected into the sector of children's books, the effects are immediately visible. Quality improves, and demand follows suit, even if prices rise slightly.

Niry Ravoninahidraibe

Cultural journalist, film critic and novelist • Madagascar

Addressing the continent's challenges when it comes to access to books thus requires investment in mobile and internet infrastructure, digital platforms and formats, digital copyright regulations, and a greater representation of African languages in digital formats. These steps are vital to developing Africa's digital reading infrastructures in order to reach as many people on the continent as possible, while ensuring that Africa's stories and knowledge reach broader audiences and are preserved for and transmitted to future generations.

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Inside the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria, Egypt. © MannaDa / Shutterstock.com*

Part 4

Subregional and national mappings

**Part 4 presents a mapping
of the book industry
in the 54 African States
Members of UNESCO,
based on data collected
for this study.**

Subregional mappings

This summary is based on data provided by national public authorities and cross-estimates following consultations with various stakeholders and documentary research. It reflects only formal sector activities.



Population
183 million



Literacy rate
73% (15 years old and above)



Average GDP per capita
US\$993



Urban population **46%**



Mobile cellular subscriptions
60%



Internet user rate
28%

Burundi
Cameroon
Central African Republic
Chad
Congo
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Equatorial Guinea
Gabon
Sao Tome and Principe

TRENDS

- No. 5 in terms of production capacity, based on titles produced in 2023, with 3 countries (Cameroon, Congo and Gabon) publishing 75% of the subregion's titles. The number of book publishers is correspondingly the lowest in the subregion.
- No. 5 in terms of distribution, based on the number of bookstores.
- No. 5 in terms of public access to books, based on the number of public libraries, with 2 countries (Chad and Congo) accounting for 66% of all public libraries.
- No. 3 in terms of number of book fairs and literary festivals.
- No. 3 in terms of number of professional associations.



Book sector

2023 estimated data



Publishing houses
196



Jobs
7,500



Titles published
954



Festivals and book fairs
34



Bookstores
147



Professional associations
30



Public libraries
361



Education and professional training on publishing
22% (2 countries out of 9)



National ISBN mechanism **22%**
(2 countries out of 9)



Governmental coordinating institution **33%**
(3 countries out of 9)



Specific law on book publishing **11%**
(1 country out of 9)



Public financial support (tax incentives, loans or grants) **55%**
(5 countries out of 9)



Intellectual property/copyright policy
100% (9 countries out of 9)

CHALLENGES

- Only 25% of the countries have ISBN agencies. Most rely on external systems, adding to costs and weakening the subregional market.
- The book publishing industry displays limited subregional cooperation. However, the Sembura Collective in the Great Lakes Region is one such initiative, uniting Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in cross-border literary exchanges.

PERSPECTIVES

- The Bilili BD Festival in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, exemplifies a niche market focus on comics and graphic novels that could expand to become a key African comic and graphic novel book fair.
- The Centre Régional de Promotion du Livre en Afrique au sud du Sahara (CREPLA) is a once-ambitious regional entity. Now limited to Cameroon, it offers Central Africa and the rest of the continent a chance to revive cooperative frameworks.
- With approximately 30 associations, the subregion is however dominated by writer networks. It has only three publisher associations.



Population
431 million



Literacy rate
67% (15 years old and above)



Average GDP per capita
US\$1,366



Urban population **31%**



Mobile cellular subscriptions
75%



Internet user rate
25%

Comoros
Djibouti
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Kenya
Madagascar
Mauritius
Rwanda
Seychelles
Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan
Uganda
United Republic of Tanzania

TRENDS

- No. 4 in terms of production capacity, based on titles produced in 2023, with 54% of titles produced in Kenya.
- No. 1 in terms of distribution, based on number of bookstores – with 74% located in Kenya.
- No. 4 in terms of public access to books, based on the number of public libraries – with 41% located in Ethiopia.
- No. 4 in terms of book fairs and literary festivals.
- No. 3 in terms of number of professional associations.

CHALLENGES

- Weak infrastructure and distribution, with limited bookstores and libraries, restrict access across the subregion outside of Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda.
- Rampant piracy is reported, particularly in relation to textbooks. While a stronger publishing country such as Kenya has implemented anti-piracy campaigns (2018–2022), significant gaps remain, as seen for example in Eritrea's lack of copyright law.
- The subregion remains fragmented and broader subregional integration remains limited.

PERSPECTIVES

- Mobile penetration and rising internet use are creating digital opportunities, with 13 countries having digital platforms already, thus forming a strong foundation for growth.
- Local and indigenous language publishing is strong in some countries.
- A stronger subregional integration strategy could bridge the divide between anglophone and francophone countries of the subregion, creating greater economic and cultural collaboration.
- With at least 30 literary festivals and book fairs across 12 Eastern African countries, the region has a strong foundation for literary promotion and market expansion.



Book sector

2023 estimated data



Publishing houses
585



Jobs
63,000



Titles published
9,320



Festivals and book fairs
30



Bookstores
5,383



Professional associations
35



Public libraries
1,089



Education and professional training on publishing
14% (2 countries out of 14)



National ISBN mechanism **57%**
(8 countries out of 14)



Governmental coordinating institution **21%**
(3 countries out of 14)



Specific law on book publishing **0%**
(none of the countries)



Public financial support (tax incentives, loans or grants) **79%**
(11 countries out of 14)



Intellectual property/copyright policy
79% (11 countries out of 14)



Population
223 million



Literacy rate
77% (15 years old and above)



Average GDP per capita
US\$3,993



Urban population **57%**



Mobile cellular subscriptions
110%



Internet user rate
75%

Algeria
Egypt
Libya
Mauritania
Morocco
Tunisia

TRENDS

- No. 1 in terms of production capacity, based on titles produced in 2023, with 68% of titles produced in Egypt. The number of book publishers is correspondingly the highest in the region.
- No. 3 in terms of distribution, based on the number of bookstores, with 75% of these located in Morocco.
- No. 1 in terms of public access to books, based on the number of public libraries. Egypt has the highest number (924), or 34% of the total for the subregion.
- No. 1 in terms of book fairs and literary festivals, accounting for 46% of fairs and festivals in Africa.
- No. 5 in terms of number of professional bodies, with a fairly even spread among countries.



Book sector

2023 estimated data



Publishing houses
4,197



Jobs
120,000



Titles published
40,370



Festivals and book fairs
125



Bookstores
1,659



Professional associations
15



Public libraries
2,722



Education and professional training on publishing
33% (2 countries out of 6)



National ISBN mechanism **83%**
(5 countries out of 6)



Governmental coordinating institution **83%**
(5 countries out of 6)



Specific law on book publishing **33%**
(2 countries out of 6)



Public financial support (tax incentives, loans or grants) **83%**
(5 countries out of 6)



Intellectual property/copyright policy
100% (6 countries out of 6)

CHALLENGES

- Strong state publishing activities with comparatively low civil society participation, as evidenced by the low number of professional associations compared with the size of the industry.
- Despite high publishing output, Northern Africa faces weak infrastructure, with a relatively low number of bookstores for the size of the industry.

PERSPECTIVES

- Strong shared infrastructure and opportunities in the region owing to Arabic as a shared language and market, with great support through the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region and international book fairs across the Arab world.
- Despite comparatively lower literacy rates, Northern Africa shows strong community engagement with books.
- Northern Africa has a higher proportion of trade publishing than other African regions.



Population
201 million



Literacy rate
79% (15 years old and above)



Average GDP per capita
US\$2,952



Urban population **52%**



Mobile cellular subscriptions
101%



Internet user rate
46%

Angola
Botswana
Eswatini
Lesotho
Malawi
Mozambique
Namibia
South Africa
Zambia
Zimbabwe

TRENDS

- No. 3 in terms of production capacity, with South Africa accounting for 82% of total output for the subregion.
- No. 4 in terms of distribution, based on the number of bookstores, with 61% of these located in South Africa and a much more even spread in the rest of the subregion.
- No. 2 in terms of public access to books, with 87% of public libraries located in South Africa.
- No. 5 in terms of book fairs and literary festivals.
- No. 2 in terms of number of professional associations.
- South Africa plays a dominant role in Southern Africa's book publishing industry, especially as a major exporter to other countries in the subregion.



Book sector

2023 estimated data



Publishing houses
435



Jobs
26,500



Titles published
12,515



Festivals and book fairs
27



Bookstores
490



Professional associations
42



Public libraries
2,236



Education and professional training on publishing
20% (2 countries out of 10)



National ISBN mechanism **80%**
(8 countries out of 10)



Governmental coordinating institution **30%**
(3 countries out of 10)



Specific law on book publishing **0%**
(none of the countries)



Public financial support (tax incentives, loans or grants) **70%**
(7 countries out of 10)



Intellectual property/copyright policy
100% (10 countries out of 10)

CHALLENGES

- Most industry associations have ceased to exist, eroding training opportunities in the subregion.
- Irregular literary festivals and book fairs. (There are nevertheless emerging events, such as the Doek Literary Festival in Namibia held yearly since 2022.)

PERSPECTIVES

- Since 2019, some countries in Southern Africa have seen a literary surge driven by youth engagement.
- Government support for publishing is increasing, as demonstrated by Angola's US\$490 million National Reading Plan (2024-2027) and South Africa's Publishing Action Plan.
- There is a growing market for children's literature and pan-African content in the subregion.



Population
441 million



Literacy rate
57% (15 years old and above)



Average GDP per capita
US\$1,246



Urban population **50%**



Mobile cellular subscriptions
106%



Internet user rate
37%

Benin
Burkina Faso
Cabo Verde
Côte d'Ivoire
Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Liberia
Mali
Niger
Nigeria
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Togo



Book sector

2023 estimated data



Publishing houses
1,015



Jobs
110,000



Titles published
22,156



Festivals and book fairs
60



Bookstores
5,058



Professional associations
50



Public libraries
1,546



Education and professional training on publishing
20% (3 countries out of 15)



National ISBN mechanism **40%**
(6 countries out of 15)



Governmental coordinating institution **47%**
(7 countries out of 15)



Specific law on book publishing **13%**
(2 countries out of 15)



Public financial support (tax incentives, loans or grants) **80%**
(12 countries out of 15)



Intellectual property/copyright policy
87% (13 countries out of 15)

TRENDS

- No. 2 in terms of production capacity, and no. 2 in terms of number of publishers. Nigeria accounts for 86% of total output for the subregion, commensurate with its large population. The next highest output is Ghana's, at 6%.
- No. 2 in terms of distribution, based on the number of bookstores, with 88% of these located in Nigeria, followed by Ghana with 9%.
- No. 3 in terms of public access to books, with 32% of public libraries located in Senegal and 20% located in Nigeria.
- No. 2 in terms of book fairs and literary festivals.
- No. 1 in terms of number of professional associations, owing probably to the number of countries in the subregion.

CHALLENGES

- Low literacy levels, averaging 57% across West Africa. There are significant disparities among countries, from 91% in Cabo Verde to just 31% in Mali.
- Distribution networks are severely underdeveloped, with scalable numbers in Nigeria and Ghana only. Many countries have fewer than 20 bookstores.
- Digital adoption remains low, constrained by insufficient internet access (at 37%), economic barriers and literacy challenges. Although they are emerging, digital platforms are limited to only 40% of the countries.

PERSPECTIVES

- From a subregional development perspective, West Africa demonstrates promising state support for publishing through mechanisms such as tax incentives, targeted soft loans and cultural funding.
- West Africa's book publishing industry is dominated by French and English, but investing in local and indigenous language initiatives can expand readership and preserve heritage.
- The Economic Community of West African States and the Organisation Africaine de la Propriété Intellectuelle facilitate cross-border trade. Expanding projects such as the Senegambia Book Prize and cross-border book trade in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria could strengthen collaboration and support smaller publishing markets in the subregion.
- There is a rising development of the children's book sector.



National mappings

ALGERIA	GABON	SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE
ANGOLA	GAMBIA	SENEGAL
BENIN	GHANA	SEYCHELLES
BOTSWANA	GUINEA	SIERRA LEONE
BURKINA FASO	GUINEA-BISSAU	SOMALIA
BURUNDI	KENYA	SOUTH AFRICA
CABO VERDE	LESOTHO	SOUTH SUDAN
CAMEROON	LIBERIA	SUDAN
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	LIBYA	TOGO
CHAD	MADAGASCAR	TUNISIA
COMOROS	MALAWI	UGANDA
CONGO	MALI	UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
CÔTE D'IVOIRE	MAURITANIA	ZAMBIA
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	MAURITIUS	ZIMBABWE
DJIBOUTI	MOROCCO	
EGYPT	MOZAMBIQUE	
EQUATORIAL GUINEA	NAMIBIA	
ERITREA	NIGER	
ESWATINI	NIGERIA	
ETHIOPIA	RWANDA	

ALGERIA



Population **46.2 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **81%**
(2018)



GDP per capita **US\$5,364**
(2023)



Urban population **75%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **109%**



Internet users (2022) **71%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **1,715**

Titles published **7,456**

Bookstores *No data available*

Public libraries **592**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 78,000 inhabitants

Jobs **38,000**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Algeria has gradually structured its book and publishing sector through significant institutional reforms implemented since independence in 1962. Algeria set up the *Société Nationale d'Édition et de Diffusion* (national publishing and distribution company), which was responsible for publishing, importing books and running bookshops in all of Algeria's major cities. This state-owned company was subsequently restructured into a number of printing and distribution companies, with the bookshops sold to employees during the 1990s.

The private publishing sector remained fairly small, with around ten publishers until the 1990s, when a number of publishing houses (approximately forty) emerged as a result of legislative changes in Algeria at that time. The creation of the Algerian ISBN Agency in 1994, housed within the National Library of Algeria, was also a key step in facilitating the systematic management and promotion of publications (Ministry of Culture, Algeria). The creation of the *Centre National du Livre* (national book centre) in 2009, under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and Arts, marked another major step towards consolidating the sector.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The *Centre National du Livre* (CNL), a public organisation supervised by the Ministry of Culture, is responsible for promoting publishing, books and reading. It is responsible for the implementation of the national policy on books and carrying out studies and compiling statistics on books and public access to reading materials, in accordance with Presidential Decree No. 09-202 of 27 May 2009. It is a consultative body with a steering committee made up of representatives from book trade organisations. The CNL also has four specialised standing committees that support all stages of

book production, the development of translation and participation in book-related activities. Each committee comprises seven members, chosen from among writers and specialists in books and public access to reading materials.

The *Office National des Droits d'Auteur et des Droits Voisins* (the national authority for copyright and associated rights) guarantees the protection of literary and creative works. Legislation in the sector includes Act No. 15-13 (2015) on the management and regularisation of the book market, Ordinance No. 03-05 (2003) for copyright, and Ordinance No. 96-16 (1996) for legal deposit.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

In accordance with Act No.15-13, Algeria has applied a single book price policy since 2015, which helps stabilise prices and protect consumers. There are specific tax exemptions for books imported for literary events and for paper used in publishing. A reduced VAT rate of 7% is applied to certain digital books and educational materials. The government also provides financial support for cultural, literary and educational publishing projects.

Additionally, the national authority's response to the survey indicates that the State has set up a system of annual subsidies from the Ministry of Culture and Arts' budget, in order to fund publishing projects submitted by the authors themselves or by publishers, as well as co-publishing projects. The levy on reprographic equipment is intended to: finance the setting up and running of a writing residency; finance the stay in a writing residency of authors whose writing projects are selected; support authors' projects to enable them to devote themselves fully to writing or translating literary works into local languages; support self-publishing projects; support the publication and sale in bookshops of books by Algerian authors; help booksellers build up their start-up stock; support the design, production and promotion of Algerian books.

Particular attention is paid to the emergence of young talent and the translation of Algerian works.

Furthermore, the government has set up a system of annual subsidies from the Ministry of Trade and Export Promotion's budget, for participation in international trade fairs, covering 80% of costs.

The national authority's response to the survey also states that, with a view to strengthening national solidarity processes and providing care for social groups with specific needs, a Braille publishing programme has been set up by the State to encourage the publication of books in formats accessible to people with visual impairments.

The publishing of school books and textbooks remains exclusively state-run and is the responsibility of the *Office National des Publications Scolaires* (ONPS). There was some opening up to private operators in 2003 and 2008, but the private sector is still mainly involved in publishing remedial textbooks.

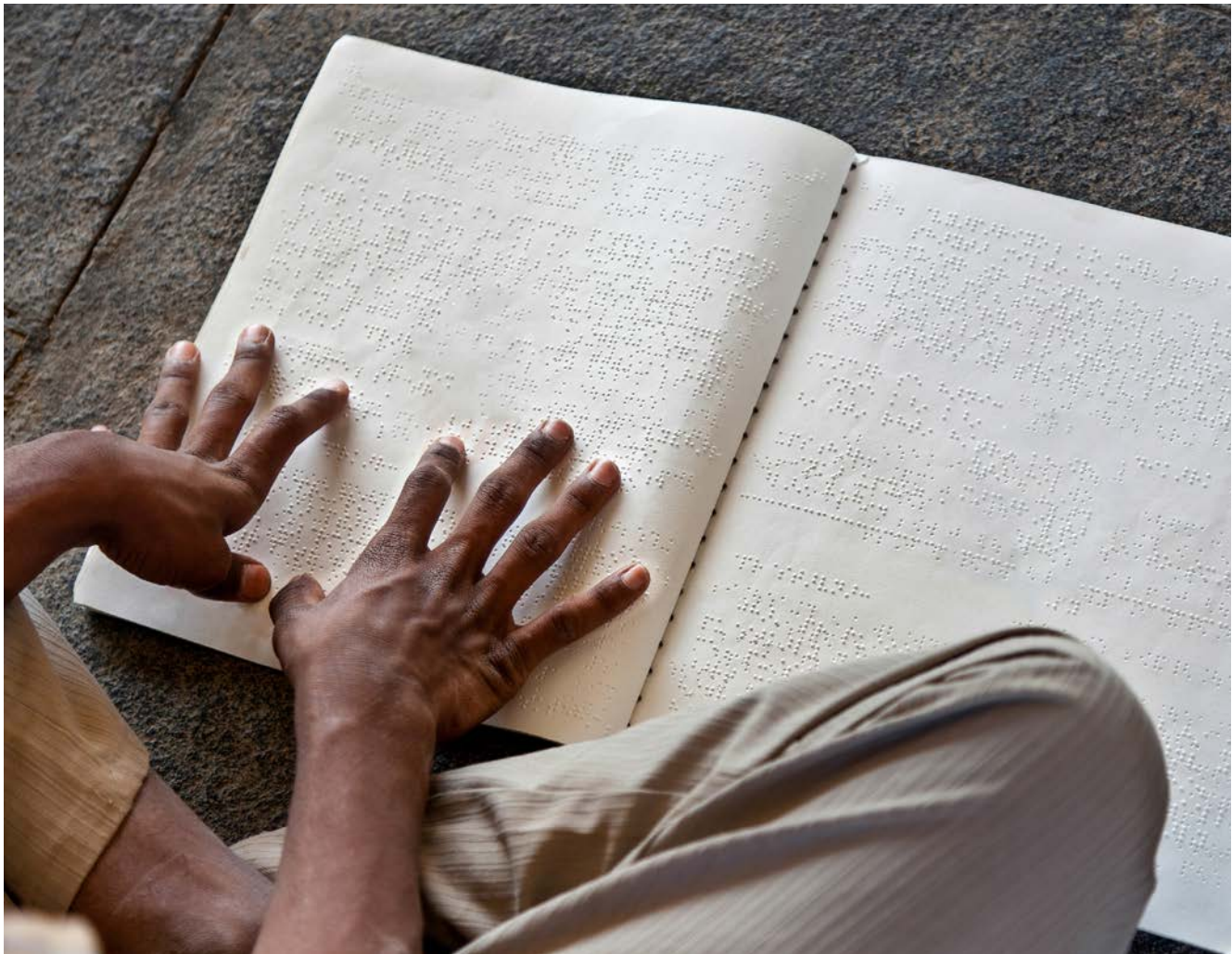
PUBLISHING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, publishing in Algeria is liberalised and requires only a prior declaration to the Ministry of Culture and Arts. In 2023, there were 1,715 publishers with 7,456 titles (2023), mostly printed (7,412) with some digital (44).

Literature was the main publishing category, followed by educational and scientific works. Publications in Arabic continue to dominate, followed by French, Tamazight and English, which are on the rise.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's response to the survey, the distribution network for Algerian books is still centred on brick-and-mortar bookshops, literary fairs and cultural events. In 2023, Algeria organised 14,548 literary events, according to the national authority's response to the survey, which considerably raised the sector's profile.



However, there has been significant growth in online book sale platforms since 2019. In terms of employment, the national authority's response to the survey indicates that 6,060 jobs generated by the sector in 2023. Our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 38,000 persons employed by the whole sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

Printed books are still the most popular format in Algeria, although there are no precise statistics on per capita reading. The national authority's response to the survey indicates a total of 592 public libraries.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

According to the national authority's response to the survey, in 2023 Algeria imported books with a total value of US\$26.7 million, mainly from France, Jordan, Egypt, the UK and Lebanon. Exports remain marginal, estimated at just US\$67,319, underlining a heavy reliance on imported publications.

TRAINING

To date, there are no higher education or vocational training programmes specifically dedicated to the publishing professions in Algeria. However, the University of Algiers 2 offers a vocational degree in library science and documentation, and specialised vocational training centres deliver a diploma in graphic arts.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The *Centre National du Livre* plays an active role in professional consultation and formulating publishing policies. It includes representatives of professional organisations in its specialised committees to ensure an inclusive and participative framework for sector governance. Two trade associations act as publishing industry mouthpieces: the *Syndicat National des Éditeurs de Livres* (SNEL, founded in 2000) and the *Organisation Nationale d'Éditeurs de Livres* (ONEL, founded in 2015). An Algerian writers' association (*Union des Écrivains Algériens*) was also set up in 1963.

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ANGOLA



Population **36.7 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **72%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$2,308**
(2023)



Urban population **69%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **67%**



Internet users (2022) **39%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **22**

Titles published **66**

Bookstores **16**

Public libraries **29** (2017)

Public libraries per capita
1 per 1,2 million inhabitants

Jobs **500**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The early seeds of Angolan literature emerged through the writings of nationalist intellectuals who sought to express cultural identity and resistance to oppression. Writings from Angolan authors such as Agostinho Neto, who would later become the country's first president, played a critical role in shaping national consciousness. Neto's poetry collection, *Sagrada Esperança* (*Sacred Hope*, published in 1974), encapsulates themes of resistance, unity and the struggle for freedom.

Following Angola's independence from Portugal in 1975, the publishing sector entered a new era marked by both promise and challenges. The outbreak of a devastating civil war severely disrupted the country's cultural and educational infrastructure for nearly three decades. The end of the civil war in 2002 ushered in a period of reconstruction, including renewed efforts to revive Angola's literary and cultural institutions. Organizations such as the União dos Escritores Angolanos (Union of Angolan Writers), founded in the year of independence, and publishing houses such as Chá de Caxinde (founded in 1989) emerged to promote Angolan literature and foster a reading culture.

Prominent post-war Angolan writers who have gained international recognition include José Eduardo Agualusa, known for *O Vendedor de Passados* ('The Seller of Pasts'). Published in 2004 and translated into English under the title *The Book of Chameleons*, it won the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize in 2007.¹ Another author of note is Ondjaki, whose works (e.g. *Os Transparentes*, published in 2012) explore contemporary Angolan society through innovative narrative techniques that blend magical realism, humour and urban life. Additionally, Pepetela, a celebrated author and recipient of the Camões Prize, has chronicled Angola's political and social transformations in novels such as *Mayombe* (published in 1980), while also addressing themes of postcolonial identity and generational change in works such as *A Geração da Utopia* (*The Utopian Generation*), published in 1992.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is responsible for coordinating book and publishing sector policies and measures, and for the content of, and financial support for, school textbooks. On behalf of the MoE, the *Biblioteca Nacional de Angola* (National Library of Angola), established in 1969,² is responsible for the technical coordination of public libraries and the promotion of books and reading. It is also responsible for the legal deposit of the country. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and its National Institute of Cultural Industries are responsible for copyright and intellectual property rights for literary works.

In terms of the legal framework, the Constitution of the Republic lays the foundation through Articles 42 and 43, which address issues related to intellectual property and copyright. The management of Angola's public libraries is guided by the Statute of the National Network of Public Libraries and the Organic Statute of the National Library of Angola, as established by Presidential Decree No. 97/21 of 2021. The decree approves the organizational framework for the National Library of Angola and the network of public libraries across the country, ensuring a cohesive structure for library services nationwide.

The Legal Deposit Law (No. 27/03 of 2003) mandates that any commercial, public or individual organization producing documentation considered part of the national bibliographic heritage must deposit a specified number of copies with the National Library for safekeeping and preservation.

Copyright protection is governed by Law No. 15/14 of 2014, which regulates the protection of copyright and related rights in fields such as the arts, literature and science, and other forms of knowledge and creative expression. Complementing this, Presidential Decree No. 184/19 of 2019 established the National Service for Copyright and Related Rights.

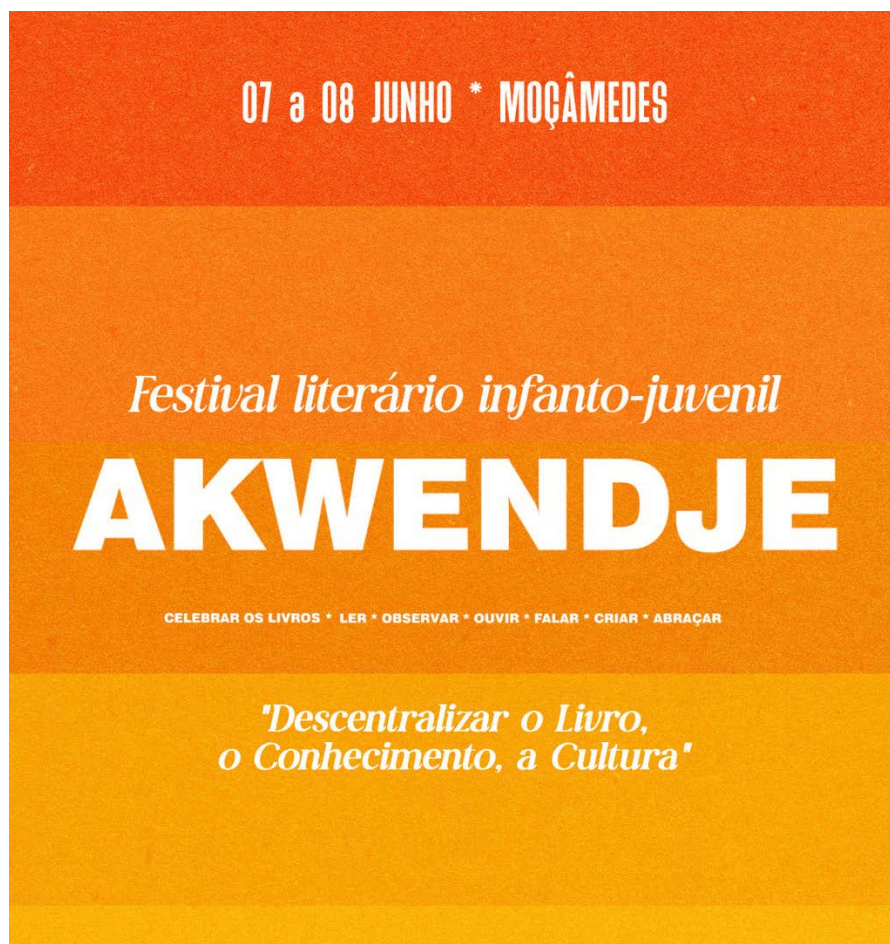
This institution is tasked with safeguarding artistic and intellectual creation, ensuring that creators' rights are protected.

Lastly, the Patronage Law for Culture (Law No. 8/12 of 2012) provides fiscal incentives and state support aimed at encouraging private and collective contributions to Angola's social, cultural, educational, sports, technological, health and information sectors. This law plays an essential role in fostering a supportive environment for cultural development by stimulating both public and private investment in cultural initiatives.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The National Policy on Books and the Promotion of Reading in Angola was approved by Presidential Decree 105/11 in 2011.³ The policy aims to mobilize resources and coordinate efforts to set priorities and develop strategies for the book sector and reading promotion in Angola. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders in enhancing literacy and access to books across the country.⁴ To this end, a multisectoral commission responsible for monitoring and implementing the National Policy on Books and the Promotion of Reading was established in 2018.⁵ Coordinated by the Minister of Culture and Tourism, this commission allows for the participation of professional stakeholders, offering them a role in shaping the country's literary landscape.

A significant recent development is the National Reading Plan (PNL/NPR) 2024-2027, formalized by Presidential Decree No. 247/24 of 2024. The plan operates under the motto '*Mais Leitura, Mais Cidadania, Mais Desenvolvimento Sustentável*' ('More Reading, More Citizenship, More Sustainable Development').⁶ It involves multiple ministries and aims to improve reading habits among children, young people and adults. Known also as PLANALEITURA, the plan focuses on reducing taxes on book imports, promoting reading habits, supporting authors and publishers, and developing infrastructure to support these initiatives.



Public investment in the book and publishing sector is detailed in government documents such as the State Budget and the National Reading Plan. The PLANALEITURA initiative, in particular, mobilizes public and private investments with a planned financial provision of 456 billion Angolan Kwanzas, equivalent to approximately US\$490 million. Public investments, dedicated to building key reading resources nationwide, make up 92.7% of this budget.⁷

In 2024, the government also established a School Book Policy, which defines the rules and criteria for the preparation, evaluation, certification, production and distribution of school textbooks.⁸ There are also government policies dedicated to purchasing books, including school textbooks. A notable development occurred in 2021, when the government began printing books for Grades 1 to 6 using Angolan printers.⁹

Infrastructural projects such as the construction of media libraries and the establishment of the Children's Book Garden (Jardim do Livro Infantil) in various provinces and municipalities further demonstrate the government's investment in the sector.¹⁰

Measures have also been taken to regulate the price of books based on a fixed price. Notably, the General Tax Administration's Circular No. 015 grants VAT exemptions for both imported books and those produced domestically.¹¹ To ensure accessibility for lower-income families, the National Institute of Cultural Industries introduced children's pocket books featuring texts by Angolan writers that are priced affordably.¹²

The government also provides digital books through the MoE's website and the SEPE.gov.ao portal, which serves as the Portal of Electronic Public Services of the Government of Angola.

In 2000, Presidential Decree No. 31/00 created the Prémio Nacional de Cultura e Artes (National Prize for Culture and the Arts).¹³ Carrying the highest artistic distinction in Angola, the prize aims to support and recognize contributions to the country's cultural heritage in literature, the visual arts, theatre, dance, music, cinema, and the human and social sciences. In 2023, the Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda (INCM/Angola) literary prize was introduced through a partnership between the Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda and Portugal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This prize, worth US\$5,220, encourages literary creation by Angolans and by residents who have lived in Angola for at least five years.¹⁴

Despite these efforts, and noting that books remain expensive, publishers, writers and booksellers have expressed concern that state financial measures have not sufficiently supported the private sector.^{15,16,17}

PUBLISHING

Requests for ISBNs are made through the National Library to the Agência Nacional de ISBN – Associação Portuguesa de Editores e Livreiros (the National ISBN Agency – Portuguese Association of Publishers and Booksellers). There are approximately 22 book publishers in Angola.

Notable publishers include Chá de Caxinde – Associação e Editora, which was established in 1989 by a group of about 100 members who shared an interest in promoting Angolan identity values.¹⁸ It operates under a triangular organizational model, sharing its headquarters and facilities among three entities: the association itself, a publishing house and bookstore, and a green space used for events. Editorial das Universidades de Angola publishes academic and scientific works produced by Angolan universities. The publisher plays a crucial role in disseminating knowledge and promoting academic research throughout the country. Editora Azul is an Angolan publishing company that focuses primarily on editing and

publishing books, magazines and similar materials. In addition to its publishing services, Editora Azul offers ghostwriting, text revision and translation, graphic design and printing services.

In the past five years, there has been a particular focus on local publishing, especially for textbooks and classic Angolan literature. The government has made efforts to reduce the price of schoolbooks. Although the government estimates the value of public schoolbook purchases at US\$0.50 per book, the policy has not been working as intended and there are ongoing complaints regarding the irregular sale of books at exorbitant prices on the informal market.¹⁹

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The estimated number of physical bookstores in Angola is ten, as well as six digital bookstores. The MoE distributes textbooks primarily through digital platforms and through networks for public schools. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry launched the Xilonga Angolan Virtual School, where primary- and secondary-school textbooks are available for free download.²⁰ Textbooks are also accessible through SEPE, the government's Electronic Services Portal.

Based on all available data and complementary research, there were an estimated 500 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the most recent official data from the MoE (recorded in 2017), there were 29 public libraries in Angola, with a total of 288,240 registered readers.²¹ The Ministry of Science and Technology in Angola has been actively involved in the construction of media libraries. These facilities not only provide internet services but also offer physical books for on-site reading, thus combining digital access with traditional library resources.

There are no surveys of reading activity available, though academic studies have been carried out on the reading habits of some Angolans. One of them is a 2018 dissertation on the reading habits of adolescents at the Baptist School in Huambo, which were found to be limited owing primarily to a lack of access to books and minimal encouragement to read from both school and family.²²

The Angolan government has implemented mobile media libraries to bring books to small villages and municipalities. These occupy public spaces and share reading materials with local communities. The initiative is part of the broader Angolan Media Libraries Network.^{23,24} Public and private universities also contribute to a culture of reading in the county by hosting book-sale exhibitions that offer books at affordable prices.

In addition, the Union of Angolan Writers, Editora Arte Viva e Eventos Culturais, Editora Mayamba and organizations connected to the literary sector, including the National Library, have developed effective strategies for promoting books and reading. These include media library services that provide digital books and programmes focused on school and children's literature (e.g. the previously mentioned Jardim do Livro Infantil). This programme features activities such as storytelling sessions and encourages the publication of Angolan children's literature through initiatives such as the Prémio Literário Jardim do Livro Infantil (Children's Book Garden Literary Prize).²⁵

Angola hosts several literary festivals and book fairs such as the *Escritaria Literary Festival Replicas*, which expanded from its original location in Penafiel, Portugal, to Angola. The festival paid tribute to the renowned Angolan writer Pepetela, with a series of activities held in the cities of Luanda, Huambo and Benguela.

This initiative was made possible through a partnership between the Piaget Institute and the Angolan government, reflecting a commitment to honouring literary figures who have shaped Angolan literature.²⁶

The ExpoBook Angola Fair, together with the Livro Zunga Project, led by the NGO Vitoria Luami, aims to increase book accessibility. Its inaugural edition took place on 28 June 2024, under the theme 'Leitura, até que se torne Cultura' ('Reading, until it becomes Culture').²⁷

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

The value of imports encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed materials into Angola in 2023 amounted to approximately US\$11,674,070. The revenue from exports in the same category of goods, however, amounted to just US\$84,050.²⁸ Portugal is the primary source country for Angola's imports, and also the main country of destination for its exports.

TRAINING

While the book industry in Angola has no programme or apprenticeship dedicated to it at the higher education level, the Catholic University of Angola offers a PhD in Library and Information.²⁹ Similarly, the Private University of Angola offers a Master's degree in Library and Information Studies, which focuses on training professionals in librarianship and information services.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Associação dos Editores e Livradores de Angola (Association of Publishers and Booksellers of Angola)³⁰ was founded in 2016 and serves as a representative organization for professionals in the publishing industry. After experiencing five years of inactivity, the association was revitalized in 2019.³¹ Another key institution is the Union of Angolan Writers, which was officially proclaimed in 1975.³²

The National Union of Artists and Composers – Society of Authors (UNAC-SA) and the Angolan Academy of Letters also play an important role. The latter functions as a literary institution responsible for publishing works of significant national historical and literary value.³³

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BENIN



Population **14.1 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **47%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$1,394**
(2023)



Urban population **50%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **109%**



Internet users (2022) **34%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **48**

Titles published **125** (2021-2023)

Bookstores **10**

Public libraries **34**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 414,700 inhabitants

Jobs **500**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The publishing sector began to take shape after Benin's independence in 1960, with major stakeholders such as *Les Éditions du Flamboyant*, a pioneer in the field founded in 1989, and *Ruisseaux d'Afrique* founded in 1998, specialising in children's literature. The creation of the Association of Writers and People of Letters of Benin (*Association des Écrivains et Gens de Lettres du Bénin* - AEGLB) in 1997 marked a desire to organize and promote the national literary sector. In 2017, the Federation of Writers' Associations and Actors in the Book Trade (*Grande Fédération des Associations d'Écrivains et Acteurs de la Chaîne du Livre* -GRAFAECL), was set up to restructure the sector. Leading authors such as Paul Hazoumé, with *Doguiçimi* (1938), Félix Couchoro, one of the pioneers of the African novel, and Florent Couao-Zotti, a major figure in contemporary literature, have left their mark on Benin's literary scene. More recently, initiatives such as the National Book Fair (*Salon National du Livre*) bear witness to Benin's ongoing commitment to boosting its book sector.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts heads cultural policies, including those related to the promotion of reading, authors and publishers, through the Arts and Culture Development Agency (*l'Agence de développement des arts et de la culture* - ADAC) and the National Directorate of Culture. The Ministry of Nursery and Primary Education and the Ministry of Secondary, Technical Education and Vocational Training ensure that books are integrated into educational programmes through the Directorate of Pedagogical, Innovation and Quality Inspectorate (*la Direction de l'Inspection Pédagogique, de l'Innovation et de la Qualité* - DIPIQ). The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research supports university libraries and scientific production.

The Benin Copyright and Related Rights Office (*Bureau Béninois du Droit d'Auteur*

et des Droits Voisins - BUBREDA, set up in 1984 and currently under the supervision of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, is responsible for collecting and paying out copyright and related rights, including those of authors and publishers of literary works. The National Library of Benin, based in Porto-Novo, is responsible for legal deposit.¹

Benin has taken a significant step forward in the management of its publishing output by enabling those involved in the book trade to make legal deposits via a digital platform, following a reform effective since August 2022.² This innovation is intended to improve the traceability of publications, combat counterfeiting and facilitate the development of a national bibliography, although challenges remain in terms of collecting and analysing data on national publishing output.

Law no 2005-30 of 2006 on copyright and related rights³ modernizes the previous provisions to bring them into line with international standards.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

According to the national authority's response to the survey, books are exempt from VAT. This strategic measure aims to make books more accessible to the general public, while stimulating local production and strengthening the competitiveness of national publishers in the face of imported books.

Public investment to support the book and publishing sector in 2023 was US\$2,019,047 (FCFA 1,272,018,220) for the National Library of Benin, US\$252,372 (FCFA 159,000,000) for the National Department of Culture and US\$1,349,162 (FCFA 850,000,000) for a project supporting the modernization of public libraries and reading centres. The National Library of Benin also issues public calls to tender for the acquisition of books for public libraries. Finally, grants enable the winners of the various editions of the Benin Grand Prize for Literature (*Grand Prix Littéraire du Bénin*) to represent the country at international literary events.⁴



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With the launch of the Arts and Culture Development Fund (*Fonds de Développement des Arts et de la Culture* – FDAC)⁵ in 2024, and with a budget of US\$1,945,644, the government intends to give a new boost to the creative industries. This fund finances up to 70% of arts and publishing projects. It is managed by the Arts and Culture Development Agency.

PUBLISHING

Benin has its own ISBN agency through its National Library. The national authority's response to the survey carried out as part of this study indicates that 48 publishers were operating in the country in 2023; while a survey by the Bureau International de l'Édition Française found between 10 and 20 active publishing houses in 2021.⁶ Publishers have to be approved by the Department of Arts and Books.

Documentary research indicates that, between 2021 and 2023, Benin's annual published book production can be estimated at between 100 and 150 books, based on ISBN requests and the fact that 78% of titles published are school books.⁷ However, according to some publishers, this estimate is greatly underestimated.⁸

The paper format is still predominant in Benin's publishing output.

Local publishing houses also contribute to the production and distribution of Beninese literature. The major stakeholders include *Les Éditions Ruisseaux d'Afrique* (founded in 1998), who has established itself as a key player in children's literature in Benin and West Africa, *Les Éditions du Flamboyant* (1989), pioneers of Beninese publishing who publish an average of eight titles a year in a variety of literary genres, and *Christon Éditions*.

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that 90% of books published are in official languages, notably French, while 10% are in local or regional languages such as Fongbè, Dendi, Yom or Baatonu. Local languages are being given increasing prominence in publications, even though their integration faces challenges relating to standardization and funding.

The 2018-2030 Education Sector Plan (*Plan Sectoriel de l'Éducation* – PSE) provides for a significant increase in the literacy rate, from 43.1% in 2015 to 59.9% in 2030. Between 2021 and 2023, Benin has stepped up its efforts to improve education through the acquisition and distribution of school textbooks.⁹ Even if the presence of local publishers in the textbook market remains marginal, since French publisher stakeholders dominate there, professionals have

noted the development of an emerging national school publishing industry with stakeholders such as *Éditions Laha*, *Éditions du Flamboyant* and *Ruisseaux d'Afrique*, according to a 2021 BIEF study.¹⁰

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that there are two book distribution networks. The same source points out that by 2023, Benin would have seven physical bookshops dedicated solely to books and three digital bookshops.

Book distribution in Benin seems to be concentrated mainly in urban areas,¹¹ particularly Cotonou and Porto-Novo, where traditional bookshops play a key role. Among them, the *Librairie Notre-Dame* in Cotonou stands out for its wide range of books from novels to teaching manuals, and for organizing events such as the *Caravane du livre*. Other bookshops, such as LBU, offer a wide range of literature, school and university books. Since 2022, LE GÉANT, a subsidiary of Christon Éditions, distributes books across the country and internationally, and collaborates with all bookshops and superstores nationwide. Online platforms such as Bookconekt.com complement these efforts by offering innovative services such as home purchase and delivery, and digital lending of e-books and audiobooks.

The National Book Fair,¹² organized since 2022 by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, is now a major event designed to provide a platform for exchange and reflection for stakeholders in the book chain, while helping to strengthen links with the public.¹³

In terms of employment, based on all available data and additional research, our estimates point to around 500 people employed by the book sector in 2023.

At the same time, the sector has been weakened by piracy, particularly in schools and universities, where the high cost of books encourages this phenomenon.¹⁴

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

The national authority's response to the survey indicated a network of 10 public libraries in Benin, as part of a network of 21 public reading centres and two departmental libraries. Moreover, there are also 11 private libraries. According to the same source, print remains the preferred format for readers.

Although digital is gaining in popularity, its acceptance remains limited owing to challenges such as internet access and lack of familiarity with digital technologies. As for audiobooks, their presence is still marginal.¹⁵

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there are five book festivals and fairs in Benin. In addition to the National Book Fair, there is also the Benin International Festival of Books and Related Arts (*Festival International du Livre et des Arts Assimilés du Bénin* – FILAB), which was held for the second time in 2024.¹⁶

Community initiatives such as book clubs, often supported by local NGOs, encourage access to books and the promotion of reading, particularly in rural areas.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2023, imports encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed materials, amounted to approximately US\$3,562,540. The value of similar goods exported, however, was only US\$36,360.¹⁷

TRAINING

The Center for Training in Information Professions (*Centre de Formation aux Carrières de l'Information* – CEFOCI)¹⁸ at the University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC) offers modules dedicated to the book trade, while the National Institute for Artistic, Archaeological and Cultural Professions (*Institut National des Métiers d'Art, d'Archéologie et de la Culture* – INMAAC) provides training in

cultural management and publishing mediation. The *Institut Supérieur Notre-Dame d'Afrique*, a private institution, also offers a vocational degree in book publishing.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Association of Writers and People of Letters of Benin (*Association des Écrivains et Gens de Lettres du Bénin* – AEGLB),¹⁹ founded in 1997, is actively committed to the cultural, social and economic development of the country. In 2017, the creation of the Federation of Writers' Associations and Actors in the Book Trade (see GRAFAECL above)²⁰ marked an important step in the restructuring of Benin's literary sector.

The Professional Association of Book Publishers of Benin (*l'Association professionnelle des Éditeurs de livres du Bénin*) and the Association of Professional Booksellers of Benin (*l'Association des Libraires professionnels du Bénin* – ALPB), created in 2019²¹, act as collaboration and capacity-building platforms for book professionals, organizing fairs, workshops and seminars to promote the production and dissemination of local content.

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BOTSWANA



Population **2.5 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **87%**
(2013)



GDP per capita **US\$7,820**
(2023)



Urban population **73%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **165%**



Internet users (2022) **77%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **49**

Titles published **370**

Bookstores **3**

Public libraries **45**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 55,500 inhabitants

Jobs **1,800**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The earliest books from and about Botswana were published in the 1930s by Thomas Mfolo, Isaac Schapera and S.M. Molema. These works documented the socio-cultural context of the country from ethnographic and fictional perspectives. The book sector gained momentum toward the end of the 20th century through influential authors such as Bessie Head and Andrew Sesinyi. Between 2021 and 2023, the sector demonstrated growth through literary works by Unity Dow, Barolong Seboni, and Lauri Kubuitsile, as well as Bettie Knight and Tjawangwa Dema, who write from the diaspora. These works offer critical insights into the socio-economic impacts of colonization, patriarchy and neoliberal policies.

The sector has historically relied on multinational and foreign publishers such as Macmillan Educational Publishers, Heinemann Publishing, Cambridge University Press, Collegium Educational Publishers, Pearson Publishers and Pentagon Publishers. The 2020s have shown growth in the number of local publishers, such as Botsalano Press, Sebilo Books and Medi Publishers. However, the sector is predominantly sustained through the educational book publishing market, subsidized by the Ministry of Education.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

According to the national authority's survey response, there is no institution responsible for coordinating policies to promote the book and publishing sector in Botswana. However, there are institutions responsible for the establishment and management of libraries (the Botswana National Library Service, BNLS), institutions responsible for copyright and intellectual property (the Companies and Intellectual Property Authority, CIPA), and those responsible for the assessment and approval of educational books (the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Department).

The National Library Service Act of 1967 is the instrument that regulates the establishment and administration of library facilities and services throughout the country. The Act provides for the establishment of a fund to advance these services. It also regulates the legal deposit of books published in Botswana. In addition, Botswana follows a public procurement tendering process for the purchase of library books through an affiliated institution, the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA). The sector is regulated mainly by the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act of 2006. This legislation is overseen by the Companies and Intellectual Property Authority (CIPA), a government agency responsible for the protection of intellectual property rights, including literary works.

The Curriculum Development Unit at the Ministry of Education oversees the assessment and approval of educational books. Quality assurance and regulations regarding the publication of books in accessible formats for people with visual impairments are also part of the mandate of this institution. This measure of inclusivity follows Botswana's accession to the Marrakesh Treaty of 2013, which facilitates access to published works for persons who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print-disabled. This was a particularly significant decision given the country's population of 15,000 blind people and 35,000 visually impaired people,¹ who are the intended beneficiaries of these specialised publications.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

According to the national authority, the Botswana Government promotes the book and publishing sector through an annual public investment of US\$100,000 toward the Literary Grant, administered by the National Arts Council of Botswana (NACB).² Research grants are also available through the Office of Research and Development at the University of Botswana for academic staff and co-researchers. CIPA, the office that oversees copyright issues in the country, also disburses funds to book publishers annually.

The funds are collected through the Government Levy on Technical Devices Fund and used for the development of authors, publishers, and the copyright industries.³ For the year 2022, approximately US\$286,000 was disbursed to book and publishing professionals, while funds amounting to US\$363,945 were disbursed in 2023.⁴ Funds are distributed to support the literary ecosystem, including the purchase of materials such as printers, and payments to book illustrators, photographers and editors.⁵

There are no tax exemptions, reduced rates or preferential tax treatments for the book and publishing sector. The same applies to the importation of paper or machinery to produce books. Public purchases of school textbooks for educational institutions are conducted through the Botswana Government's public procurement process. According to the national authority's survey response, a preferential scheme provision is adhered to for women and youth during the public procurement tendering system for purchasing library books.

PUBLISHING

The National Reference Library (NRL) in Gaborone is the country's ISBN agency. This is an arm of the BNLS. Prior authorization is required for the use of copyrighted material. Publishers are bound by the BNLS Act to declare and deposit all book publications. It is mandatory to deposit one copy with the University of Botswana and two copies with the BNLS Board.⁶

Botswana's book publishing landscape is dominated by multinational and foreign publishing companies such as Macmillan, Cambridge University Press, and Collegium Publishers. According to the national authority, in 2023, a total of 49 book publishers were operating in the country. The national authority further indicates that between 2021 and 2023, most publications were in print format, with 406 published in 2021, 411 in 2022, and 370 in 2023.

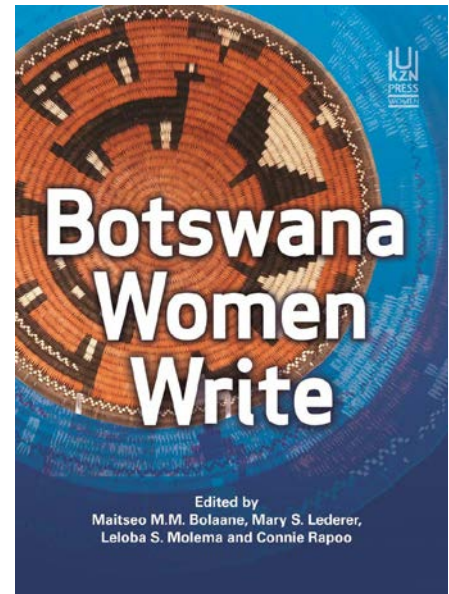
Based on the national authority's survey response, the preferred format among readers is printed books, followed by digital books. Other formats, such as audiobooks, are the least preferred.

The National Bibliography of Botswana (NABOB), published by the Botswana National Public Library, is a comprehensive record of new books, dissertation and abstracts of annual publications in the country. It also provides a list of publishers and printers. However, the collection does not indicate how many books were written or published by women. This critical document specifies the language of book publications, which are predominantly in English, the country's official language. It also includes publications in the national languages of Setswana and Ikalanga.

The sector's output at the University of Botswana is managed through the University Library, the Office of Research and Development (ORD), and the University of Botswana Research Innovation and Scholarship Archive (UBRISA). For 2023, the University of Botswana's Annual Research Report, produced by the ORD, indicates that there were 549 outputs, including books, journal articles and book chapters. The report does not provide detailed disaggregation.⁷

As for educational books, the Ministry of Education secures books for schools through a public procurement and tendering system. With 821 primary schools and 293 secondary schools, the target market for publishing professionals in the country is the educational publishing sector.

The book sector in Botswana is predominantly led by women. Based on consultations with multiple stakeholders, it appears that women occupy managerial roles but not executive positions in the distribution sector. Information gathered through these consultations indicates an employment trend by gender of 70% women, 25% men, and 5% unspecified.



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DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's survey response, the most important distribution channels are physical bookstores. Data from the same survey response also show that there are two physical bookstores dedicated mainly to books in the country, likely referring to the Botswana Book Centre (BBC) established in 1965, and Exclusive Books, which has been operating in the country since 2002. There is, however, a third bookstore based at the University of Botswana, called Van Schaik Bookstore, which sells mainly academic books to staff and students at the university.⁸ All three bookstores are located in Gaborone. Both Exclusive Books and Van Schaik Bookstore also have online bookstores. Procurement at the BBC is 70% local acquisitions,⁹ while Exclusive Books procures 95% imported books from South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.¹⁰ This applies to library acquisitions as well as bookstores.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 1,800 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the national authority's survey response, as of 2023 there were 45 public libraries operating in Botswana, located in different regions, namely Urban, Rural Urban, and Rural Remote. In addition to its role of providing core library and bibliographic services, the BNLS coordinates outreach services such as mobile libraries to remote areas throughout the country. These include educational libraries, specialised libraries, public libraries and the National Reference Library. These are all physical libraries.

Data from the national authority's survey response indicate that there are four festivals and book fairs in the country. These are the Gaborone Book Festival, the Botswana Literature Award, the Continental Book Fair Botswana, and the World Book and Copyright Day. The Gaborone Book Festival was established in 2017.¹¹ This annual event promotes leisure reading. Established on 5 November 2020, the Botswana Literature Award is another annual event that advances the book sector through writers' workshops, writing competitions, book talk shows, book publishing and book distribution.¹² BNLS runs the fourth literary event annually: the World Book and Copyright Day. According to the national authority, the event features book promotions and awards for local authors.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

According to documentary research,¹³ for the year 2023, Botswana's trade activity in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, was characterized primarily by imports, with a total value of US\$4,819,100. The top countries supplying these imports were South Africa, followed by the United Kingdom. The export value was US\$65,060.

TRAINING

According to the national authority's survey response, there are training opportunities on writing and publishing skills at the Bessie Head Heritage Trust (BHHT) and Petlo Literary Arts. The survey also indicates that promotion of the sector is maintained through capacity-building workshops offered by the BNLS, the Ministry for Arts and Culture, and the National Arts Council of Botswana. Training workshops on creative writing skills target the youth. These are held predominantly in Gaborone, but as of 2022, more workshops have been held in other urban centres and remote areas.

As of 2023, there was no creative writing programme at the University of Botswana (UB). However, the University offers courses in playwriting and scriptwriting workshops at the Department of Visual and Performing Arts. UB also houses the Writers' Workshop, a literary training platform for fiction authors. The University of Botswana's Department of Library and Information Studies offers programmes in the book sector. No programmes exist for training writers and publishing professionals, nor are there training programmes focused on digitalization in book publishing, digital marketing, or associated digital activities.

The Tertiary Education Statistics Report (2021) produced by the Human Resource Development Council and Statistics Botswana reflects 'the potential supply of trained and qualified human resources in different spaces and specialisations'.¹⁴ The report offers data on training institutions in the country and their respective qualifications. As the data show, there is no specialised training for human resources for the book sector by any of the tertiary institutions.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Professional associations in the civil society space do exist, and they mobilize the sector's developmental aspirations. They include the Botswana Library Association (BLA), the Botswana Library Consortium (BLC), the Botswana Editors

Forum (BEF), the Gaborone Book Festival, and the Fiction, Academic and Non-Fiction Association of Botswana (FANFABO), previously known as the Writers Association of Botswana (WABO). These organizations promote the rights of practitioners in the book and publishing space, advocate for the sector, and organize conferences on library matters and trends in library services. There is also the Copyright Society of Botswana (COSBOTS), the country's only collective management organization. Regarding stakeholders' participation in policy decision-making, the BNLS Act provides for the establishment of a National Library Service Board, which, according to the national authority, is currently not functional. Board membership comprises practitioners from civil society organizations, predominantly from the book and publishing industry. The Board plays an advisory role to the Minister on matters regarding library services, undertakes administrative functions, and promotes efficient library services in collaboration with library and bibliographical organizations in the country.

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BURKINA FASO



Population **23 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **34%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$883**
(2023)



Urban population **33%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2021) **112%**



Internet users (2022) **20%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **98**

Titles published **222** (2022)

Bookstores **3**

Public libraries **34**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 676,470 inhabitants

Jobs **1,400**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Among the first authors from Burkina Faso, we can highlight Dim-Dolobson Ouedrago whose work *L'Empire du Mogho Naba* was published in 1932. Two years after the country's independence, Nazi Boni published *Crépuscule des temps anciens* in 1962. In addition, the book and publishing sector in Burkina Faso has been marked by committed figures and players who have contributed to its development and visibility. Among them, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, a renowned historian and writer, remains an emblematic figure thanks to his major works, such as *Histoire de l'Afrique Noire*. Authors such as Monique Ilboudo, author of *Le Mal de peau*, and Pierre Claver Ilboudo have enriched the literary landscape.

ABC Éditions, the first local publishing house, was not established until 1988.¹ Before then, the country depended on the technical skills of other countries, notably France, for publications. Publishers such as *Éditions Sankofa & Gurli* and *Le Figuier* play a key role in promoting national authors. Stakeholders such as the Burkina Faso Editors Association (*Association des Éditeurs du Burkina Faso* – ASSEDIF) and events such as the International Book Fair of Ouagadougou (*Foire Internationale du Livre de Ouagadougou* – FILO) play a major role in promoting books.

Burkina Faso's publishing landscape has undergone a recent transformation thanks to the adoption of a law in 2019 that redefined the protection of artistic works and the structuring of the literary sector.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Burkina Faso's Ministry of Communication, Culture, Arts and Tourism is responsible for coordinating policies to promote the book and publishing sector and for implementing them through the Directorate General for Culture and the Arts (DGCA).

The Directorate of Books and Public Reading (DLLP) and the National Library of Burkina Faso (created in 1996) are the two technical directorates within the DGCA responsible for implementing these policies. The National Library plays an essential role in preserving literary heritage and promoting public reading. The same ministry is responsible for copyright and intellectual property through the Burkinabè Office of Copyrights (*Bureau Burkinabè du Droit d'Auteur* – BBDA).

The Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages (MENAPLN) oversees the development of educational programmes and the production of textbooks adapted to the country's socio-cultural realities. The National Centre for School Textbooks and School Supplies (*Centre National des Manuels et Fournitures Scolaires* – CENAMAFS), under the supervision of the MENAPLN, is specifically responsible for publishing, producing and distributing school textbooks.

Law No. 049-2019/AN on the orientation of the book and public reading sector in Burkina Faso,² adopted in 2019, elevates the sector to a national priority. This text aims to structure the entire book supply chain, from creation to distribution, with the active involvement of the State. The latter offers financial and technical support to boost the sector, while promoting works in national languages and French. Digital publishing, the inclusion of Burkinabè works in school curricula, and the organization of events such as literary fairs are among the concrete measures introduced. The law was recently supplemented by Decree No. 2024-0456³, adopted in 2024, which establishes operational guidelines for the book trade and aims to optimize the contribution of the book industry to the national economy by improving the legal framework and professionalizing the industry. In order to work as a book trade operator in Burkina Faso, a licence must be obtained, issued for a renewable period of five years.⁴

These efforts are also based on the legal deposit system introduced in 1996 (Law No. 042/96/ADP), now governed by the new law of 2019, which requires publications to be kept with the National Library. Although still in the deployment phase, the integration of the digital repository is a modern response to technological change, including electronic content in this approach to preservation.

Law No. 048-2019/AN was also adopted in 2019. It replaced the former Law No. 032/AN 1999 on the protection of literary and artistic property in Burkina Faso. The new law gives creators moral and economic rights over their works, with protection extended to 70 years after their death. This text applies to a wide variety of cultural expressions, including literature, audiovisual works and traditional cultural heritage. As well as guaranteeing fair remuneration for creators and performers, the law provides a framework for rights management to encourage the fair exploitation of works.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Books are freely priced in Burkina Faso. Book sales are exempt from VAT, but the inputs required to produce them are still taxed.

The national authority's response to the survey indicated an approximate investment of US\$416,500 in the book and publishing sector through FILO, the activity programmes of the Department of Books and Public Reading and the National Library. In addition, the response mentions subsidies from the Ministry of Culture through the BBDA and the *Comité d'Évaluation des Requêtes de Subvention* (CERS), without indicating the amount, as well as the granting of travel tickets by the Ministry of Culture to attend international book fairs and festivals.

In 2014, a national strategy for the production of teaching materials was put in place to strengthen the production chain.

MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION, DE LA CULTURE, DES ARTS ET DU TOURISME

FILO

FOIRE INTERNATIONALE DU LIVRE DE OUAGADOUGOU 17^e Edition

Thème
LES OPPORTUNITÉS DU NUMÉRIQUE POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DE L'INDUSTRIE DU LIVRE AU BURKINA FASO

> 23 au 26 Nov. 2023
Pavillon Soleil levant (SIAO)

AU PROGRAMME

- Expositions-ventes de livres
- Atelier d'écriture pour les jeunes
- Compétitions des olympiades littéraires
- Grand Prix du Livre
- Prix du meilleur éditeur
- Conférences, panels, communications, tables-rondes, dédicaces
- Espace-enfants.

PAYS INVITÉ D'HONNEUR > TCHAD

Foire Internationale du Livre de Ouagadougou – FILO / © MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION, DE LA CULTURE, DES ARTS ET DU TOURISME

More recently, following the MENAPLN's initiatives for a major curricular reform aimed at modernizing education at all levels, a Strategic Plan (2021-2025) for the Development of Basic and Secondary Education (PSDEBS) provides for the local production of these resources in order to improve the book/pupil ratio to a sufficient degree and within a reasonable time frame. A textbook conservation strategy and measures to improve distribution are also under consideration.⁵ Within this framework, calls for tender are regularly launched, leading to significant contracts worth several million dollars, in line with the objectives of strengthening the education system and integrating content adapted to local needs.

PUBLISHING

There is no ISBN agency in Burkina Faso. However, according to the national authority's response to the survey, steps are being taken to set up an ISBN issuing centre at the National Library.

The national authority's response to the survey indicates a total of 98 publishers in Burkina Faso in 2023. The most active publishing houses include *Les Éditions l'Harmattan Burkina*, *Éditions CEPRODIF*, *Éditions La Blancheur*, *Éditions Sankofa & Gurli* or *Le Figuier*, *Éditions du Lac* and *Promolangues*. There are also around twenty young publishing houses specialising in comics, schoolbooks and, above all, self-publishing.⁶

Documentary sources indicate a production of 222 titles in 2022.⁷ In terms of languages of publication, French, the official language, plays a predominant role in literary production. Nevertheless, documentary research shows that efforts are emerging to integrate national languages such as Mooré, Jula and Fulfuldé, although this production is still in the minority.⁸

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The national authority's response to the survey indicates the existence of two physical bookshops, while documentary research identifies three.⁹ It also shows that the most popular sales channels are retail outlets (department stores, stationery shops, supermarkets, etc.), followed by book fairs and literary festivals. Book distribution is based on three main channels: conventional bookshops, bookshops on the ground (librairies par terre)¹⁰ and literary events such as FILO.

Among the bookshops is *Mercury*, which has several outlets in the country and aims to become the first bookshop in sub-Saharan Africa to sell books entirely via its website. However, distribution remains concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural regions underserved.

In terms of employment, based on all available data and additional research, an estimated 1,400 people were employed in the sector in 2023.

In the area of book promotion, a new partnership was signed on 7 November 2024 between the Burkinabè online media platform Lefaso.net and *Mercury* to promote Burkina Faso's literary output.

The BBDA protects creators from the problems of photocopying and counterfeiting, which affect mainly school textbooks. With local production still insufficient, ASSEDIF is calling for greater collaboration between the State and private publishers.¹¹ According to the local press,¹² the BBDA is modernizing its tools – such as

geolocation of exhibitors and electronic payments – to improve the collection of royalties and ensure that authors are fairly remunerated.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

The National Centre of Reading and Cultural Animation (*Centre National de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle* – CENALAC), set up in 2006 by the government of Burkina Faso, has initiated the structuring of public reading in Burkina Faso and actively organizes the operation of 34 Public Reading and Cultural Action Centres (*Centres de Lecture Publique et d'Actions Culturelles* – CELPAC) throughout the country. CENALAC has an annual budget of 20 million CFA francs (around 30,000 euros) for the purchase of books.¹³

The national authority's response to the survey refers to an analysis on reading habits conducted by the Higher National School of Information and Library Sciences (*École Nationale Supérieure des Sciences de l'Information et des Bibliothèques* – Enssib) in 2006,¹⁴ which indicates that the absence of libraries in rural areas is a major obstacle in promoting reading. This study emphasizes that in urban areas competition from other forms of entertainment tends to divert the public's attention away from books.

Paper remains the dominant medium in Burkina Faso, particularly for school textbooks and literary works. However, documentary research suggests that the digital format is gaining ground, with initiatives to digitize educational content, making it available as ePub and PDF files for better accessibility.¹⁵

With regard to the promotion of reading, the national authority's response to the survey indicates the existence of 3 major book fairs and festivals in Burkina Faso. Among them is the Ouagadougou International Book Fair (*Salon International du Livre de Ouagadougou* – FILO), launched in 2000. The country's main annual

literary event, it had held seventeen editions up to 2023, promoting national and African literary production with exhibitions, workshops and conferences. The International Book and Didactic Material Fair (*Foire Internationale du Livre et du Matériel Didactique de Ouagadougou* – FILIDO) places particular emphasis on educational books and teaching materials, targeting teachers and educational institutions. The first edition of the International Women's Book Fair of Ouagadougou (*Salon International Féminin du Livre de Ouagadougou* – SIFLO) was being planned for 2024.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2023, the total value of book sector imports, including printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials amounted to approximately US\$1,966,330. The main source of imports is France. Exports of similar goods from Burkina Faso totalled US\$33,090.¹⁶ Sales of books imported from France thus account for a substantial portion of total sales. According to professionals in the sector, this figure reaches around 85% in Burkina Faso.¹⁷

TRAINING

Although there does not appear to be any specific training dedicated to the publishing profession, the national authority's response to the survey indicates that training in librarianship, archiving and documentation is available in both public and private higher education institutes. In addition, every two years CENALAC offers five-day training courses on library management, with a focus on the children's section. These training courses, aimed primarily at network coordinators, are also open to staff from community libraries. Moreover, practical workshops on writing and publishing techniques are regularly incorporated into events such as FILO, which includes training activities for authors and publishers.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The professional associations stand out for their constant advocacy for the development of the book and publishing sector in Burkina Faso. Among the key stakeholders, ASSEDIF, which has around ten members, plays a central role in defending the interests of publishers and raising awareness among the authorities of the importance of books in national culture and education. *Mots d'Elles*, an association of women writers in Burkina Faso, was founded in November 2021 to promote high-quality national literature and defend women's rights. It organizes sales exhibitions, such as *Dewtere*, and takes part in literary events such as FILO, showcasing the works of Burkinabè authors.

There is also the Collective Network Group of Book Stakeholders (*Groupe de Réseau Associatif des Acteurs du Livre* – GRAAL), identified by the cultural authorities as a unifying force. This network brings together diverse stakeholders across the book supply chain, such as publishers, booksellers, librarians and even writers, with the aim of promoting collaboration, training and the defence of the rights of professionals in the sector.

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BURUNDI



Population **13.7 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **76%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$193**
(2023)



Urban population **15%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **58%**



Internet users (2022) **11%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **25**

Titles published **50**

Bookstores **2**

Public libraries **58**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 236,200 inhabitants

Jobs **500**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Publishing houses in Burundi began to emerge around the time of the country's independence in 1962, within the framework of the educational activities of religious institutions. In 1961, Librairie Saint-Paul was created, selling books, periodicals and stationery. The University of Burundi, which was founded in 1964, did not have a dedicated publishing entity, but it did have a *Presses et Publication* department offering content focused primarily on academic news.

In 1977, the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture established the Centre of Burundian Civilization (*Centre de Civilisation Burundaise*), which published the magazine *Culture et Société* for over three decades. Following the civil war (1993–2005), publishing activities experienced a revival during the 2010s, marked by the emergence of publishing houses such as Bandima, Iwacu and Soma.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of East African Community Affairs, Youth, Sports and Culture is responsible for coordinating policies and measures related to the book and publishing sector in Burundi. It operates through the Directorate of Culture and three specialised administrative bodies:¹ the Burundian Centre for Reading and Cultural Activities (*Centre Burundais pour la Lecture et l'Animation Culturelle* – CEBULAC), established in October 2007;² which is responsible for formulating and implementing government policy on public reading, the promotion of literary creativity and the support of community libraries; the Burundian Copyright Office (*Office Burundais des Droits d'Auteur* – OBDA), set up in September 2011,³ which contributes to the protection of copyright and oversees the registration of literary works; and the Maison de la Culture, founded in 2017, which protects and promotes Rundi literature. The Ministry also manages the operations of the National Library.

With regard to schoolbooks, the materials used in basic and post-basic education are published by pedagogical offices operating through the Pedagogical Production Management (*Régie de Production Pédagogique* – RPP), which functions as a publishing house.

The legal framework for the book sector is limited to Law No. 1/021 of December 30, 2005 on the protection of copyright and related rights.⁴

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

There are no tax exemptions, reduced rates, or fiscal incentives applicable to the book and publishing sector, as confirmed by the national authority's response to the survey. The Cultural Policy of Burundi, which dates back to 2007 and the update of which been expected since 2022, encourages the promotion of books, notably by recommending the creation of literary prizes to encourage writing.⁵ The adoption of a national book policy also features among the key recommendations of the most recent National Conference on Culture,⁶ which took place in 2022.

The implementation of the Burundian government's book procurement strategy, particularly for textbooks, relies on financial support from international organisations and development partners, most notably UNICEF⁷ and the World Bank.⁸ This strategy involves centralised procurement by the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, which prints textbooks through RPP. It also emphasises the preference for local production over imports to stimulate the national economy, and the distribution of free books in public schools.

PUBLISHING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there is no national ISBN agency. Books published in Burundi obtain ISBNs primarily from the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (*Agence Francophone pour la Numérotation Internationale du Livre* – AFNIL).

The introduction of free basic education in 2005 led to a significant increase in the school population,⁹ creating strong demand for educational materials.

In the survey, the national authority reports the existence of 25 publishing houses in Burundi, including Éditions Iwacu and Éditions Gusoma – the latter being the only publisher registered with the OBDA. Consultations indicate that few publishers and authors routinely register literary works with the OBDA, making it impossible to obtain reliable data.¹⁰ Since its creation in 2011, the OBDA has registered only 34 works by 20 different authors. Despite this lack of data, we estimate that approximately 50 titles were published in 2023.

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that print remains the predominant publishing format.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

There are currently two functioning bookshops in Burundi: Librairie Saint Paul and Librairie Savoir Plus, Faire Plus, both located in Bujumbura. Their financial viability is supported through the sale of stationery.

The Ministry responsible for the Culture Sector occasionally procures books to supply the Reading and Cultural Event Centres (*Centres de lecture et d'animation culturelle* – CLAC).

Book distribution and the promotion of Burundian authors are based primarily on individual efforts, with direct sales constituting the main channel. Books are also promoted through literary broadcasts on local media, as well as through literary events in public spaces dedicated to reading, including the Institut Français du Burundi, the 'American Corners'¹¹ and the Alliance Franco-Burundaise in Gitega.

In terms of employment, the response to the national authority's survey indicates that the sector employed 137 people in 2023, including 65 women (44.5%). However, our estimates, based on all

available data and additional research, suggest that approximately 478 people were employed in the sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

In addition to the National Library, Burundi has 57 CLAC throughout the country. In 2023, CEBULAC reported that 338,461 readers visited these centres, of whom nearly 43% were women – an average of 28,250 readers per month. CEBULAC also lends books on a rotating basis to schools across the country to give them access to reading materials.

Updated data on attendance at the Institut Français du Burundi could not be obtained. However, the institution maintains the country's largest collection of reading materials, with close to 30,000 items. In Gitega, the Alliance Franco-Burundaise offers 4,000 books.¹²

Also noteworthy is the contribution of Libraries Without Borders, which promotes digital reading through its "Ideas Box"¹³ mobile "pop-up" multimedia centres, deployed in three universities in Bujumbura, Gitega and Ngozi¹⁴ to support student mobility.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

In the absence of recent official data, available documentary research indicates that Burundi's commercial activity in the book sector in 2022 – including printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials – was primarily import-driven, with imports amounting to US\$1,545,620. The main source countries were France and Canada. Exports were recorded at US\$4,983.¹⁵

TRAINING

There are no training programmes dedicated specifically to professions in the book sector in Burundi. Technical expertise such as graphic design and proofreading is sourced from other fields, notably journalism.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

There are two professional associations: the Burundi Writers Association (*Association des Écrivains du Burundi*), created in 1982, and the Burundi Writers and Book Promoters Association (*Association Burundaise des Écrivains et Promoteurs du Livre*), created in 1995.



Library of Nyakibingo © IWACO, Antoine Kaburahe

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CABO VERDE



Population **0.5 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **91%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$4,851**
(2023)



Urban population **68%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **99%**



Internet users (2022) **72%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **25**

Titles published **30**

Bookstores **17**

Public libraries **80**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 6,250 inhabitants

Jobs **500**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After Cabo Verde's independence in 1975, education and culture became key pillars of Cabo Verde's national development. However, access to books was limited to a few public access points operating mainly in urban areas and under the supervision of the Cape Verdean Book Institute (*Instituto Caboverdiano do Livro*).

During the 1990s and 2000s, national efforts were made to revitalize central libraries such as the Municipal Library of São Vicente (in 1996) and the National Library of Cabo Verde in Praia (in 1999). Additionally, several municipal libraries were created, and book fairs were promoted as opportunities to purchase books at affordable prices across various fields of knowledge.

