
Sub-Saharan Africa literature and publishing sector report

**Preliminary research into the trade
publishing and literature sectors in
Sub-Saharan Africa**

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Introduction

This report presents preliminary research into the trade publishing and literature sectors in Sub-Saharan Africa. It identifies local contexts, trends and challenges in publishing contemporary writing across nine countries in Africa where the British Council works: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Every effort has been made to list major literary festivals, book fairs, publishers, notable writers and advocacy groups across these countries, in this report. However, this list is by no means exhaustive.

Comprehensive, reliable and up-to-date publishing industry data are not readily available in these nine countries, except for South Africa. It remains unclear how many books are sold annually or the actual size of the other markets. For this reason, this report merely highlights the publishing trends and initiatives oftentimes introduced by writers in these countries. The defunct Heinemann African Writers Series (AWS), established in the UK in 1962, played a major role in developing the literature and publishing sectors in Africa. Novels in these series were widely published, distributed and read throughout Africa. As Achebe (2003) notes, the introduction of the AWS was a game-changer in modern African literature; it enabled Africans to read books written by Africans for Africans. Over the past years, attempts have been made to establish indigenous publishing – integral to national identity and cultural development (Walter and May, 2003) – on a firm financial footing, to advance the work that AWS started. Such publishing can essentially showcase a people’s history experience, and belief systems (Walter and Jay, 2013).

The rapid growth of mobile phones and internet connectivity in Sub-Saharan Africa have enabled a new kind of opportunity – digital publishing. In 2001, the British Council leveraged the internet to launch the Crossing Borders mentoring and publishing initiative, focused on promoting new literature from Sub-Saharan Africa. A foreign teacher described during a British Council Oxford Conference how discovering the Crossing Borders website gave her materials on contemporary African literature (Mort, 2006). Many online publications – including Afreada, Lolwe, Africanwords, Down River Road, Doek, among others – have emerged after Crossing Borders ended. These new publications are expanding the scope of creative writing by Africans, by taking advantage of the relative ease of online publishing. Indeed, ‘Where once the ability to create online text would have entailed specialist knowledge of programming techniques, the advent of . . . Web 2.0 technologies . . . has enabled users with relatively low technical skills to upload and manipulate text with unprecedented ease’ (Page and Thomas, 2011:2).

E-books and other forms of digital literature have also emerged to suit readers’ abilities and interests. South African ed-tech company Snapplify was launched in 2012 to provide a marketplace for digital books (including fiction) and other educational content. In Kenya, eKitabu is a publishing platform launched in 2012, to provide accessible digital content. This business has also expanded to other countries. In Nigeria, Okadabooks was set up by an engineer in 2013 to enable people read books using mobile phones. Traditional publishers are also tapping into the digital market; Penguin Random House South Africa has its own mobile app – replete with sounds, videos, and interactive elements – to cater for the needs of its diverse readers. Similarly, the African Books Collective (ABC), the worldwide marketing and distribution outlet for books from Africa now distributes e-books on its platform. Evidently, literature in Sub-Saharan Africa is not limited to physical books. It can be encountered online or other electronic media environments. Koskimaa (2007) believes that this variety indicates that literature is being expressed in new ways. This can be seen as a good thing, ‘one which helps maintain and even increase the relevance of literature in the contemporary digital world’” (Koskimaa 2007:5).

Prize culture plays an important role in shaping who and what gets read in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Noma Award for Publishing in Africa was established in 1980 (and discontinued in 2009) to reward outstanding African writers who published in the continent. Winners of this annual prize received \$10,000. The Caine Prize for African Writing was established in 2000, in the UK, to reward a published short story by an African writer based in any part of the world. The winner of this prize is usually awarded £10,000. Similarly, the inaugural Miles Morland Writing Scholarships – also founded in the UK – were awarded in 2013, to African authors, with the aim of allowing each scholar the time to produce the first draft of a completed book. The scholars writing fiction usually receive a grant of £18,000. The Safal-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature was founded in 2014 to recognize writing in African languages and encourage translation from, between and into African languages. It has a total prize fund of \$15,000. Additional literary prizes exist in Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan and the other countries that are the focus of this report. However, such prizes are often restricted to citizens of these countries.

This study has included a few authors from Africa who are also citizens of Western countries. The reason is that these writers continue to maintain strong links with their ancestral homes while living in other countries. Indeed, many of them prefer to be identified as Nigerian-British or Ghanaian-British, and so on. Clark (2007) argues that literature by Africans based abroad is increasingly interconnected with those by Africans based on the continent. Some of these writers voice concerns about the conditions in Africa and expose frustrations about living abroad. Such aspects reinforce the concept of ‘home’ for the African writer — which may mean living somewhere while remembering and desiring another place (Clifford, 1997).

Several interventions have been devised in these nine countries to strengthen reading and writing among primary and secondary school students. By contrast, interventions aimed at enhancing the skills of creative writers, at the tertiary level have received less attention. This report highlights several writing workshops that have been established in recent times to promote literature. Given limited funds and scope, such initiatives have very little effect on the overall quality of the literature sector, especially compared to interventions aimed at increasing literacy. This report also highlights some of the major challenges confronting the publishing industry such as book piracy and poor returns on investment. Furthermore, in some of the markets, small publishers are not treated particularly well by bookshops. Returnable books are putting a huge burden on these publishers. Despite these issues, many writers and publishers remain committed to creating value for book lovers by showcasing and celebrating literary talent from Sub-Saharan Africa.

Methodology

This research adopted document analysis to develop an understanding of current state of the publishing and literature sectors. Morgan (2022) argues that document analysis allows researchers to conduct studies that would have been difficult to conclude. This methodology is most suitable for researchers who do not have the resources or time required for field work (Morgan, 2022). The process for this study involved skimming, reading, examining and interpreting contents of reports and other publications. This procedure helped identify specific and useful data relevant to the study. It also provided clarity on previous work in this area. Interviewing is a common research method used in studies involving people (Jensen, 2012). Hence, it was also used to collect more data from five respondents in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Uganda. These respondents have a keen interest in the publishing and literature sectors in Sub-Saharan Africa. Full details of their biographies are provided in the Appendix.

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is Africa's second largest country (in terms of population), with a rich literary tradition. Early literary works produced in the country were written in Ge'ez, Amharic, and Tigrinya languages (Marzagora, 2022). A new wave of literature emerged in late 19th century, featuring works that decried the political and social climate of the time. In 1908, Afäwäraq Gäbrä-Iyäsus became the first writer to publish a novel in Amharic, under the title *Ləbb Wälläd Tarik* (Marzagora, 2022). Women played a key role in development of Amharic literature in Ethiopia; some of the earliest poems published by female poets were recorded in 1930s (Mueller, 2016). Ethiopian literature has evolved over the years, culminating in a range of new genres such as fantasy, science fiction, and romance, published in both English and Amharic. Literature and publishing are generally supervised by the Ministry of Information and Culture, however, matters pertaining to reading and literacy are overseen by the Ministry of Education. According to UNESCO figures, the literacy rate in the country is 52%, as of 2017.

Publishing is a costly venture in Ethiopia. There is an absence of support for local writers which affects the creative output in the country. Few professional writers in Ethiopia can make a living from their books. Some children's books produced in the country are of low quality (Walelign, 2022). The book production-distribution-consumption value chain is also being controlled by a few enterprises, leading to an absence of a dynamic competitive environment (Gudeta, 2021). Although the business model of self-publishing is practiced in the country, this can be unprofitable because of the hefty distribution costs charged by booksellers. Regarding widespread copyright infringement, the writer Alemayehu Gelagay told Anadolu Agency that Ethiopian writers are facing massive theft of their creative works: 'We're in a dark period. As soon as books are published, unknown people in Ethiopia and abroad post and sell the books in PDF format on the internet' (Tessema, 2022).

Advocacy groups/Initiatives

[Ethiopian Writers Association](#) is helping to promote literature in the country. In 2016, the Association, in conjunction with Ethiopia Reads organised and participated in a two-day book festival in the Shiro Meda district of Addis Ababa.

[Ready Set Go Books](#) helps to increase literacy by producing colourful, mother tongue, early reader, children's story books. The organisation now has over 125 unique titles in Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali, Anuak, Dizin, Kiswahili, Wolaitta, Spanish, Greek, and French.

[Abrehot Library](#): In 2022, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed inaugurated the Grand Abrehot Library in Addis Ababa, the largest public library in Ethiopia. The library is a four-storey facility with a capacity to accommodate more than 2,000 users at a time and houses 1.4 million books.

[Ethiopia Reads](#) aims to empower and strengthen communities through the teaching and learning of reading. The organisation has planted over 80 libraries in every region of Ethiopia. Where there are no roads, the organisation deploys a teacher on a horse to reach children who do not have any books.

[Selam Ethiopia](#) was established in 2005 to promote a reading culture. In collaboration with the Ethiopian Writers' Association, the National Archive and Library Agency and the Ethiopian

Academy of Sciences, this organisation has provided several training courses in fiction and non-fiction writing, poetry, Ethiopian literary history, basic literary criticism and folklore.

