

Source: UNESCO heute N° 1, 1996

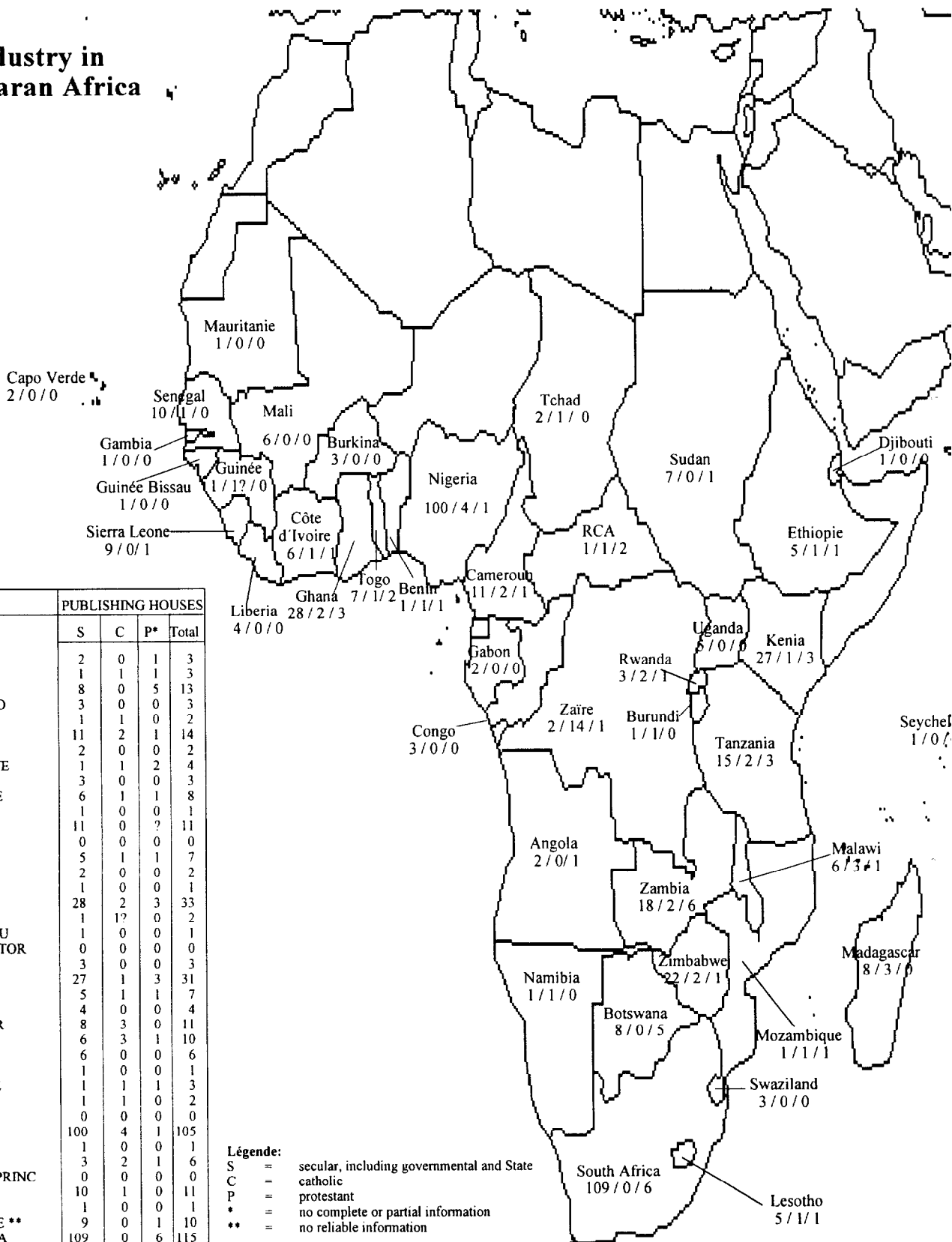
A CONTINENT IN SEARCH OF PUBLISHERS

by *Michel Philippart, CAMECO*

Africa is suffering from a "book famine". In Africa books are rare, and their production expensive, making their purchase unaffordable for many. At present the majority of books on the market are imported. There are not many book publishers in the continent, but they are plagued with innumerable problems, and for whom the daily concern is economic survival. With regard to the problematic situation of the book industry in Africa, Catholic publishers met February last, with a view to overcoming the difficulties of their profession, and to search for better self-sustenance. Toward the end of the seminar, the Catholic publishers made a decision to form an association to be called the Association of Catholic Publishers in Africa (ACPA), with concrete plans of action for the purpose of assisting and collaborating with one another, and reinforcing their contribution to book development in the country, at the service of the people and the Church.

