2025 WORLD BOOK AND COPYRIGHT DAY

Books and copyright – the foundation of human and national development

African Publishers Network (APNET) joins its members, UNESCO and the world to celebrate World Book and Copyright Day which was instituted by UNESCO to recognize the power of books as a bridge between generations and across cultures. Every April 23, Books and Copyright are celebrated across the world.

"Books are like a window onto another world – with each new page, they introduce us to new people, new cultures and new ideas (UNESCO, 2025)." Books are versatile educational and cultural materials on which educational institutions hinge. They develop human resources that result in national development. It is factual to note that any developed country prioritises books in the national development agenda.

APNET, National Publishers' Associations and African publishers have contributed immensely to the development of quality books which have progressively contributed to the increase in literacy, education, cultural values, efficient and effective human resources. It is important to note that constant advocacy engagements are required to educate government officials to understand the book industry and the essential legal frameworks which include national book and reading policies, amendment of copyright laws to match up the modern trends and innovations such as AI and ebooks that will result in the growth of the industry.

The private sector needs partnership with the government to promote books and strenghten copyright laws, procure books from local publishers and enhance the book procurement system. Copyright proctection is one area which has not received much support from copyright offices and government as a whole. In Africa, there is poor enforcement of copyright laws, inadequate anti-book piracy campaigns, deliberate impunity of pirates due to shallow punitive provisions in the copyright laws.

Students, parents and the populace should note that anytime a book is published, the work of the publisher is central. The publisher serves as an investor of financial resources, employer of human resources, mobiliser of materials and inputs and a refiner of the author's knowledge in a book form. As APNET celebrates World Book and Copyright Day, it is important that we acknowledge the sacrificial and professional role, each player plays within the publishing industry – from authors, editors, illustrators, designers, printers, administrators, distributors and booksellers.

APNET builds the capacity of African Publishers' Associations and individual publishers through training; enhances best practices for publishers to catch up with modern publishing trends through conferences and also offers the opportunity for Publishers' Associations and publishers to congregate and network to enhance visibility of their organisations, books and services. The Network also facilitates and promotes trade within Africa and beyond especially through international book fairs. Such services have reflected in the quality of books published across the continent.

The role of many National Publishers' Associations (NPAs) in promoting books in their countries is highly commendable. However, more work still needs to be done to help bring the state of the book industry to the desired level.

APNET encourages African publishers to invest in book publishing and promotion including multilingual education through the publishing of books in local languages. African governments have the responsibility of promoting multilingual education in schools through book purchasing and distribution to schools; spearheading policy reforms to include the teaching and learning of African languages and deliberately promoting the use of African languages in official government communication.

APNET encourages its NPAs to keep strengthening the publishers, sustain and intensify their commitment to the publishing of more books and undertake anti-book piracy campaigns and projects to reduce book piracy in Africa.

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