Another significant effort to promote books in Cabo Verde was the reissue of classic works of Cabo Verdean literature that had been out of print for many years. One such work was *Chuva Braba* by Manuel Lopes. First published in 1956, it was reissued in 2018 and is now regarded as a classic of Cabo Verdean literature. Manuel Lopes, who was born on the island of Santo Antão, was one of the founders of the cultural and literary movement known by the name of 'Claridade'. *Chiquinho*, by Baltasar Lopes da Silva, also a founder of Claridade, was reissued in 2022.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Culture and Creative Industries is responsible for coordinating policies and initiatives related to the book and publishing sector. It carries out much of this work through the National Library. In the field of education, operating through the Cabo Verdean Foundation for School Social Action (*Fundação Cabo-verdiana de Acção Social Escolar* – FICASE), the Ministry of Education is responsible for overseeing the development and evaluation of, and the financial support for, textbook production and distribution.¹

Regarding copyright and intellectual property rights, the *Instituto de Gestão da Qualidade e da Propriedade Intelectual* (Institute of Quality and Intellectual Property Management), established in 2014, holds regulatory power over copyright in Cabo Verde. It authorizes associations and cooperatives to engage in collective copyright management. At present, there are two recognized collective management organizations in the country: the Cabo Verdean Society of Authors (*Sociedade Caboverdiana de Autores* – SOCA) and the Cabo Verdean Society of Music (*Sociedade Cabo-Verdiana de Música*).

The main legislation governing copyright and related rights is the Copyright and Related Rights Law, first approved through Legislative Decree No. 1/2009 and later amended through Legislative Decree No. 2/2017. Compensation for private copying, established by Law No. 118/VIII/2016 and revised by Law No. 108/IX/2020, is a significant source of funding for authors and publishers. The mandatory legal deposit of publications is legislated by Law No. 73/VII/2010, enacted in 2010.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The government programme for the book sector includes the promotion of literature, publications and libraries, with the aim of stimulating public reading and reinforcing editorial policy. Within this framework, a National Reading Plan was adopted in 2022, which for the first time provided recommended reading lists categorized by age group. The Plan aspires to make books accessible to everyone regardless of their economic circumstances,² and serves as a framework through which the National Library can implement a variety of activities aimed at promoting books and reading.

After almost a decade of publishing inactivity, the National Library resumed its publishing efforts, reissuing nine classic works of Cabo Verdean literature over a four-year period.

The Library has also implemented significant price reductions – of up to 75 per cent – for classic Cabo Verdean literary works commonly studied in schools.³

In terms of fiscal policy, a fixed book-pricing system exists for school textbooks.⁴ Tax exemptions and preferential tax treatment are available to institutions recognized as serving the public interest. According to the national authority's response to the survey, books are exempt from customs duties.

Many of the book-promotion activities carried out in Cabo Verde have been made possible through international donations and cooperation agreements, particularly with Portugal. The national authority's survey response notes that the International Institute of the Portuguese Language provides scholarships or grants for authors.

While policy development and public measures aimed at inclusion are still in the early stages, some progress has been made. One example is the publication of Cabo Verde's first series of children's books in Braille, *Tufas, Princesa Crioula*, by Odair Varela, which reflects an effort to make literature accessible to visually impaired readers.

PUBLISHING

In Cabo Verde, the attribution of ISBNs is the responsibility of the National Library, as established in law. In practice, however, requests for ISBNs are often processed through a Portuguese institution, the Portuguese National ISBN Agency (*Agência Nacional de ISBN*).

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there were 25 book publishers operating in Cabo Verde in 2023. The main ones include the *Imprensa Nacional de Cabo Verde* (INCV), established in 1836, which traces its origins to the early days of the Cape Verdean press and is the publisher reissuing classic works of Cape Verdean literature; *Ilhéu Editora*, founded in 1992 on the island of São Vicente and specialising in literary

works by Cabo Verdean authors and publications addressing the country's culture and history; and *Livraria Pedro Cardoso*, established in 2014, a small bookstore that doubles as a publisher. It is estimated that 30 titles were published in Cabo Verde in 2023.⁵

Literary awards have emerged as an important source of funding, providing direct financial support for authors and publishers. The *Prémio BCA Corsino Fortes*, established in 2016, is a biennial award recognizing unpublished works in either prose or verse by Cabo Verdean authors. It is organized by the Cabo Verdean Academy of Letters in partnership with Banco Comercial do Atlântico, and was awarded for the second time in 2019.⁶ The *Arnaldo França Literary Prize*, also established in 2016, is a joint initiative of the National Printing Office of Cabo Verde (*Imprensa Nacional de Cabo Verde*) and its Portuguese counterpart, the National Printing Office and Mint (*Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda*). The award promotes literary talent and the Portuguese language in Cabo Verde, and honours the legacy of Arnaldo França, a prominent figure in Cabo Verdean literature and culture. Other awards include the *Prémio BAI de Literatura*, launched in 2022, and the *Prémio Literário Infantojuvenil Manuel Lopes*, introduced in 2024.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's survey response, there are currently 12 physical bookstores in Cabo Verde dedicated exclusively to books. One notable example is the bookstore named *Livraria do Centro Cultural do Mindelo*, which is owned by the National Library. There were also five digital bookstores operating in the country in 2023.

Among the various private bookstores operating in Cabo Verde, several stand out for their contributions to the literary scene. On the island of Santiago, *Livraria Nhô Eugénio*, founded in 2008, promotes local authors while hosting literary events and other cultural activities aimed at fostering a vibrant literary community in Praia. The island of São Vicente has three well-known bookstores: *Livraria Semente*, *Livraria Terra Nova* and *Livraria Pax*. Additionally, *Livraria Sousa Lda.*, which operates on the island of Sal, offers a range of materials including books and stationery.

Some publishers, such as *SOCA Editora*, rely on more informal sales networks, including participation in book fairs held in various municipalities across Cabo Verde and in other countries.



SOCA Editora also uses its visits to different municipalities, islands and international destinations as opportunities to promote and sell the books published by its members.

The National Library, acting on behalf of the Ministry of Culture and Creative Industries, has established a partnership with the Cabo Verde Post Office to facilitate the distribution of literary classics and other reading considered essential.⁷ These materials are offered at affordable prices, and are made accessible throughout the islands and within the Cabo Verdean diaspora. Another example of a public distribution network is the Cape Verdean Foundation for School Social Action (FICASE), which ensures the distribution of textbooks to students from families living in poverty and extreme poverty.

Based on the national authority's response to the survey, literary festivals and book fairs are considered the most significant sales channels in Cabo Verde. The same source reveals that 30 book fairs were held in Cabo Verde in 2023. The Morabeza Cabo Verde Literary Fair, founded in 2017, has become a major platform for showcasing and exhibiting books. The fair provides opportunities for interactions with internationally renowned authors; offers a range of debates, training sessions and literary workshops; and fosters both national and international partnerships.

In terms of employment in the sector, our estimates – based on all available data and complementary research – add up to approximately 500 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

While the extent of book piracy in Cabo Verde is not officially documented, it is widely recognized by both authors and academics as a serious concern within the country.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the national authority's survey response, there were 80 public libraries operating in the country in 2023.

As part of their Strategic Cooperation Programme for 2022–2026, Portugal and Cabo Verde signed a partnership agreement to implement a School Libraries Network. This initiative aims to promote education and literacy by providing schools across the archipelago with resources and support.⁸

Within the framework of the National Reading Plan, the National Library organizes summer library courses and reading competitions designed specifically for children and young people, including the National Reading Competition (*Concurso Nacional de Leitura*).

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that, for the year 2023, the total value of imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$1,417,704; while the value of exports amounted to US\$1,294.⁹ The national authority's survey response reports that Portugal is the primary country from which Cabo Verde imports books, whereas Cabo Verde exports books mostly to Portugal and the United States of America.

TRAINING

Apart from university courses in literary studies, there are no study programmes related to the book and publishing sector in Cabo Verde.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Cape Verdean Society of Authors (SOCA) is a private, nonprofit legal entity with an associative structure and voluntary membership. Dedicated to defending and protecting copyright, the organization was founded in Praia in 2005 and currently has around 500 members. One of its most important publications is *Soca Magazine*.

The Cape Verdean Academy of Letters was established in 2013 and had 40 members at that time. There is also the Associação de Escritores de Cabo Verde (Cabo Verde Writers Association), which is currently inactive.

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CAMEROON



Population **28.4 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **78%**
(2020)



GDP per capita **US\$1,737**
(2023)



Urban population **59%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **83%**



Internet users (2022) **44%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **52**

Titles published **262**

Bookstores **30**

Public libraries **41**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 692,700 inhabitants

Jobs **2,500**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After the French government took control of the National Printing Office – replacing missionary oversight that had focused on religious publications – Cameroon’s publishing sector experienced significant growth starting in 1923.¹ The country’s independence in 1960 marked a turning point, with the creation of the Publishing and Production Centre for Education and Research (*Centre d’Édition et de Production pour l’Enseignement et la Recherche* – CEPER) in 1961 and faith-based publishing houses such as Éditions CLE in 1963. By the 1970s, these publishers were competing with Franco-British multinational companies. The economic crisis of the 1980s and the privatization of CEPER spurred the rise of local private publishers in the 1990s.

Iconic literature figures include Ferdinand Oyono and Mongo Beti, two Cameroonian authors ranked among the 100 best African writers of the twentieth century² by the Department of African Studies at Colombia University (USA). They left a lasting mark on the literary scene with works denouncing social injustice.

In 1975, the Regional Centre for Book Promotion in Africa (*Centre Régional de Promotion du Livre en Afrique* – CREPLA) was established in Cameroon to promote books at the regional level. Initially active in several countries, the organization gradually scaled back its operations to focus solely on Cameroon by the late 1980s.

Public libraries and the Yaoundé International Book Fair (*Salon International de l’Industrie du Livre de Yaoundé* – SILY) play a crucial role in promoting reading. Since 2000, the sector has been driven by the growth of local publishers and government policies – such as the 2021 Law on the Organization and Promotion of the Book Industry in Cameroon – which have helped to structure and strengthen the industry.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Arts and Culture oversees the book and publishing sector, and since 2001 has included a Book and Reading Directorate. However, textbooks fall under the joint authority of the Ministry of Basic Education and the Ministry of Secondary Education. A specialised body,³ the National Council for the Approval of Textbooks and Teaching Materials, ensures that educational books comply with school curricula and grants them official approval.

Law No. 2021/024, on the Organization and Promotion of the Book Industry in Cameroon, was passed in 2021. The law allowed for the reorganization of the book value chain by introducing regulations and incentives to strengthen the sector. These initiatives are part of a national policy to professionalize the publishing industry and promote local literary production.

Law No. 2000/005 on copyright and related rights grants creators both moral rights and economic rights. Additionally, legal deposit legislation⁴ requires publishers to submit six copies of their works to the National Library upon public release, with penalties for non-compliance. Law No. 2020/011 of 2020⁵ provides a legal framework for the formation and operation of artistic and cultural associations, supporting their development through professional federations, including those dedicated to books and publishing, across different administrative levels.

Since 2003, the Civil Society for the Rights of Literature and the Performing Arts (*Société Civile des Droits de la Littérature et des Arts Dramatiques*)⁶ has served as the collective management organization responsible for protecting literary and artistic works, collecting and distributing royalties, and defending the interests of its members.

MINAC

SILLY
Salon International de l'Industrie du Livre de Yaoundé

ARI

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Rejoignez vous à nous

Du 12 au 15 Mars 2025
l'Esplanade du musée national à Yaoundé

LE LIVRE,
Pilier du Développement.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

According to the national authority's response to the survey, the 2021 Law on the Organization of the Book Industry introduced a fixed-price policy. However, this policy applies only to textbooks approved by the National Council for Approval. All other books remain subject to free-market pricing. Fiscally, books are exempt from VAT,⁷ and are therefore classified as essential goods. This measure aims to boost production and improve access to culture.

Decree No. 2001/389 of 5 December 2001 established a special appropriation

account to support cultural policy, allocating \$1.6 million annually, with a part of the funds designated for literary competitions and book industry prizes.

Public investment in the book sector also focuses on building public libraries. Additionally, in education, data from the Education Reform Support Project in Cameroon show that public spending on essential textbooks – i.e. those covering core subjects – amounted to US\$4.82 million in 2021, US\$5.33 million in 2022 and US\$5.02 million in 2023, or a total of US\$15.17 million over the three-year period.

PUBLISHING

Cameroon has maintained a national ISBN agency, affiliated with the Ministry of Arts and Culture, for the past 20 years. In its response to the survey, the national authority estimated that the book and publishing sector employed 2,500 people in 2023. Although 448 publishers were officially registered with the national authority, only around 50 maintained regular operations. In 2023, according to the legal deposit registry data, only 52 publishers submitted deposits, compared to 62 in 2022 and 66 in 2021.

Between 2021 and 2023, the registry recorded 953 publications, including books and periodicals, with a steady decline in deposits over time: 389 in 2021, 302 in 2022, and 262 in 2023. Of these publications, 80% were educational or school textbooks, while only 10% were university-level books. Scientific publications remain virtually non-existent, despite the increasing role of research in the development of the academic sector. Among the most active local publishers are Éditions Ifrikiya, Éditions Proximité, Presses Universitaires d'Afrique, Éditions Sopecam, Éditions Afrédit and Éditions NMI Éducation.

Successive government reforms have progressively rebalanced the sector in favour of local publishers, who were historically marginalized in educational book production. Previously, local publishers accounted for only 10% of the market, with 90% dominated by private or faith-based multinational companies. Today, textbook publishing is controlled mainly by local players, who now account for over 80% of the market, with a significant impact in terms of cost, accessibility and availability.⁸

In terms of languages, English is the predominant language, accounting for 441 published books, followed by French (282) and local languages (106) between 2021 and 2023. This distribution reflects the country's sociolinguistic landscape while also underscoring the growth potential for publications in local languages.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Although no official data are available on the number of books sold or revenue generated, the national authority stated in its survey response that retail outlets constitute the primary distribution network, followed by physical bookstores, direct sales, and book fairs and festivals. The National Union of Booksellers and Stationers of Cameroon (*Syndicat National des Libraires et Papetiers du Cameroun*) reports approximately 300 members, yet additional research suggests that only about 30 outlets engage exclusively or primarily in book sales.

The book distribution sector has been in turmoil since the final liquidation of Messageries de la Presse in 2020.⁹ Previously a cornerstone of the commercial network, its closure left a void in a sector already weakened by recurrent insolvency crises. Publishers have thus turned to alternative solutions such as self-distribution and street vending, which remain precarious yet essential in the absence of a structured distribution network. A number of digital platforms are emerging, such as the AfriBookHub¹⁰ website, launched in 2021.

In 2023, the Association of Book Industry Promoters (*Association des Promoteurs de l'Industrie du Livre – APIL*) organized the first SILY. This event seeks to promote a culture of reading and foster collaboration among stakeholders in the book supply chain. The fair has been held three times – in 2023, 2024 and 2025.

To combat counterfeiting, the 2000 Copyright Law established a private copying levy, imposing a 5% fee on reprographic equipment, payable by manufacturers or importers. The revenue generated from this levy serves as partial compensation for copyright holders affected by unauthorized reproduction.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

Reading habits remain largely undocumented, owing to a lack of comprehensive studies on readers' preferences. According to the national authority's survey response, print formats remain dominant, particularly in the school and academic sectors, although digital books and audiobooks are gradually gaining traction.

According to the national authority's response to the survey, Cameroon has 41 public libraries, including 13 Reading and Cultural Event Centres (*Centres de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle – CLACs*), which receive support from the International Organisation of La Francophonie. However, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions reported 203 public libraries in 2021.¹¹

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there are five book fairs and literary festivals in Cameroon. These include the SILY, the Douala International Literature Festival, launched in 2010, the Buea Book Festival, held since 2015, the Garoua Book Fair, established in 2017, with a focus on literature in local languages, and the Maroua Literary Festival, launched in 2019, aimed at promoting reading and writing within local communities. Additionally, the Cameroon Library Week, held in Yaoundé in 2023, convened book industry professionals to promote the political, social, cultural and economic roles of libraries.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

According to documentary research, Cameroon's book imports in 2021 amounted to US\$12,941,940, while exports totalled US\$17,511.¹² France remains the primary source of book imports, as confirmed by data from the Centrale de l'Édition,¹³ positioning Cameroon as the second-largest importer of French books on the African continent.

TRAINING

At the University of Yaoundé II, the Higher School of Information and Communication Science and Technology (*Université de Yaoundé II, l'École Supérieure des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information et de la Communication*) has been offering a publishing programme within its Department of Publishing and Graphic Arts since 1991.

At the University of Yaoundé I, the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Humanities¹⁴ offers specialised courses as part of its Master programme, with a core unit dedicated to the book, documentation and publishing professions.

The Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training also plays a role in developing more structured vocational training programmes by publishing guidelines and standards aligned with current market needs. One such standard, entitled GP INFOGRAPHIE.pdf, promotes the establishment of certified training centres in fields such as graphic design, website management, e-marketing and digital publishing.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Association of Cameroonian Poets and Writers (*Association des Poètes et Écrivains Camerounais -APEC*), founded in 1960, played a pivotal role in promoting Cameroonian literature before becoming inactive for nearly 28 years, starting in the 1990s.¹⁵ Revived in 2016 under the initiative of the Ministry of Arts and Culture, APEC has since been engaged in initiatives such as annual literary showcase events, exhibitions and interactive sessions with authors.

The Association of Librarians, Archivists, Documentalists and Museographers of Cameroon (*Association des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes, Documentalistes et Muséographes du Cameroun*)¹⁶ has been active since 1973 and is affiliated with international networks.

The Association of Publishers (Association des Éditeurs) was founded in 1997. It played a key role in organizing the country's book fairs until they were taken over by the Ministry of Culture in 2013.

The National Union of Booksellers and Stationers of Cameroon (Syndicat National des Libraires et Papetiers du Cameroun), which has existed since 1993, has 300 members.¹⁷

The Association of Book Industry Promoters (*Association des Promoteurs de l'Industrie du Livre*), created in 2019, aims to foster the development of the book sector in Cameroon, promote literary culture, and organize events such as the Yaoundé International Fair of the Book Industry (*Salon International de l'Industrie du Livre de Yaoundé*).

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CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



Population **5.2 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **37%**
(2020)



GDP per capita **US\$496**
(2023)



Urban population **44%**
(2023)



Mobile phone subscription (2021) **34%**



Internet users (2021) **11%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **3**

Titles published **34**

Bookstores **0**

Public libraries **5**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 1 million inhabitants

Jobs **200**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Writer Pierre Makombo Banboté was one of the pioneers of literature in the Central African Republic with his book entitled *La Poésie est dans l'histoire*, published in 1962. In the 1990s, three Central African writers had their works included in school curricula: Étienne Goyémidé, with his book entitled *Le dernier survivant de la caravane*, and Pierre Sammy-Mackmoy, with his book entitled *L'odyssée de Mongou*. The third, Bertrand Ndokobanda, has contributed to the writing of several educational works for school curricula, with *Édicef*. Since 2015, comic strip artist Didier Kassaï, with his comic strip *Tempête sur Bangui*, has established himself as a reference for reading enthusiasts in Bangui.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The book sector is coordinated by the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism through the Directorate for Cultural Action and Public Reading, the National Library and the National Centre for Public Reading and Cultural Activities (*Bibliothèque nationale et le Centre national de la lecture publique et d'animation Culturelle*). The institution responsible for evaluating and approving educational and schoolbooks is the National Institute of Pedagogical Research and Animation (*Institut National de Recherche et d'Animation Pédagogique* – INRAP).

The main regulatory or legal provisions applicable to the book and publishing sector are Law 20.020 on copyright and related rights, adopted in 2020, and Decree 17.314 on the creation, organization and operation of the National Centre for Public Reading and Cultural Activities (*Centre National de Lecture Publique et d'Animation Culturelle* – CENALEPAC).

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

According to the national authority's response to the survey, printed books, documents, publications and microfilms

intended for public cultural institutions are admitted free of import and export duties and taxes.

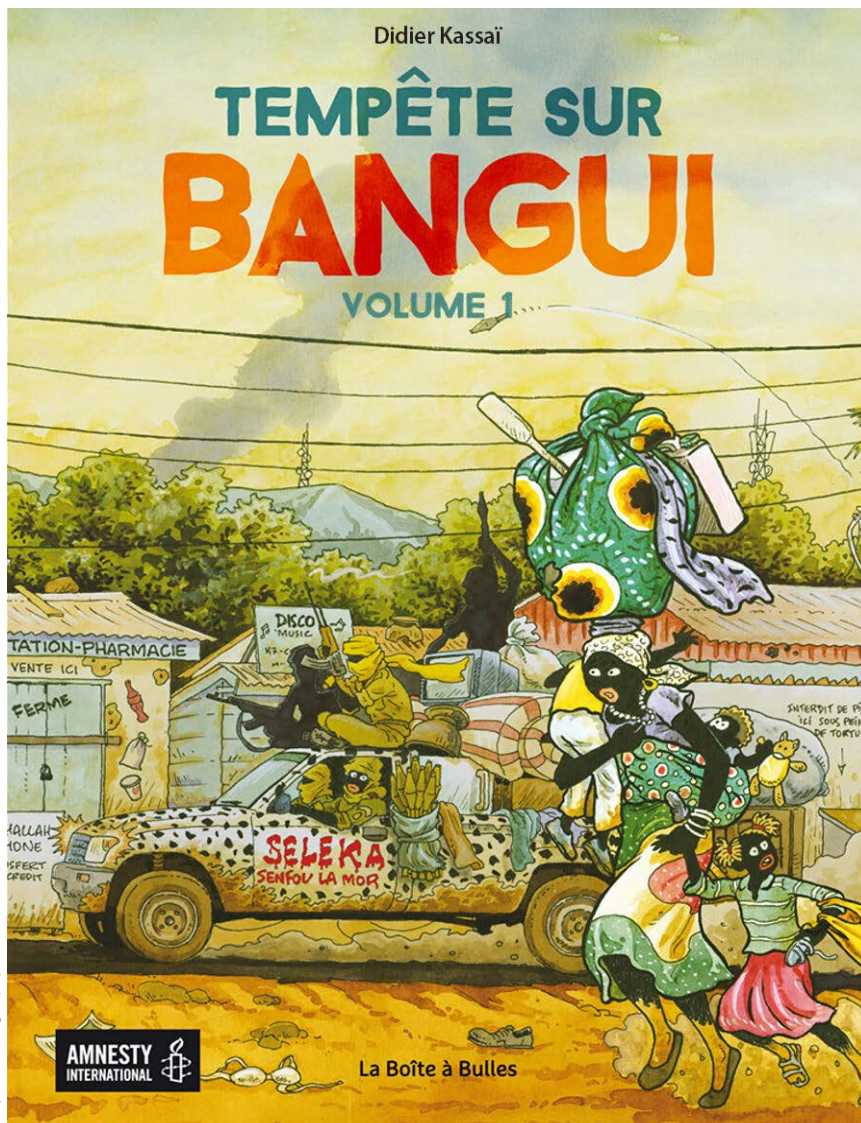
The national authority has not provided any data concerning financial incentives or funding mechanisms, public subsidies or public investments in support of the book and publishing sector. However, *Éditions Oubangui's* activity reports for the *Alliance française de Bangui*¹ show that it provides technical support for literary activities and even sells books during the Christmas market organized by the *Alliance française de Bangui* every December. In addition to this support from the *Alliance française de Bangui*, there is also occasional support from the government for the organization of certain activities or the participation of writers in international activities, such as the celebration of the centenary of the Batouala book in 2021 by the Central African Writers' Association (*Association des Écrivains Centrafricains*).

Regarding government policy on the purchase of books, including schoolbooks, the national authority did not provide any data in its response to the survey. However, it should be noted that the government has a monopoly on the design, approval, reproduction and distribution of schoolbooks through INRAP. School books are subsidized and excluded from sale. Just over €6 million was allocated by the government to Hachette Livre International and other publishers for the production of French, physics and maths textbooks in 2021.² Local publishers have no share in the schoolbook production or co-publishing market.

PUBLISHING

The Central African Republic does not have an ISBN agency. ISBN identification numbers are generally requested from the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (*Agence Francophone pour la Numérotation Internationale du Livre* – ANFIL).

A bill for the creation of an agency was submitted in 2021 by the Ministry of Arts and Culture to the National Assembly. It has not yet been passed.



The national authority mentioned in its response to the survey that only one publishing house exists in the country, namely *Éditions Oubangui*, which was set up in 2017. However, there are two other Central African publishing houses established in France: *Éditions Zo Kwe Zo* (2008) and *Centrocaricaturer Éditions* (2023). Documentary research shows that most Central African writers publish their works with French publishing houses such as *L'Harmattan* and *Edilivre*.

The role played by women in the sector is noteworthy, such as that of Georgette Florence Koyt, former rector of the University of Bangui (2011 to 2013), who has published 10 books in a variety of literary genres. Adrienne Yabouza has written novels with semi-fictional accounts of the Central African Republic, and Jeanne de Chantal Wodobode, author of four novels, remains a leading figure

in the promotion of books as a tool for raising awareness about education among girls and women. She was a member of the executive committee of the Central African Writers' Association (*Association des Écrivains Centrafricains*), promoter of the *Festi-livre Centrafrique* in 2010, and also winner of the Année Senghor poetry competition in 2006 and the 9th *Printemps des Poètes* competition in 2007, organized by the Alliance française de Bangui. Other women writers are also active in Central African literature, including Alexandrine Lao, General Secretary of the Central African Writers' Association (*Association des Écrivains Centrafricains*), and Annela Niamolo, journalist, poet and promoter of the *Littérature'Elle* competition in 2020³.

More generally, the national authority states that they have no data for monitoring the book and publishing sector. Consultations and documentary research

indicate that between 2017 and 2024, approximately 113 titles were published by the three publishing houses, mostly in French. Some titles have been produced in bilingual (Sango and French) or trilingual (Sango, French and English) versions.

In 2023, *Éditions Oubangui* decided to no longer publish on a self-publishing basis but rather on an author-funded basis. This was due to pending bankruptcy, with unsold books in both warehouse inventory and in bookshops, and with no possibility of government subsidy. During that year, the publishing house produced 31 titles. Of this total, 29 were printed in 50 copies on a self-publishing basis, producing a total of 1,450 printed books and generating a revenue of US\$3,520. Based on surveys of young people's reading preferences, the publishing house subsequently decided to invest part of the income it had earned from self-publishing in children's literature⁴. This strategic reorientation allowed it to stay afloat and, as a result, generate sales of 600 copies and revenue of US\$3,965, well over double its investment, with only two children's literature titles⁵. The other two publishers published three titles.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there is no distribution network. However, it is worth noting that there was only one bookshop until 2019, the Central African Press House (*Maison de la Presse Centrafricaine*). The main stakeholders in the distribution and sale of books in the Central African Republic are street vendors, shopkeepers and book sellers on the ground, commonly known as '*bouquinistes*'. Along with second-hand booksellers, the *Alliance française de Bangui* helps by allowing an exhibition and sale of Central African books in the reception hall of its head office. However, a number of initiatives were put in place by private stakeholders and associations to sell books via Amazon or the web in 2024.

This is how the digital bookshop *La Plume Centrafricaine* came into being. In terms of employment, based on all available data and additional research, an estimated 200 people were employed in the sector in 2023. There is no data on the extent of piracy in the book sector in the Central African Republic, but as the market is not very profitable, it can be assumed that piracy only concerns schoolbooks.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, the Central African Republic has three public libraries, the Reading and Animation Centers (*Centres de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle* – CLACs) located in the towns of Bangui, Sibut and M'Baïki. Unfortunately, there seems to be a lack of activity at these reading centres, which is discouraging readers.⁶

However, there is also the media library of the *Alliance française de Bangui*, which is the most consulted library and the richest in terms of documentary holdings, with around 30,000 documents.⁷ There is also the National Library, the documentation centre of the Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment (*Agence Centrafricaine pour la Formation Professionnelle et l'Emploi* – ACFPE), and the physical and digital library of the University of Bangui, making a total of seven libraries and documentation centres.

It should be noted that in 2017, the Libraries Without Borders Association (*association Bibliothèques sans Frontières*) and the *Alliance française de Bangui* set up a digital media library project in the Central African Republic. This project aims to create digital media libraries using KoomBooks in eight educational structures: the *Alliance française de Bangui*, the *École Normale Supérieure*, the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Faculty of Economics and Management, the Bangui University Library, the Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment (*Agence centrafricaine pour la formation professionnelle et l'emploi*), the Bangui Regional Education

Centres (*Centres pédagogiques régionaux de Bangui*) and the Mbaïki Regional Education Centres (*Centres pédagogiques régionaux de Mbaïki*).⁸ Moreover, some schools and youth centres also have mini libraries. But, according to documentary research, the general observation in public libraries is a lack of books.^{9,10}

Activities to promote reading and books are carried out by the *Alliance française de Bangui* as part of the promotion of all cultural activities. *Éditions Oubangui* also regularly promotes books and reading.¹¹

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2021, the total value of book sector imports – including printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials – amounted to US\$ 120,829. Exports totalled at US\$ 1,392.¹² France remains the main country for importing and exporting books. Added to this is the fact that *Centrocaricaturer* prints its books and distributes them mainly in France. *Éditions Oubangui* has a shop selling its books in France.¹³

TRAINING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, no vocational training is offered for the book sector in the Central African Republic. However, the Central African Writers' Association (*Association des Écrivains Centrafricains* – AECA) organizes writing workshops once a year.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The *Alliance française de Bangui*, which is an association under Central African law, remains the main umbrella association for the book sector. Documentary research indicates that the *Alliance française de Bangui* is responsible for 75% of book-related activities in the country, with the remainder taking place in schools.¹⁴ There is also the Central African Writers' Association (*Association des Écrivains Centrafricains* – AECA), founded in 1985, and the Association of Central African Young

Writers (*Association des Jeunes Écrivains Centrafricains* – AJEC), founded in 2022.

Other networks and associations, such as the bookshop *Maison de la Presse Centrafricaine*, which closed its doors in 2016, the Association of Central African Poets and Writers (*Association des Poètes et Écrivains Centrafricains* – APECA), founded in 1981, and the Literary Fellowship of Central Africa (*Amicale Littéraire de Centrafrique* – ALICA), founded in 2018, have not carried out any activities over the past five years owing to a lack of support.

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11. *Éditions Oubangui*, *Activity posts homepage*, Facebook, accessed 31 October 2024, https://www.facebook.com/ÉditionsOubangui/?locale=fr_FR.
12. United Nations, *UN Comtrade Database: Central African Republic Imports of Printed Books, Brochures, Leaflets, and Similar Printed Matter* (HS 490199), 2018, consulted February 24, 2025.
13. Consultation with the *Institut National de Recherche et d'Animation Pédagogique (INRAP)*. *Éditions Oubangui*, Annual review report: summary of 2017 to 2023.
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CHAD



Population **19.3 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **27%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$680**
(2023)



Urban population **24%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **68%**



Internet users (2022) **12%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **10**

Titles published **30**

Bookstores **1**

Public libraries **100**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 193,000 inhabitants

Jobs **500**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

For many years, Chadian writers were published abroad, particularly in France, as exemplified by such classics as *Au Tchad sous les étoiles* (1962)¹ and *Un enfant du Tchad* (1967)² both authored by Joseph Brahim Seid, who is widely regarded as the founding figure of Chadian literature. It was not until the years 1990-2000 that a dynamic national publishing sector began to take shape in Chad – most notably through the Centre for Studies and Training for Development (*Centre d'Études et de Formation pour le Développement* – CEFOD), which launched its publishing activities in 1999, and the Almouna Cultural Centre. This led to the publication of a collective volume: *Tchad, Conflit Nord-Sud : mythe ou réalité ?*,³ followed by other anthologies.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Tourism Development, Culture and Handicrafts is responsible for promoting the book sector, notably through the Directorate of Books, which oversees the National Centre for Public Reading and Cultural Activities (*Centre National de Lecture Publique et d'Animation Culturelle* – CNLPAC). The CNLPAC coordinates the activities of the Reading and Cultural Event Centres (*Centres de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle* – CLACs), which are distributed across the country. The Chadian Copyright Office (*Bureau Tchadien du Droit d'Auteur* – BUTDRA)⁴ and the National Library complement the institutional framework under the supervision of the Ministry in charge of Culture.

As far as schoolbooks are concerned, publishing is subject to a monopoly held by the National Curriculum Centre (*Centre National de Curricula*), an entity of the Ministry of Education.

From a legal standpoint, Ordinance No. 008/PR/2011 establishing legal deposit in Chad requires all publishers

and authors to deposit three copies of each publication with the National Library to ensure their preservation and long-term accessibility. A 2008 decree⁵ on the pricing of exploitation rights for literary works enables authors and publishers to assert their rights with respect to the use of published materials. Copyright and related rights are governed by Law No. 05/PR/2023.⁶

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Specific information regarding public subsidies or tax exemptions aimed explicitly at promoting the book sector in Chad remains limited. Nonetheless, the government of Chad has introduced general fiscal mechanisms that may indirectly benefit the sector, including a tax regime providing temporary exemptions for young innovative enterprises and start-ups.

Chad's Ministry of Tourism Development, Culture and Handicrafts has launched several initiatives to promote books and reading in the country, including the 'Book and Reading Month', an annual event dedicated to promoting reading and Chadian literature. This initiative features a range of activities, including literary dialogues, public readings, book fairs, writing workshops, and literary prizes.

PUBLISHING

There is no ISBN agency in Chad. National publishers obtain ISBNs through the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (*Agence Francophone de la Numérotation Internationale du Livre* – AFNIL). According to the national authority's response to the survey, Chad had ten publishing houses in 2023. Interviews with book and publishing professionals highlight the precarious state of the sector. None of the publishers interviewed could make a living from publishing alone. Nevertheless, an estimated thirty titles are published annually.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there is only one bookshop in Chad, the Librairie La Source. Within this context, the national authority's response to the survey indicates that the most widely used sales channel is that of participation in book fairs and literary festivals. As a result, authors are often required to personally promote and sell their books, drawing on professional, family, or even religious networks to distribute their publications.

In terms of employment, based on all available data and supplementary research, it is estimated that approximately 500 individuals were employed in the sector in 2023.

In addition to the aforementioned government initiative for Book and Reading Month, several initiatives led by associations also contribute to the promotion of Chad's book sector. These include the Salon du Livre organized by the Iqra'a association, the International Festival 'Le Souffle de l'Harmattan', the International Dramatic and Fine Arts Festival for Unity and Peace (*Festival International des Arts Dramatiques et Plastiques pour l'Union et la Paix* – FIADPUP), the Rentrée Littéraire of the Writers and Authors Association of Chad (*Association des Écrivains et Auteurs du Tchad* – ASEAT), the Chadian Literary Rentrée in Paris (ReLitt), the Mini Youth Salon du Livre of Chad (SALIJET), the Literary Festival Maoundoe de Moundou, and the 48 Hours of Chadian Literature.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the Federation of Public Libraries of Chad, around one hundred libraries across the national territory have joined the network of public libraries. These include CLACs, community libraries, and specialised institutions such as the National Library of Chad. These centres play a vital role in promoting reading and cultural engagement in Chad, particularly among young people.



We were unable to find any surveys of reading habits in Chad. However, a number of initiatives have been launched to encourage reading, including Thé et Textes, initiated by the Salon des Belles Lettres Association, and Vacances à la Bibliothèque Nationale.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Data on book imports and exports are not currently available for Chad. However, representatives of several active publishing houses report that Africana Library Service in North America places biennial or triennial orders for all titles published by their firms, to supply university libraries in North America with works by Chadian authors in support of African Studies curricula.

TRAINING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there is currently no higher education programme in Chad specifically dedicated to the book or publishing sectors.

However, writing workshops are periodically organized by associations such as the Friends of Chadian Literature (Amis de la Littérature du Tchad – ADELIT), which conducts sessions for young volunteers.

The Salon des Belles Lettres Association has also launched initiatives to establish Reading and Writing Clubs (Clubs de Lecture et d'Écriture – CLE) in selected secondary schools.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The ADELIT, established in 1994; the Salon des Belles Lettres (SBL), founded in 1996 and formalized in 2004; ASEAT, created in 2020; and the Group of Chadian Book Editors (*Groupement des Éditeurs des Livres du Tchad* – GELT), founded in 2023, are organisations that advocate on behalf of the sector to government authorities and technical and financial partners, working towards a more robust and resilient national book supply chain.

NOTES

1. Seid, Joseph Brahim. *Au Tchad sous les étoiles*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1962.
2. Seid, Joseph Brahim. *Un enfant du Tchad*. Paris: SAGEREP, 1967.
3. Collective volume. Tchad, *Conflit Nord-Sud : mythe ou réalité ?* Éditions Almouna/Sépia, 1996.
4. Decree No. 313/PR/PCJS/2005, on the organization and operation of the Chadian Copyright Office.
5. Decree No. 023/PR/PM/MCJS/SG/BUTDRQ/2008, on the pricing of exploitation rights for copyright-protected literary and artistic works in Chad.
6. Law No. 05/PR/2023, on the protection of copyright, related rights and expressions of folklore.

COMOROS



Population **0.9 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **62%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$1,590**
(2023)



Urban population **30%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **100%**



Internet users (2021) **27%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **8**

Titles published **90** (2021-2023)

Bookstores **5**

Public libraries **34**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 26,500 inhabitants

Jobs **300**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Modern literature in the Comoros has been shaped by its pioneering intellectuals. Among these, Mohamed Toihiri, whose work reflects a search for identity and a fusion of Comorian, Arab and French influences, published his first novel, *La République des imberbes*, in 1985.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Comorian literature experienced a dynamic growth with the emergence of a new generation of writers, such as Salim Hatubou. These authors explored themes related to the socio-political realities of the Comoros while maintaining strong ties to cultural traditions. Afterwards, other writers, such as Soeuf Elbadawi, further enriched the Comorian literary landscape, despite challenges related to local publishing. This is how the first publishing houses began to emerge, although economic difficulties and limited infrastructure hindered their development. During this period, the Comoros remained largely dependent on foreign publishing houses, particularly in France, where many Comorian authors published their works.

Since the 2000s, the rise of self-publishing and digital technologies has provided Comorian writers with new opportunities for publication. Komedit, founded in Moroni in 2000, is considered the first publishing house in the country dedicated to promoting Comorian literature.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Comoros has public institutions that coordinate book promotion and publishing policies, with specific entities responsible for each aspect. On the one hand, the Ministry of Culture oversees the Directorate General of Arts and Culture (DGAC) and on the other hand the Ministry of Education directs the National Centre for Documentation and Scientific Research and the University of the Comoros.

These two ministries also oversee entities responsible for copyright protection and intellectual property. These are, in addition to the DGAC, the Comorian Office of Intellectual Property, and the National Agency for the Promotion of Investment and Intellectual Property Protection. The Ministry of Education is also responsible for evaluating and approving school textbooks.

To date, the Comoros has no specific law or decree governing the book and publishing sector. Nevertheless, initiatives and efforts have been underway since 2020 to establish a more structured environment for this sector, notably through the adoption of the Law on Copyright and Related Rights in the Union of the Comoros in 2020.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

According to the national authority's response to the survey, the government implements a policy for book procurement for libraries and school textbooks through public tenders. The survey responses also indicate that there are no tax exemptions, financing mechanisms or public investments to support the book and publishing sector.

PUBLISHING

The Comoros does not have an ISBN agency. Comorian publishers and authors obtain ISBNs from regional or international agencies.

While no official data exist on the number of book publishers in the Comoros, documentary research has identified eight publishing houses, most of which were founded by Comorian expatriates in France during the 2010s.¹ These include Éditions KomEDIT, Éditions Cœlacanthe, Éditions Kalamu des Îles and Éditions 4 Étoiles, all of which have their head office in France, except for Éditions KomEDIT. As a pioneer among Comorian publishers, KomEDIT was established in Moroni in 2000 and is currently based in Ndruani, Ngazidja Island, the Comoros.



Regarding textbook acquisition, the Ministry of National Education is primarily responsible for ordering textbooks, through various international cooperation partnerships.

While there are no official data on the number of published titles, information gathered from various publishing houses² indicates that 90 titles were published from 2021 to 2023. Over the same period, the Ministry of Education³ reported acquiring 138,252 printed works for the education system, including textbooks, teacher's guides and exercise books.

According to the national authority's survey response and various other sources consulted,⁴ the two primary languages of titles published in 2023 were French and Shikomori.⁵

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The distribution and sales network operates through five major physical bookstores.

Based on available data and additional research, an estimated 300 people were employed in the sector in 2023.

According to the responses from the national authority survey and consultations with industry professionals, counterfeiting remains a significant issue, though its exact extent is difficult to quantify. Financial losses owing to unauthorized reproduction may significantly reduce the sector's potential revenues, limiting investment and growth for local publishing houses. This challenge particularly applies to schoolbooks.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

There are no reports or surveys on reading habits in Comoros. However, all stakeholders consulted in this study unanimously affirm that printed books remain the preferred and most widely used format among readers.

According to the national authority survey, there are 34 public libraries, including the National Library and 15 Reading and Cultural Event Centres (Centres de lecture et d'animation culturelle – CLACs), jointly established by the national authority and the International Organisation of La Francophonie.⁶

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

According to the national authority survey responses, France is the primary source of book imports, followed by the United Kingdom. Documentary research indicates that in 2021, the Comoros imported books worth US\$120,829, while book exports amounted to US\$1,392.⁷

TRAINING

No formal training programmes in the book and publishing professions were identified in the Comoros through this research.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

No representative organizations for book and publishing professionals were identified in the Comoros through this research.

NOTES

1. Cassiau-Haurie, C. *L'édition dans l'archipel des Comores*. <https://africultures.com/ledition-dans-larchipel-des-comores-10477/>. Accessed 10 March 2025.
2. Questionnaire sent to 21 publishing businesses in the Comoros between 15 September and 13 October 2024.
3. Interview with the Comoros Ministry of Education, 3 October 2024.
4. Interviews conducted between 15 September and 13 October 2024, with the Ministries of Culture and Education, and with the publishing houses Caelacanthé, 4 Étoiles and KomEDIT.
5. According to the 2018 Constitution of the Union of the Comoros, *The official languages are Shikomori, the national language, French and Arabic*.
6. Cassiau-Haurie, C. « L'édition dans l'archipel des Comores ». <https://africultures.com/ledition-dans-larchipel-des-comores-10477/>. Accessed 10 March 2025.
7. United Nations, *UN Comtrade Database: Comoros Imports of Printed Books, Brochures, Leaflets, and Similar Printed Matter* (HS 490199). Accessed 10 March 2025.

CONGO



Population **6.2 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **81%**
(2021)



GDP per capita **US\$2,478**
(2023)



Urban population **69%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2021) **97%**



Internet users (2022) **36%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **30**

Titles published **260** (2022)

Bookstores **98**

Public libraries **140**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 44,300 inhabitants

Jobs **2,000**

Sector revenue **US\$506,832**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first books were introduced by the colonial administration and clergymen at the end of the 19th century. This particularly concerns the documentary collection of the General Government of French Equatorial Africa, kept in Brazzaville, the collection of the General Inspectorate of Education and the Documentation Library.

From 1960 onwards, the independent Congo opened up the book and publishing sector in favour of promoting Congolese authors. The creation of a network of bookshops in the Congo dates back to 1966, with the establishment of the National Office of People's Libraries (*Office National des Librairies Populaires* - ONLP), followed by the creation in 1971 of the General Directorate of Library Services, Archives and Documentation (*Direction générale des services de bibliothèques, d'archives et de documentation*), responsible for managing public reading libraries.¹ The political will to provide schooling for all Congolese coincided with the introduction of free school books in the 1970s.

The first publishing houses were created only recently, for example *Les Éditions Hemar* in 2000, *Les Lettres Mouchetées* in 2015 and *Médiafrrique Éditions* in 2017.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Three Directorates-General are responsible for coordinating public policy related to the book and publishing sector: the Directorate-General for the Arts and Humanities, the Directorate-General for Heritage and Archives, and the Directorate-General for Books and Public Reading, created in 2010.² The Congolese Copyright Office, the National Fund for Cultural Development and the National Library also contribute to the institutional framework applicable to the book and publishing sector.

This institutional framework also features regional directorates, by 'département', for Books and Public Reading,³ the National Institute for Pedagogical Research and Action (*Institut national de recherche et d'action pédagogique* - INRAP), dedicated to schoolbook publishing⁴ within the Ministry of National Education, and the Brazzaville Book Fair.⁵ The national authority's response to the survey indicates that the establishment of the Congolese Copyright Office has also made it possible to gain a better understanding of the realities of the sector, in terms of both legislation and market regulation.

Regarding the legal framework, notable among the key texts is Decree No. 66-249 of 10 August 1966, which creates a legal deposit office in Brazzaville. This legal framework has encouraged the emergence of cultural movements in which artists, craftsmen and writers have distinguished themselves. Also notable is Law No. 24-82 of 7 July 1982 on copyright and related rights.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Congo has adopted policies to promote books by encouraging book imports, particularly of schoolbooks; and by abolishing customs duties and exempting and/or reducing the rate of value-added tax (VAT).

The establishment of a national library and of libraries in several public institutions, and the encouragement of private initiatives to set up libraries and organize literary events, complete the public policies and measures in favour of the sector.

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that the Directorate-General for Books and Reading does not have a permanent budget line and therefore operates on the basis of subsidies granted by the Ministry of Finance. In 2023, around US\$158,821 (100 million CFA francs) were received to relaunch the Centres for Reading and Cultural Events (*Centres de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle* - CLACs), around US\$283,232 (150 million CFA francs) to organize the Brazzaville Book Fair,

and around US\$90,528 (57 million CFA francs) to purchase books for the libraries in the public reading network. Invitations to tender have also been issued through INRAP for the purchase of schoolbooks for educational establishments.

PUBLISHING

Although the Congo does not have its own ISBN agency, the task of allocating ISBNs is devolved to the National Library, which in turn applies to the Francophone Agency for International Book Referencing (*Agence Francophone de la Numérotation Internationale du Livre – AFNIL*).

According to the national authority's response to the survey, the 2015 Constitution of the Congo places freedom of expression among the fundamental elements underpinning human rights, and the publication of a book is therefore not subject to prior application. Nor does Congolese legislation require publishers to declare the publication of their books after the fact. However, they are required to deposit two copies of each publication with the National Library, as part of the legal deposit.⁶

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there are 30 active publishers in 2023. The same source states that 260 titles were published in 2023, 88 of which, or 12%, were written by women. On the whole, Congolese publishers publish essays and fiction (novels, poetry, drama) in print format. These books are not often available in digital or audio formats.

For 2022 and 2023, the national authority's response to the survey indicates the following amounts of revenue in US dollars: for general literature US\$172,290 and US\$192,975, for education US\$384,710 and US\$396,545, and for science, technology and professional services US\$92,110 and US\$102,080.

Educational books dominate the publishing market. They account for most of the demand for books. 98% of books are published in French, with the exception of a few bilingual dictionaries.



Comics sales stand and merchandising. © Bilibi BD Festival 2022

Most of the schoolbooks used are not published locally. According to the national authority's response to the survey, the Congolese government issues public invitations through INRAP to tender for the publication of schoolbooks. These tenders are often won by multinationals, which are better equipped to publish and print schoolbooks. University books are imported to an even greater extent, and Congolese academics turn mainly to European publishers to get their research published.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's responses to the survey, there were 4 book distribution networks, 98 bookshops and 140 public libraries in the country in 2023. The number of employees was 2000, of whom 200 were women (a percentage of 10%). The number of copies of books sold increased between

2022 and 2023: in general literature from 11,280 to 14,280; in education from 48,698 to 52,490; and in science and technology from 5,810 to 6,122. In light of these figures, educational books are marketed the best when compared with general literature or scientific, technical and professional books.

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that physical bookshops remain the preferred sales outlets, along with retail outlets (supermarkets, stationery stores, etc.), followed in third place by book fairs and literary festivals.

The same source states that there are 24 book fairs or literary festivals in Congo. Literary events are also part of book promotion in the Congo. In recent years, these have included the *Rentrée Littéraire du Congo (Relico)* (three annual editions since 2020), the *Salon International du Livre et des Arts de Pointe-Noire* (two editions in 2022 and 2024) and the *Foire du Livre de Brazzaville* (promotional edition in 2023).

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

Several libraries of varying sizes are operational. The response to the national authority's survey indicates that 140 public libraries are up and running. Examples include the *Grande Bibliothèque Universitaire* at the *Université Marien Ngouabi* in Brazzaville and the Library of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Francophonie and Congolese Abroad.

With regard to reading habits, the national authority's response to the survey indicates that despite the introduction of digital formats in the book sector, the Congolese are still very attached to printed books. Numerous surveys show that almost all readers visit physical libraries and consult printed books. This can be explained by the fact that virtual libraries are still non-existent in the country. However, a few digital printers plants are beginning to appear in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire, although statistics are not yet available.

Nevertheless, in 2008, a number of bibliological studies compiled by Robert Estivals⁷ pointed to an overall weak relationship with the book. For example, the survey carried out by O. Massoumou⁸ showed that more than 80% of schoolchildren in Brazzaville did not use a library (with 33.33% of girls and 50% of boys not subscribed), and 75% of literature students did not subscribe to a library or documentation centre (including 25% of female students and 50% of male students not subscribed). In 2023, the national authority's response to the survey indicates some improvement, with an average of three books read per inhabitant. This figure represents an exceptional performance, given that with its 6 million inhabitants, the Congo is thus estimated to have read around 18 million books.

Other channels for diffusing and promoting books exist, but these are often ephemeral experiences. For example, the Book Boxes (*Boîtes à livres*) set up in some of Brazzaville's public

gardens (a project run by Rita Fabienne Lokanga) aim to make books accessible to the general public and encourage a taste for reading; or the *Biblio média bus* of the Marien Ngouabi Association), the main aim of which is to bring books to readers in outlying areas and schools.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that, for the year 2023, the total amount from imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, was primarily characterized by imports, and amounted to US\$2,265,743. Export value amounted to US\$8,287.⁹

The national authority's response to the survey mentions France as the biggest source of imported books, at 96%. The same information applies to exports. It also indicates that imported books account for more than 80% of sales volume, as confirmed by Congolese booksellers, who claim to sell mainly printed books imported from abroad.

TRAINING

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the *Université Marien Ngouabi* has three courses that train professionals in the book and publishing sector, particularly in document and archive management – librarianship.¹⁰ Private higher education offers some higher technician diploma courses to train computer graphics designers and/or layout artists.

The same source also notes that there are training programmes on digitisation, notably in schools and technical institutes, but that the Congo has yet to invest in modern technologies such as print-on-demand and digital printing, given the existing laws on digitalisation and digital transition. However, the increased availability of internet, even in rural areas, has sparked interest and involvement in digital publishing.

Finally, it also points out that the need for vocational training in all areas of book publishing remains high in the Congo. Although publishing courses are now available in some higher education establishments, they are not specific to book publishing.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

In its responses to the survey, the national authority listed the following organisations representing professionals: the National Union for Congolese Artists and Writers (*Union Nationale des Écrivains et Artistes du Congo – UNEAC*), the Forum of Congolese Writers (*Forum des Gens de Lettres*), the Association for Congolese Librarians, Archivists, Documentalists and Museum Conservators (*Association des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes, Documentalistes et Muséologues du Congo*), and the *PEN Centre Congo*.

NOTES

1. Decree No. 71/321 of 27 September 1971.

2. Ruling No. 2249/MCA-CAB.

3. Ruling No. 7334/MCA-CAB.

4. Ruling No. 4908.

5. Ruling No 7133/MCA-MFB (2018).

6. Decree No. 66-250, of 10 August 1966, tending to fix the conditions of legal deposit in the Republic of Congo.

7. R. Estivals, R. (ed.), *La bibliologie scientifique appliquée*. (L'Harmattan Congo RDC, 2008).

8. Massoumou, O. Massoumou, *La lecture à Brazzaville : Expérience scolaire et universitaire*, R. Estivals (ed.), in *La Bibliologie scientifique appliquée*, eds. R. Estivals (L'Harmattan CongoRDC, 2008, pages 185-193).

9. United Nations. *UN Comtrade Database: Congo, Imports of Printed Books, Brochures, Leaflets, and Similar Printed Matter* (HS 490199), 2023. Accessed February 24, 2025.

10. These courses are of the following types: Language Sciences (*Sciences du Langage – SDL*) – Communication Science and Techniques (*Science et techniques de communication – STC*) – Art.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE



Population **31.2 million** (2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **50%** (2021)



GDP per capita **US\$2,531** (2023)



Urban population **53%** (2023)



Mobile phone subscription (2022) **174%**



Internet users (2022) **38%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **62**

Titles published **224** (2022)

Bookstores **61**

Public libraries **235**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 132,800 inhabitants

Jobs **2,000**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The earliest book sector organizations in Côte d'Ivoire were established by Catholic missionaries in the early 1930s. These included the Missionary Press Institute (*Institut de la Presse Missionnaire*) and the Jean-Baptiste Publishing House (*Imprimerie Jean-Baptiste*) in 1932, the Library of France (*Librairie De France*, formerly *Établissements Barnoin*) in 1938, and the African Institute for Economic and Social Development Editions (*Éditions de l'Institut Africain pour le Développement Économique et Social*) in 1957, now known as the Centre for Research and Action for Peace (*Centre de Recherche et d'Action pour la Paix*).

The country's independence in 1960 marked the establishment and expansion of state institutions, such as the African Editorial and Distribution Centre (*Centre d'Édition et de Diffusion Africain* – CEDA) in 1961, the National Library of Côte d'Ivoire in 1971, and the New African Editions (*Nouvelles Éditions Africaines* – NEA) in 1972.

In the early 1990s, the privatization of CEDA and NEA – renamed BI-NEA and later NEI – and the deregulation of the publishing sector led to the emergence of several private publishing houses, thereby contributing to the dynamism of the book industry.¹ These include EDILIS, Éditions Éburnie, and Passerelle Éditions.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Culture and Francophonie (MCF), through the Directorate of Book Industry and Reading Promotion (DILPL), oversees institutional management of the book sector and ensures the implementation and promotion of the book policy in Côte d'Ivoire. The National Technical Centre for Public Reading and Cultural Activities (*Centre National Technique de Lecture Publique et d'Animation Culturelle* – CENATELPAC), under the supervision of the MCF, promotes and

coordinates public reading through Reading and Cultural Outreach Centres (CLACs), public libraries, and other outreach coordinators and book sector partners. The Ivorian Office of Copyright (*Bureau Ivoirien du Droit d'Auteur* – BURIDA) manages copyright-related matters.

The Ministry of National Education and Literacy (MENA), through the Directorate of Pedagogy and Continuing Education (DPFC), collaborates closely with publishers in the development of school textbooks.

The book and publishing sector is governed by a legal framework comprising laws, decrees and regulations, the most notable of which include Law No. 2014-425 on cultural policy and Law No. 2015-540 of 20 July 2015 on the book industry. Decree No. 2019-103 of 30 January 2019 defines procedures, conditions, standards, and pricing for institutional book acquisitions. Decree No. 2021-631 of 20 October 2021 lists book sector professions and defines the process for registering and practising these professions.

With regard to copyright and intellectual property, regulations from 1996, 2013 and 2016 have been supplemented by Decree No. 2021-632 of 20 October 2021 on the private copying levy.

Côte d'Ivoire also enforces legal deposit requirements under Decree No. 62-28 of 2 February 1962, through the Directorate of National Archives of Côte d'Ivoire (DANCI), which falls under the Ministry of the Interior and Security. Additionally, Decree No. 86-448 of 25 June 1986 transfers the responsibility for establishing, equipping, and managing cultural institutions such as libraries, museums, and cultural centres from the central government to the cities.

Regarding school textbooks, Order No. 0025/MEN/CAB of 28 February 2001 designates the Directorate of Pedagogy and Continuing Education (DPFC) as the responsible authority.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

According to the national authority's response to the survey, books benefit from tax incentives, including a value-added tax (VAT) exemption and reduced customs duties of 2.5%. Schoolbooks are subject to state-approved pricing, and centralized calls for tenders facilitate their purchase by educational establishments as part of the free school textbook policy.

Furthermore, enterprises in the book and publishing sector can benefit from a recent mechanism for subsidized loans and business creation financing through the Central Fund for Culture (*Guichet Unique de la Culture* – GUC). According to the national authority, this fund has a budget of US\$1,633,987 and is co-financed by the Ministry of Youth (MCJ) and Orange Bank Côte d'Ivoire.

Grants provided by the Cultural and Artistic Creation Support Fund (FSCCA) under the MCF support book publishing, organization and participation in international book fairs, exhibitions and festivals, as well as business initiatives.

PUBLISHING

Côte d'Ivoire does not have a national agency for assigning ISBNs. Publishers must request them from the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (*Agence Francophone de Numérotation Internationale du Livre* – AFNIL). No prior authorization is required to publish a book, but an a posteriori declaration is mandatory under legal deposit regulations.

According to the national authority, there are 62 registered publishers in Côte d'Ivoire, while the International Publishers Association reports 75. In 2022, 224 titles were published, up from 115 in 2021. Documentary research shows that 70% of published titles are schoolbooks, and 30% are general literature.²

According to the national authority, public investment in the book and publishing sector amounted to approximately US\$408,497 in 2023.

Currently, 80% of the public market share for schoolbooks is held by publishing houses with majority national capital, including *Éditions Éburnie*, *Les Classiques Ivoiriens*, *Vallesse Éditions*, *Frat-Mat Éditions*, and *JD Éditions*, reflecting a trend that began at the start of the decade with the deregulation of the publishing sector. Publishing houses with foreign or multinational ownership hold the remaining 20% of the schoolbook market (NEI-CEDA).

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority, Edipresse and the French Library Group (*Librairie de France Groupe* – LDFG) are the largest distributors, alongside the specialised distributor, Biblical Alliance of Côte d'Ivoire (*Alliance Biblique de Côte d'Ivoire* – ABCI). There are also distributors that are part of publishing houses, such as Eburnie Distribution. In 2023, the national authority reported a book ecosystem comprising 60 approved physical bookstores, a digital bookstore (YouScribe),³ based in France and operating in several other countries, and 11 book events.⁴ Physical bookstores remain the primary book purchasing locations, followed by retail outlets, book fairs, and literary festivals.

According to documentary sources, the sector accounted for 1,300 jobs in the Abidjan region alone in 2010.⁵ Our estimates, based on all available data and additional research, suggest that in 2023, approximately 2,000 people were employed in the sector.

Furthermore, though the aforementioned formal distribution channels contribute to the circulation of books, the book industry remains heavily influenced by informal networks, which reinforces a lack of industry transparency in terms of production and sales. Henceforth, the book industry in Côte d'Ivoire is strongly marred by piracy. The national authority notes the existence since 2006 of the Brigade for Combating Fraud and Piracy of Cultural Works in Côte d'Ivoire, under the Ministry of Culture and Francophonie

all while recognizing that its capacity must be strengthened to better address the problem of counterfeit books.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

No data are available on reading habits and practices. According to the national authority's response to the survey, Côte d'Ivoire has 235 public libraries, including 19 CLACs, which recorded a total of 53,229 books read throughout the network in 2023.⁶

Still according to the national authority, printed books are the most popular and widely consumed format, followed by digital books, which are consumed in relatively large numbers, and finally other formats, including audiobooks. French is the predominant language of publication, followed by English. Local and regional languages are largely absent.

Initiatives in support of public reading are carried out through CLACs, including sociocultural and community activities (dictation contests, storytelling, read-aloud sessions, games and computer-based activities, etc.).

The Ministry of Culture and Francophonie and the Publishers Association of Côte d'Ivoire (*Association des Éditeurs de Côte d'Ivoire*) contribute to book promotion through the Children and Young Adults Book Fair (*Salon du Livre pour Enfants et Adolescents* – SALEA) and the Abidjan International Book Fair (*Salon International du Livre d'Abidjan* – SILA).

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2023, total revenue from book sector imports – including printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials – amounted to US\$18,687,280. Total export value stood at US\$592,530.⁷ According to the national authority's response to the survey, 95% of imported books came from France, 3% from England, and 2% from Canada. In terms of exports, 50% of books are destined for Burkina Faso, 40% for Mali, 5% for Togo, and 5% for Benin.



SILA¹⁵
**SALON INTERNATIONAL
 DU LIVRE D'ABIDJAN**

THÈME : LIVRE, RACINES

PARC DES EXPOSITIONS
 D'ABIDJAN

DU **6** AU **10**
 MAI 2025

PAYS INVITÉS
 D'HONNEUR



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Furthermore, in the absence of tax exemptions and reduced import duties on paper, printing inputs, and book production equipment, Ivorian printers struggle to compete with their foreign counterparts. Indeed, books printed abroad (notably in France, Morocco, Tunisia, and South Africa) are less expensive than those printed locally.

TRAINING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there is no dedicated formal training for the book and publishing professions in Côte d'Ivoire. However, the Printing Trades Training Centre (*Centre de Perfectionnement aux Métiers de l'Imprimerie* – CPMI) at the Mohamed VI Multi-Sectoral Vocational High School in Yopougon, Abidjan, offers training leading to the Advanced Technical Certificate (*Brevet de Technicien Supérieur* – BTS) in printing.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

According to the national authority's response to the survey, the most active professional associations are the Côte d'Ivoire Writers Association (*Association des Écrivains de Côte d'Ivoire* – AECl), the Côte d'Ivoire Publishers Association (*Association des Éditeurs de Côte d'Ivoire* – ASSEDI), the Côte d'Ivoire Booksellers Association (*Association des Libraires de Côte d'Ivoire* – ALCl), the Côte d'Ivoire Booksellers and Retailers Association (*Association des Libraires et Détaillants de Livres* de Côte d'Ivoire – ALDLCl), the Côte d'Ivoire Second-hand Booksellers and Booksellers Association (*Association des Bouquinistes et Libraires de Côte d'Ivoire* – ABOLICl) and the Côte d'Ivoire Publishers and Graphic Designers Association (*Association des Imprimeurs et Graphistes de Côte d'Ivoire* – AIGCl). Librarians are members of the Côte d'Ivoire Association for the Promotion of Documentary Material Sciences (*Association pour la Promotion des Sciences de l'Information Documentaire en Côte d'Ivoire* – APSID-Cl).

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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



Population **105.8 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **81%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$627**
(2023)



Urban population **47%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **50%**



Internet users (2022) **27%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **50**

Titles published **150**

Bookstores **29**

Public libraries **211**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 500,000 inhabitants

Jobs **600**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first books were introduced by the colonial administration and the clergy. After independence in 1960, missionary publishing houses helped to meet the growing need for textbooks. Structures like Edisco, which is a substructure of the national association of book publishers and distributors were set up to meet the challenges of schoolbook publishing. Between 1967 and 1990, the National Association of Book Publishers and Distributors (*Association Nationale des Éditeurs et Diffuseurs du Livre – ANEDIL*), the Writers' Union (*Union des Écrivains – Zairean*, then Congolese: UEZA then UECO), the National Association of Literary Critics (*Association Nationale des Critiques Littéraires*), and the National Society of Publishers and Composers (*Société Nationale des Éditeurs et Compositeurs – SONECA*), which has now become 'SOCODA', were born.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The government institution in charge of the book sector is the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage, which oversees the National Library of Congo (*Bibliothèque Nationale du Congo – BNC*), created in 1989,¹ and the network of libraries and reading centres for the public.

Schoolbooks fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education and the Awakening of New Citizenship (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de l'Éveil de la Nouvelle Citoyenneté*). The Ministry contains a Department of Curricula and Teaching Materials, which has had a National Textbook Commission since 1966. The Commission examines all draft textbooks submitted by authors or publishers to the Ministry for approval.

Legal deposit is governed by Law 74-003 of 1974 and Decree No. 81-017 of 1981, which requires any publisher or printer to deposit eight copies of any printed work (including books) with the National Library. Ordinance-law No. 87-013 of 1987 instituted a royalty to support Congolese artists and writers and created

the Cultural Promotion Fund (*Fonds de Promotion Culturelle – FPC*). Ordinance-law No. 86-033 of 1986 governs the protection of copyright and related rights, the collective management of which in the DRC has been entrusted to the Congolese Copyright Society (*Société Congolaise des Droits d'Auteurs – SOCODA*).

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Locally printed books are exempt from VAT, as are imported books. Public support for the book and publishing sector is provided through the FPC, which is funded by the aforementioned royalty. Although it is not possible to determine from documentary research how much financial support is allocated to the book and publishing sector, it should be noted that out of one hundred projects selected for funding, fifty are book-related.²

PUBLISHING

Since 2000, the National Library of Congo (BNC) has had a system for allocating international book identification numbers (ISBNs).

Although the national authority reports the existence of 17 publishing houses, the ANEDIL counted 50 active in 2023, including 38 in Kinshasa, 8 in Goma, 3 in Lubumbashi and 1 in Mbuji-Mayi. Among the most active are *Médiaspaul* and *Filles de Saint Paul*, which also publish digitally, *Loyola, Éditions universitaires africaines, Presse de l'Université du Congo, and Presse de l'Université Catholique du Congo, Scolot, Épiphanie* and *Grands Lacs*.

The national authority's response to the survey indicates a total of 150 titles published in 2023. The number of titles published rose from 130 to 183, then to 199 and 187 between 2006 and 2016; and from 151 to 94 between 2022 and 2024.³ In large publishing houses, such as *Médiaspaul*, the average print run is 1,000 books per title. For small publishing houses, the average print run is between 50 and 200 copies.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that physical bookshops remain the most widely used sales channel, followed by literary fairs and festivals. However, there is no company specialising in professional book distribution. There are 29 professional bookshops, mainly run by the two major publishing houses: *Éditions Mediaspaul*, which has 10 bookshops of its own, and the *Filles de Saint Paul*, which markets its own titles as well as those of other publishers through the bookshops it owns in the capital and in some provinces.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 600 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

Book fairs and exhibitions are organized by trade associations. The best known are the Book and Teaching Materials Fair (*Foire du livre et du matériel didactique*), organized by the National Association of Book Publishers (*Association Nationale des Éditeurs du Livre - ANEDIL*), the School Book Fair (*Foire du livre scolaire*), the Book and Bible Festival (*Festival du livre et de la Bible - FELIBI*), and the Buku Festival.

One can also mention the Kongo-Central Book Fair (*Salon du Livre de Kongo-Central - SALIK*), organized by young professionals from Congolese civil society, the Mbandaka Festival of Books and Oral Traditions (*Festival du Livre et de l'Oralité de Mbandaka - FELIMBA*), the Congolese Languages Literatures Fair (*Salon des Littératures en Langues Congolaises*), as well as the Kinshasa Book Festival (*Fête du Livre de Kinshasa*) and the *Grande Rentrée Littéraire de Kinshasa*.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to documentary research, the DRC has between 0.5 and 1 library per 500,000 inhabitants,⁴ or around 211

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public libraries. Documentary research reveals that reading surveys are geared towards knowledge of Congolese writers and their works. Conducted between 2009 and 2010, and again between 2013 and 2016 in schools and universities, the latest published surveys conclude that Congolese literature in French is better known abroad (in academic circles, where studies and conferences are devoted to it) than in the DRC. In fact, fewer than 10 out of every 100 pupils and students have read a novel by the authors that these surveys present as the most famous in the DRC.⁵

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2016, total revenue from book sector imports, including printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to approximately US\$7,347,360. As for exports, they

amounted to US\$69,810.⁶ The national authority's response to the survey states that France and Belgium are the main countries for book imports.

TRAINING

Created in 1973, the Institute of Information Science and Technology (*Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information - ISTI*) was the first higher education institution to set up a department called Book Publishing and Public Relations.

This department was split into two faculties when ISTI became a university. These are the Faculty of Journalism, Press and Information, and the Faculty of Written Sciences, Technology and Documentary Information,⁷ where the book trade is taught as a compulsory or optional course with a practical component carried out mainly in publishing houses and bookshops.

The book trade is also taught at the Department of Documentary Sciences and Technology at the University of Kinshasa, as well as at the Kinshasa High Institute of Statistics. The Catholic University of the Congo also offers a training course in the book trade.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Five recognised associations represent the various book sectors in the DRC: the National Association of Book Publishers and Distributors (*Association Nationale des Éditeurs et Diffuseurs du Livre* – ANEDIL), the Congolese Writer's Union (*Union des Écrivains du Congo* – UECO), the Association of Young Writers of Congo (*Association des Jeunes Écrivains du Congo* – AJECO), the National Association of Literary Critics (*Association Nationale des Critiques Littéraires* – ACLC), the Association of Librarians, Archivists, Documentarians and Museologists (*Association des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes, Documentalistes et Muséologues* – ABADOM), and the Congolese Women Writers' Association (*Association des Femmes de Lettres Congolaises* – FELCO).

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DJIBOUTI



Population **1.2 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **53%**
(2017)



GDP per capita **US\$3,555**
(2023)



Urban population **79%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **46%**



Internet users (2022) **65%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **5**

Titles published **823**

Bookstores **3**

Public libraries **20**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 60,000 inhabitants

Jobs **3,378**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first books published in Djibouti appeared before independence. William Syad, the country's first major author, published his first collections of poetry in French as early as 1959. Following an interval of more than three decades, the book sector took off in the mid-1990s, thanks to the first Time for Books (*Temps des livres*), an event organized by the Arthur Rimbaud French Cultural Centre, featuring several big names in Djiboutian literature: Abdi Ismael, Chehem Watta, Aicha Robleh and Idriss Youssouf. It was a landmark event, raising the profile of books and writers through meetings between the country's secondary school pupils and authors from a wide range of backgrounds, including Ahmadou Kourouma, Azouz Begag and Gisèle Pineau. During the 2000s, International Mother Language Day saw the emergence of associations such as Somali Speaking Pen and Afar Speaking Pen, which celebrate writers who express themselves in their mother tongue – Somali and Afar respectively. This was followed by a proliferation of literary events designed to promote works published in these languages. With the financial support of the public authorities, their production has increased considerably.

From 2016, the emergence of civil society associations has extended the momentum initiated by Time for Books. This period also corresponds with the emergence of a new generation of writers. Their number increased from six writers in the 1990s to around twenty writers, including five women, in 2024.¹

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Youth and Culture has a Department of Books and Public Reading responsible for drawing up and implementing national policy for the development of the book and publishing sector. It also includes a Copyright and Related Rights Department, which is responsible for protecting intellectual works, as well as collecting and distributing royalties to beneficiaries and right holders.² This contributed to the

revitalization of Law No. 154/06/ of 23 July 2006,³ relating to the protection of copyright managed by the Djibouti Copyright and Related Rights Office, established in 2006.

The National Agency for the Promotion of Culture (*Agence Nationale de la Promotion de la Culture* – ANPC) was created in 2022 under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth and Culture. Its remit for the book and publishing sector includes: managing legal deposits; compiling and disseminating the national bibliography to enhance collections and ensure their accessibility to as many people as possible; and developing national and international cooperation (through exchanges of collections and support for research).

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training is responsible for schoolbooks. The Center for Research, Information, and Production of National Education (*Centre de Recherche, d'Information et de Production de l'éducation Nationale* – CRIPEN), set up in 1990 under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, is the only institution authorized to design and publish schoolbooks for public establishments, thus enabling the State to control their sale price.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The Ministry of Youth and Culture has introduced a series of measures to strengthen the book and publishing sector, including the decree creating the Book Fair (*Salon du livre*). The creation of the ANPC has also helped to strengthen the Ministry's prerogatives, and to launch projects relating to books (elaboration of a charter with publishers and authors subsidized by the Ministry of Youth and Culture), copyright, legal deposit and the implementation of a strategy for the promotion of culture. The three projects are currently being validated. This legal arsenal is helping to structure a policy linked to books and publishing, which is part of the strategy to promote culture. Policies in favour of books and publishing concern mainly schoolbooks, which benefit from state subsidies (a tax of 8%⁴ compared with 33% for other types of books⁵).

PUBLISHING

In their response to the survey, the national authority states that an initiative to provide Djibouti with an ISBN agency is currently being led by the ANPC.

There are three private publishing houses (Francolin, Discorama and Deeqsan). Francolin and Discorama are bookshops that started publishing fairly recently (less than 10 years ago). There are also two public publishing houses, National Publishing House (*Imprimerie Nationale*) and CRIPEN, which publish schoolbooks and administrative documents.

In terms of the volume of books published, CRIPEN is the leading publishing house, having made remarkable efforts in the printing of schoolbooks to achieve a ratio of one book per pupil and per subject,⁶ not forgetting works published for people with special needs.⁷ In addition, the Centre has put its faith in digital technology by recently organizing two pilot smart classes equipped with interactive tablets, an idea encouraged by the Covid-19 pandemic in particular.

The National Printing House, which was founded in 1943 and is the country's oldest publishing house, occasionally publishes books to order.