A large part of projects and applications from Africa received by CAMECO for study with a view to funding or for advice, are related to book publishing: during the last five years, among projects from Africa recorded by CAMECO, 53% were related to the print media, among which 30% were concerned with book publishing (see tables 1 and 2). From these figures it can be presumed that the Church book industry in Africa is strong and active. We have to

Book industry in Sub-saharan Africa



Légende:

- S = secular, including governmental and State
- C = catholic
- P = protestant
- * = no complete or partial information
- ** = no reliable information

On the map, the first figure refers to "SECULAR" publishing houses; the second to "CATHOLIC" and the third to "PROTESTANT" houses; the last category is far from being completed. This information is CAMECO's own calculation based on various sources, including *The Africa Book World & Press: A Directory*, 1989; *African Publishing Review* published by APNET, Harare; *Partners in African Publishing*, edited by CODE-Europe, Oxford; *The African Book Publishing Record*, edited by Bowker-Saur, East Grinstead, UK.

	PUBLISHING HOUSES			
	S	C	P*	Total
ANGOLA	2	0	1	3
BENIN	1	1	1	3
BOTSWANA	8	0	5	13
BURKINA FASO	3	0	0	3
BURUNDI	1	1	0	2
CAMEROUN	11	2	1	14
CAP-VERT	2	0	0	2
CENTRAFRIQUE	1	1	2	4
CONGO	3	0	0	3
COTE D'IVOIRE	6	1	1	8
DJIBOUTI	1	0	0	1
EGYPTE*	11	0	?	11
ERITREA	0	0	0	0
ETHIOPIE	5	1	1	7
GABON	2	0	0	2
GAMBIA	1	0	0	1
GHANA	28	2	3	33
GUINEE	1	1?	0	2
GUINEE BISSAU	1	0	0	1
GUINEE EQUATOR	0	0	0	0
ILE MAURICE	3	0	0	3
KENYA	27	1	3	31
LESOTHO	5	1	1	7
LIBERIA**	4	0	0	4
MADAGASCAR	8	3	0	11
MALAWI	6	3	1	10
MALI	6	0	0	6
MAURITANIE	1	0	0	1
MOZAMBIQUE	1	1	1	3
NAMIBIA*	1	1	0	2
NIGER	0	0	0	0
NIGERIA *	109	4	1	105
REUNION	1	0	0	1
RWANDA**	3	2	1	6
SAO TOME & PRINC	0	0	0	0
SENEGAL	10	1	0	11
SEYCHELLES	1	0	0	1
SIERRA LEONE **	9	0	1	10
SOUTH AFRICA	109	0	6	115
SUDAN **	7	0	1	8
SWAZILAND	3	0	0	3
TANZANIA	15	2	3	20
TCHAD	2	1	0	3
TOGO	7	1	2	10
UGANDA	5	0	0	5
ZAIRE	2	14	1	17
ZAMBIA	18	2	6	26
ZIMBABWE	22	2	1	25
	464	48	44	556

assess here however that the reality is just the opposite. There are only a few Catholic publishing houses in Africa: on average we are far behind one per country (see map page 2). In fact, the largest part of the requests for funding book publishing came from individuals: authors searching for funds required to print their manuscripts on their own, which usually means that the books will remain on the author's premises. But it is difficult to blame when there are so few publishing houses around; similarly how to blame the possible entrepreneurs in book publishing when the readership is so limited and the basic conditions to practice the profession so difficult.

Is the book relevant for Africa?

Indeed "books are an irrelevant luxury on a continent where people are dying of hunger" ⁽¹⁾. The Book is a much too expensive product according to the living standards of the population: in many African countries, the average monthly salary for a teacher for instance, is not more than a few hundred Dollars, and the majority of the population do not even reach this grade (e.g. the minimum monthly salary in Tanzania is below US\$ 30.00). After the rent has been paid, the family fed and school fees covered,... how much do they have still in their pockets? How can Africans buy books sold for instance at US\$ 10.00 and often more, with such a low standard of living?