Literary festivals/Book fairs

[Jigjiga International Book Fair](#): In 2022, the Jigjiga International Book Fair, the first book fair in Somali Region of Ethiopia, took place in Jigjiga, the capital city of the region. The forum brought together writers, readers, scholars, and social models in Ethiopia and around the world.

[Youth Book fair](#): In 2022, the Alliance Ethio-Française of Addis Ababa and the French Embassy in Ethiopia organized an inaugural youth book fair. Several authors, illustrators, publishing houses and storytellers from Ethiopia and French-speaking African countries took part.

Publishers

[Shama Books](#) founded in 1981, is one of Ethiopia's largest book publishers and distributors. Its main office is in Addis Ababa.

[Mega Books](#) was established in 2007 and is a leading book publisher and distributor in Ethiopia. Based in Addis Ababa, the business has 32 bookshops throughout Ethiopia.

[HK Publishing](#) is a private limited company publishing a diverse range of educational books and fiction. It is based in Addis Ababa.

[Duka](#) is an innovative publisher of educational books for children, based in Addis Ababa. Duka is an Amharic word for footprint.

Literary awards

[HOHE Award](#) was established to promote creative writing and reading culture in Ethiopia. Organizers of the award also run events and trainings for young readers.

[Burt Award for Ethiopian Young Adult Literature](#) recognizes excellence in young adult fiction. It also aims to develop a strong reading culture in the country.

Market trends

[AfroRead](#) is a mobile book-reading app providing easy access to African literature in both e-book and audiobook formats for readers worldwide. AfroRead started by producing content from Ethiopia.

[Semu](#) offers a library of audiobooks and podcasts in several Ethiopian languages. Listeners can enjoy free and paid content. Classic literary works by Ethiopian authors are also available as well as a collection of children's books in several languages.

[Ethio Book Review](#) is a website that provides reviews of Ethiopian Amharic and Afaan Oromoo books to spread the culture of reading.

High-profile authors

Maaza Mengiste, Adam Reta, Mahtem Shiferraw, Linda Yohannes, Sulaiman Addonia, Meron Hadero, Mikael Awake, Lelissa Girma, Rebecca Fisseha, Solomon Hailemariam, Girma T. Fantaye, Teferi Nigussie Tafa, Hannah Giorgis, Bewketu Seyoum, Aisa Edemariam, Dinaw Mengestu.

Key moments of international recognition

In 2021, Meron Hadero won the Caine Prize for African Writing for her short story titled 'The Street Sweep.' Hadero made history as the first Ethiopian winner in the prize's 21-year history.

In 2020, Maaza Mengiste was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, for the novel, *The Shadow King*. The book was also a 2020 LA Times Book Prize Fiction finalist. In 2010, her debut novel, *Beneath the Lion's Gaze*, was selected by the *Guardian* as one of the 10 best contemporary African books and named one of the best books by *Christian Science Monitor*, *Boston Globe*, and other publications.

In 2019, Aida Edemariam was awarded the Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize for her debut book *The Wife's Tale*. The book had previously won a Royal Society of Literature Jerwood Award for a work of non-fiction in progress.

In 2012, Dinaw Mengestu was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship. He also won the Ernest J. Gaines Award for his novel *How to Read the Air*, in 2011. In 2007, his first novel, *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* was named a *New York Times* Notable Book. He also won the Guardian First Book Award in 2007.

GHANA

Prior to Ghana's independence in 1957, the publishing sector in the country was dominated by religious organisations who also published grammar books, dictionaries, hymn books (Dekutsey, 2000). During that period, some multinational companies including Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press were also producing story books for primary schools in the country, thus helping to create a demand for children's literature. In 1963, President Kwame Nkrumah made sweeping educational changes in Ghana which increased demand for textbooks (Dekutsey, 2000). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, British publishers such as Heinemann and Longman encouraged creative writing from Ghana. Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* was published in 1969 by Heineman African Writers Series. Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth My Brother* was also published by the series in 1971. Meanwhile Efuwa Sutherland's *Edufa* was published by Longman in 1969. Several indigenous publishers now operate in the country, producing the works of many new writers. However, many of these publishers and literary activities are concentrated in Accra, thereby alienating booklovers outside the capital city. Authors have also complained of a lack of literary agents, editors, translators and publishers focussing on literary works not just textbooks for schools. This scarcity of editors has limited the number of writers emerging and thriving in the country.

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture in Ghana is responsible for establishing a suitable environment for tourism, arts, and culture to flourish. However, other government agencies such as the Ghana Book Development Council (GBDC) also help coordinate the development of the book industry in Ghana, and promote reading habits among Ghanaians, particularly school children. According to UNESCO, Ghana's literacy rate is 80% (as of 2020). In 2021, GBDC carried out a survey to assess the extent to which books in the market conform to standards which prescribe minimum technical guidelines or requirements for books in the country. Out of the 3,504 books assessed, 65.9% and 62.9% met the standards set for the physical features and technical features respectively (GBDC, 2021).

Advocacy groups/Initiatives

[Contemporary Ghanaian Writers Series](#) (CGWS) is a literary initiative created to highlight Ghana's contemporary writing scene by promoting the works of emerging writers particularly of Ghanaian descent. Founded in 2019, CGWS also provides a platform for emerging writers to connect and build a relationship with the writing and reading communities in Ghana.

The [Writers Project of Ghana](#) (WPG) was founded in 2009 to help Ghanaian writers explore and affirm their identity and culture. To achieve these goals, WPG reaches out to Ghanaian writers through various programmes and activities. WPG also offers public readings and poetry recitals, writing workshops and more.

The [Ghana Association of Writers](#) (GAW) was founded in 1967. It is one of the oldest advocacy groups in the country. GAW created the GAW Schools Outreach, which establishes literary clubs in senior high schools, and the GAW Annual Literary Awards which promote writing and publishing standards.

[Ghana Writes Literary Group](#) is a group of literature enthusiasts whose aim is to encourage the writing and reading of African literature. The group organizes literary contests, produces anthologies, facilitates writing workshops, and sets up reading clubs.

[The Pan African Writers' Association](#) (PAWA), founded in November 1989, is a Ghana-based cultural institution. It is an umbrella body of writers' associations on the African continent and the diaspora.

[Flash Fiction Ghana](#) is a not-for-profit organisation created for lovers of storytelling. With the aim of creating a platform for writers to publish their works to reach a wider audience, this organisation produces flash fiction from Ghana alongside non-fiction, and commentary from the Ghanaian literary scene.

[Write Ghana](#) is a literary non-profit dedicated to exploring, showcasing and documenting language and literature in Ghana. It celebrates, supports and showcases the languages and literatures of Ghana through various initiatives. Write Ghana's mission is to create opportunities that increase the use and representation of Ghanaian languages and literatures.

Literary festivals/Book fairs

[Pa Gya! A Literary Festival in Accra](#) is a literary arts festival featuring readings, panel discussions, performances, book launches, literary prize awards and many more. Over the years, the festival has grown to include art talks, art and literary exhibitions, as well as film screenings. The festival also enables booksellers, publishers and independent authors to showcase and sell their books.

The inaugural [All African Book Fair](#) (AABF) took place in 2022 in Accra. The book fair was organized by Gracie Grace Reads, a children's book publisher, with the aim of 'bridging the large diversity margin in the children's book publishing field'.

The [Ghana International Book Fair](#) is an annual event that brings together all Ghanaian and international book industry players to exhibit books, explore business opportunities, organise literacy programmes for students, and hold workshops for the book industry. The 19th edition of the fair was held in 2022.

Publishers

[Adwinsa Publications Limited](#) is a leading publishing company in Ghana. Founded in 1977, it focuses on literature books and textbooks for Ghanaian schools.

[Afram Publications](#) is one of the largest indigenous book-publishing houses in Ghana. Afram dominates the market, particularly in the areas of Ghanaian literature and textbooks for schools.

[Aki-ola Publications](#) is a leading publisher specialising in textbooks and story books for children and young adults. It was established in 1998.

[Kwadwoan Publishing](#) aims to build a solid relationship between industry players and customers through the provision of quality books for children of all age groups, adults and general readers. It was founded in 1996.

[Mountype Publishing](#) was established in 2014 to provide quality publications for educational purposes as well as leisure reading. Books published by this company cover the reading spectrum ranging from pre-school readers to tertiary.

Literary awards

[The Ghana Association of Writers \(GAW\)](#) Literary Awards were first held in August 1987. The awards were created to honour, celebrate, inspire and promote outstanding Ghanaian literary talent. Since their establishment, the GAW Literary Awards have grown to become the largest literary awards in the country.

The [Ghanaian Languages Short Story Prize](#) is a literature prize awarded to a writer of a short story in an indigenous language. The prize aims to increase the visibility of literature in Ghanaian languages.

Market innovations

[AkooBooks](#) is Ghana's digital distributor of African audiobooks, and offers a wide range of audio services. In 2022, the AkooBooks platform was redesigned so it could reach consumers in more African countries, and allowing users to pay using their mobile wallets.

