

# Notes and News

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## Publisher's apology

The 'June 13th 2019 – Pre-Conference Events' section of the 'Review: International Publishers Association Nairobi Seminar' article published in, Volume 46 (2020): Issue 1, was omitted without the permission of the Author. We have taken the decision to retract the article and re-publish it in full in this issue Volume 46 (2020): Issue 3. We accept full responsibility for this error and apologise for the distress and inconvenience caused to the Author.

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## IPA Seminar 2019 – Nairobi

**Editor's note** – *there follows a series of three interviews by Olatoun Gabi-Williams (founder of Borders Literature for All Nations) with publishing industry attendees at the IPA African Seminar in Nairobi in June 2019.*

### Borders book trade interviews

#### Elliot Agyare – Smartline

Elliot Agyare took part in the first edition of the IPA African Seminar Series, held in Lagos, Nigeria, May 9<sup>th</sup> 2018. It was our first meeting. I was struck by his clarity, vigour and focus as he spoke on the Socio-Economic panel and when he spoke from the audience. At our second meeting, Agyare sat on a panel about African book fairs which I moderated at Frankfurt Book Fair 2018. Dedicated to the African book industry, the conference was entitled *Changing the Narrative*. Our interaction reinforced my impression of a dedicated professional of the nascent African publishing industry. My third meeting with the urbane Ghanaian publisher was at the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the IPA African Seminar Series. It was held in Nairobi June 14<sup>th</sup>-June 15<sup>th</sup> 2019. I asked him for an interview. It took place in a set-apart seating area of the lobby of the Mövenpick Hotel. The interview with Elliot Agyare was big, rich and stimulating.

#### Part I

#### **Elliot Agyare, welcome to Borders. Tell us about yourself and your educational background.**

I come from Ghana. Interestingly, I'm an artist. I did my first degree in Art at Art School in Ghana.

#### **A visual artist?**

Yes. I learned how to paint. After art school I went to the UK for my Masters and enrolled at the University of Salford for a Masters in International Relations. From Art to International Relations!

#### **A very interesting move.**

When I came from England, in 1993/94. That was the time when Ghana also started the International Studies Unit in the University of Ghana. But unfortunately for me, my Masters was MA while the requirement to become a lecturer was an M. Phil. So, I fell back on my art. A side thing I used to be engaged in was helping people design their books, design cassette labels and things like that. I was artistic. I had also come back from England with quite a bit of equipment. It was the time the desktop publishing revolution was just starting to take place. I was helping a lot of publishers. By 1997, I realized that look, I was already doing quite a bit of editing for the publishers. I cross-checked some of the things they did. I was almost a publisher myself. I like the cerebral part of the publishing process. And at that time, Ghana was also going through a transition with regard to the publishing system. The government was divesting from publishing and moving to private publishing model. So, I decided why don't I try my hands in publishing? My wife and I co-wrote our first book for our kids and published it. My publishing career really took off from there.

#### **PART II – IPA Africa Regional Seminars**

#### **OK, let's move on now to the reason we are here. This seminar. The full title is: *Africa Rising: Realizing Africa's Potential as a Global Publishing Leader of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. It's a resonant title. What does it mean to you?**

For me, when we talk about Africa Rising, it means so many things. First of all, the global publishing industry is worth a hundred billion, every year.

#### **Publishing is a mighty industry.**

The European publishing industry is worth 22.20 billion. That's 2017 records. Africa is very insignificant part of this

picture. We don't even feature. When we talk about Africa Rising, it must have a certain economic significance. What kind of share of that market is Africa going to carve for itself?

**Break it down for us.**

What it means is that books that are published in Africa should find space all across the world. Books that are published in Africa should have significance in that they are contributing to the knowledge economy. Because truly, there is knowledge in Africa but the knowledge not being seen and heard.

**Let's just quickly go into those two points you've made. How do we increase the visibility? Give us your ideas.**

OK. You have to realize that there is a convergence of circumstances that is going to aid this Africa Rising thing: one is global logistics. The second is the internet. When I say global logistics, in the past the publishing world was divided into territories. Before, because of logistics, when you are selling and buying rights, you look for North America, Europe, Asia, and sometimes Africa. And because here logistics is such a factor, it was impossible in the past to supply books directly to North America. But now with the global logistics and FedEx, you are able to. As long as people are aware that you have books, the books can crisscross the world because of global logistics.

**Give us an example.**

OK. With Smartline Publishing, my own firm, for instance, I print my books in India and the books are stored in a warehouse in Ghana. Let's say someone goes to my website and is interested in the book. How long would it take to ship the book from Ghana by DHL to them? Years ago, that would have been a difficult task. But now it is not. In the same way we order books from the US. In maybe five days you have your book. So that has changed. Secondly, because of the internet and my website, people who are interested in Smartline books can just go into the Smartline website and realize that there are books in Smartline because Smartline has published these titles. That is fundamental. Years ago, it was almost impossible. There is a book written by the US columnist, Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat*. The concept comes into play because now the world actually is flat.

If we have books that have been published to the highest possible quality and the editorial work has been done well then surely those books must be able to sell on the same shelves as books published by any publisher in any part of the world. That is what I mean by Africa Rising: more books from Africa reaching all parts of the world. This seminar, a forum for publishers and key industry players to get together and talk about this, is most oppor-

tune. Rather than being isolated in silos in different countries, it's better for us to travel together so that we sharpen each other and then rise together.

**You put it so well. Earlier you mentioned the knowledge economy. Do you want to talk about that?**

Well, in the past African intellectuals from the universities found it more expedient to publish with international publishers if they really wanted their voice to be heard in the world.

**Yes, the North has always been the world stage for us.**

Yes, that was the stage, but now with the capacity building that is taking place in African publishing, you can publish locally and still be heard out there. African knowledge can originate here but become available worldwide.

**We become like trees planted at home with our branches spread out across the world?**

Exactly. Because once you publish overseas, it goes through the editorial bodies out there. They do whatever they want with it. But if you're published here, the books are given editing that is local. Editing needs to take cognizance of local nuances. There are things we will allow to go because we understand culturally that this is what it is. Rather than it going through the sieving of someone who isn't culturally aware of what we're trying to convey.

**And if we publish at home, we can draw self-esteem from the fact that the production processes are ours. We're in charge.**

Yes. The fact of the matter is that books are cultural tools. Our books speak for us, they project who we are.

**There are only 10 African member countries in the IPA. Is that laziness?**

It's not laziness. It has more to do with whether we find the IPA relevant.

**I think things are beginning to change.**

Yes, exactly. And the IPA itself is beginning to realize that it needs to hear the African voice. But the African voice is not enough in itself, it must also go forth with something.

**Economic backing?**

Economic backing. I mean this conference is almost exclusively supported by the IPA. African Rising means that we support ourselves.

**As we are talking about self-supporting, what is your opinion of book donor organisations? The ones which donate huge amounts of books that are not tailored to African reading needs? How about if they converted some of that into money for publishing education?**

Of course. This is something that we have also spoken about, and I think now there is a little bit more enlightenment from donor organisations, that they do not just take rejects, publisher rejects and unsold books and just come and dump them in Africa. What that does is undermine the

publishing market. Books are commodities. In the same way there are dumping laws for other commodities, there should be anti-dumping laws for books as well. Book Aid, for instance, donated a huge amount of books to the Ghana Library Authority, but within that they decided that there was going to be a component ensuring they buy from local publishers. So, with that kind of awareness, it means they are helping the local industry to also develop. <https://bookaid.org/countries/ghana/>

### PART III – Government, Literacy & Publishing

I think Africa and African publishing can develop all the funds needed for Africa. It's a strategic industry. If it's organised properly, it can help in education and cultural enrichment. If I were somebody in power, my greatest challenge would be how to get our people out of illiteracy.

#### **Yes, you can't create wealth without literacy**

The industry itself has a role to play. How does the industry interface with government, and at which level? Fortunately for us in Ghana, the gap between industry and government and ministries is not that wide. I know in Nigeria, things are different. I suggested to one of the delegates from Nigeria that it probably has to do with the Federal system. From the Nigerian Publishers Association to Abuja is quite a distance

#### **So the Ghana Book Publishers Association has a closer working relationship with government?**

Yes. It's very easy for us. For instance, two weeks ago I was speaking to the Culture Minister. We were talking about some of these issues and the fact that our industry technically needs to be in Culture.

#### **Technically?**

Yes, technically. The publishing sector is a cultural industry. Our direct link should not be the Ministry of Education, but because we publish books, our link is more with the Ministry of Education than with the Ministry of Culture. We are trying to correct that.

**Very interesting. I was impressed by the number of Kenyan government representatives at the seminar. The highest-ranking government representatives were here. That's so important. They are the real decision makers so they needed to be present and very active in this kind of seminar. When we had the Lagos seminar, the only government representatives there were Afam Ezekude and John Asein from the Copyright Commission. I found that so discouraging. We can't really move without government.**

It shows the priority the government gives the industry. I think that because of the critical nature of the publishing

industry and of literacy, this industry should have support in the same way that we prioritise the building of hard infrastructure. And until government and people in position, the policy makers, realize the importance of the publishing industry, it will not attract attention. Because for now, that kind of enlightenment is not there.

The responsibility is up to us, the industry, and organisations like ADEA to reach out to decision makers and development partners. And to sensitise them.

### PART IV – Commonwealth Book Publishers Association

**So let's move on to your role as the President of the Commonwealth Book Publishers Association. Very quickly, tell us about the genesis of the association. Why we need the Commonwealth Publishers Association.**

Well, publishing flourishes when there's a lot of collaboration. So the Commonwealth Book Publishers Association was actually set up to foster relationships between publishers in the different Commonwealth countries. Because, after all, we have a common lineage through colonization by Britain. We meet in London every year during the London Book Fair. Publishing is about markets. Canada, the initiator of the group, found that Commonwealth countries were their closest allies. And there are more Commonwealth countries in Africa than anywhere else in the world. We have common issues we can deal with. This can be about cross-border relationships; we can buy and sell rights from each other. And there can be mentorship opportunities between well-established publishers and less-established publishers.