Data on both the volume of books published and the revenue generated by these publishers is almost non-existent, if not patchy. According to the national authority's response to the survey, three books were published in 2022 and 10 books in 2023, as well as 803 titles published by CRIPEN in 2023. Consultations confirm that the volume of books published by private publishing houses remains low, with an average of three to five⁸ books per year for Discorama and five to six books⁹ for Francolin. These are mainly children's books, likely to be bought by parents wanting to encourage their children to read more.¹⁰ It should be noted that Deeqsan, the new publishing house that appeared in 2024, has so far only published four books, which were

presented at the Salon du livre 2024. However, Deeqsan is investing in a multilingual production (Afar, English, French, Somali, Swahili, etc.) to broaden its customer base by targeting a regional market.

Women are fairly well represented in this field, with two women leading the management of the two public publishing houses (the National Printing House and CRIPEN) and another leading one of the three private publishing houses (Francolin).

As far as publication languages are concerned, according to the national authority's response to the survey, the majority of books published are in French, since 5% of the publications are written in other languages (Afar, English, Arabic and Somali), and the main publishing format is still paper.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The main distribution channels are bookshops and libraries in Djibouti. There are three bookshops in the whole of the country,¹¹ whose main turnover is made up of school textbooks. Average sales are between 2,000 and 3,000 books for Al Fajr (an Arabic-language bookshop), between 5,000 and 6,000 books for Discorama, and between 8,000 and 11,000 for Victor Hugo (Discorama and Victor Hugo are French-language bookshops).

According to professionals in the sector, bookshops face a number of challenges, such as the high cost of books that are mainly imported, a lack of financial support, fluctuating exchange rates (purchases mainly in euros), and a weak distribution network.¹² Once the new school year is over, there are very few events to promote book sales. The recent creation of the Book Fair does not yet allow one to draw any significant conclusions about its impact.

Established in the central Djibouti market for at least thirty years, Djibouti's only second-hand bookseller obtains its supplies from the French

Institute of Djibouti (*Institut Français de Djibouti*) or buys from private individuals. Unlike booksellers, it has a high demand during the holidays from parents who want their children to practise reading. There are very few requests for textbooks, as these remain accessible thanks to government subsidies¹³.

The national authority reports an average of three to five employees¹⁴ per bookshop. Our estimates, based on all available data and additional research, show that around 3,378 people were employed by the entire book and publishing sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there are 10 public libraries across the country.¹⁵ For a long time, the French Institute Arthur Rimbaud (*Institut Français Arthur Rimbaud*) was the only reference point for regular readers, apart from three school libraries and the Djibouti City Municipal Library (*Bibliothèque municipale Ville Djibouti*) which operated for around ten years before being replaced by the National Library.

Thanks to its long history, the library of the French Institute of Djibouti has a variety of programmes to promote books and reading, large collections (16,098 documents) and a regular budget dedicated to collections.¹⁶ Even if attendance has fallen slightly, the diversity of the programmes put forward to encourage reading corners in partnership with civil society associations should be emphasized.¹⁷ Digital technology is an integral part of the programming at the French Institute, which perhaps explains the high proportion of young people, who represent more than 50% of subscriptions.¹⁸ Finally, it should be noted that the French Institute has set up programmes to support the editing and publication of books translated into French.¹⁹



Despite its recent creation in 2020, the National Library has also managed to set up a number of activities designed to promote books (painting and calligraphy workshops, dictation competitions,²⁰ etc.). The organization of the first two Book Fairs (2023 and 2024) has enabled the National Library to see its visits increase considerably, even if the lack of data does not allow an overview. One also notes the existence of around ten Centers for Reading and Cultural Facilitation (*Centres de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle - CLACS*) across the country.²¹

In addition to the many activities to promote reading carried out by associations over the last ten years, CRIPEN has also set in place since 2006 a Working Group to promote books and reading; to set up reading corners in primary school classrooms; and to supply libraries in secondary schools.²² Other noteworthy CRIPEN initiatives include Book Week, organized in March, and the literary television programme *Des mots d'ici et d'ailleurs*, designed to promote new literary works by Djiboutian writers.

The Djibouti Book Fair, organized by the Ministry of Culture and Youth, is the only festival related to the sector in the country. There have been two editions (2023 and 2024).

Despite these many initiatives, the lack of data makes it impossible to measure the reading habits of the population.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2023, total import revenue in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$638,530, with the main countries for book imports being India, France, Egypt, Somalia and Ethiopia.²³ CRIPEN is the leading importer of books, particularly school textbooks printed in India.²⁴ Public and private publishing houses print either in India or Dubai,²⁵ for cost reasons. Exports totalled US\$377,050.

TRAINING

The University of Djibouti has been training librarians and archivists at Bachelor degree level for the past fifteen years. Some graduates went on to find jobs with the National Library. The French Institute of Djibouti recently set up a plan to develop the professional skills of librarians and facilitators, which it plans to implement in the near future.²⁶ CRIPEN, for its part, initially trained a large number of primary and secondary school teachers abroad, particularly in France, so that they could take charge of the book publishing process. CRIPEN currently operates virtually autonomously.

However, given the expansion of non-textbook publishing, the number of people trained in this field remains insufficient.²⁷ According to industry professionals, this makes it difficult for publishers to find local experts, forcing them to call in experts from outside Djibouti, which further increases the cost of production.²⁸

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Over the last ten years or so, there has been a proliferation of professional associations in the book trade. Among the most active are The Book Caravan (*La Caravane du Livre*, an association of book lovers), founded in 2016, and The Compass of Knowledge (*La Boussole du Savoir*, a group of writers and academics), founded in 2018.

The Association of Djiboutian Writers (*Association des Écrivains Djiboutiens*) was recently created in the wake of the 2023 Book Fair, along with the Association of Djiboutian Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists (*Association de Bibliothécaires Archivistes Documentalistes Djiboutiens*). However, these associations work irregularly, which limits the visibility of their actions. They also have very little involvement in drawing up and monitoring measures and policies relating to the book and publishing sector.

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EGYPT



Population **114.5 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **75%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$3,457**
(2023)



Urban population **43%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **93%**



Internet users (2022) **72%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **1,600**

Titles published **27,498**

Bookstores **153**

Public libraries **924** (2024)

Public libraries per capita
1 per 124,000 inhabitants

Jobs **50,000**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Egypt's history of documenting its knowledge dates back to the ancient Pharaonic era. The production of papyrus paper was pivotal in advancing early paper-making, one of the oldest methods for preserving and documenting human knowledge. Ancient Egyptian papyri are some of the earliest forms of books known worldwide.

The history of Egyptian publishing took a significant step forward with the establishment of Egypt's first modern printing press, which arrived from France with the campaign led by Napoleon. The idea of establishing a printing press was championed by Muhammad Ali Pasha, the Ottoman Albanian viceroy and de facto ruler of Egypt from 1805 to 1848. In 1815, he sent a first delegation to the city of Milan, Italy, to study the art of printing. This effort culminated in the establishment of the Bulaq Press, also known as the Amiriya (meaning 'governmental' in Arabic) Press, which was officially opened in 1821 as Egypt's first governmental printing house.¹ Its first publication, the *Italian-Arabic Dictionary*, aligned with Muhammad Ali's vision of fostering progress through engagement with Europe. Other notable early publications included *Kalila and Dimna* (1826), *Gulistan al-Saadi* (1828), and *One Thousand and One Nights* (1836).

Major Egyptian publishing institutions emerged during the first half of the 20th century, playing a pivotal role in the industry's development. Among the most prominent were Dar Al-Hilal Al Masriya and Dar Al-Maaref, both of which became integral to the National Press Authority.

Egypt has produced many successful writers who have made a significant contribution to literature. Naguib Mahfouz, known for works such as *The Cairo Trilogy* (published between 1956 and 1957), was the first Egyptian winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1988. Other noteworthy authors include Ahmed Khaled Tawfik, who is known for writing in Arabic in the

genres of horror and science fiction, such as the *Ma Waraa al Tabiaa* series, Hoda Shaarawi, first influential feminist writer and pioneer of the Egyptian feminist movement, and Nawal El Saadawi, a feminist writer with influential non-fiction works such as *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1977) and fictional works such as *Love in the Kingdom of Oil* (1993).

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Egyptian General Book Organization (EGBO) serves as the coordinating institution for the book sector in Egypt, under the broader umbrella of the Ministry of Culture. It was first established by presidential decree in 1961, as the General Authority for News, Publishing, Distribution and Printing. It underwent multiple rapid changes between 1961 and 1971 and was finally renamed in 1993, by means of Presidential Decree No. 176.

Also established by presidential decree is the Egyptian Intellectual Property Authority. This public entity is responsible for organizing, managing and protecting intellectual property rights nationwide.

State publishing plays an active role in the Egyptian book sector. State institutions that publish include the following: the EGBO, which publishes intellectual and creative works in various fields for authors from Egypt and Arab countries; the Egyptian National Library and Archives, which focuses on publishing heritage works and editing manuscripts; the General Authority for Cultural Palaces; the National Center for Translation, responsible for translating intellectual and creative works from foreign languages into Arabic; and the National Center for Children's Culture, which publishes literature tailored to children and young readers. These institutions' primary aims are to deliver readable content; and to provide printed books at cost, and sometimes even below cost – thus offering subsidized books to the public.

Several ministries and government entities in Egypt contribute to publishing, across various specialised fields. The Ministry of Education produces school textbooks, while the Ministry of Higher Education supports universities in publishing specialised academic journals that drive research forward.

The Ministry of Religious Endowments, along with the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, shares religious and scholarly works, while the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church preserves and promotes its rich heritage through its own publications. Institutions such as the Bibliotheca Alexandrina play a vital role in spreading knowledge and culture, while government press houses such as Amiriya Press ensure that official and large-scale printing needs are met. Together, these entities help to shape Egypt's diverse and dynamic publishing landscape.

The Press and Publications Law, No. 20 of 1936, stands as one of the early foundational legislative frameworks governing publishing and printing in Egypt. Over the decades, it has been subject to various amendments intended to address an evolving media landscape and changing societal needs. More recently, the Law Regulating the Press, the Media, and the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (Law No. 180 of 2018) was enacted to define a comprehensive legal framework for both electronic and print publishing. This law underscores the principles of freedom of expression while setting out regulations that address contemporary publishing platforms.

To protect intellectual property and author rights, Egypt enacted Law No. 82 of 2002, which pertains to the protection of intellectual property rights along with the implementation of regulations through various prime ministerial decrees. This law is designed to protect creativity, innovation and fair competition. It grants authors, artists and creators exclusive rights to their works for 50 years after their passing. To enforce these rights and resolve disputes, Egypt has established specialised economic courts dedicated to intellectual property matters.



Cairo International Book Fair © General Egyptian Book Organization

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The national authority's response to the survey states that, based on Egyptian law on value-added tax (Law No. 67 of 2016), books are tax-free. The schedule of exempt goods and services under this Law lists newsprint, printing paper, writing paper, notebooks, books, educational booklets, newspapers and magazines as VAT-exempt. These exemptions are outlined within the section regulating taxation policies related to printed and educational material.² The national authority's survey response also indicates, however, that the book industry does not benefit from tax incentives.

Egypt implements national projects aimed at producing high-quality books at affordable prices, such as the publishing project of the General Authority for Cultural Palaces under the Ministry of Culture.³ This initiative provides subsidized books covering a variety of fields to make them accessible to a wider audience.

The government also strengthens national publishing institutions such as the EGBO and the National Library

and Archives of Egypt by funding book production and improving printing and distribution technologies.

The government supports the adoption of modern technologies, such as digital printing and electronic publishing platforms, to reduce costs and increase accessibility. These efforts are carried out through collaborations between the ministries of Communications and Culture. In addition to financial support, the State promotes publishing by organizing both international and local book fairs, which serve as significant cultural and commercial platforms.

As for libraries, the State allocates budgets for purchasing newly published books from local publishers to add to public and university libraries, though this process is not carried out regularly. The Egyptian government focuses on building new public libraries and upgrading existing ones, transforming them into educational and cultural hubs. Investments are also directed towards enriching school and university libraries with scientific and cultural books to support educational development and foster a culture of reading among students.

Educational books, including textbooks, reference materials and exam preparation guides, constitute a significant portion of the Egyptian book publishing sector, driven by the education sector's needs.⁴

Textbooks for government-run schools in Egypt are provided free of charge. This policy is part of the Egyptian government's commitment to ensuring access to education for all students, as outlined in Article 19 of the Egyptian Constitution of 2014. The Constitution guarantees the right to free education at all levels and mandates that the state provide the necessary resources to achieve this goal.

PUBLISHING

The Egyptian National Library and Archives provides free deposit numbers for books published in Egypt by both government and private publishers, and offers ISBNs for all titles at no charge.

According to the Egyptian Publishers Association (EPA), there are 1,600 publishers in Egypt.⁵ Based on deposit statistics from the Egyptian National Library and Archives, the numbers of titles published in Egypt over the years 2021 to 2023 were as follows: 14,346 (2021), 15,914 (2022), and 27,498 (2023). As for the number of copies of printed books published in recent years, 356,352 were published in 2021; 387,373 copies were published in 2022; and 740,357 copies were published in 2023. Based on interviews with a representative of the EPA, the ratio of digital book production to printed book production in 2023 was 1:3.⁶

The national authority's response to the survey states that 86% of books published in 2023 were in Arabic, whereas the remaining 14% were in foreign languages such as English, French, Russian, Italian and German. Indeed, while Arabic remains the chief language of publication, the EGBO and the National Center for Translation publish numerous titles in these languages.

These publications reflect the Ministry of Culture's efforts to introduce Egyptian creative works to non-Arabic-speaking readers, often in collaboration with other Egyptian ministries or foreign cultural institutions. Among notable publishing initiatives is the 'Roya' project, a collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Religious Endowments, which produces titles in multiple languages – including Chinese, English, French, German, Greek, Russian and Spanish. This project, with over 50 titles, aims to counter extremist ideologies and to promote values of tolerance and respect for women's roles, through works such as *Women on the Throne of Egypt* by Dr Mamdouh El Damaty.

According to the national authority's survey response, 38% of titles published in 2023 were written by women. Women have also made significant contributions by holding important positions within the Egyptian publishing industry. Notably, Dr Suheir Al-Qalamawi was the first woman to head the EGBO and the Cairo International Book Fair in its inaugural session in 1965. In recent years, female leaders such as Dr Karima Sami (National Center for Translation) and Dr Nevin Moussa (Egyptian National Library and Archives) have continued to play prominent roles in government publishing.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that 153 physical bookstores were operating in 2023, while the EPA states that there were 350 bookstores. The discrepancy between the two figures may be explained by differing definitions of what constitutes a bookstore, since books are also sold in stationary shops and supermarkets, and from street stalls. In addition, the Ministry of Culture is busy installing 333 'book kiosks' – accessible book-distribution points that are part of the presidential initiative entitled 'Decent Life' and are focused on villages in Egypt's more rural areas.⁷

According to the national authority's survey response, 2,460,678 copies of books were sold in 2023. In 2021, the corresponding figure was 717,949 copies; and in 2022, 361,828 copies.

Many private publishing houses also operate dedicated outlets for book sales, which are concentrated primarily in Cairo. Among the most notable is Shorouk Bookstores, widely recognized for its extensive selection of cultural, literary and scientific books, and appealing to a broad spectrum of readers. Diwan Bookstore caters specifically to modern literature enthusiasts and those interested in translated works, whereas Alef Bookstores provides a diverse collection of Arabic and foreign books. Madbouly Bookstore is another key player, known as one of Egypt's leading distributors of books. In addition to these private outlets, Egypt is home to popular book markets, with Sur Al-Azbakeya being the most renowned. This market is famous for offering used books at affordable prices, and for featuring a wide selection of rare and heritage books, academic resources and novels. Moreover, private publishers have embraced digital platforms, collaborating with applications such as Read to me to expand their sales and connect to a wider audience. Furthermore, the Hindawi Foundation's digital platform makes translated books available online free of charge. Additionally, the Egyptian Knowledge Bank (EKB), launched in 2014, provides access to 250,000 e-books in English and Arabic.⁸

The national authority's survey response states that 78 book fairs and literary festivals operated in Egypt in 2023. The EPA also reported ten regional book fairs in ten different governorates in addition to the Cairo International Book Fair (CIBF).⁹ The CIBF, founded in 1969 under the patronage of the President of Egypt, is one of the oldest and most prominent book fairs worldwide. According to recent statistics, the fair recorded some 4.5 million visitors to its latest edition. The 2025 edition has featured the participation of 1,246 publishers from Egypt, the Arab world and beyond, representing 70 countries in all.¹⁰

The CIBF is of particular importance to the Egyptian and Arab publishing industries, with Egypt's large market providing significant opportunities for participants. While precise figures on total sales during the Fair are not available, official reports from the Ministry of Culture indicate sales during the event add up to 400,000 copies of Ministry publications alone.

The CIBF facilitates professional exchanges between Egyptian and international publishers, creating valuable opportunities for investment in general and collaboration on translations more specifically. It provides direct support to Egyptian publishers by subsidizing booth rentals and related costs, with similar support being extended to Arab publishers. It also enforces strict intellectual property protections, prohibiting unauthorized reproductions and coordinating with Egyptian and Arab publishers' associations to uphold these standards. Moreover, a dedicated website facilitates the online sale of printed books, extending the event's reach to readers who cannot attend in person.

To further support the local publishing industry, the Ministry of Culture, represented by the EGBO, organizes the ten regional book fairs already mentioned. These fairs provide both government and private publishers with an opportunity to distribute their books nationwide, particularly in areas where private publishers may lack direct sales channels. For many publishers, therefore, these book fairs are crucial.¹¹ Notably, they often offer books to the public at subsidized prices, ensuring access to affordable reading materials across different provinces.¹²

According to the EPA, the sector employed 8,000 people in 2023, with 40% of them women. The national authority's survey response provided a slightly higher percentage of 50%. The estimated number of indirect employment in publishing services (translation, design, proofreading, printing, etc.) is 50,000.¹³

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

The country's library infrastructure comprises 923 public libraries, not counting the Egyptian National Library. Moreover, the library landscape is complemented by 482 academic libraries, 29,429 school libraries and 48 special libraries.¹⁴

Building on a strong cultural tradition of reading, the government and educational institutions promote strong reading habits and conduct public reading-promotion activities. These include mobile libraries in remote areas, book-donation campaigns, story-telling workshops, poetry-reading events, round-table discussions and workshops for children.

Egypt has been actively working on expanding its mobile library programme to reach rural and under-served areas through the Mobile Libraries Project. This initiative is a collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and the Egyptian General Libraries Fund. In 2024, the Ministry announced new mobile libraries for border governorates such as North Sinai, Matrouh, Aswan, Wadi El Gdedid and Red Sea. The mobile libraries are equipped with a variety of books and educational resources, and they also offer enriching activities such as storytelling sessions and literacy programmes. The goals are to foster a love of reading and to provide access to information that can empower individuals and communities.¹⁵

Key literary awards in Egypt include: the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature, which is awarded annually by the American University in Cairo Press, the Sawiris Cultural Award sponsored by the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development, the Nile Awards for Egyptian and Arab Creators granted by the Supreme Council of Culture, and the Hamdi Abu Golayyel Prize, named after the renowned Egyptian writer. These awards play a significant role in promoting and recognizing literary talent in Egypt.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

According to documentary research, Egypt's imports of printed books and similar materials in 2023 totalled US\$26.9 million (1.8% of world share) while the value of its exports in the same categories was US\$38.7 million (2.6% of world share).¹⁶

Egypt's exports of printed books and similar materials saw remarkable growth over the past three years. Exports fell from US\$26.4 million in 2012 to US\$8 million in 2017 before stabilizing around US\$11 million between 2018 and 2019. A steady increase followed, reaching US\$13.8 million in 2021, but the most dramatic shift came in 2022 and 2023, with exports jumping to US\$23 million and then US\$38 million, an increase of 65% in just one year. This surge highlights Egypt's strengthening position in the global publishing market, as the country expands its reach and influence in regional and international trade. Top export destinations from Egypt in 2023 were Libya (48%), the Netherlands (13%), Morocco (6%), Algeria (5%), Yemen (5%) and Saudi Arabia (3%).

At the same time, the industry has faced economic challenges owing to macroeconomic factors such as the flotation of the Egyptian pound. These have impacted the cost of importing publishing materials, including paper. According to the Printing Chamber at the Egyptian Federation of Industries, this has led to a tripling of production costs and publishers' profit margins were reduced by as much as 50%.¹⁷

TRAINING

The national authority's response to the survey refers to a diploma in cultural development offered by the Department of Libraries and Documents at Cairo University. Cairo University also offers a Master's in Publishing and Digital Archiving. Several universities, such as the American University in Cairo and the Pharos University in Alexandria, organize creative writing workshops.

Professional training in digitization skills such as Photoshop, InDesign and other book-industry programmes is available for publishing-sector employees in the Ministry of Culture. Additionally, Bibliotheca Alexandrina and Egypt Public Libraries across the country provide training for professional librarians in specialised areas such as database management.

Moreover, numerous capacity-building initiatives are organized during the professional programme at the CIBF, in cooperation with international organizations such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the Egyptian and Arab publishers' associations, and the International Publishers Association (IPA). In recent years, the fair has introduced professional training programmes and workshops aimed at enhancing publishers' skills in various aspects of the industry, including sessions on artificial intelligence and intellectual property in publishing.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Egyptian Writers Union, established under Law No. 65 of 1975, is an independent organization dedicated to supporting and protecting writers, poets and intellectuals. It champions freedom of expression, literary creativity and authors' rights while also providing financial aid, pensions and healthcare benefits. The Union actively promotes Egyptian literature and culture through literary events, conferences, book fairs and awards, and represents Egyptian writers on international platforms to foster cultural exchange. Committed to the protection of intellectual property and cultural policy-making, it plays a vital role in shaping Egypt's literary landscape. Notable members have included Tawfiq al-Hakim, a key figure in modern Arabic literature.

Egypt's private publishing houses are represented by the EPA, established in 1965. Many of them are also members of the Arab Publishers Union, and some are members of the IPA.

The EPA establishes guidelines that publishers must follow and defines their rights, duties and means of cooperation.

It seeks to enhance the quality of Arab books, broaden their accessibility both domestically and internationally, and safeguard the integrity of the profession. It also promotes collaboration among publishers, in order to improve operations, create opportunities for showcasing Arab books abroad and foster cultural awareness at home. It also works to standardize publishing practices, and to unify communication between Egyptian, Arab and international publishers.

The IFLA Centre for Arabic-speaking Libraries and Information Institutions, established at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in 2007, bridges the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the Arabic-speaking library community. The centre was created following an agreement signed during IFLA's 73rd annual conference in Durban, South Africa, to enhance collaboration, professional development, and the visibility of Arabic-speaking libraries at regional and international levels.¹⁸

Another relevant group, consisting of experts, academics and publishing industry professionals with sector expertise, is the Supreme Council of Culture's Book and Publishing Committee (CBPC). One of the Ministry of Culture's arms, the Council seeks to coordinate governmental and non-governmental efforts in the book and publishing field through the BPCC, which plays a consultative role that is capable of shaping sectoral policy and strategy.

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EQUATORIAL GUINEA



Population **1.8 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **94%**
(2010)



GDP per capita **US\$6,678**
(2023)



Urban population **74%**
(2023)



Mobile phone subscription (2022) **53%**



Internet users (2022) **67%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **2**

Titles published **9**

Bookstores **1**

Public libraries **4**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 450,000 inhabitants

Jobs **60**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first book published by an Equatoguinean was *Cuando los combes luchaban* (1953) by Leoncio Evita Enoy. It was followed by *Una lanza por el Boabí* (1962), by Daniel Jones Mathama. The early 1980s saw the emergence of female writers such as Raquel Ilombe and María Nsué Angüe, while the 1990s brought writers such as Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel, Maximiliano Nkogo, José Siale Ndjangany and Francisco Zamora Lobocho. Equatoguinean literature, characterised by social critique and identity affirmation, gained greater international visibility at the turn of the millennium with the celebration of the First Conference of Hispanic-African Literature in 2000.¹

In 2004, the government established the Institute for the Promotion and Development of Equatoguinean Culture, which became the Equatoguinean Cultural Centre in 2012. Meanwhile, new voices emerged on the literary scene, such as Guillermina Mekuy with *El llanto de la perra* (2005) and César Mba Abogo with *El porteador de Marlow* (2007). The '12 October' literary competitions, organised by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), highlighted authors such as Recaredo Silebo Boturu, with *La danza de la abuela* (2011).

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The management of the publishing sector is overseen by the Ministry of Information, Press and Culture. This Ministry, with the support of various institutions, regulates the production and distribution of printed materials through the Press, Printing and Audiovisual Media Law, No. 6/1997, which is structured into two key chapters. Chapter II classifies printed materials into 'Single Publications' (books and pamphlets) and 'Periodicals' (daily and weekly newspapers), establishing a legal deposit system to

ensure the preservation of copies in the National Library. Chapter VII, on the other hand, details the requirements for the public registration of publishing and distribution companies.

Equatorial Guinea is a member of the African Intellectual Property Organization and proposed a Copyright Protection Bill in 2022, which is still under review for approval.

National institutions such as the Council for Scientific and Technological Research and the National Library, along with bodies for cultural promotion such as the Equatoguinean Cultural Centre and the Academia Ecuatoguineana de la Lengua Española (AEGLE) – the 'Equatoguinean Academy of the Spanish Language' – play a crucial role in protecting copyright and fostering literary creation. Additionally, the support of international organisations such as the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) facilitates the promotion of Equatoguinean authors abroad.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

While there are no dedicated policies for the book sector, Agenda Guinea Equatorial 2035² highlights relevant elements such as the adoption of pricing schemes for essential goods, including schoolbooks (section 2.5.1.2 on pricing policy); and the promotion of key sectors through public investment, featuring measures such as export support policies (section 2.7.2). While the budgets allocated to the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Sport and the Ministry of Information, Press and Culture may include related activities, no specific funds are earmarked for books or educational materials there. The national authority's survey response states that there are no tax exemptions or reduced rates for the book sector in the country. Publishing companies are subject to the same tax obligations as any other commercial business in the country, including paying taxes to the State.

PUBLISHING

Equatorial Guinea currently lacks a national ISBN agency, a situation that forces many authors to rely on foreign publishers to release their books. Publication is often achieved with support from Spanish publishers.

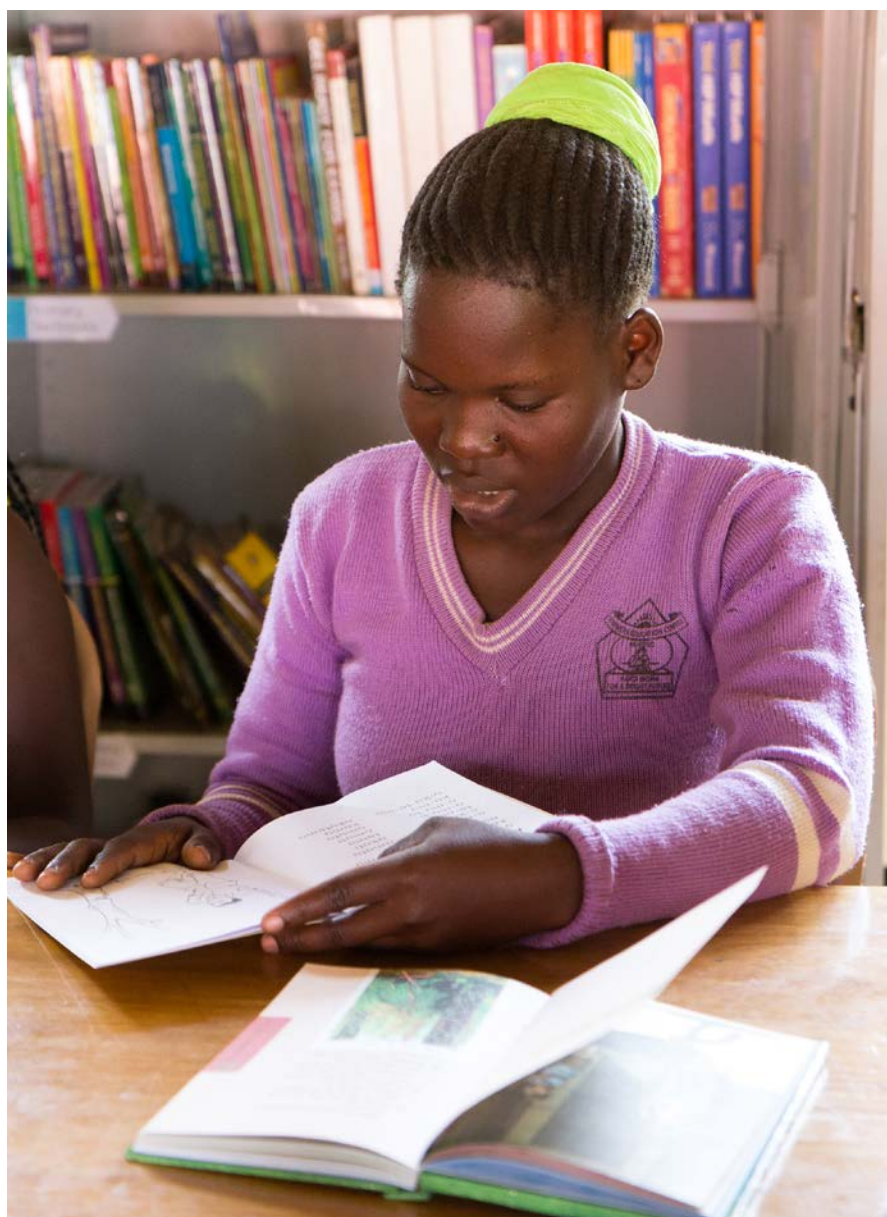
There are only two publishers in Equatorial Guinea, namely Elat Moyong (founded in 2022) and Esangui (founded in 2021). The two are working to establish sustainable publishing infrastructure by improving local capacity in production and distribution for both print and electronic books. The two publishers reported publishing a total of nine titles in 2023, all with estimated print runs of 50 to 200 copies. Esangui released three narrative works, while Elat-Moyong produced six books across various genres (including narratives, essays and poetry). Among the published authors were Eladio Andreu, Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel, Rufino Ndong Esono, Jorge Abeso and Teodomiro Monsuy Eyi Abang.

Research shows that the majority of Equatorial Guinea's publishing output is produced outside the country, mainly by Spanish publishers who print and distribute works by Equatoguinean authors.³ Notable examples include Sial Ediciones (Madrid), Plaza & Janés (Madrid), Carena Ediciones (Barcelona) and Ceiba Ediciones (Barcelona). Additionally, institutions such as the Institute of African Studies and AECID have played key roles in publishing Guinean literature internationally, offering access to a broader market but highlighting a reliance on external infrastructure. Self-publishing has offered an alternative means of having their voice heard to authors who cannot find traditional publishers abroad. Platforms such as Amazon and services such as Círculo Rojo allow Equatoguinean writers to publish and distribute their works independently – although at a significant cost since they must finance the entire process.

According to information provided by Elat-Moyong Publishing, both local publishers have increasingly been combining different publishing approaches. All the books they published in 2023 were edited in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, but were printed outside the country. To expand their reach, they later released the digital publications on self-publishing platforms. Such practices are also common in cultural centres in Spain, as was the case with the 12 de Octubre and the Mares de Guinea literary awards.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

There is only one formal bookstore in the country: Ndembo Muakuku in Malabo. However, books are also available for purchase at kiosks in the National Library, supermarkets, hotels and shops near cultural centres. Most writers still have to reach their audiences through informal networks, despite the challenges involved. Based on all available data and complementary research, our estimates in terms of employment amount to approximately 60 persons in the sector in 2023.



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The national authority's survey response reports that two book fairs took place in the country in 2023. The Malabo and the Bata book fairs (held in 2022 also) marked a cultural revival after pandemic restrictions. Within a community-focused approach, they offered reading activities, workshops and round-table discussions, fostering both educational and cultural development. Significant efforts to distribute and promote local literature are also made in collaboration with the Cultural Centres of Spain in Malabo and Bata, which support the publishing sector through competitions and through cultural events such as the 12 de Octubre Literary Award. Additionally, literary awards organised by AEGLE, such as the Miguel de Cervantes Prize and the Constancia Mangué Nsue Okomo Prize, have helped to recognise and promote local literary talent.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

The country has a network of four public libraries and five kiosks,⁴ managed by the Ministry of Information, Press and Culture (two national public libraries via the Directorate General of Libraries and Archives; and two in the Equatorial Guinean Cultural Centre via the Directorate General of Cultural Centres, Cinema and Theatre). Other important libraries exist in educational institutions such as Universidad Nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial (UNGE) and the Afro-American University of Central Africa, as well as in the Cultural Centres of Spain in Malabo and Bata.

In cities such as Malabo, Bata and Mongomo – and working alongside the local publishers – cultural associations use activities such as book presentations and literary competitions to support the promotion of, and access to, books and reading. Outside these cities, however, the promotion of reading is more limited. In remote provinces such as Kie Ntem, Centro Sur, Annobón or Bioko Sur, the lack of libraries and cultural centres limits access to books and the promotion of reading.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

The importation of books is conducted mainly through informal channels, donations and cooperation with other countries. Most books arriving in the country do so as the result of cultural cooperation agreements, and also thanks to authors themselves. As for exportation, it is practically non-existent, although the national authority survey response indicates that the main country of exportation is Spain. Authors publishing internationally do so personally and face serious difficulties in distributing their works outside the country.⁵

TRAINING

There is currently no curriculum at the middle or higher education levels providing for specialised training in any aspect of publishing.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The creation in 2019 of the Equatorial Guinean Writers Association (GE-Pluma), which was supported by the Ministry of Information, Press and Culture, represented an important milestone. Institutionally, the existing infrastructure of cultural centres, and public libraries and kiosks, provides a starting point for the creation of professional associations. However, the lack of formal connection between these spaces, along with the scarcity of bookstores and limited support for local publishers, hinders the consolidation of a true guild or professional community in the publishing sector.

The national authority's response to the survey makes the point that informal collectives of writers and publishers, and literary communities such as Omal, Eclipse, Azul, Capullos Literarios and Literary Culture, participate actively in book fairs and collaborate with national institutions while facing the challenge of staying afloat.

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ERITREA



Population **3.5 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **77%**
(2018)



GDP per capita **US\$689**
(2011)



Urban population **43%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2021) **50%**



Internet users (2022) **27%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **4**

Titles published **15**

Bookstores **5**

Public libraries **97**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 36,000 inhabitants

Jobs **380**

This mapping was carried out based on documentary research and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After gaining independence in 1993, the Eritrean government promoted the development of local languages (such as Tigrinya and Tigre) and encouraged publishing as a part of nation-building efforts. However, the book publishing sector faces limited availability of resources, such as printing facilities, paper and infrastructure for distribution. Most of the country's publishing is done by government-run or affiliated entities.

Eritrea has many notable authors who have made significant contributions to literature, both within the country and internationally. Beyene Haile, renowned for his novel *Haddas*, is celebrated for his literary works that delve into Eritrean culture and history, and the intricate complexities of identity and heritage. Reesom Haile is another significant writer, known for his poetry written in Tigrinya, one of Eritrea's major languages. Saba Kidane, a poet, writer and activist, has contributed significantly to Eritrean literature by amplifying the voices and experiences of Eritrean women.

Gebreyesus Hailu, best known for his novel *The Conscript*, written in 1927 and published in 1950, is credited with writing one of the earliest modern novels in Tigrinya. Ghirmai Negash, a scholar, poet and translator, is widely known for his translations of Eritrean literature, including *The Conscript*, into English. His work has been instrumental in bringing Eritrean literature to a global audience, helping it gain visibility in African literary anthologies, festivals and scholarly discussions.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Information, while primarily responsible for overseeing media and communication, also contributes to the promotion of literature. Notably, the Arabic Department plays a key role in fostering the development of Arabic literature in the country.¹

Proclamation No. 23/1992 established the Department of Information and Culture with a mandate that includes developing Eritrean art and literature and promoting the study of Eritrean languages.²

Key components of the legal framework that regulate the book publishing sector include the National Press Proclamation, No. 90/1996, which is the cornerstone of Eritrea's publishing regulation. The proclamation mandates that all publishers must register with the Ministry of Information and obtain permission for publishing and printing activities. Although Eritrea does not have a dedicated copyright law, the Civil Code of Eritrea (2015) offers protection to authors and publishers, focusing primarily on the reproduction and distribution of works.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) oversees educational content development, textbook production and supply to schools, while the Eritrean National Curriculum Development Office develops, evaluates and approves school curricula and textbooks.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The National Policy on Education grants the Eritrean MOE full control over the production and supply of textbooks for public schools. It ensures that educational resources are accessible nationwide, including in rural areas, to promote equitable access to learning materials. The policy effectively establishes a government monopoly over textbook development, production and supply.

Under the Eritrea Education Sector Plan 2018-2022, the MOE prepares, prints and distributes to schools all textbooks in basic education (encompassing preschool, elementary and middle school) free of charge.³ Eritrea's broader cultural and educational policies emphasize gender equality and the inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly regarding access to education.

PUBLISHING

Publishing houses that are independent of the government are scarce in Eritrea. Most of the country's limited literary output in the trade book sector is controlled by government-affiliated entities or religious institutions. Creative and literary works are often published by Eritrean writers in the diaspora rather than domestically.

According to research, there are at least four publishing houses in Eritrea that work closely with the MOE to develop curriculum-aligned content and provide educational resources to schools throughout the country, including Hidri Publishers, founded in 1995. While primarily known for its focus on educational books, Hidri's broader goal is to produce works across all genres and in all Eritrean languages. Similarly, the Eritrean Ministry of Information, through its publishing unit, manages the government's publishing efforts, which include the production of educational materials, official government documents, and historical and cultural books. The two main printing presses in Eritrea are Sabur Printing Services (SPS) and Eritrean National Printing Corporation (ENPC). Although the sector is largely dominated by state-owned entities, there are a few smaller private printing presses that cater to the limited demands of the local market. These private presses typically focus on low-volume print runs, including books, educational materials and occasional commercial printing. The estimated number of titles published in 2023 is 15.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The Eritrean government tightly regulates the distribution of books, with the MOE undertaking most of the country's distribution through educational institutions and libraries.⁴ Research identified at least five bookstores, among them Ghirmay Bookshop, Awghet Bookshop and Cathedral Stationery, all located in major cities such as Asmara and Keren.

These stock textbooks, cultural books, language learning materials and religious texts.⁵ In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 380 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

Various Eritrean diaspora networks around the world, particularly in the United States of America, Europe and Canada, play a role in publishing and distributing Eritrean literature. They publish their works through international or independent publishers. Distribution is done mainly through online platforms such as Bana Books, a platform managed by Eritreans in the diaspora, which focuses solely on distributing works about Eritrea and authored by Eritrean writers both within the country and abroad.⁶ Online book distribution in Eritrea is still in its early stages. The absence of significant local e-commerce platforms, coupled with restricted access to international platforms including Amazon, is exacerbated by low levels of digital literacy.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

No detailed surveys or formal reports are available on reading habits and preferred formats in Eritrea. The country has two public libraries located in the capital, leading to low library access per capita. However, eighty Community Reading Rooms (CRRs) are an extension of Eritrea's Public Library Service into rural areas. At its beginning in 1993, the CRR project was closely linked to the adult literacy programme of the Department of Adult Education of Eritrea. The CRRs were intended primarily to serve adult literacy learners and newly literate adults. However, because the CRRs were housed at first in existing school buildings, farmers and schoolchildren became their most active and most numerous users. The villages have claimed the CRRs as an important part of community life.⁷

In 2019, Eritrea's National Information for All Programme (IFAP) Committee, in collaboration with the Rora Digital



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Library and the MOE, launched the project entitled 'Information accessibility in remote areas of Eritrea through digital libraries'.⁸

The initiative aims to reduce educational disparities, by providing access to learning materials through digital libraries and enriching school curricula with digital resources. It also includes teacher training to enhance the effective use of library resources. Digital libraries were established in six regions, benefiting eleven boarding schools and four public schools.⁹ Most of the reading in Eritrea is focused on educational materials, with leisure reading being less common.

School libraries are also limited in scope, focusing on textbooks and basic educational materials. Academic libraries, such as those at the Eritrea Institute of Technology, serve students and faculty. The Asmara Public Library, established in 1958, features a children's library, an open-space reading facility and a digital library, providing access to both print and digital books.

Since school libraries in Eritrea are also accessible to the public, they are counted as part of the total number of public libraries, bringing the total to 97.

The National Digital Library of Eritrea, launched in 2019 as a joint project between the University of Pavia and Eritrea's Research Documentation Centre (RDC), seeks to identify, recover and digitize materials printed in Eritrea between 1867 and 1962. The project also aims to strengthen the RDC's capacity to develop policies for the digital preservation of Eritrea's cultural heritage.

The Eritrean Book Fair, organized annually by a coordinating committee set up by the MOE, is intended to showcase Eritrean literature and to promote a culture of reading in the country. It includes various reading activities, such as seminars, group discussions and reading competitions. PEN Eritrea, established in 2014, aims to promote literature in all Eritrean languages. The PEN Eritrea Freedom of Expression Award recognizes individuals, groups and institutions that have made significant contributions to literature and to the promotion of freedom of expression in the Eritrean context.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

In 2021, imports of printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar products to Eritrea totalled US\$66,020. The top five countries of origin included the Republic of Korea (US\$40,270), Kenya (US\$12,150), South Africa (US\$4,640), the European Union (US\$2,840), and the United Arab Emirates (US\$2,230).¹⁰

TRAINING

There are no formal training institutions for publishing in Eritrea, and opportunities for professional development in the Eritrean publishing sector are limited. Lines & Spaces Creative Writing Workshops have previously collaborated with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the International Writing Program (IWP) and the American Embassy in Asmara to

offer skills development to local writers, with the aim of increasing the number of individuals and organizations engaging in cultural and educational activities in Eritrea.¹¹

Some Eritrean diaspora organizations, such as PEN Eritrea in Exile, also provide training and support to local publishers and authors. These initiatives often focus on improving writing, editorial skills and digital publishing, and on connecting local authors with international markets. SPS, in partnership with the MOE, provides a one-year general printing certificate course specifically for SPS staff. This comprehensive curriculum equips publishing professionals with a diverse set of practical skills and techniques.¹²

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Library and Information Association of Eritrea (LIAE) was founded in 2000 under the auspices of the MOE to facilitate library services and access to information in Eritrea. The LIAE has collaborated with the MOE to draft a policy guideline for school libraries. The association has also conducted research to explore the status of school libraries, provided training to librarians and introduced digital libraries into schools. The Eritrean National Creative Promotion Association (ENCPA), established in 2018 with support from the MOE, serves as a platform for fostering invention and innovation among Eritrean intellectuals.¹³

PEN Eritrea, established in 2014, is a chapter of PEN International. It is dedicated to promoting Eritrean literature in all Eritrean languages and advocating for freedom of expression in Eritrea. PEN Eritrea operates in exile and serves as a support network for Eritrean writers and journalists outside the country.

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ESWATINI



Population **1.2 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **91%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$3,611**
(2023)



Urban population **25%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **122%**



Internet users (2022) **58%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **2**

Titles published **20**

Bookstores **38**

Public libraries **17**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 70,600 inhabitants

Jobs **215**

Sector revenue **US\$1,192 million**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first printing press was introduced in 1883 by missionaries, and used primarily to produce educational and Christian content.

A few trailblazing authors contributed to the development of a distinctive Swazi literary identity in the 1960s and 1970s as Eswatini moved towards independence. Stanley Matsebula was well-known for his siSwati works honouring Swazi tradition and culture. Journalist and author Sarah Mkhonza addressed social and political concerns, concentrating on the difficulties that Swazi women confront.¹ Musa Dlamini wrote about the ways in which colonialism affected Swazi society, while Richard Motsa examined Swazi customs and the effects of modernisation in his poetry and prose.

Contemporary writers include Lucy Dlamini, who examines gender roles and identity while challenging stereotypes about Swazi women, and Velaphi Mamba, who writes about political and social issues, including monarchy and land distribution. Ntsika Kota recently shone the spotlight on Eswatini when he won the Commonwealth Short Story Prize in 2022.²

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Eswatini National Council of Arts and Culture (ENCAC), located under the Ministry of Sports, Culture and Youth Affairs, is the custodian of Eswatini's book publishing sector. It provides financial support to various disciplines, including literature.

The National Library of Eswatini falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Training. Governed by the National Library Service Act (Act 4 of 2002), it plays the crucial role of collecting and preserving the country's documentary heritage while using digital information centres to increase access to knowledge. Included in its mandate is the legal deposit, although the Books

and Newspapers Act (No. 20 of 1963)³ seems to have an extended mandate that includes a form of legal deposit. The Act requires the registration of all newspapers and book publishers with the Registrar of Books and Newspapers. It furthermore requires the deposit of all printed material with the Registrar, failing which can lead to a fine and/or imprisonment. It, however, differs from legal deposit in that it focuses on controlling and regulating the content and distribution of media and books, and requires the registration and licensing of publishers.

The Ministry of Education and Training is also responsible for the procurement of textbooks, which is managed by the National Curriculum Centre (NCC).⁴ No centralized tender is apparent as the Centre procures primary school textbooks from one supplier. Intellectual property rights fall under the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry,⁵ where the Intellectual Property Office is responsible for the effective implementation of the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act, Act 4 of 2018.⁶

There are no specific laws governing the sector within the ENCAC. In its 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, the Council refers to several Bills that need to be passed. The Bills awaiting enactment include the Draft Arts and Culture Bill and the Draft Intellectual Property Rights Bill of 2012, which would apply to the book and publishing sector.⁷

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The VAT system in Eswatini is administered by the Commissioner for VAT within the Eswatini Revenue Authority. Textbooks are VAT exempt if they are approved – by the Ministry responsible for education – for the furtherance of education in a qualified educational institution established under public law.⁸ Furthermore, textbooks are printed in South Africa owing to the lack of suitable print infrastructure in Eswatini. No import duties or VAT are applied when these textbooks cross the border.

The national authority's survey response states that publishers have an agreement with the government to provide free copyright access for adapted versions of prescribed textbooks for the visually impaired. The same response indicates that the government sometimes purchases books for libraries through centralized tender.

According to the national authority's survey response, there are no public funding sources specific to publishing: sector companies apply for general business loans.

PUBLISHING

The largest publisher is the multinational company, Eswatini Macmillan, which is the sole supplier of textbooks at primary level. Macmillan was established in 1843 in Britain, when publishing was still foreign to Eswatini. Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, both foreign publishers operating out of South Africa, supply textbooks for the junior secondary level alongside Macmillan and Imisebe Publishing. The national authority's survey response corroborates the fact that there are only two publishers operating in Eswatini, namely Macmillan, with 90% of the market share, and Imisebe, the sole local publisher, with 5% of the market share. According to sector professionals,⁹ the primary-level textbook budget is, on average, approximately US\$813,000, while the budget for junior-secondary level is US\$271,000. Trade and academic revenue is estimated at 10% of educational publishing, leading to a total publishing revenue of \$1,192 million.¹⁰ It is further estimated that 20 titles were published in 2023.

Macmillan also supplies scholarly and academic books through the extensive imprints owned by the parent company, Macmillan Publishing Group.

No data could be established for digital versus print and audio production. The national authority's response suggests that consumers have a strong preference for print books over digital books and audiobooks.



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Books are published in English and siSwati, with 90% of them in English according to the national authority's survey response. Eswatini and South Africa share languages such as isiZulu and siSwati, and many Swati writers use South African publishers.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Macmillan Eswatini has the largest book warehousing and distribution facility in the country, with a network of approximately 36 independent educational booksellers. While the national authority's response reports 23 bookstores operating in 2023, Eswatini Macmillan's website states that the company alone operates through 36 bookstores in the country.¹¹ Van Schaik Bookstores, a South African-based academic bookseller, has two academic

bookshops in Eswatini, which adds up to 38 bookstores operating in Eswatini in 2023.

In the same survey response, bookstores are rated as the most important sales channel, followed by retail outlets, online stores, book fairs and direct sales. Primarily, bookstores sell educational texts and Christian literature. According to an interview with a local bookseller, all Christian literature is imported.¹²

In terms of employment, based on the national authority's survey response, there are 47 persons employed in the publishing industry. However, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 215 jobs generated by the sector in 2023.

The national authority's survey response indicates that piracy is affecting textbook publishing, although no evidence-based data is provided.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

There are 17 public libraries in Eswatini according to the national authority.¹³ No information is available on the reading habits and preferred reading formats of the people in Eswatini.

Eswatini hosts various cultural festivals that celebrate its rich cultural heritage, dance being a central feature. There is an opportunity to broaden these celebrations by incorporating literature, including storytelling and performance poetry.¹⁴ The national authority's survey response indicates that there were five book fairs or literary festivals operating in 2023.

The Eswatini National Council of Arts and Culture hosts the Eswatini National Arts and Culture Awards, which include an Outstanding Poet Award.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that, for the year 2023, the total value from imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$4,330,410. Export value amounted US\$5,272,310.¹⁵

Historically, South Africa and Britain were the primary suppliers of books to Eswatini.¹⁶ Today, Eswatini is almost entirely dependent on South Africa, as corroborated by the national authority's survey response.

TRAINING

No relevant training programmes were identified at tertiary institutions or among professional bodies. According to the national authority's survey response, training is conducted in-house by publishers.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Publishing activity in Eswatini is limited, which may be contributing to the absence of industry associations. The library sector is organized through the Eswatini Library and Information Association.¹⁷ A Reading Association of Swaziland was established in 1999, but no evidence of its further existence could be found beyond 2013.¹⁸ The national authority's survey response does, however, refer to a reading association that is slowly being revived after having been inactive for about 10 years.

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ETHIOPIA



Population **128.6 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **52%**
(2017)



GDP per capita **US\$1,272**
(2023)



Urban population **23%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **56%**



Internet users (2022) **19%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **50**

Titles published **778**

Bookstores **800**

Public libraries **448**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 287,250 inhabitants

Jobs **6,300**

Contribution to GDP **0.65%**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Ethiopian literature dates back to the ancient Axumite texts in Ge'ez script, from around 300 AD. Ge'ez served as the official written language until the 19th century. However, during the early modern period (16th–18th centuries), Amharic began to emerge as a written language. The advent of printing in Ethiopia appears to have spurred the development of Amharic literature. A key milestone in Amharic literature, Afework Gebre-Yesus's 1908 novel *Tobia*, not only marked the beginning of modern Amharic literature but was also the first novel in an Ethiopian and African language. However, significant modern works in Amharic literature did not emerge until the 1950s and 1960s.¹ Since then, renowned Ethiopian writers, including Kebede Mikaél, Tseggayé Gebre-Medhin, Dagnachew Worqu and Berhanu Zerihun, and contemporary authors such as Sebhat Gebre Egziabher, Gebre Kristos Desta, Yohannes Admasu and Solomon Deressa, have made significant contributions to the literary field.²

Initially focused on religious texts, the Ethiopian publishing sector evolved with the establishment of modern printing houses such as Berhanena Selam in 1914. The social changes brought by the 1974 revolution, which lasted until 1991, led to the establishment of the Ethiopian Book Enterprise (1977) and Kuraz Publishing House (1978), and the literacy campaign of 1979 that significantly boosted literary development.³ The book publishing sector continues to shape societal discourse and to foster intellectual growth, despite ongoing challenges, including high publishing costs, limited support for writers and the rise of self-publishing.^{4,5}

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Education (MOE) plays a crucial role in evaluating and approving school textbooks, ensuring these materials meet national educational standards. The Ministry of Culture and Sport (MoCS) leads efforts to develop cultural policies

with an emphasis on supporting the cultural and creative industries, including the literary and publishing sectors.⁶

An integral part of this institutional framework is the Ethiopian Intellectual Property Authority (EIPA), which manages copyright and intellectual property rights. It processes registrations and enforces laws to protect authors' works.⁷ The National Archives and Library Agency (NALA) is a line institution of the MoCS that operates as an autonomous agency. It serves as a hub for the written heritage in the country. It also offers training and consultancy services to support the intellectual needs of researchers, scholars, writers and the general public.⁸

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Very few public grants and programmes in Ethiopia support literacy through library development, national literacy campaigns, improved access to educational materials and teacher training.⁹ External initiatives enhance literacy through community libraries, benefiting students (especially girls) and adults. They also provide teacher and librarian training, and book supplies.¹⁰ One of them is the Canadian Organization for Development through Education, in the form of CODE-Ethiopia.

Regarding book purchasing, the Ethiopian Federal Government's Procurement and Property Administration Proclamation No. 649/2009 establishes a framework for national and international competitive bidding, emphasizing transparency, fairness and value for money.¹¹ This framework is employed by public institutions, including the MOE, for the procurement of general books and textbooks, engaging the private sector and leveraging economies of scale to supply affordable, high-quality textbooks in multiple languages to schools.¹² Additionally NALA acquires literary resources through purchases, gifts and mandatory deposits, in accordance with Proclamation No. 179/1999.¹³ NALA serves as the national repository for printed materials, grey literature, non-printed documents, manuscripts, historical archives and records.¹⁴

Public investment in the book publishing sector, though notable, remains sparse. Significant projects, such as the expansion of NALA's multi-purpose complex (completed in 2024) and the opening of the approximately US\$20.5 million (1.1 billion birr) Abrehot Library in 2022, reflect major public investments in the sector. Additionally, the development of school libraries and facilities in both urban and rural areas of Ethiopia significantly enhances access to diverse books and educational resources, particularly benefiting students and underprivileged communities.¹⁵ These efforts are supported by investments in information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructure, which facilitate digital learning and improve access to a wider range of books.¹⁶ A notable example of this is the establishment of the National Academy of Digital Library.¹⁷ Investments aimed at enhancing literacy, particularly among marginalized groups, can also be seen as indirect support for the book publishing industry by stimulating demand for books and fostering a culture of reading.¹⁸

PUBLISHING

In Ethiopia, the book and publishing sector operates under the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) system, administered by the National Archive and Library Agency (NALA).¹⁹ While general books do not require prior approval for publication, educational materials must be endorsed by the MOE.²⁰ Publishers, printers and authors must submit copies of their printed materials to NALA for proper archiving, as required by Proclamation No. 179/1999.²¹ Despite the market changes that saw the exit of some renowned publishers in the 1970s and 1980s²² and the gradual closure of many printing businesses as a result of increased market competition,²³ the sector has witnessed a resurgence, with around 800 printing companies and 50 publishers currently registered.²⁴

While no data are available for the annual number of titles published, based on the number of book publishing sector enterprises, a 4% growth rate estimate suggests that Ethiopia publishes around 778 titles per year.

Owing to the high cost of publishing, most general books are limited to 3,000 copies per title.²⁵ Educational materials, however, see far larger print runs. The MOE alone contracted 23 million copies for the 2022/23 academic year and 19 million for the 2023/24 academic year.²⁶ Although detailed revenue statistics by book category and format are not readily available, textbooks generate substantial revenue, with Ethiopia's e-book market projected to yield US\$15.10 million in 2024. The rising demand for e-books is fuelled by an increasingly tech-savvy population, with the number of e-book readers expected to reach 14.5 million by 2027.²⁷

Documentary research and interviews with stakeholders reveal the dominance of international publishers in Ethiopia's schoolbook sector. This seems to underscore the limited capacity of local players to meet large-scale demand.²⁸ However, some local publishers, including Aster Nega Publishing Enterprise, established in 2005, have published over 500 titles across various subjects, of which over 99% are educational materials.²⁹ Online academic publishing from Ethiopian universities is also growing, particularly in collaboration with international institutions from the United States of America, the United Kingdom and India, among others, with English serving as the primary language of publication.³⁰

The adult illiteracy rate for women stands at 58%, compared to 42% for men, and this imbalance is reflected in the literary sector.³¹ Of the 469 members of the Ethiopian Writers Association (EWA), only 17% are women, highlighting the underrepresentation of female authors.³² Employment surveys by the Ethiopian Statistics Service reveal shifts in the sector. In 2021, 6,934 people were employed as authors, journalists and linguists, with 61% men and 39% women. By 2022, employment figures dropped to 3,726 and the proportion of women had increased to 42.7%. Meanwhile, the publishing sector saw a rise in female participation from 8.8% in 2021 to 34.5% in 2022.^{33,34} The rise in female participation might be linked to changes in survey methodology or sampling, or involvement in large-scale, time-limited projects coinciding with the survey period, causing a sharp but possibly temporary increase.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The distribution of books faces considerable challenges, particularly in rural and remote areas where the infrastructure is underdeveloped and costs are high.³⁵ The MOE facilitates textbook distribution through zonal and district channels, while bookstores rely on regional networks to reach their customers.

Sales channels for books in Ethiopia are driven predominantly by small roadside bookshops and street vendors, who absorb a substantial portion of the cover price. While estimates suggest that the number of bookshops in Addis Ababa ranges between 700 and 1,000,^{36,37} and street vendors number between 500 and 1,000,³⁸ the precise data on digital bookstores remain unavailable. Meanwhile, digital sales platforms such as EthioBooks are gaining popularity, signalling a shift towards online book purchasing.³⁹

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 6,300 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

In addition to these platforms, book fairs and literary festivals have become crucial venues for sales and promotion. Key institutions such as NALA, Addis Ababa University (AAU), EWA, the Ethiopian Publishers and Printers Association (EPPA) and organizations such as Ethiopia Reads, frequently spearhead such events. Based on available information, it is estimated that Ethiopia hosts between thirty to forty book fairs annually. NALA alone organizes around twelve fairs each year across the country. Other major events, such as the Nibab Lehiwot, Jiggiga International Book Fair, Youth Book Fair, the Addis Ababa International Book Fair and the Ethiopian Book Fair, add to this count, though some may not be held every year. Universities such as AAU, along with regional cultural bureaus, NGOs and other cultural organizations, also contribute by hosting fairs across the country.

At the same time, book awards play a vital role in promoting the sector. While the exact number of awards organized each year is unknown, prestigious honours such as the HOHE Literary Awards, the National Book Awards, the Burt Award for African Literature (facilitated by CODE-Ethiopia) and the BCA African Business Book of the Year significantly elevate the profiles of authors and publishers.^{40,41,42}

Although comprehensive figures on book sales and revenue remain elusive, it is clear that intermediaries capture a substantial portion of the revenue.⁴³ As mentioned earlier, the e-book market is projected to generate US\$15.10 million in 2024,⁴⁴ with further growth anticipated in the coming years.

While no data could be found on piracy, according to sector stakeholders, despite the gradual rise of online book distribution, the issue of piracy presents a significant obstacle for authors and publishers alike. This illicit activity includes the unauthorized scanning and distribution of copyrighted books or selling e-books without the author's consent.⁴⁵ Moreover, many books in Ethiopia are reportedly published by unlicensed organizations, further exacerbating the issue by allowing unauthorized reprints for profit without the authors' knowledge or approval.^{46,47} Efforts to combat this issue include strengthening intellectual property laws and promoting legal access to books, ensuring that authors and publishers can rightfully benefit from their work.⁴⁸

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

Comprehensive surveys on reading habits in Ethiopia are scarce. Small-scale academic studies on higher education students and secondary school teachers reveal that both groups exhibit weak reading habits.^{49,50} Observations from respondents at NALA echo these findings, noting that even university graduates demonstrate limited reading engagement. NALA reports that its primary library users tend to be students, especially during exam periods. To address the broader issue, several organizations – such as Enanbib, Enabib, Ethiopia Reads,



Ancient Goatskin Book, Entons Church Museum, Lake Tana, Near Bahir Dar, Ethiopia © Adam Jones / Wikimedia Commons

universities, cultural bureaus, the EWA, and NALA – collaborate on monthly literacy campaigns across various regions. These campaigns include the establishment of reading clubs, which are regularly assessed for their impact on fostering a reading culture.^{51,52} A particularly noteworthy initiative, the READ CO project, has introduced school reading corners, clubs, community camps and book banks.

Although precise data on the average number of books read per capita in Ethiopia remain elusive, it is widely understood that this figure is low. Given the lack of comprehensive data on readers'

preferences for non-educational book categories, limited insights from industry business owners in the *Ethiopian Business Review* indicate that short stories, prose, memoirs of military narratives and political leaders and biographies are currently the most popular types in the market.⁵³ Similarly, specific details regarding preferred reading formats in Ethiopia are scarce.

The availability of libraries in Ethiopia has grown over the past two decades, owing largely to significant investments in education. As of 2023, there were 448 public libraries in Ethiopia. NALA has consistently supported libraries nationwide.

For five and a half years, NALA supplied 337,916 books valued at approximately US\$1.4 million (60.5 million birr), according to their report. The expansion of public, academic and community libraries, including the prominent Abrehot Library in Addis Ababa, marks a positive shift toward increasing access to reading materials.⁵⁴ Discussions with NALA staff⁵⁵ reveal that book donations from the Ethiopian diaspora and various organizations, including NALA, are helping to alleviate resource shortages in schools and libraries. However, detailed data on the circulation of these donations remain limited. In contrast, members of EPPA expressed mixed feelings.⁵⁶ While some acknowledged the positive impact on resource shortages, others voiced concerns that large-scale donations, particularly from abroad, could undermine the local publishing industry.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

In 2022, Ethiopia's trade in printed books, newspapers and pictures reflected a significant imbalance, with imports valued at US\$20.49 million⁵⁷ compared to exports of just US\$84.4 thousand.⁵⁸ This disparity underscores the country's reliance on imported educational and academic materials to meet local demand. The bulk of these imports came from India, Germany and the United Kingdom,⁵⁹ likely driven by factors such as cost efficiency, the quality of content, established trade relationships and curriculum compatibility.

On the export side, the United States of America is a significant destination for Ethiopian exports in this sector.⁶⁰ This can be attributed to the demand from the large Ethiopian diaspora, with the United States of America being the leading host country for nearly half a million Ethiopian descendants.

TRAINING

Training programmes play a vital role in advancing the book publishing sector, with over fifteen universities and colleges, including Addis Ababa University, Jimma University and Bahir Dar University offering degrees in Literature and Linguistics, Journalism and Communication, Library and Information Science, and Printing Technology. These academic paths provide foundational skills in writing, editing, literary analysis, media management, archiving and printing.⁶¹ Additionally, although data on publishing-specific training are limited, participation in related fields that support the sector has been tracked. For example, Library & Information Services training saw 3,728 participants in 2021, increasing to 5,145 in the first round of the 2022 Urban Employment Unemployment Survey. In contrast, participation in Folklore & Literature training dropped from 15,182 in 2021 to 5,439 in 2022.^{62,63}

Alongside degree programmes, short-term workshops and specific skills training are offered, particularly in the printing services sector. For instance, Artistic Printing Enterprise provides training across East Africa,⁶⁴ while Birhanena Selam Printing Technology College offers both long-term programmes and short-term courses in areas such as graphic design, printing technology and screen printing.⁶⁵ Furthermore, NALA supports the sector with training in library, records and archive management throughout the year.⁶⁶

As the sector adapts to modern technologies, training increasingly focuses on digital and technical competencies such as e-book production and digital marketing. In addition to technical skills, advocacy and capacity-building, initiatives from groups such as the EWA, Ready Set Go Books, the Abrehot Library, Ethiopia Reads and Selam Ethiopia contribute significantly to fostering reading habits and equipping professionals with the expertise needed to thrive in Ethiopia's evolving publishing landscape.⁶⁷

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Ethiopian Publishers and Printers Association (EPPA) supports publishers and organizes book fairs, while the Ethiopian Writers Association (EWA) promotes literature and assists authors.⁶⁸ EWA has established a revolving fund in partnership with local printing presses to support writers.

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GABON



Population **2.3 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate **86.3%**
(≥15 years old) (2023)



GDP per capita **US\$445**
(2023)



Urban population **80%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2023) **90%**



Internet users (2023) **71.7%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **21**

Titles published **200**

Bookstores **3**

Public libraries **12**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 191,700 inhabitants

Jobs **1,000**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Gabon's first publishing house, *Les Éditions Udégiennes*, owned by the Union of Gabonese Writers (*Union des Écrivains Gabonais* – UDEG), was established in 1987, followed by *Ndze* (1991), *Emma's Media* (1999) and *Raponda-Walker* (1996).

Gabon experienced a literary boom in the early 2000s, leading to the creation of almost 21 publishing houses between 2010 and 2024. Literary events such as the International Book and Arts Fair of Libreville (*Salon International du Livre et des Arts de Libreville*, 2011), organized by the Association for the Promotion of Books and Arts (*Association pour la Promotion du Livre et des Arts* – APLA), were followed by the International Festival of Gabonese Books and the Arts (*Festival International du Livre Gabonais et des Arts* – FILIGA), as well as the Women's Book and Arts Festival (*Festival du Livre féminin et des Arts*) and the Youth Book Festival.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and the Arts is responsible for Gabon's book and publishing policy, more specifically the Book Department under the General Directorate of Arts and Cultural Industries.¹ The Book Department's mission is to develop, implement and promote publishing and books throughout France and internationally. The Gabonese Office for Copyright and Related Rights (*le Bureau Gabonais du Droit d'Auteur et des Droits Voisins* – BUGADA) was established in 2013 to oversee the protection of authors' rights. Copyright and related rights are governed by law No. 1/87, which was updated in 2024.²

Legal deposit was instituted in 1971 by decree no. 00048/PR, under which one or two copies of printed works of any kind publicly offered for sale, distribution or hire or given away for reproduction, must be deposited with the National Library.

The content of schoolbooks is guided by the National Pedagogical Institute (*Institut Pédagogique National*), which is a Ministry of Education department. Schoolbooks have been published by local publishers since 2020 for primary school titles, and since 2024 for secondary school titles. The same department also recommends books by Gabonese authors for the programme.

On the issue of piracy, which affects mainly the schoolbook market, the Criminal Code provides for financial penalties and imprisonment for offences.³ In 2012, the UDEG and the judicial police⁴ organized a vast operation to seize counterfeited books, arresting a number of booksellers.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

In Gabon, printed books are exempt from VAT in accordance with national regulations and the tax code.

Since the early 2000s, the Ministry of Education has made the study of Gabonese works compulsory in high schools. According to the national authority's response to the survey, the Ministry of Education initiates partnerships to acquire books for school establishments. The government also puts out public book tenders to supply university and public libraries. Through ministerial decision, since 2024, Gabonese publishing houses have benefited from these invitations to tender.

PUBLISHING

There is no ISBN agency in Gabon. National publishers obtain ISBNs for their publications through the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (*Agence Francophone de la Numérotation Internationale du Livre* – AFNIL). Documentary research indicates that in 2023, Gabon counted 21 publishing houses, including *Editions Raponda Walker*, *Éditions Ntsame*, created in 2010 and a major stakeholder in the schoolbook market since 2020, *La Maison Gabonaise du Livre* (founded in 2003), etc.

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PAYS INVITÉ D'HONNEUR
CÔTE D'IVOIRE

PAYS ATTENDUS

THÈME
FACE À L'HISTOIRE, RÉÉCRIRE ET VIVRE SON ÉPOQUE.

du 30 mai au 01 juin 2024

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Conférences - Débats - Tables Rondes - Rencontres
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Among the young publishers are Bistephe Éditions, Éditions Mengane, specialising in books on Gabonese culture, and Éditions Génération Ekang, specialising in comic books on the Mvet, a Gabonese epic, les Éditions Amaya, that between 2014 and 2015, organized two literary competitions named Pick up your pens (A vos plumes) to help new Gabonese writers emerge.

Concerning the schoolbook market in particular, the State encourages local publishing houses, such as *Éditions Ntsame* and *Multipresse*, to benefit from approvals. Every year at the start of the school year, demand for books by national authors on the curriculum is high, creating a market opportunity for the country's publishers. However, demand cannot be fully met, which opens the door to piracy. According to some Gabonese authors, revenue losses owing to piracy are considerable: between 50% and 70%.⁵

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that in Gabon, the main distribution channels for book sales are physical bookshops and retail outlets (stationery shops, etc.). There are two major distributors in Gabon: *Sogapresse*, which is the national distributor of national and international newspapers, periodicals and schoolbooks, and *Livre+*, which has a network of around 40 bookshops throughout the country. *Éditions Ntsame* also owns 3 bookshops. In total, there are 69 bookshops in the country, but they all have a stationery business at their centre.

In terms of employment, our estimations, based on all available data and additional research, count 1,057 people employed in the sector in 2023.

Gabon currently has three major book festivals and fairs: International Festival of Gabonese Books and the

Arts (*Festival International du Livre Gabonais et des Arts* – FILIGA), as well as the Women's Book and Arts Festival (*Festival du Livre féminin et des Arts*) since 2022, and the Youth Book Festival (*Salon du Livre de Jeunesse de Libreville* – SLJL), the first edition of which was held in 2024.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

While there are no reports available on reading habits in Gabon, the national authority's response to the survey indicates that print remains the format preferred by readers. According to the national authority, there are 12 public libraries in Gabon, including some ten Reading and Cultural Activity Centers (*Centres de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle* – CLACs).

As far as young people are concerned, a number of associations are involved in promoting reading in Greater Libreville and inland.

For example, the APLA has been organizing the reading competition for primary school pupils called *The Reading champions Justine Minsta (Les champions de la lecture Justine Minsta)*, in collaboration with the town halls of the municipalities in the interior of the country since 2019. The public media have also been helping to promote Gabonese literature since the 1970s, for example through TV programmes on the *Gabon Première* and *Gabon Culture* channels of the group *Gabon Télévisions*. The national daily *L'Union* also contributes to the dissemination of Gabonese literature through its various columns and reports on literary events.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2023, the total value of book sector imports – including printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials – amounted to US\$2,467,150. The main import countries are France, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and India. As for exports, they amounted to US\$78,490.⁶

TRAINING

Although there are as yet no comprehensive training courses in the book trade in Gabon, the Sophie Ntoutoume Emame Institute of Organizational Sciences (*Institut des Sciences de l'Organisation Sophie Ntoutoume Emame* – IUSO) offers training in documentation, as does the *École Normale Supérieure* (ENS), which trains educators in information and documentation sciences.

Occasional training workshops are held for professionals in the sector, such as the one on authors' rights organized as part of the SLJL in 2024. Workshops on children's books, writing school textbooks and comic strips were also organized at that edition of SLJL.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

While Gabonese writers are united within the UDEG, founded in 1987, this is not the case for Gabonese publishers, who have no representative association.

NOTES

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GAMBIA



Population **2.7 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **59%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$888**
(2023)



Urban population **64%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2021) **101%**



Internet users (2022) **54%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **3**

Titles published **17**

Bookstores **1**

Public libraries **5**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 540,000 inhabitants

Jobs **200**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

With his early publications in the 1960s marking the beginning of a formal literary tradition, Dr Lenrie Peters is widely recognized as the founder of Gambian literature. Peters' novel *The Second Round* (1965) and poetry collections titled *Satellites* (1967) and *Katchikali* (1971) are foundational works, reflecting themes of national identity. From 1971 to 1976, Peters also fostered Gambian literary production by founding *Ndanaan*, a literary magazine published by the Gambian Writers Club, which provided a platform for emerging writers.

Writing under the sobriquet of Ramatoulie Kinteh, Augusta Jawara, a prominent advocate for women's rights, contributed to Gambian literature with plays titled *Rebellion* (1960) and *Master Brain* (1966), which championed education and women's empowerment. Ebou Dibba, counted among Gambia's foremost novelists, authored *Chaff on the Wind* (1986), regarded as the nation's first significant novel, exploring themes of social change. Another notable figure, Tijan Sallah, enriched West African poetry with works like *When Africa Was a Young Woman*, reflecting on African heritage and identity.¹ Nana Grey-Johnson's *The Magic Calabash*, a novel published in 2004, evokes the context of economic, social, and political upheavals in development.

Major achievements in the evolution of the book and publishing industry in Gambia include the establishment of pivotal institutions like the Book Production and Material Resources Unit (BPMRU) in 1973, the National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC)² in 1989, the Gambia National Library Service Authority (GNLSA) in 2009,³ and the Writers' Association of The Gambia (WAG) in 2009, which succeeded the erstwhile Gambia Association of Writers and Artists (GAWA).⁴

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC), operating under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, enforces copyright protections in accordance with the Copyright Act of 2004 and its subsequent revisions. Collaborations with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) have enhanced the NCAC's function by incorporating culturally pertinent materials into the curriculum, supporting local authors, and safeguarding intellectual property.

It supports these initiatives by approving educational resources aligned with the national curriculum. The MoBSE has prioritized the commissioning of educational materials authored by Gambians, incorporating local narratives to enable students to interact with literature pertinent to Gambian culture. The Gambia Printing and Publishing Corporation emerged in 2006⁵ from the former Book Production and Materials Resources Unit under the Ministry of Education as a separate entity primarily responsible for printing Government materials.