[Journal of the Writers Project of Ghana](#) (JWPG) seeks to publish original work by emerging and established Ghanaian writers at home and abroad, writers from other African countries, and other writers who write about Ghana.

High-profile writers

Kofi Awoonor, Nii Ayikwei Parkes, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ayesha Haruna, Yaa Gyasi, Caleb Azumah Nelson, Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Kwei Quartey, Efua Sutherland, Kofi Anyidoho, Atukwei Okai, Taiye Selasi, Roseanne A. Brown, Ruby Yayra Goka.

Key moments of international recognition

Accra was named as UNESCO World Book Capital for 2023.

In 2023, Victoria Adukwei Bulley won the Rathbone Folio Prize in the Poetry category for her debut collection *Quiet*. In 2018, she won a Society of Authors Eric Gregory Award for promising poets under 30.

In 2021, Caleb Azumah Nelson's first novel, *Open Water*, won the Costa First Novel Award and Debut of the Year at the British Book Awards. The novel was also nominated for the Dylan Thomas Prize, Gordon Burns Prize, and Desmond Elliot Prize.

In 2016, Ayesha Harruna Attah was awarded the Miles Morland Foundation Scholarship for non-fiction.

In 2016, Yaa Gyasi was awarded the National Book Critics Circle's John Leonard Award for her novel *Homecoming*. She was also awarded the PEN/Hemingway Award, the National Book Foundation's '5 under 35' honours, and the American Book Award for the same novel.

KENYA

This political upheavals in Kenya during the 1950s and 60s were largely incorporated into the first wave of Kenyan novels (Sifuma, 2021). Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child* is one of the first novels to depict this period. Published in 1964, the book is also one of the first published East African novels written in English, and included in the African Writers Series (Sifuma, 2021). Elsewhere, the literary magazine *Nexus/Busara*, founded in the late 1960s by literature students at the University College, Nairobi, gave young authors a space to write (Mwangi, 2021). This underscores the pivotal role that the university played in laying the foundations of modern Kenyan literature. The government's decision to make Swahili a compulsory language in schools led to a rise of Swahili literature in the 1990s (Waweru, 2013).

The literature sector in Kenya sits under the Ministry of Sports, Culture and Heritage, while the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Digital Economy oversees book publishing. Additionally, the Ministry of Education is heavily involved in promoting a culture of reading in schools. In 2019, at a workshop on National Book and Reading Policies for Africa in Nairobi, a representative of the Ministry of Education's State Department for Early Learning and Basic Education stressed the strategic role the book publishing industry plays in the provision of quality education and in national development (Global Book Alliance, 2019). The representative committed that the Ministry of Education would formulate and implement a national book and reading policy for Kenya. The literacy rate in Kenya is 83%, as of 2021, according to UNESCO.

Piracy is a major issue affecting the publishing sector in Kenya. In fact, pirated books are sometimes sold at the same price as the original copies, thus confusing buyers even more (Capital FM, 2020). Apart from hurting the finances of publishers, counterfeited textbooks are also compromising the quality of education. A government policy of taxing books through VAT also impacted book sales in the country (Mwazemba, 2014). Interestingly, a novel could be termed 'bestseller' if sells up to 3000 copies in Kenya; nevertheless, the same novel could sell up to 300,000 if it is included in the secondary school curriculum (Mwazemba, 2014). A poor distribution network has also been identified as hampering the growth of the publishing sector (Ngao, 2021). Furthermore, there is no culture of creative writing training in Kenya; a few available classes are inconsistent.

Advocacy groups/Initiatives

[Kenya Publishers' Association](#) is the umbrella body for book publishers in Kenya. This association encourages the spread of printed and digital books throughout Kenya and beyond.

[Writers Guild Kenya](#) is a writing group committed to serve, educate and support authors in Kenya. This group organises various programmes and events.

[Book Bunk](#) was founded by a writer and publisher duo Wanjiru Koinange and Angela Wachuka. They are changing Nairobi by restoring some of the city's most iconic public libraries.

The [Nairobi Writing Academy](#), founded by Makena Onjerika, offers online classes in various creative writing areas including short and long fiction, poetry, screenwriting and creative non-fiction. Classes generally run for between 10 to 20 weeks and are led by published and award-winning African and non-African writers.

[Storymoja](#) is a creative company that also produces a wide range of books including fiction, textbooks, revision books, workbooks/activity books, and career resources. To promote reading, Storymoja has also run many reading and writing initiatives for children, parents, teachers and writers.

[Kwani Trust](#) was established in 2013, as a literary network dedicated to developing quality creative writing. The network publishes and distributes contemporary African writing, organises training programmes, curates literary events and maintains global literary networks. This organisation ran the Kwani? Manuscript Project to discover and publish African writers across the continent and in the diaspora.

Literary festivals/Book fairs

[The Macondo Literary Festival](#) is organised by the Macondo Book Society, a non-profit organisation registered in Kenya and founded by journalist Anja Bengelstorff and award-winning Kenyan author Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor. The festival seeks to promote literature and authors of and from Africa.

[Nairobi International Book Fair](#) is organised by the Kenya Publishers Association.

[MOTO Books and Arts Festival](#) is an annual event that brings together global books, arts and culture enthusiasts to engage through physical and virtual platforms.

[The Storymoja Festival](#) is a celebration of ideas, stories, writing and culture through books, live discussions, storytelling, poetry, music, workshops, debates and exhibitions.

Publishers

[Jahazi Press](#) is a Nairobi-based independent publisher of literary fiction and non-fiction by Kenyan authors. It was founded in 2020 by Ahmed Aidarus.

[East African Educational Publishers](#) (EAEP), founded in 1965, is a company that publishes and promotes products that contribute to educational and cultural development. It is based in Nairobi. It publishes classics by writers including Chinua Achebe, and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

[Rafu Books](#) was initially established in 2018 to produce novels and self-help books, but it expanded to include religious texts, textbooks and children's books. Rafu Books works with Kenyan authors who register on its portal and sell directly to readers on the platform.

Literary awards

The [Text Book Centre Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature](#) is a biennial literary award given by the Kenya Publishers' Association. The first award ceremony took place in 1974. In 1990, the award was revived with sponsorship from the Text Book Centre, and the first prize was given in 1992. Since 2015, the award's official name was known as Text Book Centre Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature.

[Kendeka Prize for African Literature](#) was launched in 2020 by Andrew Maina Kariuki, a Kenyan author, in memory of his late mother Kendeka Nyambura. The Prize aims to support a new breed of writers.

Market innovations

[Soma Nami](#) started out as a blog for book reviews. It is now a bookstore, a book café, a book box service and a book club. It is located in Nairobi.

The [Nairobi Book Love](#) podcast is a platform for readers looking to learn more about their favourite Kenyan writers. Founded by Kui Kabala in 2020, the podcast includes reviews of books and interviews with writers. Kabala's aim is to create a community of book lovers within Nairobi.

High-profile writers

Meja Mwangi, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Francis Davis Imbuga, Stanley Gazemba, Binyavanga Wainaina, Muthoni Garland, Mukoma wa Ngũgĩ, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, Peter Kimani, Charles Mangua, Grace Ogot, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, Idza Luhumyo, Makena Onjerika, Okwiri Oduor

Key moments of international recognition

In 2020, Idza Luhumyo was announced as the inaugural recipient of the Margaret Busby New Daughters of Africa Award. She was also the winner of the 2021 Short Story Day Africa Prize with her story 'Five Years Next Sunday', which also won the 2022 Caine Prize.

In 2018, Makena Onjerika was awarded the Caine Prize for African Writing. She was shortlisted for the 2020 Bristol Prize, was a nominee for the 2020 Best of the Net Awards and was on the 2022 NOMMO short story award shortlist.

Okwiri Oduor won the 2014 Caine Prize for African Writing for her story 'My Father's Head'.

In 2009, Peter Kimani was one of three international poets commissioned by National Public Radio to compose and recite a poem to mark President Barack Obama's inauguration. His novel, *Dance of the Jakaranda*, published in New York in February 2017, was named a *New York Times* Editors' Choice, among other accolades.

NIGERIA

In the 1950s, two Nigerian writers, Amos Tutuola and Chinua Achebe, were first published by UK publishing houses Faber and Heinemann before the books were imported home (Shercliff, 2015). These books helped build a solid foundation for a thriving literature and publishing sector in Nigeria. Earlier, in 1948, Oxford University Press (now University Press Plc) became the first western publisher to establish a West African branch in Ibadan (Ihebuzor and Ihebuzor, 2016). Other foreign publishers, including Longman Green, Evans and Heinemann opened their offices in Nigeria in the 1960s (Ihebuzor and Ihebuzor, 2016). The Onitsha Market Literature (popular booklets sold in markets in Onitsha, south-eastern Nigeria), also played a part in the development of the literary movement in Nigeria (Obiechina, 1973). The first book in the Onitsha Market Literature series was published around 1947 (Obiechina, 1973). A number of indigenous trade publishers exist in Nigeria. However, the landscape remains dominated by large educational publishers.

