

## **Brief summary of group 1's discussion**

Topic: The African publishing Industry: challenges faced by stakeholders and constraints on intra-African book trade

### **Introduction:**

The group listed the challenges that should be addressed in a book policy to boost the book trade. Then they made some recommendations.

It cannot be said that the list is exhaustive though.

### **Challenges:**

- The absence of good governance makes transparency impossible and encourages bribery and corruption, especially when it comes to tenders
- Tender bidding notices are too short and bid guarantees are too heavy for proper mobilisation of resources by the African publisher. Thus only the big international publishers who by some unknown means seem to always get information first and well ahead of time end up qualifying. It was regretted that all the money therein end up abroad and the local population is burden with reimbursing the loans.
- The Bidding process is too long and the role of ARMPs whose actions frequently lead to tenders being cancelled is rather counterproductive. The implication is that the allocated budget is lost after the time that was allocated for the funds to be used.
- Governments buy directly from the publishers, thereby killing one nod in the book chain – the bookseller.
- There is lack of local capacity at all levels of the book chain. Training is required: printers, authors, booksellers, publishers.
- There is a conflict of interest between stakeholders that hinders orderliness in the book chain
- In some countries where the Book Development Council exists, they are not properly equipped and empowered to resolve matters

**Limitation on movement of books:**

- Border controls and taxes obstruct the free circulation of books
- Transportation is not cheap and the impact on price is prohibitive to making books accessible
- Even within the same country, stakeholders do not have a meeting point to relate in the profession – absence of national book fairs and other events around books
- Absence of libraries

**Role of regional and sub regional organisation**

- Single sub regional currency would remove exchange losses between countries in a sub region eg East Africa
- Government loans to publishers will help to boost the industry
- Governments in the various organisations must be more courageous in the political will to make things happen

**Mobilising internal resources and assistance from technical/financial partners**

- Create libraries
- Create special banking facilities for players in the book industry. If there could be a bank to fund agriculture, there could be one for books too
- All technical and financial partners should fund projects through one channel – one basket funding instead of carrying out parallel projects within the same country

**Existing possibilities for upstream/downstream partnerships:**

There were some examples that could serve as inspiration.

- Ghana has a textbook development, procurement and distribution service

- In Madagascar, international publishers can only participate on tenders in partnership with local publishers
- There is a network of publishers in Francophone Africa that is successful in co-publishing partnerships

### **Recommendations:**

- A special status should be given to books because they are indispensable in the training and acquisition of the required skills for sustainable development
- Governments should bring all stakeholders together to a forum to reflect on the book industry and draw up a book policy
- Governments should encourage intermediary associative bodies – authors, booksellers, printers and publishers
- Previous recommendations from various institutions advocating for the industry like ADEA should be followed up at the level of regional and continental organisations/institutions. Pressure needs to be stepped up from national governments to these institutions
- A follow up commission (or working party) on book development should be formed and delegates could travel into countries to speak with top officials. They should also attend top level meetings of regional, sub regional, continental and international meetings to express the importance of books in these top decision making forums. These meetings must be made to feature in various newscasts and in newspapers for a wider communication purposes.

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