

# Lagos Action Plan 2018-2019

Quick Impact for the Future of African Publishing



international  
publishers  
association

## Forging Our Future: The Need for a Shared Vision

In May 2018, at the inaugural International Publishers Association Africa Seminar in Lagos, Nigeria, I called for the development of the Lagos Action Plan to promote collective accountability and action for progress in the publishing industry. This document, developed under the guidance of an 8-member volunteer committee in consultation with stakeholders in 39 countries, is the result of my call to action.

The Lagos Action Plan is a testament to the impact that a small group committed to change can have on an entire industry in a short amount of time. Over the last year, we have mobilised over \$1 million in financial support and in-kind contributions to ensure the Africa Seminar Series will continue for the next several years. We have also implemented 8 pilot projects that present scalable, quick impact approaches to addressing industry challenges and opening up new frontiers for industry growth.

The Lagos Action Plan details the carefully designed program the committee used to convert the proceedings of the inaugural seminar in Nigeria into tangible, on-the-ground results. The positive and unprecedented engagement of stakeholders in the publishing ecosystem and adjacent industries in the development of this plan and implementation of pilot projects reflects a genuine desire for transforming the future of African publishing.

I would like to thank all those who contributed — in particular, the Lagos Action Plan Committee which includes John Asein, Jose Borghino, Samuel Kolawole, Anges Felix Ndakpri, Lawrence Njagi, Ernest Oppong, and Brian Wafawarowa. I commend the former president of the International Publishers Association, Dr. Michiel Kolman, and the current elected officers, president Hugo Setzer and vice president Bodour Al Qasimi, for their ongoing support of the Africa Seminar Series. I would also like to thank the International Publishers Association secretariat for their role in coordinating the preparation of the plan.

The Lagos Action Plan reminds us of the importance of a shared vision — at both the regional and international levels — in forging our industry's future. If we all fully commit to implementing this plan and achieving its objectives, we can have a transformational impact on the publishing industry. **Not only will a strong, vibrant publishing industry bring prosperity and benefits for us today, it will also provide a foundation for Africa's future.**

On behalf of the Lagos Action Plan Committee, we look forward to working with you on this ambitious plan for industry change.

*Gbadega Adedapo*  
*Chair, Lagos Action Plan Committee*

## Africa Rising: The Need for a Platform for Creative Thinking, Collaboration, and Action

Rough estimates indicate Africa's publishing market is worth over \$1 billion, has over 500 million book buyers, and is growing upwards of 5% annually. With 60% of Africa's population under 24, the region has a young, increasingly digitally connected population. At the same time, readers globally are seeking out more diverse books with a growing interest in other cultures, countries, ideas, and lifestyles. In response, there is a significant wave of African literary talent focused on the region as well as reaching global markets. Global publishers are also starting to take notice of Africa's literary talent and favourable market prospects fuelled by a thirst for culture, localised narratives, and learning.

Against this backdrop of surging interest in African publishing, the International Publishers Association's Africa Seminar Series was established in 2018. An initial seminar was hosted in Lagos, Nigeria where publishers, policymakers, and creative industry stakeholders gathered to explore themes at the nexus of sustainable development, education, and the future of publishing. The inaugural seminar, held under the theme of Publishing for Sustainable Development: The Role of Publishers in Africa, was a response to a need for a platform to discuss sectoral innovation and revitalisation as well as develop new ideas and solutions. The event attracted 200 attendees from over 20 countries — making it the largest global forum on African publishing ever held.

A key aim of the initial event in Nigeria was to promote purposeful action towards building African publishing markets as well as catalysing fruitful dialogue and productive partnerships within the continent and between Africa and the rest of the world. Based on the success of the 2018 event and generous support from partners, the International Publishers Association (IPA) has institutionalised the Africa Seminar Series as an annual event to serve as a continent-wide, multi-sectoral platform for creative thinking, collaboration, and action to shape the future of African publishing.



“Seminars on African publishing are long, long overdue. There are more than 500 million book-buyers across Africa. We simple haven't shouted enough about how important publishing is to the development of all the countries that make up this great continent of ours. African publishing needs to hold their head high, recognise its value and reach out to the world.”