The GNLSA is a fundamental entity for bibliographic and library services. It facilitates ISBN issuing for local authors and collaborates with educational institutions to enhance the accessibility of Gambian literature across the country. The Gambia National Library Service Act of 2009 mandates the management of ISBNs, the execution of legal deposits, and the archiving of national publications.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

While there are no dedicated policies for the book and publishing sector reported by the national authority in the survey response, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture provides financial support to the National Centre for Arts and Culture to organize writers' workshops and fund cultural activities and partnerships initiated by entities such as the Writers' Association of The Gambia, although not on a regular basis.

The Education Sector Policy 2016–2030,⁶ which focuses on an inclusive education system, promotes book development.

PUBLISHING

According to the national authority's survey response, in 2023, the publishing sector in Gambia consisted of three recognized publishing houses. Publishing and distribution remain primarily print-based owing to the country's limited digital infrastructure and an internet penetration rate of only 54%. The sector produced 49 titles between 2021 and 2023, including 48 printed books and one digital title.⁷

Also, according to the national authority's survey response, the book and publishing sector employs approximately 200 individuals, with women representing 40% of these positions. Revenue data for the sector are unavailable. It seems that the centralisation of publishing activities in urban areas has concentrated efforts on educational resources, literature and intellectual works. Gambians seem to maintain a strong preference for printed books, which might also be explained by low internet access and a lack of digital bookshops. Initiatives to expand digital publishing seem to face challenges, especially in training and resource availability, impeding the digitisation of books and the accessibility of e-books and audiobooks.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES, AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's survey response, Gambia has only one physical bookstore: the Timbooktoo Bookshop, a key distributor of Gambian literature that offers a selection of local and international publications.

The same source indicates that Gambia has five public libraries. They are overseen by the Gambia National Library Services Authority and play an essential role in distribution, though their reach is limited mainly to urban districts.



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Numerous Gambian authors engage in outreach initiatives and partner with bookshops, academic institutions, and community libraries to enhance accessibility. Projects like the 'My Gambia, Read to Lead the World Campaign' by the writer and founder of Suba Kunda Publishers, Amir Yaya Sillah, have popularized Gambian literary works among secondary-school students.⁸

Literary events like the Kunta Kinteh International Book Festival held every year since 2019 and the Mboja Festival of Arts, Culture and Sports initiated in 2017 promote Gambian literature by showcasing local authors and facilitating direct sales opportunities.⁹ Additionally, programmes like Book Fair Africa work to expand Gambian literature's readership and attract interest from both publishers and readers outside Gambia.¹⁰

The Senegambia Book Prize reflects collaborative efforts between Gambia and Senegal. It recognizes and promotes literary talent across borders, thereby enhancing the subregion's literary presence.

Regarding textbooks, within the framework of the Education for All Fast-track Initiative (World Bank, 2009-2011),¹¹

local authors were promoted by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) through the publication of supplementary books such as folktales, short stories and novels.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

While there is no official survey on reading habits, the reading habits of the Gambian population seem to be focused mostly on printed books, with a combination of local and international institutions actively fostering a culture of reading, according to various stakeholders.

Regarding public reading promotion, local initiatives like the Orange Library aim to foster a reading culture by increasing book accessibility for communities across the country.¹² International cooperation is also playing a key role, such as the American Corner Gambia, which offers accessible public resources, digital literacy assistance, and community-oriented reading initiatives. It functions as a community centre, providing workshops, access to global literature, and educational initiatives that enhance Gambian cultural narratives.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

According to practitioners, the Gambian book market relies significantly on imported educational, literary and technical publications.¹³ Documentary research indicates that, for the year 2023, the total value from imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$1,529,690.¹⁴

Based on the national authority's survey response, Gambia imports mainly books from Nigeria, the United Kingdom, Ghana and Senegal. No data are available regarding the export of books.

TRAINING

There are no technical, professional, or higher education training programmes for the book and publishing sector in Gambia identified in this study.

The Writers' Association of The Gambia reported that the National Centre for Arts and Culture, in collaboration with them, established programmes to assist young authors by providing training in creative writing, editing and copyright awareness. While mostly implemented during the COVID-19 period, these seminars provided young talent with the skills necessary to create and disseminate their works, thereby enhancing the literary community in Gambia.

Furthermore, according to the same source, the Gambia's book and publishing industry partners with both international and local organizations to improve training and develop the skills of authors, publishers and literary professionals.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Writers' Association of The Gambia (WAG) is the principal organization that advocates for local authors and advances Gambian literature through events, workshops, and collaborations with governmental entities such as the National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC). For example, the initiatives led by WAG, such as the annual World Book and Copyright Day celebrations in 2023 and the Dr. Lenrie Peters Memorial Prize for Literature in 2015, have contributed to the visibility of Gambian authors and nurtured literary talent.

Additionally, Gambia has progressively engaged in regional and international partnerships to enhance its publishing industry. Alliances with the Pan-African Writers Association (PAWA) and the Senegalese Writers Association (AES), as well as participation in initiatives such as the Senegambia Book Prize Award, have afforded Gambian writers opportunities to connect with extensive literary networks throughout Africa and beyond.

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GHANA



Population **33.8 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **80%**
(2020)



GDP per capita **US\$2,260**
(2023)



Urban population **59%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **120%**



Internet users (2022) **70%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **250**

Titles published **5,403**

Bookstores **467** (2024)

Public libraries **138**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 244,900 inhabitants

Jobs **24,000**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

European missionaries, particularly the Basel Mission, played a pivotal role in the publishing sector in Ghana (then Gold Coast) by establishing the first printing press in Akropong in 1858. This press focused primarily on printing religious texts and books promoting literacy in local languages including Twi and Ga to facilitate the spread of Christianity among the indigenous people.¹

The period following the Second World War and the rise of Ghanaian nationalism brought significant changes to publishing. Printing presses began producing materials that reflected Ghanaian identity and culture. Political advocacy newspapers such as the *Accra Evening News*, edited by Kwame Nkrumah, became platforms advocating for independence and mobilizing public opinion.

With Ghana's independence in 1957, the book and publishing sector experienced significant transformation. The newly independent government recognized the importance of education in nation-building and invested in expanding the educational system. In March 1965, under Legislative Instrument No. 413, the Ghana Publishing Corporation was established to take over the functions of the former Government Printing Department and the administration of the Government Free Textbook Scheme.² The Corporation became a major force in the production of textbooks and other educational resources.

With the expansion of education and the demand for books, privately-owned publishers such as Anowuo Educational Publications, Afram Publications, Adwinsa Publications and Sedco Publishing began to emerge, catering to educational and cultural needs. This period saw the establishment of more local publishing houses and an increase in the publication of works by Ghanaian authors, fostering a sense of national identity and cultural pride. Notable contributions were A.W. Kayper-Mensah's *The Drummer in*

Our Time (1965) and Kofi Awoonor's *Rediscovery and Other Poems* (1964). Other significant works included Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965), Asare Konadu's *A Woman In Her Prime* (1967), Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* (performed widely in the 1960s). More contemporary writing includes Ayesha Harruna Attah's *Harmattan Rain* (2008) and Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016).

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Several public institutions play critical roles in managing the book and publishing sector in the country. The Ghana Book Development Council (GBDC) was established in 1975 under the Ministry of Education (MoE) to promote the book industry and to address its challenges. Its main goals are to develop and coordinate national policies to promote the publishing industry, and to support local publishers by providing training and promoting best practice. It also advocates for literacy and a reading culture through public campaigns and collaborations with educational institutions. In collaboration with the GBDC and other stakeholder organisations, the Ghana Publishers Association has been organising the Ghana International Book Fair (GIBF) since 1996.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) is an entity mandated by the Education Regulatory Bodies Act (Act No. 1023 of 2020) to develop national curriculum and assessment standards for pre-tertiary educational bodies other than technical and vocational education and training institutions. NaCCA evaluates and approves textbooks for use in schools, ensuring that they meet national curriculum standards. Its implementation of the Free Senior High School policy and its curriculum reforms have driven demand for locally produced textbooks.

To support these reforms, the MoE has invested heavily in the procurement of millions of textbooks from local publishers for distribution to all public junior and senior high schools. This has not only increased the volume of locally produced educational materials but has also provided a critical boost for the local publishing industry.

The Ghana Copyright Office operates under the Ministry of Justice & Attorney General's Office. The functions of the Copyright Office, as set out in the Copyright Act (Act No. 690 of 2005), provide the legal framework and enforcement mechanisms necessary to protect intellectual property rights. Its work ensures that the rights of authors, publishers and other stakeholders in the industry are safeguarded, fostering a sustainable and thriving publishing ecosystem.

Closely connected to the copyright office is CopyGhana, the reproduction rights organization that collects royalties on behalf of authors and publishers from institutions that use works falling under copyright. The money it collects is then distributed to the rights holders as compensation for the use of their intellectual property.

The Book and Newspaper Registration Act (Act No. 73 of 1961) mandates the legal deposit of published materials, ensuring that copies are archived for public access and government records, contributing to the preservation of the nation's literary heritage.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Compulsory basic education and the free textbook scheme in Ghana became statutory educational policy in 1962. Current government policy (since 2017) provides for free education and the free provision of textbooks in all public schools, from basic to senior high. While figures are not readily available, the government is the biggest buyer of textbooks and supplementary readers for schools in Ghana.

The Value Added Tax Act (Act No. 546 of 1998) added tax to print books, e-books and audiobooks, thereby increasing the cost of publishing and purchasing books, and potentially reducing accessibility and affordability for readers. However, the Act was amended in 2006 to classify locally produced textbooks as zero-rated supplies, ensuring that locally published textbooks are exempt from VAT and reducing the cost to consumers. This has provided significant relief for the local publishing industry.³

The national authority's response to the survey revealed no specific public investment figures for the book and publishing sector, and no mechanisms for financial support. While school textbooks are procured through a centralized tender process, there are no government-backed programmes for purchasing or distributing books for libraries. Accessibility efforts for people with disabilities show some promise, for instance books in braille for the visually impaired, but these initiatives remain limited to specialised centres and are not part of a broader national strategy.

PUBLISHING

According to estimates from the Ghana Publishers Association, Ghana's publishing industry in 2023 comprised 250 publishing houses while 160 are registered members of the Association, which is the number reported by the national authority survey response. However, the majority specialize in textbook publishing, driven by the educational demands of basic, secondary and tertiary institutions. This focus reflects the industry's close relationship with the educational sector and government curriculum policies.

An analysis of data from the Ghana Library Authority, supplemented by a review of the literature and stakeholder interactions, reveals a consistent decline in international standard book number (ISBN) registrations over a three-year period: 2,500 in 2020, 2,200 in 2021, and 2,000 in 2022 (a number corroborated by the International Publishers Association).^{4,5}

At the same time, according to the World Intellectual Property Organization's *Global Publishing Industry* reports from 2020 to 2022, book deposits at recognized repositories reveal a growing diversity in publishing formats in Ghana. In 2020, a total of 1,147 titles were deposited, of which 1,097 were print and 50 were digital. In 2021, of 1,056 titles deposited, 1,039 were print and only 17 were digital. By 2022, total titles increased to 1,389, comprising 1,137 print books and a significant rise to 252 digital titles. According to the Ghana Publishers Association, however, the total for titles published in 2023 was 5,403.⁶

This rise in digital titles in 2022 underscores an emerging trend toward digital publishing, possibly fuelled by evolving reading habits, technological advancements and increased internet accessibility. Akoobooks Audio, founded in 2017, is Ghana's first publisher of, and digital streaming platform for, Black/African audiobooks. Its content is also available in multiple African languages.

Published titles use primarily English (the official language), with local languages such as Twi, Ga and Ewe also widely used. According to the national authority's survey response, local publishers are exclusive suppliers in the public schoolbook market, with no involvement from multinational or foreign groups. In 2023, the survey states, public schoolbook purchases amounted to US\$27,004,219, all for printed books, with no data available for digital or audiobook formats.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Although the national authority's response to the survey states that there were only 10 physical bookstores – the main purpose of which was to sell books – operating in Ghana in 2023, Rentech Digital reported that Ghana had a total of 467 bookstores as of December 2024. Among these, 461 stores (98.72%) were independently owned, while the remaining 6 (1.28%) were affiliated with larger companies.

The majority of bookstores are located in the Greater Accra Region (330), the Ashanti Region (54) and the Western Region (27).⁷

Rentech Digital also reports that bookstores in Ghana are increasingly building a digital presence across multiple platforms. Among them, 3 have LinkedIn profiles, 23 maintain Facebook pages, 18 are active on Instagram, 18 have X (formerly Twitter) accounts, 2 use TikTok, and 7 operate YouTube channels. Additionally, 81 bookstores have their own websites.⁸ The national authority's survey response also reveals the diverse roles played by various sales channels, with physical bookstores remaining in the dominant position.

While online bookstores were ranked as receiving a moderate level of engagement in the market by the national authority, online platforms such as BookNook Store, SyTris Bookshop, EPP Bookstore and Mayan Book Centre are further transforming the publishing landscape in Ghana by expanding access to books and connecting publishers, authors and readers. BookNook Store stands out with its diverse offerings, including African literature, children's books and bestsellers. It is supported by nationwide delivery and an active social media presence. SyTris Bookshop caters to educational needs, with books for all age groups and academic levels. Meanwhile, Mayan Book Centre, headquartered in Accra, offers a broad range of books across genres, coupled with delivery services that make books accessible across the country. As in other countries, the adoption of mobile money services facilitates online transactions, further enabling the growth of e-commerce in the book industry.

Digital book subscription services have also entered the Ghanaian market. Bookmate, a Russian⁹ e-book service, was launched at the Ghana International Book Fair in 2023, in partnership with a telco company. Mobile users can conveniently pay for their Bookmate subscriptions using their mobile airtime, by joining YouScribe, a France-based service that has been expanding into English-speaking African countries.^{10,11}



Accra World Book Capital 2023 © UNESCO / George Koranteng

Events such as the Ghana International Book Fair serve as a central hub where local and international book industry players converge to exhibit their works, explore business opportunities and engage with readers, thereby enhancing the visibility and reach of publishers and authors. Similarly, literary festivals such as Pa Gya! A Literary Festival in Accra, organized by the Writers Project of Ghana, provide platforms for readings, panel discussions and book launches, fostering direct interactions between authors and audiences. The Accra International Book Festival is a three-day annual event. It is also the organizer of the Accra Children's Book Festival, announced in 2019.

Literary awards, such as the Ghana Association of Writers (GAW) Literary Awards, the S.I. Idrissu Literary Award and the Golden Baobab Prize are vital in promoting literary excellence, encouraging emerging writers and enhancing the visibility of Ghanaian literature both nationally and internationally. Established in 1987, the GAW Literary Awards honour outstanding works in various categories, including novels, short stories and poetry. The S.I. Idrissu Literary Award recognizes exceptional contributions to literature, fostering a culture of reading and writing among Ghanaians. The Golden Baobab Prize focuses on promoting African children's literature, encouraging writers to create engaging and educational

content for young readers. The Aidoo-Snyder Book Prize, established in 2004 and awarded by the Women's Caucus of the African Studies Association, honours scholarly and creative works that prioritise African women's experiences.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 24,000 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the national authority's survey response, there are 138 public libraries in Ghana, operating nationwide. Despite the relatively low number of libraries, these institutions play a crucial role in enhancing the visibility and reach of publishers and authors. They also serve as venues for book launches, readings and community engagement activities, facilitating direct interactions between authors, publishers and readers.

Access to reading materials remains a significant challenge in Ghana. Based on Worldreader figures, only 7% of children have books at home.¹² This scarcity contributes to literacy struggles, with a 2021 survey by World Vision Ghana revealing that only 3% of Grade 2 students can read with comprehension.¹³

Despite some recognition of the value of reading among older students, as evidenced by a 45.19% acknowledgment rate at Eastbank Senior High School in a 2018 case study, actual reading engagement remains insufficient. Studies in pre-tertiary technical institutions similarly reveal a gap: students understand the importance of reading, but fail to adopt regular reading habits beyond those meeting their academic needs.¹⁴

To address these challenges, various initiatives have been implemented to promote reading culture. The GBDC advocates for family reading as a tool to ensure that the culture of reading permeates all levels of society. Mobile libraries, such as Street Library Ghana, have been instrumental in reaching underserved communities, providing access to quality literature and fostering a love of reading among children and youth. These efforts aim to cultivate a reading culture that enhances literacy rates and contributes to the overall development of the nation.

Other initiatives include after-school reading clubs, to enhance students' reading skills and foster a reading culture. The Reading Improvement and Skills Enhancement Programme, supported by World Vision Ghana, operates over 240 after-school reading clubs in 260 communities. Community-driven efforts to encourage reading have been implemented, emphasizing the need for culturally relevant materials and sustained engagement in developing a lasting reading culture. The Literacy and Community Development Programme, launched by Pamoja Ghana with support from Action Aid Ghana, is an intergenerational, integrated and multilingual literacy and social development programme. The Programme, with its current 3,340 active participants, aims, among other goals, to facilitate literacy and reading skills.¹⁵ Community-based reading clinics, implemented in ten communities by International Needs Ghana, also provide targeted reading support to children, enhancing their literacy skills and fostering their love of reading.

Accra was designated by UNESCO as the World Book Capital for 2023. During the year the city organized activities such as reading sessions in schools, with the aim of empowering youth through books. This cultural initiative brought several key advantages to the country, including a new initiative to promote Ghanaian literature nationwide, backed by the Mmofra Foundation. This project involves displaying impactful quotations and excerpts from books by prominent Ghanaian authors on mobile billboards throughout Accra's communities.¹⁶

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

According to the national authority's response to the study, Ghana imported books from various countries, among which are the United Kingdom and the United States of America, followed by smaller contributions from Italy, China and India.

However, documentary research reports that Ghana's imports of printed books, brochures and related materials in 2023 were valued at approximately US\$36.4 million. The primary sources for these imports were India (60%); China (13%); the United Kingdom (8%); the United States of America (5%); and Germany (3%).¹⁷

Conversely, Ghana's exports of printed books and related materials were markedly lower, totalling US\$65,890 in 2023. The main destinations for these exports included the United Arab Emirates (13%), Côte d'Ivoire (12%), Gambia (11%), Sierra Leone (7%), the United States of America (5%) and Germany (3%). This stark disparity between imports and exports highlights Ghana's dependence on imported printed materials to satisfy domestic demand.¹⁸

TRAINING

In Ghana, the training landscape for the publishing industry is anchored primarily by the Department of Publishing Studies at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Established in 1984 with UNESCO's support, this department offers Bachelor of Arts and

MPhil programmes in Publishing Studies. The curriculum encompasses areas such as book production, printing technology and publishing management, aiming to produce skilled professionals equipped for various facets of the book publishing industry.¹⁹

Complementing this academic training, vocational and technical institutions, including the Tema Technical Institute, provide practical skills in printing, focusing on traditional printing processes essential to the publishing trade. However, these programmes do not often extend to diversified roles such as editing, marketing or digital publishing. Occasionally, workshops and training sessions are organized by the Ghana Publishers Association and its partners to enhance industry skills. Despite these efforts, according to professionals in the sector, there remains an obvious gap in formal training programmes. Notable in this respect are programmes addressing modern developments such as digital publishing (including e-books and audiobooks), which is increasingly significant in the global publishing landscape.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Ghana Publishers Association serves as the cornerstone for local publishers, uniting them to build capacity, organize the Ghana International Book Fair and regional book fairs, and advocate for policies that advance the publishing sector. Championing the cause of writers since 1957, GAW provides a vibrant forum for the study of Ghanaian literary heritage and the exchange of ideas, striving to protect and advance the interests of Ghanaian writers. It also runs an annual two-day book festival called the Ghana Association of Writers Book Festival (GAWBOFEST), first held in 2011, and the GAW Annual Literary Awards.

The Ghana National Association of Authors and Publishers fosters esprit-de-corp among industry members, promoting and preserving national culture through the development of literary works, and advocating for the welfare of authors and publishers.

Ensuring that the backbone of the publishing process remains robust, the Ghana Printers and Paper Converters Association represents the interests of printers and paper producers, facilitating access to quality printing services.

On the distribution front, the Ghana National Booksellers Association plays a pivotal role in enhancing book distribution networks, actively participating in book fairs and improving the retailing of books across the nation. Adding a visual dimension to literary and other works, the Ghana Association of Visual Artists supports artists who create illustrations and cover designs, thereby enriching the aesthetic appeal of publications. Dedicated to upholding editorial standards, the Ghana Association of Book Editors focuses on promoting excellence in editing and publishing through capacity-building, networking and advocacy. Extending its influence beyond national borders, the Pan African Writers Association, established in 1989 and based in Accra, is committed to promoting African literature and defending the rights of African writers, providing a platform for collaboration that bolsters the literary landscape throughout the continent.

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GUINEA



Population **14.4 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **45%**
(2023)



GDP per capita **US\$1,541**
(2023)



Urban population **38%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2021) **102%**



Internet users (2022) **34%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **12**

Titles published **50**

Bookstores **8**

Public libraries **40**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 360,000 inhabitants

Jobs **400**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Guinean authors are among the emblematic figures of African literature, such as Camara Laye, author of *L'Enfant noir* (1953), Djibril Tamsir Niane, author of *Soundjata: ou L'épopée mandingue* (1960), and Williams Sassine, author of *Le jeune homme de sable* (1979). The publishing sector experienced a new dynamic in the 1990s with the creation of *Éditions Ganndal* (1992) and the arrival of *L'Harmattan-Guinée* (2006), both of which promote and disseminate Guinean literature. Launched in the 2010s, the Conakry Book Fair celebrates local talent and helps to promote the sector. Bookshops and libraries are also essential vehicles for public reading, supported by events such as UNESCO's designation of Conakry as World Book Capital in 2017.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Crafts plays a central role in promoting literature, preserving cultural heritage and regulating the publishing sector. It is supervised by the Directorate of Books and Public Reading, established in 2016, which itself houses the National Library of Guinea, the Public Reading and Cultural Action Centres (*Centres de Lecture Publique et d'Action Culturelle*, CELPAC), and the Guinean Copyright Office (Bureau Guinéen du Droit d'Auteur – BGDA) responsible for collecting and redistributing royalties for authors and publishers.

In the field of education, the Ministry of Pre-University Education and Literacy is responsible for the design, production and distribution of school books through departments and institutions such as the National Service of Educational Materials (*Service National des Matériels Didactiques*, SNMD) and the National Institute of Educational Research and Action (*Institut National de Recherches et d'Actions Pédagogiques*, INRAP). The Ministry of

Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation is also involved in the management of works for higher education and research.

Regarding the legislative framework, as early as November 1973, and through Decree No. 290/PRG/73, the country instituted the legal deposit of printed documents. This text requires printers, producers and publishers to deposit copies of their publications with the National Archives and academic institutions, thus ensuring the preservation of documentary heritage, support for research and the dissemination of national cultural productions.

In 1980, Law No. 043/APN/CP/80 marked a turning point by establishing a framework for the protection of copyright and related rights. This legislation guarantees the economic and moral rights of creators, while providing for sanctions against infringements such as counterfeiting. However, in the face of technological change, this law has had to be supplemented by more recent legislation, in particular Law L/2019/0028/AN, adopted in 2019, on the protection of literary and artistic property.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Documentary research indicates that books are exempt from VAT when sold, in recognition of their status as an essential good.¹ This reflects their fundamental role in providing access to education, disseminating knowledge and promoting culture. On the other hand, customs tariffs are applied to imports of the raw materials needed to manufacture the books as well as printing equipment.²

The BGDA runs initiatives aimed at curbing the problems associated with piracy, counterfeiting and photocopying, such as a training workshop that was organized in 2023 for fifty magistrates and lawyers, aimed at strengthening their skills in literary and artistic property.³

Salon International du livre de jeunesse de Conakry

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PUBLISHING

Guinea does not have an ISBN agency. Publishers are generally registered with European agencies, in particular with the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (*Agence Francophone pour la Numérotation Internationale du Livre* – ANFIL).

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that there are around ten active publishers. *Éditions Ganndal*, founded in 1992, specialises in children's literature, school textbooks and publications in Guinean languages. *L'Harmattan-Guinée*, founded in 2006, publishes works of literature, titles in the social sciences and essays. *Dardia Éditions*, based in Conakry since 2023, is open to novels, poetry, short stories and academic essays. *Innov Éditions Guinée* promotes Guinean literature and local authors. The *éditions Plumes Inspirées* encourages young talent and African literature.

According to documentary research and testimony from professionals in the sector, Guinea was producing around 50 titles a year (excluding school and extracurricular titles) in 2020, with an average print run of 3,000 copies per title, mainly in the fields of general literature, children's literature and essays.⁴

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that schoolbooks are published abroad.

Some publishers, such as *Éditions Ganndal*, actively support local publishing by emphasizing production in national languages and the distribution of works. In 2018, Guinea hosted the second edition of the African Languages Writing and Book Fair (*Salon de l'Écrit et du Livre en Langues Africaines* – SAELLA), organized by the *Afrilivres* collective as part of Conakry, World Book Capital.⁵

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there were 8 physical bookshops in operation in 2023. Bookshops are few in number and often poorly stocked, while informal channels such as street vendors are still predominant, even forming associations.

In terms of employment, our estimations, based on all available data and additional research, count 400 people employed in the sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there were 40 physical bookshops in operation in 2023. The library network has been coordinated by CELPAC since 2008.

Two literary events dominate the Guinean publishing scene: the *72 heures du livre*, organized every year since 2009, is a major event; and the International Youth Book Fair (*Salon International du Livre Jeunesse* – SILJ), which was launched in 2017 and held its eighth consecutive edition in 2024. On this occasion, CELPAC launched the first edition of the Guinea High School Literary Prize to promote reading in secondary schools, with a prize of 5 million Guinean francs (around US\$600) for the winner.⁶

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

In the absence of recent official data, documentary research indicates that in 2016 the total value from imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets and other similar printed documents, amounted to US\$873,980, while the amount of exports did not exceed US\$2,790. According to the national authority's response to the survey, France is the main country for book imports, followed by Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire.⁷

TRAINING

At present, there are no training courses dedicated exclusively to publishing at Guinean universities. The University of Kankan is home to a library science training institute. This course prepares students for careers in the library and documentation sector, with a focus on documentation and archival theory.⁸ The *Université Française de Guinée* also offers degree courses recognized by the French and Guinean governments in fields relevant to publishing. These courses offer programmes including, among others, publishing techniques, literary criticism, publishing law and intellectual property.

In addition, partnerships with local publishing houses, such as Innov Éditions, mean that writing workshops, conferences and literary training courses can be organized to promote writing and reading within the university community.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Civil society in Guinea plays an essential role in the growth and development of the book and publishing sector, complementing government initiatives. Associations such as the Association of Guinean Writers (*Association des Écrivains de Guinée*, AEG), founded in 1985, the Association of Guinean Booksellers (*Association des Bouquinistes de Guinée*, ABG) and the Association of Guinean Publishers (*Association des Éditeurs Guinéens*, ASSEGUI) promote reading and literary production, notably through the organization of book fairs, writing workshops and literary debates. There is also a Network of Guinean Book Professionals (*Réseau des Professionnels Guinéens du Livre*, REPROLIG), an Association of Guinean Libraries (*Association des Libraires de Guinée*), an Association of Museologists, Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists (*Association des Muséologues, Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes*, AMBAD), and an Association of School Textbook Editors (*Association des Rédacteurs de Manuels Scolaires*), created in 2015.

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GUINEA-BISSAU



Population **2.2 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **54%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$951**
(2023)



Urban population **45%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **126%**



Internet users (2022) **32%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **4**

Titles published *No data available*

Bookstores **2**

Public libraries *No data available*

Public libraries per capita
No data available

Jobs *No data available*

This mapping was carried out based on documentary research and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After independence in 1973–1974, Guinea-Bissau faced significant challenges in preserving its documentary heritage owing to inadequate infrastructure and repeated relocations of archives, resulting in the loss of and damage to important documents.

A turning point came in 1984 with the creation of the Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa (National Institute of Studies and Research) (INEP), a public body that integrated the national library and the historical archive. INEP aimed to preserve oral and written records of the national liberation struggle and to promote research in the social sciences. Despite its efforts, however, the book sector continued to face obstacles, including low literacy rates, limited publishing infrastructure and scarce financial resources. Most books available in Guinea-Bissau were imported, primarily from Portugal, and there were few local publishers. In recent decades there have been gradual improvements, with local publishers and cultural initiatives emerging to promote Bissau-Guinean literature, although the sector remains underdeveloped compared to that in other Lusophone countries.

Despite these challenges, Guinea-Bissau has produced notable authors who have significantly contributed to its literary landscape. The poetry of Helder Proença, especially his collection *Não Vou Para as Calendas* (1985), reflects themes of resistance and liberation. Filomena Embaló is known for her novel *Tiara* (1999), which examines themes of identity, gender and postcolonial challenges in Bissau-Guinean society.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

While the Directorate General for Culture under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports is responsible for copyright and intellectual property rights, the Ministry of National Education (MNE) is the institution in charge of coordinating book-sector policies and measures.

The MNE is also tasked with the content of, and financial support for, schoolbooks. It leads the process of developing textbooks and teacher's guides through the National Institute for the Development of Education.

Since 1984 INEP, which is linked to the MNE, publishes research in print and digitally to support the formulation of public policies and development programmes.¹ The National Library of Guinea-Bissau is part of INEP and was also established in 1984. It is the largest public library in the country. With about 70,000 monographs and 3,000 periodicals, it is considered the most important library in Guinea-Bissau thus far.

The MNE and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports work in partnership with public and private institutions, especially Portuguese ones, in relation to book production, the financing of schoolbooks² and the promotion of copyright.³ Two of these institutions are Instituto Camões and Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.

Among the main legal provisions applicable to the book sector is Decree No. 28/87, adopted in 1987, which created the legal deposit and historical archives; and characterizes the National Library as the depository and body responsible for the custody, preservation and dissemination of the country's intellectual production.

Author rights are guaranteed by Article 50, Title II, of the Constitution of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.⁴ The Copyright and Related Laws Act approved in 2023 establishes the norms and regulations for the protection of authors' and editors' rights, ensuring that they receive due recognition and compensation for their work.

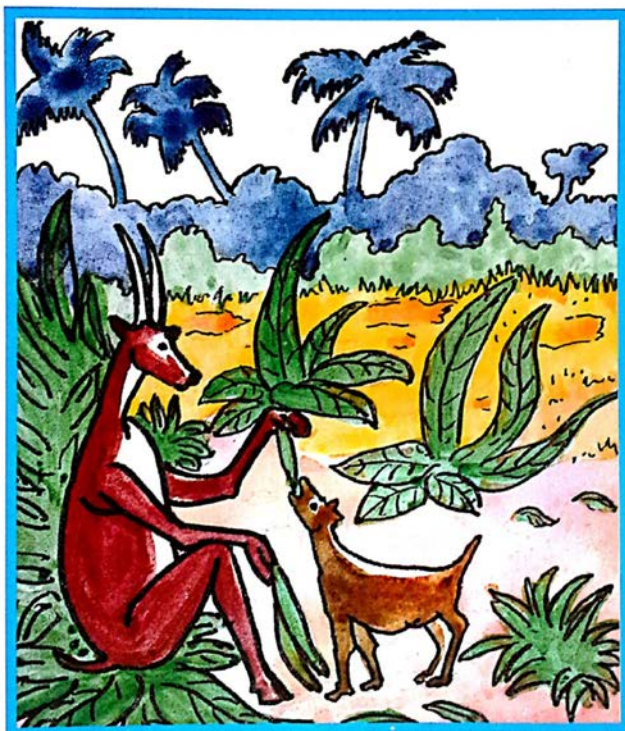
PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The Carta Política do Sector da Educação na Guiné-Bissau 2017–2025 (Policy Charter for the Education Sector in Guinea-Bissau, 2017–2025)⁵ highlights the notion of 'improvement in quality'.

Contes Créoles de Guinée-Bissau

GASELA KU LIOPARDU

LA GAZELLE ET LE LÉOPARD



ku si mon
editora

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This focus is linked directly to the book sector, the greater availability of teaching materials in educational institutions, and teacher training in the use of materials. It covers the free distribution of textbooks and other teaching materials in schools, the provision of school textbooks and teaching materials for teachers in all public school establishments, and the improved use of textbooks and teaching materials in the classroom. In 2024 the government, through the MNE, began the distribution of 395,000 school textbooks and over 13,000 teacher's guides produced as part of the 'Quality Education for All' project. This initiative aims to modernize the primary education curriculum and to improve learning outcomes across the country.⁶

PUBLISHING

Requests for ISBNs are made through the National Library to Agência Nacional de ISBN – Associação Portuguesa de Editores e Livreiros (National ISBN Agency – Portuguese Association of Publishers and Booksellers).

Data on the number of publishers, titles published, number of copies printed, and revenues generated are very scarce. In this context, secondary research indicated that there are an estimated four main publishers operating in the country (two of them being foreign-based). The two local publishers are Ku Si Mon, the first private publisher

in Guinea-Bissau, which was founded by three writers in 2014;⁷ and Corubal, the Cultural and Scientific Production and Dissemination Cooperative (Cooperativa de Produção e Divulgação Cultural e Científica),⁸ founded in 2012 for the purpose of publishing *Agenda Cultural Bissau* in partnership with the Municipality of Bissau. The Publishing House of the Assemblies of God focuses on religious books and is based in Brazil, while Nimba Edições & Nimba Art Gallery is based in Portugal.⁹

These publishers' economic viability is very fragile, as they depend on various funding sources, including grants, international cooperation projects and support from cultural organizations, for example the PROCULTURA programme managed by Camões, Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua, I.P., with co-funding from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the European Union.¹⁰

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The National Library and other structures within the MNE collaborate with various institutions to distribute textbooks and teaching materials to schools as part of educational projects. Guinea-Bissau also maintains several international partnerships, particularly with organizations from Portugal and other member countries of the Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (Community of Portuguese Language Countries) to facilitate access to books and educational resources. Additional initiatives, such as book donation campaigns run by foreign organizations, further contribute to expanding the presence of educational materials in the country.

Guinea-Bissau actively participates in international book fairs and promotes its authors, especially among Lusophone countries, helping to showcase its literary contributions on a broader stage. Despite these efforts to support and develop the book sector, however, there is little information available regarding consistently running literary festivals or book fairs in the country.

The Bissau Book Fair, organized by Casa dos Direitos, is last reported to have run in 2018. The event focused on providing books related to human rights, development, and African and international literature.¹¹

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

Although there are no formal surveys or reports on reading habits in Guinea-Bissau, consultations with stakeholders suggest that the country faces low literacy rates and limited access to books.

Several initiatives aim to encourage reading and improve access to literature in Guinea-Bissau. One example is the Clube de Amor à Leitura (Love of Reading Club), established in Portugal's Santo Tirso Municipality in 2019. This club seeks to cultivate a reading culture in Guinea-Bissau by promoting and disseminating the works of Guinean authors.¹² Other initiatives are led by international NGOs such as the Young Readers Project (2024–2026).¹³ The American Corner at Escola Normal Superior Tchico Té in Bissau hosts book clubs and provides public access to American literature translated into Portuguese, fostering a culture of reading and cross-cultural exchange.¹⁴

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

In 2018, the total value of importation in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$34,660. The top country supplying these goods was Portugal, contributing the largest share (70%), followed by Brazil.¹⁵

TRAINING

The National Library of Guinea-Bissau offers a 240-hour training course for librarians and library assistants.¹⁶

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Associação de Escritores da Guiné-Bissau (Association of Writers of Guinea-Bissau) was founded in 2013. PEN Guinea-Bissau, established in 2020, is part of the international PEN network for the promotion of literature and freedom of expression.¹⁷ Also founded in 2020 is the Academia de Letras e Artes da Guiné-Bissau (Academy of Letters and Arts of Guinea-Bissau). It aims to promote literature and the arts as key elements of national cohesion and to advance the use of the Portuguese language.¹⁸

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KENYA



Population **55.3 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **83%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$1,952**
(2023)



Urban population **30%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **122%**



Internet users (2021) **41%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **160**

Titles published **5,000**

Bookstores **4,000**

Public libraries **64**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 864,000 inhabitants

Jobs **15,000**

Sector revenue **US\$120 million**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

By the 1940s, East Africa had a growing readership. In 1948, the British government established the East African Literature Bureau (EALB) for its colonies to develop homegrown reading materials. Oxford University Press and Longman opened local branches in Kenya. Both companies collected locally written manuscripts and sent them to London for editing, production and publishing. When the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), now called Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) was established in 1964, it started publishing syllabi and literature developed by the institute, taking control of the country's book supply system. The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation (JKF) was established in 1966, after which the East African Publishing House – the first indigenous publisher – was opened.¹

The nascent publishing industry experienced challenges that required structured engagement with government, and in 1972 key players in the industry came together to establish the Kenya Publishers Association (KPA). A year later, in 1973, KPA launched the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature, meant to nurture a culture of reading and promote local authorship. In 2006, the Wahome Mutahi Prize for Literature was launched, in honour of the humorist and columnist, Wahome Mutahi.

Kenya has a vibrant literary heritage, with numerous authors earning recognition at both national and international levels for their contributions to literature. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is arguably the most renowned Kenyan writer. Some of his most famous works are *Weep Not, Child*, *The River Between*, *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*. Ngũgĩ is also renowned for his pioneering role in African literature written in indigenous languages, beginning with his novel *Devil on the Cross*, originally written in Gĩkũyũ.

Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor is an award-winning Kenyan writer known for her lyrical prose and compelling storytelling. Her novel *Dust*, set against the backdrop

of Kenya's political turmoil, received critical acclaim.

Another renowned writer, Dr. Margaret Ogola, was a Kenyan paediatrician and author best known for her novel *The River and the Source*, which won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book in Africa in 1995. The novel, which traces the lives of four generations of Kenyan women, is a celebrated work in Kenyan literature and is often included in the Kenyan school curriculum.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The book publishing sector operates within a structured legal and regulatory framework designed to protect intellectual property rights, support local content creation, and regulate the distribution and publication of materials. Key components of this framework include the Copyright (Amendment) Act, 2022, which is the cornerstone of Kenya's copyright law. It provides comprehensive protection for authors, publishers and creators of literary works. The Act established the Kenya Copyright Board (KECOBO), which is tasked with administering and enforcing copyright laws, protecting intellectual property rights and regulating copyright-related matters, including literary works. KECOBO also plays a crucial role in combating piracy.

The Kenya Information and Communications Act, 2019, governs digital publishing and online content distribution, providing a framework for electronic transactions and communication. As the book and publishing industry increasingly shifts towards digital platforms, this Act has become crucial in regulating the dissemination of literary works through electronic media. The Books and Newspapers Act, 2012, mandates that all publishers register their publications with the government and provide legal deposits to institutions such as the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS). This law ensures that Kenya's literary heritage is preserved and accessible for public reference.



African Book Fair 2024, Nairobi. © Soma Nami Books

The KNLS, with a network of 64 libraries across 47 counties, provides access to information and supports literacy and knowledge dissemination through libraries. It also works with publishers and the education sector to enhance access to textbooks and reading materials. The Education Sector Policy on Instructional Materials, 2019, is a comprehensive framework designed to support the development and distribution of books in Kenya. Specific strategies contained in the policy include the liberalization of the textbook market to allow free market forces to apply, promoting the local manufacture of books, taking affirmative action to lower the cost of books and providing opportunities for learners to access e-learning materials.

The National Curriculum Policy, 2018, influences the educational content that publishers produce and has a direct impact on the publishing industry, as it sets the standards for educational materials. KICD is responsible for developing, reviewing and approving curricula and educational materials, including textbooks, for schools in Kenya. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is responsible for setting educational policies and standards. This includes oversight of school curricula, textbooks

and the approval process for instructional materials, in collaboration with KICD. The Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act, 2015, outlines the procurement processes for government contracts, which may affect publishers competing for government tenders for textbooks and other learning materials.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The funding landscape for Kenya's publishing industry is shaped by a mix of government initiatives, international support and revenue from book sales. Publishers rely on private investments and book sales to fund their publishing activities. The government, however, supports the local publishing industry through tenders for educational materials, which are a significant source of revenue for publishers.

Significant boosts to the book publishing industry in Kenya came from the introduction of free primary education in 2003, followed later by subsidized secondary education. The government allocated annual capitation grants of about US\$15 per learner in primary schools and about US\$52 per learner in secondary schools. By 2021, annual capitation grants per learner had

increased to about US\$100 in primary schools and about US\$500 in secondary schools.² A part of the capitation – with no specific percentage – is designated for the purchase of books. In 2021, the government purchased books worth US\$62.5 million directly from publishers.³

According to the national authority's survey response, in 2023 the MOE purchased books worth US\$30 million from publishers through a donor-funded scheme. One of the strategies of the Education Sector Policy on Instructional Materials, 2019, is to liberalize the textbook market to allow for free market forces. Kenya introduced a standard 16% VAT rate on print books, e-books and audio books for the first time through the VAT Act of 2013⁴ and 1.5% on the gross transaction value for books sold on online platforms.⁵

The Kenya Copyright Board (KECOBO) focuses on unauthorized distribution of copyrighted content via social media platforms such as Facebook, Telegram and WhatsApp. Collaborating with the Communications Authority of Kenya in 2025, KECOBO launched a crackdown targeting individuals and groups sharing pirated materials, including e-newspapers, television shows, films and subscription codes.⁶

PUBLISHING

According to the Kenya Publishers Association, Kenya's publishing industry comprises about 160 publishers and is valued at approximately US\$120 million. This figure covers all forms of publishing, including educational, fiction, non-fiction and digital publishing, with textbooks accounting for about 90% of this revenue.⁷

According to the Global Publishing Industry's 2022 Report, published by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), 2,188 titles were deposited with the Kenya National Library, the ISBN Agency, in 2022. This number does not include digital and other formats. According to the KPA, the number of titles published in 2023 was around 5,000.

According to Statista, the e-book market in Kenya was projected to reach a revenue of US\$2.25 million in 2025 and is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2025–2029) of 0.32%, resulting in a projected market value of US\$2.27 million by 2029, when the number of readers in Kenya's e-book market is expected to reach 4.8 million users.⁸

Key publishers in Kenya include the Kenya Literature Bureau (KLB), a government parastatal and one of Kenya's oldest publishing houses, established in 1947 as the East African Literature Bureau; Longhorn Kenya Limited; Moran Publishers; Oxford University Press (OUP) East Africa (the only multinational in Kenya today); Mountain Top Publishers; Spotlight Publishers; Mentor Publishers; and Storymoja Africa, which focuses on children's literature. Kenyan publishers have also ventured into the African region, with East African Educational Publishers setting up offices in Tanzania, Rwanda, and Zambia, and Longhorn with offices in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroon.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's survey response the number of bookshops in Kenya is estimated at about 4,000, while the Kenya Booksellers and Stationers Association estimate is 2,600 bookstores. Bookshop chains such as Text Book Centre, Prestige Bookshop, Bookstop, Savanis Book Centre and other independent bookshops offer a wide range of local and imported books including educational materials, fiction, non-fiction and children's books.

Online platforms such as Prestige Bookshop, Soma Nami, Text Book Centre Online, Nuria Bookstore, Worldreader, eKitabu, Kytabu and Snapplify are expanding the reach of publishers and authors by offering books with convenient delivery options across the country. The integration of mobile money services like M-Pesa has facilitated online transactions, making it easier for Kenyans to purchase books online. Many publishers have developed their own e-commerce platforms to sell books directly to consumers. This model allows for higher revenue retention and better customer data management. The KNLS Virtual Library has also increased accessibility to books.

In terms of employment, while the national authority's survey response estimates that the total workforce employed within the book publishing industry is around 5,000 individuals, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 15,000 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

Events such as the Nairobi International Book Fair (NIBF), first organized by the Kenya Publishers Association in 1998, are critical for book distribution and promotion. In 2024, the NIBF had 130 exhibitors and over 34,000 visitors.⁹ The KPA also organizes annual regional bookfairs which rotate around Kenya's 47 counties. The African Book Fair is another annual week-long event, organized by Soma Nami Books, a leading Kenyan Pan-African cultural and

literary hub. The inaugural 2023 African Book Fair attracted over 5,000 attendees and showcased over 10,000 books from 50 African countries.¹⁰

Kenya hosts several literary festivals, campaigns and awards, including the Macondo Literary Festival, first held in 2019. It is organized by the Macondo Book Society, co-founded by award-winning Kenyan author Yvonne Adhiambo Awuor and journalist Anja Bengelstorf. The literary festival focuses on fiction and non-fiction works by African authors.

The Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature, established in 1974, recognizes outstanding works of literature in various categories, including adult fiction, children's books and Kiswahili literature. It is organized by the KPA. The Kendeka Prize, established in 2020, seeks to inspire a new generation of writers from Africa and the African Diaspora.

Piracy has a major economic impact on the book publishing industry in Kenya. KPA estimates that piracy is denying publishers up to 40% of the book market.¹¹ According to the national authority's survey response, in 2018, KPA introduced a security tag (CHKTags) on the covers of books which, when scratched, reveals a 16-digit pin number. When the pin number is sent by SMS to a USSD code, buyers receive a message confirming whether the copy bought is genuine or pirated. In the period 2018–2022, KECOBO, Partners Against Piracy (PAP) and the media collaborated in a national public awareness anti-piracy campaign.¹² The impact of this measure has not been evaluated.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

A 2023 study by data firm Stadi Research Analytics and Writers Guild Kenya shows that 85.8% of residents living in Nairobi read regularly (and not for exams), with more than half reading daily. The study found that the most-read materials are books (86.8% of respondents).

On average, Kenyans spend about US\$10.46 on reading materials monthly, with the majority of respondents stating that they spend at least US\$7.88 on books monthly.¹³ National data on reading habits in Kenya are not available.

Book clubs play an instrumental role in developing and nurturing a culture of reading in Kenya. Soma Nami, Escape Book Club, Books and Beyond, Zuri and Amnesty are among several book clubs whose members meet regularly to discuss books they have read. Most book clubs source books from local bookshops and, on occasion, import directly. There are also children's book clubs, including the Africa Kids Book Club, formed in 2017 to foster a reading culture amongst children. Unlike the adult book clubs which select both local and international books, the Africa Kids Book Club focuses on African literature only. Data on book purchases through book clubs are not available.

The Storymoja National Read Aloud Campaign was launched in 2020 by Storymoja Africa to create a shared experience of the written word as children in multiple locations read aloud simultaneously from the same text. The 2022 Campaign attracted 147,496 children in 836 venues (schools and libraries) across 40 counties in Kenya.¹⁴ The NBO Litfest, a biennial event organized by Book Bunk, was first held in 2021 and is hosted in Nairobi's public libraries. Designed as a celebration of public libraries as spaces for art, culture, and knowledge production, the NBO Litfest features virtual concerts, live storytelling and writers in conversation. The 2024 event hosted 60 local and international writers and over 1,000 attendees.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

In 2023, Kenya exported printed books and related products valued at about US\$8.4 million. Kenya's top export destinations for printed books, brochures and related materials were primarily in East Africa, with Burundi leading at 28% of exports, valued at US\$2.37 million, followed closely by Rwanda at 26% (US\$2.22 million). The United Arab Emirates was the third-largest destination

with US\$1.14 million, while Uganda accounted for US\$1.02 million. Other significant destinations included Tanzania (US\$636,129), Ethiopia (US\$412,182), and South Sudan (US\$227,573).¹⁵

In the same year, Kenya's imports in this category amounted to US\$12.6 million. Kenya's top trading partners for importing printed books, brochures, and similar printed materials included the United Kingdom, accounting for 32% (US\$4 million), and India, accounting for 21% (US\$2.6 million). China followed closely with US\$2.3 million, while the United States of America contributed US\$1.1 million. Other notable partners were Nigeria (US\$767,007), Spain (US\$495,154) and South Africa (US\$350,100).¹⁶

TRAINING

Moi University's School of Information Sciences offers a Bachelor of Science in Information Sciences, allowing final-year students to focus on Library and Information Studies or Publishing and Media Studies. Additionally, the university provides a Master of Science in Publishing Studies, covering areas such as editorial work, production, marketing and sales across both print and electronic formats.

The KPA provides its members with professional development opportunities to build the skills and capabilities of the industry. The training programme includes annual conferences, training, seminars and workshops. Further, the KPA collaborates with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) to offer training to publishers to improve the content and production of instructional materials in Kenya.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The primary body representing the interests of publishers in Kenya is the Kenya Publishers Association (KPA), established in 1972. The KPA is involved in policy development, collaborating closely with the MOE, KICD and KECOBO. The KLA was established in November 1973, after the dissolution of the East African Library Association (EALA). Major objectives of

the KLA include lobbying government to formulate and enact policies that promote access to information, to promote development and sustenance of a reading culture and the creation of a knowledge society and to collaborate with key stakeholders in the development of a school library network in Kenya.

The Kenya Booksellers and Stationers Association (KBSSA) is a trade body that promotes retail bookselling in Kenya. KBSSA has limited involvement in direct policy development. The Writers Guild Kenya (WGK), established in 2014, supports the needs of writers by providing training, mentorship and a platform for networking among authors. WGK has limited involvement in direct policy development.

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LESOTHO



Population **2.3 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **82%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$916**
(2023)



Urban population **30%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **68%**



Internet users (2022) **47%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **16**

Titles published **18**

Bookstores **20**

Public libraries **13**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 177,000 inhabitants

Jobs **215**

Sector revenue **US\$1.61 million**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Book publishing in Lesotho began with European missionaries. Morija Sesotho Book Depot, established in 1861, is one of the oldest printing presses in Southern Africa. Mazenod Printing Works was established almost a century later, in 1932. While both Mazenod's and Morija's publishing led to the recording and preservation of folklore, traditional stories and historical accounts of the Basotho, literary development was constrained as these works were entirely influenced by Christianity. Very few literary titles were published, as most of the books produced were for educational and religious purposes.

Consequently, the earliest books of Thomas Mofolo also followed Christian themes. Mofolo is seen as the father of Sesotho literature and is regarded as the first African novelist for his book *Chaka*. He is joined by writers such as AS Mopeli-Paulus and Patrick Bereng.¹ Caroline Ntseliseng Khaketla was one of the first women to publish in Sesotho, and Mpho 'M'atsepo Nthunya gained international recognition for her memoir *Singing Away the Hunger*, which details her struggles as a Basotho woman. Together, Khaketla and Nthunya helped bring prominence to female writing in Lesotho.

In contemporary Lesotho, educational publishing remains the dominant sector within the publishing industry. British-owned publishing houses, based in South Africa, expanded into neighbouring countries such as Lesotho, supplying the demand for textbooks. However, in 2022, these South African-based British publishers closed their Lesotho branches. This decline is attributed primarily to procurement practices through which books are purchased as a one-time supply, without provision for damaged or lost books, or for updating stock with revised editions. A significant increase in piracy emerged as a result, as parents turned to the black market to obtain necessary textbooks.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture is the custodian of the book promotion and book publishing sector in Lesotho, while the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) is responsible for the provision of textbooks for the primary and secondary levels. The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) of the MOET, established in 1980, is responsible for the assessment and approval of these books. Government procurement is managed through the established Public Procurement Regulations of 2007, as further amended through the Public Procurement Act of 2023.² The procurement policy creates a framework for transparency and includes the necessary checks and balances to minimise corruption.

Lesotho's book publishing industry is supported and enabled by copyright law, textbook procurement and legal deposit. Copyright Order No. 13 of 1989 was enacted to make provisions for the copyright of literary, artistic and scientific works, to safeguard expressions of traditional and cultural productions, and for other related purposes.³ The Ministry of Law and Constitutional Affairs is responsible for copyright. The Copyright Order is further supported by the Copyright Regulations, Legal Notice 139 of 2015.⁴

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Lesotho currently lacks a dedicated book policy and specific measures to support its publishing industry. However, the Government's National Strategic Development Plan II identifies the development of the creative industries as a national priority. The stated aims of the plan are to create a regulatory or legislative framework for all creative industries in Lesotho, to protect intellectual property and enable job creation, especially for youths; build capacity in the creative arts industry by enhancing relevant courses in tertiary institutions; develop relevant infrastructure for creative industries;

and develop local markets to showcase the creative work of Basotho, including fashion and arts and crafts, through local events and media platforms.⁵

Lesotho recently passed legislation to formalise and strengthen its state library and its library infrastructure in general. Since Lesotho does not currently have a formal National Library Act, the National Library Service Bill of 2022 makes provision for the National Library Service, the National Library and other libraries for the collection and promotion of available national documentary heritage.⁶ The requirement for legal deposit is contained in this Bill. The national library is known as the State Library and Archives in Lesotho, and falls under the Ministry of Information, Communications, Science, Technology and Innovation. A centre for the visually impaired was established in 2022. There is, however, no regulatory framework for this library.

The Morija Mission institutions, particularly the Morija Museum & Archives and the Morija Printing Works, play a significant role in holding a

vast portion of Lesotho's heritage archives and supporting the country's publishing needs, especially in terms of documenting history, heritage and culture. The Morija Museum & Archives established a Book Publishing Fund in the early 1990s, which has since published or reprinted over 30 titles focusing on Lesotho's history and development.

PUBLISHING

According to an interview with the Librarian of the National Library,⁷ ISBN records show that there are approximately 16 publishers in Lesotho, including Morija and Mazenod. The number of ISBNs issued was 32 in 2021, 21 in 2022 and 20 in 2023. The library recorded eight legal deposits in 2021, all from one publisher acting as an agent for British-owned Cambridge University Press, which is based in South Africa. Nine titles were deposited in 2022, while 18 titles were deposited in 2023. It is interesting to note that the missionary publishers were not that active over

the reporting period, with Mazenod depositing only 6 titles in 2023. Trade and academic publishing remain negligible, with most titles being of an educational and religious nature.

The total revenue was US\$ 1,87 million for 2022 and US\$ 1,61 million for 2023.⁸ No further breakdown could be found. The Lesotho Publishers Association's survey response ranked consumer preference for paper books at 5, digital at 3, and audio at 2.

The official languages are English and Sesotho, while some regions of the nation also speak isiXhosa and isiZulu. The languages most published in are Sesotho and English. In 2023, nine ISBNs were for titles in Sesotho and six for titles in English. Unlike many other African countries, Lesotho publishes primarily in its local language.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for Lesotho was US\$2,04 billion in 2023,⁹ to which book publishing contributed approximately US\$1,61 million or 0,08%.¹⁰



Lesotho, Masenu Quailing School - John Hogg © World Bank Photo Collection / Flickr.com*

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Lesotho is divided into 10 administrative districts, with one Mazenod and one Morija bookstore in each of the districts. It is therefore estimated that Lesotho has 20 bookshops, with Morija and Mazenod fulfilling their own warehousing and distribution requirements. According to the national authority's survey response, the most important sales points for books are bookstores – both online and physical – and retail outlets that sell other products as well as books.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 215 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

No data could be sourced on consumer behaviour related to book reading and buying. The Morija Arts & Cultural Festival is a significant event in Lesotho, aimed at celebrating the rich heritage of the Basotho people. Literature is not listed as one of the offerings. The Ba Re e Ne Re Literature Festival, an annual event that offered writing workshops, and literary and poetry readings, was last hosted in 2019. There is no evidence of its revival following the period of the Covid-19 pandemic.¹¹

The State Library and Archives are currently located at the University of Lesotho's academic library. According to consultations with practitioners, there are 13 public libraries in Lesotho.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that, for the year 2023, the total value from imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$12,552,100.¹² The top three countries for imports are the United States of America, the United Kingdom

and South Africa. Since Sesotho is spoken in South Africa, many Sesotho authors look to South Africa for publishing opportunities.

TRAINING

The National University of Lesotho offers a two-year full-time Master's degree in African Literature, and a Master's degree and a PhD in Literature in English.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Lesotho Publishers Association (LPA) and the Lesotho Library Association (LLA) are the two primary publishing associations in operation in Lesotho.

The sustainability and viability of both associations have been impacted by dwindling and inactive membership. There have been renewed efforts by publishers to revive the LPA after the closure of the offices in Lesotho of the South African-based publishers. Likewise, the LLA has reached out to South Africa's library association and to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) to assist them with skills, techniques and tactics to build a strong and sustainable library association.

Moluoane, formerly known as the Young Basotho Writers, has organised itself to serve as a directory for self-published works written in Sesotho. Approximately 40 titles are listed in the directory, with books being sold through alternative distribution networks, primarily Amazon. Without government support to subsidize them, these initiatives often struggle to sustain themselves, as revenue from book sales alone may be insufficient to cover overhead costs and keep operations viable in the long run. Government subsidies allow a sustainable business model to develop, with increased subscriptions enhancing the chances of long-term survival.

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LIBERIA



Population **5.5 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **48%**
(2017)



GDP per capita **US\$772**
(2023)



Urban population **54%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2021) **32%**



Internet users (2022) **30%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **16**

Titles published **17**

Bookstores **4**

Public libraries **7**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 786,000 inhabitants

Jobs **1,275**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Founded by freed African Americans in 1847, Liberia maintained close ties with American institutions, leading to an early emphasis on English-language education and literacy. Initial literary efforts focused on educational texts, religious literature and political pamphlets.

In the mid-twentieth century, a stronger sense of national identity spurred interest in documenting Liberia's culture and history. Pioneering authors such as Bai T. Moore, best known for works such as *Murder in the Cassava Patch*, played key roles in advancing Liberian literature and capturing local narratives.¹ However, Liberia missed out on the literary boom of the Heinemann African Writers Series, which ran from the 1960s to the early 2000s. Consequently, its writers were largely cut off from the literary mainstream of the rest of Anglophone Africa.²

In the 1980s and 1990s, civil war and political instability disrupted education, diminished access to books and caused extensive damage to cultural institutions. Many schools and libraries were destroyed, and economic collapse limited access to imported materials, further constraining the book sector.

Post-war rebuilding in the 2000s renewed interest in education and literacy. Organizations such as the Liberian Association of Writers (LAW) and international NGOs initiated programmes to support Liberian authors, and a growing number of private institutions and schools invested in small libraries.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MICAT) oversees Liberia's cultural policy, which promotes indigenous authors and literature. MICAT works with cultural institutions to create events, promote reading, and foster local authorship. The Ministry also collaborates with international agencies and NGOs on literacy efforts

such as school reading programmes and book donations.

The Ministry of Education creates and approves educational curricula and textbooks. Owing to local production shortages, the Ministry buys many textbooks from abroad. Despite the Ministry's work with NGOs to increase access to educational material in Liberia, many rural schools still lack supplies.³

As for Liberia's legal framework, its main intellectual property law is the 2016 Intellectual Property Act. The Act protects creators and promotes fair pay. It created the Liberia Intellectual Property Office (LIPO), which is responsible for the management and protection of copyright, patents and trademarks for literary and artistic works, with an emphasis on the prevention of piracy.⁴

Liberia does not have a legal deposit system, so publishers are not required to send copies of the books they have published to institutions such as the National Library.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

According to the national authority's survey response, Liberia provides tax exemptions and preferential treatment for the importation of paper and machinery used in book production, and general tax exemptions for the book publishing sector. It also offers soft loans or financing to support the establishment of companies within the publishing sector, such as publishing houses and bookstores.

Liberia has no centralised tender or policy for purchasing books for public libraries or the free distribution of school textbooks. There are no data indicating direct public investments specifically aimed at the book publishing sector.

PUBLISHING

Liberia does not have an ISBN agency, which makes book cataloguing difficult and limits the international distribution of locally written and produced publications.

According to the national authority's survey response, Liberia had approximately 16 publishers operating in 2023, some of whom print newspapers or mixed-media content. Liberia published only 17 books in 2023, two of which were digital titles. The survey response also indicates that Liberian consumers prefer printed books, with digital books and audiobooks being less popular.

The national authority's survey response indicates that, based on the Liberia Revenue Authority, 102 jobs were occupied by women, who made up 8% of that workforce, meaning that the

total number of jobs in publishing in the country in 2023 could be estimated at 1,275.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Documentary research shows that a small bookshop network and low use of digital platforms hinder book distribution, sales and promotion in Liberia. Bookshops are rare: most booksellers are stationery stores or small businesses with a small book section. It is estimated that there were four bookshops in 2023.

Liberia relies on bookshops and retail outlets for book sales. The national authority's survey response ranked retail outlets such as stationery stores or supermarkets as the most important. Direct sales are next in importance, with book fairs ranked low.

Although the survey response states that there are seven book fairs and literary festivals operating in 2023, the same survey also cites that they are the sales channel with the lowest participation. In 2022, Liberian writer and author Andy Hare hosted the All-Liberian Book Fair.⁵

Interviews with book publishing stakeholders reveal that piracy still undermines the local publishing industry despite ongoing efforts to increase public awareness of intellectual property rights.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

Although no survey or report is available on reading habits in Liberia, the national authority's survey response indicates that print is the most popular reading format, whereas digital and audiobook formats have a lower popularity ranking. This can be attributed to poor digital infrastructure and a lack of consumer adoption.

According to the national authority's survey response, seven metropolitan public libraries are open in Liberia. Libraries are the main public points of access to literature despite their limited resources.

International agencies and NGOs have launched literacy initiatives and reading campaigns to encourage young students to read. For example, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and through a direct partnership with the Liberian Ministry of Education (MOE), Read Liberia (Sept. 2017-Sept. 2022) sought to improve the reading skills of Liberian students, reaching 172,800 students across nearly 640 primary schools across the country.



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As a result, community leaders and parents established over 2,600 reading spaces for after-school reading in 2,580 school communities.⁶

In 2018, the organization Monrovia Reads launched a mobile literacy van that visited elementary schools once a week throughout the school year.⁷ In 2023, Banks Foundation Liberia organized a Book Drive and successfully collected and distributed 1000+ books to schools across Liberia. The drive aimed to increase access to books among underprivileged children.⁸

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

The Liberian book industry relies on imports owing to limited local publications. The national authority's survey response indicates that approximately 70% of all book imports come from the United States of America and 30% from Europe. Documentary research indicates that, for the year 2023, the total revenue from imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$6,929,430.⁹ Research further indicates that many books are imported from Ghana¹⁰ and the United States of America.¹¹

According to secondary sources, educational institutions, libraries and consumers purchase books from foreign publishers owing to local publisher shortages. Textbooks, particularly those required for basic and secondary education, are frequently imported, as they are rarely available from local publishers.

TRAINING

Documentary research suggests that there are no specialised higher education programmes for book publishing in Liberia. The country's book publishing sector lacks training infrastructure, particularly in the technical and digital skills needed for modern publishing. Apprenticeships and technical training in areas such as printing, book design and publishing technology are extremely limited. The absence of formal technical training in Liberia limits practical experience for professionals in the sector, forcing them to gain advanced skills on the job or abroad.

When it comes to author development, Write Liberia, a subsidiary of the NGO Smiling Faces, hosts an annual writing contest that identifies, rewards and develops aspiring writers from Liberian high schools.¹²

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Though small, Liberia's book publishing sector is supported by several networks. The Liberia Association of Writers (LAW) leads writers and authors.¹³ LAW works with the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, and with other government agencies, to support local authors and promote literature. As an author network, LAW also encourages civic engagement, cultural activism and local writing.

Apart from LAW, several other organisations work to advance literature. They include Wesley's Young Scholars of Liberia, the Liberian Poets Society, the Pepper Coast Literary Society, and – the most active of them all – Monrovia Reads.¹⁴

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LIBYA



Population **7.3 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **35%**
(2018)



GDP per capita **US\$6,173**
(2023)



Urban population **82%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **205%**



Internet users (2022) **88%**

Source: World Bank, UNESCO Institute for Statistics.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **56**

Titles published **876**

Bookstores **21**

Public libraries **64**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 114,000 inhabitants

Jobs **4,000**

This mapping was carried out based on documentary research and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book and publishing sector in Libya traces its origins to the Ottoman period, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Following independence in 1951, the Libyan government invested heavily in literacy campaigns and the expansion of education in general, adopting a state-controlled publishing policy aimed at protecting societal values and fostering national identity. Although the book and publishing sector was limited to two official entities, namely the Jamahiriya House for Publishing and Distribution, and the Green Book Studies and Research Center, the government increased book production and publishing. After the change of political regime in 2011, these institutions were dissolved and the book industry was opened to the private sector, giving rise to new, independent publishers.¹

Among Libya's noteworthy authors are Ibrahim al-Koni, recognized for his profound exploration of desert life and Tuareg culture, as showcased in novels like *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *Gold Dust*. Additionally, Ahmed Fagih stands out for his extensive contributions to Arabic literature, notably his epic trilogy *Gardens of the Night*.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Libyan public institutions responsible for overseeing the book and publishing sector in the country include the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development (MCKD), the National Library, the National Center for Culture, Arts and Literature, and the National Center for Translation. The Department of Censorship of Publications and Audiovisual Materials (DCPAM), affiliated with the MCKD, delivers publishing licences.

The Center for Educational Curricula and Educational Research at the Ministry of Education (MoE) is the authority responsible for preparing, developing and supervising the printing and distribution of curricula for basic

and secondary education. This centre manages educational research related to the development of school textbooks and the approval of foreign school curricula, and ensures effectiveness in improving the quality of general education.

With the issuing of Publications Law No. 76 in 1972, a comprehensive legal framework was established, giving the government extensive authority over the book and publishing sector and restricting publishing rights to two public entities. This framework remains in effect today, despite a few subsequent amendments.² In addition to the laws already mentioned, Libya issued several laws enhancing the status of the book and publishing sector, the most important of which were Law No. 9 of 1968, concerning the protection of authors' rights; and Law No. 7 of 1984, regarding legal deposit.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

In general, there are no specific economic policies in Libya to support the book and publishing sector. There are also no dedicated tax exemptions for this industry. Existing tax exemptions are applied selectively and vary depending on the nature of the event and the organizing entity (e.g. educational institutions). In some cases, tax rates have reached up to 25%.³

PUBLISHING

The Libyan International Standard Numbering (ISBN) Agency is affiliated to the National Library of Libya in Benghazi and assigns the number 978-9959 to works published in Libya. A publishing licence from the DCPAM is required to publish books and other content.

Official statistics supplied by the Libyan Publishers Union indicate the presence of 56 private publishing houses⁴ working alongside public institutions involved in publishing books and other materials. In addition to the General Authority for Endowments and Islamic Affairs, this includes universities, research centres, the MoE and the MCKD.

According to the statistics of the Libyan ISBN Agency, the number of books published between 2021 and the end of 2023 was 3,114. This figure consisted of 1,359 titles in 2021, 879 titles in 2022 and 876 titles in 2023, all of them in print format.

Female authors contributed 28 books to the total number of books published in 2023, thus representing only 3.2% of books published in that year.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Based on preliminary statistics from distribution centres in major cities, 21 accredited bookstores and kiosks serve publishers in Libya. These are distributed across Libya according to the importance and population density of the various cities.

Institutions involved in the book and publishing sector in Libya rely on several direct channels for distribution to readers. These include the main offices of state publishers (5), private sales outlets (7), general bookstores (3) and specialised private distribution companies (6).

Libya held the following seven book fairs in 2023: the Benghazi International Book Fair (Second Edition), the Tobruk International Book Fair (Second Edition), the Ras Lanuf Local Book Fair,

the Benghazi University Local Book Fair, the Misrata Local Book Fair, the Tripoli Local Book Fair and the Omar Al-Mukhtar University Local Book Fair.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 4,000 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to documentary research and in addition to the National Library, Libya has a total of 64 public libraries across the country.⁵ One of the remarkable public libraries is the Al-Qawmiya Library, located in Tripoli. Az-Zāwiya and Benghazi are both home to several active public centres containing public libraries, including Dar Alkitab, Al-Sabri and Wahbi Albouri.

In addition to public libraries, Libya is home to several notable national and academic libraries. Among the latter are those at the University of Benghazi (initially the University of Libya, then of Garyounis), which maintains seven libraries serving the range of academic disciplines taught there.

No survey has been undertaken on the reading habits of Libya's inhabitants. According to the head of the Libyan Publishers Union and a number of owners of publishing houses, academic

and scientific textbooks, prepared in large part as collections of research papers required for master's and doctoral degrees, are the most widely produced and popular titles.

In second place are books on Islamic jurisprudence in its various forms, followed by literary books in general.⁶

A significant interest in writing and authorship has been noted among young men and women, particularly in the following genres: novels, poetry, short stories, autobiographies and historical narratives.⁷ There has, however, been a noticeable decline in the production of children's books in recent years.⁸

Different civil-society organizations contribute to highlighting the importance of reading, book production and digital content as means of preserving Libya's cultural heritage. Two notable organizations active in this field are the Libyan Association for Libraries and Information, and the Friends of the Book Association. It is worth noting that, in recent years, women have made a significant contribution in organizing these events.⁹ Recently, also, Libya has witnessed several initiatives aimed at encouraging writing and the creation of digital content. The most notable of these is the establishment of the Libya Creativity Award, accompanied by the organization of an annual event to honour outstanding contributors in the field.



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Some universities, in order to promote innovative scientific research, have taken the step of covering the expense of publishing books featuring cutting-edge content; and have been promoting other local initiatives, such as the Best Scientific Research Award, organized by Benghazi University, and the Distinguished Scientific Publishing Competition, organized by Tobruk University. These initiatives include offers of financial reward to encourage authors to engage in creative writing.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

While few recent data could be gathered on imports and exports in the book and publishing sector in Libya, documentary research indicated that, in 2019, the country imported books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed matter to the value of US\$21,855,729; and exported the same category of goods to the value of US\$25,119.¹⁰

In 2019, the top three countries from which Libya imported books were Italy (US\$11.3million), Spain (US\$4.6million), and Lebanon (US\$4.3million); and the top three countries to which it exported books were the United States of America (US\$13,506), Netherlands (US\$7,993), and Canada (US\$2,611).¹¹

According to a different source, Libya's imports of books in 2023 came mostly from Egypt (which accounted for 75% of the total value of imported books), Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic (at 8% and 7% of total value respectively).¹²

TRAINING

There are no specific higher education programmes for the book and publishing sector in Libya. However, programmes on related subjects are available in various academic departments, for instance Libraries & Information Science and Media Studies departments. These are found primarily in major universities, such as the universities of Benghazi, Tripoli, Misurata and Omar Al-Mukhtar.

Short training courses are organized by the Libyan Publishers Union and by individual publishers, often in collaboration with academics and specialists in related fields. On-the-job training in specific skills is managed by publishers and supervised by experienced workplace professionals.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

There are two main Professional associations in Libya: the Libyan Publishers Union and the Libyan Association for Libraries and Information. The University of Benghazi, in collaboration with other cultural and official institutions including the National Library, the Libyan Publishers Union and legislative bodies such as the House of Parliament, has contributed to amending laws and regulations governing the book and publishing sector and intellectual property rights.

The latest example is the proposed amendment to Intellectual Property Law submitted by the Department of Library and Information Sciences at Benghazi University, in collaboration with professors from the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Media.

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MADAGASCAR



Population **31.2 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **77%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$506**
(2023)



Urban population **41%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **70%**



Internet users (2022) **21%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **18**

Titles published **121**

Bookstores **16**

Public libraries **36**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 866,700 inhabitants

Jobs **700**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book and publishing sector in Madagascar has been profoundly influenced by emblematic figures who have left their mark on Malagasy literature. Among them, Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo (1901 (or 1903) to 1937) is renowned for his ability to fuse surrealist, romantic and modernist poetic forms with elements of traditional Malagasy oratory. His work paved the way for a rich and diverse body of contemporary Malagasy literature. Another notable figure is Jacques Rabemananjara (1913-2005), poet, playwright and politician, who played a key role in Madagascar's cultural and political life in the 20th century. His literary and political engagement has left a lasting mark on Madagascar society. On the publishing front, houses such as *Nocomment® Éditions*, founded in 2011 in Antananarivo, have distinguished themselves by publishing works focusing on Madagascar, thereby helping to promote local literature.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Communication and Culture is the central body responsible for overseeing the book and publishing sector. It coordinates initiatives to promote the production and dissemination of literary works, while ensuring compliance with intellectual property laws. The National Library of Madagascar (*Bibliothèque Nationale de Madagascar* – BNM), whose mission is to promote the book distribution chain and public reading, includes the legal deposit service. It works with other stakeholders to ensure that national publications are well protected and accessible.

The prerogatives of legal deposit, previously the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior,¹ were transferred in 2020 to the Ministry of Communication on topics related to the media, and to the Ministry of Culture for printed works (books).

The Malagasy Copyright Office (*Office Malagasy des Droits d'Auteur* – OMDA) is the competent body responsible for the collective management of copyright, which includes issuing permission for use, and collecting and redistributing royalties to authors and creators. The OMDA also ensures that infringements, such as copyright violations or piracy, are monitored and sanctioned.

The Ministry of Education oversees the assessment and approval of schoolbooks. This responsibility includes validating educational content to ensure that it complies with national curricula and is adapted to Malagasy cultural and linguistic realities.