**It's good for Africa. Good for Africa to be part of that kind of niche. So you get to work as individual publishers and as groups collaborating. It's very exciting. Are you members of IPA?**

We are in talks with the IPA. We have started our application. Unlike the Ghana Publishers Association, we are having our membership meeting in Frankfurt. We have applied for it. We are supposed to attend the General Meeting in Frankfurt and then the members will vote to accept us or to reject us. (Laughter) We've also forged a relationship with the Ghana Book Publishers Association.

### PART V – Ghana Book Publishers Association

**I overheard the renowned publishing consultant, Richard Crabbe, praise the improvements the Ghana Book Publishers Association has made. He also**

**praised advances you have made regarding your areas of focus. Tell us a bit about the things you are very proud of and the advances you have made.**

Zimbabwe used to be the bookfair for Africa. It was the go-to bookfair because of all the activities that surrounded its organisation. That was the fair that a lot of publishers went to for training and networking. There needs to be a focal point for African publishing. And irrespective of the fact that we have the Nigerian Book Fair, the Cairo Book Fair, the Moroccan Book Fair, we needed a book fair that Africans congregated at. So it's not that we wanted to benefit from someone else's misfortune, but with the demise of the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, we grew stronger.

**What about the South African Book Fair?**

The South African Book-fare should have replaced ZIBF and when it started, it started with a lot of fanfare. We all attended thinking it was going to be the African book fair like ZIBF but unfortunately it became just a localized SA book fair. When I became president of the Ghana fair, I realized that we had an opportunity to do something in that regard. Let's have a book fair that Africa can attend.

**Did that involve radical changes?**

Yes. We realized that a bookfair needs certain things in place. Ambience. And it needs a certain look. It needs certain things to have an international flavour and to showcase an industry. It is not just about selling physical books. It is a setting for a meeting of minds of industry players. We talk about the industry and chart a path forward into the future. This is one of the reasons why we moved the fair from the National Theatre to the Conference Centre. It wasn't taken well by a lot of our members.

**The National Theatre gives the fair a more cultural angle. If the publishers resisted, it's probably because they were coming from a more cultural angle.**

Yes, but the National Theatre was also too small. The size of the book fair, the ambience, the space around the book fair, and how the book fair looks, all these things are important. A book fair needs plenty of space. There was the problem of costs though. The new venue, the Conference Centre, was about four times the cost of the Theatre. So it was a very bold move to decide that instead of paying 44,000 Ghana Cedis, we were going to pay 120,000 Ghana Cedis.

**A leap of faith. Well done!**

Yes. And as soon as we moved it, it changed the way the book-fair held. We didn't stop with the look. The programme of the book-fair is also important. That needed a certain mind change. I had to get my members to understand that: *"We are not going to the book-fair just to go and sell books. When you pay for your stand, you shouldn't be looking to make that same money back. We should be looking for more than that. For other benefits. You want to show-*

*case the fact that we have an industry that has taken its place in the social economic activity in the country"*

**Tell us about the socio-economic benefits.**

Well, this year our book-fair is focused on encouraging cross-border trade in the book publishing sector and we are inviting other countries to come. We are also surrounding the book fair with a lot of workshops because we want to build the capacity of our members.

**Wonderful**

We are having a meta-data workshop, for instance. Meta-data is the new buzz word.

**I wish I knew what meta-data is. What does it mean?**

It means you need to organise your data, your information on the internet in such a way that you are discoverable. You can put all your works on the internet but nobody gets to hear about it.

**Searchability?**

Exactly! You need to know where to place your ISBN, the kind of buzz words that you need to use, how the book relates to other books

**Things are very exciting right now. With digital, I mean. There are so many possibilities.**

Our members are now paying more for their stands. We decide on what kind of stands they can have. The stand must be neat. Anytime I come to Nigeria, I'm not happy about how the book fair is organised. I heard through the grapevine that Nigeria wants to move from its usual venue at University of Lagos.

**Move? But it's the University of Lagos! Isn't that what the attraction is? A research institution?**

Initially. But if you want an international flavour...

**You need something like a conference setting!**

**I was impressed by the video you showed at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2018. The Ghana International Book Fair looked world class. I felt proud even though I'm not Ghanaian. It showed Africa on the rise.**

Exactly. The thing is that book fairs follow a certain template. If you want a book fair to be a book fair then you must follow that template. The Ghana book fair last year got great reviews. I'm happy Richard Crabbe is saying such nice things about what we're trying to do. But I won't attribute all the success to myself. It's a team that's working. They are working hard.

**You have said you're trying to institute rights trading more actively at the Ghana Book Fair. Talk to us about that.**

That's what we're doing. One of the things that needs to be understood in African publishing is the need and ability to trade in rights.

**Please explain.**

The Ghana Education Service bought \$45M worth of dictionaries from the developed world when we could have and should have been the ones the government bought from. If the government wants to buy dictionaries, it ought to buy dictionaries that have been localized. You must have local flavour in your dictionary. And every book must have some local flavour. Even Harry Potter was segmented. There was the American Harry Potter and the British Harry Potter. Scholastics have the rights to the American and British editions.

**Why two editions?**

Because of the different Englishes. American English and British English

**There is Ghanaian English and there is Nigerian English**

Yes. And that is why we do rights.

**We need to do this dictionary thing.**

And what happens is that once you buy rights, you buy all the capacities embedded in the rights.

**Who would initiate a dictionary project? Who would it be up to if we were to develop a dictionary locally?**

The Ghanaian publishers can. We can do collaborations with international publishers.

**Yes. Do we have any? Have any African countries developed dictionaries? Because the only ones I ever see are Webster's and Collins.**

There aren't any that I know of. But it's not beyond us.

**I think developing local language dictionaries for our own use is a real beginning of Africa's rise. My last question: you are soon to step down as President of Ghana Publishers Association. What are your greatest concerns if any? And what are your hopes as you prepare to leave office?**

My great concern is continuity, because, obviously, we have made or tried to advance the cause of publishing locally, and most reviews are that we are doing well. We are looking for continuity, but in saying that, we are not oblivious to the fact that there could well be leadership that does not take to what we have put in place. Of course the advancement may even go further than we have, but it's important that definitely we get somebody who will move the agenda forward.

**These are exciting times. I have a lot of faith in the future of African publishing with Ghana leading the way. Before we finish, are you now going to focus exclusively on Smartline and on the Commonwealth Book Publishers Association from now on?**

Yes, that is correct.

**Elliot Agyare, this has been a very interesting conversation. Thank you so much for coming on Borders.**

**Gill Moodie – NB Publishers**

“The heartbeat of publishing is to publish all that we feel that we are entitled to publish and it implies the willingness to challenge established boundaries in society concerning the freedom to publish. In IPA we have seen that censorship is a threat to publishing in many countries and self-censorship also due to pressure from government and interest groups who try to influence what is published.”

**Kristenn Einarsson** (Norway), Chair, *Freedom to Publish Committee, IPA*; President *Bjornson Academy for Literature & Freedom of Expression [Panel: The Growing Threat of Self-censorship]*; *IPA Nairobi Seminar, June 2019 on which Gill Moodie participated as publisher of The President's Keepers by Jacques Pauw.*

**Preamble**

Kristenn Einarsson, Chair of the Freedom to Publish Committee at the International Publishers Association (IPA), used these words to introduce *The Growing Threat of Self-Censorship*, the panel he moderated at the 2nd edition of the IPA African Seminar Series held in Nairobi, Kenya June 14–June 15 2019. The panel which I missed but recorded was a brigade of stalwarts in the movement to protect the freedom to publish: Einarsson is President of the Bjornson Academy of Literature and Freedom of Expression; Sihem Bensedrine is President of the Truth and Dignity Commission in Tunisia; Khanya Mncwabe is Centre Coordinator for PEN, South Africa. The panel boasted world famous political cartoonist from Tanzania, Gado Mwampembwa and Dr. Tom Odhiambo, renowned Kenyan scholar of literature. Also participating was Gill Moodie of NB Publishers, South Africa, publisher of *The President's Keepers*, the controversial exposé of the corruption scandal besieging former South African President, Jacob Zuma. *The President's Keepers* is a runaway best seller; the second biggest selling book in the history of South Africa. After the seminar, I met with commissioning editor, Gill Moodie, to talk about the publishing phenomenon pulled off with style and drama by the book's author Jacques Pauw, the book's publishers, NB, the brave booksellers and the thousands of readers who bought the book in solidarity.

**Tell us a little about your background and how you found your way into publishing.**

I worked in England at the beginning of my career and I worked at the Guinness Book of Records. It wasn't at all like traditional publishing. It's a very unusual project and

company. Then I moved back to South Africa and became a journalist for 18 years. Then the industry went into contraction. Newspapers are in a really bad way. Then I saw a job advertised at NB Publishers. I've been here now for about 4 years.

**Are you originally English?**

No! I'm South African but after the 1994 elections, South Africa got back into the Commonwealth and for a while there was a program called Commonwealth Visas. England let young South Africans come to the UK for work experience.

**Let's go back to your work with the unique Guinness Book of Records. Was the experience useful?**

Oh, yes! It was an amazing company. They are very good at thinking about the reader. They used to drum it into our heads that the reader is a 12 year old boy; his mother buys the book; his father reads it. So think of mum when you do the cover; for everything inside, think of Dad and the little boy. That is a remarkable marketing message: extremely honed.