– *Gbadega Adedapo,*  
*President, Nigerian Publishers Association*

## Seminar Action Plans: Translating Proceedings into Consensus and Action

During the inaugural seminar, a frequently voiced concern was that many previous events failed to lead to tangible outcomes. This concern led to a call for a Lagos Action Plan which would document seminar outcomes and recommendations so that progress towards addressing industry challenges and opportunities could be assessed at future events. This suggestion received widespread support from participants and was subsequently adopted at the seminar. Action plans will also be integrated as a defining feature of the legacy and impact strategy of the Africa Seminar Series going forward. This action plan is a direct response to the call for more progress in Lagos.

The Lagos Action Plan is an attempt to formulate a shared view of the opportunities and most pressing challenges facing African publishing emerging from the first seminar in Lagos to assist in building consensus on potential strategies and solutions. By offering a shared vision focused on immediate change, the Lagos Action Plan was conceived to motivate publishers, IPA members, and the global publishing community to work together to overcome challenges and realise opportunities while instilling joint accountability for progress.



“The Lagos Action Plan is a major departure from the kind of workshops and seminars that have been held on African soil in the past. A lot of times, those workshops yielded very little in terms of tangible, pro-active actions that remedy problems. The Lagos Action Plan, which was as a result of the inaugural IPA Africa Seminar, is a clear departure from this.”

– Lawrence Njagi  
Chair of the 2019 Africa Seminar  
Chairman, Kenya Publishers Association

## Action Plan Pilots Demonstrate Scalable, Incremental Progress Towards Transformational Change

The African Publishing Innovation Challenge Fund, made possible through the support of Dubai Cares, enables seminar action plans to rapidly be developed into scalable, quick impact pilot projects implemented in partnership with trusted local partners. Action plan pilot programs funded through the newly created African Publishing Innovation Challenge Fund present an opportunity to engage some of the brightest young minds, identify new leverage points for intervention, promote cross-sectoral collaboration, and explore new approaches for industry transformation.

To accelerate innovation to scalable impact, learnings from implementing action plan pilots are presented for possible scale-up and knowledge sharing at the following iteration of the seminar series. Through better information, evidence, tools, and approaches gained from pilot programs, stakeholders learn and grow together by being exposed to innovative, replicable solutions and best practices to support industry growth and address common challenges.

Seminar action plans and associated pilot programs achieve incremental progress through collective accountability for implementation while creating stakeholder and industry buy-in for more transformational change. As the first action plan developed under the Africa Seminar Series, the Lagos Action Plan is a litmus test for the Seminar Series' longer-term legacy and impact strategy. It is an answer to the industry's call in Lagos to translate words into action.

Seminar action plans and pilots are establishing a solution-focused agenda to inform the work of IPA and its African members while also fostering relationships and promoting multi-sectoral partnerships within the publishing ecosystem for industry-led progress and change. As the Africa Seminar Series evolves, its legacy and impact strategy will become critical to achieving transformative change through widespread stakeholder participation in pilots. While the development of the Lagos Action Plan was an exercise in learning by doing this year, the development and implementation process for future action plans will become more streamlined and inclusive.

## Africa Seminar Series Legacy and Impact Strategy



## How the Lagos Action Plan was Developed

The Lagos Action Plan was developed by an 8-member Action Plan Committee which included representatives from IPA African member associations as well as representatives from government, civil society, and partner implementing institutions. The committee tasked with developing the action plan and selecting pilot projects included experts in several fields of importance to African publishing including creative industry development, copyright policies, education, economics, social policy, and public sector management. The broad spectrum of expertise represented on the committee enabled a fresh approach to realising industry opportunities and addressing sector challenges.

The Lagos Action Plan is based on extensive consultations involving participation of publishers and members of the wider industry stakeholder community in 39 African countries encompassing community leaders, business leaders, entrepreneurs, academics, students, professional groups, women and youth associations, and media. Consultations were also held with members of the African diaspora globally. The objective of consultations was to gain consensus on the most transformative opportunities and fundamental challenges facing the industry and potential ways to respond. Pilot projects were incubated in a similar participatory, consultative process with stakeholders and implementation partners.