Act No. 94-036 of 18 September 1995 and Decree No. 98-435 of 16 June 1998 concerning the General Regulations for Collecting Copyright and Related Rights provide the legal framework to protect literary and artistic property, and guarantee authors exclusive rights to use their works, with protection extending until 70 years after their death. Additionally, Act No. 2021-019 of 2019 related to the National Cultural Policy highlights the role of books in socio-economic and cultural development. It aims to promote the local book industry by supporting authors, publishers and booksellers, while adapting production to the country's cultural realities.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Book sales are exempt from VAT. Book imports, on the other hand, may be subject to customs duties, the rates of which vary according to the nature of the books and their origin.

The Malagasy Book Policy was established in 2012 by Decree No. 2012-1008, with the aim of promoting the publication and translation of books in Madagascar. Specific measures to combat piracy were adopted in 2006 with Interministerial Decree No. 12226/2006, which sets out measures to strengthen the fight against the counterfeiting of literary and artistic works.

PUBLISHING

Madagascar does not have an ISBN agency. Publishers are generally registered with European agencies, in particular the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (*Agence Francophone pour la Numérotation Internationale du Livre* – AFNIL).

According to the national authority's response to the survey, 18 publishers were operating in 2023. The same source mentions the publication of 121 titles during 2023 and indicates that the printed format remains most popular with readers. It also notes that in 2023, 37.2% of Madagascar's published output was in Malagasy and 62.7% in French.

The publishing sector is remarkable for its diversity, with companies specialising in different fields. *Nocomment*[®] *Éditions*, for example, focuses on general literature and fiction, including novels, short stories and comic strips relating to Madagascar. Children's literature is driven by publishers such as *Éditions Jeunes Malgaches*, which has an extensive bilingual catalogue containing 100 titles, and *Vakoka Vakiteny*, which promotes local culture through works in Malagasy. In education, the *Librairie Mixte* and the *Librairie CMPL* meet school and university needs with a tailored range of books. On religious matters, *Éditions Luthériennes* publishes Bibles and theological texts, while legal publishing is handled by *Éditions Jurid'Ika*, which specialises in works for lawyers and students. Local publishing houses, such as *Dodo Vole*, *Jeunes Malgaches* and *Tsipika*, publish works in local languages and play an active role in disseminating Malagasy literature.

Regarding the school market, according to a report from the Ministry of Education, 1,455,759 textbooks covering the teaching of mathematics, Malagasy and French were distributed, as well as 581,964 bilingual and trilingual dictionaries. Foreign publishers, particularly French, nonetheless have a significant presence in the Malagasy textbook market.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there were 13 brick-and-mortar bookshops in 2023 and 3 online bookshops. Bookshops are concentrated mainly in large cities such as Antananarivo, where operators such as *Librairie Mixte*, *Librairie Mille Feuilles* and *Librairie Tsipika* play a key role in retail sales. In rural areas, distribution is virtually non-existent, as books have difficulty reaching these regions owing to high logistics costs and challenging transportation infrastructure.

To overcome these constraints, local initiatives such as *bibliobus*² (mobile libraries), run by NGOs like Friends of Madagascar Library, aim to make books accessible in rural areas. In addition, local publishers such as *Éditions Jeunes Malgaches*, *Éditions Tsipika* and *Éditions Dox* use direct channels like sales at book fairs and cultural events to reach their audiences. Fairs and festivals,³ such as the Antananarivo Book Fair, are also major platforms for publishers and authors, although their impact remains limited to urban areas.

In terms of employment, based on all available data and additional research, estimates are that some 700 people were employed in the sector in 2023.



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The national authority's response to the survey indicates that four book fairs and festivals are held. These include the Antananarivo Book Fair, organised by the *Association des Éditeurs de Madagascar* since 2005, as well as the Mahajanga Book and Culture Fair and the Tsenaben'ny Boky in Antananarivo, which feature book-related events and literary debates. Other initiatives, such as the Toamasina Book Fair, are held at regional level, increasing access to literature throughout the country.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

The national authority's response to the survey records 36 public libraries. Documentary research shows that Madagascar has an extensive network of public access to reading materials, with 27 Reading and Cultural Activity Centres (*Centres de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle* – CLACs) throughout the country, as well as two associative networks coordinated by the Ministry of Education and comprising 25 reading, information and cultural centres. These centres were set up by the *Alliance française* branches in Madagascar and are supported by the association *Trait d'union France Madagascar*. There are also 100 local French-language exchange centres in all regions, run by the Ministry of Education. Finally, there are 29 media libraries in the *Alliance française* network.⁴

In terms of activities to promote reading, NGOs such as *Passeurs de Mots* and *Bibliothèques sans Frontières* are setting up mobile libraries and reading workshops to reach rural communities.

Schools are incorporating reading activities into their teaching programmes, in partnership with initiatives such as Books for All (*Livres pour Tous*). NGOs such as *Livre Échange Madagascar* and *Biblioref* are involved in distributing books to promote access to reading, often in rural areas. These initiatives are complemented by awareness-raising campaigns run by artists' collectives and book clubs that

encourage young people to explore local literature. Finally, literary events such as the Madagascar International Book Fair (*Foire Internationale du Livre à Madagascar* – FIL) raise public awareness of the importance of reading and provide a forum for meetings between authors and readers.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2023, imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$4,910,160. France is the main supplier of these imports. Exports totalled US\$4,730.⁵

TRAINING

University-level training in the book and publishing professions in Madagascar is still relatively unstructured, but initiatives are emerging to meet the sector's growing needs. Madagascan universities, in particular the University of Antananarivo, offer courses in the arts, humanities and communication that include modules in literature, writing and, to a lesser extent, publishing. However, there is as yet no complete course specifically devoted to the publishing professions.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

While the Madagascar Publishers Association (*Association des Éditeurs de Madagascar* – AEDIM) organises the Antananarivo Book Fair, writing workshops and training courses for the sector's stakeholders, two other associations of major importance are also prominent in the literary landscape: the Madagascar Bookshop Association (*Association des Libraires de Madagascar* – ALM), which focuses on distributing and promoting books from local publishers in particular, and the Madagascar League of Women Writers (*Ligue des Femmes Écrivaines de Madagascar* – LFEM),⁶ founded in 2023, which aims to promote Madagascan women writers, encourage female

literary production and contribute to the country's socio-economic, cultural and environmental development through education and literature.

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MALAWI



Population **21.1 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **68%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$602**
(2023)



Urban population **18%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **60%**



Internet users (2023) **18%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **19**

Titles published **132**

Bookstores **40**

Public libraries **15**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 1.4 million inhabitants

Jobs **700**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Book publishing in Malawi, then known as Nyasaland, began with the arrival of missionaries who established printing presses in 1878. Not all the presses in Malawi were mission-based. In 1948, the Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland Joint Publication Bureau was created. It scouted for writers, distributed their works, fixed local prices, provided information to libraries, guaranteed sales to publishers after assessing the potential market for each book and, whenever relevant, subsidized books to bring down the selling price.¹

The Bureau established depots in schools, mission campuses and on some estates. It also set up reading rooms for students and the general public.² When the two territories of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) became independent, the Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland Joint Publication Bureau delinked and became two separate entities: the National Educational Company of Zambia Ltd and the Malawi Publications and Literature Bureau.

The Christian Literature Association in Malawi (CLAIM) became operational in 1968, covering the entire book chain. It commissioned editors to scout for writers, encouraging them to undertake creative Christian writing.³

Of the non-religious publishers, the first local publishing company established was Dzuka Publishing Company Limited (1975).⁴ During the one-party era, it was the only company that published educational materials used in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.⁵ In the 1980s, it established a platform for Malawian creative writers called Dzuka Writers, including works by Steve Chimombo, such as *Wachiona Ndani*.

When Malawi became a democracy in 1994, it adopted liberal economic policies. This freed up the market and allowed for the emergence of more local publishers, including Jhango Publishers. Jhango publishes and supplies primary and secondary school books that are

approved by the Ministry of Education (MOE), fiction and children's books. Since 2000, with the advancement of technology, there has been a rise in self and vanity publishing.⁶

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The National Library Service was established by an Act of Parliament in 1967 under the authority of the MOE, to operate national public library information services. Its declared mission is to ensure that Malawians have access to educational training, leisure materials and materials providing information for national development. The Copyright Society of Malawi (COSOMA), established in 1992 under the Copyright Act, promotes and protects the rights and interests of authors and other creatives.

The Malawi Institute of Education (MIE), a national curriculum development centre, is the organization responsible for evaluating textbooks and operates under the MOE. It is mandated to evaluate textbooks, teachers' guides and other instructional materials produced by publishers and to publish suitable ones.⁷ This mandate makes MIE the major publisher of educational materials, particularly primary school textbooks, in Malawi.

While there is no law dedicated to the book publishing sector, several legal provisions are applicable. These include the Printed Publications Act (revised 2014), which provides for the registration of printed materials including newspapers and books and the preservation of printed works published in Malawi; the National Archives Act (1975, revised 2014), which provides for the classification, conservation, custody and control and disposal of certain public, judicial, historical and general records; the Malawi Book Service Act (1964, revised 2014), which provides for the establishment of Malawi Book Service Ltd for the distribution of books and sale of educational supplies including books, among other items;⁸

the Copyright Act (1989, revised 2016), which provides for copyright of literary works; and the Censorship and Control of Entertainments Act (1968), which provides for the prohibition of cinematography, records, publications and entertainment deemed to be politically and culturally undesirable.⁹

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The main public policy related to the book publishing sector is the Intellectual Property Policy (2019), which provides a framework to foster the generation, protection and exploitation of intellectual property. The National Book and Reading Policy, elaborated on in 2022 and still pending ratification, will ensure that books and other reading materials are developed and made commonplace for the purpose of supporting education, literacy and lifelong learning in order to improve the levels of reading in the country.

Regarding book pricing policy, textbooks and educational materials from MIE have fixed price lists.¹⁰ The national authority survey response notes that while there is no public investment in support of the book publishing sector, the government implements various projects such as the Equity with Quality Learning in Secondary School (EQUALS) project, through which the MOE purchased approximately 1,293 million secondary school science and mathematics textbooks and teacher guides, worth approximately US\$863,000 (MK1.5 billion) for distribution to all 885 public secondary schools across the country.

PUBLISHING

The Malawi National ISBN Agency operates under the Department of National Records and Archives Services (formerly known as the National Archives).

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/// The Chitenje Changa Monologue ///

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While the national authority survey response indicates there were seven publishers operating in the country in 2023, Book Publishers Association of Malawi (BPAM) records show nineteen registered publishers.¹¹ The book publishing sector was initially dominated by international companies such as Longman and Oxford University Press. Independence opened the book publishing sector to local enterprises. Currently, CLAIM publishes and markets a wide range of books, ranging from religion and politics to school textbooks. It also publishes Chichewa creative works under its Chichewa Creative Writing Series. While no official data are available on the number of titles

published in 2023, consultation with stakeholders suggests an estimate of 132 titles, of which 90% are textbooks.

There are two categories under school textbook publishing: primary and secondary school. The primary school market is potentially the larger, but it is closed to competition as only the MOE, through its agency, MIE, publishes for this market and it is responsible for all stages of textbook publishing. On the other hand, the secondary school market is open to competition. This market is dominated by local publishers such as Grey Matter and CLAIM. International companies such as Macmillan and Oxford work in collaboration with local partners.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Bookshops are the main distribution channel in Malawi. Research indicates that there are over 40 bookstores.¹² Some publishers, such as CLAIM, have a network of bookshops across the country. The Catholic Church-owned Montfort Bookshops also operate a network of bookshops in the cities and some urban centres. Logos Open Culture Ltd operates a bookshop at Chambo Market in Lilongwe and Grey Matter operates bookshops in both Blantyre and Lilongwe. There are other bookshops that are not affiliated to a particular publisher.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 700 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

Promotion channels include book festivals and bookfairs, which are rather sporadic. For example, BPAM's Malawi Book Festival was last held in Lilongwe in 2017 and Story Club Arts Café's Feminart Arts and Book Festival was last held in 2019.¹³ Book launches are regular promotional events, where books are auctioned off rather than sold at a regular price. However, there are no data showing the revenue generated from these promotional channels.

While there is no official ranking of the relative importance of each sales channel, the national authority survey response shows that the physical bookshop is ranked highest, followed by direct sales and lastly, bookfairs and literary festivals.

Although there are no data available indicating the extent of piracy in Malawi, it is considered a huge problem by stakeholders in the book publishing sector. According to the Director of the Copyright Society of Malawi, educational materials are the most pirated works, notably in tertiary institutions. There is consensus in the survey responses from professionals that piracy is impacting the book publishing sector negatively.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

There are no data available regarding the reading habits of Malawians. However, the Malawi National Library Service (MNLS) operates fifteen public libraries across the country.¹⁴ Apart from lending books, the MNLS is the main promoter of reading, particularly among children. One of its activities is to promote reading culture among children, using strategies that motivate children to read books.¹⁵ The MNLS also promotes reading through school libraries. One of their notable efforts in this area is the establishment of the Werangani Series (Read Series), which publishes stories aimed at strengthening reading among children and adults who have just learned how to read.¹⁶

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that, for the year 2023, the total value of imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$8,028,910. Export value amounted to US\$55,320.¹⁷ The top countries supplying these imports were China, India, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. With regard to book exports, the survey responses show that books are exported to South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.¹⁸

TRAINING

No public university in Malawi offers specialised programmes for the book publishing sector. Survey responses point to the lack of professional training as a major handicap. Most practitioners in the sector are either self-taught or have had on-the-job training. Regarding specific technical skills such as digital marketing for the book publishing sector, these are absent from public education institutions. However, the national authority's response to the survey

refers to individual and group efforts, including Zaluso Arts and M-Hub, that provide informal training in digital marketing to local communities.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The main professional network for the book and publishing sector is BPAM. BPAM members participate in various book-related activities, including developing new books whenever there is a curriculum change. BPAM also participated in the preparation of the draft for Malawi's Book and Reading Policy, which is yet to be ratified.

The Malawi Writers Union (MAWU) is a national organization for creative writers in Malawi. It was established in 1995 to serve as a platform for writers of various genres, including prose, poetry and non-fiction.¹⁹

The Malawi Union for Academic and Non-Fiction Authors (MUANA) is dedicated to promoting academic research and non-fiction writing in Malawi. It works very closely with COSOMA on actualizing reprographic rights licensing and lobbying the MOE on the importance of secondary schools obtaining reprographic licences.²⁰

The Malawi Library and Information Consortium (MALICO) was established in 2003. It is a cooperative consisting of university libraries, college and polytechnic libraries, research libraries, public libraries and special libraries. MALICO's main objectives are to encourage cooperation among information stakeholders, influence information policy at the national level, and provide for adequate ICT infrastructure for members (especially sufficient internet bandwidth) in order to assist in the development of appropriate ICT skills at all levels and facilitate access to electronic journal articles in international databases. The consortium also organizes and digitizes Malawian content. It has assembled and preserved indigenous information and provided access to that information in many formats for all Malawians.

Although these organizations advocate for equality and equal opportunities between the genders, the national authority survey response notes that the reality on the ground is different. The number of women holding important positions is low and there are no reserved positions for women or other prioritized groups of people.

NOTES

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MALI



Population **23.8 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **31%**
(2020)



GDP per capita **US\$869**
(2023)



Urban population **46%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **114%**



Internet users (2022) **33%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **126**

Titles published **151**

Bookstores **11**

Public libraries **73**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 326,000 inhabitants

Jobs **1 350**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Mali has inherited a rich oral and written literary heritage thanks to its great medieval cities (Timbuktu and Djenné), which from the 13th century onwards were home to universities on par with the Arab universities of the time. These universities were the vehicle for literary production that gave Mali the largest bibliography of pre-colonial writings in West Africa. Among the first writers who emerged from Mali in the early 1900s were Moussa Traoré, whose first book was released in 1913 and his second in 1923, Mamby Sidibé in 1933, and above all Fily Dabo Sissoko (1901-1964), Seydou Badian Kouyaté-Nomboina (1928-2018) and Amadou Hampaté Ba (1901-1991). Over the years, this circle has grown to include Yambo Ouologuem, Gaoussou Diarra, Mansa Makan Diabaté, Moussa Konaté, Ismaïl Samba Traoré and many others.

When Mali became independent in 1960, the Institute of Humanities (*Institut des Sciences Humaines*) was created by Law no. 62-75/AN-RM of 17 September 1962. This Institute included the National Library and the National Archives among other sections. As early as 1963, Mali created a ministry responsible for education and the Educational Office (*Bureau Pédagogique*), which later became the National Educational Institute (*Institut Pédagogique National - IPN*), a technical structure responsible for designing, monitoring, disseminating and evaluating school curricula, as well as writing, editing and/or printing teaching materials. However, the IPN had difficulty finding authors to carry out these assignments, and therefore signed publishing contracts with foreign publishers, mainly Docje, Novice, Servedit, EdicefP and Nathan, all based in France.

In a bid to move away from this model and in the context of economic liberalisation in the 1980s, the State adopted a new strategy by relinquishing its monopoly over the publishing and bookshop sub-sectors, allowing the emergence of several private Malian

publishing houses and bookshops. These include Éditions Fayida (1983), Éditions Jamana (1988), EDIM.SA (1991), La Sahélienne (1992), Donniya (1996), Le Figuier and ÉDIS (1997). The first bookshop, Librairie de l'Étoile noire, was opened in 1961. In 1962, it officially became Librairie Populaire du Mali (LPM). In the 1980s, professional bookshops followed, including the Bah SARL bookshop, the Soudan bookshop and the Lire à gogo bookshop.

One of the characteristics of publishing in Mali is that publishers are mainly writers. These include Chaka Diarrassouba of Éditions Fayida, Ismaïla Samba Traoré of La Sahélienne, Moussa Konaté of Le Figuier and Samba Niaré of Édis. Sons of writers have arrived more recently, such as Igo Diarra (Balani's) and Kadiatou Konaré (Cauris Édition). The latest established, Figura Édition, Prostyle, Sawa and Gafé, are managed by the new generation.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The book sector is overseen by the Ministry of Handicrafts, Culture, Hotel Industry and Tourism, which is responsible for developing and implementing government policy on book promotion through the National Directorate of Libraries and Documentation (*Direction Nationale des Bibliothèques et de la Documentation - DNBD*). The National Library of Mali was created in 1984 by Law No. 83-51/AN-RM.

On an institutional level, the creation in 2001 of the DNBD and the National Centre for Public Reading (*Centre National de la Lecture Publique - CNLP*), responsible for the coordination, technical control and promotion of libraries and documentation centres, reflects the Government of Mali's desire to make books accessible to all.¹ The National Council for Book Promotion (*Conseil National de Promotion du Livre - CNPL*) is a consultative body created by decree No. 92-230/P-RM in 1992.

Created in 2010 as part of the National Policy on Non-Formal Education, the National Centre for Non-Formal Education (*Centre National de l'Éducation Non Formelle – CN-RENF*) is a specialised department of the Ministry of Education responsible for producing, publishing and distributing teaching materials and supporting operators in training, and managing literacy and post-literacy projects.

In terms of legislation and regulations, Mali adopted Law No. 85-04/AN-RM of 6 February 1985 instituting legal deposit at the National Directorate of Libraries and Documentation. Under Decree No. 72/PG-RM, the number of copies to be filed varies according to the nature of the applicant. The printer or producer must deposit four copies with the National Library of Mali, while the publisher or author must deposit two copies identical to those offered for sale.

Law No. 2017-012 of 1 June 2017 sets out the literary and artistic property regime in Mali, as well as on information society. Copyright and related rights are managed by the Malian Copyright Office (*Bureau Malien des Droits d'Auteur – BUMDA*), which was set up in 2000 under Law no. 8426/AN-RM of 7 June 2017, establishing the literary and artistic property regime in the Republic of Mali.²

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that Mali has drafted a national policy on books and reading, the adoption of which is pending. It is accompanied by an action plan costing 22 billion CFA francs (around US\$35 million) for the period 2024-2028.

Regarding taxation, the levying of VAT on imports and sales of books of all kinds has been suspended in Mali since 2002.³ In terms of public investment, the Ministry of Finance has also provided the National Directorate of Libraries and Documentation with an annual line of credit of around fifty million FCFA (US\$78,000) for the purchase of books. The national authority's response to the survey also indicates

the existence of public invitations to tender for schoolbooks and tax incentives and subsidies for the training or professionalisation of agents in the book and publishing sector.

In addition, the Charter of Publishing Professionals and Code of Ethics,⁴ drawn up in 2017, has made it possible to specify the criteria for delimiting the contours of the book publishing profession, of textbooks and teaching materials in Mali.⁵ It also aims to determine the basic ethical and functional rules that should govern relations between publishers and all professionals in the book chain.⁶

PUBLISHING

Mali has two national ISBN (2006) and ISSN (2007) agency centres. The National Directorate of Libraries and Documentation counted 126 publishers and 151 titles published in 2023, although the national authority's response to the survey indicates that there were 94. Only titles for which legal deposit has been made are counted here. Among the main and very active publishing houses in the country are *La Sahélienne* and *Éditions Cauris*. Documentary research also shows that many publications are produced on a self-publishing basis, in small quantities.⁷

An examination of the titles shows a preponderance of French-language publications. The local or regional languages of publication include Bamanankan, Fulfulde, Songhay and Soninke. The Malian Writers' Union (*Union des Écrivains du Mali*), which gathers together writers, notes the preponderance of literary works and essays.⁸ According to the national authority's response to the survey, the market for schoolbooks is dominated mainly by publishing houses whose capital is majority-owned by nationals.

According to documentary research, publishing in Mali is characterised by its interest in national languages. This interest emerged between the support and competition of public structures dedicated to education and the fight against illiteracy since independence.

Discussions between professionals from the private publishing sector and the relevant public institutions have focused on issues in the schoolbook markets, as well as debates on the rules for writing orally spoken languages (print coding, translation formats, etc.). It should be noted that *Jamana*, followed by several publishing houses, has chosen to publish bilingual works or works in national languages, particularly for a young audience. The international success of Sess and Omar Sylla's 2019 book *En italique*, a bilingual Bamanankan-French work, seems to confirm this trend.⁹

Although no data are available, the publishing sector continues to face piracy according to industry professionals, who believe that large quantities of Malian books are printed in Mali and especially in Asia outside any legal framework and then released on the Malian market.¹⁰

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that retail outlets (supermarkets, stationeries, etc.) and direct sales remain the main channels. The Malian network of bookshops is concentrated in Bamako, with around 11 physical booksellers dedicated to selling books as their main activity.¹¹ Moreover, in the main towns in the regions, single shops often function as a bookshop, a stationery and even a hardware store. Sales in the informal sector are also very strong in Mali, through 'bookshops on the ground' (*librairies par terre*)¹² that offer second-hand books, many of them school textbooks, at often very low prices, and often pirated. There are currently no online book sales in Mali.¹³

Nevertheless, books produced in Mali are not widely distributed, according to professionals in the sector, who note that there is no distribution structure capable of making books accessible throughout Mali.¹⁴ In the absence of distribution companies, self-distribution remains the essential channel for distribution through personal and professional networks and often even schools and universities.¹⁵



In terms of employment, based on available data and additional research, our estimations amount to 1,350 people employed in the sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

The national authority's response to the survey indicates a total of 73 public libraries in 2024. As early as 1977, Mali set up an extensive and structured network of public libraries named Operation Public Reading (*Opération Lecture Publique* - OLP), comprising 56 fixed public reading libraries and a travelling library (a train-wagon library serving 11 localities along the railway line between Bamako and the border with Senegal).¹⁶ Additional documentary research also revealed a total of 244 documentary units, including public reading libraries, reading and activity centres for municipal children (*Centres de Lecture et d'Animation pour les Enfants des Communes* - CLAEC), reading and cultural activity centres, school libraries, university libraries, community libraries, religious libraries, private libraries and specialist libraries.

The national authority's response to the survey indicates the existence of three book fairs and festivals. There have been several long-standing public initiatives to promote books and reading, including the Malian Book Fair (*Foire du Livre du Mali* - FOLIMA) and the Bamako Book

Fair (*Salon du Livre de Bamako* - SALIBA), the Ségou Book Fair (*Salon du Livre de Ségou* - Salise), the *Festival Étonnants Voyageurs* (2001-2017) and the Manuscript Fair (*Foire aux Manuscrits*). In the same vein, literary prizes, notably the National Prize for the Arts, Literature and Sciences (*Grand Prix National des Arts, des Lettres et des Sciences*) and the Yambo Ouologuem Prize (*Prix Yambo Ouologuem*), have been instituted. Other promotional events are also worth noting, such as the *Rentrée Littéraire*, which has been running since 2008.¹⁷

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

In the absence of recent official data, available documentary research indicates that Mali's commercial activity in the book sector in 2019 - including printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials - was primarily import-driven, with imports amounting to approximately US\$1,344,653. The main supplier of these imports was France. As for exports, they totalled US\$68,000.¹⁸

TRAINING

While there are no public or private training establishments for publishers and booksellers, the national authority's response to the survey refers to the University Technology Institute (*Institut Universitaire de Technologie* - IUT), which has offered a Book, Archives and Documentation course since 2004, and the Balla Fasseké Kouyaté Multimedia Arts and Crafts Conservatory (*Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers Multimédia Balla Fasseké Kouyaté* - CAMM-BFK), which offers training for illustrators, translators, developers and content managers.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

There are two main professional organizations in Mali: the Malian Book Publishers Organization (*Organisation Malienne des Éditeurs de Livres* - OMEL) and the Malian Professional Booksellers Association (*Association Malienne des Libraires Professionnels* - AMLP).

There are also four writers' networks, namely the Malian Writers' Union (*Union des Écrivains du Mali* - UEM), the Writers' Association of Mali and its Diaspora (*Association des Écrivains du Mali et sa Diaspora* - AEMD), the Women's Writers Network of Mali and its Diaspora (*Réseau des Femmes Écrivaines du Mali et de la Diaspora* (RFEMD), and Young Literary Minds (*Jeunes Esprits de la Littérature*).¹⁹ In the field of libraries, the Malian Association of Librarians, Archivists and Documentalists (*Association Malienne des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes* - AMBAD) was created in 1978 and the Malian Documentation Network for Development (*Réseau Malien de Documentation pour le Développement* - REMADOC) in 1993.

NOTES

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2. Interview with Ms Aida Koné, Managing Director of BUMDA, 2024.
3. Letter No. 0574/MEF-SG dated 18 March 2002 from the Minister of the Economy and Finance.
4. *Organisation Malienne des Éditeurs de Livres* (2017), p. 16 Charter for publishing professionals and code of ethics. Bamako, Mali.
5. Interview with Hamidou Konaté, President of the *Organisation Malienne des Éditeurs du Mali* (OMEL), 2024.
6. Ibid.
7. *Rapport d'analyse comparative 2020-2021*, Biblio SUD et Institut Français, page 45.
8. Interview with Diadié Koné, Head of National Library Division, 2024.
9. Mali Country Study, June 2021, p. 64
10. Interview with Mr Hamidou Konaté, President of the *Organisation Malienne des Éditeurs du Mali* (OMEL), November 2024.
11. Interview with Mr Bah, President of the Professional Booksellers of Mali, 2024.
12. Interview with Aboubacar Sissoko, writer, promoter of Mandenka Publishing House, 2024.
13. Fatoumata Keita, writer and publisher, Figuira Edition.
14. Interview with Mr Hamidou Konaté, President of the *Organisation Malienne des Éditeurs du Mali* (OMEL), November 2024.
15. Interview with Ms Kébé Bintou Coulibaly, Manager of *L'Harmattan Mali*, 2024.
16. *Une bibliothèque mobile pas ordinaire : Le wagon-bibliothèque de l'Opération lecture publique au Mali*, by Jacques Cuzin, Secretary to *Bibliothèque sans frontières, Bibliothèque Trocadéro*/carriage library.
17. Interview with Mr Mamadou Macalou, writer, promoter of the *Salon du Livre de Ségou* (SALISE), 2024.
18. United Nations. *UN Comtrade Database: Mali Imports of Printed Books, Brochures, Leaflets, and Similar Printed Matter* (HS 490199), 2019, consulted March 5, 2025.
19. Interview with Ms. Oumou Armand, President of the Network of Women Writers of Mali and the Diaspora, 2024.

MAURITANIA



Population **5 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **67%**
(2021)



GDP per capita **US\$2,121**
(2023)



Urban population **58%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **113%**



Internet users (2022) **44%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **20**

Titles published **47** (2021-2023)

Bookstores **10**

Public libraries **15**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 333,300 inhabitants

Jobs **350**

This mapping was carried out based on documentary research and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Ladji Traoré Ladji is one of the pioneers of the book trade in Mauritania, having been one of the country's first booksellers with the establishment of the Société Nationale de Diffusion, SONADI, in 1987.

With its desire to support books and its openness to 'reading for all', the government launched a programme called Daar Kitab in the early 2000s to promote reading throughout the country. As a result, the 'maisons du livre' or 'book houses' have been opened in all the country's regions and regional capitals. The project will go down in history thanks to a song that has become a veritable invitation to read: *Kitabou*. It was sung by several artists, and in all the languages of the country. These Maisons du Livre were followed and supported by the Centres de lecture et d'animation culturelle (CLACs) set up from between 1980 and 1990.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Within the Ministry of Culture, Arts, Communication and Relations with Parliament, the Department of Books and Public Reading is responsible for supporting literary production, promoting public reading, printing, publishing and distribution services, and monitoring libraries. The National Library, set up in 1962 under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, houses a department responsible for managing copyright and intellectual property rights, as well as the legal deposit required of all authors. The *Institut Pédagogique National* (IPN), set up in 1975 under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education, has as its main mission to make books available to schools nationwide at token prices. The IPN is also responsible for evaluating and approving educational books.

Mauritania has an Orientation Law 2023-022 (2023) on the book and publishing sector and a Law 2012-03 of 16 July 2012 on literary, intellectual and artistic property.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Books sales are exempt from tax. The imports of paper, inputs and machinery for book production benefit from reduced tax rates.

Since 2016, the IPN is responsible for the publishing and distribution of school books thanks to the establishment of a School Publishing Support Fund (*Fonds d'Appui à l'Édition Scolaire*) granted by the State under decree no. 0173/2016. Between 2017 and 2020, this fund represented around US\$40,000 before it was increased to over US\$85,000 (US\$80,000 for publishing and US\$5,000 for distribution). A national strategy for schoolbooks and teaching materials is currently being drawn up. In addition, in October 2024, the Ministry of Education launched a digital textbook programme aimed at providing access to digital textbooks for pupils.

PUBLISHING

Mauritania does not have an ISBN allocation body. Publishers generally turn to the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (*Agence Francophone pour la Numérotation Internationale du Livre* - AFNIL) in France. It is estimated that only 7 to 9 publishers are involved in this activity. These include Éditions Les Trois Acacias, founded in 2015, *Éditions Jousour/Ponts et Passerelles* and *Éditions Jousour Abdel Aziz*. However, there are around 20 stakeholders brought together in an association of publishers and distributors, the Publishing and Distribution Mauritanian Union (*Union Mauritanienne pour l'Édition et la Distribution* - UMED).

Between 2021 and 2023, around 47 titles were published in Mauritania. Publication is entirely in print, with digital technology being rarely used for the time being. Most books are published in Arabic, the official language, and in French. In addition, whether in French or Arabic, most are printed abroad - in Europe (France) and in Arab countries (Egypt, Syria, and Morocco).

Publications in English and in national languages are rare, and are found generally in scientific publications (English) or popular poetry (national languages).

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The book distribution sector is dominated by IPN, which has several kiosks in the country's regions and administrative regions. Mauritania also has 10 physical bookshops, mostly concentrated in the capital. In addition to these chains, there are isolated sales outlets, commonly known as 'on the ground bookshops' (*librairies par terre*) or 'books on the ground' (*livres par terre*).

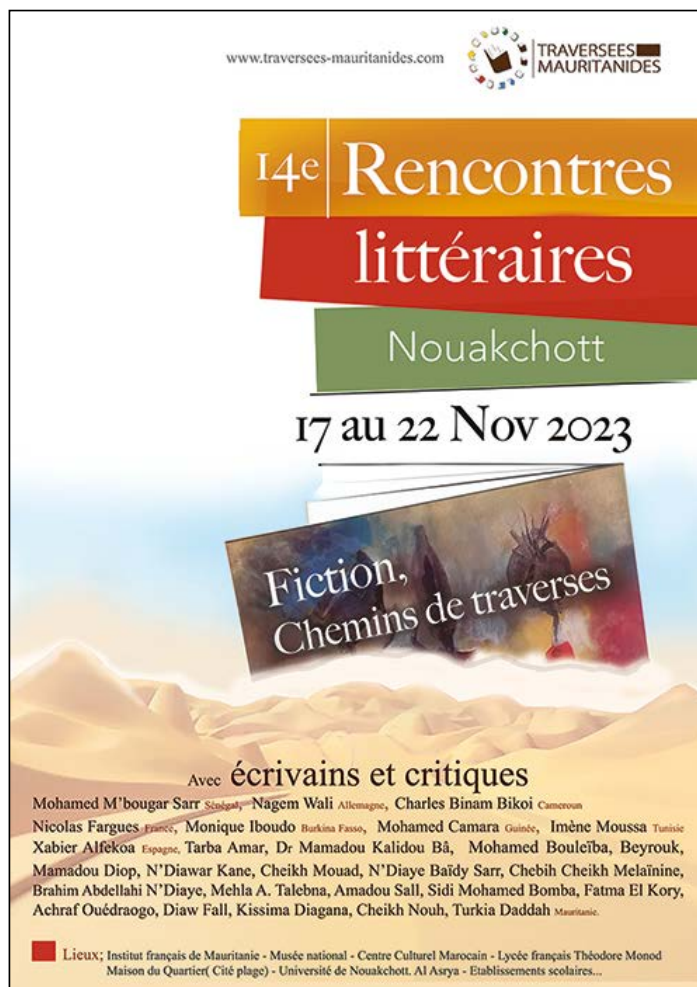
In terms of employment, our estimations, based on all available data and additional research, amounted to 350 people employed in the sector in 2023.

Since 2010, Mauritania has had a number of book events and festivals supported by the private sector, such as the *Rencontres littéraires-Traversées Mauritanides*. In addition, the Chinguitty prize, organized by the national authority since 1999, awards various prizes each year, including a literature prize.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

There are five public libraries, plus a number of Reading and Cultural Activity Centres (*Centres de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle* - CLACs). There are, however, family libraries in the old towns (Oualata, Chinguitty, Tichitt and Ouadane) which preserve manuscripts several centuries old, and private libraries in Nouakchott.

The national authority implements activities to promote literature, mainly on international days dedicated to books or the Arabic language. Associations such as *Traversées-Mauritanides* also implement initiatives such as welcoming writers to schools, universities and cultural centres in Nouakchott and the surrounding region.



IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2023, the total value of imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$ 1,702,010. The main sources of imports are Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and France. As exports, they came to a total value of US\$ 11,670.¹

TRAINING

There are no official higher education or vocational training programmes in the book and publishing sector.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

There are two writers' associations: the Association of Mauritanian Writers of French Expression (*Association des Écrivains Mauritanien d'Expression Française* - AEMEF), founded in 2008, and the Mauritanian Writers Union (*Union des Écrivains Mauritanien*), founded in 1975. Book publishers and distributors are members of the Publishing and Distribution Mauritanian Union (*Union Mauritanienne pour l'Édition et la Distribution* - UMED), which was set up in 2012.

NOTES

1. United Nations. UN Comtrade Solutions: *Mauritania Imports of Printed Books, Brochures, Leaflets, and Similar Printed Matter* (HS 490199), 2023. Accessed 24 February 2025.

MAURITIUS



Population **1.3 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **92%**
(2021)



GDP per capita **US\$11,613**
(2023)



Urban population **41%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **161%**



Internet users (2022) **76%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **76**

Titles published **210**

Bookstores **66**

Public libraries **16**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 81,250 inhabitants

Jobs **1,350**

Sector revenue **US\$14 million**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After independence in 1968, the Mauritian government prioritized education and literacy, which increased demand for textbooks in schools. As a result, in the 1970s, educational publishing became a major focus for the industry.

Key publishers in the 1970s were Éditions de l'Océan Indien (EOI) and Éditions Le Printemps (ELP). EOI, established in 1977, was a state-owned company until it was acquired by the Hassamal Group in 2016. Éditions Le Printemps was established in 1969 as a lending library and transformed into a publishing company in 1989. ELP was initially focused on Creole language books and educational materials for the Mauritian school system.

In 1999, the National Library of Mauritius was established with the mission of preserving all Mauritian literary output. In 1992, Khal Torabully, a poet, essayist and filmmaker, coined the term 'Coolitude', a literary and cultural concept that reflects the history and experiences of Indian indentured labourers in the Indian Ocean region. His works, for instance *Cargo Hold of Stars: Coolitude*, published by Azalées Éditions, have been influential in redefining Mauritian and Indian Ocean literature and history. The title was awarded the Prix Jean Fanchette in 1993. The early 2000s saw the entry of Mauritian authors into the international literary scene. A notable example is Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, the French-Mauritian author who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2008.

Mauritian literature reflects the country's multiculturalism through the diversity of languages in which authors write. Ananda Devi, one of the most celebrated Mauritian authors, is the 2024 recipient of the Neustadt International Prize for Literature, also known as the 'American Nobel'. Other prominent Mauritian authors include Nathacha Appanah, Shenaz Patel, Édouard Maunick, Dev Virahsawmy and Lindsey Collen.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Culture Section of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage oversees the cultural and literary sectors, including the publishing industry. It supports the development and monitoring of policies related to books and the literary arts. The National Library of Mauritius collects and preserves the country's published works, acts as the national bibliographic centre, and maintains the national bibliography. The library also plays a role in promoting literacy and supporting local authors. Éditions de l'Océan Indien is the official ISBN agency. The Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology is responsible for the evaluation and approval of school textbooks, ensuring that educational materials used in schools are of high quality and aligned with the national curriculum. Additionally, the Mauritius Institute of Education is responsible for developing and approving educational content, including textbooks.

The Mauritius Society of Authors (MASA) is mandated to oversee copyright and IP rights, ensuring the protection of authors, publishers and creators by enforcing copyright laws and safeguarding intellectual property.

Key components of Mauritius' legal framework include the Copyright Act, 2014 (Amended 2017), the cornerstone of copyright law in Mauritius, providing protection for creators of artistic works. It aligns with international treaties such as the Berne Convention, ensuring that creative outputs from Mauritius are protected both domestically and internationally.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Printed books, booklets, children's picture books and drawing or colouring books are exempt from value added tax (VAT) under Mauritian tax regulations.¹ Books imported into Mauritius are not subject to customs duties.²

According to the national authority's response to the survey, materials and goods used in the printing industry may be admitted free of customs duty with the approval of the director general of the Mauritius Revenue Authority. However, imports of paper and other inputs for book production do attract VAT.

The government provides financial incentives to promote publications in arts and heritage. Key measures include the National Arts Fund, which encourages the production of Mauritian literary works in local languages. Writers and publishers can apply for financial grants under this fund. Financial incentives are also available through literary competitions, including the Prix Jean Fanchette, which was established in 1992 in honour of the Mauritian poet and journalist of that name. The prize encourages and acknowledges local literary talent across various genres, including fiction, poetry and essays. The President's Fund for Creative Writing, which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage, was established in 2010 to support deserving Mauritian writers wishing to have their work published; and to promote creative writing in all languages written and spoken in Mauritius. The government has also shown support, financial and otherwise, for local publishers, particularly those focusing on the production of books in Creole and other local languages.³ This includes the creation of cultural events, such as book fairs, which promote local authors and publishers.⁴

Since 2020, the Mauritian government has provided free textbooks to students in Grades 1 to 9 as part of its commitment to free education. The Ministry of Education purchases textbooks from both local and international publishers through a competitive bidding process.

Public investment in the book and publishing sector is directed mainly at promoting literacy and encouraging local content creation. This includes investment in expanding and upgrading public libraries. In addition to national libraries, Mauritius has been developing

local libraries to improve access to reading materials in different regions of the island. The government, in its Public Sector Investment Programme, a five-year strategic investment plan covering the period 2022 to 2026, has allocated funding for the construction of a national library and village libraries. This will provide access to books and increase literacy rates.

While there is no explicit mention of gender-based inclusiveness in book publishing policies, women writers are often highlighted in national literary awards and grants.

PUBLISHING

However, according to the national authority's survey response, 76 publishers operating in 2023 produced a total of 210 books in print format. This followed similar totals of 218 print books in 2022 and 238 print books in 2021. The national authority also stated that in 2023, 10 titles were categorized as trade books, 150 as educational books and 8 as science, technical and professional books, amounting to a total of 168 of the 210 books published that year. There are no data on the categories for the remaining 42 books. The national authority's data similarly indicate that there was a significant drop from 120 trade books in 2022 to 10 in 2023, although 2021 produced a similar total of 8 trade books. Books in education, however, showed a year-on-year rise in number, from 50 in 2021 to 75 in 2022 and 150 in 2023.

According to the report entitled *Global Publishing Industry in 2022*, published in 2023 by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a total of 1,712 print titles were deposited with Éditions de l'Océan Indien, the ISBN agency, in 2022. This number does not include digital or other formats.⁵

No other sources of information could be found to verify or explain the trends in trade books indicated in the survey, nor to verify the discrepancy between the national authority's survey response and WIPO's numbers for legal deposit.

The survey also indicates that, in 2023, about 75% of the new titles published were in the de facto official languages (English and French), while 25% were in local or regional languages, the most common of them being Asian languages and Mauritian Creole.⁶ Despite the dominance of the print format in local publishing, digital books are ranked in the survey as the best-liked format. The production of books in Mauritius is characterized by a mix of local and international players, with a strong focus on educational and trade publishing.

Temple Publications' publishing and distribution focus is on academic and creative writing. The company is the sole distributor of online and print products for LexisNexis (a leading US-based publisher of legal publications) in the Indian Ocean region. Other key publishers in Mauritius include Éditions de l'Océan Indien, which specialises in textbooks and general books for both the local and international markets, and Éditions le Printemps, with its primary focus on local literary and educational works, in both print and digital formats. Éditions Le Printemps is also a major distributor, through its own bookshops and online platform. Éditions VIZAVI was established in 1993 to promote Mauritian culture. To date, the privately owned company has published around 150 titles, including the best-selling picture book series *The Adventures of Tikulu*. Éditions VIZAVI publishes a wide range of children's books designed to foster a love of reading and raise awareness of the local environment. It also specialises in books about Mauritius for the tourist market, focusing on the island's natural and cultural diversity.

Tourism plays a significant, albeit niche, role as a market for the book and publishing industry in Mauritius. With over a million tourists visiting the island annually,⁷ Mauritius has developed a range of literary products that cater to both the educational and the leisure interests of these visitors. To meet this demand, the Mauritian publishing industry produces travel, language and coffee-table books, and books on wildlife, nature and ecotourism.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

As per the national authority's survey response, the Mauritian book and publishing sector is supported by a network of 66 bookstores and 16 public libraries. Additionally, the island hosts small book events and occasional literary festivals, providing important platforms for authors, publishers and readers to engage with one another. Book fairs and bookstores hold particular importance among the various distribution channels, serving as prominent venues for the sale and promotion of books. Retail stores and online platforms also play a significant role, while direct sales remain a less commonly used method within the industry.⁸

Local bookshops such as Bookcourt Ltd., Le Printemps and Librairie Le Cygne, all strategically located in key urban and commercial areas, offer a wide selection of books in multiple languages. Educational institutions are a major market for textbooks and academic materials, frequently purchasing these directly from publishers or authorized distributors. Hachette Maurice was established in 2006 as a local subsidiary of the international publishing group

Hachette Livre. The company specialises in importing books from major international publishers and supplying them to local bookstores, schools, libraries and educational institutions.

Digital libraries and their formats, such as e-books and audiobooks, have become popular in Mauritius,⁹ with the national authority ranking digital formats as having the highest participation from readers in the country.¹⁰ The e-book market in Mauritius is projected to reach US\$1.63 million in 2024, according to Statista. This growth is anticipated to continue via an annual growth rate of 1.21% between 2024 and 2027, with the market volume projected to reach US\$1.69 million by 2027. The number of e-book readers in Mauritius is expected to rise to 122,600 users by 2027.¹¹

Based on all the available data and complementary research, approximately 1,350 persons were employed in the sector in 2023.

Book fairs such as the Salon International du Livre de Maurice, Confluences, and the Mauritius International Book Fair (MIBF) provide platforms for local and international publishers, authors and booksellers to present their works and engage with readers. The MIBF was established in 2000.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the national authority survey response, Mauritius has 16 public libraries, including the Mauritius National Library and regional libraries spread across the island, which provide free access to a wide range of books and other educational materials.

There is currently no comprehensive, publicly accessible, national survey or report providing detailed data on the reading habits of the Mauritian population.

There have, however, been periodic media articles providing some insight into the state of reading in Mauritius. Mauritians were said to be reading an estimated 2.2 books per month in 2009, although this estimation was based solely on the circulation statistics of the 16 public libraries and may include educational books.¹²

These articles generally indicate that reading rates are relatively low, particularly among adults.

The Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture promotes local literature and cultural heritage. It collects and disseminates information on African and Creole arts and culture while organizing literary events, workshops and book fairs, supporting the local book industry and providing a platform for Mauritian authors to showcase their work.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

According to the national authority's survey response, Mauritius imported books worth US\$8.06 million in 2023. In the same year, the country exported printed books with a total value of US\$501,388. The United Nations Comtrade database reports similar numbers.¹³



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The national authority survey response also reports that the top import sources were the United Kingdom, contributing 38.7% (US\$3.12 million), followed by France with 19.1% (US\$1.54 million) and India with 14.4% (US\$1.16 million). The top export destinations were France (64%) and Zimbabwe (13%).

TRAINING

The University of Mauritius offers courses in media and communication, while the Open University of Mauritius offers an undergraduate course in Library and Information Science and Journalism.¹⁴ Another provider is the Knowles Training Institute Mauritius, which operates as a subsidiary of the global Knowles Training Institute headquartered in Singapore. The institute offers a two-day professional proofreading training course that is designed specifically for editors, writers, content creators, and other professionals involved in publishing and the media. The MASA conducts workshops and training programmes focused on crucial topics such as copyright, licensing and the legal aspects of publishing in general. The National Institute for Culture, Heritage and the Arts offers training and support aimed at cultural preservation and literary development.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Mauritius hosts several key associations that play an essential role in the book and publishing sector. ALEDIM aims to ensure the smooth functioning of the book supply chain while promoting a culture of reading across the island. The Mauritian branch of the International Association of French-speaking Booksellers supports and promotes French-language literature in the country. Another key entity is the Mauritius Writers Association, which supports local writers and promotes Mauritian literary works. The association strengthens networks among authors, and encourages the growth and recognition of local literary talent. MASA focuses on safeguarding the rights of writers and ensuring proper copyright enforcement in the publishing industry.

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MOROCCO



Population **37.7 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **77%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$3,771**
(2023)



Urban population **65%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2021) **137%**



Internet users (2022) **90%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **450**

Titles published **1,493**

Bookstores **1,248**

Public libraries **640**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 58,900 inhabitants

Jobs **12,300**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Morocco saw the introduction of its first lithographic printing press in 1865. Between that date and the establishment of the French Protectorate in Morocco in 1912, approximately 475 works were printed, with an annual rate not exceeding 10 titles per year.¹

During the Protectorate, private publishing houses began to emerge, including Dar Al-Rachad and Dar Al-Kitab, forming the initial core of the national publishing sector. This period was also marked by the establishment of the first modern bookstores, such as *Librairie Hachette* in 1924, and the founding of the National General Library (*Bibliothèque Générale Nationale*) in 1926. Professional publishing houses did not emerge in Morocco until the 1980s, with the creation of *La Croisée des Chemins* (1980), *Toubkal* (1984), and *Le Fennec* (1987), in the wake of the Arabization policy, which created new demands, particularly for written output in Arabic. During this same period, the International Publishing and Book Fair (*Salon International de l'Édition et du Livre - SIEL*) was established in 1987. This momentum continued into the 1990s, with the emergence of new publishing houses such as *Slaiiki* (1995), *Marsam* (1997), *Yomad* (1998), and *Tarik Édition* (1999).

In the past two decades, additional publishing houses have appeared, including *Dar Abi Raqraq* (2001), *Yanbow Al Kitab* (2006), *Dar Abi Raqraq* (2001), *Virgule Éditions* (2014), *En toutes lettres* (2014), and *Moukarabat* (2015).

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The book sector falls under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, which develops and implements government policy to promote books through the Directorate of Books, Libraries and Archives.

The evaluation and approval of schoolbooks are entrusted to specialised scientific and pedagogical committees appointed by the Ministry of National Education. These committees follow specifications that outline the pedagogical, didactic and technical aspects to be considered in the development of schoolbooks, ensuring alignment with the requirements of each grade level and subject.²

Morocco has a legal framework of over 160 legal texts³ covering culture cross-sectionally. Among these, four decrees specifically address the book sector: the decree establishing the Morocco Book Prize (*Prix du Maroc du Livre*, 2006);⁴ the decrees on financial support for cultural and artistic projects (2013)⁵ and on legal deposit at the National Library of the Kingdom of Morocco (*Bibliothèque Nationale du Royaume du Maroc*, 2005);⁶ and the decree on the Press and Publishing Act (2016).⁷

Copyright and related rights are governed by Law 66-19 supplementing and amending Law 2-00 (2022).⁸ The current law reflects an effort to align with international standards in copyright protection.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Printed and digital books are exempt from VAT, in accordance with circular notes detailing tax provisions in the finance laws for fiscal years.⁹

Public support for the book and publishing sector is based on Decree No. 2.12.513 of 2013, which governs support for cultural and artistic projects. Its objectives include fostering cultural creativity, professionalizing the book sector, creating opportunities for initiatives and experimentation, encouraging creative freedom, reinforcing the components of national identity, opening up to other cultures, and developing effective management in line with governance and transparency principles.¹⁰

Moroccan publishing houses can benefit from general support measures for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to meet their investment needs through several programmes launched by the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and the Green and Digital Economy, including ISTITMAR, an investment support programme, and MOWAKABA, an accompaniment programme designed to enhance SMEs' competitiveness during their growth phases.¹¹

Since 2008, school textbooks have been supported by public purchases under the One Million Schoolbags (*Un million de cartables*) initiative, which aims to cover the costs of school supplies and textbooks for underprivileged Moroccan students. Managed by the Ministry of National Education, Preschool, and Sports, the budget for this initiative stood at US\$56.11 million for the 2022/2023 academic year.¹²

PUBLISHING

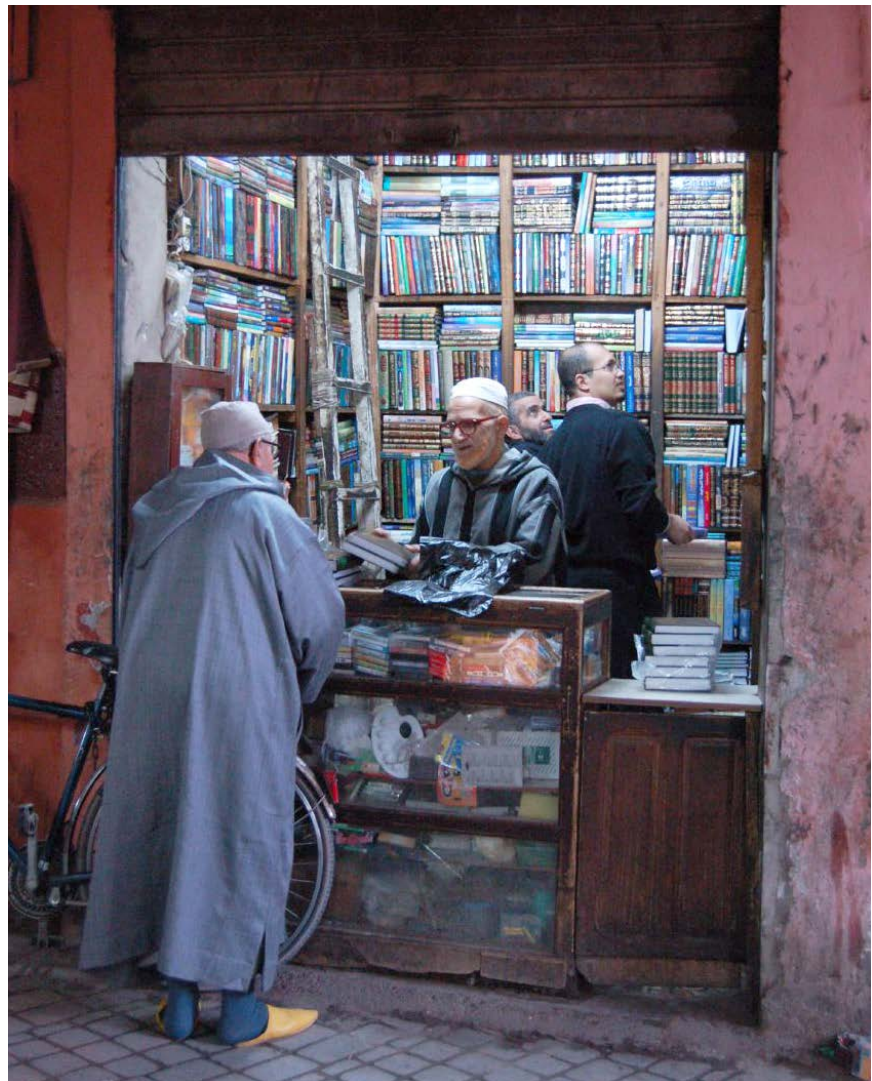
Morocco has an ISBN allocation system run by the National Library of the Kingdom of Morocco. Under the legal deposit decree, publishers are required to submit copies of each new publication to the National Library.

Research indicates that the number of Moroccan publishing houses increased during 2022/2023, reaching a total of 450.¹³

The same research shows that the number of published books in 2022/2023 was 2,986, with an estimated annual production average of 1,493 titles,¹⁴ 93% of which were in print format and 7% in digital format.¹⁵

This output is characterized by the predominance of publications in Arabic (79%). For publications in other languages, the distribution is as follows: French (16.31%), English (2.28%), Amazigh (1.5%), Spanish (0.5%).¹⁶

Regarding publication categories, literary works accounted for a significant share (22.03%) during



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the same period, followed by legal studies (14.2%), history (11.79%), Islamic studies (9.98%), and works on social issues (8.87%), among others. With regard to the printing volume, the average print run per title does not exceed 1,500 copies.¹⁷ As for the economic weight of the publishing sector in Morocco, the latest official statistics from the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Economic Modernization show that the 'Publishing and Printing' sector generated revenue of US\$385.53 million and investments of US\$12.54 million through the activities of 28 publishing houses and 426 printing companies nationwide.¹⁸

The schoolbook market was deregulated in 2002, in application of the National

Education and Training Charter launched in 2000, which opened the schoolbook market to competition among publishers. There are 70 schoolbook publishers, producing approximately 30 million copies annually and generating an estimated revenue of US\$40.77 million.¹⁹ With 7.9 million students in Morocco, demand for schoolbooks is high.²⁰

In terms of gender equality in publishing, research shows that the sector is male-dominated. Indeed, female-authored publications did not exceed 527 titles in 2022/2023, representing only 17.78% of Morocco's total book production.²¹ As for the number of female publishers, there are only 10.²²

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Distribution is divided between professional distribution and self-distribution by authors who publish independently.

Regarding professional distribution, the *Société Chérifienne de Distribution et de Presse (Sochepress)* is the largest player. Founded in 1924, Sochepress operates a network of 800 sales outlets and 350 bookstores. Its newspaper, magazine and book sales total more than 2.6 million copies.²³ However, changes in the book market paved the way for new competitors: the *Librairie Papeterie Nationale* (1951), a subsidiary of the French group *Hachette Livre*, is an illustrative example in an inherently narrow market, which explains *Sochepress'* decision to diversify its activities, particularly into schoolbook publishing.

The evolution of bookstores has been marked by an uneven geographical distribution across Moroccan cities. The 2024 edition of the *Pages jaunes* business directory²⁴ lists 1,218 bookstores, including small enterprises. Casablanca dominates with 350 bookstores (28.9% of the total), compared to 86 in Rabat (7.9%).²⁵

Concerning online sales, *Livre Moi* (2009) was one of the first online bookstores in Morocco. There are now a large number of websites, including *Englishbooks.ma*, *Ephesus*, *Librairie en ligne au Maroc*, *Lmaktaba*, *Ma Librairie en Ligne* and *Qitab.ma*. It is also worth noting the launch of an online sales website by the Association of Independent Bookstores of Morocco (*Association des Librairies Indépendantes du Maroc – ALIM*).

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and additional research, indicate that approximately 12,300 people were employed in the sector in 2023.

Morocco hosts several book fairs, along with initiatives led by ministerial

departments and non-governmental organizations aimed at promoting books and reading. The most significant of these events is SIEL, which has been organized since 1987 by the Moroccan Ministry of Youth, Culture and Communication. The second is the *Littératures Itinérantes* Festival, launched in 2017 by the *Association Littératures Itinérantes*. The third largest event is the Arab Reading Challenge, an initiative launched by the United Arab Emirates to promote reading among children and young people across the Arab world. The Moroccan Ministry of National Education, Preschool and Sports has participated in this competition since 2015.

Additionally, several prestigious awards help promote literary works. The Moroccan Book Prize (*Prix du Maroc du Livre*), for example, is a national honour recognizing works in various categories, including literary creation, essays, criticism, and translation. In 2018, the decree governing the award was revised to introduce three new categories: the Moroccan Prize for Encouraging Amazigh Literary Innovation (*Prix du Maroc d'encouragement à l'innovation littéraire amazighe*), the Moroccan Prize for Encouraging Studies on Amazigh Culture (*Prix du Maroc d'encouragement aux études sur la culture amazighe*), and the Moroccan Prize for Children's and Young Adult Literature (*Prix du Maroc du livre destiné à l'enfant et aux jeunes*).²⁶

The market continues to be heavily impacted by informal sales and piracy. According to the limited statistics available on this issue, Moroccan imports of French books have dropped by US\$16.406 million in value since 2012, primarily due to piracy.²⁷

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

Although surveys on reading in Morocco are conducted sporadically, they do exist. The first, entitled *Students and reading (Les étudiants et la lecture)*,²⁸ dates back to 1981, while the most recent official survey by the Ministry of Culture was conducted in 2001.²⁹

However, the most recent report on reading in the Arab world, the *Arab Reading Index (Indice de lecture arabe – 2016)*,³⁰ found that Moroccans read an average of 57 hours per year. The report also highlighted the particular importance of printed books for Moroccan readers, while digital reading was largely limited to online newspapers and magazines, with a readership rate of 59%.

Concerning public libraries, research shows that there are 640 of them across the country.³¹

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Official statistics, notably those provided by the *Office des Changes*, point to a steady narrowing of the gap between Morocco's book exports and imports. In 2023, book imports were valued at US\$66.56 million, with France, Lebanon and Spain as the main sources, while exports reached US\$67.99 million.³²

TRAINING

Since 1994, the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Mohammed V University in Rabat has offered an applied bachelor's degree in Writing Sciences, followed in 2007 by a master's degree in Book Industry Professions. That same year, the Ain Chok Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences in Casablanca introduced an applied bachelor's degree in Book Industry Professions. These three programmes also train assistant librarians, publishing assistants and booksellers. In addition, a cross-disciplinary master's programme focused on cultural and creative industries, the Master's in Managerial Engineering for Info-Cultural Organizations (*Master Ingénierie managériale des organismes info-culturels*), was established in 2022 at the School of Information Sciences (*École des Sciences de l'Information*) in Rabat, with a particular focus on editorial projects and digital publishing.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Two associations represent publishing professionals: the Union of Moroccan Publishers (*Union des Éditeurs marocains* – 2014) and the Professional Union of Publishers of Morocco (*Union Professionnelle des Éditeurs du Maroc* – 2016). Other book industry professionals are organized into associations such as the Association of Independent Booksellers of Morocco (*Association des Libraires Indépendants du Maroc* – 2018), the Moroccan Association of Book Importers (*Association Marocaine des Importateurs du Livre* – 2020) and the Moroccan Writers Union (*Union des Écrivains du Maroc* – 1960).

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MOZAMBIQUE



Population **33.6 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **60%**
(2020)



GDP per capita **US\$623**
(2023)



Urban population **39%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **42%**



Internet users (2022) **21%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **61**

Titles published **300**

Bookstores **14**

Public libraries **37**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 908,000 inhabitants

Jobs **1,600**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book sector was launched with newspapers at the beginning of the 20th century, through an elite largely concentrated in the urban areas of Beira and Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), who gradually took over the channels and centres of administration and power.

The newspaper 'O Africano' was founded by the brothers José and João Albasini in 1909, and published in Portuguese and Ronga. In 1918, the Albasini brothers founded 'O Brado Africano', the official organ of the Grêmio Africano Associação Africana. From 1958 until its suspension in 1974, its operation was subject to Portuguese authorities' censorship.

Between 1959 and 1975, the newspaper 'Voz de Moçambique' was the most important vehicle for the publication of literature, hosting several leading Mozambican writers of the time: Noémia de Souza (who had to leave the country in 1951), José Craveirinha (considered Mozambique's greatest poet, who died in 2003), and Luís Bernardo Horwana, author of the famous collection of short stories, *Nós matamos o cão tinhoso*. Esteemed and award-winning female writers such as Noemia de Sousa, Lília Moplé and Paulina Chiziane are prolific at the national level and prominent at the international level.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Education and Human Development coordinates book sector policies for education. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce is in charge of non-educational books and publishing. Mozambique's book and publishing sector is governed by a comprehensive legal framework designed to protect intellectual property rights and regulate industry practices. A cornerstone of this framework is Law No. 9/2022 of 2022, known as the *Lei dos Direitos de Autores e Direitos Conexos*. This law supersedes the previous Law No. 4/2001 and broadens the scope of protected works to include literary, artistic and scientific creations.

The National Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries (INICC) established in 2019 under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism is responsible for the implementation of this law.

The National Library of Mozambique (BNM), established in 2019 by Ministerial Diploma No. 3/2019, in its decree No. 8/2015, defines the legal framework for legal deposit. It establishes principles for the collection, conservation and preservation of the bibliographic heritage of Mozambique. The Legal Deposit Headquarters and Depository Institutions operate at the National Library of Mozambique (BNM), the main depository institution. The Historical Archive of Mozambique, the National Institute of Audiovisual and Cinema, the National Institute of Books and Records, and provincial public libraries are beneficiaries of legal deposit.

Additionally, Decree No. 9/88, established the Fund for Cultural Artistic Development (*Fundo para o Desenvolvimento Artístico Cultural* - FUNDAC) in 1988, a fund aimed at supporting artistic and cultural development, including initiatives in the publishing sector.

In 2000, Mozambique signed the Dakar Declaration, with the main objective of ensuring that all citizens had access to free quality primary education. Since 2004, the government has provided free textbooks to primary school students in public and community schools each year. The cost for this programme is estimated to be around US\$15.7 million (1 billion meticais)¹ per year, financed by partners through the Education Sector Support Fund (FASE) and the World Bank.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The Culture Policy and its Implementation Strategy,² approved in 1997 under Resolution 12/97, establishes the basic procedures for the production and marketing of books in Mozambique. This instrument calls for the marketing of books at a reduced price in order to allow a wider range of readers and to stimulate interest in reading and literature.

Patronage Law under Decree 29/98 of 1999 establishes the basic principles that allow legal entities, natural or legal, public or private, to develop activities, or financially and materially support them, in the field of arts, literature, science, culture and social action.

In Mozambique, under Law 32/2007 of 2007, the import and export of books are exempt from the payment of value-added tax (VAT). Mozambique's National Research Fund (FNI), together with its partners, establishes annual programmes to finance the publication of books and scientific articles, with an estimated budget of approximately US\$31,620.55 (2 million meticaís). The private sector, through banks like Moza Banco, Banco Comercial e de Investimentos (BCI) and the Mozambique Bank (BM), has also played a key role in financing literary publications each year. Many of the published works are available to purchase at the Fernando Leite Couto Foundation.

The Bibliographic Fund of the Portuguese Language (FBLP) was established in 1990 under Decree No. 49/90, in accordance with Article 200(1)(c) of the Constitution. FBLP focuses on curating a collection of works that represent the use of the Portuguese language in education and communication within Mozambique. Textbooks in Mozambique are purchased through a public tendering process.

PUBLISHING

Mozambique does not issue ISBN codes. Authors who want to receive an ISBN would have to go to the Portuguese Authors Society (SAP).³ According to the national authority's survey response, Mozambique had a total of 61 publishing houses in 2023. In 2023, 300 titles were published.⁴ The number of literary works registered in the country during the period from 2022 to 2023 increased from 269 in 2022 to 300 in 2023.⁵

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's survey response, there were 14 bookstores

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Sob o Lema: Jornalismo e literatura:
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Paços do Município e Jardim Tunduru

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dedicated to books operating in Mozambique in 2023, while Mozambique's National Institute of Statistics reports 180 total bookstores including stationery stores.⁶ The same survey also notes that book fairs obtain the highest participation, followed by physical bookstores, and lastly, online bookstores. Book fairs are one of the mechanisms used to encourage public participation in literary discussions. They facilitate access to books at more affordable prices and create conditions for discussions about literature. In Mozambique, there are the following fairs: Maputo Book Fair (begun in 2014), Resilience Festival (2018), Beira Book Fair (2021), Encounter with the Book (2021), and International Poetry Festival (2016).⁷ In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 1,600 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

From 2022 to 2023, 10 National Book Fairs were organized in Mozambique.⁸

Generally, these fairs are associated with historical cultural events, such as the Day of Artists and Creators of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the International Cultural Diversity Day, and the World Book and Copyright Day, among other historic celebrations. During this period, 12,812 visitors were registered. 2023 had the highest number of fairs and visitors, the latter totalling 7,171. Among the four provinces, Sofala stood out with the highest number of visitors. No sales data are available from these book fairs.⁹

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

The Mozambique National Library data indicate that the total number of readers in 2022 was 11,958. In 2023, it was 18,693 and in 2024, it was 16,283, showing an overall upward trend despite a decline from 2023 to 2024. No surveys on reading habits are available.

In 2023, 141 libraries were registered in the country. It should be noted that the largest number of libraries registered in 2023 were university libraries totalling 62 and district public libraries, totalling 37. The number of university libraries and public district libraries increased by 12.7% and 15.6% respectively between 2022 and 2023, while the number of specialised libraries decreased by 50%.¹⁰ However, the national authority's survey response states that there were 75 public libraries operating in 2023.

National and private organizations like the Mozambique Bank, within the framework of the Project *Bibliotecas-Caixa* and in partnership with the Bibliographic Fund of the Portuguese Language (FBLP), are supporting primary schools without libraries with extra-curricular bibliographical materials to encourage interest in books and reading, thereby improving the reading and writing skills of the students.¹¹

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Many literary works and books are imported into the country. Publishers tend to produce digital copies and send them overseas for production and printing. This is due to limited capacity and high production costs in Mozambique. These materials are then imported back into Mozambique. Schoolbooks are all imported as the country does not have the capacity to produce and print these books. Books are exported from Mozambique through national publishers at international book fairs.

According to documentary research, for the year 2023, the total value from imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to approximately US\$31 million, whereas the export value was a significantly smaller amount of US\$26,000.¹² On the import side, the top countries of origin for imports are South Africa, India, Portugal, followed by China and Hong Kong. The main countries for exports are Angola, Portugal and South Africa.

TRAINING

Mozambique has several institutions offering training in librarianship. Among the most prominent is the Eduardo Mondlane University, which is the national public university of Mozambique. It provides a degree programme in Librarianship through its Arts and Communication School (ECA/UEM). This programme is designed to prepare high-level professionals with comprehensive expertise in librarianship. Graduates are equipped to work in both public and private sectors, addressing the demands of organizing and managing information in science and technology.

Other institutions also contribute significantly to professional training in related fields. The Escola Superior do Jornalismo (School of Journalism) and the Instituto Médio Pandora Box (Pandora Box Medium Institute) are noteworthy for their roles in developing expertise in communication and documentation sciences.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Mozambique is home to numerous NGOs, professional networks, associations, and cultural organizations that actively promote and protect books and copyrights. One prominent organization is the Mozambican Association of Writers (AEMO), which was founded in 1982. AEMO aims to promote Mozambican literature and its authors by publishing their works, organizing conferences, meetings and debates, and awarding literary prizes to celebrate achievements in the field of literature.

The Mozambican Association of Authors (SOMAS) was founded in 1998, based on Law No. 8/91 of July 18. This organization is dedicated to defending authors' rights through a system of collective management of royalties and other related rights on behalf of its members. Recently, SOMAS played a significant role in advocating for the approval of the new Copyright and Related Rights Law (Law No. 9/2022).

The Fernando Couto Foundation, a non-profit organization established in 2015, focuses on preserving and promoting Mozambican arts and culture, particularly literature and visual arts. The foundation also supports emerging talent in these areas. Notably, Mia Couto, one of Mozambique's most renowned authors, is a co-founder of this organization.

Another significant entity is the Mozambican Federation of Cultural and Creative Industries (FEMICC), which works to map and unify the private sector involved in cultural and creative industries. FEMICC seeks to promote the creative economy by supporting industries such as music, literature, dance, theatre, and cinema.

The Mozambican Association of Medical Doctors, Writers, and Artists (AMEAM) was officially established in 2013. AMEAM integrates medical professionals into the fields of literature and other arts and is a member of the Union of Lusophone Medical Doctors, Writers, and Artists (UMEAL), which connects associations of medical writers across Portuguese-speaking countries.

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NAMIBIA



Population **3 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate **95.6%**
(≥15 years old) (2023)



GDP per capita **US\$4,168**
(2023)



Urban population **62.5%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2021) **52.4%**



Internet users (2022) **34.9%**

Source: World Bank and Namibia 2023 Population and Housing Census.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **15**

Titles published **312**

Bookstore **1**

Public libraries **66**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 45,400 inhabitants

Jobs **1,550**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the early 20th century, local publishing in Namibia expanded from religious texts to include pamphlets, booklets and self-help brochures in German. Textbooks and literature for the German-speaking population were imported, while education for black Namibians remained largely under missionary control.

When Namibia gained independence in 1990, there was a drive for local book production to accompany the new Namibian Government's educational reforms, which included curriculum development and ways to ensure that the nation's history was conveyed through textbooks. This also created opportunities for authors to share their personal stories.¹

In 1992 the Namibia Book Development Council (NBDC) was established to help create a viable and sustainable book and publishing sector, with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Owing to a lack of resources, it is no longer functional.²

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

One of the main institutions driving the book and publishing sector is the National Library of Namibia (officially established in 1994), a division of the Namibia Library and Archives Services (NLAS) under the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MEAC). The National Library of Namibia promotes education and research by providing access to national and international resources, preserving the country's published heritage through legal deposit and acquisitions, and offering bibliographic services.

The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), a directorate within the MEAC, was founded in 1990. It is responsible for evaluating, designing and developing curricula for the educational system; introducing effective approaches to teaching and learning; coordinating

educational research; and pre- and in-service teacher education and training. All educational textbooks are evaluated and approved by the NIED's curriculum panels.

The Business and Intellectual Property Authority (BIPA) was established under the BIPA Act (No. 8 of 2016) as an agency of the Ministry of Industrialization and Trade.³ It is responsible for the administration and protection of business and intellectual property rights (including copyright).

The Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Protection Act (No. 6 of 1994) is the law currently protecting the work of creatives. BIPA is in the process of developing new legislation for the purpose, with the Copyright and Related Rights Protection Bill in draft since 2021.

The National Archives Act (Act No. 12 of 1992) regulates and supervises all record-management activities for Namibian public service institutions that are created by an Act of Parliament. On the other hand, the Namibia Library and Information Service Act (Act No. 4 of 2000)⁴ makes provision for the collection of materials emanating from Namibia or relating to Namibia through legal deposit. It coordinates and supplements the acquisition, exchange, disposal or retention of any library material to ensure an adequate national library resource. In addition, the National Library acts as a central agency for the implementation of national and international standards relating to library and information work.⁵

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

While there is no dedicated policy for the book and publishing sector in Namibia, the Namibia Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy of 2016 aims to encourage book writing and publishing by offering incentives to both writers and publishers.⁶ These incentives include the National Arts Council of Namibia's awards, grants and bursaries to fund literary projects that promote traditional and modern Namibian literature. Among the projects funded are publications, training, fellowships, festivals and competitions.