Books are insufficiently available in Africa. There are too few libraries, and usually only in the cities and universities. There are also very few bookshops, and often again only in the urban areas: "Some people don't buy a book because they

(1) From "The Missing Links in the African Book Publishing Chain", by Henry Chakava, in "Promoting Technical Publishing in Africa", CTA, 1994, p. 37.

TABLEAU 1 : AFRIQUE - Projets enregistrés 1991-1995

Année	Général	Presse	Radio	Télévision	Film	AV	Vidéo	Informatique	Telecom	TOTAL
1991	87	395	31	4	0	38	42	29	0	626
1992	121	417	52	1	1	58	60	49	0	759
1993	118	333	60	3	1	41	76	48	0	680
1994	114	392	106	8	3	24	82	52	6	787
1995	60	306	97	7	3	23	45	46	4	591
TOTAL	500	1.843	346	23	8	184	305	224	10	3.443
%	14	53	10	0,6	0,23	5,3	8,8	6,5	0,29	100

TABLEAU 2 : AFRIQUE - Projets de Presse enregistrés 1991 - 1995

Année	21.1	21.2	21.3	22	23.1	23.2	24.1	24.2	24.3	24.5	24.6	26	TOTAL
1991	38	60	13	18	0	67	125	6	28	3	25	87	391
1993	25	77	12	8	0	49	87	13	20	2	32	14	339
1994	46	79	4	13	0	54	118	4	22	11	36	5	392
1995	22	70	16	15	0	36	87	2	15	9	38	4	314
Total	153	378	57	77	0	253	545	36	120	32	166	38	1.855

Codes des Catégories :

21.1 = Imprimeries - Equipement de haute performance	24.1 = Publications de livres, brochures, etc.
21.2 = Equipment de basse ou moyenne performance	24.2 = Maisons d'Édition
21.3 = PAO	24.3 = Bibliothèques
22 = Agences de Presse, Centres de Documentation, Congrès, Associations	24.5 = Librairies
23.1 = Quotidiens	24.6 = Distribution
23.2 = Périodiques, Revues	26 = Formation

(2) Op. cit.

(3) According to our own calculation, presently we know of more than 170 independent radio stations on air, in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa; and this figure does not consider South Africa (where about 70 to 100 licenses for Community Radios have been granted) neither Reunion Island, where more than 40 private radio stations are on air! Just to give other statistics, it could be of interest to note the following figures about radio penetration rate /100 inh.: in Mali there are 4 receivers to 100 inhabitants, when the circulation of the dailies is 0.1 for 100 inh.; in South Africa: 30 radio receivers/100 inh. and only 3.5 dailies in circulation/100 inh; in Kenya 13 radio/100 inh. and 1.5 dailies in circulation/100 inh. (sources: UNESCO). As these figures are mostly from 1990/91, we can be sure that the number of radio receivers in countries where there are many new radio stations, like Mali, Burkina Faso, or South Africa, is in constant growth.

(4) From "The missing link in the African Publishing Chain", by Henry Chakava in "Promoting Technical Publishing in Africa. Seminar Proceedings", published by CTA, 1994, p.36.

don't get to know about it. Some get to know about it but cannot find it at their nearest bookshop, or there is simply no bookshop where they live"⁽²⁾.

Books produced in Africa, by African publishers are few: for example, in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa there are about 600 publishing houses (see map and table page 2) - maybe 800 - to cater to the needs of about 500 million people, when in France alone there are nearly 400 just to serve a population of 50 million! Similarly, and based on UNESCO statistics the countries most dominant in the book publishing industry in Africa, namely Egypt and Nigeria, in 1985 produced respectively approximately 1,300 and 2,200 titles (not all new), when France produced about 40,000 titles, Germany 64,000, Italy 16,000, the United Kingdom 53,000, Spain 38,500, Switzerland 11,700 and Belgium 8,400 (see table 3).

Unbalanced competition with audiovisual media

Due to the high illiteracy rate - higher than 50% for the whole continent, and most probably we can consider that not more than 30% of the population is functionally literate - the readership in the continent is very limited. Furthermore is Africa not the continent of orality? Reading is not integrated into the African culture. Therefore Africans - many people say - are not used to reading... and now the print media (not only the book industry, but also the press) have to face a strong competition from the audiovisual media, in particular presently due to the new and rapid developments of private radio of any kind: independent, commercial, local, and community radio stations⁽³⁾.