**And very useful for you as a commissioning editor at NB Publishers – National Books. According to the cover letter to your catalogue, NB is the biggest trade publisher in South Africa. How many imprints do you have?**

We have 7: Tafelberg which means Table Mountain, Kwela, Human & Rousseau, Queillerie, Pharos, Best Books and Lux Verbi.

**How did you merit this attribution?**

Ok. So, we don't import books at all. We make local books and produce about 350 a year which is one a day. No-one makes as many books in South Africa and we have the biggest revenue and the most people.

**So this is an official statistic? That you have the biggest revenue? It must be great to work for such a successful venture! I know NB recently won the American Association of Publishers Freedom to Publish prize for Jacques Pauw's book, *The President's Keepers* published by the Tafelberg imprint. Talk to us about the book's position on the Jacob Zuma corruption question.**

Well, it's not a question. (Laughter). South Africa has a long tradition of very independent media. Zuma is being prosecuted for corruption on charges going back to a multi-million Rand arms deal, fifteen years ago. The idea for the book was very clear. Jacques had the title from the very beginning and the sub-title: Those keeping Zuma in Power and out of Prison. Jacob Zuma is a part of it but what Jacques was most interested in was the cover-up by perverting law-enforcement agencies. We have had a succession of people he has appointed at the top of our agen-

cies who would not prosecute him for corruption over this arms deal which goes back to when he was Deputy-President.

**Give us a little of the history behind the scandal.**

After 1994, the elections, there was a famous corruption trial – it's quite hard to convict people of corruption- involving a confidant of Jacob Zuma, an old comrade in the Struggle. He was convicted of taking bribes from British and Swedish arms dealers and manufacturers and the person he was paying the bribes to was Jacob Zuma. So, if the corrupter was being convicted, why was Jacob Zuma not being prosecuted? That's the history.

**How did Jacques Pauw try to solve the mystery?**

He looked at what was happening within the Police, the Intelligence communities and then at the Tax Revenue service. There was someone there, at the Tax Revenue service, who was a close friend of Jacob Zuma who wouldn't look closely into Zuma's tax affairs. That wasn't a bad thing because it was Jacob Zuma: it was bad because it was perverting this incredibly important institution. Jacques found evidence that an old friend of Zuma, a very rich business man, was paying him a salary while he was President. It was declared in his taxes. Jacob Zuma didn't declare it. The business man declared it. Zuma didn't know. And generally there was a lot of information in the tax realm that was proof of things going on.

**What risks did NB Publishers run by publishing this kind of content? I know for instance that the book's code name during production was *The Peacock's Keepers*.**

Well, we had to break a few laws.

**You were so daring! (Laughter)**

They were Apartheid era laws but they still stand. We broke the laws on confidentiality, classified information law. We argued that we were doing it in the public's interest and that the country needs to know about the President's tax affairs and why he has been trying to cover it up. The public also needs to know what is happening to our prosecution authority and how it is being undermined.

**Tell us about Jacques Pauw himself, the author of *The President's Keepers*. What are his credentials for writing this kind of book?**

He is one of the country's premier investigative journalists. In the Apartheid era, in the 1980s, he was a founding member of an alternative investigative newspaper, an Afrikaans newspaper. He broke a huge story about an Apartheid death squad. Someone who was police intelligence, Eugene de Kock, was convicted of crimes. His death squads dragged black people off the streets and

coerced people to become informers. A very bad guy. There were rogue elements in the squads and enormous cruelty. They would have big barbecue parties to celebrate, after their killings. Jacques' story was the first proof that there were death squads sanctioned by the state. It was huge.

**So he has the credentials, the street cred!**

Oh, yes. He may have an Afrikaans background but he is absolutely independent.

**I hear *The President's Keepers* has sold more than 200,000 copies in electronic and print editions and it's one of the biggest selling books in South African history. Congratulations.**

Thank you. It became the fastest selling book in South African history only since 2009 when Nielsen started to measure book sales. Perhaps some books sold more before that – we don't know. Before that each individual publishing house kept its own data.

**So, Nielsen Book Research International started measuring data for the South African book industry in 2009. That's a good decade of proof of the value of Nielsen's systems. I hope other African countries follow suit. Talk to us now about publicity around the sales of *The President's Keepers* and about any drama around the sales.**

The book is a once in a lifetime book. I say once in a lifetime despite the fact that Jacques will write many more books; and despite the fact that NB Publishers are still actively seeking out investigative journalists. Let me explain: there was a confluence of very strange events around the time Jacques book came out. The head of our own version of the FBI issued a Cease and Desist order – a legal letter saying we must take the books off the shelves because they contained classified information. The bookshops refused and stood by us as the publishers of *The President's Keepers*. They said the book is out. If it's out, it's out. The bureau chief was using intimidation tactics, testing to see if they would work because you actually can't do that in South Africa today. We have enshrined freedom of speech. He hoped the booksellers would get nervous and put the books back in their boxes.

Well, because of all the intimidation, someone pirated the book (off Amazon, I think) and released a pdf version into the wild telling the world that the government was trying to ban the book. So we put out a statement via social media, Twitter especially, to say that the book isn't banned and do please try to support the author. We didn't want to wave a big stick at anyone though. It was a nightmare for us as the publishers but it was very well intentioned. And then Jacques put a post on social

media which changed everything. He said, if you can't afford to buy the book, read the pirated copy but if you can, please buy it. It shifted everything. People started buying the e-book and putting pictures of themselves on social media saying, "*I bought the book*", "*I downloaded the book*".

**What solidarity! Did you shed tears? It's such a lovely story.**

It was very heartening. We were constantly barraged by government so it kept us going. It also really helped Jacques. Everyone wanted a piece of him. Everyone wanted to interview him. We went on a book tour and hired bodyguards. There was one heart-stopping moment at the big Johannesburg launch –

**Where is NB based?**

Cape Town. The publishing industry is mostly based in Cape Town but Joburg is where all the action is so we had the big launch there. We held it in the auditorium of a shopping centre because the bookshops couldn't contain the crowds. And then suddenly the power went out. Just like that. Jacques was talking to Peter Vrees, a veteran newspaper editor. I thought someone was going to do something bad to them. The bodyguards jumped up and formed a human chain around the two of them. The lights never came back on but everyone stayed. Jacques signed books in the dark for over two hours. It was the book launch of book launches.

**It must have been a pivotal moment in your life too as a publisher.**

Yes, it was. That's why it's a once in a lifetime book. A very unique experience. The book became a protest movement. It isn't only NB: all the publishers in South Africa are actively commissioning books that speak truth to power. We don't just wait for the journalists to come to us; we look into an area and find a good author to write about it.

**But Jacques Pauw was writing *The President's Keepers* before you met, wasn't he? I read something about you and your boss going to see him because you liked the project and then taking it on.**

Yes, that's right. Jacques is also the kind of person who would never be commissioned to write anyway. He is such an independent person. He would say, '*No, I have my own ideas!*'

**Is the public responding to the protest movement in the publishing industry?**

Yes, South Africans are definitely responding. They're enjoying reading non-fiction about politics.

**How did you feel when you were shortlisted for the 2019 IPA Prix Voltaire? It's a prestigious Freedom to Publish award.**

We were quite stunned! The book was a big deal in South Africa but we didn't sell the foreign rights. We were humbled and amazed that anyone outside the country took notice.

**The Prix Voltaire is a nomination process so the book must have been considered very worthy.**

We are such an insular country with a strange history and it's a big economy. We do tend to look inwards. So when someone outside takes notice, we go, wow, thank you so much! We also got the American award which is \$10,000. My CEO is looking to donate it to an NGO that focuses on freedom of speech.

**Finally, Africa Rising. Give me your main takeaways from the IPA Nairobi seminar.**

It's always interesting to pause from your daily life, get out of the office and meet your peers from other countries. It's interesting to see where we have similarities and where we don't. It's especially interesting for South Africans because for a long time we weren't properly part of things. For me, publishing in indigenous languages is a very interesting take away from the seminar. It's huge in South Africa, something we talk about and think about a lot. It's very interesting to see how important it is across Africa and to see the interesting things people are doing like the Jalada Collective's multi-media translation project.

What I will definitely take home to publishers is news about how much support there is for the industry. This African Publishing Innovation Challenge Fund! To support something innovative that can be scaled up. How interesting is that!

And then the privilege of listening to Ngugi wa Thiong'o. I'm going back with lots of ideas, things we can do with our books that have been successful. The ones with the right hip content that are published in English and Afrikaans; let's see about translating the ones that have sold well into Zulu. I've already got an idea for one book by a young, hip black guy. It sold about 7,000 copies. He has very edgy views on all sorts of things like black identity. That would be a perfect experiment in Zulu.

**Gill Moodie, thank you for coming on Borders.**

**Gbadega Adedapo, President, Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA)**

On the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2018, at Eko Hotel & Suites, the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA) hosted the inaugural edition of the International Publishers Association (IPA) Africa Seminar Series. The one day seminar, entitled Publishing for Sustainable Development: The Role of Publishers in Africa was a success with around 200 book industry stakeholders in attendance.

Africa Rising was the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Africa Seminar Series held in Nairobi, Kenya, June 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> 2019. This was the forum at which Gbadega Adedapo, President of the NPA and member of the IPA Executive Committee, presented the Lagos Action Plan based on challenges to the industry identified at the maiden Lagos Seminar. Now known as the IPA Africa Action Plan, the plan is distinguished by its ambition and its emphasis on seminar specific action plans and near-term impact.

I caught up with the NPA President on his return to Nigeria to schedule the following discussion focused on the IPA African Action Plan.