Namibia's National Textbook Policy of 2008 aims to pave the way towards equitable access to learning-support materials for learners in formal education. Ultimately, the policy's objective is to achieve a textbook-to-learner ratio of 1:1 for core subjects. This would mean eight textbooks per learner at primary level, and thirteen textbooks per learner at secondary level.⁷

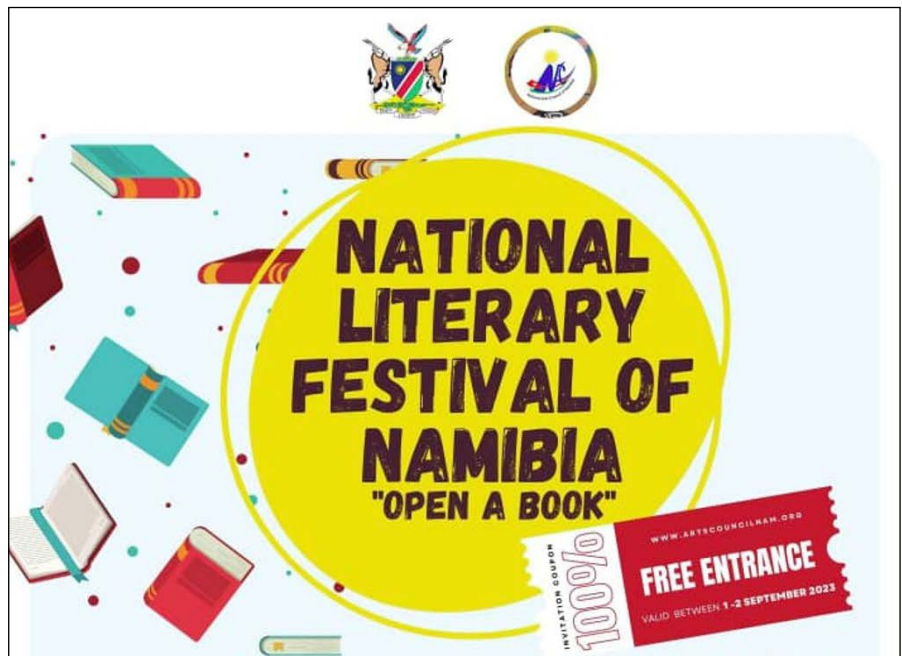
All textbooks must undergo evaluation and approval by NIED curriculum panels. Once approved, titles are included in an official catalogue sent to schools each year for selection purposes. The procurement process involves verifying book orders against schools' book budgets before final submission for approval by the Ministry of Education's Directorate of General Services. Teachers receive the textbooks as their main teaching resource. Where textbooks are in adequate supply, students can take them home to study and do homework from.⁸

The National Intellectual Property Policy and Strategy 2019–2024 (NIPPS) aims to: promote the responsible use of intellectual property (IP); integrate IP into Namibia's development plans; strengthen the legal framework for IP; and prevent the loss of valuable assets. NIPPS also focuses on enforcing IP rights, raising awareness, boosting the creative industries and encouraging the use of IP in sectors where Namibia holds a competitive advantage.⁹

PUBLISHING

The National Library of Namibia serves as the national bibliographic agency and provides ISBNs and ISSNs to publishers, and individuals who engage in self-publishing. As there is no formal registration required for book publishers, there are no official data regarding the total number of book publishers, i.e. organizations whose sole business is book publishing.

Research reveals nine companies dedicated to publishing alone: African Blossom Publishers, Kuiseb Publishers, Microwide Publishing, Namibia Publishing House, New Namibia Books, Pollination



National Literary Festival 2025 © Gretta Caspar

Publishers, the University of Namibia Press, Wordweaver Publishing House and Zebra Publishing. The organisations that are not solely publishers but also publish books include the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)/ German Corporation for International Cooperation, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, the Goethe-Institut Namibia, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Museums Association of Namibia and the NIED. Thus, the total number of publishers is estimated at 15.

Most Namibian publishing houses are owned by Namibian nationals, including those that dominate the market for textbooks supplied to government schools, i.e. Namibia Publishing House, the NIED and Pollination Publishers. Textbooks, which cover the thirteen officially recognized languages of instruction in the country, are developed by private-sector publishing houses and based on the curriculum and syllabi developed by the NIED. They are produced through a partnership made up of commercial publishers, the NIED, Deutsche GIZ and the Ministry of Education's curriculum unit.

Namibia Publishing House was rebranded as such in 2013, but was originally the result of a 1990 merger between the multinational publisher, Macmillan, and Gamsberg Publishers (established in 1976 by Namibian citizens).

New Namibia Books was launched in September 1990 as an independent publishing company, and later bookshop, dedicated to developing Namibian writing. The University of Namibia Press, Namibia's only university press, was established in 2011. Wordweaver Publishing House opened in 2012, producing twenty-five Namibian literary texts in its first three years.¹⁰ In the late 2000s, Kusieb Publishers was established in-house by the Namibia Scientific Society for authors wanting to publish fiction and scientific literature.¹¹ Originally publishing only in German, the publisher now releases books in various genres in all Namibian languages. Microwide Publishing Press was established in 2017. It specialises in providing self-publishing services and has a special interest in books that promote and preserve Indigenous Namibian languages.

According to the National Library of Namibia's survey response, there is a steady increase in book publishing, including self-published titles. There were 312 titles published in 2023 – 310 trade books and two digital publications, an increase from the 291 published in 2022 and the 288 published in 2021. Printed books are the most popular format for consumers. These are published primarily in English, Oshiwambo, Khoekhoegowab and Otjiherero.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's survey response, in 2023 there were four physical and six digital bookstores operating in Namibia.

While specific data on market share are limited, Namibia Book Market's extensive catalogue and active distribution partnerships suggest a significant presence in Namibia's book distribution landscape. The distributors act for local and international publishers, and for self-published authors. Namibia Book Market also functions as a bookshop. There are several second-hand bookshops, such as Uncle Spike's Book Exchange, and also Christian bookshops, e.g. Christian Mobile Literature and Revive Us. Bookshops such as PNA, Exclusive Books and Van Schaik Bookshop are South African franchises. The larger bookshops are located in Windhoek and Swakopmund, with smaller outlets in other major towns.

As stated above, consumers prefer printed books and appear to make minimal use of e-books and audiobooks. There are no data to determine whether consumers access these formats legally or through piracy (including the unauthorised copying and distribution of books, or the illegal downloading of e-books).

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 1,550 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

Namibia hosts several literary festivals and other book events, which are organised by various organizations. The National Literary Festival is an initiative of the National Arts Council of Namibia. The first Festival took place in September 2023 and provided a platform to empower authors, publishers and bookstores.

The Namibia Book Fair, an initiative of Yambeka Children Media, brings together Namibian authors, publishers and

readers of all ages. It provides workshops and exhibitions. The Fair has not taken place consistently, with the most recent one held in 2019.

The Doek Literary Festival, hosted every two years by Doek Literary Magazine and sponsored by Bank Windhoek, showcases Namibian and African literature. The festival is integral to Doek's mission of nurturing and growing the country's reading and writing culture while providing a creative and immersive space in which to encounter the works of Namibian and African writers, poets and visual artists.

Book Sprint Namibia, modelled on Book Dash South Africa, is sponsored by the German Embassy in Windhoek and the Goethe institute in Namibia. Over a twelve-hour period, volunteer creative teams work to create beautiful African children's books that anyone can freely translate, print and distribute. Two separate Book Sprint Namibia events (in 2022 and 2024) have taken place thus far.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the directorate of the Namibia Library and Archives Services (NLAS), there are 66 public libraries across the 14 regions, 17 ministerial libraries operating under government ministries, 489 school libraries and 19 academic libraries.¹²

There are no recent national surveys or reports that provide information on the reading habits of Namibians, although several projects have previously been conducted by researchers on selected target groups – in 2012¹³ and 2017.¹⁴

Most of the promotional work done towards a sustainable reading culture is guided by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MEAC) and organized by the NLAS. Initiatives such as the Readathon promote reading among children and young people in schools. The Readathon is a week-long festival of reading, held annually in schools across Namibia. The programme

was first launched in 1988 by the Namibian Children's Book Forum, a non-governmental organization with the aims of supporting literacy, encouraging a love of reading and promoting the production of children's literature in all Namibian languages.¹⁵ Readathon activities are now organized by the MEAC through the NLAS. It is held in the last week of September every year and children are encouraged to read varying amounts and different types of reading materials, which are accompanied by games and other activities.

Also through the MEAC, the NLAS directorate received a one-year complimentary sponsorship in 2021, valued at US\$1 million, for the Smart Kidz Club digital reading App known as 'Namibia Reads App'. The App is a carefully curated digital library that allows young children easy access to narrated and illustrated e-books. It is accessible to anyone with internet access across the entire country. The sponsorship was extended to 2025.¹⁶

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research showed that the value of exports of printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed matter totalled US\$164,920 in 2023. South Africa is the largest importer of Namibia's book and publishing industry, followed by Germany. The same source indicates that the value of imports of printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed matter to Namibia totalled US\$6.8 million in 2023. South Africa's book and publishing industry is, again, the biggest exporter to Namibia, making up 80% of Namibia's total import value in 2023.¹⁷

TRAINING

No dedicated or accredited training programmes for the book and publishing sector are provided through higher education institutions. However, the University of Namibia has a Diploma programme in Information Science that teaches a semester module in Publishing.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

At the time of documentation, there are no official representative organizations for book and publishing professionals. Many freelancers operating in the sector join South African-based organizations such as the Southern African Freelancers' Association (SAFREA) or the Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA). Previously, the Namibia Book Development Council and the Association of Namibian Publishers attempted to create organizations for professionals, but a lack of support and scarcity of resources rendered these initiatives defunct.¹⁸ The National Library of Namibia has attempted to spearhead an initiative to organize publishers and develop guidelines and standards for publishing in Namibia. They held a workshop with publishers in 2023 and subsequently drafted proposed publishing standards, which were finalized and approved in March 2025.

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NIGER



Population **27.2 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **38%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$618**
(2023)



Urban population **17%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2021) **56%**



Internet users (2021) **22%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **6**

Titles published **140**

Bookstores **6**

Public libraries **35**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 777,100 inhabitants

Jobs **700**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book and publishing sector in Niger has been marked by pioneers and emblematic figures who have contributed to its emergence and influence. Boubou Hama, often regarded as one of the founding figures of Nigerien literature, began writing in the early 1940s and went on to become renowned for his essays on oral tradition and cultural identity. Among the other pioneers are Mamadou Dandobi, mainly known for his early contributions to theatre and storytelling in the 1950s, as well as Issa Ibrahim, author of poems and the novel *Les grandes eaux noires* (1959), considered the first Nigerien novel in the French language.

Nigerien writers have gained international recognition, notably Boubou Hama and Idé Oumarou, both recipients of the *Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Afrique Noire* (in 1971 and 1977 respectively). Nationally, nine authors have received the *Grand Prix Boubou Hama* since its creation in 1977. Among contemporary authors are Fatouma Alassane, Moussa Mahamadou, and Oumarou Kadry Koda, who represent a diverse and constantly evolving literary landscape through their contributions to short fiction and narrative innovation. Nigerien literature is now considered to consist of five generations of writers, with a notable rise in women's contributions, particularly in poetry, novels, short stories and autofiction, as exemplified by Fatoumata-Agnès Diarra, Hélène Kaziendé, and Antoinette Tidjani Alou.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The National Library of Niger was established in 2009 by Decree No. 2009-24 on cultural orientation law, but its statutes were only approved in 2018. In addition, there is the National Centre for the Network of Public Reading and Cultural Activities (*Centre National du Réseau de Lecture Publique et d'Animation Culturelle*).

The Ministry of Education oversees the development of educational programmes and the production of textbooks tailored to the needs of pupils. The National Institute for Pedagogical Documentation, Research and Activities (*Institut National de Documentation, de Recherche et d'Animation Pédagogique* - INDRAP) plays a key role in the documentation and production of teaching resources. In April 2023, a public-private partnership was signed for the installation of a modern printing house at INDRAP, with the aim of improving the textbook production ratio from one book for every four pupils to one book per pupil.

Copyright is governed by Decree no. 2010-95 of 23 December 2010, which also established the Nigerien Copyright Office (*Bureau Nigérien du Droit d'Auteur* - BNDA). The latter has exclusive authority to issue licences for the exploitation of works and to collect and distribute royalties.

This decree is supplemented by law no. 2003-15 of 2003 on legal deposit, which imposes an obligation to deposit works with the National Library of Niger and other designated institutions. This system, supplemented in 2020 by implementing decree No. 2020-370, aims to preserve, enhance and collect national literary, artistic and cultural productions.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

Books are exempt from VAT¹ at sale, in recognition of their status as essential goods. This measure reflects the fundamental role of books in providing access to education, disseminating knowledge and promoting culture.

According to the national authority's response to the survey, public investment in the book sector relates to orders for books for public libraries and Reading and Cultural Activity Centres (*Centres de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle* - CLACs), subsidies to the National Centre for the Network of Public Reading and Cultural Activities, and subsidies for participation in the Niger Cultural Industries Fair (*Salon des Industries Culturelles du Niger*).

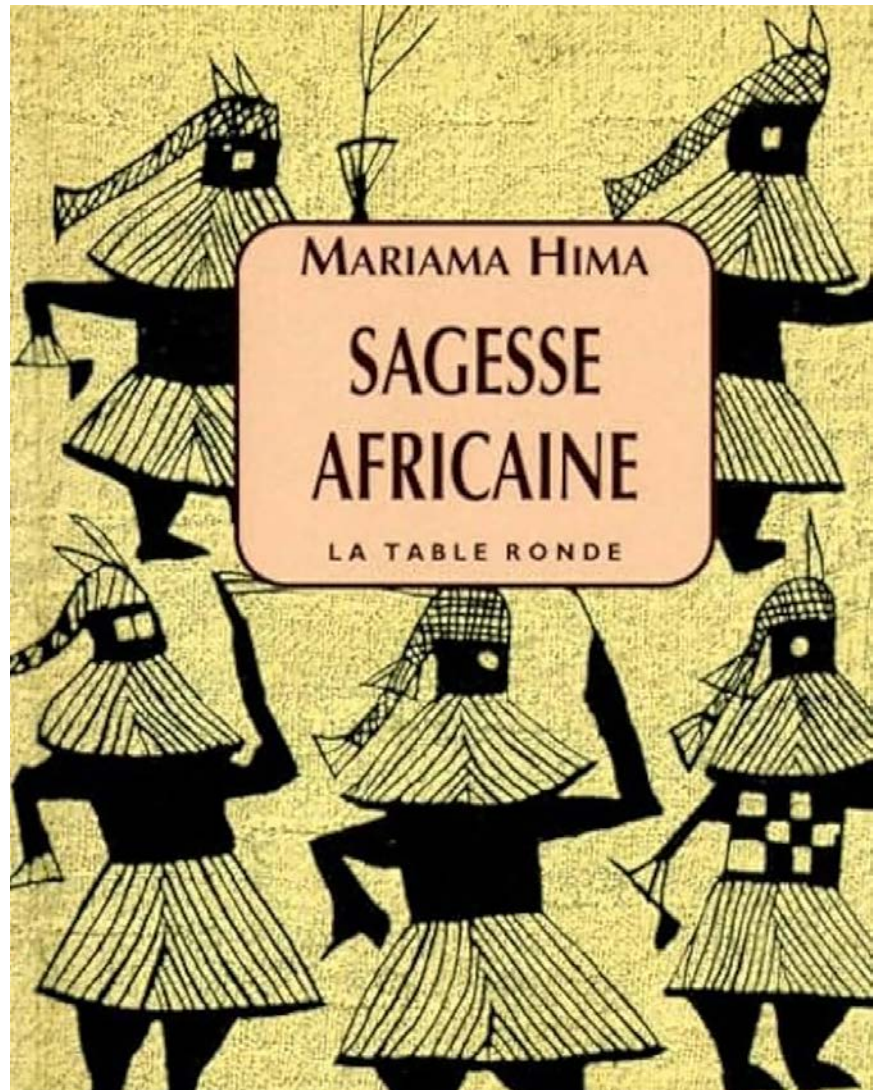
In the education sector, the National Textbooks and School Supplies Centre (*Centre National des Manuels et Fournitures Scolaires – CENAMAFS*) regularly issues invitations to tender in response to the need for textbooks and school supplies. In addition, with regard to the promotion of linguistic diversity, a number of initiatives are aimed at including national languages in school textbooks and publishing literary works in Hausa, Zarma, Tamasheq, etc.

PUBLISHING

Niger does not have an ISBN agency. Publishers are generally registered with European agencies, in particular with the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (*Agence Francophone pour la Numérotation Internationale du Livre – ANFIL*).

According to the Niger National Authority, there were 6 publishers in operation in 2023, including *Nouvelles Éditions du Sahel* (NES), founded in 1982, *Éditions Gashingo*, *Éditions La Table Ronde Niger*, *Éditions Ardi*, and *Éditions Afrique Lecture* (EAL). The same source indicates that 140 titles were published in 2023, all formats and fields included. The responses to the survey also divide the titles published in 2023 among general literature (97), education (32) and scientific, technical and professional (11). 43 titles were written by women, representing around 31% of the total published in 2023. In the same year, around 95% of titles were published in French and 5% in local or regional languages such as Hausa or Zarma. According to the national authority's response to the survey, 70,000 copies of books were sold in 2023, including 50,000 in general literature, 15,000 in educational literature and 5,000 in scientific, technical and professional literature.

Additional documentary research indicates that in 2019,² Niger had an annual production of 40 titles outside the school sector, with an average print run of 1,000 copies per title.



© Mariama Hima, *Sagesse africaine*, Éditions de La Table Ronde, 1998

It is also noted that in countries such as Niger, book print runs can be high, sometimes reaching 1,000 to 5,000 copies, but stocks are often sold over long periods, sometimes up to ten years.³ The majority of publications are in paper format, while digital and audio formats remain underdeveloped.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there were only 4 physical bookshops in operation in 2023, and they remain the most widely used sales channel, along with retail outlets (stationery shops, etc.).

Official bookshops, such as *La Maison du Livre* and *La Farandole des Livres* in Niamey, play a crucial role by offering a wide range of books, including African literature and school textbooks. However, their reach remains limited, especially outside urban centres.

In terms of employment, our estimations, based on all available data and additional research, arrived at a figure of 700 people employed in the sector in 2023.

Despite the legal sanctions in place, piracy is widespread through photocopying and represents a major challenge for the sector, particularly for local authors and publishers whose income is significantly reduced by these practices.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that there are 35 active public libraries in Niger. This network and the CLAC network play a central role in promoting reading. Libraries, although often under-equipped, offer spaces in which to consult books and take part in initiatives such as workshops or public readings. Cultural clubs, for their part, stimulate interest in reading through creative activities such as literary competitions and debates.

The national authority's response provided statistics for the CLAC network, which represents a third of the reading centres in Niger and serves the needs of around 250,000 beneficiary inhabitants, amounting to 71,055 loans in 2023, or 0.28 books per inhabitant.

In terms of promoting reading, Niger has hosted a number of literary fairs and events, including the Niamey International Book Fair (*Salon International du Livre de Niamey – SAHARA*),⁴ a gathering of writers, publishers and readers around conferences, workshops and exhibitions, and the *Foire Internationale du Livre de Niamey*, the second edition of which was held in 2014. Since 2022, the Poetic and Literary Association of Niger (*Association Poétique et Littéraire du Niger – APOL-Niger*) has been organizing the Book and Arts Market of Niger (*Marché du Livre et des Arts du Niger – MALAN*)⁵ with the support of local publishers, aiming to encourage reading and highlight Nigerien writers and authors as well as those from other African countries.

Niger also benefits from the *Caravane du Livre et de la Lecture* programme, an initiative set up in 2004 by the International Association of Francophone Bookshops (*Association Internationale des Libraires Francophones*),⁶ which travels through several countries in sub-Saharan Africa to promote reading and facilitate access to books in remote areas. This programme offers exhibitions and sales at reduced prices and organizes cultural events.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

According to documentary research, Niger's book imports in 2023 amounted to US\$ 1,171,450 while exports totalled US\$ 860.⁷ Regarding books imported into Niger, according to the national authority's survey response, 80% come from France, 10% from the United States of America, 5% from Saudi Arabia, 3% from Nigeria and 2% from Benin. No equivalent information is available for books exported from Niger.

TRAINING

There are no training or apprenticeship opportunities specifically dedicated to publishing or the book industry. The Abdou Moumouni University in Niamey offers courses in modern literature and the humanities, providing a relevant theoretical basis for the writing and publishing professions. Similarly, library science modules are included in training courses for librarians and cultural facilitators at the National Institute for Youth, Sport and Culture (*Institut National de la Jeunesse, du Sport et de la Culture – INJS*) and the Graduate School of Communication and Media Sciences (*École Supérieure des Sciences de la Communication et des Médias – ESSCOM*).

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Booksellers of Niger Association (*Association des Libraires du Niger – ALN*) brings together the country's booksellers and works to promote reading and professionalize the field. It organizes events such as the *Caravane du Livre et de la Lecture*, aimed at encouraging young people to read. The APOL-Niger is an association that promotes literature from Niger through the organisation of cultural events.

In addition, the national authority's response to the survey mentions the process of citizen (including women's) participation in Library Management Committees that promote the role of books and the publishing sector, including in public policy.

NOTES

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NIGERIA



Population **227.9 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **63%**
(2021)



GDP per capita **US\$1,597**
(2023)



Urban population **54%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **102%**



Internet users (2022) **35%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **290**

Titles published **15,603**

Bookstores **4,458**

Public libraries **316**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 721,200 inhabitants

Jobs **73,500**

Sector revenue **US\$34 million**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book and publishing sector in Nigeria began in early 1846 with the Christian missions that established the first publishing firms. The missionary presses began by publishing religious works before expanding into secular publications like schoolbooks and newspapers. The first fully indigenous publisher in Nigeria was Tika-Tore Printing Works, which was established in Lagos in 1910. It was followed later by Ibadan University Press, established in 1950. Others include the Onibonjo Press (1958) and publishers that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, namely African Educational Press, John West Publications, Fourth Dimension, Ilesanmi Press, Ethiope Publishing Corporation and Northern Nigerian Publishing Corporation (NNPC).¹ Firms situated in Onitsha were famous for publishing a specialised category of books popularly known as 'Onitsha Market Literature'.² At the same time, Oxford University Press (OUP) established a branch in Ibadan in 1949. Its first publication in 1963 was entitled *Ijala Ere Ode*, a Yoruba poetry book by Yemitan.³ The success of OUP in Nigeria attracted other foreign publishers like Macmillan, Longman, Evans Brothers, Thomas Nelson and Heinemann, all of which held sway for a long while before the advent of indigenous publishers and the indigenization decree which, among other things, led to slight modifications in these expatriate publishing firms' names.⁴ Pioneering Nigerian writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark, Cyprian Ekwensi, John Munonye, Amos Tutuola, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta and Elechi Amadi owe their emergence and much of their success to these secular expatriate publishers.

Leading publishing companies in Nigeria today include Farafina, an imprint established in 2004 that published Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and Cassava Republic Press, which expanded into the United Kingdom in 2016 and the United States of America in 2017.^{5,6} Other indigenous publishers also populate the market, namely

Covenant Books, Parrésia Publishers (2012), Kraft Books (1986), Bookcraft Africa (1988), Book Builders (1999), Archers Publishers, Abik Books and Equipment, Africana FEP (1966) and Pearls Publishers.⁷ Notable contemporary home-based Nigerian writers include Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Isidore Okpewho, Ifeanyi Ajaegbo, Obari Gomba and Kaine Agary, while diaspora authors include Bolu Babalola, Bassey Ikpi and Okey Ndibe.⁸

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Federal Ministry of Education oversees educational policies and programmes and coordinates textbook development and distribution. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) evaluates and approves textbooks for schools and colleges and develops educational curricula and standards.⁹ The Public Procurement Act (2007) allows government agencies to purchase books from local publishers.

The National Library Act (Cap N56, LFN 2004) established the National Library of Nigeria, which regulates book deposit and lending. The Customs and Excise Management Act (Cap C45, LFN 2004) controls the importation and taxation of books. The Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA, 2020) manages the registration and operation of companies including publishing companies.¹⁰ The Consumer Protection Council Act safeguards consumers' rights and regulates the quality of publishing. The Freedom of Information Act (2011) ensures transparency in publishing and access to information. The Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015 combats cybercrime and regulates online publishing.

The Copyright Act (Cap C28, LFN 2004) oversees copyright infringements and protects authors' rights.¹¹ The Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) protects the copyright and intellectual property rights of authors and publishers and regulates copyright infringements and piracy in the country.

The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) establishes and nurtures projects related to higher education book development in Nigeria.¹² The National Library of Nigeria (NLN) collects and preserves Nigeria's literature.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The Nigerian Book Policy (2002) promotes book development, publishing, and reading culture. It supports indigenous publishing in Nigeria through the promotion of local publishing industries, Nigerian authors and literature. It also encourages Nigerians to read in order to improve the literacy rate in the country.^{13, 14, 15}

There are book tax policies in Nigeria related to exemption, reduction and preferential treatment. For example, educational books are officially exempted from the value-added tax (VAT) policy of Nigeria. Officially, book importation is expected to attract a zero-import duty. Authors and publishers in Nigeria enjoy reductions in tax as a result of the country's Tax Relief policy. Also, the book industry is one of the beneficiaries of the 2% Education Tax. Likewise, a 1% levy is imposed on book importation to support the National Library of Nigeria. The industry also benefits from the fees accrued from the licensing of book importers under the Book Import License Policy. Similarly, there is a 1% levy on imported print materials.^{16, 17, 18}

Financial incentives exist for book publishing in Nigeria. The Book Development Fund, which operates under TETFund, and the Lagos State Government Grants fund artistic and literary projects, including book publishing. The Local Content Development Fund supports local content creation including books. The Private Sector Sponsorships and Partnerships involve organizations that offer financial support for book publishing projects. Publishers can also apply for import duty waivers on book imports.^{19, 20, 21, 22, 23}

The Nigerian government has policies and initiatives to promote book purchasing and reading. Some of these policies include: the National Book Purchase and Distribution Policy (2023), which aims to make books accessible and affordable; the Education Sector Plan (2018-2022), which includes initiatives to improve literacy and reading culture; the National Literacy Strategy (2015), which aims to reduce illiteracy and promote reading; the Local Content Policy, which encourages government agencies to prioritize local content including books; the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) initiatives, which promote Nigerian authors and publishers through exhibitions and festivals; and State Government initiatives to promote reading and book purchasing, for example in Lagos and Rivers.^{24, 25}

There is significant public investment in book publishing in Nigeria, championed by notable organizations. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) provides grants for literary projects and book publishing. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) invests in educational materials, including books. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) develops and publishes educational materials. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) supports the publication of books for teacher education. The Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) promotes book publishing and research in oil and gas-related fields.²⁶

In terms of inclusivity in publishing policy development in the country, the national authority's survey response indicates that the Nigerian Copyright Act includes provisions that allow for the reproduction of copyrighted works in accessible formats for people with disabilities without requiring permission from the copyright holder. Nigeria is a signatory to the Marrakesh Treaty, which aims to facilitate access to published works for persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled, although its full domestic implementation is still a work in progress in Nigeria. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development

Council (NERDC) is also involved in initiatives aimed at developing and distributing educational materials in accessible formats. The National Library of Nigeria (NLN) has limited materials in accessible formats, and availability varies from region to region across Nigeria. The Nigerian government also has an inclusive Education Policy. There are some measures in place to foster the publication of books in accessible formats, but those efforts are in their early stages. More targeted policies and resources are needed to fully support this important aspect of inclusivity.

PUBLISHING

The National Library of Nigeria is responsible for ISBN registrations. Traditionally, the ISBN is declared post-publication. The ISBN may, however, be declared prior to publication if the publishers pre-register their books with online retailers or databases, seek advance reviews or promotional activities requiring an ISBN, or decide to use print-on-demand services, which may require an ISBN before printing.

The exact number of book publishers in Nigeria cannot be ascertained because not all of them are registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) or the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA). However, the number of registered publishers in Nigeria as of 2023 is 290.²⁷ The last authoritative data on the total number of books published in Nigeria based on ISBN Registrations in 2023 provided a figure of 15,603.²⁸ There are no data on published titles according to format or language; nor on revenue generated from book sales whether in total or by category, including in the national authority's survey response. The Publishing Markets Report 2024 suggests that traditional print formats are gradually giving way to e-books and online publications.²⁹

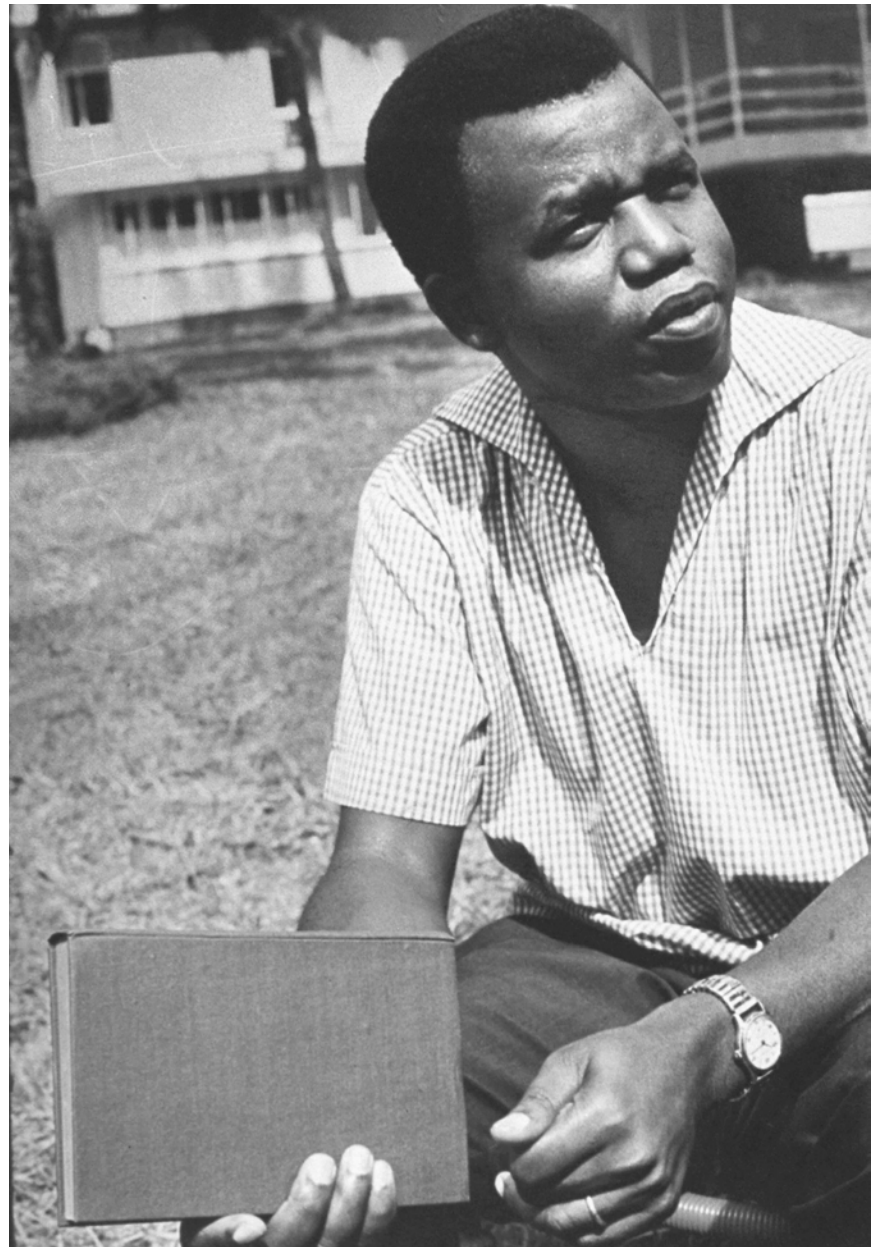
Schoolbook publishing in Nigeria today involves both local and international publishers, unlike in the past, particularly between 1850 and 1930, when international publishers dominated the sector.³⁰

The publishing of schoolbooks is more economically viable in Nigeria than other types of books because of the high number of government-approved schools in the country.³¹ Nigeria had 144,042 schools in 2022, ranking highest in Africa that year.³² It is estimated that Nigeria spends about US\$75 million on the purchase of schoolbooks, based on the national authority's survey response.

According to the national authority's survey response, publishing houses do not have positions specifically reserved for women or other prioritized groups of people. However, they operate in a policy environment that encourages inclusivity and representation, leading to the involvement of diverse voices in their processes. For example, the Chief Executive Officer of Pearl Publishers indicates that, in his firm, women hold the positions of Publishing Manager, Senior Editor, Secretary and Typesetter.³³

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Books in Nigeria are distributed and sold via a whole range of different channels: physical retail outlets that include traditional bookstores, shopping malls, and market stalls; direct sales channels involving authors and publishers selling directly to consumers through events and workshops; digital platforms like Amazon, Jumia and Konga; literary fairs and festivals; schools and educational institutions; gift shops, and airport bookstores.³⁴ The national authority ranks physical bookstores highest in terms of the relative importance of sales channels in Nigeria, followed by online bookstores. It must also be noted that the book distribution and sales network in Nigeria faces some very significant challenges, which include limited coverage especially in rural areas, poor transportation and logistics systems causing delays in product deliveries, inadequate storage facilities, high distribution costs due to fuel price hikes, limited access to data on market trends, customer behaviour, and piracy and copyright infringements.³⁵



Chinua Achebe in Lagos, Nigeria. Public domain.

As of 8 October 2024, there were 4,458 physical bookstores in Nigeria, a 2.60% increase over 2023. Of these, 4,421 are operated by single owners, while the remaining 37 are part of larger brands.³⁶ Many of these Nigerian bookstores also have an online presence via different platforms: 48 have X handles (formerly known as Twitter); 61 are on Instagram; 27 have YouTube channels; 67 have Facebook pages; 17 have LinkedIn profiles; and 6 are on TikTok. About 527 bookstores have their own websites and the remaining 3,931 do not.³⁷

Many physical bookstores also generate revenue by selling other educational materials and stationery and by providing services such as bookbinding,

printing and photocopying.³⁸ There are no data available on the copies of books sold and the revenue generated in 2023. The British Council, however, projected in 2019 that professional and educational book sales in Nigeria would generate US\$34 million in 2023, based on an annual growth rate of 3.9% between 2018 and 2023.^{39,40}

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 73,500 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

Book fairs and literary festivals are some of the ways in which publishers and authors promote their products and literary culture in Nigeria.

The Abuja Literary and Arts Festival often hosts 1,000 participants for five days. The Aké Arts and Book Festival lasts for three days, with an attendance of over 2,000. Other festivals include the Hausa International Book and Arts Festival, Kaduna Books and Art Festival, Lagos Book and Art Festival, and Lagos International Poetry Festival. The fair with the highest number of attendees (15,000) is the three-day Nigeria International Book Fair.⁴¹ Another book festival of significance is the Port Harcourt Book Festival, whose activities culminated in the city of Port Harcourt being designated as the UNESCO World Book Capital in 2014. The programme gave birth to 200 book clubs in schools and a 350-seater library.⁴² According to the national authority's survey response, only 6 book fairs and literary festivals operated in Nigeria in 2023.

Documentary research indicates that piracy has been one of the greatest challenges of the Nigerian book industry since its inception.⁴³ It is a thriving business in the country because copyright laws are not enforced. Advancements in technology have also aided pirates in their activities.⁴⁴

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

The 2024 World Culture Statistics report states that Nigeria is among the countries with the lowest reading culture in the world. While the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education believes that this is caused by the high illiteracy rate in the country (about 38%), book enthusiasts attribute it to sheer unwillingness to read owing to technological distractions. They further argue that if a similar survey were to be carried out in 2024, there would likely be a further decline.⁴⁵ To curb this, the National Library of Nigeria launched a reading campaign in 2022 and conducted public readings in different zones of the country.⁴⁶ The Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN) promotes reading and advances literacy development by organizing public

school readings and competitions and establishing reading centres.

According to the national authority's survey response, print books remain the most preferred format in Nigeria, followed by digital books and audio books. However, there are no data available on the average number of books read per capita in Nigeria. The same source states that the total number of libraries operating in Nigeria in 2023 was 316.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

While the national authority's survey response indicates that China, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, India and Germany are the top five countries for books imported into Nigeria, according to the International Association of Publishers, Nigeria imports books from the United Kingdom (58%), India (20%), the United States of America (11%), and other European countries (11%).⁴⁷

The United Kingdom has long had robust trade and investment relations with Nigeria. In 2024, both countries signed the Enhanced Trade and Investment Partnership (ETIP) to further strengthen their already thriving business relations, which were valued at 7 billion pounds in 2023 (about US\$8.8 billion).⁴⁸ While the national authority's survey response indicates that the value of imports stood at US\$156.5 million, according to documentary research, the value of Nigeria's imported books and related materials such as newspapers and pictures stood at US\$116.84 million in 2023.⁴⁹

Nigeria exports books mainly to West African countries and sometimes to the United Kingdom and the United States of America.⁵⁰ According to the national authority, the country's book exports are valued at US\$39.8 million.

TRAINING

There are limited training programmes available for the book and publishing sector in Nigeria. For higher education programmes, Yaba College of Technology offers a Higher National Diploma course

in Printing Technology. The subject is also studied as a course component in Mass Communication at the National Open University. Other tertiary institutions offer it at the Postgraduate Diploma, Master's and PhD levels. The University of Ibadan offers a Master of Publishing and Copyright Studies through the Department of Library and Archival Studies as well as a Professional Master's in Communication Arts with a specialisation in Book Development and Publishing. Babcock University and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, are other tertiary institutions that train professionals in the book and publishing sector. There are also scores of book publishing outlets in Nigeria that offer informal apprenticeship programmes in publishing.

Furthermore, according to the national authority, the African Writers Development Trust provides training programmes aimed at helping African authors and publishers transition to digital platforms. They offer courses in digital publishing, including the creation of eBooks and audiobooks. The Bodes Social Media Hangout offers training on digital marketing and e-commerce, which is crucial for the promotion and sale of digital books and content. Many Nigerian universities are beginning to incorporate digital publishing courses into their curriculum, particularly in mass communication and library science departments. Conferences and workshops are held occasionally by the Nigerian Publishers Association focusing on challenges and opportunities in digital publishing.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Nigeria boasts a number of representative organisations of book and publishing professionals. These include the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA), the umbrella organization for publishers established in 1965 that promotes the interests of the publishing industry and funds literary projects; the Nigerian Book Fair Trust (NBFT), which organizes the annual Nigerian Book Fair to promote books, reading and publishing;

the booksellers Association of Nigeria (BAN), which represents book manufacturers, printers, and binders, focusing on the production aspects of book publishing; Nigerian Writers Association (NWA), which represents writers, authors, and creative minds, and advocates for their rights and interests; Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), which promotes Nigerian literature, supports authors, and organizes literary events; Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), which represents editors, proofreaders, and other publishing professionals; Society of Book Designers Nigeria (SBDN), which promotes book design, illustration, and visual arts in publishing; Nigerian Library Association (NLA), which represents librarians, libraries, and information professionals, and advocates for access to information and reading materials; African Publishers Network (APNET), Nigeria Chapter (a subsidiary of the international APNET), which promotes African publishing, books, and reading; and International Publishers Association (IPA) Nigeria Chapter, which is part of the global IPA, and advocates for publishers' rights, freedom to publish, and copyright protection.

There is no authoritative information on the extent of these organizations' inclusion in the development and monitoring of book and publishing sector policies and measures. However, the national authority's survey response states that the National Educational Research and Development Council, which is responsible for educational curricula development in Nigeria, allows stakeholders to participate in the development and revision of curricula, and that the Federal Ministry of Education provides a platform for stakeholders, including citizens and publishers, to engage in policy dialogue and advocacy.

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RWANDA



Population **14 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **79%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$1,010**
(2023)



Urban population **18%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **80%**



Internet users (2022) **34%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **15**

Titles published **35**

Bookstores **4**

Public libraries **4**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 3.5 million inhabitants

Jobs **220**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book and publishing sector in Rwanda has been shaped by emblematic figures who have preserved and enriched the country's literary culture. Among them is Alexis Kagame (1912-1981), a Catholic priest, historian and poet who played a crucial role in documenting oral history and promoting Kinyarwanda, contributing to its adoption as the language of primary education in post-colonial Rwanda. Other notable authors include Saverio Nayigiziki (1915-1984), an educator and writer, and Benjamin Sehene (b. 1959), a novelist and essayist, whose works explore profound themes of Rwandan history. The Rwandan diaspora has also produced influential voices, such as Scholastique Mukasonga (b. 1956), whose writings bear witness to the experiences of Rwandans, and Gaël Faye, who is a member of the younger generation of authors.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Youth and Arts is responsible for promoting reading among the public, and for establishing and supporting reading facilities such as public libraries. The Rwanda Arts Council, placed under the Ministry and made up of artists' unions and federations, offers a participatory platform for actors in the creative sector. The Rwanda Academy of Language and Culture (RALC), which is responsible for promoting the Kinyarwanda language and Rwandan culture, collaborates to promote reading and support authors and publishers. Regarding education, the Rwanda Education Board (REB) is responsible for evaluating and approving the content of schoolbooks. It also ensures that this content reflects the country's cultural and educational values, while maintaining standards of quality and accessibility.

With more than 40,000 references, Rwanda has a National Library known as *Inkoranyabitabo y'Igihugu* in Kinyarwanda. It was founded in 1989 as a department within the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. The Rwanda Archives and Library Services Authority (RALSA) was created in 2014 by Law no. 12/2014 of 9 May 2014. This agency merged the National Library and the National Archives of Rwanda, in order to implement the government's policy on archives and libraries.

The Ministry of Commerce is responsible for intellectual property policy and strategies, in collaboration with the Office of the Registrar General, which is responsible for registering intellectual property and copyright. The latter operates through the Rwandan Intellectual Property Office. This body oversees the application of intellectual property laws, ensures that literary and artistic works enjoy legal protection and raises awareness of copyright issues among local stakeholders. It also issues patents and registers rights.

Copyright management in Rwanda is governed by Law No. 31/2009 on the protection of intellectual property. Rwanda also relies on collecting societies, which represent the interests of authors, publishers and other rights holders by collecting and redistributing royalties from the commercial use of works. These organizations make it easier to negotiate licences and give authors greater protection. Law No. 54/91 of 15 November 1991 on the press and freedom of expression also includes provisions on legal deposit.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

According national authority's survey response, books are exempt from VAT and libraries can import books, manuscripts, works of art and other cultural objects without elevated customs duties or trade restrictions. The national authority points out that Rwandan tax law also exempts paper imports.

The protection and promotion of local languages in the book and publishing sector are strategic priorities for preserving cultural heritage and strengthening national identity. Kinyarwanda, the official and national language, plays a central role in educational and cultural policies, thereby promoting the production of books and teaching materials in this language. Initiatives such as literary competitions, festivals and government subsidies encourage authors and publishers to create works in Kinyarwanda.

PUBLISHING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, the Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy, through its National Library Unit, is the body responsible for issuing ISBNs to any person or organization requesting them. Documentary research indicates that Rwanda had around 15 active publishers in 2020.¹ Among the most notable publishing houses are Ubuntu Publishers, founded in 2016, which publishes in Swahili, Kinyarwanda, French and English; Imagine We Rwanda, founded in 2015, which promotes local authors and makes their works accessible and affordable; and Bakame Éditions, founded in 1995 and a pioneer in children's literature, which publishes works in Kinyarwanda.

In the absence of official data, our estimates based on existing research suggest that around 35 titles are published each year. According to the national authority's response to the survey, publications in English and Kinyarwanda predominate.

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that the market for schoolbooks is held mainly by local publishers. Fountain Publishers Rwanda, a subsidiary of Fountain Publishers founded in 1988 in Uganda, registered in Kigali in 2007 and specialises in the publication of school and university books, as well as tourist publications.

With regard to the fight against piracy, Law No. 31/2009 on the protection of intellectual property provides for penalties against the illegal reproduction of books. Publishers are working with the authorities to report infringements and protect their works, while awareness campaigns are being established to educate students, teachers and booksellers about the economic and cultural consequences of these practices. One notable feature is the commitment of educational institutions and public libraries, which promote legal access to resources through collective licences and agreements with publishers.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The national authority's response to the survey confirms that physical bookshops are the main distribution channel, along with direct sales. According to documentary research, there are between two and four professional bookshops.² Large bookshops such as Caritas Rwanda Bookshop and Ikirezi Bookstore focus on selling domestic and imported books, providing essential access points for readers. Publishers, particularly through direct channels, also play a part in distribution by offering their publications at literary events and in schools. Digital platforms are gradually emerging, with initiatives such as Rwanda Online experimenting with the sale of e-books, although their reach is still limited.

In terms of employment, our estimations, based on all available data and additional research, amounted to 220 people employed in the sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

The national authority's response to the survey indicates that there was only one public library in operation in 2023. There are, however, estimated to be at least four libraries currently open to the public.

The national authority's response to the survey also indicates that the printed format remains the preferred format for readers.

The private sector and civil society play a key role in promoting reading. For example, local publishers such as Bakame Éditions promote reading awareness by producing books in the Kinyarwanda language that are suitable for a young audience, and by regularly organizing reading workshops and meetings with young readers to encourage reading from an early age.

The Rwanda Editing and Literature Organization (RELO),³ founded in 2012, was created on the initiative of intellectuals from leading institutions and various staff from civil society organizations who wished to promote writing and reading activities among Rwandan youth. RELO supports authors in the publication of their works and promotes the publication of these in book form to enrich the national literary landscape. Associations such as the Imbuto Foundation are also involved in projects to encourage children to read and to develop educational resources in Kinyarwanda. Imagine We Rwanda has set up reading clubs and organizes writing workshops to stimulate Rwandan literary creativity.

Rwanda Bookmobile has set up a mobile library project that travels throughout the country's rural areas to provide communities with access to books and reading. In addition to distributing books, Rwanda Bookmobile organizes public reading sessions and educational activities to promote literary culture.

The Ubumuntu Arts Festival, although primarily focused on the performing arts, includes literary components such as poetry readings, narrative performances and discussions around literature, highlighting the link between the arts and literature in the Rwandan context.

Reading clubs and literary festivals, such as the Rwanda International Book Fair (*Rencontres Internationales du Livre du Rwanda*),⁴ have also been set up to raise public awareness of the importance of literature and provide a platform for exchange between readers, authors and publishers. In 2024, Kigali hosted the seventh edition of the African Writers Conference (AWC) with the theme *The Role of African Children's Literature in Shaping the Youth*, which brought together writers, readers and publishers from across the continent.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2023, the total value of book sector imports, including printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to some US\$5,630,299. The main source of imports is the UK, followed by Uganda and Kenya. Exports totalled US\$64,120.⁵

TRAINING

The University of Rwanda offers courses in the arts and publishing.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Rwanda Book Industry Association (RWABIA) and the Union of Rwandan Editors and Publishers (*Union des Éditeurs et Libraires Rwandais*) aim to support and develop the book industry in Rwanda. The Rwanda Writers Federation (RWF) seeks to represent and stimulate investment in Rwanda's creative sector by showcasing the country's writers. The Rwanda Children's Book Organization (RCBO) was created in 2015 with the mission of promoting the production and use of quality children's books by Rwandan publishers.



NOTES

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SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE



Population **0.2 million** (2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **94%** (2022)



GDP per capita **US\$2,941** (2023)



Urban population **76%** (2023)



Mobile phone subscription (2022) **87%**



Internet users (2022) **57%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **3**

Titles published **15**

Bookstores **3**

Public libraries **1**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 200,000 inhabitants

Jobs **80**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

After the country's independence in 1975, the collection of the National Library of Sao Tome and Principe was divided between the then-created Francisco José Tenreiro Reading Room, named in honour of the Sao Tome and Principe city poet, and the Technical and Scientific Documentation Centre, both in the capital.

Afterwards, the State created the Francisco José Tenreiro Cultural Centre, which constituted the only public library in operation in the country for more than a decade. It was only in the 1990s that new libraries began to appear, in the capitals of Sao Tome and Principe's city districts. The new building of the National Library of Sao Tome and Principe was inaugurated in May 2002, in the capital city São Tomé.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sciences and Higher Education (MECSHE) is responsible for coordinating policies and measures related to the book and publishing sector in Sao Tome and Principe. It oversees the content of, and provides financial support for, schoolbooks. The MECS also manages the primary regulatory and legal provisions applicable to the sector, including Decree-Law No. 02/2017, which approves the Code of Copyright and Related Rights.¹ This legislation aims to protect the rights of authors and artists, promote intellectual creativity, and combat piracy and counterfeiting.

The institution responsible for managing copyright and intellectual property is the National Service of Intellectual Property and Quality of Sao Tome and Principe (SENAPIQ STP), which plays a central role in enforcing intellectual property rights in the country. Additionally, the Patronage Law for Culture and Sport, approved in 2014, exempts private companies from paying customs duties and taxes on certain cultural products.

On behalf of the MECSHE, the National Library is responsible for the technical coordination of public libraries and for promoting books and reading across the country. It also manages the legal deposit system.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The Programme of the 18th Constitutional Government, published in November 2022, sets out four main cultural initiatives that include the creation of a Collective Management Office for Copyright and Related Rights, and the promotion of national literature through the Francisco Tenreiro Literary Prize.² Established in 1993, the prize encourages national intellectual production and is worth just over US\$50,000. While the other two proposals have not yet been implemented, they signal the government's intent to develop the cultural sector further.

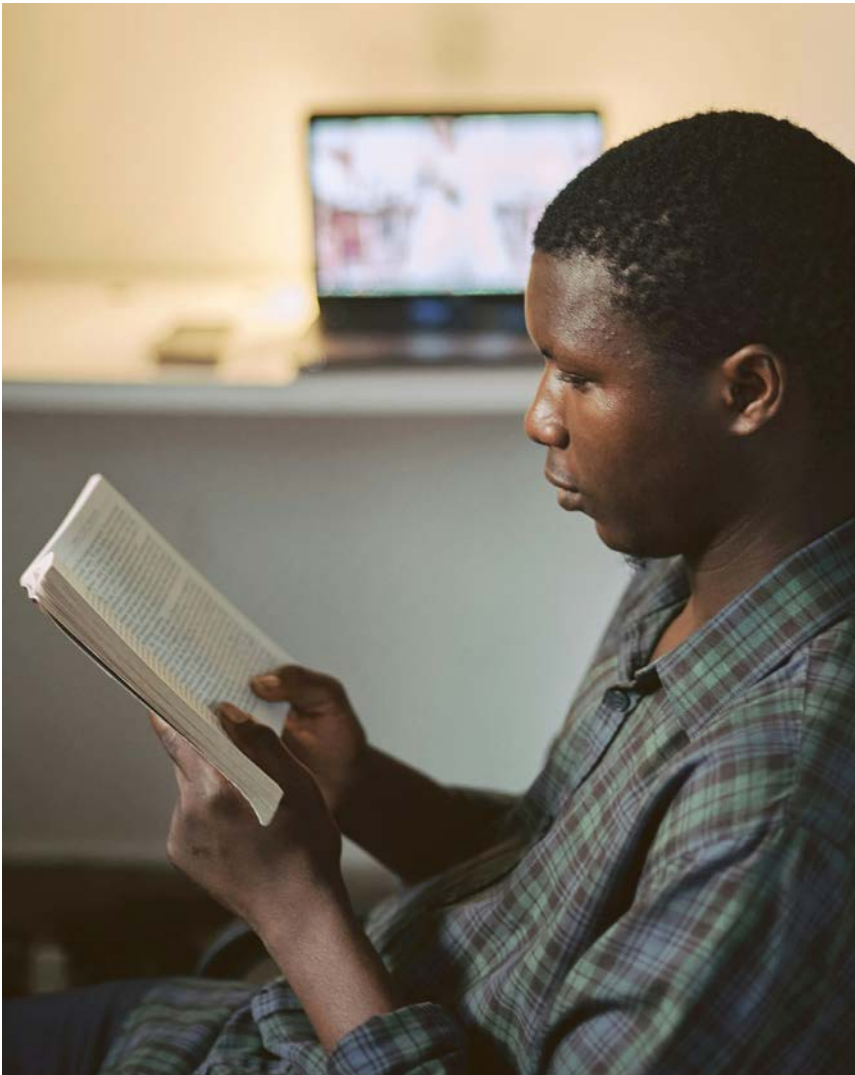
The National Library's project Cartas com Ciência (Letters with Science), launched in 2020, has promoted literacy by attracting children and young students to the library and fostering an interest in reading and scientific inquiry.

Books are exempt from customs duties, which facilitates access to imported literature. Additionally, the MECSHE has announced plans to launch a call for tenders to purchase books under the Active Library Project, marking an effort to strengthen national collections and library services.

PUBLISHING

Publishing activities in Sao Tome and Principe are overseen by the National Library, which is responsible for granting legal deposit numbers.

However, this process is not always consistently followed, as prior authorization or post-publication declaration depends on the initiative of authors and publishers.



There are three principal publishing houses currently operating in the country and contributing to the modest but growing local publishing ecosystem: Editora Preciosa, Malanza Edições and TPVENDAS.ST. However, data on the number of titles published by format, category and language, the number of copies printed and the revenues generated, remain unavailable.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sciences and Higher Education (MECSHE) assigned Porto Editora, a Portuguese publisher, the responsibility for producing and supplying school textbooks for the country. One key initiative by the MECSHE is the Integrated Support Program for the Education Sector of Sao Tome and Principe (PAISE-STP), which has played a

significant role in developing a Digital Repository that provides textbooks and other educational materials for both students and teachers.³

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The National Library, on behalf of the MECSHE, distributes classics and essential works during literary fairs and festivals. According to the national authority's response to the survey, private-sector activity in these areas includes Livraria Nón, reportedly the only physical bookstore operating in Sao Tome and Principe as of 2023. The survey further reports that two digital bookstores are in operation, providing

additional access to books through online platforms. Digital distribution is also facilitated by StreetLib Sao Tome & Principe, which enables local authors and publishers to distribute their works globally without having to pay upfront fees.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 80 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

Book fairs and literary festivals, often in partnership with Portuguese cooperation programmes, are a significant component of the country's literary culture. At least two such events were organized in 2023. The national authority's response to the survey indicates that book fairs and literary festivals are the most important channels for book sales in Sao Tome and Principe. Despite the lack of data on revenues generated by these events, they remain essential in promoting literature and fostering a reading culture.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the national authority survey response, printed books are the most preferred reading format. The survey also noted that one public library was operational in 2023, namely the National Library – with daily attendance averaging between 50 and 60 visitors, particularly during school periods.

There are several partnerships and donations that support the National Library. For example, in 2023, the Portuguese NGO Helpo donated more than 2,000 books to the National Library. The National Reading Plan (PNL), implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sciences and Higher Education in partnership with the Portuguese School of Sao Tome and Principe (EPSTP-CELP) and the National Library, aims to promote reading and enhance literacy and digital skills, particularly among youth. Since 2021, the PNL has hosted reading competitions, contributing to the development of a national reading culture.⁴

The National Library collaborates with international partners, for example the University of Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte (Brazil), to promote public reading events that target children and teenagers across the country, and to organize events celebrating Portuguese Language Day on the 5th of May. This initiative includes book fairs, readings, and book presentations. In 2024, a partnership between the National Library, the Brazilian Institute of Public Advocacy and the Association of Young Writers of Sao Tome led to the sixth edition of the country's Literary Short Story Competition.

The Rio Atlântico–Diálogo e Cooperação entre as Bibliotecas Nacionais do Brasil e dos PALOP project (Dialogue and Cooperation among the National Libraries of Brazil and PALOP Countries), launched in 2023, seeks to enhance cooperation, collaboration and cultural exchange between the National Libraries of Brazil and the Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP). This initiative aims to strengthen cultural ties, share resources and knowledge, and improve library services across the nations involved.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

In Sao Tome and Príncipe, official data on the trade in books, specifically novels and other literary publications, remains limited. In 2023, the value of exported books amounted to US\$554, while the value of imported books amounted to US\$123,151.⁵ Portugal remains the country's primary trading partner, notably influencing the import market for literary publications and underscoring ongoing linguistic and cultural connections.

TRAINING

There is no dedicated higher education programme or apprenticeship for the book and publishing sector in the country.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Sao Tome and Príncipe is home to several professional organizations that support writers and the literary community.

União Nacional dos Escritores e Artistas de São Tomé e Príncipe (National Union of Writers and Artists of Sao Tome and Príncipe) is an organization that represents writers and artists. It was founded in 1985. The organization aims to promote local culture and literature through various activities and events.

Associação de Jovens Escritores Santomenses (Association of Young Writers from Sao Tome and Príncipe) was founded in 2021. It aims to support young Santomean writers, promote the literature of Sao Tome, especially that produced by young people, and create new readers.

While these networks are active in promoting literature and cultural activities, the national authority's response to the survey notes the absence of formally recognized guilds or networks involved in policy development for the book sector. Nevertheless, cross-referenced data and interviews indicate that private-sector bookstores and publishers often participate in the implementation of initiatives, even if they are not formally included in the design of national policies.

NOTES

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SENEGAL



Population **18.1 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **58%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$1,706**
(2023)



Urban population **50%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **120%**



Internet users (2022) **60%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **51**

Titles published **125**

Bookstores **10**

Public libraries **500**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 36,200 inhabitants

Jobs **2,250**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first printing presses were introduced in Saint-Louis and Dakar, but local production remained limited. Although founded in Paris in 1947, *Présence Africaine* has had a major impact in Senegal as it has published many emblematic Senegalese authors, such as Léopold Sédar Senghor and Cheikh Anta Diop. With independence in 1960, the country became strongly committed to promoting national literature and culture, in particular through the creation of *Nouvelles Éditions Africaines* (NEA) in 1972, which dominated the West African publishing landscape. From the 1980s onwards, the sector was further structured with the creation of the Directorate of Books and Reading (*Direction du Livre et de la Lecture*), and the launch of the Dakar International Book Fair (*Foire Internationale du Livre de Dakar* – FILDAK), which promoted local and international production. During the 1990s, NEA was privatised, publishing in national languages started to emerge, and specialist publishers began to appear.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture is responsible for implementing policies related to publishing, reading and author promotion under the supervision of the Directorate of Books and Reading. A Higher Council for Books (*Conseil Supérieur du Livre*) was established in 1972, but does not appear to be operational at present.

The Senegalese Society for Copyright and Associated Rights (*Société Sénégalaise du Droit d'Auteur et des Droits Voisins* – SODAV) collects and distributes royalties for copyright holders. It centralises management of literary, artistic and audiovisual works, guaranteeing fair remuneration for authors.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education,

Research and Innovation support integration of books into school and university curricula respectively, while encouraging the production of academic publications. More specifically, the National Institute for Study and Action for Educational Development (*Institut National d'Étude et d'Action pour le Développement de l'Éducation* – INEADE) is responsible for assessing and approving educational books. The Technical Evaluation Committee examines the relevance of the works proposed, while the Inspector General for Education and Training (*Inspection Générale de l'Éducation et de la Formation* – IGEF) ensures compliance with quality standards. The National Council for Education and Training (*Conseil National de l'Éducation et de la Formation* – CNEF), a consultative body, helps to validate educational guidelines.

Since Act No. 76-30 of 9 April 1976, legal deposit legislation has obliged publishers and printers to submit their publications to the State, thereby guaranteeing the creation of national archives that are essential for safeguarding culture and access to it. In 2002, Law No. 2002-17 was adopted, establishing the National Library of Senegal. However, the latter still remains at the planning stage. Copyright protection is also governed by Act No. 2008-09 of 25 January 2008.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

As far as taxation is concerned, books are exempt from VAT, which improves sales and accessibility.

Senegal is notable for the creation of a publishing support fund (*Fonds d'Aide à l'Édition*) in 2004 (which became operational in 2009), under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture, with the aim of supporting literary production and encouraging reading. In 2020, despite the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, 365 titles were published or purchased and 365,000 copies produced thanks to the fund, mobilizing a total budget of US\$967,742.

It has also supported publishing and printing houses, bookshops, libraries and associations in the book sector, guaranteeing authors' copyrights and funding cultural and training initiatives.¹ According to the national authority's response to the survey, in 2023, the fund had 750 million CFA francs (around US\$1.23 million) to provide subsidies for: publishing, the purchase of self-published books, private initiatives to organise book fairs, national representation at international book fairs, libraries and events promoting public access to reading materials, and the purchase of materials.

In the education sector, Senegal has implemented a national policy for textbooks and teaching materials since 2013. The policy was adopted following a series of reforms initiated in previous years, in particular after the partial liberalisation of the textbook market between 2000 and 2011. These reforms have strengthened national educational publishing and introduced a multiple-choice system for textbooks. Senegal has also set up a capacity-building programme for stakeholders in the educational publishing sector, including staff from the Ministry of Education's various structures as well as publishers, booksellers, printers and distributors. The programme has covered key areas such as book design, editorial revision, publishing techniques, financial management of publishing houses and scheduling the distribution of textbooks.²

In addition, in 2022 a clause was introduced to allow local publishers to submit bids up to 15% higher than the public procurement standards for school textbooks, without this affecting the assessment of their file.³ This measure should enable Senegalese publishers to compete effectively with the foreign publishing houses that traditionally dominated this market. However, according to local publishers, its complicated application has limited its effectiveness.

PUBLISHING

There is no national ISBN agency in Senegal. Most national publishers obtain ISBNs through the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (*Agence Francophone de la Numérotation Internationale du Livre* – AFNIL). Despite the lack of data, documentary research makes it possible to estimate the number of titles published annually at around 125.⁴

According to the national authority's response to the survey, Senegal had 51 active publishers in 2023. The Senegalese Publishers Association (*Association Sénégalaise des Editeurs*) currently counts 42 active members who publish in all genres, with some even specialising in indigenous and local languages. Among the most active publishers are: *Nouvelles Éditions Africaines du Sénégal* (NEAS), one of the country's oldest publishing houses, founded in 1976; *Falia Édition*, founded in 1995, which publishes cultural and educational works; Amalion Publishing, based in Dakar since 2009; and finally, *Saaraba Éditions*, opened in Dakar in December 2022 by the French group Editis, which aims to promote literary talent from the African continent.

Documentary research shows that Senegal has a long-standing, well-structured children's book chain. In 2019, 450 Senegalese authors were identified, demonstrating the country's strong creative dynamic. Among the publishing houses specialising in children's books are: *BLD Éditions*, established in 1994, which offers specific collections for different age groups, such as *Tété*, *Guné* and *Selbé*; and *CELI Éditions Sénégal*, founded in 2014, which is a non-profit publishing house for the benefit of children, parents and childhood professionals.

An ever-increasing number of authors of children's books are writing in local languages in response to growing demand from the diaspora and the expansion of bilingual education.⁵

It is difficult to quantify books published in local languages, although the numbers are significant thanks to specialist publishers such as *Papyrus Éditions*. One-time international aid and grants help to fund publishing in national languages such as Serer, Pulaar and Wolof.

In the educational publishing sector, *Nouvelles Éditions Africaines du Sénégal* (NEAS) continues to play a major role. Furthermore, the presence of *Nouvelles Éditions Numériques Africaines* (NENA) in Senegal for over two decades is a key indicator of the transformations affecting the country's book and publishing sector. NENA offers a relevant alternative for distributing digital content in French-speaking Africa. Founded in response to the growing need for digital books in Africa, it focuses on publishing, disseminating and distributing African works, particularly those by African authors and researchers.

As regards piracy, SODAV is currently reviewing the laws on private copy so that authors and publishers can benefit from them.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Book distribution relies on a variety of operators and channels. There are around ten bookshops, including brick-and-mortar bookshops located mainly in Dakar and urban areas, which play a key role despite their still limited numbers. One of the most emblematic bookshops in Dakar is *Aux 4 Vents*, which offers a wide selection of schoolbooks. The *Clairafrique* bookstore is also a leading name, particularly for children's books and textbooks. There is also *La Bouquinerie*, an online second-hand bookshop, and *Plumes du Monde*, which offers a wide range of books. Outside the capital, the Saly Center bookshop is a cultural hub for the Petite Côte coastal area, and *Librairie Papeterie Le Sénégal* (LPS), with its digital services and online platform, meets today's need for accessibility.

The *Mona Lisa* and *L'Agneau Carnivore* bookshops complement the offering, each with its own speciality ranging from school and university books to African literature and books by Senegalese authors.

In terms of employment, based on all available data and additional research, an estimated 2,250 people were employed in the sector in 2023. Revenue in the sector remains moderate and is largely driven by sales of textbooks, which account for almost 80% of the market, while sales of general literature are limited, rarely exceeding 1,000 copies per book. Royalties for writers are low, at between 5% and 10%, and the amounts received are still limited.⁶

Literary events play an essential role in promoting books and culture. Among these initiatives, the key event is the Dakar International Book Fair (FILDAK). Organized every two years by the Ministry of Culture, the Fair aims to promote African literature and the development of the book industry by bringing together a variety of stakeholders – authors, publishers, librarians and teachers – in a space dedicated to reading and education. There is also the Dakar International Poetry Festival (*Festival International de Poésie de Dakar*), which highlights African and Francophone poetry; the Literature Biennale (*Biennale des Lettres*), a space dedicated to literature and critical reflection; and the Dakar International Book and Press Fair (*Salon International du Livre et de la Presse de Dakar – SILDA*), which brings together authors, publishers and readers to promote local and international literature.

In addition, the International Children's Book Fair (*Salon International du Livre de Jeunesse*) and the Rentrée littéraire in Senegal are now part of the national cultural programme. Finally, outside the capital, the Metissons Festival is a unique event combining music and literature to encourage creative encounters; and the Saint-Louis International Arts and

Book Fair (*Rencontres Internationales des Arts et du Livre de Saint-Louis*), a forum celebrating Senegal's literary and artistic heritage. There is also the Thiès International Book Fair (*Salon International du Livre de Thiès – SILT*), which has become a major literary event in Senegal dedicated to promoting African literature and encouraging reading.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

Senegal has around 500 public libraries, according to the national authority's survey response. Some operators in the sector point out that, despite the existence of a law on libraries, its impact is hampered by a lack of means and resources, with the result that infrastructures are few and under-equipped.⁷

Reading is promoted in Senegal through collaboration between the government, educational programmes supported by international partners and various cultural associations. For example, the Program for Strengthening Early Ready for All (*Programme de Renforcement de la Lecture Initiale pour Tous*) aims to improve the reading skills of primary school pupils, in particular by extending teaching in the national languages. In the same vein, associations such as the Senegalese Publishers' Association (ASE) are contributing to this dynamic, notably through events such as the Dakar International Literary Festival (FILID), a forum bringing together writers, publishers and readers to celebrate literature and encourage reading.⁸ Finally, associations such as *Déclic*⁹ and *Paroles en Scènes* organise book collections and activities to make reading accessible to as many people as possible, particularly in rural areas.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2023, the total value of book sector imports, including printed books,

brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$7,190,990. Exports totalled US\$141,830.¹⁰ France remains the primary source of book imports, as confirmed by data from the Centrale de l'Édition,¹¹ positioning Senegal as the sixth-largest importer of French books on the African continent.

TRAINING

The School of Librarians, Archivists and Documentarians (*École des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes – EBAD*) at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar is the reference for library science studies leading to Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Since 1992, the Association Library-Reading-Development¹² (*Bibliothèque-Lecture-Développement – BLD*) has offered introductory courses in library organisation and management, as well as promotion of children's books.

Regarding the other links in the book chain, while university courses in literature and communications provide a sound foundation for future authors, publishers and proofreaders, few specialist publishing programmes are available in public institutions. Some private institutions, such as the Higher Institute of Information Sciences and Communication (*Institut Supérieur des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication – ISSIC*), do offer courses in communications and publishing.

Workshops and seminars organised by NGOs, authors' associations and cultural stakeholders play a complementary role in training professionals in editorial management, book marketing and copyright. However, these courses are still mainly concentrated in Dakar, limiting their accessibility from rural areas. A lack of permanent funding and internship opportunities in publishing houses also hampers the development of practical skills.



PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

There are around twenty associations in the book and reading sector, including the Senegalese Author's Association (*Association des Écrivains du Sénégal* – AES), founded in 1969. The AES also plays a central role in promoting Senegalese literature, for example by organising events such as International African Writer's Day (*Journée Internationale de l'Écrivain Africain*), celebrated annually since 1992. Furthermore, the AES is actively involved in debates on contemporary issues such as citizenship and sovereignty, reflecting its commitment to current societal issues.

It is complemented by the Union of Senegalese Authors in National Languages (*Union des Écrivains Sénégalais en Langues Nationales* – UESLN), which is dedicated to promoting and advancing literature written in national languages. The Young Senegalese Writers' Circle (*Cercle des Jeunes Écrivains du Sénégal* – CJES) is a community for young Senegalese writers. There is also the Senegalese Publishers' Association (*Association Sénégalaise des Éditeurs* – ASE), which brings together the main publishers and plays an active role in promoting books and boosting the publishing sector in Senegal.

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SEYCHELLES



Population **0.1 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **96%**
(2020)



GDP per capita **US\$17,879**
(2023)



Urban population **59%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **192%**



Internet users (2022) **87%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **155**

Titles published **36**

Bookstores **5**

Public libraries **1**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 100,000 inhabitants

Jobs **800**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Before the formation of a local book publishing sector, books were largely imported from Europe, particularly from France and Britain. Creole was predominantly an oral language, while French and English dominated written texts.

The 2000 Policy Statement of the Ministry of Education, titled 'Education for a Learning Society', cemented the place of books and reading by stating that early childhood education would lay the foundations for further attainment and learning by ensuring that children learn to read with understanding at a level appropriate to their age and interests, acquire a love of books and demonstrate an interest in using writing for a purpose.¹

The political and policy changes led to the emergence of a book publishing sector in Seychelles. Though relatively small, it is evolving and diversifying in terms of genres, formats and distribution channels. Several prominent writers contribute to Seychelles' rich literary heritage and to international literature. One of the early Seychellois writers, Antoine Abel, known as the father of Seychelles literature, wrote novels, short stories, poetry, plays and folklore in French, English and Seychelles Creole. He was the first playwright to bring his country's culture and Creole language to the world stage with his collection of poems *Paille en queue* (1969). He was awarded France's Prix Mascareignes in 1979. Other notable figures include Shakuntala Hawoldar, a prolific writer and poet who promotes the arts through cultural initiatives; Marie-Thérèse Choppy, whose works focus on preserving Creole culture and language; Lorina Barbe, recognized for her contributions to Creole literature, with six books and numerous poems advocating cultural promotion; and Georgette Larue-Jumaye, whose novels and poems reflect everyday life in Seychelles and champion the visibility of Seychellois literature through tourism.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for overseeing educational materials and evaluation of textbooks for use in schools. The Seychelles National Library promotes access to a wide range of reading materials and fosters a culture of reading through library services and book-related initiatives. It is also the national ISBN agency and therefore manages the issuing of ISBNs for books published in the country.

The National Arts Council (NAC) supports literary works as part of its broader mandate of promoting the arts and culture in Seychelles. It provides grants and organizes literary competitions. Additionally, the Seychelles Creole Academy plays a pivotal role in preserving and promoting the Creole language, including its use in literature and academic works. The academy also supports local authors writing in Seychelles Creole through the provision of technical and financial assistance, such as editing, publishing and distribution of their work.

Key components of the legal framework include the Copyright Act, 2014, which is the primary law governing copyright in Seychelles. It provides comprehensive protection for literary and artistic works. The law is enforced by the Seychelles Licensing Authority (SLA) and the Seychelles Intellectual Property Office (SIPO).

Although the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Act, 2000 (Revised), is aimed primarily at broadcasting, this act also regulates the distribution of digital books and content in Seychelles by ensuring that all electronic content complies with national standards to prevent the dissemination of harmful materials. The Seychelles Media Commission Act, 2010, established the Seychelles Media Commission (SMC), which oversees media activities, including print media. The SMC ensures that publishers adhere to ethical standards and promotes professionalism within the industry.

The Penal Code (Amendment) Act, 2016, includes provisions against the publication of defamatory or seditious materials, ensuring that content does not violate public order or individual rights. The Education Act, 2004 (Revised), governs the use of educational materials in schools, influencing the production and distribution of textbooks and other learning materials. The Customs Management Act, 2011, regulates the import and export of books and other printed materials into and out of Seychelles. The Act empowers customs officials to inspect imported books to ensure compliance with content regulations and intellectual property rights.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

While there are no dedicated policies for the book publishing sector, the 2000 Policy on Education for a Learning Society emphasizes nurturing a love of books and an interest in writing from an early age.

Regarding tax policies, The Value Added Tax Act, 2017, exempts imported educational material and reference books (not for resale) authorized by the MOE. Other printed books, including children's picture, drawing or colouring books, are also exempt.² In terms of financial incentives, institutions such as NAC offer support for local writers, primarily through grants and writing competitions. Public investment in the publishing sector is generally limited to cultural and educational initiatives rather than to commercial publishing. Institutions such as the Seychelles National Library and the Creole Academy are involved in promoting reading, literacy and the preservation of the Creole language.