The Ministry of Information and Culture oversees the literature and publishing sectors in Nigeria. Despite Nigeria's large population, book sales remain challenging. It could take a number of years to sell off a print run of about three thousand books (Nwaubani, 2015). Pirates are also estimated to control a staggering 90 per cent of the book, music and film publishing industries in Nigeria (Ogunlesi, 2015). Nigeria's literacy rate is 62%, as of 2018, according to UNESCO.

Advocacy groups/Initiatives

[The Abuja Literary Society](#) (ALS) – founded in 1998, brings together writers, aspiring writers, book-lovers, intellectuals, and generally anyone with an interest in the literary arts and looking to relax in a creative atmosphere.

[The Committee for Relevant Art \(CORA\)](#) was founded in 1991 to carry out various events and activities which support cultural expression and contemporary art, including literature.

[Nigerian Publishers Association](#) is the trade association and professional body for publishers in Nigeria.

The [Association of Nigerian Authors](#) was founded in 1981 during a conference convened by Chinua Achebe.

[The Rovingheights Bestseller List 2022: Presented with Open Country Mag](#) is an initiative to track and highlight best-selling books in Nigeria.

[100 Notable African Books](#) is an initiative by *Brittle Paper* to celebrate 100 books by African authors. It was launched in 2018.

Literary festivals/Book fairs

[Nigeria International Book Fair](#) was founded in 2002. It hosts exhibitors from across the country and continent.

[Ake Arts & Book Festival](#) is a major festival that has brought over a 1000 writers, poets, musicians, actors, filmmakers, artists and thinkers together to celebrate creativity. It was founded in 2013.

[Lagos Book and Art Festival](#) (LABAF) was founded in 1999, to bring together publishers, book lovers, literary activists and artists.

Publishers

[Bookcraft Africa](#) is a publishing house established in Ibadan in 1998. The company publishes both fiction and non-fiction. In 2020, it published Wole Soyinka's first novel in 48 years, *Chronicles of The Happiest People on Earth*.

[Cassava Republic Press](#) was founded in Abuja in 2006 with the aim of publishing high-quality fiction and non-fiction for adults and children. They now publish several award-winning titles.

[Evans Brothers](#) is a leading educational publisher based in Ibadan. It was founded in the UK in 1903 by brothers Robert and Edward Evans. In 1945, it launched in Nigeria.

[Kachifo Limited](#) was founded in 2004 and is based in Lagos. The literary imprint, Farafina, took off in 2004 with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and soon became the home of several other leading African authors.

[Ouida Books](#) was founded in 2016 in Lagos by the author Lola Shoneyin to cater to the needs of readers who enjoy high-quality fiction. Their children's imprint Tanja was launched in 2018.

[Parrésia Publishers](#) is based in Lagos and publishes fiction and creative non-fiction under four imprints: Regium Books, Origami Books, Cordite and Qmode Meta. It was established in 2012.

[Narrative Landscape Press Limited](#) was founded in 2016 in Lagos by editor Anwuli Ojogwu and author Eghosa Imasuen. The dream of the founders was to provide a service to other publishing houses and self-publishing authors in Nigeria. They now publish many fiction titles. Their first big success was the acquisition of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's books.

[Masobe Books and Logistics Limited](#) was founded in 2018 in Lagos. Masobe is a word derived from the Isoko language, meaning 'Let Us Read'.

[Quramo Publishing](#) is an independent publishing company founded in Lagos in 2015. It publishes a range of titles from cultural history to contemporary fiction and non-fiction as well as academic and specialised works. In 2017, its founders launched the Quramo Writing Prize.

Literary awards

The [Nigeria Prize for Literature](#) was founded in 2004, and administered by an Advisory Board set up by Nigeria LNG Limited. The award rotates among four genres: fiction, poetry, drama and children's literature, repeating the cycle every four years. The winner receives \$100,000, making it the biggest literary award in Africa and one of the richest literary awards in the world.

The [9mobile Prize for Literature](#) was founded in 2013 in Nigeria by the telecoms company Etisalat, later renamed 9mobile. It is the first pan-African literary prize created to honour only debut books of fiction - novels or short story collections. Traditionally, the winner receives £15,000 and a sponsored fellowship at the University of East Anglia. 9mobile also purchases 1,000 copies of each of the shortlisted books for distribution to schools, libraries and book clubs across the continent.

The [SprinNG Women Authors Prize](#) was established in 2020 to honour female Nigerian authors who have published full-length books.

The [National Creative Writing Competition](#) is an annual creative writing competition organized by MyRainbowBooks (MRB) Limited and E-GAPs Foundation to help develop children's creative thinking and writing skills. It is open to children aged five to 16 years who are resident in Nigeria, or of Nigerian origin. The author Chigozie Obioma is the patron of the prize.

Market innovations

[Saraba](#) is a literary magazine focused on the work of new writers in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Since 2009, it has published several issues of a magazine, editions of poetry chapbooks, and online-only work.

[OkadaBooks](#) is a publishing and bookselling platform based in Nigeria. It was founded by engineer Okechukwu Ofili in 2013.

[Open Country Mag](#) was founded by Nigerian writer and critic Otosirieze Obi-Young. Their website launched on December 26, 2020.

[Isele Magazine](#) was founded as an online publication in 2020 by Nigerian novelist Ukamaka Olisakwe. They publish fresh and dynamic voices from Nigeria and across Africa.

Nigerian academic Ainehi Edoro founded [Brittle Paper](#) as an online literary magazine for readers of African Literature. They have grown to become Africa's premier online literary brand.

High-profile writers

Chinua Achebe, Flora Nwapa, Mable Segun, Helon Habila, Cyprian Ekwensi, Igoni Barrett, Lola Shoneyin, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, Titilope Sonuga, Dike Chukwumerije, Dami Ajayi, Efe Paul Azino, Eloghosa Osunde, Cheluchi Onyemelukwe-Onuobia, Chigozie Obioma

Key moments of international recognition

In 1986, Wole Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, the first Sub-Saharan African to be honoured in that category.

In 1991, Ben Okri, aged 32, won the Booker Prize, becoming not only the youngest winner of the prize at the time, but the first Black author to win.

In 2001, Helon Habila won the Caine Prize, becoming the first Nigerian to do so.

In 2007, Chinua Achebe won the International Booker Prize.

In 2007, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie won the Orange Prize for her novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In 2020, *Half of a Yellow Sun* was voted by the public to be the best book to have won the Women's Prize for Fiction in its 25-year history.

In 2014, the Nigerian city Port Harcourt became the 14th city to be designated UNESCO World Book Capital.

In 2021, Eloghosa Osunde won the Paris Review's \$10,000 2021 Plimpton Prize.

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SENEGAL

In the 1930s, Leopold Senghor's poetry and the Negritude Movement helped bring global attention to Senegalese literature. Years later, novelists including Sembene Ousmane (who became a filmmaker), further established a vibrant literary tradition within the country. Female authors have also played a major role in developing Senegalese literature. In 1980, Mariama Bâ published *Une si longue lettre* (So long a Letter). Set in post-1960 independent Senegal, the novel recounts the problems with polygyny from the point of view of a Senegalese widow. Mariama Bâ was hailed as the 'pioneering feminist voice of a continent' (Garman, 2019).

French is the official language of Senegal, but other widely spoken languages include Wolof, Peul, Jola, Mandinka. However, most novels in the country are written in French. The literature and publishing sectors are supervised by the Ministry of Culture and Communication. According to UNESCO, the literacy rate of Senegal is 52% (as of 2017). Many people, especially those in the villages, do not have access to books. Very few people in the country read for pleasure thus textbooks and school books account for a majority of the book market.

Advocacy groups/Initiatives

[Bibliothèque Lecture Développement](#) (BLD) is an association founded by Senegalese book professionals, sociologists and educationalists. The aim of BLD is to promote culture and education, and to enable access to libraries for all.

[Association of Writers of Senegal \(AES\)](#) is a body representing writers in Senegal. In 2021, the association [celebrated](#) award-winning Mohamed Mbougar Sarr on International Day of the African Writer.

[RAW Material Company](#) is a centre for art, knowledge and society. It works to foster appreciation and growth of artistic and intellectual creativity in Africa. The centre organises residencies for authors.

[Per Ankh Publishing Cooperative](#) is a research and publishing institution that aims to showcase the unifying values of art and scholarship. Activities of the cooperative are financed through members' contributions and proceeds from book sales.

[Black Rock](#) is a multidisciplinary artist-in-residence programme founded by renowned artist Kehinde Wiley. The residency brings together international artists to live and work in Dakar for 1-3 months.

Literary festivals/book fairs

[Foire Internationale du Livre et du Matériel Didactique](#) (FILDAK), the International Fair of Books and Learning Material, Dakar has been held bi-annually since 1987. It is organised by the Direction du Livre et de la Lecture (DLL) du Ministre de la Culture et de la Francophonie.