**Tell us a little about your educational background and about how you ventured into publishing.**

I had my first degree in Computer Science with Statistics from Ogun State University (now Olabisi Onabanjo University) and an MBA from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. I also have various professional certificates which include but are not limited to Certificate in Developing Successful Publishing Strategy; Cover Concepts and Design awarded by New York University. I have a Certificate in Strategic Publishing Management: Gaining the Competitive Edge issued by The Publishing Training Centre in London. I started my publishing business, Rasmed Publications Limited, 23 years ago with a single book published in Yoruba, a Nigerian local language. The book was titled Ise Esu (Devil's Handiwork). My venture into the publishing business was born out of my passion for reading and noticeable gaps in the book industry. I felt there was a need to promote our local languages in order to connect with readers' minds, to make reading interesting, to educate people and to promote literacy.

**What is the mandate of the NPA and what are your own functions as NPA chief?**

The Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA) is a professional association of publishers and the only collective voice of the publishers of Nigeria. It has been in existence since 1965. It has been a rallying point for all book, journals, and electronic publishers in the country since its inception. The mandate of NPA is to promote and protect publishing in Nigeria by providing a conducive business environment for

publishers, creating a forum through which publishers come together to deliberate on various issues affecting the publishing industry and to work out possible solutions while forming a synergy to tackle the challenges. We make an effort to promote the reading culture and to contribute to the growth of education in Nigeria through publishing quality and content-rich books. We also strive to protect intellectual property through copyright.

**You are on the executive committee of the International Publishers Association. Tell us a little about the members of the committee, about the work you do and how often you meet as a committee.**

The International Publishers Association is governed by the General Assembly, The Executive Committee, President, Vice President and Treasurer. It is administered by the Geneva-based secretariat. The governance of the association is based on a formal set of Statutes, and the three permanent Committees (Freedom to Publish Committee, Copyright Committee and Membership Committee). The Executive Committee is the “board” of the Association and our responsibilities include managing the activities between the General Assemblies, which is the supreme body of the Association consisting of delegates from IPA’s Regular Members.

**I have looked at the Lagos Action Plan of the IPA. Who are the members of the steering committee?**

We had an 8-member committee set up for the Lagos Action Plan (LAP) Committee comprising John Asein (Director General and Chief Executive, Nigerian Copyright Commission); Jose Borghino (Secretary-General, International Publishers Association); Samuel Kolawole (Chairman, African Publishers Network); Anges Felix Ndakpri (President, Association des Editeurs de Cote d’Ivoire); Lawrence Njagi (Chairman, Kenya Publishers Association); Ernest Oppong (Ag. Executive Director, African Publishers Network); Brian Wafawarova (President, Publishers Association of South Africa) and myself – Gbadega Adedapo. The LAP Committee worked closely together with the new IPA Vice President – Bodour Al Qasimi who has been providing immense support to the Committee. Many thanks to the New President – Hugo Setzer and the secretariat for the kind gestures we have been receiving.

**What are the IPA’s objectives regarding African publishing which you hope to realize by means of this action plan?**

IPA objectives for the IPA Africa Seminar Series is to widely extend its mandate to the Africa region which is a clear-cut indication that the Association is for all the continents, unifying stakeholders around a common vision and enhancing their collaboration and coordination. I raised the issue during one of our meetings at IPA, about

the need for capacity development programs in Africa. This birthed the IPA Africa Seminar Series. IPA were interested in unlocking the potential opportunities that are yet untapped in the African publishing industry. The IPA wants to build the markets as well as promote fruitful collaboration within the continent. IPA also wants to connect Africa to the rest of the world. The Lagos Action Plan’s aim is to identify key challenges facing the African publishing industry and the gaps, translating proceedings at the IPA Africa Seminar maiden edition in Lagos to consensus and action. The LAP lays the foundation for the development and implementation process for future action plans that will be more streamlined and inclusive.

**Please give examples of a couple of the goals for Africa and talk to us about the plans for implementation?**

We have decided to streamline priorities for Africa into 5 basic Transformation Goals which are strategically developed to address industry challenges and realize opportunities. We have developed Pilot Programs and we require elaborate stakeholder partnerships. The spelt out goals are: Goal 1 – Enhancing Stakeholder Collaboration and Coordination

Goal 2 – Advancing Innovative Solutions to Long standing Challenges

Goal 3 – Making Africa’s Copyright Framework Fit for the Digital Era

Goal 4 – Leveraging Data for Advocacy and Digital Transformation

Goal 5 – Promoting Diversity and Inclusiveness in Global Publishing

*Goal 1 – Enhancing Stakeholder Collaboration and Coordination*

We quite understand that there is a need to foster the relationship among the stakeholders in the Africa Publishing industry. Hence the LAP will identify initiatives with parallel vision and which are supportive to the industry. In order to have this goal implemented, leveraging on the African Publishers Network (APNET) will be a progressive move and we have signed MoU with APNET. We want to engage the network to improve collaboration and to coordinate programs up for execution. We want to ensure we do not leave any communication gaps among the stakeholders. I am pleased to inform you that as a step towards ensuring a strong publishing collaborative, we have also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). This partnership will bring forth an increased capacity building of publishers and stakeholders. As part of our implementation strategies, IPA will be formalizing member assistance programs to facilitate increased membership for national publisher associations. IPA will also encour-

rage them to apply for IPA membership which will open them up to global opportunities.

#### *Goal 2 – Advancing Innovative Solutions to Longstanding Challenges*

The generosity of Dubai Cares towards the Lagos Action Plan, which has now been nomenclated as IPA Africa Action Plan, cannot be overemphasized. We are indeed grateful to Dubai Cares for committing \$800,000 as supporting funds to address pressing needs of the African publishing ecosystem, building the industry's capacity, improving the reading culture and supporting new initiatives for sustainability development in education and in the publishing industry in Africa. As part of our implementation strategy towards achieving this goal, we have put in place a programme tagged 'African Publishing Innovation Challenge' and the essence is to channel funds generously donated by Dubai Cares to creative projects in Africa over the next 4 years. At the Nairobi seminar, we were able to meet with prospective grant recipients and will be rounding off soon on shortlisted projects.

#### *Goal 3 – Making Africa's Copyright Framework Fit for the Digital Era*

It is obvious that Africa's publishing industry is still struggling with its poorly functioning copyright ecosystem. This of course is not helping publishing as a business. The situation has degenerated into a high level mistrust which has affected the book distribution chain. We have a systematic approach in place now to ensure practical steps to create copyright systems that can support and accommodate the rapidly growing digital economy while collaborative national measures are being considered to tackle the print segment.

#### *Goal 4 – Leveraging Data for Advocacy and Digital Transformation*

Data on the happenings in the African publishing industry can scarcely be found. As a result we can't adequately keep track of quantitative progress and we do not have indicators to work with for the growth of the industry. As part of the implementation plans towards achieving this goal, we worked with Insight Wells Research to conduct a survey that will guide our next action on publishing industry policy and advocacy. We are also going to work closely with Nielsen Book Research International on launching a demo presentation in Nigeria and Kenya as a model to have a data system for the African publishing industry.

#### *Goal 5 – Promoting Diversity and Inclusiveness in Global Publishing*

IPA takes delight in inclusive publishing that puts all genders into consideration. The action plan as a result has led us to striking a partnership with leading African diversity

and inclusiveness advocates such as PublisHer which was founded by Bodour Al Qasimi, Vice-President of the IPA and aims to develop a global agenda that features women publishers on the side-lines of key literary events. We understand the need to be inclusive in our projects and that is why we ensured the involvement of women in the new committee formation and in decision making.

#### **Can you provide a couple of examples for Goal 3: *Making Africa's Copyright Framework fit for the Digital Era*?**

One of the systematic approaches to creating systems that can support the digital economy is consideration of digital-based projects in our upcoming pilot programs. Among other national measures in place to tackle the print segment, is creating an environment that converges all stakeholders in the industry. We want to facilitate an understanding of the current challenges, the status in each region and to design sensitization and advocacy programs. We began this campaign at the Kenya IPA seminar, where we had stakeholder's meeting. In Nigeria, we have been able to gain the interest of government parastatals such as the Nigerian Copyright Commission and we appreciate the support of the Commission's Director General – John Asein. Last week we had a town hall meeting jointly organized by the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA) and the Nigerian Copyright Association (NCC) where we shared practical approaches for implementation and we are not relenting on the implementation of a national book policy. You will recall that the IPA signed an MOU with APNET and ADEA at the IPA seminar in Kenya. The intention is to achieve a strategic partnership that will further leverage on the networking opportunities of APNET and ADEA and which will enable a better understanding of peculiar national issues as it affects the industry in each region. Programs will be deployed accordingly.

#### **Based on experiences of past seminars and conferences, there is scepticism about the likelihood of successful implementation and sustainability. How will the steering committee ensure that this time around there is concrete gain for the African book industry? And that these gains can be showcased as evidence of progress in a measurable way?**

One of the distinctive features of the IPA Africa Seminar is the setup of the Action Plan Committee. The responsibility of the committee is to ensure that all discussions at the IPA African Seminar maiden edition are further processed and translated into actionable plans. However, the steering committee tasks don't end at action plans: we have been working tirelessly with several organizations from day one. We are defining the programs and seeing to their im-

plementation. The implementation framework has time-lines. We are very consistent about making progress. The sustainability of the programs has been factored into the drawn-out plans. You would agree with me that the presentation of the LAP is an indication that several activities have taken place behind the scenes to carry it forward. If you read the Action Plan, you will see clearly that several actions have already taken place. We cannot however overrule the importance of funds to drive the programs and the generous donation from Dubai Cares is one of the outcomes of the activities. We are soliciting for more stakeholder support in actualizing the plans as outlined.

#### **What are the challenges you foresee?**

I do not foresee any challenges other than gaining the full support of stakeholders on actions and rapid response as may be required to make progress with the designed programs. The programs are designed 100 % around industry stakeholders. We conducted an online survey sometime ago and found we had to keep pushing and pressing for submissions for a survey of no more than 10-15minutes. We had to extend the submission deadline! This is why we continue to urge book industry players in Africa to offer these programmes their responsiveness. Without their responsiveness, nothing will be achieved. Nothing.