PUBLISHING

According to the national authority's survey response, in 2023 the publishing industry in Seychelles comprised 155 publishers and published 36 titles, all of them written in English.³ While English was the exclusive language used for publications in 2023, the publishing



sector also commonly employs French and Creole in its broader publishing endeavours.

The Creole Institute (*Lenstiti Kreol*), established in 1987, is both a research and documentation centre and the primary publishing house for works in Creole. Owing to limited local printing capacity, many books, especially those with large print runs or specialised printing requirements, are printed abroad and imported into Seychelles. There are, however, a few local printers who support publishers in Seychelles through small-scale print runs.

According to *The Global Publishing Industry in 2022* report by the World Intellectual Property (WIPO), only 101 titles were deposited with recognized repositories in Seychelles. This number does not include digital and other formats.⁴ The e-book market in Seychelles was projected to reach a

revenue of US\$ 103,400 by 2024. It is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2024–2027) of 0.86%, resulting in a projected market value of US\$ 106,100 by 2027. The number of readers in the e-book market is expected to reach to 860,000 by 2027.⁵

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The book distribution network in Seychelles includes both traditional physical channels and emerging digital platforms, catering to both the local population and the tourist market. Although comprehensive data are not readily available, Antigone Bookshop and Chanterelle Bookshop appear to be the leading players. Both bookshops offer a wide range of Seychellois literature, educational materials, general interest books and international titles.

Digital reading is steadily gaining momentum in Seychelles, with various platforms providing easy access to e-books and other digital content. The MyON online platform offers students a personalized library with more than 6,000 enhanced digital books. Expanding the range of available literature, The Dusty Collection, a pioneering online retailer, distributes second-hand books from across the globe, offering affordable reading options to the public.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 800 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

Data on reading habits in Seychelles are limited, with few surveys or reports specifically addressing the topic. However, various initiatives suggest a growing interest in reading among the population. One notable initiative between 2019 and 2021 involved the Seychelles MOE partnering with Renaissance, a UK-based firm, to promote guided reading practices among students. Through this programme, primary school students gained access to a free myON site, where they collectively logged over 400 hours, reading more than 11,000 books during the initial wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.⁶

While specific statistics regarding preferred reading formats in Seychelles are not readily available, the Seychelles National Library offers a diverse array of reading materials, including e-books and audiobooks. The Seychelles National Library provides extensive collections for both adults and children. Additionally, registered members can access digital resources, including e-books and audiobooks, through the library's portal or via the Libby app.

The promotion of books and a reading culture in Seychelles is supported by both government and private initiatives, with a focus on local content and cultural preservation.

State-sponsored efforts are led by institutions such as the National Institute for Culture, Heritage and the Arts (NICHA) and the Seychelles National Library, which organize literary events and reading programmes. Community-based activities are also prominent, with local bookshops, community centres, and Lardwaz (the Seychelles writers' association) hosting events including author meet-and-greets, book signings and literary festivals, to foster a strong reading culture. The promotion of literary excellence is further bolstered by the Sonia Grandcourt Award for Literature, part of the annual Arts Awards of Seychelles. Organized by the NAC, this award honours outstanding Seychellois writers across various categories, including poetry, short stories, novels and drama. Winners receive monetary prizes and have their work published.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that, for the year 2023, the total value of imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$ 1,000,740. The top countries supplying these imports were the United Kingdom, Mauritius and the United Arab Emirates.⁷

TRAINING

Seychelles has no higher education programmes or technical or apprenticeship processes dedicated to the book publishing sector. However, the MOE provides training for writers, editors and illustrators to ensure that the national curriculum standards are met. Furthermore, Lardwaz, the association of writers in Seychelles, offers workshops and training sessions for authors, focusing on writing, editing and publishing skills.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Lardwaz, the Creole name for 'writing slate', was established in 2008 as an association for writers, poets and literary professionals in Seychelles. Lardwaz operates under the umbrella of NAC and organizes training workshops and book signings for Seychellois writers.

The Bling Bling Poetry Association, founded in 2015, has made significant strides toward integrating poetry into the cultural fabric of Seychelles. With the mission of evaluating poetry's status in society, the association serves as a platform for both seasoned poets and emerging voices to share their work. Every year, the Bling Bling Poetry Association organizes poetry festivals, bringing together local and international poets to celebrate the art of the spoken word, poetry readings and live performances. Beyond festivals, it also hosts poetry competitions and runs occasional poetry workshops for children.

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SIERRA LEONE



Population **8.5 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **49%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$758**
(2023)



Urban population **44%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2021) **98%**



Internet users (2022) **30%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **4**

Titles published **40**

Bookstores **12**

Public libraries **4**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 2.1 million inhabitants

Jobs **250**

This mapping was carried out based on documentary research and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Key literary figures have emerged throughout Sierra Leone's history. Adelaide Casely-Hayford, an activist and short story writer, played a key role in popularising Pan-Africanist and feminist politics in the early 1900s. Yulisa Amadu Pat Maddy, a poet and playwright, extended the reach of Sierra Leonean theatre beyond the nation's borders through his work in Nigeria, Zambia and the United States of America. Another prominent figure is Syl Cheney-Coker, whose novel *The Last Harmattan of Alusine Dunbar* won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Africa in 1991. These pioneers, who started writing prior to the civil war in the 1990s, helped to establish a foundation for Sierra Leonean literature.

The Sierra Leonean Civil War (1991-2002) significantly disrupted the literary scene, creating a generational and geographic divide between established writers and emerging voices, and between those living in Sierra Leone and those taking up residence in the African diaspora. Despite these challenges, some notable writers have gained recognition in the post-war period. Among them is Ishmael Beah, a *New York Times* bestselling author, whose works *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* and *Radiance of Tomorrow* have garnered international attention.¹ Similarly, Aminatta Forna² achieved critical acclaim for her novels, with *The Memory of Love* being awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best Book in 2011. Olufemi Terry won the prestigious Caine Prize in 2010³ and Pede Hollist was a finalist for the same award in 2017. These authors represent a new wave of Sierra Leonean writers building on the country's literary tradition.

PEN Sierra Leone, a chapter of PEN international, was established in 2003 to promote local writing and literary culture.⁴ Earlier efforts to boost local publishing included the World Bank-funded Sierra Leone Education III Project, in 1983. This initiative encouraged and supported textbook publishing by private-sector publishers, with local

curriculum requirements being targeted to strengthen the country's publishing infrastructure.⁵ Additional initiatives, such as the Sierra Leone Library Board (SLLB), the Freetown International Book Fair and the Sierra Leonean Writers Series (SLWS), have also contributed to the growth of the book publishing industry. SLWS is an academic and general publisher of Sierra Leonean authors.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Institutionally, Sierra Leone does not have a single coordinating body for the book publishing sector. The responsibility for copyright and intellectual property matters falls under the Office of the Administrator and Registrar General (OARG), which administers the National Registry for Industrial Property and Copyright. The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) plays a key role in assessing and approving educational books through its Curriculum and Research Division.

There are no specific laws governing the book publishing sector in the country. Nevertheless, copyright is protected under the Copyright Act of 2011, while other intellectual property is managed under the Patents and Industrial Design Act (2012) and the Trade Mark Act (2014). The legal deposit system is governed by the Ordinances of 1887 and 1898, which were amended in 1962 to require that three copies of each publication be deposited with the SLLB, which operates under the authority of the MBSSE. There are no penalties for non-compliance.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The government provides some tax exemptions and reduced rates for the sector. Notable among them is the Ministry of Finance's duty-free concession to book importers. Public investment includes centralized government tenders for school textbooks. There is no large-scale purchasing of other books by the government.

PUBLISHING

Sierra Leone has an ISBN agency, operated by the SLLB, which manages book identification. The publishing sector in Sierra Leone remained small in 2023, with two publishing houses in operation. SLWS, established in 2001, is the more prominent publisher.⁶ According to consultation with stakeholders, the estimated number of titles produced in 2023 is 40.⁷ No digital or audiobook formats were reported on during this period.

The Non-Formal Education Directorate produces adult literacy curriculum materials used in community programmes in collaboration with non-governmental organisations, for instance the Sierra Leone Adult Education Association (SLADEA) and the Partners in Adult Education (PAE).

While non-scholastic works of literature by Sierra Leoneans in the African diaspora are published overseas,

mostly in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, initiatives such as Poda-Poda Stories (launched by journalist Ngozi Cole in 2020) have expanded the publishing landscape. Poda-Poda Stories publishes local literature in the form of poetry, essays and short fiction on its website.⁸

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Sierra Leone's distribution network comprises five main booksellers operating nationwide. The country has 12 physical bookstores. In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 250 persons employed in the sector in 2023. Regarding activities to promote the book industry, the country hosted the first Sierra Leonean National Book Fair in 2019. The Fair featured book exhibitions, book launches, reading sessions, panel discussions and poetry competitions.⁹

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

Sierra Leoneans' reading habits are poorly documented, and no formal surveys are available. However, one may argue that printed books remain the preferred reading format, since digital and other formats (such as audiobooks) are rare. There are only four public libraries, which are run by the SLLB. This restricts access to books and educational resources, particularly in rural areas. Book piracy has not been extensively documented, though it can be assumed that it is a challenge given the weakness of distribution networks and controls. In terms of reading promotion, PEN Sierra Leone held its first literary award ceremony in 2005, to honour significant contributors to Sierra Leonean literature. It also organises literary evenings to read poetry and short stories.



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IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research¹⁰ indicates that, for the year 2023, the total value of imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$3,781,647. According to consultations with booksellers and the MBSSE, Sierra Leone imports the vast majority of its books, primarily from Ghana, Nigeria, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The value of imports versus exports is heavily skewed towards imports, reflecting the country's dependence on foreign publications, particularly for educational materials.

TRAINING

Educational and professional training opportunities in the publishing sector are limited. Higher education institutions such as Fourah Bay College in Freetown offer sub-degree and degree courses in various disciplines relevant to the book sector, including Information Studies and Knowledge Management. Still, these programmes do not specialise in the technical skills required by a modern publishing industry. There is no apprenticeship programme dedicated to the sector, nor are there training programmes focused on digitalisation, such as are needed in the production of e-books and audiobooks, and the creation of digital marketing strategies.

In 2023, however, with funding from the Commonwealth Foundation and the Institute for Legal Research and Advocacy for Justice, Poda-Poda Stories introduced the first writing fellowship in Sierra Leone. It is a year-long programme aimed at supporting young Sierra Leonean writers.¹¹ In collaboration with the international NGO CODE (Canadian Organization for the Development of Education), PEN Sierra Leone trained local writers and illustrators to produce children's readers. Between 2011 and 2019, they published 20 titles, primarily anthologies.¹²

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

There are a few professional associations in Sierra Leone. Among them are PEN Sierra Leone, which is an association of writers and journalists, the Sierra Leone Booksellers Association, the Sierra Leone Publishers Association and the Association of Textbook Writers.

However, these organisations have limited influence on national policy and sector development. Space for citizen participation in the development of the book publishing sector is also minimal, though there is some stakeholder representation on government boards such as the SLLB and the MBSSE's Textbook Quality Control Board, where at least 30% of seats are reserved for women and minority groups.¹³

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SOMALIA



Population **18.4 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **54%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$597**
(2023)



Urban population **48%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **50%**



Internet users (2022) **28%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **9**

Titles published **50**

Bookstores **25**

Public libraries **7**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 2.6 million inhabitants

Jobs **280**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Somali language, part of the Cushitic language family, is spoken in Somalia and in adjacent parts of Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. Arabic was introduced into northern Somaliland in the 13th century, bringing with it a vowel system based on Arabic nomenclature. The Osmanya script, invented in the early 1920s, facilitated the acquisition of literacy in the language. The first-known complete Somali book, *Afkeena iyo fartiisa* (Our Language and Its Script), was published in Osmanya script by Industrie Grafiche della Somalia in 1971. The Somali language did not adopt an official orthography until 1972, when a new language policy was implemented. This made Somali the only official language and the language of instruction in schools until the last two years of schooling.¹

After this policy was established, two national literacy campaigns were launched: one targeting urban areas in 1973 and 1974 and the other a rural campaign in 1974 and 1975.² Anecdotal evidence points to an unprecedented production of school textbooks and literary texts for adults³ as a result of the implementation of the policy and the subsequent literacy campaigns, although no specific data are available.

The Somali National Library, established in 1975, played an integral role in promoting books and public reading until it was destroyed during the civil war in the 1990s. Efforts to rebuild this institution have been ongoing, including recent initiatives by the Somali diaspora to revitalize the library sector and promote a culture of reading.

A key figure in the development of Somali literature is Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac 'Gaariye', a renowned poet and political activist who championed the promotion of Somali language literature in the 1970s. Another writer who has had a major influence on Somali literature in the Somali language is Faarax Maxamed Jaamac Cawl, whose novel, *Aqoondaaro waa u nacab jacayl* (Ignorance is the Enemy of Love), is considered a classic.

For poetry, 'Hadraawi' (Mohamed Ibrahim Warsame) is often referred to as the 'Shakespeare of Somalia' owing to his profound influence on Somali poetry. His most renowned works include *Hal-La-Sheeg* (1972) and *Gaaraa* (1976). Diaspora authors have also played a crucial role in the Somali publishing landscape. For example, Nuruddin Farah's works have earned him numerous literary awards and recognition worldwide, giving Somali literature a global platform.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education oversees education policy, curriculum development and the evaluation and approval of school textbooks.

Trademarks, patents and industrial designs are protected through the Somalia Intellectual Property Office (SIPO). However, copyright and related rights are not protected. The Media Law (2016, amended in 2020) governs the media and publishing activities in Somalia, including the registration and licensing of publishers. It mandates compliance with content standards to prevent the dissemination of false information, hate speech and incitement to violence. The Penal Code of Somalia (1962), which applies to all forms of media, including books, criminalizes the distribution of defamatory, obscene and seditious materials.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The National Education Policy of 2020 assigns to the State Ministry of Education the responsibility of developing and preparing curricula, student textbooks and other educational materials at different levels of education.

Except for educational and religious books, all books are subject to taxation at the standard rates. According to the national authority's survey response, no specific financial incentives or funding mechanisms exist to provide direct support to Somalia's book and publishing sector.



Government initiatives, while limited, nevertheless support educational publishing through government tenders for textbooks and other educational materials.

PUBLISHING

According to the national authority's survey response, there are only three publishers in Somalia, among them the Redsea Cultural Foundation (RCF), which specialises in Somali literature. With a significant presence both within Somalia and in the Somali diaspora, RCF is instrumental in promoting the Somali

language and culture. Sagaljet Digital Printing Company, established in 2007 and one of the largest printing companies in Somalia, supports the publishing sector in its production of books. However, according to the Somali Publishers Association, there are at least 8 publishers who are members of the Association: Beder Printing House, Puntland United Publishers, Sacba Publishing Company, Darwiish Stationery Company, Bile Printing Press, Garaad Publishing Company, Saahid Publishing Limited, and Hargeisa Printing House.⁴ Along with RCF, it is therefore estimated that there are at least 9 active publishers in Somalia.

The national authority's survey response indicates that 50 printed titles were published in 2023, down from 80 and from 75 in 2022 and 2021 respectively. They also estimate that 5% of titles published in 2023 were written by women. In 2023, a high 92% of books were published in local or regional languages such as Somali, while 8% were published in official languages such as English or Arabic. The language mix in Somali publishing involves the use of Standard Somali, known as Maxaa Tiri, which encompasses other dialects such as Af-Maay, spoken widely in southern regions. Efforts to support indigenous language publishing remain limited. However, in 2023, the launch of the Elif Maay script in Baidoa marked a significant step toward linguistic inclusivity.⁵

Publications do not require prior authorization by a governmental entity. Publishers that are majority-owned by Somali nationals, for instance Bedar Printing and HEMA Books, own the market for books produced for public schools in Somalia. No ISBN agency exists in Somalia, and publishers make use of neighbouring countries' ISBN agencies.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Somalia lacks a formal distribution network for books.⁶ Most distribution is carried out on an ad-hoc basis, with publishers and retailers relying on informal methods to get books to readers. Educational materials are often distributed directly to schools through government or NGO channels.⁷ Online platforms, for example Sahanbooks Borama, are emerging, making access to books easier.

The national authority's survey response estimates that 25 physical bookstores were operating in Somalia in 2023 and that they remain the main distribution and sales channel for books, followed by book fairs and literary festivals. HEMA Books, founded in 2009, is one of the largest bookstores – with educational books as its speciality.

Sahanbooks, launched in 2020, specialises in trade books. It has established branches in major towns, as well as the online bookstore mentioned above. Other retailers, which offer both general and educational books, include Irshaad Bookshop, established in 2013, the National Book Centre, founded in 2016, and Bidhaan Books.

Somali Books Online (SBO), established in 2023, is an e-learning platform targeting both local and diaspora audiences and providing free access to Somali literature and educational content online. The Somali diaspora plays a crucial role in funding and supporting the book and publishing sector. Apart from funding the publication of books, the diaspora communities also contribute by purchasing books and supporting Somali authors and publishers through international networks. The most notable example is Sahanbooks, founded by Ismail Ahmed, also the founder of WorldRemit.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 280 persons employed by the sector in 2023.

According to the national authority response to the survey, there are around five book fairs or literary festivals operating in Somalia. The Hargeysa International Book Fair, founded in 2008 by the RCF, is an annual event that showcases the work of local and international authors, publishers and cultural organizations. Somali authors, publishers and bookshops also leverage social media and online platforms to promote their books, targeting especially the Somali diaspora and young readers. Other book fairs and festivals include the Mogadishu International Book Fair (launched in 2015) and Garowe International Book Fair (launched in 2016).

Literary awards also play a role in promoting Somali literature. The Somali Poetry Awards, organized by the Home of Somali Poetry with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), includes the categories 'Somali

Poet of the Year', 'Somali Youth Poet of the Year' and the 'UNDP Somali Woman Poet of the Year'. In 2021, the first and last time the awards ran, all categories came with money awards of between US\$1,000 and US\$2,000. The Woman Poet of the Year Award was accompanied by a commission that entailed writing six poems in the course of a year. Additionally, the Somali Literature Awards, established in 2018, aim to honour achievements in poetry and storytelling.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

The national authority's survey response estimates that there were seven public libraries operating in 2023. The Hargeysa Cultural Centre Library, a public library established in 2014 as part of the Hargeysa Cultural Centre, offers books in Somali, Arabic, English, Italian, German, French and Swedish. The library also provides curriculum materials for schools, universities and colleges. According to the same source, printed books remain the preferred format in the country, taking into account that the digital format is not easily available.

A large part of the Somali population learned to read and write during the mass literacy campaigns of 1973 to 1975, after the implementation of a new language policy making Somali the only official language in Somalia. One million people among the urban population took part in the literacy campaign.⁸ Participation data for the rural population are not available. Anecdotal evidence, however, points to a higher number of rural than urban people participating. International non-governmental organisations such as the International Rescue Committee and Save the Children have funded literacy programmes in Somalia, which indirectly support the book and publishing industry by increasing demand for educational materials and books.

In more recent years, the Redsea Cultural Foundation, which started as a publishing company in the 1990s,

has been the most active promoter of a culture of reading and creative writing in Somali-speaking society, with a particular focus on youth. In 2011, the Foundation launched the Somaliland Moving Library, a weeklong tour around the country with a bus carrying books and representatives from nine regional readers' clubs. The aim of the moving library is to bring books to towns and cities, and to facilitate access to literature through local reading clubs.

The IFIYE Centre in Mogadishu, established in 2013, has been a pioneer in revitalizing Somali literary traditions through community-based reading programmes. It opened a public library in 2016 and launched literacy campaigns for children in camps for internally displaced persons, alongside creative writing contests like Tartan Sheeko, which encourages young Somalis to engage with storytelling and develop a habit of reading.⁹ In Puntland, World Vision has established reading clubs in 21 primary schools under its Humanitarian Programme Plan (HPP). These clubs provide reading materials and structured activities to support early-grade literacy, helping children strengthen their reading skills both in school and at home.¹⁰

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Data for Somalian imports and exports are largely unavailable, with the exception of those for trade between Kenya and Somalia. In 2023, Somalia imported printed books, newspapers and pictures from Kenya valued at US\$74,440.¹¹

According to the national authority's survey response, among the books imported into Somalia in 2023, 60% were from Egypt, 25% from Kenya, 10% from Turkey and 5% from the United Kingdom. Conversely, for countries to which Somalia exported that year, 40% went to Ethiopia, 30% to Djibouti, 25% to Kenya, 3% to Sweden and 2% to the United Kingdom. Exporting books is difficult owing to a lack of distribution networks and local printing facilities, forcing reliance on costly international partners.

TRAINING

While there are no higher education programmes, or technical or apprenticeship processes, dedicated to the book and publishing sector in Somalia, the Hargeisa Cultural Centre, in partnership with the Redsea Cultural Foundation, organizes workshops, training sessions and seminars aimed at building the capacity of Somali editors, publishers and writers. These initiatives often bring together experienced professionals from the diaspora and international publishing communities to share knowledge and best practices. Training programmes cover a range of topics including editorial practices, book design, translation and digital publishing. The Hargeisa International Book Fair, also organized by the Redsea Cultural Foundation, serves as a platform for these training activities.¹²

Beder Publishers also conduct yearly training for its authors. Between 2020 and 2023, the EU-financed Somalia Education Systems Strengthening Project (SESSP) trained hundreds of authors and textbook evaluators across Somalia.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Somali Publishers Association was formed after Somalia's turbulent history to support a nascent industry, advocate for the rights of Somali publishers, promote literacy, and collaborate with other agencies to protect the intellectual property rights of creators.

The Union of Somali National Authors (USNA) was formed in 2010. Its aims are to collect, archive and revive Somalian literature and literary works published around the world.

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SOUTH AFRICA



Population **63.2 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **90%**
(2021)



GDP per capita **US\$6,022**
(2023)



Urban population **69%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **167%**



Internet users (2021) **72%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **200**

Titles published **10,257**

Bookstores **300**

Public libraries **1,949**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 32,500 inhabitants

Jobs **17,000**

Sector revenue **US\$189.6 million**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first printing press arrived in South Africa in 1794. During this period, English and Afrikaans dominated publishing, while indigenous language publishing was limited to missionary endeavours. One such missionary publisher was Lovedale Press, established in 1823, with the goal of publishing the bible in isiXhosa.

From 1910, with the formation of the Union of South Africa and later the adoption of apartheid policies, book publishing became controlled by a single political narrative. From the 1960s, a genre of opposition and resistance publishing took shape, energizing publishers such as David Phillip, Ravan Press, Ad Donker and Skotaville, who supported the resistance movement. Resistance publishing nurtured black writers supported by a small, educated, black readership. Educational publishing was dominated largely by foreign publishers and local Afrikaans publishers, while trade publishing catered to an affluent white market.

The South African transition to a constitutional democracy in 1994 shaped South African writing, with many writers transitioning to broader social issues. The post-apartheid era has seen the consolidation of the ownership of publishing houses. Many small publishers were acquired by big, mostly foreign publishers, and almost all the resistance publishers were absorbed into the resulting conglomerates. The exception was David Phillip Publishers, now one of South Africa's longstanding black publishers.

Many successful writers have been part of the South African diaspora, some owing to exile and others owing to greater publishing or academic opportunities elsewhere.

Among the many well-known South African writers are Nadine Gordimer, who in 1991 was the first South African Nobel Laureate for Literature. JM Coetzee was the second South African to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature (in 2003)

and was also the first author to win the Booker Prize twice. Miriam Tlali was the first black woman to publish in English in South Africa.

South Africa has many notable, locally published writers whose works are translated and sold internationally. Among them are Deon Meyer, Lauren Beukes, Angela Makholwa and Gcina Mhlope.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) serves as the primary custodian of the cultural and creative industries (CCI) in South Africa. The DSAC is supported by provincial departments in all nine provinces and oversees four related agencies. These agencies include the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), established in 1918 and formalized in 1998, which serves as the repository and custodian of the nation's documentary heritage. The NLSA also enforces the Legal Deposit Act, No. 57 of 1997, and serves as the ISBN agency for the country.

Another key agency is the South African Library for the Blind (Blindlib), founded in 1919 and formalized under the South African Library for the Blind Act, No. 91 of 1998, which provides library and information services to visually impaired readers nationwide. The Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB), enacted in 1995, contributes to the development of indigenous languages, with the development of literature being one of its services.

The approval of school textbooks, known as learning and teaching support materials (LTSM), falls under the Department of Basic Education (DBE). Meanwhile, matters related to copyright and intellectual property in South Africa are managed by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC).

Several indirect laws contribute to the transformation of the publishing sector, including the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act, No. 53 of 2003, which aims to address economic inequalities created by apartheid.

This act promotes the preferential treatment of black individuals in terms of the criteria for government tenders, and has led to greater transformation in the educational publishing sector than in other sectors. Key components of the act include ownership, employment, skills development and enterprise development. Mandatory reporting on these components has resulted in increased black ownership across the book value chain.

In relation to copyright protection and piracy, the DTIC has been in a lengthy process of amending the Copyright Act 98 of 1978, resulting in the Copyright Amendment Bill (B13 of 2017). In October 2024, the President referred the Bill to the Constitutional Court as a result of certain provisions being deemed unconstitutional and mounting oppositional pressure from the CCI sector.¹ Despite its flaws, the Bill introduces a comprehensive framework for the collective management of copyright and related rights by including reprographic rights organisations (RROs).

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The CCI sector has recently gained significant attention from the government, particularly from the highest office. The Presidency has identified the sector as a key driver of economic growth, and this has led to the development of a Creative Industries Master Plan.² In November 2022, the South African Parliament approved this Master Plan, which includes a dedicated Publishing Action Plan aimed at fostering the growth of the book industry. DSAC has oversight of its implementation.

Moreover, the DSAC is in the process of finalizing the draft national book policy, originally drafted in 2005. This policy initiative includes the establishment of a South African Book and Publishing Development Council, as recommended in the 2017 White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, and is expected to be finalized by 2025. DSAC has a

dedicated directorate focused on books and publishing. In 2023, this directorate funded book publishing projects to the value of US\$867,000.³

The National Arts Council (NAC) acts as a funding body that includes literature as one of its supported disciplines.

The Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998, requires employers to contribute 1% of their payroll toward a skills development levy. These funds are managed by Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), which represent various sectors of the South African economy. The book and publishing industry falls under the Fibre, Processing and Manufacturing SETA (FP&M SETA). The FP&M SETA, in partnership with the Publishers' Association of South Africa, has funded internships and bursaries, and sector-specific interventions such as editing in the indigenous languages and the support of small, independent publishers. Critical and scarce skills identified between the SETA and the industry in support of local content development include digital publishing, and editing and proofreading, particularly in the indigenous languages.

The sector has been hard hit by a 2019 policy change by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, Act 56 of 1999, which had direct and possibly unintended consequences for academic publishing in South Africa. This change is related to how funding for tertiary students is administered. Previously, funds for academic textbooks were set aside, ensuring that students could spend allocated amounts on prescribed books only. However, the NSFAS now disburses funds directly to students in cash. Industry estimates indicate that, as a result, the proportion of students purchasing academic books has dropped from 50% to 20%.⁴ This 30% loss in revenue is believed to be closely linked to increased piracy, as students still require textbooks but may be turning to illegal copies to access them.

PUBLISHING

The National Library of South Africa is the agency responsible for delivering ISBNs.

While the national authority's survey response indicates that 100 publishers were operating in South Africa in 2023, research reveals the presence of 150 to 200 publishers. The market is, however, dominated by 15 publishers, who collectively control more than 80% of the market share.⁵ The national authority's survey response reports that the sector's contribution to the country's overall economy totals US\$192 million. However, according to the Publishers Association of South Africa, in 2022/23, US\$189.6 million was generated in revenue,⁶ contributing 0,04% to South Africa's GDP of US\$450 billion.⁷ The sector has recovered to pre-pandemic levels after declining to US\$184 million in 2020, down from US\$328 million in 2019.⁸ Over the period of 2022/23, the National Library issued 13,749 ISBNs; and 10,257 non-serial publications (books) were deposited there.⁹

Top South African publishers remain either foreign-owned or are part of the Naspers conglomerate.¹⁰ One of the Naspers imprints is also the biggest agent for international books and holds the lion's share in trade publishing. South African trade publishing, therefore, remains heavily invested in importing international titles.

The country has a strong local academic publishing presence, with the second-oldest publishing house in South Africa, Juta and Company (1853), providing academic content, comprehensive legal and regulatory text, and business books, across the continent.¹¹

In terms of language, English and Afrikaans continue to dominate South African publishing, as confirmed by the national authority's survey response, while indigenous language publishing is driven primarily by LTSM requirements. These requirements fluctuate yearly based on the DBE's focus on specific languages.



Publishing in English accounted for 80%, and publishing in Afrikaans for 10%, of total revenue in 2022/23. Publishing in IsiZulu, the most widely spoken indigenous language in South Africa, represented only 3% of total publishing output.¹²

In 2022, the DSAC launched an Indigenous Languages Publishing Hub in collaboration with the Academic and Non-Fiction Authors' Association of South Africa (ANFASA), which has already published 22 books with at least two titles in each of the official

languages.¹³ The programme, with an annual budget of US\$271,000, involves 20 publishers (13 male and 7 female). According to the national authority's survey response, 98% of the DSAC Publishing Hub's financial support goes to books written in the official indigenous languages and 2% towards those written in English and Afrikaans. Some of the books are also converted into Braille.

The national authority's survey response reports 1,700 employees in the sector. However, the sector

more likely employs approximately 2,500 people – 1,552 of them employed directly in publishing (as reported on by the Publishers Association of South Africa); and an estimated 948 employed in bookselling (this figure is based on an interview with a bookseller).^{14,15} The sector relies on a strong freelance community, but no data are available for this segment. According to the national authority, the industry employs 1,122 women.

One of South Africa's female-owned independent publishers, Modjaji Books, publishes women writers exclusively. Modjaji Books has an impressive list of 146 titles. In addition, it produces the African Small Publishers Catalogue, which features over 60 small and independent publishers from across the continent that are not owned by conglomerates.¹⁶

The development of structured international standards to ensure that books are available across countries and languages has become the focus of a number of projects in South Africa. For example, PASA has been leading a metadata project using the near-universal implementation of the ONIX and Thema standards for books. This locally driven initiative ensures that language and other regional biases are addressed at the global level. Puku Children's Literature Foundation (Puku), one of the organisations promoting reading in the indigenous languages, has started Pukupedia, South Africa's first comprehensive database of children's literature. The initiative aims, among other things, to increase the discoverability of, and access to, indigenous language content. As a foundational step to Pukupedia, a metadata capturing portal is being developed to aggregate information on children's books written in all 11 official South African languages, including sign language.¹⁷

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Although the national authority's survey response estimated that there are 205 physical bookstores and 20 digital bookstores in South Africa, an accurate estimate is more likely to be 300 bookstores, based on the chain stores and independent bookstores around the country. The largest bookstore chains are Exclusive Books (41 stores), Bargain Books (90 stores) and Wordsworth Books (6 stores). Cum Books (50 stores) is the largest religious chain, while Van Schaik (60 stores) is the largest academic bookseller. In terms of online retailers, there are three main players. Takealot is the largest of them, and is similar to Amazon in its broad product range. Loot is another significant online book retailer. In 2024, Amazon entered the South African market as the third major online bookseller. While not dedicated online book retailers, the three platforms contribute significantly to online book sales. Additionally, most brick-and-mortar stores offer e-commerce, as do educational booksellers.

The availability of sales data is limited. Accurate data do, however, exist for trade books, from Nielsen BookScan. In 2023, 7.8 million trade books were sold. In terms of market composition, non-fiction books account for 38% of total market volume, (non-school) children's literature for around 30% and fiction for some 23%. Sales of children's literature and young adult (YA) books have been steadily increasing, with graphic novels showing particular growth.¹⁸ This increase has been driven largely, although not exclusively, by the Japanese manga genre. Because sales of graphic novels have consistently increased since 2021, bookstores have been curated to feature dedicated manga shelves. While most graphic novels are imported, South Africa boasts its own homegrown graphic novel series, Kwezi, published by the independent and black-owned New Africa Books.

South Africans prefer print books, with their sales making up 93% of the market compared with 7% for e-books. However, digital formats have seen substantial growth in the educational sector, with an 80% year-on-year increase in sales between 2022 and 2023. Educational textbook sales in digital formats rose from US\$2.3 million to US\$4.2 million,¹⁹ the latter number having been corroborated by the national authority's survey response. Print, however, still made up the large majority of public purchases of school books. According to the national authority, the value of these purchases was US\$99 million.

The Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA) reports that in 2023 total revenue from the sale of printed books was US\$141 million and from the sale of digital books was US\$8.8 million. (Figures for 2022 were US\$160.5 million and US\$14.7 million for print and digital respectively; and figures for 2021 were US\$121.3 million and US\$5.1 million respectively.) In terms of revenue broken down by category, PASA figures record that trade books grew year on year, education dipped after a high in 2022, and scientific, technical and professional (STP) books remained largely constant. In 2023, the numbers were US\$57.5 million for trade, US\$120.1 million for educational, and US\$11.9 million for STP books. (In 2022, revenue was US\$57.5 million for trade, US\$111.84 million for educational, and US\$12.9 million for STP books. In 2021, it was US\$41.1 million for trade, US\$110 million for educational, and US\$11.7 million for STP books.)²⁰

South Africa's publishing sector is categorised into three main subsectors: educational, trade and academic publishing (which includes technical, vocational and scholarly publishing). Educational publishing dominates the market, generating US\$120.1 million or 63% of total industry revenue. Trade publishing accounts for US\$57.5 million or 31%, while academic publishing comes in at US\$11.9 million or 6%.

Trade publishing grew by 29% in 2022 and maintained this figure in 2023.²¹ This growth was driven largely by BookTok, a book-focused community on the TikTok platform, which has fuelled demand for both new releases and backlist titles.

Booksite Afrika is the largest warehousing, logistics and distribution network in South Africa. The country also has an abundance of logistics companies, providing courier services to the most rural parts of the country. Snapplify is a leading educational digital provider offering tailored digital solutions to schools, educators and students. The platform provides access to digital learning resources, including e-books, educational tools and interactive content. Snapplify also serves as a data aggregator, distributor and marketplace for publishers who list their books and e-content on the platform.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

South Africa has conducted three national reading surveys so far, in 2006,²² 2016²³ and 2023.²⁴

The 2023 survey reveals that 17% of adults identify as committed readers, up from 14% in 2006 and 2016. This increase is likely the result of dedicated, national reading-promotion campaigns such as National Book Week and Nal'ibali.²⁵ However, the proportion of households without leisure books has also risen, increasing from 51% in 2006 to 58% in 2016, and to 63% in 2023. This trend may indicate declining disposable income or a shift towards other leisure activities. While 17% of adults use public libraries to read, only 8% borrow books, a slight improvement from 7% in 2016. Encouragingly, 52% of South Africans with children in their households report reading with them, up from 35% in the 2016 survey.

Several non-governmental organizations are active in promoting reading. These include Nal'ibali, FunDza, which offers a digital and mobile phone library, and Bookdash, which creates children's books for donations. Biblionef focuses on donating children's books in the indigenous languages and Puku promotes reading for children in all languages.

South Africa hosts some nine longstanding literary festivals. (The national authority's figure of 21 festivals may include more transient events.) Wordfees was established in 2000, and Time of the Writer in 2006. Both festivals focus largely on fiction. The Franschhoek Literary Festival was established in 2007 and is most popular for non-fiction. The largest of the festivals, it features local, international and Pan-African authors. On average, the festival sells 16,000 tickets and books worth approximately US\$59,000 over the festival weekend. Since 2011, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) has funded the travel expenses of independent publishers to the Frankfurt Book Fair through a partnership with PASA. This initiative aims to introduce these publishers to international markets and familiarize them with the process of selling rights.

Literary journals and prizes have become increasingly important in promoting the literary sector. The Johannesburg Review of Books is a bi-monthly publication that reviews contemporary South African, Pan-African and international titles, with a strong emphasis on Pan-African literature. The Sunday Times Literary Awards stand as the most prestigious, honouring excellence in both fiction and non-fiction in English. The South African Literary Awards celebrate literary achievements across all official South African languages, featuring over 14 award categories. It is funded by DSAC. The University of Johannesburg Prize (UJ Literary Prize) recognizes fiction writing in English, with a special award for debut authors. The National Institute for Humanities and Social

Sciences (NIHSS) Awards commend work in non-fiction, poetry, fiction, and digital work within the humanities and social sciences. Additionally, the Sol Plaatje European Union Poetry Award celebrates South African poetry across all languages. Prize money for these awards ranges from approximately US\$542 to US\$5,400.

According to the national authority, a network of 1,949 public libraries supports access to books beyond the commercial channels. The country's library infrastructure comprises academic libraries, school libraries, special collection or private libraries, and public libraries, with the majority concentrated in urban areas. A conditional grant of US\$54 million per year by DSAC has facilitated the expansion of public libraries into rural areas.²⁶ South Africa has an impressive library per capita rate of one (1) public library per 30,990 inhabitants.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

No reliable data are available on the importation and exportation of books specifically. According to the United Nations Convention for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), South Africa's export of printed books, newspapers and pictures amounted to US\$66 million for 2022,²⁷ while imports for the same year were in the amount of US\$98 million.²⁸ These figures appear disproportionately high in relation to the total revenue for books discussed earlier. They do, however, accurately reflect the trade deficit that exists in books.

The national authority's survey response indicates that the value of book exports in 2023 was US\$44.6 million, whereas imports totalled US\$12.9 million. However, these numbers are disputable since South Africa imports more than it exports, a situation corroborated by UNCTAD's figures above. The survey also cites the top countries for imports as the United Kingdom (45%), the United States of America (25%), the European Union (10%), China (10%) and India (5%).

The national authority did not supply equivalent data for exports in its response.

TRAINING

Publishing and related studies are offered by six tertiary institutions. The University of Pretoria is the only university offering a dedicated publishing degree at the bachelor level, while the University of the Witwatersrand offers publishing studies and creative writing at the postgraduate level. Creative writing and literary studies are offered by the universities of South Africa, Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Industry training includes training for authors, publishers, booksellers and reading-promotion practitioners. Publishers offer on-the-job training to recently qualified graduates, and also training on metadata standards for small and emerging publishers. Booksellers have created online training courses covering topics such as bookshop design, book buying and marketing, and specialised training in children's books. The Professional Editors' Guild offers regular training in a range of editing-related topics. In 2020 it introduced an annual accreditation test that awards successful candidates the apex membership level of Accredited Text Editor (in English), ensuring ongoing standard-setting and excellence. According to the national authority's survey response, the Department of Higher Education has technical apprenticeship programmes in printing and publishing, which are run by the relevant Sector Education Training Authority (SETA).

As stated earlier, the book publishing sector falls under the Fibre, Processing & Manufacturing SETA, alongside the paper and printing industries. Being classified with its upstream industries is advantageous, as it enables participation in value chain initiatives supported by the SETA. (Other cultural industries form part of the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport SETA.)

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

South Africa's book publishing subsectors are all represented by industry associations that facilitate engagement with government and ensure representation on related government committees. Additionally, the country has well-established upstream industries.

The Academic and Non-Fiction Authors' Association of South Africa (ANFASA) is a longstanding membership-driven organization that has achieved tangible results for authors. Notable achievements include the ANFASA-PASA Agreement on Contract Terms (APACT), which outlines minimum contract standards between authors and publishers. ANFASA also offers a grant scheme for authors, providing selected authors with writing grants of US\$1,300.

The Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA) has been collecting industry statistics since 2003 and is currently implementing standardized metadata in line with international standards.²⁹ PASA also prioritizes strategies for small and independent publishers and offers ongoing training, including internships and programmes for new and emerging publishers. PASA and the South African Booksellers' Association (SABA) work closely together, celebrating industry excellence through a range of publisher and bookseller awards. SABA, in turn, has developed a comprehensive 11-module online bookseller training programme widely used by its members and the broader publishing sector.

Completing the consumer side of the value chain, the library sector has focused on professionalizing the industry. Represented by the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA), it has established the LIASA Professional Development Centre. The association also promotes reading through events such as the annual SA Library Week, a dedicated cultural event aimed at showcasing library services and encouraging reading.

The book publishing sector is supported by a large freelance workforce, including editors and designers. Editors are organized through the Professional Editors Guild, which aims to promote professional standards in editing, proofreading and related services. The sector has also been served by the Dramatic, Artistic and Literary Rights Organisation (DALRO), a privately owned collective management organization that administers various rights on behalf of authors, creators and publishers, and has been operating in the country since 1967.

The various industry members operate well together, having worked on the collective aim of increasing access to books as members of the South African Book Development Council, which included 11 subsector representative bodies. According to the national authority, a National Book Policy Advisory Task Team, comprising members with sector expertise, has been formed by DSAC.

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SOUTH SUDAN



Population **11.5 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **35%**
(2018)



GDP per capita **US\$1,080**
(2015)



Urban population **21%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **30%**



Internet users (2022) **12%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **4**

Titles published **15**

Bookstores **10**

Public libraries **18**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 638,000 inhabitants

Jobs **150**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Before South Sudan gained independence in 2011, there was only one South Sudanese newspaper, the *Juba Monitor*, which was printed by the Northern Printing Company. At the time, the only other presses in the South were small presses owned by the Catholic Church. They were used primarily for printing gospel-related and liturgical books.

A few Southern Sudanese authors were active during this period. Notable names include Lam Akol, Francis Deng, Aduak Nyaba, James Alala, Daniel Thabo, Taban Lo Liyong, Arthur Gabriel and Stella Gaitano. These writers, who published primarily in English and Arabic, contributed to fields such as creative writing, politics, the social sciences and the humanities.

After South Sudan gained independence, the national government installed a national printing machine inside the main compound of the South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation in Juba.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Director General of Library at the Ministry of Culture, Museums and National Heritage (MCMNH) oversees libraries, museums and archives, and is responsible for issues related to copyright and intellectual property.

Other institutions also contributing to this area are the Ministry of General Education (MGE), which is responsible for developing, reviewing and overseeing the printing of books for basic education; and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, which manages university-level books and also supports research through two dedicated councils.

Currently, there is no specific legislation regulating the book and publishing sector. However, the national authority's survey response indicates that the country has drafted a Copyright Bill, which is under review by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

There are no frameworks or policies guaranteeing tax exemptions or preferential tax treatment for the book and publishing sector in South Sudan. There are also no clauses clarifying tax rates for printed materials, or for the publication of important government documents such as school curricula produced by the MGE.

The National Policy for Culture and Heritage Management¹ was recently endorsed and approved for implementation in May 2024. It addresses newspapers, books, the educational process, and the transmission of values from one generation to the next. Chapter 3 of the policy, which covers the publishing industry, stresses the industry's role in promoting the country's literary traditions and cultural identity, and its contribution to schools and to research in higher education.

The Director General of Library at the MCMNH is about to launch the Ministry's first project to promote reading among primary and secondary school students in Juba. The project, titled *My Book is my Friend*, aims to enhance students' reading capabilities and expand their knowledge. According to the Director General of Library, the project represents a strategic investment in the development of the country's future leaders.²

PUBLISHING

There are four publishing houses operating in South Sudan, three of which are privately owned – Rafiki, Willows House and Nile Scribes – and one public entity, the National Printing Press. The country's first privately owned publishing house, Rafiki, was established in 2012. In addition to publishing books, Rafiki has organized book-signing and launch events between 2013 and 2024.

Willows House, another private publisher, was founded in 2020. Between 2020-2025, Willows House has printed a total of 300 titles.³ It held its first book fair that same year, at Green Rokon in Juba. Willows House also organizes book signings and launches, and participates in international and continental book fairs.



Library at the University of Juba © UNESCO / Becu Morita

Furthermore, it promotes reading among children through its Willows House Kids initiative, which is a series of educational books for children in Arabic, English and French. In 2021, it launched an audio book project called Assumma Book. Both Rafiki and Willows House have also opened small libraries and bookshops in Juba.

Nile Scribes House was established as the third private publishing house in 2024, with a vision of supporting and empowering women in the sector.⁴ In November 2024, Nile Scribes House launched a new project titled 'Got a story to tell? We'd love to hear it.', aimed at supporting local authors and women in particular.⁵

When Rafiki published and launched its first books in 2012, it faced challenges in selling them internationally because they lacked ISBNs. Rafiki collaborated with the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport (as it was known prior to its separation into two ministries) to secure the ability to assign ISBNs for the Republic of South Sudan.⁶

There are no data available, even from the national authority's response, on the number of titles published, the copies of books printed or the revenue from books sold. However, based on similar patterns in the region and on the number of publishers, upwards of 15 titles may be put forward as a rough estimate of the number of titles published in 2023. Common languages used in publications include English, Arabic and French; and a number of indigenous languages, Bari being one. The church helps to translate and publish bibles into various indigenous languages, including Ndogo, Dinka, Nuer, Azande and Cholo.

According to the Director of the MGE, the United Kingdom has provided funds to develop and publish schoolbooks for primary and secondary education, with UNICEF serving as the agent responsible for the printing process.⁷

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Bookshops in South Sudan are located mostly in major cities such as Juba, Wau, Aweil and Malakal. Juba alone hosts an estimated eight bookstores, most of which offer digital as well as printed books. However, there are no clear statistics on the number of physical and digital bookstores, the volume of books sold, the number of jobs created, or the revenues generated. The total number of bookstores in South Sudan overall has been estimated at 38 in 2023, but this number includes businesses selling only school- and university-related books from tables set up for that specific purpose.

Owing to distribution challenges, such as the location of printing facilities and transportation issues, book prices in South Sudan can be very high.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 150 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

Publishing houses in South Sudan leverage international book fairs, including the Sharjah International Book Fair, the Riyadh International Book Fair, the Livre Paris Book Fair and the Forum International du Livre Arabe.⁸ These events serve them as platforms for promoting, distributing and selling their publications regionally and internationally.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

There are an estimated 32 libraries operating in South Sudan, a majority of them based in major cities. Some are in public universities, including six libraries, both physical and digital, at the University of Juba alone.⁹ Another 18 libraries are owned by private centres and hubs, and are thus open to the general public. Maintaining digital libraries is particularly costly since the required stable power and internet connectivity are not always available.

Youth and cultural centres, such as Scenius Hub, have initiated national programmes, including reading sessions. Korbandi Salon in Juba is another active centre where youths gather to read poems and stories, followed by discussions, to improve their reading skills. The Korbandi Salon is also one of the most active forums for promoting books through television channels, thereby making literature accessible to audiences who cannot access libraries.

The University of Juba supports literary development by organizing book launches to which it invites its professors and academic staff, and a variety of non-academic authors.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

According to the national authority's survey response, South Sudan imports books primarily from Sudan, Egypt, Kenya and Uganda. Consultation with the Dean of Library at the University of Juba indicates that most reference books in universities are imported. The university library houses over three million books, imported primarily from Europe. According to the same source, while Arabic books are often imported or exported to cater to Arabic speakers, English books dominate imports and exports.

TRAINING

The School of Community Studies and Rural Development at the University of Juba offers a BA in Library Management.¹⁰ Additionally, the Ministry of Culture has considered a strategic plan to work with the ministries of Education, Higher Education and Justice in order to offer specialised courses in digital archiving, libraries, and other areas relevant to the book sector.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The South Sudanese Writers Association brings together authors in South Sudan and assists them in publishing their work.¹¹ However, this association does not play a role in developing or monitoring legal frameworks and measures for the sector. There is also a Young South Sudanese Writers Association, based in Ethiopia. It offers its members information-sharing and intellectual support, and lobbies for the development of creative environments for the young people of South Sudan.¹² In addition, publishers such as Willows House have taken steps to engage with international organizations, including the African Publishers Network (APNET) and the International Publishers Association (IPA), to lay the groundwork for the future sustainability of South Sudan's book industry.¹³

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SUDAN



Population **50 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **61%**
(2018)



GDP per capita **US\$2,183**
(2023)



Urban population **36%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **74%**



Internet users (2022) **29%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **25**

Titles published **10**

Bookstores **5**

Public libraries **50** (20218)

Public libraries per capita
1 per 1 million inhabitants

Jobs **300**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The origins of printing and publishing in Sudan date back to Turkish rule (1821–1885), when a stone printing press was established for official purposes.¹ The first official government publication was the *Sudan Gazette*, which first appeared in 1898.² This publication continues today under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice and features laws and government announcements.

The first bookseller in Sudan, the Sudan Book Shop, was founded in Khartoum in 1902 to serve the newly established Gordon College (later the University of Khartoum). The first public library appeared in 1907, followed by the Nahda Library in 1929. Other public libraries, such as those in Wad Madani and the Omdurman Cultural Library, were established by 1940.

Shortly after the Second World War, in 1946, the first teacher training institute in the country was established in Bakht-Elruda, White Nile Province. This marked the beginning of the government's focus on textbooks and academic publishing, when responsibility for textbook design was entrusted exclusively to the Ministry of Education.

Judge Ibrahim Siddiq is recognized as Sudan's first publisher. His first publication was *Al-Tabaqat*, which was printed in Cairo in 1929. Following Sudan's independence in 1956, the national library and the publishing sector grew. Sudanese literature flourished. Writers included Tayeb Salih, who gained global recognition for his best-known work, *Season of Migration to the North* (1966).

The Sudanese House of Books emerged as a private bookseller and publisher in 1966. In the public sector, a publishing press was established at the University of Khartoum in 1967, with UNESCO's assistance. It was tasked with academic and cultural publishing, and also became an official government entity for the legal deposit of Sudanese publications. In 1999, when the National Library of Sudan was

established, the University of Khartoum Library shifted its focus away from its role in national representation.

Since the 1980s, civil wars and economic decline have severely hampered the book and publishing industry. The war that began in the capital, Khartoum, in April 2023 has negatively affected the entire publishing sector, as over 95% of presses and publishing houses are located in Khartoum. It has also spread to other parts of the country. At the time of writing, ongoing conflicts continue to strain the sector. Digital publishing, however, is emerging despite infrastructural challenges.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Culture and Information is the primary government authority overseeing the book and publishing sector. The ministry creates policies and supervises the sector through state legislation. It is directly responsible for the National Library and for public libraries, and for the performance of the overall sector. The National Council for Press and Publications, established in 1993,³ oversees the licensing of newspapers and printing materials.⁴ In addition, the National Council for Copyright and Neighbouring Rights and the Literary and Artistic Works, established in 2013 through the Intellectual Property Laws Amendment Act, No. 28 of 2013 (revising the Copyright Act of 1996 and the Literary and Artistic Act of 2001), serves as a state advisory body for copyright, related rights and literary and artistic works, and is responsible for setting policies and devising programmes that promote innovation, creativity and publication in the field of culture.

The Ministry of General Education is responsible for developing school curricula, and for printing and distributing schoolbooks. Legislation in 1996 made provision for the National Centre for Curricula and Educational Research,⁵ which is responsible for overseeing educational and academic publishing.

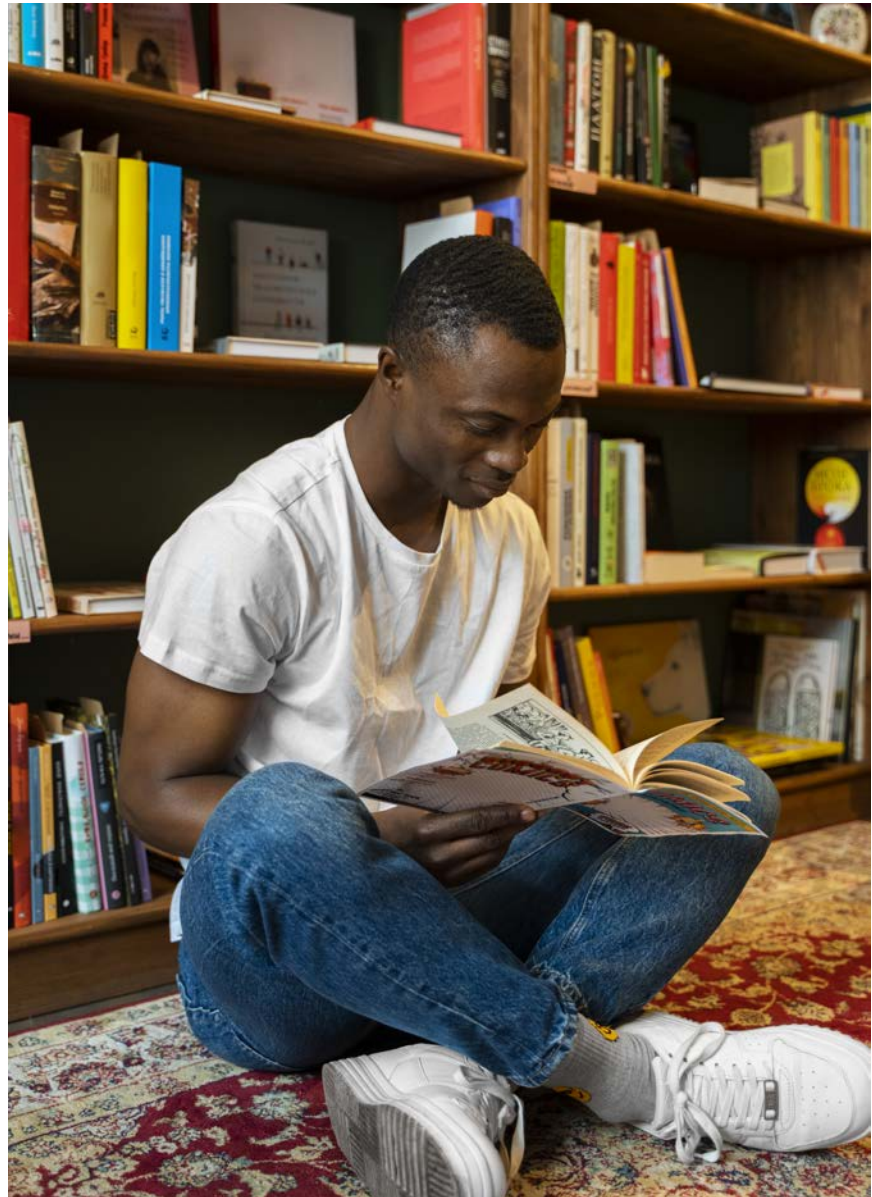
An independent body ruled by a council chaired by the Minister of Education, it is responsible for the design of textbook printing specification (to ensure standardization) and the endorsement of printing press templates, and also for the scheduling of book delivery dates to different states through specified channels.

The National Library of Sudan manages the legal deposit of publications under the National Library Act of 1999 and the Deposit Act of 1966, which granted the library the responsibility for ISBN and ISSN allocation. The National Archives handle government documents, ensuring the preservation and accessibility of national heritage. According to the National Archives Act of 1982, the National Records Office of Sudan is responsible for managing government documents. It ensures the preservation of records and provides appropriate access to government collections.⁶

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

In terms of the National Council for Auspices to Culture and Arts Act of 1999, the state is tasked with supporting the publication of artistic works by distinguished writers.⁷ According to professional stakeholders, however, the publishing market in Sudan is shrinking. This decline is attributed to insufficient sales and to the impact of rising government taxes on paper, ink and other materials, both of which have resulted in smaller profits for publishers and reduced royalties for authors.⁸ The International Publishers Association's 2023 report also states that the Sudanese government does not sponsor centralized book tenders for school books.⁹

Although the government has historically supported the Ministry of Education's publishing house, no robust policies have been developed to support educational books, particularly during the economic crises of the past decade. This highlights the significant challenges facing educational publishing in Sudan. The sole exception is the National Currency Press, which has been responsible for printing a limited number of high-quality textbooks.¹⁰



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Under the Higher Education Reorganization Act of 1990 and its related statutes, universities are authorized to manage their own educational publishing. As a result, several universities have established their own printing presses.¹¹ Additionally, the Centre for Publishing and Information of the National Centre for Research is tasked with supporting the documentation of national research and the publication of scientific works.¹²

PUBLISHING

The National Library allocates ISBN/ISSN numbers and oversees their use by publishers and authors. In 2020, Sudan had 80 publishers (individuals and organizations) and 30 printing presses, predominantly located in Khartoum.¹³ However, the publication *International Publishing Data 2023* (a joint publication of the International Publishers Association (IPA) and Nielsen BookData), states that there were only 25 publishing houses operating in Sudan by 2022.¹⁴ Currently, there are no official statistics available on the number of books printed in the country.

Key players include the Sudanese House of Books, a major private publisher specialising in various fields including science, literature and children's books; Rafik Publishers, known for academic and literary works by Sudanese authors; and Azza House for Publication and Distribution, which focuses on literature, history and the social sciences. Dar al-Ma'arif contributes religious and educational materials. Other publishers for educational materials and schoolbooks include Dar Almusawarat Publishing, Dar Alreem Publishing, Dar Alkhortoum Publishing and Global International Publishing.¹⁵ Academic institutions such as the University of Khartoum Press, and organizations such as the Sudanese Organisation for Research and Development and the Beja Research Institute, support scholarly and cultural publications.

The University of Khartoum Publishing House, established in 1967, marked the beginning of modern publishing in Sudan. Modelled after university presses worldwide, it has become an important university publishing house in the Arab and African regions, focusing on scientific and cultural publishing in Arabic and English. Other universities followed the example set by the University of Khartoum in designing and establishing their own presses and publishing units. Examples include the Omdurman Islamic University Press and Publishing House, and the Muhammad Omar Bashir Sudanese Studies Center at Ahlia University in Omdurman.

Independent publishers, including Dar al-Sudan and the digitally-focused Elhoush Publishing, promote niche topics and broader accessibility.

In addition, Sudanese publishers collaborate with regional bodies such as the Arab Publishers Association and with international non-governmental organisations to fund and distribute works on heritage, conflict and resilience. Digital publishing sites, such as sudaneseonline.com and sudanile.com, have become popular, promoting the broader accessibility of published materials.

Other noteworthy aspects of publishing in Sudan are that partnerships between the Ministry of Education and domestic and foreign publishers has facilitated the production of school books; the Sudanese Currency Printing Press has played a key role in improving the quality of printing in the country; and the Higher Authority for Arabization, established in the 1990s, has published Arabized academic books and dictionaries in various scientific fields.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Although there were no available data on the number of bookstores in 2023, the IPA's *International Publishing Data 2023* names five bookstores in Sudan: Dar Azza Publishing, Sudan Library, Academy Book Store, Marawi Bookshop and The Nile Bookshop (which also operates online).¹⁶ There are no reliable data available on book sales for Sudan.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data, account for approximately 300 jobs generated by the sector in 2023.

The Khartoum International Book Fair was a key annual event for local and regional publishers, until, in 2020, it ceased operations as a result of insufficient funds. Stakeholders, including university librarians, have been forced to visit other fairs, such as the Cairo International Book Fair, to source their books. The Tayeb Salih Prize for Creative Writing also operates in Sudan. It was established in 2010 and awarded annually for the categories of novel, short story and critical studies. The last prizes were awarded in 2023.¹⁷

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

Accurate statistics on public libraries in Sudan are limited. According to the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), however, there were 55 public libraries operating in Sudan in 2018.¹⁸ Khartoum hosts most of

them, with the different states having at least one library each. Prominent libraries include the Omdurman Central Library and the Abdul Karim Mirghani Centre. School libraries are supported by initiatives such as the Al-Faisal Cultural Center, which has supported 135 school libraries across Sudan.¹⁹ The Center is open to the public and was established as part of Faisal Islamic Bank's social responsibility scheme.

The Ministry of Culture and Information instituted the National Centre for Children's Art, located in Khartoum North. The Centre managed to publish selected tales for children, even though the scale of their distribution was limited. In general, no trusted official statistics exist on the number of children's books distributed, or on the average number of hours children spend reading. There is nevertheless an ongoing initiative by the Sudanese Association for Libraries and Information, in partnership with public bodies and the private sector, to provide books for, and otherwise support, school libraries. The Sudan Library Association has convened training sessions for librarians in the management of school libraries.

According to the national authority's survey response, the Ministry of Culture and the Educational Publishing Department at the Ministry of Education have carried out surveys on reading habits, one of which showed a significant weakness in the basics of reading and writing among many elementary pupils.²⁰

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that, for the year 2018, the total revenue from imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to approximately US\$1,234,478. Export revenue in 2016 amounted US\$152,995.²¹ The top countries for the import of books into Sudan are Egypt, at 50%; and Morocco, at 20%, of total imports.²² Sudan is also recorded as the top destination for exports from Egypt's printing and paper sector.²³

TRAINING

Courses in library and information science have been taught in Sudan's universities since the 1970s. Courses on publishing and printing at Sudanese universities are part of the curriculum for bachelor's degrees in the field. The Omdurman College for Journalism and Printing remains the only specialised institution to offer a bachelor's degree in printing as well as journalism.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Sudan Publishers Union holds membership in the Council for Press and Publications at the Ministry of Culture. In addition, several cultural societies actively advocate for publishing. Notable among these are the Sudan Writers Union, the Union of Sudan Writers and Artists, and the Song Poets Union, all of which play significant roles in discussions about publishing issues and have spearheaded initiatives to protect the interests of their members.

The Sudan Association for Libraries and Information is devoted to supporting the librarian community and advancing the profession. The association has partnered with public and private entities to provide books and support to libraries, and has also organized training sessions on the management of school libraries for librarians.²⁴ Similarly, the Sudanese Association for Archiving Knowledge promotes archiving and digitization. This association is a signatory to the Budapest Open Access Initiative (2010) and a partner in King's College London's 'Sudan Memory' project, which aims to digitize and provide free online access to selected aspects of Sudanese culture.²⁵

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TOGO



Population **9.3 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **67%**
(2019)



GDP per capita **US\$986**
(2023)



Urban population **44%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **74%**



Internet users (2022) **38%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **20**

Titles published **80**

Bookstores **3**

Public libraries **67**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 138,800 inhabitants

Jobs **500**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

From the 1920s onwards, Catholic and Protestant missionaries produced religious and educational works in local languages such as Éwé and Kabyè. After independence in 1960, publishing houses such as NEA Togo, EDITOGO, Haho, Akpagnon and the National Institute of Education emerged to promote local production. Figures such as Félix Couchoro, David Ananou, Paul Akakpo Typamm and Paul Ahyi, left their mark on this period. New stakeholders such as *Éditions AGO*, *Graines de Pensées* and *Éditions Continents* have contributed to the sector's dynamism since 2000.

The International Book Fair of Lomé (*Foire Internationale du Livre de Lomé - FI2L*) is a major event for the book trade launched in 2011. Despite obstacles such as limited infrastructure and the high cost of production, authors such as Kangni Alem, Kossi Efoui, Sami Tchack and Théo Ananissoh continue to uphold the profile of Togolese literature.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism coordinates cultural policies, including those relating to books, with the support of the Department of Libraries and Literary Promotion, which oversees public libraries and supports local authors. The Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education and Handicrafts is responsible for educational books, while the Ministry of Higher Education and Research supports university publications and academic libraries. The National Library of Togo, located in Lomé, preserves the archives and provides public access to literary resources.

On a legislative level, copyright and intellectual property rights are governed by Law no. 91-12 of 10 June 1991, on the protection of copyright, folklore and related rights. Adopted in 2016, Law no. 2016-012 recognizes the professional status of artists and thus

strengthens their role in promoting intellectual and literary works. Law no. 2018-028 of 2018 on legal deposit, revised by Law no. 2020-002 adopted in 2020, requires the systematic deposit of works with authorized institutions, including digital works, in order to preserve and enhance Togolese cultural productions. The legal deposit service does not come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture, but under the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Development. In 2024, legal deposit was dematerialized and must be carried out primarily via an online platform.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

From a tax point of view, books, including school textbooks, are subject to general taxation, i.e. VAT at 18%, except for those in formats.¹

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education issues public calls to tender for the publishing of school books, a market held mainly by national publishing houses, according to the national authority's response to the survey. The response also states that the National Fund for Cultural Promotion (*Fonds National de Promotion Culturelle - FNPC*) helps to support the book and publishing sector through annual calls for projects.²

PUBLISHING

Togo does not have an ISBN agency. Publishers are generally registered with European agencies, in particular with the Francophone Agency for International Book Numbering (*Agence Francophone pour la Numérotation Internationale du Livre - AFNIL*).

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there were 20 active publishers in 2023, including *Éditions Graines de Pensées*, founded in 2013 and focused on literature, *Éditions Ago*, created in 2008 and specialising in comics, and *Éditions Continents*, set up in 2011.

The book sector in Togo is dominated by small businesses employing between 2 and 10 people. Royalties generally does not exceed 10% of the retail price.³

Documentary research estimates Togolese publishing output at around 80 titles published annually, with print runs fluctuating between 1,000 and 2,000 copies per book.⁴

Regarding publication languages, French, the official language, remains in the majority despite efforts to enhance indigenous and local languages such as Éwé, Kabiyé, Ifè, Tem and Moba.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Lomé is home to one of the oldest bookshops in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa, the famous *Librairie Bon Pasteur*, founded in 1906. The bookshop has several other outlets in Togo. Other more recent bookshops exist, but it is difficult to identify them. Only 3 physical bookshops are members of the International Association of Francophone Booksellers (*Association Internationale des Libraires Francophones – AILF*).⁵ The national authority's response to the survey indicates that direct sales remain the most widely used sales channel. In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 500 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

The first Youth Book Fair was held in Lomé in 2024. This event highlights the growing interest in children's literature, which complements general literature and comics, already well represented by the likes of *Éditions AGO*, *Graines de Pensées* and *Éditions Continents*. Likewise, a first African Youth Publishers Forum (*Forum des Éditeurs Jeunesse d'Afrique – FEJA*) was held to develop exchanges between publishing professionals in Lomé in March 2025.



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READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, Togo has 35 public libraries. In 2021, there were also 32 'associated' libraries, made up of private, voluntary and religious initiatives. Created in 2021, the National Centre for Reading and Cultural Activities (*Centre National de Lecture et d'Animation Culturelle – CENALAC*) will bring together all public reading structures under a single administrative umbrella, with the aim of pooling management bodies, increasing the involvement of local authorities and mobilizing resources for operations.⁶ The paper format still dominates publishing production and reading habits in Togo.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that in 2023, the total value of book sector imports – including printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials – amounted to US\$5,922,480.⁷

As far as exports are concerned, they totalled US\$16,350. According to the national authority's response to the survey, the main countries for book imports are France, Benin, Senegal, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire.

More specific research into imports of French books shows in fact that Togo ranks in the 7th place among the main importers of French books on the African continent.⁸

The main destinations for exportation are Ghana, Benin, Tunisia, Senegal and Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

TRAINING

There are no training programmes specifically dedicated to book-sector professions in Togo. The Togolese Association of Authors and Illustrators of Children's Books (*Association Togolaise des Auteurs et Illustrateurs de Livres pour Enfants – ATAILE*),⁹ hosted by the *Institut Français de Lomé*, is offering training sessions for illustrators.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Togolese Writers' Union (*Union des Écrivains Togolais* – UET) has established itself as a pillar of literary promotion in Togo. As well as actively defending the rights of writers and campaigning for legislation to encourage literary creation, it regularly organizes literary cafés to provide a place where authors, readers and publishers can exchange ideas. It also promotes Togolese writers by publishing anthologies and raising their visibility on the national and international scene. It supports young talent and established authors through writing workshops, seminars and conferences. The Togolese Writers' Association (*Association des Écrivains du Togo* – AET),¹⁰ officially founded in 2012, was born out of a desire to fill the void left by the demise of the Togolese Association of Literary People (*Association Togolaise des Gens de Lettres* – ATGL) and to create a structure dedicated to promoting literary and artistic activities in Togo. As for the Togolese Association of Children's Book Authors and Illustration (*Association Togolaise des Auteurs et des Illustrateurs de Livres pour Enfants* – ATAILE), it was founded in 2014¹¹ and is dedicated to promoting children's literature in Togo. It brings together writers and illustrators committed to creating books for young readers.

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TUNISIA



Population **12.2 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **85%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$3,978**
(2023)



Urban population **71%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **129%**



Internet users (2022) **74%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **356**

Titles published **3,000**

Bookstores **20**

Public libraries **487**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 25,000 inhabitants

Jobs **15,000**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The beginnings of publishing in Tunisia date back to the second half of the 19th century and are linked to the publication of the newspaper *Arrayd At-Tounsi* (the Tunisian pioneer), which later became *Arrayd Ar-Rasmi At-Tounsi* (the official Tunisian newspaper). The printing house (Monotype) that published the newspaper also published books, including *Aqwam Al-Massalik (Straight Paths)* by Khairuddin Pacha, as well as other books (mainly on history and theology).

At the beginning of the 20th century, and particularly between the two world wars, printing activity increased, but always with limited resources. Authors such as Mustapha Khraïef and Farid Ghazi sold 'vouchers' for their books before publishing them, unlike Zine Al-Abdine Snoussi, for example, who had his own newspaper and printing press.

After independence in 1956, the sector really began to emerge. This led to the creation of the Tunisian Publishing and Distribution Company (*Société Tunisienne de l'Édition et de la Distribution*) in 1956, which gave rise to two subsidiaries, the Tunisian Publishing House (*Maison Tunisienne de l'Édition*, 1966) and the Tunisian Distribution Society (*Société Tunisienne de Distribution*, 1964). The Arab Book House (Maison Arabe du Livre) was set up in partnership with Libya in 1974, as was the Graphic Arts, Publishing and Press Company (*Société des Arts Graphiques, de l'Édition et de la Presse*) in the same year.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The institution responsible for coordinating policies and measures in the book and publishing sector in Tunisia is the Ministry of Cultural Affairs through its General Directorate for Books, which includes the Directorate for Literature and the Directorate for Public Reading.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for schoolbooks through the National Pedagogical Centre (*Centre National*

Pédagogique – CNP). Educational books are subject to quality controls concerning their content and methods, carried out by experts and commissions specialising in education and subject didactics.

The body responsible for ensuring that copyright and intellectual property rights are respected is the Tunisian Organization for Copyright and Related Rights, which was set up in 1994 and reports to the Ministry of Culture.¹

The main legal provisions relating to the sector are Decree No. 79-749 of 21 August 1979, on state encouragement of literary and scientific production, Decree No. 79-748 of 21 August 1979 on the composition and operation of the National Publishing Council (*Conseil National de l'Édition*),² and Framework Law 75-32 of 28 August 1975, revised in 1988,³ which governs legal deposit.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The public policies and measures implemented include the awarding of prizes to writers and publishers as well as subsidies for the purchase of paper and of copies of newly published books in order to stimulate and encourage creative activity and publication. They also include public reading through a network of public libraries in all the regional delegations.

Every year, the Ministry of Culture organizes a call for tenders for library books, even though it has a limited budget. It also grants subsidies to publishers for purchasing paper and buys the publishing rights to foreign writers via the Tunisian Translation Institute.

There is also a fixed price policy for schoolbooks, to make them affordable for all income.

According to the national authority's response to the survey, books are exempt from all taxes. The government is granting tax exemptions on imports of products used in the book industry,⁴ as well as preferential stand rental rates for national exhibitors at the Tunis International Book Fair.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is also involved in the book and publishing sector through the Academic Publication Centre (*Centre des Publications Universitaires - CPU*), a national body with publisher status that is fairly active in the field. The same ministry is also involved in the book and publishing sector through research units and laboratories, which also have budget lines for this activity. Higher education establishments (local education authorities called rectorats, faculties, schools and institutes of higher education) also have publishing units or services.

Research centres and institutes such as the Centre for Economic and Social Studies and Research (*Centre d'Études et de Recherches Économiques et Sociales - CERES*), the Centre for Research, Study, Documentation and Information on Women (*Centre de Recherche, d'Étude, de Documentation et d'Information sur la Femme - CREDIF*), the Tunisian National Institute of Agronomy (*Institut National d'Agronomie de Tunis - INAT*), the Kairouan Centre for Islamic Studies (*Centre des Études Islamiques de Kairouan - CEIK*) and the Arid Zones Institute (*Institut des Zones Arides - IZA*) are also involved in book publishing.

The Tunisian Academy of Science, Literature and the Arts (*Académie Tunisienne des Sciences, des Lettres et des Arts*) is another active centre in this field, and also enjoys publisher status.

According to the national authority's response to the survey, the State guarantees access to audiobooks for the visually impaired in public libraries. Finally, through the Ministry for the Family and Women, the State also subsidises the CREDIF to support its research and publications on women, such as an Encyclopaedia on Tunisian Women published in 2021 and 2023, and the ZouBeida Béchi⁵ literary prize to promote Tunisian women writers and researchers.

PUBLISHING

The National Library of Tunisia officially acts as the ISBN agency. As such, it grants publishing authorization and takes care of legal deposit.