The first edition of [Festival international de littérature de Dakar](#) (Filid) was hosted in Dakar from June 29-July 2, 2022. The festival theme was 'Literature and conflict.' Writers, literary critics, publishers, culture lovers, students, and journalists were among those that attended the fair.

Publishers

[Amalion](#) is an independent academic publishing initiative. It was founded in 2009, to focus on publishing high-quality and innovative knowledge texts on Africa. Amalion publishes monographs, textbooks, journals and literary writing primarily in English and French.

[Saaraba Éditions](#) was established in Senegal by the French publishing group Editis. It was the second publishing house opened by the French company in Africa. Saaraba has a goal of publishing 15 to 20 titles per year - works that reflect the daily life, experience and aspirations of Senegalese.

[Éditions Jimsaan](#) was founded in 2012 by Felwine Sarr, Boubacar Boris Diop and Nafissatou Dia Diouf, leading figures in the Senegalese cultural scene. Jimsaan seeks to showcase new writing and republish lost classics. The three founders also acquired the Athéna bookshop in Dakar.

Literary awards

[Prix National Cénacle du Livre Senegal](#) is an initiative from Cénacle des Jeunes Écrivains du Sénégal to promote books written by Senegalese or foreigners, without distinction of age. The initiative in its first year – 2022 - celebrated work in poetry and prose with a 1,000,000 FCFA cash prize and a reissue of 100 copies of the prize-winning books.

Market innovations

[Nouvelles Éditions Numériques Africaines](#) (NENA SARL) is a pan-African digital publishing house. It was founded by a Senegalese of Quebec origin, and three other Senegalese associates. Long before the arrival of tablets and smartphones, NENA was publishing African law CD-ROMs. When smart mobile devices arrived, NENA became a generalist publisher in 2012.

High-profile writers

Mariama Bâ, Lamine Diakhate, Birago Diop, Cheik Aliou Ndao , Abdoulaye Sadj, Ibrahima Sall, Boubacar Boris Diop, Ousmane Soce, Sembene Ousmane, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Abdoulay Sadj, Aminata Sow Fall.

Key moments of international recognition

In 2021, the Prix Goncourt, France's leading literature prize, was awarded to Mohamed Mbougar Sarr. The author was only 31 years old, and became the first Sub-Saharan African to win the most prestigious French award.

In 1980, Mariama Ba was awarded the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa. She became the first winner of the prize.

In 1980, Aminata Sow Fall won the Grand Prix Littéraire d’Afrique Noire.

SOUTH AFRICA

The South African publishing sector is relatively robust, with a mix of independent and multinational companies operating in the market. During 2020/21, the industry produced around R2.9 billion in revenue, a decline from the 2018/19 (Publishers Association of South Africa, 2021). Unsurprisingly, educational books accounted for around 60% of publishing revenue (Publishers Association of South Africa, 2021). The Department of Arts and Culture established the Books and Publishing unit in 2004, to promote a culture of reading and writing, and to develop a sustainable book industry that supports equitable development of all South African languages. Although revenue is also derived from books in other languages, the South African publishing landscape is dominated by English and Afrikaans (Publishers Association of South Africa, 2021). Socio-politics have played a significant role in shaping the South African literary canon. A generation of South African writers revolutionised the country's literary landscape in the 1950s and early 1960s - a dynamic and politically volatile period in the country (Barnard, 2011). Over the years, several South African authors have continued to produce novels that provide commentary on society.

A lack of finance is slowing action to grow the South African publishing sector and hindering the ability of organisations to fulfil their strategic objectives. The South African Book Development Council (SABDC) which was established by the government in 2007, was shut down in 2021, due to financial hardship (Brittle Paper, 2021). Specifically, SABDC sought to showcase, strengthen and diversify the South African book industry and its many-linked supply chain. Nick Mulgrew who runs a small poetry publisher - uHlanga - in South Africa states that as suppliers to bookshops, small publishers are not treated particularly well. In fact, "many bookshops in the past have made large orders of books on consignment, only to return them en masse at the end of the consignment period. This makes accounting, such as my royalties calculations, very difficult." In this regard, Mulgrew thinks the South African publishing sector is not serving the majority of South Africans: "We have had, and will continue to have, a small amount of internationally successful writers, but this is not really a useful metric to use in determining the health of a publishing industry." Piracy (both in print and digital book formats) is also a threat to the sector. UNESCO's figures reveal that South Africa's literacy rate is 98%, as of 2019.

Advocacy groups/Initiatives

[Publishers Association of South Africa](#) (PASA) is the largest publishing industry body in South Africa, and is committed to creativity, literacy, the free flow of ideas and encouraging a culture of reading.

[The National Writers Association of South Africa](#) (NWASA) was born out of a need for a national writers' movement that will advocate for literature, advance and defend the rights and interests of writers.

[The Writers Guild of South Africa](#) (WGSA) aims to be a support system for the South African performance writer in the local film, television, radio, stage, animation, and new media (internet – mobile and digital distribution, and gaming).

Academic and Non-fiction Authors Association of South Africa ([ANFASA](#)) was formed as a national association especially for authors of general non-fiction works, textbooks and academic works, but it does not exclude authors of fictional works from membership.

[Romance Writers Organization of South Africa](#) (ROSA) is a non-profit, volunteer-run professional association. It started as a Yahoo group in 2010.

Literary festivals/Book fairs

The [Abantu Book Festival](#) was launched in Soweto in 2016, to celebrate the rich and diverse African literary heritage. It focuses on books, poetry and musical performances, as well as writing and publishing workshops.

[The Open Book](#) Festival started in 2011, and was an annual book festival which took place in Cape Town, every September. Following the effects of Covid, organisers introduced a more flexible festival in 2022, with multiple events through the year.

[The Time of the Writer International Festival](#) has been organised annually since 1996, in Durban by the University of KwaZulu Natal's Centre for Creative Arts. The project is among the largest and longest-running literature festivals in the continent. The week-long event hosts writers from South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world.

The [Franschhoek Literary Festival](#) (FLF) is hosted annually in the Western Cape's winelands in the town of Franschhoek. It was established in 1997, and has become internationally recognised for celebrating South African books and authors while fostering a culture of reading and writing among children.

Publishers

[Kwela Books](#) was founded in 1994. They specialise in fiction and non-fiction. Their main aim is to "broaden the scope of Southern African literature, and to document stories that have not been told". While the majority of their books are published in English, they also publish several leading Afrikaans authors.

[Modjaji Books](#) is an independent feminist press that publishes southern African women writers. Established in 2007, Modjaji Books fills a gap by providing a platform for serious and ground-breaking writing by new and established women writers.

[New Africa Books](#)' history starts with David Philip Publishers, which was founded in 1971 by Marie Philip and her late husband David. Not long after the Philips' retirement in 1999, David Philip Publishers merged with two other small presses to become New Africa Books.

[Jacana Media](#) is an independent publisher, producing books in the fields of the arts, natural history, lifestyle, fiction, South African history, current affairs, memoir and biography, children's books and public health. It was established in 2002.

[Blackbird Books](#) was founded in 2015. Since their inception, they've been pioneering and establishing a home for new African narratives, especially for black authors.

[Penguin Random House South Africa](#) was formed in 2015, following the merging of Penguin Books South Africa and Random House Struik. They publish general and literary fiction, as well as narrative non-fiction.

Literary awards

[The University of Johannesburg \(UJ\) Prize for South African Writing](#) was established in 2006. It is awarded to South African writers.

The [South African Literary Awards](#) (SALA) honour South African writers who have distinguished themselves as ground-breaking producers and creators of literature. It was founded in 2005, by the wRite associates, in partnership with the Department of Arts and Culture.

The [SA Book Awards](#) was founded in 2002 to recognize bestselling books written and published in South Africa, as selected by South African booksellers and determined by sales via data drawn from Nielson Book Data.

[The Sunday Times CNA Literary Awards](#), established in 1989, are awarded annually to South African writers by the South African weekly newspaper the *Sunday Times*. They are awarded for full-length non-fiction works and both winners receive R100 000.

[The Dinaane Debut Fiction Award](#) – formerly the European Union Literary Award – founded in 2004, to support debut writers. The winner is awarded R35 000 and a publishing contract from Jacana Media.

[The Ingrid Jonker Prize](#) is a literary prize for the best debut work of Afrikaans or English poetry. It was instituted in honour of Ingrid Jonker after her death in 1965. The yearly prize, consisting of R10,000 and a medal, is awarded alternately to an Afrikaans or English poet.

[The Olive Schreiner Prize](#) has been awarded annually since 1961, to emerging writers in the field of drama, prose, or poetry. It is named after Olive Schreiner, an author and activist.

Market innovations

[Imbiza Journal for African Writing](#) is an inclusive publishing platform for creative writing, criticism, academic writing and intellectual engagement for African thinkers, cultural workers and activists.

[The Johannesburg Review of Books](#), an independent literary review, publishes reviews, essays, poetry, photographs and short fiction from South Africa, Africa and beyond.