#### **Literature from the IPA Nairobi Seminar held in June this year emphasizes building African publishing markets. My instinctive response to Nigeria's recent ratification of AfCFTA, was joy. What are your own hopes and maybe fears regarding what is now the world's largest free trade zone?**

The AfCFTA is by default designed to expand African trade which of course is to the advantage of the IPA plans in building African Publishing markets in the long run. In my opinion the AfCFTA will highly promote education and literacy levels across Africa in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal for inclusive and equitable quality education: SDG 4. The AfCFTA ratification by the Federal Government of Nigeria will be maximized if industry players could position their businesses. It will create more competitiveness within the publishing industry.

*Editor's note – there follows a Review by Olatoun Gabi-Williams (founder of Borders Literature for All Nations) of the IPA African Seminar, held in Nairobi, Kenya in June 2019.*

#### **Africa Rising – Realizing Africa's Potential as a Global Publishing Leader in the 21st Century**

##### **International Publishers Association Nairobi Seminar, 14th – 15th June 2019, Nairobi, Kenya**

On the 9<sup>th</sup> June – the Day of Pentecost – my heart alight with hope for Africa – I boarded flight ET 900. Seatbelt fastened, eyes closed in prayer for journey mercies, I let Ethiopian Airways fly me out of Lagos, Nigeria, over the forests, mountains and rivers of Chad, Sudan's plains and Red Sea Hills, bound for Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. At Bole Airport, ET 308 would fly me to Nairobi. We landed safely in Jomo Kenyatta Airport at around 1.30am on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Visa processing at Immigration at that spectral hour was a quick, silent affair. In no time I was walking out of the airport building into a cold Kenyan night. A taxi driver – a massive, dark skinned Kenyan dressed up for a Nordic winter shepherded me into the car-park, looking at me with concern when he saw that I was chilly; talking about Kenyan winters, nodding towards the ATM, asking whether I had Kenyan Shillings on me. It was far too dark outside to see anything during the long drive to the Movenpick Hotel in Westlands, Nairobi, where he deposited me and my suitcase with a courtesy that did nothing to hide the fact that he had overcharged me. Movenpick staffs were professional. I had forgotten just how much Kenya is a veteran of world class hospitality. I had expected a generic, 5 star hotel with standardised facilities. What welcomed me was the eclectic luxury of a spacious lobby. A selection of gleaming sculptures dotted a setting which I would find relaxing as the meeting days unfolded. The kind of setting that provides the comfortable nooks I would need for two interviews. The first was with Elliot Agyare, President of the Ghana Publishers Association and of the Commonwealth Book Publishers Association – <http://bordersliteratureonline.net/globaldetail/Elliot-Agyare>. The other was with Gill Moodie, Commissioning Editor at NB Publishers, home of *The President's Keepers*, the runaway bestseller by Jacques Pauw about beleaguered Jacob Zuma. NB Publishers is South Africa's biggest trade publisher. All checked-in and into the elevator bearing me to the 8<sup>th</sup> floor where my room and sleep awaited me. It was now about 3 in the morning. I was relieved to be feeling tired again and noticed too that a gentle peace was rising in me. A good sign. And true. The IPA Nairobi seminar of June 14<sup>th</sup> – June 15<sup>th</sup>, would be a rewarding meeting

of experts brought together to discuss how to position Africa as a global publishing leader – *that will take a while and quite a journey* – and themed ***Africa Rising***.

### June 13<sup>th</sup> 2019 – Pre-Conference Events

The birthing of any good thing is magical: the first IPA Seminar, *Publishing for Sustainable Development: The Role of Publishers in Africa* took place on May 9<sup>th</sup> 2018, here in Lagos, Nigeria. On the sidelines of this second edition in Nairobi would be a new IPA initiative, ***Africa in Action***: two MOU signings slated for Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June: one between the IPA and APNet (African Publishers Network) and the other between IPA and ADEA (Association for the Development of Education in Africa). ***Africa in Action*** has been designed to ensure collective management of plans and their materialization.

Same day, early evening, UAE's Bodour Al Qasimi, Vice-President of the IPA, would host the second edition of the innovative ***PublisHers Dinner*** which she initiated at the London Book Fair in March 2019. Conceived to take place as a supplement to major IPA conferences, it is a lavish, all-woman, invitation only party that gathers leading women in the publishing eco-system around the dinner table. They are expected to discuss critical issues in the industry and of course, to network. Invited as a media practitioner, I attended the Nairobi edition of the ***PublisHers Dinner***. It was an elegant evening held on a terrace of the Movenpick Hotel. The spotlight was on three leading lights of African Publishing: Bibi Bakare-Yusuf of Cassava Republic Press, Nigeria; Thabiso Mahlape of Blackbird Books, South Africa (An Imprint of Jacana Media) and Ama Dadson of Akoo Books (audio books), Ghana. The women talked with moderator Lorna Irungu Macharia of Gina Din Group, Kenya, about their rise to power in a male dominated arena that has up until now resisted diversity. I am always struck by Bibi Bakare's spirited commentary peppered with insights and surprising takes on any issue. On the ***PublisHers*** panel, she didn't disappoint, describing hijab clad staff as a must-have in Cassava Republic's editorial team working in Christian dominated corporate Nigeria. Responding to Ama Dadson's subtle navigations around male dominated meetings, she recommended processing information quickly as the men speak – not later and speaking up so you don't get pushed out of the conversation.

After the panel, no-one complained when critical issues in publishing were neglected in favour of refills of champagne, good food, networking and above all, Maimouna Jallow, Kenyan dramatist of women's literary works who held us captive with her performance of Lola Shoneyin's ***The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives***.

### The Value of Publishing Conferences – Debate Rages

Let's take a quick look at the major international conferences on the African book industry that have taken place between November 2017 and June 2019 – within less than 24 months. They are too big to ignore:

- The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) conference in Yaoundé in November 2017
- The Global Book Alliance/ADEA/USAID-sponsored conference in January 2018
- The IPA/NPA seminar which held on May 9<sup>th</sup> 2018 in Nigeria and which has produced the Lagos Action Plan which was distributed to delegates at the IPA Nairobi Seminar.
- The ADEA/Kenya Ministry of Education/African Union Commission/USAID conference June 17<sup>th</sup> – June 19<sup>th</sup> designed to produce a Continental Framework for National Book & Reading Policies.
- The WIPO International Conference on June 14<sup>th</sup> for Least Developed and Developing Countries, conceived, starting in Kenya, to begin the adaptation of international copyright frameworks to local realities.

In the ***Book Publishing in Africa*** hub on Facebook, news of the Continental Framework for National Book & Reading Policies was relayed with jubilation by believers, David Waweru of World Alive Publishers (Kenya) and ADEA's Lily Nyariki, who is also Librarian in charge of the Moi University bookshops. The news was received with the expected scorn by industry's cynics in what is the longest, most impassioned and knowledgeable conversation I have witnessed on social media. The debate closed (at least for now) with David Waweru warning sceptics that if old Africa hands continue to look in the rear-view mirror [of past paralysis] as we try to move the industry forward, we will crash. Quite true. It is also true that Waweru's caution is unlikely to make a difference to the jaded views of some of these (prominent) members of the African publishing community. They will continue to dismiss meetings conceived to identify and meet the challenges besetting African publishing, as 'talk shops.'

### From Talk to Action

Continental breakfast stations were set up in a corner of a broad outdoor lobby area flanked on both sides by publishers' booths. This exhibition area was the gateway to the great Hall of Africa where the IPA Nairobi seminar would unfold from 8am on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June with an estimated attendance of over 300 guests: publishers and stakeholders of the wider industry. With Kenyan Pete Open-

da as Master of Ceremony, over the course of 11 panels the African book industry would evaluate and express frustration about its challenges. I wasted no time in scheduling a post-conference interview on Borders – my on-line publicity service – with Gbadega Adedapo, President of the Nigerian Publishers Association who would present the Lagos Action Plan, this plan of plans, generated by the 1<sup>st</sup> IPA African Seminar held in Lagos, Nigeria, May 2018.

I must point out that none of the conference sceptics were present at the Nairobi meeting to witness the commitment of the IPA and the African Publishers Network to the newly launched IPA African Seminar Series. I was there and to me the emphasis organizers had placed on seminar specific action plans and near-term impact signaled a credible new dawn for the industry. I noted tangible solutions to clearly articulated problems rather than boring theory in the presentations delivered by: Deborah Ahenkorah of *Accord Literary*; André Breedt of *Nielsen Book Research International*; Giacomo D'Angelo of *StreetLib.com*; Peter Tabichi Mokaya, educator and winner of *2019 Global Teacher Prize* and Anna Bertmar Khan who spoke with hard data and clarity about the urgency for the mother tongue as tool of instruction for early learners. Bertmar Khan is Senior Technical Advisor at leading education non-profit, *Dubai Cares*, compatriot of the global *Varkey Foundation*, sponsor of the Global Teacher Prize. The presentations bred an excitement in me, a real sense of movement towards feasible and tangible results. I wasn't alone in my response: who could fail to notice the speed with which Abdelkader Retnani, President of the Moroccan Publishers Association, volunteered to host the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the IPA African Seminar Series?