## Charting a New Future for African Publishing

The IPA's Africa Seminar Series is establishing itself as a global reference in forging new approaches to challenges faced by developing publishing markets and promoting best practices for industry progress that can be applied globally. The IPA invites all stakeholders to play a part in this ongoing process of dialogue to bring transformative change to Africa's publishing industry and other developing publishing markets globally. The participatory manner in which the Lagos Action Plan was developed will be emphasised in its implementation and in future action plans and pilots.

Through the Africa Seminar Series and accompanying action plans and pilot programs, the IPA is uniting key stakeholders to create collective accountability in tackling complex, systemic publishing industry challenges and realising opportunities through innovation. In this way, the publishing industry can be a positive force for addressing the toughest issues facing regions, countries, and communities on the path to sustainable development including poverty, conflict, inequality, unemployment, and other future challenges.



“Frontier, emerging markets is where the publishing industry will find its future readers and customers. And while I believe the present is bright for African publishers, I believe the future looks even brighter. Emerging publishing markets, which played a relatively modest role in the global publishing market just a decade ago, have the potential to occupy a much more important role in the global publishing industry of the future. I have no doubt that Africa will be a significant beneficiary of this rebalancing.”

– *Bodour Al Qasimi*  
Vice President, International Publishers Association

## The Lagos Action Plan 2018-2019: Addressing Challenges and Realising Opportunities

The Action Plan Committee began the process of identifying the challenges and opportunities to include in the action plan through contextual analysis of the 2018 seminar transcripts. The transcripts were coded to derive thematic similarities which were then used to develop and field a targeted survey of national publishers associations. Responses from the initial association survey enabled the committee to follow up with semi-structured interviews of select stakeholders to gain further input and validate the priority challenges and opportunities to focus on in the Lagos Action Plan. A wider survey of the industry stakeholder community was also conducted. The results of this survey, which will be released in the future, will guide ongoing implementation of pilot projects and be used to shape future IPA Africa programming and advocacy initiatives.

The feedback collected through this six month consultative process following the Lagos seminar in May 2018 was used by the Action Plan Committee to select five focus areas for inclusion in the Lagos Action Plan as well as validate and stress test a variety of pilot projects suggested in consultations. Because all challenges and opportunities cannot be pursued simultaneously, the Action Plan Committee identified and prioritised pilot projects which could promise significant impact without complex implementation challenges. Quick impact projects were selected to show progress that would motivate IPA members, partners, and stakeholders, highlight capacity to deliver, and build momentum behind the larger Seminar Series change effort.



## Transformation Goal 1: Enhancing Stakeholder Collaboration and Coordination

Collaboration and coordination of stakeholders involved in initiatives to support the development of Africa's publishing industry is lacking. Through the seminars, action plans, pilots, and Africa in Action sessions, the IPA is unifying stakeholders around a common vision and enhancing stakeholder collaboration and coordination.

**Pilot Program:** International Publishers Association Member Assistance Program

**Partner:** International Publishers Association

**Overview:** The Africa Seminar Series is fully funded by the generous financial and in-kind contributions of an expanding international network of partners including donors, sponsors, and knowledge partners. Since the first iteration of the seminar in Nigeria, support has been provided through the IPA Member Assistance Program to build the capacity of host associations to contribute to mobilising resources to fund seminar costs and pilot programs. IPA member assistance to hosts has involved capacity development on identifying and cultivating sponsorship and in-kind contributions that members can continue to use to secure resources for funding their ongoing activities after the seminar.

**Progress:** To date, over \$1 million in support and in-kind contributions from partners to ensure the Africa Seminar Series will continue for the next several years has been secured. The number of partners has doubled in size to 20. However, to diversify sources of sponsorship, more effort is needed to attract regional and national partners from significant African economic sectors such as oil and gas, financial services, construction, telecom, technology, mining, and aviation. It is anticipated that this capacity building will continue as a priority in the Nairobi Action Plan to ensure more African public and private sector sponsors support the seminar series.



"The IPA has made a strong commitment to the development of publishing in Africa with our annual African publishing seminars, capacity building projects and other interventions. But we cannot do it alone. We need more sponsors from a broader representation of different industries and sectors. The time for us to have maximum impact is now. Get in touch with the IPA and be part of the flourishing of African publishing."