[Snapplify](#) specialises in enabling digital learning for individuals and institutions. Fiction and non-fiction are also distributed via their website.

High-profile writers

Mandla Langa, Deon Meyer, Zukiswa Wanner, Niq Mhlongo, Mohale Mashigo, Jacob Dlamini, Rešoketšwe Manenzhe, Gabeba Baderoon, Zakes Mda, Angela Makholwa, Masande Ntshanga, Damon Galgut, JM Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Zoe Wicomb.

Key moments of international recognition

In 2021, Damon Galgut was awarded the 2021 Booker Prize for his novel *The Promise*, having previously been shortlisted for the award in 2003 and 2010.

In 2017, Angela Makholwa was shortlisted for the Comedy Women in Print Prize.

In 2017, Durban became a UNESCO City of Literature – the only such city in the African continent.

In 2003, JM Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. In 1999, he won the Booker Prize

In 1991, Nadine Gordimer received the Nobel Prize in Literature.

In 2013, Zoë Wicomb was awarded the inaugural Windham–Campbell Literature Prize for her fiction.

SUDAN

Literary magazines, such as *Al-Fajr* and *Nahda*, founded in the 1930s, encouraged the flourishing of writing talent in Sudan (Qualey, 2019). Yet, Sudanese literature didn't begin with these publications. Classical poetry and popular oral tales were already in existence. Although young men – mostly friends who attended Khartoum's Gordon Memorial College - founded *Al-Fajr*, they attended literary salons hosted by women. Arafat Muhammad Abdallah, who was the chief editor of *Al-Fajr*, was also a pioneering short story writer in Sudan. (Qualey, 2019).

Most authors in Sudan write in Arabic. However, the country has several other languages, in addition to a number of distinct Arabic dialects. Sudanese literature covers a broad range of political and cultural themes. Most of the published works in the country are rarely translated or distributed abroad. Some of the books printed, and sold in Sudan are quite different from what is appealing to English readers abroad (Shmookler, 2019). In recent times, many Sudanese writers abroad have gained recognition in the UK and the US. Sudanese literature is also receiving much attention from publications such as the *ArabLit Quarterly* magazine which was founded in 2018, to promote literary works focused on Arabic literatures in translation. Publishing and literature sectors sit under the Sudanese Ministry of Culture. In 2018, the Ministry announced a requirement for Sudanese publishing houses to submit their books for approval before they could be displayed at book fairs. Beyond censorship, other challenges facing the sector in Sudan include an absence of robust cultural centres, libraries, and a low literacy rate – 61% (as of 2020), according to UNESCO.

Advocacy groups/Initiatives

The Work Cultural Group in Sudan was established in 2012, to bring together a number of Sudanese fine artists, playwrights, musicians, poets and authors who are active in [many cultural fields](#). The Group organizes the Mafroosh book fair during the first week of each month in Khartoum, to encourage reading and exchange valuable books that are not available at bookshops.

[Sudanese Writers' Union](#) was established in 1985 by writers in the country. The union works in many different fields, such as freedom of expression through writing.

[Faal Cultural Centre](#) was established in 2020 to enhance writing skills. The centre trains young women, and empowers them through writing and literary education.

[The Book of Khartoum: A City in Short Fiction](#) edited by Raph Cormack & Max Shmookler was published in the UK by Comma Press, in 2016. The anthology is described by the publisher as “the first major anthology of Sudanese stories to be translated into English.”

The [Red Sea Press](#) in the UK also published an English-language anthology, *Literary Sudans: An Anthology of Literature from Sudan and South Sudan*, in 2017. This book attempted to bring together literature from the two countries to establish a unified, national Sudanese literature.

Literary festivals/Book fairs

[Khartoum International Book Fair](#) is considered one of the country's major cultural events, provides a platform for workshops, seminars, films, musical bands, poetry recitals, concerts, and folkloric shows that attract big crowds of readers and visitors.

The [University and Cultural Book Fair](#) is organised by Sudan University of Science and Technology (SUST), in cooperation with the Academic Science House for Publishing and Distribution of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Publishers

[Azza Publishing House](#) is based in Khartoum. It publishes general literature and other fields.

Sudanese House of Books was founded by [Haji Abdel Rahim Makkawi](#), one of the most famous and prominent librarians in Sudan and in the Arab world. Makkawi contributed to the establishment of many public libraries before establishing his own business which specialized in selling books in addition to publishing.

[Khartoum University Press](#) was founded by the University of Khartoum to publish academic and non-academic texts.

Literary awards

[Tayeb Salih International Award for Creative Writing](#) sponsored by Zain telecommunications, is named in remembrance of the Sudanese novelist and short-story writer Tayeb Salih. Awards are usually given in three categories: novel, short-story collection, and critical studies. In each category, \$15,000 goes to the winner, \$10,000 to the author in second place, and \$8000 to the author in third.

High-profile writers

Sara Hamza El Jak Abdallah, Taban Lo Liyong, Leila Aboulela, Jamal Mahjoub, Bushra al-Fadil, Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin, Fatin Abbas, Isa al-Hilu, Ali al-Makk, Ahmed al-Malik, Tayeb Salih, Abdel Aziz Baraka Sakin, Bawadir Bashir, Mamoun Eltlib, Rania Mamoun, Hammour Ziada.

Key moments of international recognition

In 2020, Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin received the 2020 Arab Literature Prize, awarded by the Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA) in Paris in cooperation with the Jean-Luc Lagardere Foundation.

In 2018, Jamal Mahjoub was appointed a judge of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF), the most prestigious and important literary prize in the Arab world.

In 2017, Bushra al-Fadil won the 2017 Caine Prize for African Writing, for his short story entitled "The Story of the Girl Whose Birds Flew Away", translated by Max Shmookler, from the collection *The Book of Khartoum A City in Short Fiction*.

In 2015, Fatin Abbas won a Miles Morland Writing Scholarship.

In 2000, Leila Aboulela became the first-ever winner of the Caine Prize for African Writing. In 2006, her novel, *The Translator* was listed by *The New York Times* as one of the 100 Notable Books of the Year. In 2018, her novel *Elsewhere, Home* was awarded the Saltire Fiction Book of the Year award.

UGANDA

Following Uganda's independence, the government focused on education as a means to reduce ignorance, and poverty (Rutangye, 2019). The authorities focused on academic books to achieve these aims – one of the reasons Ugandan curricular materials (pre-school, primary and secondary school books) remain popular. Uganda has several indigenous languages, however, the official languages are English and Swahili. The country has a literacy rate of 79%, as of 2021, according to UNESCO. The privatisation of government businesses in the 1990s, including publishing further enhanced the publishing sector (Rutangye, 2019). The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development regulates the literature sector. Additionally, the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) an agency under the Ministry of Education and Sports is responsible for the development of educational curricula in Uganda.

In 1962, Makerere hosted a major international gathering of writers and critics of African literature. This was a period many African countries were gaining independence. This gathering and subsequent discussions helped pave the way for the emergence of a powerful Ugandan literary tradition (Korkeakivi, 2018). Although the country has produced many great writers, the publishing sector remains weak. There is a lack of adequate financial reward for authors, and the situation is further exacerbated by piracy. A poor reading culture in Uganda has also stalled the development of the book market (Magara, 2017).

Advocacy groups/Initiatives

[FEMRITE](#) (Uganda Women Writers' Association) was founded by Mary Karoro Okurut in 1995 and it was officially launched in 1996. FEMRITE promotes women writing in Uganda.

[Uganda Children's Writers & Illustrators Association](#) (UCWIA) is a body of Ugandan writers and illustrators of children's books.

[Uganda Publishers Association](#) is the umbrella body representing publishers in Uganda.

Author Jackee Batanda founded [SuccessSpark Brand Ltd](#), to provide writing, coaching, book writing, editing, and book marketing services to Ugandan authors. Through this company, Jackee runs an online book writing masterclass for new authors.

The [African Writers Trust](#) was established in 2009 as a body that aims to bridge the divide between African writers and publishing professionals living in the Diaspora and on the continent.

The [National Book Trust of Uganda](#) (NABOTU) is a non-profit umbrella organisation founded in 1997 to promote a reading culture in Uganda. It is made up of members' associations and institutions of authors, publishers, booksellers, printers, among others. The association offers training in copyright, open licensing and book development.

[The Babishai Niwe \(BN\) Poetry Foundation](#) (formerly The Beverley Nambozo Poetry Award for Ugandan women) began in 2008 as a platform for promoting poetry. It has since grown to include all African poets and runs as an annual poetry award.

[Scribe House](#) provides professional editing, and book production services. It also offers publishing and promotional advice to firms and individuals across Uganda and the continent.

[Writivism](#) was started at the Centre for African Cultural Excellence in Kampala, in 2012. This initiative, which works to build the capacity for writing on the continent includes the Writivism Short Story Prize which held its inaugural edition in 2012 and was sponsored by the British Council.

Literary festivals/Book fairs

The [Uganda International Writers Conference](#): Every two years, since 2013, writers and other publishing professionals have gathered in Kampala for this conference which is organised by the African Writers Trust.