### Foreign Interest and Justifications for Hope

Doubtless a major justification for the commitment of the IPA is hard-headed economics. So it should be: economics is key and African is an emerging market. A lucrative one. Emblazoned across the cover of the March 2019 edition of *The Economist* magazine are these words: *The New Scramble for Africa*. It is the title of the month's main article which engages with what the writer terms the 'unprecedented extent of foreign engagement' with our preyed-on and maligned continent. Read it here:

<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2019/03/07/the-new-scramble-for-africa>

*"Governments and businesses from all around the world are rushing to strengthen diplomatic, strategic and commercial ties. [This creates vast opportunities. If Africa handles the*

*new scramble wisely, the main winners will be African themselves."*

It is a fascinating, readable look at the promise of Africa today. For those who may not click the link, let me quote the introduction: *"The first great surge of foreign interest in Africa, dubbed the "scramble", was when 19th-century European colonists carved up the continent and seized Africans' land. The second was during the cold war, when East and West vied for the allegiance of newly independent African states; the Soviet Union backed Marxist tyrants while America propped up despots who claimed to believe in capitalism. A third surge, now under way, is more benign. Outsiders have noticed that the continent is important and becoming more so, not least because of its growing share of the global population (by 2025 the UN predicts that there will be more Africans than Chinese people). Governments and businesses from all around the world are rushing to strengthen diplomatic, strategic and commercial ties. This creates vast opportunities. If Africa handles the new scramble wisely, the main winners will be Africans themselves."*

That 'third surge' represents some of the ideas and much of the sentiment underpinning the *IPA African Seminar Series* and my own take on the Nairobi event. And if there is some cynicism and predation in the interest of a few world powers in the action about our continent, that does not give the lie to the sincerity of others. I believed Hugo Setzer, President of the IPA, when he evoked the African philosophy of Ubuntu during his Opening Address. To the leaders of 40 African publishers' associations and other stakeholders assembled in the Hall of Africa, Movenpick Hotel, President Setzer presented Ubuntu, undergirded by the principle of a shared humanity on a shared planet. He quoted Archbishop Desmond Tutu: *"You can't exist as a human being in isolation. You are connected. What you do affects the whole world."*

Both Hugo Setzer and host Lawrence Njagi, President of the Kenya Publishers Association, who spoke before him, praised the passion of the first Arab woman in the history of IPA's leadership, Vice-President Bodour Al Qasimi. A champion of Arab and African publishing, her own speech, delivered on the second day of conference, decried negative 'stereotyping' and pointed out that both our people groups navigate a world with low expectations of us. As Africa seeks to realize her potentials, Al Qasimi re-affirmed the IPA's support, promising book industry practitioners: *You won't walk this road alone*. With generous material contributions, EMAAR, Emirates Airlines, Sharjah Publishing City testified to the commitment of the Arab world to see African publishing grow. Serving as exhibition sponsors were Sharjah World Book Capital 2019, [the UNESCO originated year long program of book

industry events] which the IPA Vice-President chairs, and the Emirates Publishers Association which she founded in 2009. Logos of UAE behemoths festooned the walls of the entrance to the Hall of Africa.

### African Literary Culture

Africa Rising? Faced with our litany of woes? Self-serving leaders, institutionalized corruption, lack of political will to support sustainable growth in our industries – see how neglectful governments have been of publishing – and the corollary- unabated migration overseas. Can we blame the sceptics rolling their eyes in irritation at the mention of an African renaissance? No, we cannot, but corruption shouldn't blind them to positive expressions of life on the continent. What about the exploding interest in African literary culture and impressive developments within the field? It did not fizzle out as predicted by the prophets of doom. When Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's burst onto the world stage in 2003 with her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, it whet the world's appetite for African voices and today, thanks to the efforts of a new generation of publishers such as Modjaji Books (South Africa); Akoo Books – audio (Ghana); Bakwa Books (Cameroon); First Veritas (Educational Publishing, Nigeria); Huza Press (Rwanda); Parresia (Nigeria); Farafina (Nigeria); Bookcraft (Nigeria); Cassava Republic Press (Nigeria); Kwani? (Kenya), Amalion (Senegal); uHlanga Press (South Africa), literary artists domiciled at home are able to stand alongside their peers living abroad to gain a visibility at home and abroad previously unknown. The world wants more: the world at home and the world abroad. Go online and search for Africa's literary sons and daughters: they adorn shortlists of prestigious awards. Go to Brittle Paper, Afridiaspora, The Johannesburg Review, jamesmurua.com. Also search WAWA Book Review which is delivering high quality review services, training the next generation of book reviewers and earlier in 2019, hosted a workshop for emerging reviewers and a panel discussion in Lagos about African Literary Culture. The speakers were high level: Indra Wussow of Days Wunderhorn, Otieno Owino of Kwani?, and the founder of the blog, Arab Lit, and translator, Marcia Lynx Qualey. Go to any established literary journal/blog they will show you home-grown prizes increasingly coveted; no longer poor relations of awards created and domiciled overseas. Awards worthy of note: the newly revived (2019) *9mobile Prize for Literature* (formerly the Etisalat Prize) sponsored by the eponymous telecoms firm; the *Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa* founded by the *Lumina Foundation*; The \$100,000 NLNG Nigeria Prize for Literature; and lately, Senegal Amalion Publishing and the Abdou Moumouni University in Niamey, Niger, have

jointly inaugurated the *Sarraounia Prize for Young Adult Fiction* in French, English or Hausa. And though the *Orange Book Prize in Africa* which took off in 2019 is not an African initiative, it was conceived to recognize [for now] francophone literary talent and to help strengthen publishing on the continent. Isabelle Kassi Fofana's presence at the seminar is a testimony to growing international recognition of local literary prizes. From the Côte D'Ivoire, Fofana is the president of the *Akwaba Culture Association* responsible for the glittering *Prix Ivoire*.

I exchanged business cards with Angela Wachuka. Executive Director of leading literary organization, Kwani Trust, she is as significant to literature in Kenya as Kassi Fofana is to literature in the Ivory Coast. Wachuka is also co-founder of Kenya's *Book Bunk*, an organization seeking to restore Nairobi's public libraries and to decolonize them with carefully curated book acquisitions and event programming, starting with the McMillan Memorial Libraries established by the colonial government Kenya to serve the white population. To me reading books should be as normal as breathing; to cities, libraries should be oxygen to their hearts. Curious about the Book Bunk project, I visited their website. The vision statement written in large print across the Home page, is arresting: "*We imagine that public libraries can be steered to become more than just repositories, acting as sites of knowledge production, shared experiences, cultural leadership and information exchange. We see them as sites of heritage, public art and memory*".

The Book Bunk partners, Angela Wachuka and Wanjiru Koinange, were two literature advocates in a glittering caucus that included Peter Kimani, author of *Dance of the Jakaranda*, a New York Times Notable Book; Petina Gappah from Zimbabwe, author of *Elegy for Easterly* which won a Guardian First Book Award; South African Zukiswa Wanner, Nairobi resident, prolific novelist and now, Paivapo publisher. Political cartoonist Gado, winner of the prestigious Prince Claus Award in 2007 under the theme of *Culture & Conflict* spoke in a discussion I was sorry to miss: *The Growing Threat of Self-Censorship* moderated by IPA Freedom to Publish Chairman, Kristenn Einarsson. Gill Moodie whom I interviewed at the seminar, spoke on this panel. <http://bordersliteratureonline.net/globalde/tail/Gill-Moodie>

Kimani, whose novel, feted overseas, was rejected by publishers at home, would not back down about African publishers lacking imagination and faith in the power of African content to sell itself. Zukiswa Wanner shared a moving memory of the launch of children's book *Story, Story, Story Come* in South Africa. A first for her publishing house, Paivapo, and edited by Maimouna Jallow, the book

was launched in a South African township hall overflowing with people with little to no money but hungry for children's stories hidden in books.

### Strengthening the Publishing Eco-System

Thabiso Mahlape, Publisher, Blackbird Books and Abdulrahman 'Abu Amirah' Ndegwa, founder of the unapologetically Swahili Hekaya Initiative were a part of that glittering caucus smashing the myth that 'Black people don't read', articulating ideas for *Creating the Readers of the Future*, an eco-system panel moderated by President of the Kenya Publishers Association, Lawrence Kibaara Njagi. Another, *Developing Africa's Next Generation of Publishers, Writers and Artists* was moderated by Maimouna Jallow. Dawn Makena, CEO Storymoja Africa (Kenya), promotes reading of all kinds through book-clubs. She called for up-skilling people in the book chain in order to produce world class work. Makena's up-skilled human resources are jewels in a crown. The crown is the risen publishing industry. The foundation for that rising, the "5Cs" advocated by Richard Crabbe, former APNET Chairman. Speaking on the panel titled: *Text Book Policies: Reaching the Goal of A Text Book for Every Child in Africa*, the elder statesman of African publishing met its intersecting challenges head-on with these 5 Cs: Creativity; Collaboration; Competition; Contracts; Costs. I lit up, enjoying his expert's precision and straight talk: *what are the real costs of the processes in the chain?* It was a master class and my eureka moment. *Creativity; Collaboration; Competition; Contracts; Costs*. After the seminar, I wrote to Richard Crabbe suggesting that his 5Cs be extended to cover the entire output of the publishing industry, not only text books. I told him that in the 5Cs I heard a mantra for the publishing industry; that I saw the principles as the axis around which a strong industry must turn. Let me reproduce his response here:

*"All decisions and practices should be anchored in and guided by a national policy framework, not ad hoc or ever-changing rules depending on who's in charge at government or technical level.*

1. **Creativity** gives rise to innovation in writing and presenting information and lessons, whether in trade, educational, academic or other types of books. We need to encourage more people to write different genres of books and to move away from focusing so much attention and energy on textbooks.
2. **Collaboration** with local and international partners provides added value. It enables content producers and writers to keep abreast with international trends, as with digital reading materials, for example. Additionally, collaboration facilitates broader exposure for

*author and publisher as well as better promotion and higher potential sales and access to a work.*

3. **Competition** encourages quality. This is particularly true for upholding standards, selection, procurement, payment. Stifling competition breeds corruption. In the case of textbooks, when government agencies take over writing, production, and distribution, that means 80 percent potential revenue going to those agencies. That is revenue that could be in private business and which could be further invested in developing writers and increasing availability of books. Government should not be referee/regulator and player competing with less-resourced private publishers.
4. **Contracts** should include who holds and or owns copyright. Implications for reprints, derivatives such as film production rights, and non-payment of royalties all need to be factored into the language of contracts. Contracts should not be limited to authors; the work of illustrators should also be covered by contracts. This is particularly important for children's books, where illustrations often convey more expression than words.
5. **Costs**. What are the drivers? Are they from customs duties, taxes, distribution (road transport, shipping, postage)? How can these be brought down within a country or across borders? For textbooks, the timeframe for a book provision program—from availability of curriculum to delivery of books to schools—should be realistic to allow for optimum content development, production quality and delivery to end-users.