*– Jose Borghino  
Secretary General, International Publishers Association*



**Pilot Program:** Strengthening Publishing Ecosystem Partnerships

**Partners:** African Publishers Network (APNET) and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)

**Overview:** There is a pressing need to integrate efforts with similar objective initiatives supporting the publishing industry's promising future. Overcoming scepticism about the impact of industry events manifesting into tangible outcomes requires stakeholders working towards the same goals to ensure scarce resources are used in the most effective way without duplication of efforts. In this way, positivity and progress will be used to counter pessimism which can lead to inaction.

**Progress:** On the side-lines of the Nairobi Seminar, IPA signed memorandum of understanding to expand its work with APNET and ADEA. These agreements call for expanded cooperation on joint workshops and trainings, collaborating on implementing action plans from the Africa Seminars Series, and joint advocacy for national book policies, reading, literacy, copyright, and freedom to publish. Fostering relationships and promoting multi-sectoral partnerships will remain a priority in the Nairobi Action Plan with continued efforts to engage international donors, national governments, and civil society to maximise impact.



“One of the key issues is determining action plans to formulate policies and implement a legal framework within which local governments and the publishing industry can work together. APNET is actively working with international organisations such as IPA to achieve this objective. However, there are many more partners which we can bring on to strengthen coordination of efforts and fast-track industry transformation.”

– Ernest Oppong  
Acting Executive Director, APNET

**Pilot Program:** Africa in Action Program to Strengthen National Publishers Associations

**Partners:** Leaders of national publishers associations from over 40 African countries

**Overview:** The largest gathering of leaders of African publishers associations ever was held on the side-lines of the Nairobi seminar to launch the program and explore how best the IPA can support African publishing. The meeting included all known national publishers associations in Africa to begin a dialogue on providing needs-driven support to strengthen publishers associations and identify common priorities for inclusion in the Nairobi Action Plan and future seminars.

**Progress:** The IPA will utilise feedback from the meeting to formalise a member assistance program to strengthen African publishers associations through capacity development partnerships linking them with their counterparts in other countries. The meeting was also used to encourage non-member national publishers associations to apply for IPA membership and engage with publishers considering the establishment of a publishers association. Member outreach efforts will likely result in a number of membership applications and requests for support to establish associations in countries without publishers associations.

## Transformation Goal 2: Advancing Innovative Solutions to Longstanding Challenges

Several complex, systemic challenges (such as promoting publishing and reading in indigenous languages and increasing rural book accessibility and literacy) can benefit from the application of new, holistic approaches to problem solving. To begin the process of developing novel approaches to historical industry challenges, the IPA has established the African Publishing Innovation Challenge Fund which will provide catalytic grants to worthwhile projects implementing potentially scalable approaches to longstanding industry challenges.

**Pilot Program:** African Publishing Innovation Challenge Fund

**Partner:** Dubai Cares

**Overview:** Dubai Cares, a United Arab Emirates-based global philanthropic organisation, signed a memorandum of understanding with IPA to support a range of initiatives to address pressing African publishing ecosystem challenges, build indigenous publishing capacity, and create national cultures of reading. Through the partnership, Dubai Cares is committing \$800,000 over 4 years to expand the reach of IPA's programs in Africa as well as cooperate on new initiatives at the nexus of sustainable development, education, and publishing. Dubai Cares, which has implemented education programs in more than 20 countries in Africa, brings significant experience in literacy, educational publishing, and mother tongue education to the partnership.

**Progress:** On the side-lines of the Nairobi Seminar, the Challenge Fund Committee and the donor met with prospective grant recipients to award its initial round of funding. The pilot projects funded will be integrated into the Nairobi Action Plan with a progress report to be provided at the seminar in 2020.



“Africa and the Arab World both have young, increasingly digitally connected populations. For this reason, the publishing industry has significant potential to contribute to sustainable development. In supporting the development of national reading cultures, strengthening the publishing industry often has a significant impact on socio-economic development. Reading, for example, broadens people’s imagination and opens minds to new possibilities and innovative ideas. Through this partnership, we will work with the IPA and local implementing partners on tough, systemic challenges, such as textbook shortages and rural literacy, which prevent a number of African countries from achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4.”