Documentary research indicates there were around 356 publishers in Tunisia in 2023.⁶ State publishers include research centres (CERES, CREDIF, CEIK, etc.), research institutes (such as the Tunisian Institute of Modern History – *Institut de l'Histoire Moderne de la Tunisie*, the National Heritage Institute – *Institut National du Patrimoine*, etc.) and university publication centres (the Tunisian Writers Union – *Union des Écrivains Tunisiens* and the Tunisian Academy of Science, Literature and the Arts (Beit Al Hikma)), which also have publisher status.

According to the National Library, over the last three years, the total number of titles published was 3,833 (including 3,109 in Arabic and 724 in French) in 2021, 3,143 (including 2,441 in Arabic and 702 in French) in 2022 and 3,000 (including 2,263 in Arabic and 737 in French) in 2023.

Documentary research indicates that the number of copies of printed books varies between 500 and 3,000 for general literature, 500 and 1,000 for essays and research, and 5,000 for children's books.⁷

Schoolbooks enjoy a special status as long as they are written by specialists in education and pedagogy, under the responsibility of subject inspectors and the Directorate General for Curricula and Continuing Education, and are published almost exclusively by the National Pedagogical Centre (*Centre National Pédagogique*). In rare cases, international publishers have been commissioned to edit them.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

There are currently just five book distributors in Tunisia, including the Tunisian Distribution Company. The national authority's response to the survey indicates that bookshops are the most common distribution and sales channel, closely followed by book fairs and literary festivals and retail sales, although no data on sales and revenue generated are available. Retail outlets are also very important, especially for school and extracurricular books. Digital bookshops are still in their infancy. Although the national authority's response to the survey indicates the existence of 50 physical bookshops, other sources count barely twenty; and only one digital publisher and librarian (Kawater)⁸ compared with 10 mentioned in the national authority's response to the survey.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and additional research, put the number of people employed by the sector at around 15,000 in 2023.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, Tunisia has 487 public libraries, or around four per 100,000 inhabitants. The Department of Public Reading periodically carries out partial surveys on the reality of reading habits, especially among young people and in non-school environments.

Documentary research into reading habits in Tunisia indicates that 25% of those questioned read a book in 2023, compared to 18% in 2021 and 12% in 2015. The same source reports that 17% of those surveyed bought a book in 2023, compared to 14% in 2021 and 9% in 2015.⁹

The Public Reading Department regularly organizes the 'National Reading Championship' to promote reading, particularly among young people.¹⁰



The Tunis International Book Fair (*Foire Internationale du Livre de Tunis*) is a major annual event created in 1973. There are also local and regional book fairs that help to promote reading at a local level.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research has shown that in 2023 the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar printed materials, was characterised mainly by imports. Total import value amounted to US\$10,842,600. Exports totalled

US\$1,368,000.¹¹ In addition, the national authority survey response indicates that 50% of imports come from France, followed by Egypt (25%), Lebanon (20%) and other African countries (5%). As far as exports are concerned, the same source cites Egypt and Senegal as the leading export destinations, with 25% each, followed by Morocco and Algeria (20% each) and the Gulf States (10%).

Among the book importers is the company SILA, which specialises in importing scientific and medical books. In particular, it supplies faculties of science and medicine.

The Al Kitab, Claire Fontaine, Elizade and Ceres libraries mainly import general literature books. As far as exports are concerned, noteworthy efforts are being made by companies such as Al-Yamama, which exports in large quantities, especially to Senegal, and specialises in children's books. The publishing house Nirvana exports to France and Senegal.

TRAINING

According to the national authority's response to the survey, there are vocational and apprenticeship training courses in the book trades at some regional vocational training centres, for example in Ariana, where there is a training course in printing and publishing.

The Tunisian Industry, Commerce and Crafts Union (*Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat* – UTICA) also has a centre specialising in the book trade. In addition, more than five years ago, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs created the International Center for the Digital Cultural Economy (*Centre International de l'Économie Culturelle Numérique* – CITECN).¹² This establishment offers training for start-ups in the field and acts as a business incubator. In particular, it deals with audiobooks and digital publishing, although its scope and resources remain limited in relation to the needs and aspirations of young people.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The main representative and professional organizations in the book and publishing sector in Tunisia are the Tunisian Writers Union (*Union des Écrivains Tunisiens*) and the Tunisian Editors Union (*Union des Éditeurs Tunisiens*). According to the national authority's survey response, there is also an Importers and Distributors Union (*Syndicat des Importateurs et Distributeurs du Livre*). These organizations are invited to take part in preparatory meetings for literary fairs and exhibitions.

They are represented on the organizing committees as well as on committees related to books and publishing, such as the Paper Purchasing Support Committee and the Purchasing Committee.¹³

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UGANDA



Population **48.7 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **81%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$1,002**
(2023)



Urban population **27%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **70%**



Internet users (2021) **10%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **34**

Titles published **1,523** (2022)

Bookstores **352**

Public libraries **198**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 246,000 inhabitants

Jobs **30,352**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Following Ugandan independence in 1962, the Government Printer became a state corporation under the Office of the President, responsible for providing printing and publishing services to government ministries and departments. In 1992, the Uganda Printing and Publishing Corporation was enacted into law, expanding the Government Printer's mandate to include the publishing of books, booklets and other publications promoting Uganda's culture, welfare and unity, and also the printing of textbooks, exercise books and other general reading materials.

In 1965, the East African Institute of Social and Cultural Affairs (EAISCA) co-founded the East African Publishing House (EAPH), making it the first independent publishing firm to be wholly owned and managed in East Africa. In 1966, EAPH published Okot p'Bitek's pioneering work, *Song of Lawino*, a narrative poem written in Acholi. P'Bitek's poetry and essays remain highly influential in African literature. Another prominent Ugandan writer, Barbara Kimenyi, is known particularly for her children's books, the *Moses* series, which became beloved across East Africa. She was one of the few African writers in the mid-20th century who focused on children's literature, contributing to the development of literacy in Uganda and the wider region. The series was published by the multinational, Oxford University Press.

After the National Resistance Movement took power in 1986, efforts to rebuild the nation prioritized the production of local content, particularly in education, thereby fuelling demand for Ugandan textbooks and literature. Furthermore, economic liberalization opened the publishing sector to private players, such as Fountain Publishers (founded in 1988), that specialize in educational textbooks and children's literature. By increasing access to education, the introduction of universal primary education in Uganda in 1997 further increased the demand for textbooks.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) is responsible for developing policies related to the production and distribution of textbooks, including their evaluation and approval. The National Library of Uganda (NLU) is responsible for promoting reading and literacy, and for providing access to books throughout the country. The UNLS is also the national ISBN agency, responsible for issuing publishers with ISBNs and managing and maintaining ISBN registers. The Uganda Registration Services Bureau oversees the registration and enforcement of copyright, trademarks and intellectual property rights. This encompasses issuing licenses and combating piracy.

Uganda's book and publishing industry is regulated by a legal and regulatory framework designed to protect intellectual property rights, promote local literature and ensure ethical standards in publishing activities. The Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act of 2006 is the foundation of copyright protection in Uganda, providing comprehensive rights for authors, publishers and the creators of literary works. Though primarily focused on telecommunications, the Uganda Communications Act of 2013 also governs digital publishing by setting regulations for electronic content, thereby ensuring compliance with national standards for online publications.

The National Curriculum Development Centre (Amendment) Act of 2021 created the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), which is tasked with overseeing the production of curriculum-related materials by publishers for use by schools and colleges, and with evaluating these materials.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The Uganda government's introduction of a transparent competitive tendering process in 2000 resulted in a reduction in the unit costs of primary textbooks by 58%, from US\$3.67 per copy in 1998 to US\$1.53 per copy in 2002.¹ The Early

Childhood Development Policy (2016) provides for improved access to equitable, quality, inclusive and sustainable early childhood care education services for children by – among other measures – implementing a strategy for developing learning materials and other inputs in under-resourced communities.² The Gender in Education Policy (2009) has provided strategies for incorporating gender in the reviewing of teacher's guides and textbooks for primary and secondary schools. It also provides guidelines for conducting gender sensitization and training for writers, evaluators and moderators of instructional materials at the primary and secondary levels.³

Uganda does not have specific tax exemptions or reduced rates for trade books and publishing materials, although, according to the national authority's survey response, printing inputs may be exempted on a case-by-case basis. The standard 18% VAT rate applies to printed books. However, according to the national authority's survey response, educational materials such as school textbooks are zero-rated for VAT.

There are currently no significant financial incentives or government-backed funding mechanisms specifically for the book publishing sector. Nevertheless, the government – through the MoES – purchases textbooks and educational materials from publishers for public schools. The government conducts tenders to purchase approved textbooks as part of its national curriculum development.

PUBLISHING

Uganda's publishing industry is a developing sector driven largely by educational publishing and government policies supporting universal primary education. The Global Publishing Industry Report for 2022, published by the World Intellectual Property Organisation, indicates that a total of 1,523 titles were deposited with the National Library of Uganda, the ISBN agency, that year. This number does not cover digital or other formats besides print.⁴ No data are available on the number of titles or copies

published per year, either by format (print, digital, etc.) or by category (trade, educational, etc.).

According to the national authority's survey response, there were 34 publishers operating in Uganda in 2023. The major ones include Fountain Publishers (described above), one of the most prominent publishing houses in Uganda; MK Publishers, which produces textbooks and has a significant presence in both Uganda and other East African countries; and Baroque Publishers, which specialises in educational publishing with a focus on the sciences, the humanities and the social sciences.

In recent years, the industry has seen a rise in digital publishing,⁵ spurred by increased internet penetration and mobile phone usage,⁶ which have opened new avenues for distribution and access to books. Digital reading is the second-most popular reading format in Uganda, with printed books being the most preferred.⁷ The e-book market in Uganda is projected to generate a revenue of US\$3.94 million by 2024, representing significant growth in the market. Revenues are expected to continue rising at an annual growth rate of 6.51% (the compounded annual growth rate for 2024-2027), reaching a projected market volume of US\$4.76 million by 2027.⁸

Book piracy is a significant problem in Uganda, costing publishers about US\$3 million annually,⁹ which undermines publishers' revenues, discourages investment in new titles and reduces the quality of educational materials. Unauthorized photocopying of textbooks is also common in schools and universities owing to high textbook prices and the limited availability of legitimate copies.¹⁰

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Most books are distributed through a mix of independent and small-scale distributors, bookshops, and publishers themselves. There is no central or highly developed nationwide distribution

network for books, which often results in inefficiencies, especially in rural areas where access to books is limited. The distribution infrastructure is characterised by high transport costs, limited reach beyond major urban areas, and logistical constraints. This affects the availability of books, especially outside Kampala, Uganda's capital.¹¹

Physical bookstores are the primary sales channel for books. The 352 bookstores in Uganda, according to the national authority, are concentrated mostly in urban centres. Prominent bookstores such as Uganda Bookshop (founded in 1927), Aristoc Booklex (1991), Mukono Bookshop (1997) and St. Paul's Bookshop (1964) have played an important role in the distribution of books in Uganda over the decades. These stores sell mostly educational materials (textbooks), religious books, and general works of fiction and non-fiction.

Uganda's online book distribution landscape features several e-commerce platforms that cater primarily to both the local and the East African markets. Notable online bookstores include Bitabo, God's Mercy Bookshop & Stationers (2013), Mahiri Books and Cemo Publishers. These stores do not specialize in specific categories; instead, they offer a diverse selection of educational materials, African literature, and trade books from local and international publishers. In addition to e-commerce platforms, local publishers such as Fountain Publishers and MK Publishers have also embraced online sales through their own e-commerce websites. Data on market share are not available.

According to the national authority, the total number of jobs in Uganda's book and publishing sector was 30,352 in 2023. Women made up 36% of the workforce, or 11,050 employees.

Uganda's literary landscape is enriched by several key festivals and events that play a central role in promoting local and African literature. The Writivism Festival, established in 2012, is one of Uganda's most prominent literary events, held annually in Kampala.

It is organised by the Centre for African Cultural Excellence (CACE) and focuses on promoting African literature, particularly by emerging writers. The event also includes the Writivism Short Story Prize, which is highly regarded in the African literary community.

Organized by the Uganda Publishers Association since 1993, the Kampala International Book Fair is an annual event that brings together publishers, authors, booksellers and readers. The fair typically features exhibitions from local and international publishers, book launches, and discussions on various topics related to publishing and literature. Babishai Niwe Poetry Festival, established in 2008, focuses on poetry in Uganda and across Africa. The event includes poetry readings, workshops and performances. The biennial Uganda International Writers Conference, which started in 2013, is hosted by the African Writers Trust. It brings together writers from Uganda, Africa and the diaspora. The conference includes workshops, panel discussions and networking opportunities for writers, publishers and literary professionals.

Uganda's literary scene is enriched by several prestigious awards that highlight the country's vibrant literary culture. The Writivism Literary Awards, organized by the CACE, support emerging African writers through competitions and mentorship. The Babishai Niwe Poetry Award, run by the Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation, celebrates African poetry and offers poets a platform for recognition.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

A 2023 study on the reading habits of students in the Tororo District concluded that the students read mainly to pass examinations; that textbooks were the information resources that were most read; and that the students had a major preference for print.¹² Uganda's high literacy rate of 84% among the youth population¹³ provides a growing market for both educational and general literature, and for digital reading among young people.



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According to the national authority's survey response, there were 198 public libraries in 2023. Documentary research revealed a total of 231 libraries in 2021, with 45 public libraries and 132 community libraries among them.¹⁴ Schools and universities, which are major consumers of books – especially textbooks – mostly have libraries. Most public and community libraries are located in major urban areas such as Kampala, Jinja and Gulu.

Several organizations and initiatives are dedicated to promoting reading habits and encouraging public reading across the country. The National Book Trust of Uganda, set up in 1997, plays a central role by organizing book events, reading competitions and other programmes that focus on enhancing literacy and fostering a culture of reading. Another key player is the Uganda National Library Services (UNLS), which is responsible for developing libraries and creating reading spaces in both urban and rural areas. The UNLS promotes public reading through campaigns and mobile libraries, extending the reach of books to underserved communities.

The Reading Association of Uganda, established in 1998, supports literacy by organizing book donation drives, teacher-training sessions and reading campaigns. They work closely with schools and communities to improve reading

skills and promote a reading culture. Additionally, the Uganda Community Libraries Association (UgCLA) supports community libraries across the country. These libraries offer free reading materials and host reading events, making it easier for people in rural areas to develop and sustain reading habits.

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

In 2023, Uganda's exports of printed books, brochures, leaflets and similar products totalled US\$213,245. The United States of America was the leading destination for these exports, accounting for 39% (US\$83,196) of the total. The next top destination was the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with US\$38,761, Kenya with US\$31,589, India with US\$20,968 and Rwanda with US\$12,688, among others.

On the import side, Uganda's total imports of printed books, brochures and similar products amounted to US\$17.4 million. India and the United Kingdom were the largest suppliers, accounting for 51% (US\$8.9 million) and 16% (US\$2.8 million) respectively. Other significant partners included Kenya with US\$1.7million, South Africa with US\$1.1million and the United States of America with US\$963,151.¹⁵

TRAINING

The Uganda Women Writers Association (FEMRITE) organizes regular writing workshops, training programmes and mentorship opportunities designed to enhance the skills of women writers in Uganda and East Africa. The African Writers Trust (AWT), which connects writers in the African diaspora with those on the continent, has facilitated workshops and capacity-building initiatives that indirectly support the publishing sector. AWT's programmes are often supported by diaspora funding and international grants, contributing to the growth of a literary output that feeds into the publishing industry. Founded by Ugandan author Jackee Budesta Batanda, SuccessSpark Brand promotes creative writing and publishing through workshops, masterclasses, mentorship programmes and other initiatives aimed at nurturing local literary talent.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Uganda Publishers Association (UPA), founded in 1997, is the trade association of publishers in Uganda. UPA organizes training activities that focus on various aspects of publishing and take place at workshops, seminars and conferences.

The Uganda Textbook, Academic and Non-Fiction Authors Association (UTANA) was formed in 2013 to enhance the profile, status and rights of academic and non-fiction authors in the country.

UTANA conducts training for its members on writing, the business of authorship, and copyright. The association has an investment arm that supports writers in enhancing their livelihoods. Known as the Writers-Authors Investment Club, it supports its members by making loans available, financing manuscript development and sponsoring participation in training events. This support is made possible through collaboration with the government, contributions from development partners, and membership fees and contributions.

The Uganda Community Libraries Association (UgCLA), registered as an NGO in 2007, serves as a network for community libraries across Uganda. With about 100 member libraries, more than 20 of which were established through UgCLA's initiatives, the organization plays a vital role in promoting literacy and access to information. UgCLA organizes conferences and workshops to support the professional development of librarians, secures and distributes grants from donors (many of whom are international), and facilitates volunteer placements in its member libraries, enhancing their operational capacity.

The Uganda Library and Information Association is the professional umbrella organization for library and information science professionals in Uganda. Established in 1972, it plays an active role in shaping policies related to library and information services in the country.

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UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA



Population **66.6 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **82%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$1,224**
(2023)



Urban population **37%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **92%**



Internet users (2022) **32%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector 2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **22**

Titles published **674**
(July 2023–June 2024)

Bookstores **90**

Public libraries **96**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 693,750 inhabitants

Jobs **3,300**

Sector revenue **US\$4 million**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Following independence in 1961, Tanzania Publishing House (TPH) was formed in 1966 with the aim of publishing all textbooks and supplementary books for use in primary schools. TPH was a joint venture between Macmillan Publishers and the National Development Council on behalf of the government of the United Republic of Tanzania. This was the result of a government law, the Education Act of 1962, to make Kiswahili the national language and the language of instruction in primary schools. All foreign publishers left Tanzania in 1967 except Oxford University Press, which was the publisher of English books and dictionaries.

After the break-up of the East African Community in 1977, the Tanzania branch formed Eastern Africa Publications Limited (EAPL). The Dar es Salaam University Press was started in 1982, with the aim of publishing books for higher education. In September 1987, publishers formed the Publishers Association of Tanzania (PATA) to act as a forum and to look after publishers' interests.

After PATA called for the liberalization and commercialization of the textbook procurement system, a new Textbook Policy privatized textbook procurement in 1991, leading to the return of some foreign publishers. Mobilization efforts by PATA and the Pilot Project for Publishing (PPP) also provided training in all aspects of textbook tendering, publishing and distribution for stakeholders in the book publishing chain. In this period, many new publishing companies were formed, such as Diamond Publishers, Readit Books Ltd., E&D Publishers, Mture Educational Publishers and Ruvu Publishers. PATA also conducted Book Week festivals, which included the yearly Dar es Salaam Book Fair between 1988 and 1999. In 2001, the Book Development Council (BAMVITA), an independent NGO with a membership representing all stakeholders in the book industry, was formed. It continued organizing national Book Week festivals until 2009.

Among major Tanzanian authors is Abdulrazak Gurnah, a Tanzanian-born British novelist and academic who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2021. Tololwa Marti Mollel, a Tanzanian-born author of 15 books, resides in Canada.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The National Kiswahili Council (BAKITA), which operates under the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Sports, is the coordinating body for the book publishing sector. BAKITA issues certifications for Kiswahili text used in books.

The Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) writes, publishes and distributes all textbooks. The Educational Materials Approval Committee (EMAC), which operates under the TIE, issues certification for books used in primary schools, secondary schools and teacher training centres, and is also responsible for the approval of alternative textbooks and supplementary books published by private-sector publishers. The Copyright Office of Tanzania (COSOTA) is responsible for copyright and intellectual property rights.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

The Tanzania Education Policy applies to the provision of textbooks and designates the government as being responsible for supplying all textbooks to schools. Following the policy's revision in 2023, the government also took over the responsibility of supplying supplementary books¹ to schools. Between 2014 and 2023, a number of foreign publishers left the country and some local publishers stopped operating as publishing was not viable without some income from school textbook production.

There are no tax exemptions for the local printing of books. However, imported educational books are exempt from VAT.²

The Tanzania Culture and Arts Fund (TCAF) was established in 1998, ended in 2013 and was revived in September 2020.



DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Physical bookstores are ranked by the national authority in its survey response as the most important sales channel for books. According to PATA, there are some 90 physical bookstores, with stationery sales as their main source of revenue.⁹ Many of them are situated in the 25 regional headquarters of mainland Tanzania. They often offer a delivery service for books sold using social media applications or the telephone. Direct sales using WhatsApp and Instagram are options for many local publishers and booksellers.

As for digital channels, there are several applications, for example Lantern, which is locally owned and serves as a platform for selling digital books. No data exist on the number of jobs or the revenue generated from bookstores and digital sales outlets.

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 3,300 persons employed in the sector in 2023. The Publishers Association of Tanzania's estimation of the sector's revenue is US\$4 million.¹⁰

Literary fairs and book festivals are irregular since the Book Week festivals ended in 2009. The latest book fairs, held in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma, were conducted in 2022. There are no data available for the revenue generated by these events.

Piracy is rampant and affects mostly dictionaries and literature networks used in secondary schools (Forms 1–4) and high schools (Forms 5–6). To curb piracy, PATA and COSOTA have planned to organize regular exercises in sensitization and enforcement.¹¹

It provides loans to authors, publishers, distributors and booksellers. There is an e-procurement system for the government's purchase of books, with publishers and distributors registering to be eligible for tendering.

Since 2001, the Language of Tanzania Project at the University of Dar es Salaam provides grants for publishing works in minority languages.³

PUBLISHING

ISBNs are provided by the National Bibliography Agency (NBA), which is a department in the Tanzania Library Services Board. It serves both the Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar. A system for the prior authorization of books is in the process of being developed. This process will also involve the distributors needed for the prior authorization of titles intended for import. According to the national authority's survey response, however, educational books must currently receive prior authorization by the Tanzania Institute of Education; and non-educational books by the National Library.

Documentary research indicates a total number of 22 publishers⁴ while the Publishers Association of Tanzania has 17 members on its roll.⁵ Six of them participate in alternative textbook publishing, while 11 others publish mainly children's books, autobiographies, and vanity books (books published with financing from the author).

Data obtained from the National Bibliography Agency⁶ shows that the number of print titles published in financial year 2023/24 was 674. There is no disaggregated data available by category. Of the 674 books published, 421 were in Kiswahili, 249 in English, 4 in local languages and 1 in French. Among the books published, 26 were written by female authors.

There are two categories of schoolbook according to EMAC: textbooks and supplementary books. Textbooks for use in all schools are published by the Tanzania Institute of Education. All other books are published by private sector publishers and are categorized as supplementary books. There are no international publishers present in the school market. From the budget speeches of the Minister for Regional Government⁷ and the Minister for Education,⁸ it is estimated that the value of public schoolbook purchases is around US\$41 million.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

There are 96 public libraries in mainland Tanzania, which are run by the Tanzania Library Service Board.^{12,13,14} Of these, 22 are regional libraries; 19 are district libraries that span the country; and two are ward libraries. In Zanzibar, six public libraries – one in each of the six regions of Unguja and Pemba – are run by the Zanzibar Libraries Services Board.

While there are no public policies or measures to promote reading, the Children's Book Project (CBP), currently known as the Children's Book Organization for Tanzania (CBO), was established in 1991 by the Canadian charitable organisation CODE (formerly known as the Canadian Organization for Development through Education), in response to the acute shortage of children's books, especially Kiswahili books, in the country. Two of the objectives of the CBP were to promote the accessibility of children's books through library development; and to foster a culture of reading beyond the classroom.

No major survey or report on reading habits has been conducted. According to the national authority's survey response, however, the preferred reading format among readers is physical books. No data exist on the average number of books read per capita.

There are occasional celebrations for World Book Day (23 April), organized by the Publishers Association of Tanzania (PATA), and for International Literacy Day (8 September), organized by the Tanzania Library Services Board (TLSB).

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research¹⁵ indicates that, for the year 2023, the total value of imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$13,719,670, with Portugal the top import country. Export value amounted to US\$46,950. Data from the Publishers Association of Tanzania indicate that the two main countries from which books are imported into Tanzania are India and the United Kingdom.¹⁶

TRAINING

Book editing, elements of book design and book marketing are offered as course options in fulfilment of the undergraduate degree in Kiswahili in the Kiswahili Language Programme at the University of Dar es Salaam. No training on technical, professional or specific skills such as digital publishing or marketing is offered formally, either in institutions of higher education or elsewhere.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Publishers Association of Tanzania (PATA) has been the main representative organization of book publishing professionals since 1987. In 2022, it was elected along with the Booksellers Association of Tanzania to be included in the Commissioner of Education's team to advise the Minister for Education. PATA has also been included in the drafting of some book approval manuals at the Tanzania Institute of Education. The Tanzania Book Writers Association (UWAVITA) was formed in 1974 and the Tanzania Academic and Non Fiction Writers Association (TANFWA) was established in 2021.

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ZAMBIA



Population **20.7 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **88%**
(2020)



GDP per capita **US\$1,331**
(2023)



Urban population **46%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **99%**



Internet users (2022) **31%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **21**

Titles published **40**

Bookstores **30**

Public libraries **48**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 431,250 inhabitants

Jobs **450**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Zambian book sector began in 1937, when the country was still known as Northern Rhodesia, with the formation of the quasi-governmental voluntary organisation the African Literature Committee, which oversaw the publication, among other works, of *Namu Siaya at the Mine* (1946) by Enoch Kaavu, the first indigenous Zambian to publish a novel.¹

The African Literature Committee was succeeded in 1962 by the Northern Rhodesia Publications Bureau (NRPB), which published works in English as well as in four local languages: Nyanja, Bemba, Tonga and Lozi. A few indigenous writers published outside the territory, particularly in England and South Africa.

With the attainment of independence in 1964, the NRPB was renamed the Zambia Publications Bureau. In 1966, however, this was replaced with the Kenneth Kaunda Foundation (KKF), which faced competition from multinational publishers such as Oxford University Press, Longman, Macmillan and Heinemann Educational Books. There were also various local publishing companies, such as Multimedia Zambia and the Fleetfoot Publishing Company.²

The pro-socialist economic policies of the post-independence government, which included the nationalisation of private companies, made it difficult for the multinationals to operate and they withdrew from Zambia. However, they returned after the change of government in 1991 ushered in policies that liberalised the book and publishing sector – as reflected in the theme of the 1992 Zambia National Book Fair, 'Publishing in a Liberalised Economy'.³ The new government also changed KKF's name to Zambia Educational Publishing House (ZEPH). While it continued to support ZEPH financially, it allowed competition in the publishing industry.⁴

Later, however, the Zambian economy began to flounder, creating an environment that was unfriendly to the publishing and book industry. The drive to fill the market with locally produced

books slowed down significantly as books became too expensive to produce and to buy. As a result, the domination of imported books on the market continued. Moreover, since the Ministry of Education and schools were the main buyers of educational books, publishing companies had to focus on educational titles rather than general ones (including fiction) in order to stay afloat.

The current situation remains largely the same, with the publishing companies depending mainly on producing books for the education sector. As a consequence, ever-increasing numbers of Zambian writers have resorted to self-publishing. This practice has spilled over into the realm of educational books.⁵

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Alongside attempts to establish the Book Development Council of Zambia,⁶ the Ministry of Education established the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), which plays a critical role in the approval of books meant for the education sector. These range from educational titles based on the various syllabi to works of fiction used as readers or literature texts in the schools.⁷ In addition, the ministry runs the Zambia Library Service. Initially inaugurated in 1962,⁸ the Service was created as part of a network aimed at making books more accessible to schools and the general public.

The National Arts Council of Zambia provides for the registration of all arts associations, including those from the book and publishing sector.⁹ Another critical institution is the National Archives. The National Archives of Zambia Act, Cap. 175 of 1995, provides for the preservation, custody, control and disposal of public archives, including public records.¹⁰ It has established a depository where all publications in Zambia, both printed and non-printed, can be stored, and is thus also a repository for books.¹¹

The Copyright and Performance Rights Act (No. 25 of 2010) provides for the protection of intellectual property, including that residing in books.¹²

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

In 2023, the Zambian government developed two critical policies aimed at developing the creative industries, namely the National Film Policy and the National Arts Policy. While the former endeavours to provide an enabling environment for writers of film scripts, who quite often also turn out to be writers of fiction, the latter is the overarching policy designed to develop and promote Zambia's creative and cultural industries.¹³

There are no preferential tax incentives for the book and publishing sector in Zambia, although there were efforts in the 1990s, especially by the Booksellers and Publishers Association, to lobby for tax exemptions on newsprint. It was envisaged that such tax incentives would lead to a reduction in both the cost of producing books and the cost of books themselves.¹⁴

The Zambian government does not offer financial incentives or funding to the book sector. The National Arts Council of Zambia does run an Arts Development Fund aimed at assisting artists in various disciplines, which includes training for writers and for book publishing. Regarding textbooks, the government also still funds ZEPH, whose board is accountable to the Ministry of Education to produce books for the education sector. The government's current policy on the procurement of books for schools marks a departure from previous practices. In the 1990s, government would purchase the books in bulk and then distribute them to schools. In the current decentralised system, it is up to publishers to sell books to schools, which now have the autonomy to decide which books to purchase.¹⁵

PUBLISHING

The Book Publishers Association of Zambia (BPAZ) plays the role of an ISBN agency. It handles pre- and post-publication authorisation and delivers ISBN numbers. According to the BPAZ, there are 21 book publishers in the country.¹⁶

The liberalisation of the publishing industry in 1991 saw the entry of a number of local companies on the publishing scene. This included companies such as Mwajionera Publishers, Gadsden Publishers (formerly known as Bookworld Publishers) and Catholic Bookshop, among others.

While no official data on the number of titles published could be collected, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 40 titles in 2023.

In terms of book format, most of the publications are printed books. While most of the books in Zambia, both educational and non-educational, are published in English, there are also some – especially educational titles – that are published in the seven officially recognised regional languages: Nyanja, Tonga, Lozi, Bemba, Lunda, Luvale and Kaonde.

The Zambian publishing industry focuses more on educational titles than non-educational ones because, once an educational title is selected for use in schools, the publisher is guaranteed payment.

Educational titles are generally published after being selected through a centralised tender system handled by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC). There are, however, instances where some publishers initiate their own publications and later submit them to the CDC for approval. These books generally end up as readers or as books complementary to those approved for use in schools.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

The Zambian book distribution network has remained largely stagnant. Nevertheless, Bookworld has continued to be a major player in the book retail business (its offshoot, Gadsden Publishers, is involved more in publishing than in book retail). Operating country-wide, ZEPH has the largest, most widespread network of shops. Most

book sales occur in physical bookstores, even though one may find a few books being sold in some stationery shops. Our estimate of the number of bookstores in the country in 2023, based on all available data and complementary research, is approximately 30.

Another avenue for selling books is the different festivals and book fairs in the country. An example has been the Zambia National Book Fair organized by BPAZ (now held erratically, especially after it was affected by COVID-19). Among other platforms for selling books is the Tilembe Literary Festival. The annual Zambia National Arts Festival has also become a popular means of marketing books since it was launched by the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts in 2022.¹⁷ In addition, in recent years, the University of Zambia has provided a platform for booksellers and publishers to market their products when it hosts the annual Students' Arts Festival (StarFest).¹⁸ In 2023, for instance, up to 20 different authors set up stands to sell books at the festival. Some publishing companies such as the ZEPH and Sotrane Publishers also set up stands.

The Zambia International Trade Fair (ZITF) and the Zambia Agricultural and Commercial Show (ZACS), held annually in Ndola and Lusaka respectively, are also destinations of choice for some booksellers and publishers. The ZITF is organised by the Zambia International Trade Fair Trust¹⁹ while ZACS is organised by the Agricultural and Commercial Cooperative Society.²⁰

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, amount to approximately 450 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

Despite the existence of laws protecting copyright and endeavours carried out by organizations such as the Zambia Reprographic Rights Society, piracy is still a major hindrance, especially in the educational sphere.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

While the national authority's survey response states that Zambia has 10 public libraries, research indicates the existence of 48 public libraries. Of these, 23 are main libraries and 25 are branches, found mainly in the major cities.²¹

Despite the high literacy rate in Zambia, documentary research indicates that the country has a poor reading culture. Besides historical reasons such as inadequate and poor-quality educational infrastructure, and the use of English in areas where local languages are prominent, there are several other reasons for this state of affairs: inadequate resources to purchase books;²² the disinterestedness of readers; failure by students to utilise school libraries; a non-conducive home environment; and the advent of technologies such as television and smartphones, which children prefer to reading books.²³

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that, for the year 2023, the total value from imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$10,819,140, while the total value of exports amounted to only US\$7,511.²⁴

TRAINING

The Department of Arts, Languages and Literary Studies at the University of Zambia (UNZA) offers courses in creative writing skills, enabling graduates to evaluate literary works. The Department of Media and Communication Studies at UNZA trains editors but in the field of journalism rather than publishing. The Evelyn Hone College offers a course in printing but none in publishing.

Professional associations such as the ZEPH and the Booksellers and Publishers Association of Zambia used to offer in-house training to the editors it employed, most of them graduates of the UNZA.²⁵



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PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

A number of professional bodies bring together professionals and stakeholders in the book and publishing sector in Zambia. The Library and Information Association of Zambia provides a common platform for all institutions and people working in libraries, archives, information centres and other information services in Zambia.²⁶

A longstanding NGO founded to serve the needs of publishing professionals in the country was the Booksellers and Publishers Association of Zambia, the aims of which were to encourage the development of the book industry in Zambia and to promote the consumption of books by the general public through book fairs and exhibitions.²⁷

The organisation was also established to run training courses for publishers and booksellers, liaise with relevant government departments and generally support the interests of the book industry during the government's process of policy-making. By 2010, the booksellers decided to form a separate association, called the Booksellers Association of Zambia (BAZ), to cater more specifically for the interests of booksellers. The Book Publishers Association of Zambia (BPAZ) continues to perform most of the original organisation's roles.

Another important player is the Zambia Reprographic Rights Society (ZARRSO), a relatively new non-profit organisation for authors, creators and publishers of literary and artistic works.

A non-governmental royalties collection society, its activities are regulated by the Office of the Registrar of Copyright under the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry. ZARRSO protects the economic and moral rights of authors and publishers, among other stakeholders. It ensures that sales from books benefit the authors and publishers by tracking sales and royalties.²⁸

The Zambia Women Writers Association, one of the affiliates of the National Arts Council of Zambia, is a key player in the sector as it caters for the needs of writers. Initially, the association was established to deal with the needs of women writers and all its members were women. Later, however, male writers were allowed to become members and even to serve in leadership positions. The association succeeded the Zambia National Writers Association, which assisted many young writers before its demise in the 1990s.

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ZIMBABWE



Population **16.3 million**
(2023)



Literacy rate (≥15 years old) **90%**
(2022)



GDP per capita **US\$2,156**
(2023)



Urban population **33%**
(2023)



Mobile phone
subscription (2022) **88%**



Internet users (2022) **33%**

Source: World Bank.



Book sector
2023 estimated data

Publishing houses **30**

Titles published **1,000**

Bookstores **25**

Public libraries **17**

Public libraries per capita
1 per 958,800 inhabitants

Jobs **4,250**

This mapping was carried out on the basis of documentary research and data collected during a consultation with government representatives and interviews with various stakeholders.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Zimbabwean literature has been shaped both by a long history of oral tradition and by colonialism. Western literature had a strong influence on early Zimbabwean literature written in protest against colonial rule. Solomon Mutsaers' 1956 novel, *Feso*, was the inaugural Shona novel, symbolizing a shift from oral tradition to written literature. It was published amid controversy, as it criticized the colonial regime. Among Zimbabwe's first publishing houses was Mambo Press, established in 1956 as a Catholic mission press. Mambo Press later expanded to include Mambo Bookshops and Moto Magazine.¹

In 1953, the Literature Bureau of Rhodesia was established as a government-funded agency that promoted indigenous languages through subsidized publications. While the Bureau played a significant role in developing indigenous literature, including works by Mutsaers, it also faced criticism for shaping narratives that aligned with colonial views and censoring works critical of the colonial status quo. The Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argued that the Bureau was created to curb the publishing of liberation, anti-white literature.² After independence in 1980 and a change in name, the Bureau continued to function as a fully funded government department that included professionals from the book and publishing sector, such as editors and proofreaders. Despite its closure in 1999, it left a significant impact on the publishing industry by professionalizing and subsidizing book publishing.

Tsitsi Dangarembga, Petina Gappah and NoViolet Bulawayo are among the Zimbabwean writers who have gained international recognition.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MPSE) governs policy for educational books and publications. The approval of textbooks is the responsibility of Curriculum Development

and Technical Services (CDTS), housed within the Ministry.

Libraries are overseen by various governance structures, including the MPSE and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development. The National Library and Documentation Service (NLDS), which performs the functions of the national library in preserving cultural heritage, is operated by the MPSE. Local government municipalities and city councils oversee libraries such as the Harare City Library and the Bulawayo City Library, individual libraries and those in the private sector.

Legislation governing the book and publishing sector in Zimbabwe is covered by several Acts. The Printed Publications Act (Chapter 25:14) provides for the printing, publication and preservation of books, newspapers, periodicals and other printed publications published in Zimbabwe. The Act includes policies on book publications in Zimbabwe, via Section 4: 'Particulars to be set out in books printed or published in Zimbabwe'; and via Section 5: 'Delivery of books published in Zimbabwe to certain libraries'. Section 4 requires that books printed or published in Zimbabwe include an imprint that clearly sets out the name and address of the printer, the publisher and the year of publication. Section 5 provides for time frames and processes for the delivery of books published in Zimbabwe to the Director of National Archives, the Director of the NLDS and the authority that controls the Public Library, Bulawayo.

The Censorship and Entertainments Control Act (Chapter 10:04) regulates publications via Part IV of the Act, which provides for the 'prohibition of importation, production and dissemination of undesirable publications, pictures, statues and records'.

Copyright is protected under the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act (Chapter 26:5), and the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Regulations, 2006. The Act protects copyright for the life of the author and fifty years after their death.

Legal frameworks for libraries include the National Library and Documentation Service (NLDS) Act, No. 11 of 1985, which provides for the establishment of the NLDS and a council to advise on the administration of the Documentation Service. The Service promotes the enjoyment of educational, scientific, cultural, recreational and sporting publications in Zimbabwe. It facilitates high library standards, provides documentation and interlibrary loan services, trains librarians and offers the free lending of publications to the public for reading and research.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND MEASURES

There are no known tax exemptions, reduced rates or preferential tax arrangements for the book and publishing sector in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Customs and Excise Tariff Handbook imposes a 5% flat rate import duty on the private importation of books.³

According to the national authority's survey response, the government provides no funding for the book and publishing sector and there is no government policy for the purchase of books, including that of school textbooks.

The Zimbabwe Library Association (ZimLA), which promotes professional development and standards among library professionals and advocates for library policies, has been collaborating with the government to establish a national library policy and legislative framework since 2017. The proposed policy aims to promote literacy, strengthen library resources and offer basic services, develop library networks, provide professional personnel, foster public-private partnerships, support the local publishing industry and preserve cultural heritage.

According to interviews with stakeholders, the late author and arts educator Stephen Chifunyise, worked with several civil society organizations to initiate processes towards the development of a book policy.⁴ The professional networks below have been included in the crafting of broad policies for the cultural and creative industries in Zimbabwe.



© Courtesy of Literature Festival Harare Trust (LitFest Harare)

PUBLISHING

While no official number of publishers is available, consultations with stakeholders revealed some thirty book publishers operating in 2023.

The National Archives of Zimbabwe receive a copy of every book published in Zimbabwe. ISBNs are issued by the Archives for a fee and processing is fast. According to the national authority's survey response, estimates by the Archives indicate that some 850 books in print format and some 150 books in digital format were published in 2023. (The corresponding estimates for 2022 are 720 printed books and 60 digital books, while about 600 printed books and 25 digital books were published in 2021.) Of the books published in 2023, 70% came under the category of 'education'. The most common language used in published books is English, followed by Shona, Ndebele, Ndau and Korekore. Information on the number of units

printed and the revenue generated by category and format (including schoolbooks) is not available.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has observed an increased informality within the book and publishing sector, which makes it challenging to collect reliable statistics.⁵ Bookstores have largely vanished, apart from a few such as the Inov8 Bookshop in Harare. According to a government representative, the collapse of bookstores means that it is challenging to gather statistics, as the marketing of books is undertaken by individuals.⁶

Self-publishing as a new model of publishing is also characterized by informality, and by the use of freelance editors, proofreaders, designers and printers. Catalyst organizations such as Ngano Hub, established in 2017, are working to create demand for professional publishing services; and to facilitate digital marketing and access to books.

According to interviews with industry stakeholders,^{7,8,9} in the last five years the majority of books have been self-published since this is cheaper and more convenient for writers. Some of the more traditional publishers have scaled down their operations, while Zimbabwe-linked diasporic publishers such as Diaspora Publishers (UK) and Carnelian Heart Publishing Ltd (UK) tend to concentrate on fiction and serve as bridges in accessing international markets.

Homegrown technological platforms for the distribution of digital books, such as the Akello Library, are not widely used.

DISTRIBUTION, SALES AND PROMOTION CHANNELS

Currently, there is no known formal book distribution network in Zimbabwe.¹⁰ The Booksellers Association of Zimbabwe was formed to facilitate the selling of books in the country. However, according to an association representative, it is no longer active. School textbooks are sold mostly by bookstores, booksellers, vendors and other retailers. Retailers such as First Pack (a store providing textbooks, stationery and ICT supplies) sell books as only a part of their portfolio (i.e. in addition to other products). In some cases, authors sell their books directly to readers at strategic events or by using social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

In terms of distribution channels for books, the national authority's response in the survey rated physical bookstores as being of the highest importance. Online bookstores, retail outlets (department stores, stationery stores, supermarkets), book fairs or literary festivals and direct sales were all rated as relatively important. According to a Book Publishers Association representative, retail outlets and individual booksellers have largely replaced traditional bookshops, which have dwindled significantly since 2000 as a result of economic challenges in Zimbabwe.¹¹

The total number of physical and digital bookstores in Zimbabwe is not available.

However, consultations with main stakeholders suggest that there were about 25 physical bookstores operating in 2023.

Sales of digital books are facilitated through local platforms such as the Akello Library, which offers digital access to a wide range of up-to-date, carefully curated, academic and non-academic books.

It should be noted that multilateral cooperation organizations such as UNICEF procure textbooks and distribute these to students. In 2023, and 2024, UNICEF procured and distributed more than four million textbooks to over 2,000 rural primary, secondary and satellite schools. In 2023 a total of 2,914 schools with 968,514 learners (50% of them girls) benefited.¹² In 2024, the total number of schools benefiting was 2,800 schools.¹³

In terms of employment, our estimates, based on all available data and complementary research, account for approximately 4,250 persons employed in the sector in 2023.

The Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF) is an annual flagship book fair that has been running in Zimbabwe for over twenty years. In the 1990s, the ZIBF was Africa's largest book fair.¹⁴

Other key literary events include LitFest Harare, an annual festival that celebrates literature and the spoken word and the Gweru International Book Fair (GIBF), launched in 2016. The Harare Open Festival was launched in 2022 to provide a safe space for authors, readers, publishers and organizations to share their thoughts and creativity in a supportive environment, without fear of judgment. The copies of books sold, the jobs created and the revenues generated by the various events remain unknown.

Book publishing is included in the National Arts Merit Awards (NAMA), conferred by the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe in recognition of outstanding achievements in the field of arts and culture. The twentieth event was hosted in 2022.

Prizes were given for Outstanding Fiction Book, Outstanding First Creative Published Work, Outstanding Children's Book and Outstanding Poetry Book.

No official data are available on the issue of piracy. It was reported in *The Chronicle* in early 2024 that pirated copies of books were selling for less than half the cost of original books; and that pirated books were readily and conveniently available to consumers who wanted speedy delivery of their children's textbooks.¹⁵ An academic article revealed that, in some cases, an original book cost as much as ten times the cost of a pirated copy.¹⁶ Understandably, people will continue to buy pirated books at lower cost. The Reprographic Rights Organisation of Zimbabwe (RROZ) was launched in October 2024, in an effort to manage the reproduction and distribution of copyrighted works, ensure fair compensation for authors and publishers, and combat piracy.

READING HABITS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING

There is no known recent research on the reading habits of Zimbabweans. A representative of Ngano Hub commented that reading habits are evolving with the digital environment, which has revolutionized reading spaces by unlocking opportunities to read books online and to listen to audio books.¹⁷ However, while digital platforms have increased the number and types of readers' possible reading choices, the lack of regular internet connectivity works against these gains.

In its 2011 survey entitled 'Is Zimbabwe Reading?' and published in *Zimbabwe Reads*, the Zimbabwe Library Association noted that librarians, publishers and booksellers had reported minimal interest in books other than textbooks, set literary texts and books for exam preparation. In addition, in 2011, library registration and subscription fees remained a major deterrent to library usage by the general public, with students fulfilling study requirements being the main users of libraries.¹⁸

There are no recent data available on the number of public libraries in Zimbabwe, but an online source suggests that there were 76 public libraries in 1989.¹⁹ A rough estimate of public libraries operating in 2023 is 17.

Documentary research indicates that the library system in Zimbabwe is mostly centralized and is still developing.²⁰ The National Free Library of Zimbabwe was founded in 1943 in Bulawayo as a national lending library and centre for interlibrary loans.²¹ Other libraries include the Harare City Library, the Turner Memorial Library in Mutare, the Library of Parliament, the Bulawayo Public Library and libraries in more than a dozen smaller towns. The University of Zimbabwe Library is the largest in the country: its main library and its branches hold more than 500,000 volumes.²²

IMPORTS/EXPORTS

Documentary research indicates that, for the year 2023, the total value from imports in the book sector, encompassing printed books, brochures, leaflets, and similar printed materials, amounted to US\$3,883,470. Export value amounted to US\$21,930.²³ The top countries supplying these imports were South Africa and China.

The importation of educational materials and textbooks for schools is minimized through a localized curriculum. The MPSE and the CDTS do not have their own publishing houses for textbooks, but publish a list of approved textbooks for Zimbabwean primary and secondary schools that covers all subjects. Featured publishers are mostly local, and include College Press and Zimbabwe Publishing House.

TRAINING

The only institution to offer book and publishing training is the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Zimbabwe, which offers a B.Sc. Honours Degree in Publishing Media and Technology. It covers relevant publishing practices and keeps abreast

of technological developments that are transforming the industry globally. Numerous tertiary institutions offer courses in creative writing, which equip and inspire authors to write. Workshops to upskill writers are also offered by networks such as the Budding Writers Association of Zimbabwe, or organized by non-governmental organizations.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Professional associations in the book and publishing sector include, among others, the Ngano Content Creatives Hub, the Zimbabwe Academic and Non-Fiction Authors Association, the Zimbabwe African Languages Writers Association, the Zimbabwe Book Publishers Association, the Zimbabwe Booksellers Association, the Zimbabwe Poets Society, the Zimbabwe Women Writers and the Zimbabwe Writers Union. Key associations within the library space include ZimLA, which is a voluntary professional association of library records, archives and information professionals in Zimbabwe.

Some authors are members of ZimCopy, a collecting society in Zimbabwe that manages the economic rights of creators of literary and artistic works. It was founded in 1995, with writer and journalist associations as founding members.

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Annex

*Foundations
and historical
changes in
African literatures*

By Jeannette Ariane Ngabeu

Most early African literatures were essentially oral, and were expressed in a variety of local languages. This oral tradition, teeming with various genres including epics, tales, and proverbs, was a primary vehicle for transmitting knowledge, collective memories and cultural values. Today, this "oraliture" is fully recognized as a cultural expression and as a legitimate and valuable source of African history, carrying with it the richness of an intangible heritage that has long been neglected.

However, this dynamic was profoundly disrupted by the arrival of colonialism. African languages were marginalized and relegated to the domestic or folkloric sphere, while African oral traditions lost their status as central vectors of knowledge. At the same time, written literatures emerged, mainly in the languages of the colonizers. Influenced by European literary models, this early output often adopted a laudatory tone towards colonialism, as exemplified by Mapaté Diagne's *Les Trois Volontés de Malick* (1920) and Bakary Diallo's *Force Bonté* (1926), two Senegalese works that celebrate the colonial order to the detriment of indigenous cultures.

In this context, a decisive rift occurred with *Batouala* (1921) by the Martinican author René Maran. Awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1921, this literary work brings to life a lucid and critical inner voice, expressing an African conscience that challenges the dominant colonial representations of the time.

In this same vein, several generations of African writers have taken up the pen with a dual desire of denouncing and condemning colonial exploitation, on the one hand, while reclaiming an identity of their own and renewing the dignity of African peoples against forces of assimilation.

WRITING TO DENOUNCE AND RESIST

Many African writers have set out to **deconstruct colonial discourse** by affirming the richness of indigenous cultures and by revaluing African civilizations, which were often refuted or denigrated by colonial ideology. Thus, *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911) by Casely Hayford (Ghana) exemplifies the beginnings of a pan-African discourse by reasserting the worth of pre-colonial African civilizations and arguing for the intellectual regeneration of the continent. In the same vein, *Chaka* (1925) by Thomas Mofolo (Lesotho) revisits the figure of the Zulu king in order to place Africa in its own historical epic, freed from exogenous narratives. Continuing this enterprise of rehabilitation, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938) by Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya) is both an ethnographic project and a political plea in favour of Kikuyu culture, then threatened with erasure. A few years later, *Chants d'ombre* (1945) by Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal) celebrates the Black African world and African cultural values through lyrical poetry with a militant approach. This logic of cultural reaffirmation continues with *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), which skilfully conveys the complexity of Igbo society before colonial influence. Together, these voices form the first milestones of a literature of resistance and rebirth, where African subjectivity asserts itself and reflects on itself outside of imposed constraints.

A major pillar of African resistance literature is the denunciation of the systemic violence perpetuated by colonial regimes. Portuguese colonialism is vigorously criticized in *O Segredo da Morta* (1929) by Assis Júnior (Angola) and in *Terra Morta* (1949) by Castro Soromenho (Angola), with stories marked by the despoliation of land and the enslavement of populations.



I was neither European, nor Arab, nor Jewish, nor Muslim, nor a believer, nor a non-believer. I was a torn man.

Albert Memmi
The Salt Statue, 1953

Similarly, *Mhudi* (1930) by Solomon Plaatje (South Africa) traces the resistance of the Barolong against the Boers, highlighting the resilience of indigenous peoples and their ability to preserve cultural dignity in the face of oppression. As for *Mine Boy* (1946) by Peter Abrahams (South Africa), it exposes the violence and segregation of South African mines, symbols of institutionalized oppression. *Le Fils du pauvre* (1950) by Mouloud Feraoun (Algeria) reveals the humiliation and suffering experienced in colonial Algeria, while *L'Enfant noir* (1953) by Camara Laye (Guinea) explores the identity struggles associated with a colonial education disconnected from African realities. Finally, *Le Docker noir* (1956) by Sembène Ousmane (Senegal) highlights the racial exploitation and inhumanity faced by African workers in metropolitan France.

Some writers opt for a **subversive aesthetic**, using satire, humour or an offbeat narrative to deconstruct the moral underpinnings of colonialism. In his work, *Une Vie de boy* (1956), Ferdinand Oyono (Cameroon) utilizes biting irony to expose the contradictions of colonial power and mock its civilizing pretensions. *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (1956) by Mongo Beti (Cameroon) ridicules missionary discourse and denounces the religious alienation orchestrated by Christian institutions. As for Naguib Mahfouz (Egypt), in *The Sons of the Medina* (1959), he uses allegory to extend criticism to other forms of domination – religious, political or social – within a broader post-independence framework.

By undermining the codes of power through incisive narrative devices, these authors are taking part in an enterprise of demystification that is as effective as it is subversive.

Colonization also left deep imprints on individuals' inner lives, generating **crises of self-identity**. This is often embodied by characters plagued by conflicts of loyalty, torn between antagonistic cultural universes. In *La Statue de sel* (1953), Albert Memmi (Tunisia) highlights the existential dilemma of a colonized subject, torn between the opposing poles of tradition and modernity and of East and West, underlining the tensions inherent in an alienated subjectivity. For his part, Kateb Yacine (Algeria), through *Nedjma* (1956), deploys a fragmented writing style that embraces the ruptures of history while figuring Nedjma as an allegory of the battered nation. These works reveal the psychic effects of colonial oppression – conflicts of identity, fragmented consciousness, and internal dissociation – that inhabit the dominated individual.

Whether through the reaffirmation of African identities, social criticism, the satirizing of imperial rule or the remembrance of struggles, African literature is a multi-vocal space of resistance. They not only denounce the violence of the past, but also propose a vision of the world based on dignity, memory and reconstruction. They thus form the continent's political poetics, where writing becomes an act of resistance and literature becomes a historical and symbolic action.

BETWEEN CRITICISM OF POST-INDEPENDENCE REGIMES AND THE QUEST FOR A NEW AFRICA

The euphoria that accompanied the first years of African independence quickly gave way to disenchantment. Far from embodying the promise of renewal, the new states sunk into the logic of power inherited from colonialism. The younger generations, the pillars of these emerging nations, found themselves faced with the challenge of authoritarianism and corruption, inhibiting the achievement of popular aspirations. This disillusionment gave rise to a profoundly critical post-independence literature, where political denunciation, social satire, identity tensions and the quest for a reinvented African future all intertwine.

At the heart of this literary dynamic, the **denunciation of the excesses of post-independence regimes** has emerged as a central motif. Writers such as Ahmadou Kourouma (Côte d'Ivoire), in *Les Soleils des indépendances* (1968), exposes with sharp lucidity the failure of the political elites to fulfil the promises of emancipation carried by independence. Following this critique, the violence of those in power is portrayed with subversive force in *Le Devoir de violence* (1968) by Yambo Ouologuem (Mali), *La Vie et demie* (1979) by Sony Labou Tansi (Democratic Republic of Congo), and *A Play of Giants* (1984) by Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), which mock the absurdity and brutality of African dictatorships. Meanwhile, *Petals of Blood* (1977) by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya) reveals the ravages of neo-liberalism and the betrayals of the Kenyan elite, while *For Bread Alone* (1980) by Mohamed Choukri (Morocco) bears unvarnished witness to social marginalization in a post-independence Morocco plagued by poverty.



Sometimes we are captured at the end of our journey, defeated by our very own adventure. All the way along our path, we suddenly realize that we have not finished our metamorphosis, and that we have become something else. Sometimes the metamorphosis doesn't even end, it just settles us into a hybrid state and leaves us there. So, we hide, filled with shame.

Cheikh Hamidou Kane
L'aventure ambiguë, 1961

Each in their own way, the stories highlight the bitter continuity between the colonial order and post-independence systems, which, far from guaranteeing desired freedom, perpetuate the logic of domination and exclusion.

Alongside this explicit criticism of power, another literary vein adopts a satirical stance to ridicule the African elites who are accused of having betrayed the founding ideals of anti-colonial struggles. *Xala* (1973) by Sembène Ousmane (Senegal), castigates a Senegalese bourgeoisie that is power-hungry, corrupt and out of touch with the people. Biting irony also becomes a weapon of denunciation in *Perpétue et l'habitude du malheur* (1974) by Mongo Beti (Cameroon) and *Le Pleurer-rire* (1982) by Henri Lopes (Democratic Republic of Congo), which highlight the continuity between the practices of the former colonizers and those of the new rulers. Finally, through *Mayombe* (1980), Pepetela (Angola) highlights the ideological tensions and internal contradictions undermining the Angolan-armed struggle, revealing the limits of a revolutionary power in the making.



In Africa, when an old man dies, it's a library that burns.

Amadou Hampâté Bâ
The Strange Destiny of Wangrin, 1973

Satire is thus wielded as a formidable weapon for exposing the excesses, hypocrisies and renunciations of elites incapable of embodying a genuine project for social transformation.

Moreover, a significant proportion of post-independence literary production is concerned with probing the **fractures of identity and the inner dilemmas** of changing African societies. Caught between tradition and modernity, between African cultural heritage and Western influences, characters become the vectors of a profound existential rift. In this vein, *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1961), Cheikh Hamidou Kane (Senegal) highlights the tensions between African spirituality and Western rationalism through Samba Diallo, torn between loyalty to his roots and the lure of colonial education. Just as poignantly, Tayeb Salih (Sudan), in *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), depicts a tragic return to the homeland, revealing the complexity of cultural duality and the malaise of the post-colonial man. For his part, Tahar Ben Jelloun (Morocco), with *La Réclusion solitaire* (1976), explores solitude and alienation as lasting traces of an oppressive colonial past. Kenjo Jumbam (Cameroon), in *The White Man of God* (1980), questions the violent confrontation between African traditions and an imposed Christianity, which is depicted as a means for spiritual uprooting. Through these introspective accounts, a central question emerges: how do we rebuild ourselves in a world in transition, marked by the collapse of the old world order and the search for meaning in a future full of uncertainties?

Finally, a more introspective vein of this literature dwells on **the memory of colonial and post-independence trauma**, exploring avenues of reconciliation, resilience and re-appropriation. In the Lusophone space, *Luuanda* (1963) by José Luandino Vieira (Angola) and *O Canto de Mateus* (1963) by Germano de Almeida (Cabo Verde) express an existential weariness in the face of the wounds of history, reflecting the silent weight of collective trials. For his part, Mouloud Mammeri's (Algeria) *L'Opium et le bâton* (1965) is an intense portrayal of the violence and disillusionment of post-independence Algeria, torn between revolutionary hope and authoritarian drift. More symbolic, *L'Étrange destin de Wangrin* (1973) by Amadou Hampâté Bâ (Mali) offers the ambivalent figure of a man navigating between collaboration and resistance. As for *Chroniques de la citadelle d'exil* (1983) by Abdellatif Laâbi (Morocco), the work carefully explores inner exile and intimate wounds linked to political repression. With their strong anthropological dimension, these works play an active part in safeguarding collective memories while taking a critical and sometimes remedial look at the painful legacies of the past.

Plural in its languages, but unified in its fundamental questions, post-independence African literature seeks to hold up a critical mirror to changing African societies. A living memory, it bears witness to political disillusionment and identity tensions, but also to an unshakeable hope: that of a new Africa, free, lucid and reconciled with itself.

They are giants only in their own eyes, not in the eyes of the suffering masses.

Wole Soyinka
A Play of Giants, 1984

DIVERSE AND GLOBALIZED WRITERS

Since the 1990s, there has been a veritable explosion of creativity in African literature, fuelled by the growing internationalization of authors, the diversification of narrative forms and a profound questioning of the continent's memories, identities and future. Going beyond linguistic barriers and strictly chronological divisions, these works are distinguished by cross-cutting themes that explore the rifts, metamorphoses and aspirations of a constantly changing Africa. Whether they are francophone, anglophone, arabophone or lusophone, African writers form a critical and plural chorus, articulating local roots and an openness to the world.

Many authors expose **the failings of authoritarian regimes** and post-independence disillusionment. Rachid Boudjedra (Algeria), in *La Confusion* (1997), expresses the disillusionment of a people faced with the betrayed promises of sovereignty. Similarly, Mia Couto (Mozambique), in *O Último Voo do Flamingo* (2000), blends dreamlike imagery and satire to denounce the absurdity of conflict and the failure of post-war reconstruction. In a darker vein, Helon Habila (Nigeria), with *Waiting for an Angel* (2002), depicts police repression and the silencing of dissidents by the Nigerian dictatorship. In parallel, Alain Mabanckou (Republic of Congo), in *Verre cassé* (2005) and *Mémoires de porc-épic* (2006), employs a comedic and allegorical tone to criticize post-independence Congolese society.

In the vein of criticizing power some authors approach **exile** – geographical, linguistic or internal – as a space for the quest for identity. Their stories, characterized by displacement and aimless wandering, resonate with contemporary migration and memories of the diaspora.



*Exile always begins in the soul,
long before the footsteps.*

Ibrahim al-Koni
The Hidden Oasis, 1993

The Hidden Oasis (1993) by Ibrahim al-Koni (Libya) evokes a spiritual exile, using the desert as a metaphor. *Le Pays sans ombre* (1994) by Abdourahman Waberi (Djibouti) translates loss, wandering and despair into poetry. *Impasse* (1996) by Daniel Biyaoula (Congo) depicts a geographical and identity-based exile marked by racism, disillusionment and the loss of landmarks, transforming emigration into an existential impasse. More introspectively, *Open City* (2011) by Teju Cole (Nigeria) blends melancholic wandering and diasporic memory in a foreign city. Finally, *L'Amas ardent* (2017) by Yamen Manai (Tunisia) takes the form of a political fable to denounce religious fanaticism and post-revolutionary disillusionment.

Following on from the themes of identity and the critique of power, another remaining key tension in contemporary African literature lies in the opposition between ancestral traditions and modern socio-political dynamics. This confrontation between immemorial heritage and **contemporary transformations** deeply structures the stories as well as their aesthetics. *The Heart of Redness* (2000) by Zakes Mda (South Africa) thus illustrates the clash between past and present, and between traditional beliefs and modern rationality, by questioning the foundations of identity in South Africa's post-apartheid reconstruction. As a complementary perspective, Ayi Kwei Armah (Ghana), with *The Healers* (2000), stages the opposition between indigenous knowledge and Western medicine, highlighting the epistemological divides inherited from colonization.

Kossi Efoui (Togo), in *Le Dernier Royaume* (2007), explores the tensions between memory, subjectivity and modernity through fragmented writing and a poetic language in perpetual recomposition. These works reflect a constant quest for reconfiguring identity in a world marked by cultural hybridization, historical dislocation and symbolic reconfigurations.

*The body cannot be whole
if the mind is colonized.*

Ayi Kwei Armah
The Healers, 2000

Through the traces left by colonial traumas, **civil wars**, exile or even socio-political upheavals, certain narratives are constructed as spaces for the reconfiguration of identity. In his work, *L'Empreinte de l'autre* (2000), Tierno Monémbo (Guinea) revisits colonial history through writing that combines irony and introspection, where memory and guilt subtly intersect. For his part, Boubacar Boris Diop (Senegal), with *Les Petits-fils de l'indépendance* (2004), highlights post-independence disenchantment by painting a bleak portrait of entrenched elites.

This reflection on memory sometimes takes a more metaphorical or speculative form, as in *O Vendedor de Passados* (2004) by José Eduardo Agualusa (Angola), which investigates the creation of fictional memories. In *The Fishermen* (2015), Chigozie Obioma (Nigeria) explores family trauma and ancestral beliefs, revealing the intimate scars left by history.



*Time makes you forget,
but it doesn't erase. History is
the memory of peoples.*

Mohamed Mbougar Sarr
La plus secrète mémoire des hommes, 2021

In parallel, other works are part of a desire to reinterpret national pasts: *Dance of the Jakaranda* (2017) by Peter Kimani (Kenya) traces Kenya's historical memory through a polyphonic narrative, while *Le Livre de l'Émir* (2018) by Waciny Laredj (Algeria) revisits the figure of Abdelkader to reconsider Algerian identity.

Finally, *La Plus Secrète Mémoire des Hommes* (2021) by Mohamed Mbougar Sarr (Senegal) offers a profound reflection on literary heritage, the quest for the absolute and the place of the African writer in a now globalized literature.

Contemporary African literature forms a web of experiences, languages and visions that bear witness to an Africa conversing with itself and with the world. Fragmented in their forms, united in their critical and memorial aspirations, they trace the contours of a continent in perpetual reinterpretation. Plural and cosmopolitan, they build a living literary memory that refuses to be labelled and that questions present-day truths through fiction.

THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN'S VOICES IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

Long marginalized in a literary world dominated by men, African women writers have gradually made their voices heard, breaking the silence surrounding their experiences. Through stories rooted in the feminine experience, they denounce patriarchal oppression, social constraints and post-independence legacies. Their writing becomes an act of resistance and self-assertion, exploring themes such as the female condition, historical memory, migration, feminism and the quest for subjectivity.

From the 1950s onwards, pioneers such as Marie-Claire Matip (Cameroon), with *Ngonda* (1956), and Thérèse Kuoh-Moukouri (Cameroon), with *Rencontres essentielles* (1969), began a critique of patriarchal societies. In addressing **the tensions between tradition and modernity**, these writers adopt a perspective that can be described as feminist. In *A Question of Power* (1973), Bessie Head (South Africa) depicts a protagonist's struggle against political and gendered marginalization. Miriam Tlali (South Africa), with *Muriel at Metropolitan* (1975), denounces the racial and sexist violence of apartheid. In West Africa, *Une si longue lettre* (1979) by Mariama Bâ (Senegal) criticizes polygamy and argues for female emancipation, while *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) by Buchi Emecheta (Nigeria) deconstructs the social injunctions associated with motherhood.

This critique continues with works such as *Le Baobab fou* (1982) by Ken Bugul (Senegal), *Nervous Conditions* (1988) by Tsitsi Dangarembga (Zimbabwe), and *Fureurs et cris de femmes* (1989) by Angèle Rawiri (Gabon).



Girls' education is the key to the future.

Mariama Bâ

Une si longue lettre, 1979

More recently, *Les Impatientes* (2020) by Djaili Amadou Amal (Cameroon) explores the reality of forced marriages and patriarchal violence in the Sahel, anchoring these struggles in the context of African feminisms.

Beyond the denunciation of patriarchy, these novels open up **space for introspection**, where the search for oneself involves re-appropriating the body, sexuality, motherhood and solitude. Werewere Liking (Cameroon), in *Elle sera de jaspe et de corail* (1983), mobilizes poetic and ritual speech to reconstruct the feminine through myth and memory. Calixthe Beyala, with *C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée* (1987), explores the search for dignity by a marginalized woman. In North Africa, *Woman at Point Zero* (1977) by Nawal El Saadawi (Egypt) and *Memory in the Flesh* (1993) by Ahlam Mosteghanemi (Algeria) confront violence against women while paving the way for a rediscovery of the self through writing and transgressive speech. Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi (Uganda), with *Kintu* (2014) and *A Girl is a Body of Water* (2020), explores matriarchal lineage and the tensions between tradition and modernity. Sefi Atta (Nigeria), in *The Bad Immigrant* (2021), examines identity reconfiguration and resistance in exile. These stories enunciate a shifting feminine subjectivity between memory, resistance and reinvention.

Memory and history form a major axis of African women's literature, with authors revisiting **collective narratives** from a perspective that has long been marginalized.

By giving voice to women who have been erased from history, they are deconstructing imposed silences and rehabilitating an oppressed feminine memory. In *L'Ombre d'Imana* (2000), Véronique Tadjo (Republic of Côte d'Ivoire) blends testimony, poetry and ethical reflection around the Rwandan genocide. Ana Paula Tavares (Angola), with *A Costa dos Murmúrios* (2000), revisits the Portuguese colonial war through the wounded voices of women. *Notre-Dame du Nil* (2012) by Scholastique Mukasonga (Rwanda) dramatizes the racial and gendered tensions of a boarding school, a mirror of pre-genocide Rwanda. In *La Saison de l'ombre* (2013), Léonora Miano (Cameroon) gives voice to mothers left to mourn the disappearance of their sons—victims of the slave trade—while probing grief and the ensuing legacy of silence. *The Shadow King* (2019) by Maaza Mengiste (Ethiopia) rewrites the Italian-Ethiopian war through forgotten women fighters. By reconfiguring modes of transmission, these authors create a sensitive counter-history, where memory becomes a form of resistance and narrative empowerment.

To remember, you have to write. To avoid repeating mistakes, you have to remember.

Véronique Tadjo

L'Ombre d'Imana, 2000

Similarly, the **themes of exile, migration and diaspora** run through this literature, exploring the fractures of identity and the tensions between belonging and otherness. These stories explore the impact of mobility on women's subjectivities and the power relationships between South and North. In *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003), Fatou Diome (Senegal) deconstructs the myth of the European El Dorado through a narrator torn between her homeland and her host country.



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria), with *Americanah* (2013), analyzes identity construction linked to gender, race and social class through Ifemelu's experience in the United States. NoViolet Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), in *We Need New Names* (2013), adopts a child's perspective to narrate the violence of displacement and of the American dream. Imbolo Mbue (Cameroon), with *Behold the Dreamers* (2016), demonstrates the precariousness of the American dream for a Cameroonian family. These works highlight a dual diasporic consciousness (as theorised by W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Soul of Black Folks*) and question identity in a globalized world, where exile becomes a space for loss, survival and reinvention of the self.

A fundamental issue in contemporary African women's literature is the **reinvention of a feminism** that is far removed from Western models and rooted in African socio-cultural contexts. These women authors denounce gendered oppression and demand an autonomous female voice, drawing on the continent's histories and memories. Assia Djebar (Algeria), in *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (1980), shows the silent resistance of Algerian women, on the fringes of post-independence patriarchy, through sensory writing. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria), with *Dear Ijeawele* (2017), presents a feminism that respects local contradictions and intergenerational relationships.

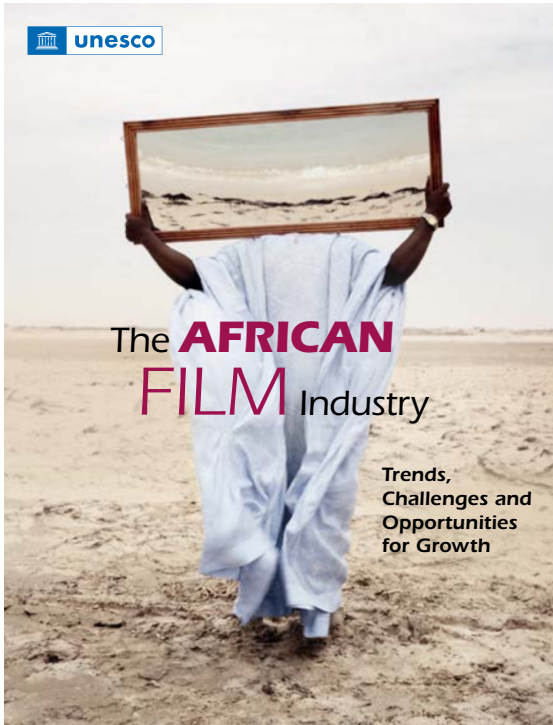
*I am a feminist
because I want to live in
a fairer world.*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Dear Ijeawele, 2017

Léonora Miano (Cameroon), in *Rouge impératrice* (2019), imagines an Afro-futurist utopia based on gender equality and the reconciliation of memories. These women writers stand out for their formal creativity: polyphony, hybridity, orality and auto-fiction become instruments of subversion. Hemley Boum (Cameroon), in *Les Maquisards* (2015) and *Si d'aimer...* (2020), interweaves intimate narrative and collective memory, while NoViolet Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), in *Glory* (2022), uses fable to criticize authoritarian regimes and accentuate feminist resistance. These writings forge a new discursive space, combining subversion and reconstruction.

This new generation of African women writers asserts itself through the richness of its stories, the originality of its voices and the strength of its commitments. By exploring post-independence fractures, memory, patriarchy, migration and the quest for self, they are redefining African literature through a critical and transnational feminine voice.

Series on the African cultural and creative industries

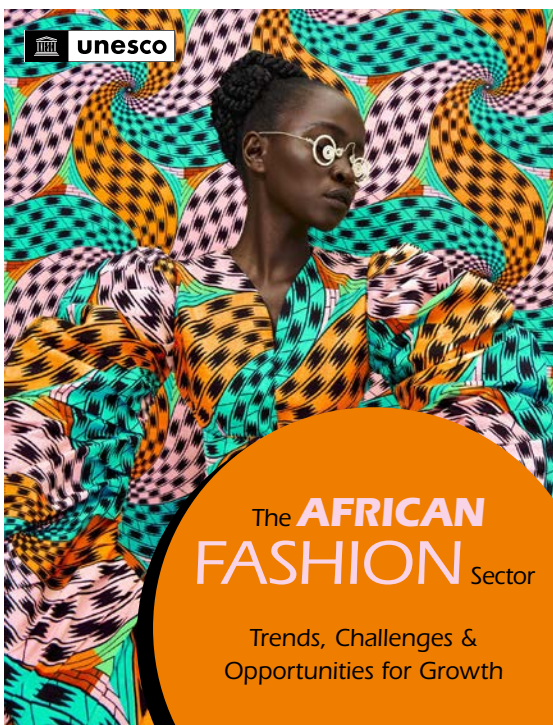


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The UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions provides Parties with rights to adopt policies and measures to promote the creation, production and distribution of diverse cultural goods – such as books – by facilitating fair access to publishing infrastructure and encouraging inclusive cultural engagement. In Africa, the book publishing industry is at a critical juncture. Though African authors and literary traditions have earned global acclaim, the sector remains constrained by limited domestic publishing and printing capacity, underfunded institutions, uneven access to books, and a regulatory landscape in which only 38% of countries have a dedicated government body for publishing. Educational publishing dominates the market, comprising 70% of output, yet the continent's immense linguistic diversity and creative potential remain underrepresented in print and digital formats alike.

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