I remember his caution about costs at the Nairobi seminar. His exact words: *"If costs are cut, it will reduce quality... And what about distribution costs?"*

I remember his appeal to his colleagues to be far more realistic about time frames: *"We need time to write; time to publish; time to get the books into the schools."*

Enitan Solarin, owner of Wordsmith, a Lagos based bookshop, recently told me that her greatest challenge as a bookseller in Lagos is acquiring books by African authors. The incoherence of the book chain does nothing to help this problem and she has invited me by means of this essay to call for greater cohesion so that there can be effective information transmission up and down the chain. I wish she had been present in Nairobi to share with delegates her recommendation that: *"There should be a central clearing house where information on local publishers and rights owners' catalogues can be accessed for information."*

An objective of my essay is to reflect the effort made by seminar organizers to represent the wider book-chain as panelists and as guests. Alongside publishers were journalists and bloggers [James Murua of jamesmurua.

com, (Kenya) Porter Anderson of Publishing Perspectives (USA)] Edward Nawotka of Publishers Weekly (USA). I have already mentioned artists, Gado Mwampembwa, political cartoonist (Tanzania) and Maimouna Jallow, dramatist (Kenya)] who, as moderator of the *Publishers, Writers, and Artists* panel, celebrated the inclusion of artists in the discussion title, commending the IPA's recognition of the wider publishing eco-system. But why were there no book-sellers on panels? I was surprised and concerned given the gaps in the book retail sector. Unavailability of titles by African authors leads to poor to no representation in bookshops. Lack of education about the economics of book retail leads to poor credit records. Attributed to far too many book sellers, the problem was brought to light in a wide-ranging study about the Nigerian book industry published by Guardian newspaper on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2017. A title with teeth, designed to raise the alarm: *Book Industry Reels in Debt as Publishers, Booksellers Bicker*. The absence of African Books Collective was a surprise too. Now using the print-on-demand model, ABC is quite possibly the world's largest marketing and distribution institution for books published on the African continent. When I shared my review with Justin Cox, the CEO of the organization, this is what he said. I quote him here, with permission:

*"African Books Collective was surprised not to be included at the IPA. The collective is an African-owned and now self-supporting organization with some 30 years experience of marketing and selling books in markets outside of Africa. Over 3000 titles published by 150+ publishers on the continent have been made available digitally and in print, they are discoverable on platforms such Nielson and Bowker, for retailers in African countries wanting to increase their holdings of African-published content the collective could serve as a useful one-shop stop in order to do so. Also, with such a vast quantity of content available on multiple digital platforms the collective could also be of great assistance to libraries wanting to decolonize their collections, and have already seen great progress in this area in South Africa which has a market hungry for content from around Africa. Additionally, some of the newer and younger publishers the collective works with may not be on the radar of the IPA group. These publishers are doing some serious work on the ground and are bringing all sorts of diverse voices from Africa to international markets. The collective is in a strong position these days; excellent new publishers are signing up and the market for the books we distribute is growing globally which has reduced our reliance on traditional markets in the US and UK thanks to the new channels we have opened up. Though it is not in our remit to necessarily be focusing on or profiting from African distribution we believe there is a lot we could have shared and collaborated*

*on at such a gathering on behalf of the publishers we represent."*

### **We Need Publishing Education & Data Collection Savvy**

Despite a colonial and post-colonial history spanning decades, publishing in Africa is still in its infancy. Step by step technical knowledge is needed about how to create viable businesses with the necessary systems in place. To get within spitting distance of global leadership, the industry must professionalize. With his **5Cs** publishing consultant, Richard Crabbe, has put us on a good conceptual footing: **Creativity; Collaboration; Competition; Contracts; Costs**. The IPA is responding to the call for professionalism. To the urgency for data collection systems, organizers set up a panel at the Nairobi seminar, moderated by APNET Chairman, (MD, University Press Plc), Samuel Kola-wole: *Data Innovation: Developing Data and Statistical Capabilities to Support the Publishing and Creative Industries*. Speaking on the panel, Isabelle Kassi Fofana, suggested publishers' reluctance to provide data may be rooted in embarrassment: fear of being shown-up as lacking know-how and credible results; a fear that undermines wide acceptance amongst publishers that it is reliable data not anecdotal information that will attract government interest and investment in the industry.

A partnership with Insight Wells Research has been forged in a pilot programme titled: *Pulse of the African Publishing Industry Survey*. The pilot will inform policy, advocacy and planning for future seminars. Of critical importance was the invitation extended to André Breedt of Nielsen Book Research International to present the benefits of using Book Scan, Nielsen's globally recognized software for research and measurement in book retail. Successfully taken up by South Africa, Book Scan features in my interview with Gill Moodie of NB Publishers based in South Africa (see above). Nielsen's software is being reviewed by the Nigerian Publishers Association for adoption in our own book trade. It was music to my ears when Breedt concluded his Power point presentation with an invitation to publishers interested in Book Scan to see him at any time during the meeting (and presumably, after). With 40 publishers' associations represented by their leadership in that hall, I saw a golden opportunity to leapfrog into the future. Surely this is the solution to the industry's poverty of data and analytics? Surely now with reliable metrics, publishers can get the data needed to attract investors; to begin to move the industry forward- starting this year? I have read Transformation Goal 4 of the Lagos Action Plan '*Leveraging Data for Advocacy and Digital Transformation*'. It is written with uplifting simplicity. What are Africa's

publishers waiting for? South Africa has already done it. Take a leaf from South Africa's book.

### We Need Publishing Education & Copyright Savvy

On August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019 The Cable reported that there is a war on. The combatants: JUMIA, online retailer with headquarters here in Lagos, Nigeria, and Bookcraft Africa, Ibadan based publisher of Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, luminaries Biodun Jeyifo, Femi Osofisan, JP Clark, Kole Omotoso, Yewande Omotoso and others. JUMIA is accused of the sale of pirated copies of journalist Olusegun Adeniyi's book, *From Frying Pan to Fire*. The publishers' solicitors have demanded the book be taken down from the portal and a compensation to the client of N10 million (approx \$28,000). Bookcraft's lawyers are still waiting to hear from JUMIA. <https://www.thecable.ng/publisher-threatens-to-sue-jumia-over-pirated-copies-of-olusegun-adeniyis-book>

Piracy causes the book industry staggering financial losses. Legal costs for fighting it are steep. Speaking on a panel in Nairobi, José Borghino, IPA Secretary-General, lambasted the 'irresponsible behaviour' of tech behemoths GAFa (Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon) and anti-copyright zealots, describing piracy as '*The dark side of publishing*'. As mentioned earlier, John Asein, Director-General of Nigerian Copyright Committee, was present at the seminar. NCC has a zero tolerance policy to piracy, he said. According to one study, pirated books represent up to 70 % of books in circulation in the Nigerian school system. If this is true, the situation is dire and begs questions about how this zero tolerance policy works and what it looks like. It also begs questions about knowledge: how many consumers understand the harm caused by piracy to the publishing industry? And how many publishers understand the intricacies of copyright, of buying, selling rights and licensing?

To begin to address yawning knowledge gaps, the IPA organized a fireside chat about copyright in the evening of 14<sup>th</sup> June and the next day, a *Copyright Workshop* which saw UK's Michael Healey of Copyright Clearance Centre brimming with optimism. He endorsed the Lagos Action Plan which he said was paving the way with practical steps '*to create copyright ecosystems that can support Africa's emergence as a global publishing leader and accommodate its rapidly growing digital economy*'. [From Healey's entry in the Lagos Action Plan booklet, I learned to my astonishment that Africa boasts an internet growth exceeding 10,000 % – the highest growth rate in the world.] Second, Healey introduced key opportunities resident in copyright. I noted his introduction of the work of the *International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations* in Africa. IFRRO's purpose is to facilitate, on an interna-

tional basis, the collective management of reproduction and other rights relevant to copyrighted works through the co-operation of national Reproduction Rights Organisations (RROs). [For information about Reproduction Rights Organisations and opportunities facilitated by RROs, visit *Reproduction Rights Organisations of Nigeria*: [repronig.ng](http://repronig.ng) and the online library at [wiley.com](http://wiley.com) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1087/09531510050162101>

Serving as *Copyright Workshop* moderator, Kiarie Kamau, CEO East African Educational Publishers, commended the Englishman for shifting the discussion paradigm from a negative one about preventing piracy to one of verifiable hope in copyright. Marisella Ouma of the Central Bank of Kenya, Carole Croella of WIPO and Maxwell Wahome of Longhorn Publishers (Kenya) were the other experts participating in the pilot project established as *Transformation Goal 3* of the Lagos Action Plan and designed with a view to '*Making Africa's Copyright Framework Fit for the Digital Era*'.