The Uganda International Book Fair is a major book fair in Kampala. It held its [28th edition](#) in 2022.

Publishers

[East African Education Publishers, Uganda](#) was established in the 1990s to publish primary, secondary and tertiary school textbooks.

[Fountain Publishers](#) was established in 1998 to publish school textbooks, academic, general, fiction, tourism, children and local language books.

[So Many Stories](#) is an independent press that publishes fiction and creative non-fiction by Ugandans. It was founded in 2014, by the writer Nyana Kakoma.

Literary awards

[The Janzi Awards](#) celebrate outstanding achievements, innovations and diversity in Uganda's cultural, creative and performing arts forms. Founded in 2021, the awards are hosted by the Uganda Development Forum.

High-profile writers

Moses Isewaga, Jackee Batanda, China Keltetsi, Okello Oculi, Mildred Barya, Gorreti Kyomuhend, Mary Okurut, Okot p'Bitek, Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, Beatrice Lamwaka, Dilman Dila, Ayeta Anne Wangusa, Ernest Bazanye, Violet Barungi, Julius Ocwinyo.

Key moments of international recognition

In 2021, Kakwenza Rukirabashaija was named the PEN 2021 Pinter International Writer of Courage Award.

In 2018, Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi won the \$165,000 Windham Campbell Prize, one of the world's most generous writing awards.

In 2007, Monica Arac de Nyeko became the first Ugandan to win the Caine Prize

In 2006, Glaydah Namukasa's young-adult novella, *Voice of a Dream* was awarded the Macmillan Writers Prize for Africa.

In 2003, Doreen Baingana won the Grace Paley Award for Short Fiction

ZIMBABWE

The development of Zimbabwean literature has been largely influenced by resistance against injustice. An early generation of writers depicted the country's struggle for independence in their works. *Feso*, the first novel in the Shona language was published in 1956, and the work portrays the condition of people under colonial rule (Tapureta, 2020). This tradition of literary resistance has been adopted by younger generations of writers. Novuyo Tshuma's novel, *House of Stone*, published in 2019, has been described by her publisher as 'a sweeping epic that spans the fall of Rhodesia through Zimbabwe's turbulent beginnings, exploring the persistence of the oppressed in a young nation seeking an identity.'

The publishing sector in Zimbabwe has been declining over the past decades due to economic challenges. This has forced many authors to look to the West or their neighbour, South Africa. As the author Tinashe Mushakavanhu notes: 'New fiction about Zimbabwe has been taking place in the diaspora.' There are few bookshops in the country, and most of the publishing taking place is for educational purposes. Other problems facing the sector include copyright infringement, poor or inadequate book policies and the high cost of books. It is also difficult for authors to get royalties from book sales. The Ministry of Youth, Sport and Recreation is responsible for overseeing the literature sector. According to UNESCO, Zimbabwe's literacy rate is 90%, as of 2021. There is a lack of book reviewing culture in the country, with most newspapers not having regular literary pages.

Advocacy groups/Initiatives

[Zimbabwe Poets Society](#) was founded by two poets, Batsirai Chigama and Fungai Tichawangana. The Society aims to build a strong community of poets and to foster relationships with other poetry initiatives around the world. The founders also established the *Ipikai Poetry Journal* to publish poetry primarily from Zimbabwe and by Zimbabweans living around the world.

[Zimbabwe Writers Association](#) is an organisation that represents writers in the country.

[Zimbabwe Women Writers](#) (ZWW) is an organisation for women writers established.

[Ngano Content Creatives Hub](#) is a consulting business that offers expert professional advice on how to self-publish. It was established by Selina Zigomo in 2017, with the aim of helping ordinary people bring their extraordinary stories to life in books, blogs and talks.

Literary festivals/book fairs

[Gweru International Book Fair \(GIBF\)](#) announced its return after four years of interruption due to Covid 19. The event was first launched in 2016.

[LitFest Harare](#) 2022 is a literature festival hosted annually in Harare. It was founded by poet and curator Chirikure Chirikure in 2013. It features panel discussion sessions, dialogues, and performances that include poetry, theatre and music.

The [Zimbabwe International Book Fair](#) was established in 1983 to create a platform for selling books, buying publishing, translation and distribution rights, promoting intercultural exchange in the field of literature on an international level, and scout for African literary talent.

Publishers

[amaBooks](#) is a Bulawayo-based publisher of Zimbabwean novels, short story collections and poetry, with a few local history and culture titles. It was established in 2000.

[Weaver Press](#) was founded by Irene Staunton and her husband Murray McCartney in Harare in 1998. Their list focuses on books on political and social history, the environment, media issues, women's and children's rights, fiction and literary criticism.

[College Press Publishers](#) (CPP) is the first local company to publish educational material in Zimbabwe. It was established in 1967.

[Zph Publishers \(Pvt\) Ltd](#) was founded in 1981. It is one of the first indigenous publishing houses to venture into the textbook publishing market in Zimbabwe.

Literary awards

[The National Arts Merit Awards](#) (NAMA Awards) are awarded by the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe in recognition of outstanding achievements in arts and culture. The twentieth edition were hosted in 2022, and prizes given for Outstanding Fiction Book, Outstanding First Creative Published Work, Outstanding Children's Book, Outstanding Poetry Book.

High-profile writers

NoViolet Bulawayo, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Chenjerai Hove, Panashe Chigumadzi, Tinashe Mushakavanhu, Petina Gappah, Dambudzo Marechera, Charles Mungoshi, Stanlake Samkange, Yvonne Vera, Musaemura Zimunya, Batsirai Chigama, Fungai Tichawangana, Novuyo Tshuma, Brian Chikwava.

Significant moments of international recognition

In 2019, Novuyo Tshuma won the 2019 Edward Stanford Travel Writing Award for Fiction with a Sense of Place, for the novel *House of Stone*. She was shortlisted for the 2019 Dylan Thomas Prize, longlisted for the 2019 Rathbones Folio Prize and the 2019 Orwell Prize for Political Fiction. The *Los Angeles Review of Books* described her as 'a defining voice of her generation'.

In 2011, NoViolet Bulawayo won the Caine Prize for African Writing for the short story 'Hitting Budapest'. In 2013, her novel, *We Need New Names* won the Etisalat Prize for fiction, shortlisted for the Booker Prize, and the Guardian First Book. In 2022, her novel *Glory* was also shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

In 2009, Petina Gappah won the Guardian First Book Award for her collection of short stories *An Elegy for Easterly*. It was also nominated for other awards – such as the Orwell Prize. In 2015, her first novel, *The Book of Memory* won the Mckitterick Prize.

In 2014, Brian Chikwava won the fifth Caine Prize for African Writing with his short story 'Seventh Street Alchemy' (which was published by Weaver Press). He was the first Zimbabwean to win the prize.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to highlight opportunities and challenges within the publishing and literature sectors in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe. There is a consensus among some writers that literature is thriving in these Sub-Saharan African countries. Nigerian author, Chika Unigwe, who also runs the Awele Creative Trust (an organisation that creates a platform for literary encounters between professional writers and aspiring ones) believes that from the quality of the writing she receives from budding authors, and the sustained interest in the Trust, the future is bright. These sentiments have also been echoed in the media. In 2021, the *New York Times* declared that “2021 was the year for African literature”. Another media outlet, *Al Jazeera* also noted that “African authors took the literary world by storm in 2021,” These headlines are not misleading. In that particular year, African writers won the Nobel Prize for Literature, the Booker Prize, the Camões Prize for Literature, the Prix Goncourt and Hennessy Book Award, among other international prizes.

Digital publishing initiatives are picking up pace in Sub-Saharan Africa, illustrating how the publishing industry is taking advantage of the digital boom, and how new technologies can extend the possibilities for storytelling in the region.. Senegalese-based publisher, NENA offers a collection of African tales in audiobooks, to be downloaded on an MP3 player, or listened to online. It also offers e-books in English and French, with most of the titles available in ePub and HTML formats, for reading, on any medium (computer, mobile, e-book reader). Readers also have several means of paying for the content, including offline purchase, before downloading or reading online. AfroRead is a mobile book-reading app that was launched in Ethiopia after the pandemic, to provide easy access to African literature in both e-book and audiobook formats for readers. Its founders intend to expand the product to the rest of Africa. In Ghana, AkooBooks the audiobooks and other spoken-word content publisher is also seeking to expand to more countries. In Nigeria, Okadabooks is leveraging mobile technology to publish more fiction by budding and established authors. In 2022, Okadabooks published eight new e-books for children by prominent Nigerian authors, including Abubakar Adam Ibrahim, Elnathan John and Yejide Kilanko. This opportunity to distribute books on mobile phones has been welcomed by publishers and writers as a new revenue stream and unique way of reaching new readers.

