



ADEA Book Development conference underline importance of Government collaboration with stakeholders

.....As forum tackles Traditional book publishing model and a limited reading population

NAIROBI, October 4, 2011 -That Africa lacks in reading culture is not news. The situation has become a song and appears more as a norm than the exception.

Adding to the dilemma is that African book publishers, who are crucial in the book making process, are yet to adapt to digital technologies that have revamped the book development process.

These are some of the issues that formed the basis of discussions on the second day of the ongoing International Conference on Book Development in Africa, with the participants stressing the need to embrace digital publishing, which could provide the platform for the much needed industry transformation and reorganization.

“The greatest technological development in publishing is the computer, which has revolutionized publishing in a great sense. The computer helps us to manipulate the general production of books and is much faster. It has lessened all the tedious editing of a book, making correction, production and design,” observed Henry Chakava, Chairman of the East African Educational Publishers.

Chakava noted that technology had not only improved the preparation of content, publishing and printing but also a subsequent marketing and the distribution of the books.

But a point of concern for the meeting was the ripple effects of the global economic meltdown, which has forced many European and Asian nations turn to Africa for market opportunities at the expense of the local publishers.

Association for the Development of Education in Africa

African Development Bank (AfDB)

Temporary Relocation Agency

BP 323 – 1002 Tunis Belvédère - Tunisia

Tel.: +216/ 71 10 39 00 Email: t.desruelles@afdb.org Website: www.adeanet.org

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The challenges are indeed varied. Not only do the homegrown publishers have to contend with the entry of the foreigners into an already constrained market crippled by a poor reading culture, there is also the issue of the quality of the books.

Roel de Haas of the Blue Tree Group, a Dutch based book production company emphasized the need to not only produce quality content but adhere to quality materials to lengthen the books life span which reduces book costs in the long run.

“Most universities want to set up and publish without thorough grounds breaking and without even looking keenly at the needs to publish. They do so merely for the big name attributed by publishing works,” observed Ndaizevi Nyamakuru, a Publishing Lecturer at a Zimbabwean University.

Participants at the Nairobi conference, which closes on Wednesday October 5, pointed that the non-involvement of the government in the book development process had an adverse effect on African publishers.

The gathering hosted by ADEA’s Working Group on Books and Learning Materials, WGBLM, was unanimous in its call for a collaborative approach between the Government and stakeholders in the book development process in policies formulation (book and education) and subsequent implementation.

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Press contacts:

- **Evelyn Watta**, Press consultant for ADEA. e-mail: evelynwatta@gmail.com, *tel in Nairobi*: +254/ 722 81 05 65,
- **Thanh-Hoa Desruelles**, External Relations and Communication, ADEA, t.desruelles@afdb.org ,
In Tunis: +216/ 21 69 11 46 (mobile).

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