### The Digital Revolution and Government Support

The Nigerian government was conspicuously absent from the 2018 Lagos IPA Seminar. Of the 200 delegates present, John Asein and Afam Ezekude of the *Nigerian Copyright Commission* were the only Government reps I saw. A year later, in Nairobi, Lawrence Njagi of the Kenya Publishers Association would praise the Kenyan government for listening, for being a working government, successfully establishing a 1:1 text book-pupil ratio in order to promote strong educational outcomes. The Kenyan government was very much present and vocal about its support for Kenyan publishing. A retired colonel [his name and panel escape me], was a strong advocate for digital helping to meet challenges – capacity, accessibility and reach (particularly rural areas), declining library services etc – faced by the print dominated industry. He pointed out the urgent need for a mix of print and digital resources to accelerate universal education.

*StreetLib.com* is a digital publishing company with "a network of thousands of publishers, booksellers, authors, editors, publishing operators from all over the world" according to CEO, Giacomo D'Angelo who was invited to present the wonders of block-chain technology. The Italian ended his talk with a declaration: "Digital books will become unstoppable". Words which paved the way for *Digital Transformation and Disruption in African Publishing*, moderated by Ochekechukwu Ofili, dynamic founder of Okada Books. Tall, supremely confident in his trademark yellow Okada jacket, shining exponent of the power of mobile telephony to leverage an exploding population of

youth wired to consume content from screens. Importantly these youth are proving proactive in innovating solutions to realize their own creativity. The panel featured *wunderkinder* Chidi and Chika Nwaogu, 20-something year old founders of digital publisher for books and music, Publisher. Lamenting the unavailability as e-pubs of the books they studied at school, the twins encouraged publishers to digitize every single book in their catalogues and argued that this kind of innovation would interest investors in Africa's publishing potentials.

When Gersey Ifeanyi Ejimofo of Digital Back Books, the virtual library platform, encouraged publishers to partner more actively with digital marketers, I nodded in agreement. As a publicist for the sector, I can testify that it is often authors who initiate links between their publishers and my publicity services. This is reversing the order: it is the work of publishers to initiate PR/Media interventions for marketing their books. Listening to her – to all of them – speak about how they birthed their digital solutions, I became convinced that if African publishing is to rise, it will be on backs of the digital dreamers. But to my techno-illiterate ears, what they said was at times hard to follow and after the conference, I asked Giacomo D'Angelo, to explain block chain technology and its potentials as galvanizer of the African publishing economy. He responded with enthusiasm, providing links to the script and slides of his presentation, and talking with great hope about GitHub, an American service platform which had encountered trading difficulties. He explained that the firm *“was forced (who knows) to close its doors to Iranian developers, leaving them outside the digital economy in their specific industry”*. He told me that the GitHub case study presents the kind of difficulties that can be solved with blockchain in a global book industry dependent on traditional financial and institutional systems. An Amazon Affiliate, I perked up when he pointed out that the Amazon is “both the seller and the controller” and asked me whether or not I “see the problem here?” He was talking about transparency in the digital arena, citing block chain as the way out of that impasse too: “Block chain network (in the form of a public ledger) can provide an open and verifiable service, a unique and independent source of truth that doesn't depend on any big company, and that publishers can really trust. Hence, the concept is trust – moving from a big centralized corporation to an open and independent blockchain-powered network.” Industry stakeholders who wish to know more about block chain as a solution might be wise to explore these links:

<https://medium.com/streetlib/unstoppable-books-f58312d0d14d>

<https://techcrunch.com/2019/07/29/github-ban-sanctioned-countries/>

I know far too little about technology but I do know that the African book industry must leverage the digital revolution to accelerate its growth. And the gain for government? Is it so difficult to see that a strong publishing sector [one in which Richard Crabbe's 5Cs are enthroned], holds the keys to the knowledge economy and an African nation's freedom from dependence on and exploitation by hegemonic systems constructed by the world's vested interests?

### **Money, Money, Money**

The IPA has established the African Publishing Innovation Challenge Fund to encourage projects that solve our industry's problems. Fundraising strategies are being carried out with leading Gulf education charity, Dubai Cares, paving the way for more donations with a start-up gift of \$800,000 to be spent over the next four years. The funds will support implementation of projects envisaged in the *Lagos Action Plan* which since Nairobi has been renamed the *IPA Africa Action Plan*. My interview with Gbadega Adedapo, President of the Nigerian Publishers Association, focuses on the Action Plan's objectives, outcomes and partnerships, and will be published on Borders:<http://bordersliteratureonline.net/globaldetail/Gbadega-Adedapo>. With the winds of fortune blowing in our direction, the IPA's focus on Africa could not have come at a better time. According to the Overseas Development Institute [odi.org], 5 of the top 10 fastest growing economies in 2018 were African: Djibouti, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Senegal and Côte D'Ivoire. And on March 30<sup>th</sup> 2019 the African Continental Free Trade Agreement made history by bringing into force the world's largest free trade zone. According to the African Union website this represents: “A milestone in Africa's resolute use of the lever of continental integration to deliver prosperity to her people in line with Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.” It is a grand vision of the AU instituting a single customs union for Africa, aiming: “...to increase the low intra-African trade, currently around 17 %, lower than the 59 % observed in Asia, by removing tariff and other barriers on trade on goods and services... It also wants, in the second phase of the negotiations, to introduce provisions to increase intra-African investment, the protection of property rights and to eliminate unfair competition practices. By doing this, African countries aim to create the conditions to diversify exports away from the current unstable commodities.” [odi.org] AfCFTA might not by itself reduce high transport and logistics barriers, and production constraints affecting trade on the continent, but without a doubt what it will do is

promote and help sustain a thriving intra-African book trade. The writer of The Economist magazine feature, *The New Scramble for Africa* (March 7<sup>th</sup> 2019), sees real hope coming our way via the unity represented in AfCFTA: “African governments could strike better deals if they showed more unity. No one expects a heterogeneous continent that includes both anarchic battle zones and prosperous democracies to be as integrated as Europe. But it can surely do better than letting China negotiate with each country individually, behind closed doors. The power imbalance between, say, China and Uganda, is huge. It could be reduced somewhat with a free-trade area or if African regional blocs clubbed together. After all, the benefits of infrastructure projects spill across borders.” AfCFTA – surely a compelling case for a serious consideration of Africa’s economics and her rise to global power?

### Language as the Soul of Africa and Passing the Baton

Apart from the new knowledge and wealth of insights, if you were to ask me what I took away from the IPA Nairobi Seminar, I would say my memories of the two patriarchs of African publishing: Ngugi wa Thiong’o, world renowned activist, author and scholar and Dr. Henry Chakava of East African Educational Publishers. What passion I heard in their voices as they presented the efforts they have made over the course of their extraordinary lifetimes to see the restoration of indigenous African languages to the centrality of African life. Now as I near the end of this essay, my mind’s eye scans the great Hall of Africa. I see Chidi and Chika Nwaogu, trailblazing twins in their twenties; Okechukwu Ofili of Okada Books; Moses Kilolo from the celebrated Jalada Collective. I’m looking at faces and over the heads of about 350 industry stakeholders and my eyes finally settle on the octogenarian heads of Henry Chakava and Ngugi wa Thiong’o. The feeling of blessing is still with me. Brian Wafawarova, former President of the South Africa Publishers Association and Chair, IPA Inclusive Publishing and Literacy Committee, has written touchingly about what the intergenerational mix meant to him; how it enriched the Nairobi seminar and about his overall views about the value to African publishing of Lagos, Nairobi, Marrakech in 2020 and future IPA Africa gatherings. You can find his commentary on Borders:

<http://bordersliteratureonline.net/africanpublishing/Brian-Wafawarova-Commentary>

### Africa Rising

I see Ngugi wa Thiong’o. A dreadlocked young man has suddenly appeared – from nowhere. He joins him on stage. There they both stand –it is hilarious- making a raucous musical hall case for smashing the hierarchy of languages which prioritizes colonial languages and insults our own. There they stand, bellowing the chorus *Glory Glory Hallelujah* and its parody, *Gory Gory Hallelujah*. Now it is the much younger Moses Kilolo that has been invited on stage by the old man. Kilolo has a project to showcase, Ngugi tells us. *The Upright Revolution*, scrolling on the screen has made world history. It has been translated into 86 languages, 54 of which are African. Ngugi’s short story is unrivalled. A translation project without peer. Licensing rights will continue to be procured for prose translations, for dramatic interpretations and music and visual art adaptations of *The Upright Revolution*. The younger generations are blazing a trail for Africa’s rise as a cultural force, with languages at the forefront of the crusade. Soon our languages will take their place in the network of lingua franca alongside colonial languages, and yes, Ngugi wa Thiong’o did say *alongside* colonial languages, not, *instead of*. What passion in the voices of the younger generation of evangelicals sharing tales of their struggles to preserve lost and at risk tongues. I have just presented Moses Kilolo. Other – older- speakers were Dr. Kimani Njogu, Kenyan scholar [Kiswahili and African Languages]; Zimbabwean author Petina Gappah; Kiarie Kamau of East African Educational Publishers. Dr. Anthony Kila is the Director of the Centre for International Advanced and Professional Studies in Nigeria and a South African whose company I enjoyed at the seminar was Elinor Sisulu, NOMA Award winner in 2004 for her biography of Walter and Albertina Sisulu, revered fighters in the struggle against Apartheid. Her parents-in-law. Sisulu is founder of the PUKU Foundation which addresses children’s literacy in South Africa and ensures the availability of resources for children in all South African languages.

Moving forward with work that embodies the spirit and objectives of the 2000 *Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures*, Moses Kilolo, Elinor Sisulu and their comrades in the struggle, are standing on the shoulders of giants. On June 14<sup>th</sup> 2019, in Nairobi, a son of Kenyan soil, an aged giant of the struggle, spoke beauty, pride and joy into our hearts with his rejection of Africa rising on English (read colonial) wings.