Large presses are also integrating e-books into their businesses. In 2021, Learn Africa Plc, announced its intention to convert 10 per cent of its textbooks sold annually into digital textbooks. The decision was based mostly on the positive reception of e-learning materials in schools. Literary magazines are increasingly using digital forms to publish new works, sometimes in collaboration with other entities. Rapatzikou and Leonard (2016) contend that open access literary journals highlight new directions for literature and technology. The “literary efforts nowadays do not break with the past, but they, certainly, highlight the importance of retaining and enhancing the communication between mediums of expression with which we are familiar (print) and with which we are becoming acquainted (digital)” (Rapatzikou and Leonard, 2016:14). To mark the 2023 International Mother Tongue Day, the online journal *Olongo Africa* produced ten short stories written by African writers in English and translated into ten different African languages. These stories were also recorded and uploaded online as audio files. A similar project was previously initiated to demonstrate how technology can function as a tool for the preservation of literature. In 2015, some writers from across Sub-Saharan Africa came together to mark Valentine’s Day by producing a digital anthology of romantic short stories in different African languages, and published by Cassava Republic, under its Ankara Press imprint.

It is worth highlighting that these digital publishing attempts have flourished in Africa because of available IT infrastructure. De Bruijn et al. (2009) believe that Africa’s communications landscape www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight

has gone through many changes since mobile phones were introduced. They see this as a “revolution in terms of voice communication, especially for areas where land lines were still rare” (De Bruijn et al., 2009:11). Recent statistics show that in 2021, 515 million people subscribed to mobile phones in Sub-Saharan Africa; this represents around 46% of the population (GSMA, 2022). Aker and Mbiti stress that in Africa the mobile phone has evolved from a talking tool into a multidimensional platform which “has shifted the development paradigm surrounding mobile phones from one that simply reduces communication and coordination costs to one that could transform lives through innovative applications and services” (2010:208). Mobile phones have therefore become hybrid devices used for a variety of purposes, including reading and publishing (Goggin, 2009).

Foreign publication has been the defining dream for many fiction writers in Sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, a book deal from a leading publisher in the West could offer a substantive payment to an African author and expose them to international markets. However, as discovered through this research, some indigenous publishers – notably in Nigeria - are now stepping up and offering modest advance payments to authors. As Chika Unigwe notes: ‘With the relative influx of quality local publishers - Ouida, Cassava Republic, Masobe, Farafina, Paressia, Narrative Landscape the landscape is different from when I was starting to write in Nigeria. Then, the only place to look to was the West. For me then, validation was a short story being accepted by the BBC. Now, as well as the West, Nigerian writers are recognizing opportunities for them at home as well, and appreciating the validation from/at home too.’ While there is a lack of sufficient data to fully understand the size of the trade book market in Nigeria, the arrival of new publishers might suggest that local publishers are actively producing books, that people are buying and reading them, both in print and digital formats. Yet, a proliferation of publishing houses does not guarantee a buoyant publishing sector. Throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, the challenges of local publishing remain daunting. Issues include piracy, shortage of capital, poor marketing and distribution network, high cost of printing materials, poor reading cultures, and unfavourable book policies.

This report has highlighted some creative writing workshops that have been hosted in Sub-Saharan Africa to create intimate spaces for emerging writers of short stories and poems to share their works with a focus on preparing them for publication. A few of Nigeria's successful authors (including Ayobami Adebayo, El Nathan John, and Eloghosa Osunde) passed through the Farafina Creative Writing Workshop, which Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie facilitated for many years. While many of those who attend these workshops in Nigeria or South Africa go on to actively produce several literary works every year, the output is significantly less in other places. As Makena Onjerika, notes, ‘a key problem for Kenya is low production. We have good writers, but they are not writing. We are not being able to make time for writing. We are too busy earning our livelihoods.’

In Sub-Saharan Africa, many writers are resorting to self-publishing not always due to the limited trade publishing opportunities, but as a means of having total control of their works, including the look, content and promotion. Jackee Batanda who runs an online book writing masterclass for authors in Uganda usually encourages her students to take up self-publishing. Many do, and she teaches them about marketing, sales, and distribution activities. In Kenya, Makena Onjerika believes there is an uptick of locally published, self-published books in the country. Interestingly, a long-standing publisher in Nigeria - University Press - offers a self-publishing service to new

authors. However, manuscripts are usually assessed by this publisher to enable them determine their viability for publishing. Assessment also gives them the opportunity to suggest improvement of the work, if necessary.

Apart from South Africa, no other country within the scope of this study is investing in the systematic gathering of reliable data on the book sector. There is virtually no reliable data that can enhance understanding of readership trends or average expenditure on books in the other countries. Statistics on the number of published titles in print or digital formats per year are also not available. On a positive note, an initiative in Nigeria aimed at addressing this lack of data, has emerged. A bookseller, Rovingheights has partnered with the literary journal, *Open Country* to share a list of the top-selling titles in its stores. The aim is to create the first formal bestseller list in Nigerian literature. This list highlights the top-selling fiction, nonfiction, poetry, children's books, and self-published titles. The 2022 data reveals interesting trends. A collection of short stories, first published in Nigeria by Masobe Books - *Nearly All the Men in Lagos Are Mad*, by Damilare Kuku – was number one on 'The 100 Top-selling Books of 2022'. The same book was also the top bestselling fiction title in 2022.

Literature has always played an important role in Sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, Gikandi (2012) believes that literature 'has been the lamp of knowledge, a symbol of enlightenment and a path to immeasurable freedom through sometimes violent encounters' (2012: 20). As highlighted in this report, many writers and publishers have embarked on initiatives that are providing fresh perspectives on African literature, and in doing so contributing to the development of the literature and publishing sectors.

Appendix

Jackee Batanda (Uganda) has been a regional winner of the Commonwealth Short Story Award, and also received special commendations at the Caine Prize and Macmillan Writers awards. Her stories have appeared in many publications (online and in print) and on radio broadcasts. She was Writer in Residence at Lancaster University, UK. She is the founder and Senior Managing Partner of SuccessSpark Brand Ltd, specialising in writing, coaching, book writing, editing, and book marketing services.

Nick Mulgrew (South Africa) is a writer, editor, poet and critic. He is the founder of the poetry press, uHlanga. His first collection of stories, *Stations*, was longlisted for the 2017 Edge Hill Short Story Prize and shortlisted for the 2017 Nadine Gordimer Award. Mulgrew also won the 2018 Nadine Gordimer Award with his second collection of stories. His works have also been shortlisted for The White Review Prize and the Ake/Air France Prize for Prose.

Tinashe Mushakavanhu (Zimbabwe) is a Junior Research Fellow in African and Comparative Literature at the University of Oxford. He became the first African to study for the MA in Creative Writing at Trinity College in Wales. He also participated in the Crossing Borders project. Tinashe has had several short stories and poems published in various publications. He is co-creator and lead researcher on readingzimbabwe.com, a digital archive collecting, cataloguing, digitizing and making available information on books about Zimbabwe from the 1950s to the present. Mushakavanhu received a Miles Morland Writing Scholarship in 2021.

Makena Onjerika (Kenya) was awarded the 2018 Caine Prize for African Writing. She was shortlisted for the 2020 Miles Morland Writing Scholarship, the 2020 Bristol Prize, and the 2022 NOMMO short story award. She was a Best of the Net Nominee in 2020. Makena completed her undergraduate degree in Economics at Amherst College where she studied fiction writing with Alexander Chee, Judith Frank, and Sue Miller. She took her Master's degree in Fine Arts (Fiction) at New York University and studied with Aleksander Hemon, Zadie Smith, Junot Diaz, David Lipsky, Brian Morton, Rick Moody, and Emily Barton. Following her Caine Prize win, she founded the Nairobi Writing Academy to offer online classes in various creative writing areas including short and long fiction, poetry, screenwriting, as well as creative non-fiction.

Chika Unigwe (Nigeria) won the 2003 BBC Short Story Competition for her story 'Borrowed Smile', a Commonwealth Short Story Award for 'Weathered Smiles' and a Flemish literary prize for 'De Smaak van Sneeuw', her first short story written in Dutch. 'The Secret', another of her short pieces, was nominated for the 2004 Caine Prize. She is the winner of the 2012 Nigeria Prize for Literature, for the novel *On Black Sisters' Street*. Unigwe is also a recipient of a Unesco-Aschberg fellowship for creative writing, and of a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship for creative writing. She founded the Awele Creative Trust to support literary creativity and boost literary productivity in Nigeria.

About the Author

Anietie Isong is researcher and creative writer. He completed his PhD in New Media and Writing at De Montfort's University's Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility, a centre that undertakes research on the actual and potential impacts of computing and related technologies on society and its citizens. Isong's thesis explored the influence of new media technologies on African literature. His debut novel, *Radio Sunrise*, won the Mckitterick Prize, and was listed for other prizes including the 9mobile Prize for Literature. The book has also been adapted into a movie. Isong's second novel, *News at Noon*, was published in the UK, in 2022. His collection of short stories, *Someone Like Me*, won the inaugural Headlight Review Chapbook Prize for Prose Fiction. His essay is included in the anthology, *Of This Our Country* (published by Borough Press), a collection of essays by acclaimed Nigerian writers on the home, identity and culture they know.

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