– Tariq Al Gurg  
Chief Executive Officer, Dubai Cares



“We are delighted to work with Dubai Cares because it shares a common belief in the role of books and quality teaching and learning materials in education. Publishers, and the IPA through initiatives like this, our SDG Book Club, and African Seminar Series, are committed to improving the education of children around the world. That doesn’t just mean access to books, it also means structurally supporting the entire publishing ecosystem to create a network of authors, publishers, distributors, and libraries that can support teachers and change the futures of millions of children in developing countries by supporting sustainable development.”

– Hugo Setzer  
President, International Publishers Association

## Transformation Goal 3: Making Africa's Copyright Framework Fit for the Digital Era

With an internet growth rate exceeding 10,000%, Africa has the highest internet user growth rate in the world. Digitisation and connectivity are key drivers of cultural globalisation that offer significant opportunity for African publishers to integrate with global markets. To take advantage of these opportunities, Africa's copyright framework must be made fit for the digital era by addressing a range of challenges.

**Pilot Program:** Workshop on Strengthening Copyright Ecosystems in Africa

**Partners:** Leading African and international copyright experts

**Overview:** Poorly functioning copyright ecosystems are limiting publishing industry development and growth. To start the process of strengthening copyright frameworks, an initial workshop which included the region's top copyright experts in business models, legal and licensing, and policy, was hosted at the Nairobi Seminar. The workshop was designed as a dynamic, interactive, and participative experience to engage participants in a meaningful discussion leading to practical next steps to create copyright ecosystems that can support Africa's emergence as a global publishing leader and accommodate its rapidly growing digital economy.

**Progress:** Several of the proposals to address emerging copyright challenges will be considered for funding under the African Publishing Innovation Challenge Fund and inclusion in the Nairobi Action Plan.



“There are countries in Africa that function without even a fledgling RRO, and there are many more countries that are somewhere between. The work we do — and we do it either independently or in conjunction with bodies like IFRRO and World Intellectual Property Organizations all about capacity-building and it's all about coordinating.”

– Michael Healy

Executive Director for International Affairs, Copyright Clearance Center

## Transformation Goal 4: Leveraging Data for Advocacy and Digital Transformation

The publishing industry can be a major driver of sustainable development and economic growth, but a key weakness in mobilising government support for planning and coordinating the industry's development is lack of industry data. At the same time, data and analytics competencies will be a competitive differentiator for leading publishers for digital transformation in response to Africa's rapidly emerging digital economy.

**Pilot Program:** Establishing Retail Sales Data Collection Systems

**Partner:** Nielsen

**Overview:** Based on Nielsen's experience implementing its BookScan retail data system in South Africa, the IPA worked with Nielsen to study if the prerequisites required for implementing the system are present in Nigeria and Kenya. A number of factors were assessed including:

- The potential for retailer cooperation
- The presence of an up to date, consistent database of in-print and forthcoming titles for active ISBNs
- Publisher willingness to pay for subscriptions potentially through national publishers associations
- Media buy-in for a recognised bestseller list
- Government support for the initiative
- Stakeholder buy-in for reliable, timely data collection, processing, validation

**Progress:** The results of the study were presented at the Nairobi seminar. Based on the study results, the Nairobi Action Plan Committee will continue to work with Nielsen on launching a live demonstration implementation in Nigeria or Kenya as a model for scaling the project to other interested countries.



“Perhaps more than any other industry, the book trade is reliant on sharing product data in order to function efficiently. The implication is that as the book industry takes its next step into the digital age data will not only remain an essential part of the industry, but become increasingly important.”

– Andre Breedt  
Director, Nielsen Book Research International

**Pilot Program:** Pulse of the African Publishing Industry Survey

**Partner:** Insight Wells Research

**Overview:** To inform policy and advocacy initiatives and planning for future seminars, the IPA and Action Plan Committee worked with Insight Wells Research on a comprehensive publishing industry public policy and advocacy survey. The survey was an effort to gain insight into the most pressing issues facing African publishers for future seminar themes and to ensure policy and advocacy initiatives are needs-driven.

**Progress:** The survey, which was completed at the end of May, attracted significant participation from the publishing industry, partners, and stakeholders. The results will be released in the near future as part of the Africa Seminar Series' effort to become a supportive voice of the publishing industry in asserting its value to policymakers and highlighting its role in socio-economic development.



“This industry-led data collection effort will enable the publishing industry to speak with a strong, unified voice. Real change is only possible if publishers can collectively speak for our industry armed with data that enables co-developing supportive public policies alongside governments. The IPA’s Pulse of the African Publishing Industry Survey is an initial step in identifying what policy, advocacy, and industry issues matter the most to publishers across the continent. However, it is not enough for the publishing industry to point out what is wrong with broad demands for action from policymakers — we, as an industry, have an obligation to present alternatives and solutions backed up with data. We need to advocate for change rooted in specific actions, policies, and programs which are supported with data and a collective voice.”

– Samuel Gicharu  
Research Director, Insight Wells Research

## Transformation Goal 5: Promoting Diversity and Inclusiveness in Global Publishing

The publishing industry has a diversity problem. In many countries, the industry is unwelcoming to outsiders, whether they are female or from other underrepresented groups. Increasingly, global attention is being paid to the problem, but there is a critical need to do more to make diversity a global industry priority across all stages of the publishing value chain.

**Pilot Program:** PublisHer Networking Session on Overcoming Publishing's Diversity Problem

**Partners:** Leading African diversity and inclusiveness advocates

**Overview:** Through PublisHer, the IPA is working to develop a global agenda for action based on a series of candid discussions with women publishers on the side-lines of key literary events. The 2nd networking session in the series was held at the Nairobi Seminar offering select attendees a chance to hear from leading women publishers about their paths to success and their views on how the publishing industry can take action to address its diversity challenge.

**Progress:** The IPA will disseminate the result of the PublisHer networking session. To take its advocacy messages globally, the Action Plan Committee is also exploring partnerships to transition the Africa Seminar Series from a single annual event to a year-round movement for change. In addition to the seminar action plans and pilot projects implemented throughout the year, the committee is exploring options to develop a stronger African presence at international literary events, like Frankfurt Book Fair, to reach key stakeholders and take its transformation message to the world. Work will be carried on under the Nairobi Action Plan to globalise the Africa Seminar Series' message of change and mobilise global action on industry diversity as well as other advocacy issues identified in seminars surrounding reading, literacy, indigenous language publishing, and access to books.



“Black men are very patronising and condescending around my work. The things that they say around and above me make me so angry. I feel like maybe black men do want a decolonisation of literature, but they aren't prepared to have black women run it.”

– Thabiso Mahlape  
Founder, Blackbird Books  
Panellist, PublisHer networking session

## Implementing the Lagos Action Plan

Publishing the Lagos Action Plan is by no means the end of the consultative process. The broad transformation goals and pilot projects contained in the plan will be systematically reviewed and adjusted with many of the pilot projects being carried over into the Nairobi Action Plan. Ensuring that the objectives of this and subsequent action plans are achieved will require transparent, public progress reporting that allows stakeholder scrutiny. Future seminars will offer periodic reports to steer the process of implementation, ensure collective accountability, and allow for corrective actions.

Implementing the ambitious change process envisioned by the Africa Seminar Series will require a true multi-stakeholder partnership committed to transforming the publishing industry. Central to achieving seminar action plan goals, is the allocation of appropriate resources to manage and implement pilot projects. There is a significant need to mobilise more regional resources to support this movement for change as well as focus stakeholder and partner resources on achieving a common vision.

There must be a fundamental shift from often uncoordinated programs at the regional and national levels towards joint planning and action to address the significant challenges holding back the publishing industry. Delivering upon pilot projects and implementing a broader industry transformation will not be easy. There will be setbacks such as missed targets, initiatives that stall, stakeholders with opposing agendas, resistance to change, and challenges that could not have been foreseen. Despite these likely setbacks and future pessimistic critiques, change needs to start somewhere.

While the IPA can provide strategic leadership and direction in realising Action Plans, it cannot transform the publishing industry on its own. As the Action Plan Committee implements this plan, it will work in full partnership with national publishers associations, governments, civil society, the private sector, and the donor community. The committee will invite input to inform decisions, encourage cooperation in delivery, seek regular feedback, and measure progress. In this way, the Africa Seminar Series will achieve incremental progress that eventually manifests into transformative industry change.







[internationalpublishers.org](http://internationalpublishers.org)