Producing in Africa is very expensive

Furthermore book production in Africa is very expensive, especially because the printers have to import all printing materials (paper, ink, plates...) and equipment (computers, printing machines...). Very few local printers are capable - here we mean "equipped" - of printing books in a desirably good quality or quantity. But the printers must not be blamed too strongly, or be called "the weakest link in the African book publishing chain: in most cases, the printer simply responds to the needs of the publisher. If the publisher's output were to increase, in number and

volume, the printer would in due course adjust his capacity to cope with the increased demand. Other printers would set up a shop, and the resulting competition would take care of prices, quality and delivery schedules"⁽⁴⁾.

In addition, paper shortages continue to be a major problem for most African publishers and printers. Even in countries with domestic paper production, mills are often unable to supply local needs in full, even in South Africa, and so paper and newsprint have to be imported at high cost, and relevant import duties paid. In other cases, paper production levels are low and quality poor.

Furthermore the African publisher is financially (lack of cash-flow e.g.) and technically ill-equipped to carry out the publishing process. Most of the equipment required for publishing work, mainly computers, have to be imported at high price and again taxes and import duties have to be paid. Finally the African publisher cannot find trained staff members in vital areas such as editing, design, illustration, production, pricing, marketing and bookkeeping". In all aspects of book publishing process, personnel has to be trained on the job.

We could continue with the long list of problems faced in African publishing today: "Many of the relatively few African publishers are having difficulties, suffering from the general economical crisis, the erosion of purchasing power, and the tremendous problems

TABLE 3 : Numbers of titles (sources: Rapport sur la Communication dans le Monde, UNESCO, 1990; Statistical Yearbook 1993, UNESCO)

Algeria	1984	718	1991	494	[% of religious books]	
Angola	1986	14			[for the last	
Botswana			1991	158	[mentioned figure]	
Burkina Faso	1985	4				
Burundi	1986	54				
Cape Verde	1985	10	1989	10		
Egypt	1984	1277				
Ethiopia	1985	227	1990	385	1991	240 9.5%
Gambia	1985	72	1991	21		
Kenya			1990	348		33%
Madagascar	1984	321	1990	154	1991	46 50%
Malawi	1984	134	1989	141		
Mali	1984	160				
Mauritius	1986	110	1990	75	1991	56 10%
Mozambique	1984	66				
Namibia			1990	106	1991	193 2%
Nigeria	1985	2213	1989	1466		16%
Réunion	1985	73				
Rwanda	1986	104				
South Africa	1989	6696	1990	4950	1991	4836 13%
Tanzania	1984	363	1990	172		10%
Zimbabwe	1986	353	1989	337	1990	349 4%
Tunisia	1985	540				
Belgium	1989	6822	1990	12157	1991	13813 4%
France	1989	40115	1990	41720	1991	43682 2.9%
Germany	1989	65980	1990	61015	1991	67890 4.9%
Italy	1989	22647	1990	25068	1991	27751 5.9%
United Kingdom	1992	86573				3.7%

involved in expanding beyond their own domestic market. There are logistical complications, particularly in the Anglophone countries, in obtaining basic printing materials such as ink and paper, as well as equipment, usually due to foreign exchange problems." (5) Without mentioning the competition of international and overseas Publishing Houses, especially in the field of school text-book production.

The African book market is not negligible!

The strong presence of transnational publishing houses in the African book industry shows that at least the African educational book market remains attractive and lucrative, in spite of the difficulties of doing business in some African countries. And we have to admit that it is not without reason that some leading book publishing houses in France (like Hachette, Presses de la Cité, Hatier and St. Paul France) and in England (Longman, Heinemann eg.) are fighting each other to conquer the lucrative public market for school text-books in Africa: "Educational publishing is the most financially attractive sector of the African book market, and it remains the area most heavily dominated by transnational publishers. For example, it has been estimated that in Cameroon, annual sales of just one officially recommended text-book at primary school level can reach the value of US\$ 3.6 million... By 1980 the annual turnover of the text-book market in Nigeria was about 90 million Pounds Sterling. It is clear that this created an attractive market for transnational as well as indigenous publishers" (6).

Publishers at the Service of Evangelization

Searching new lanes of collaboration with a view to overcoming these problems was the main objective of the Seminar of Catholic publishers held February last in Nairobi.

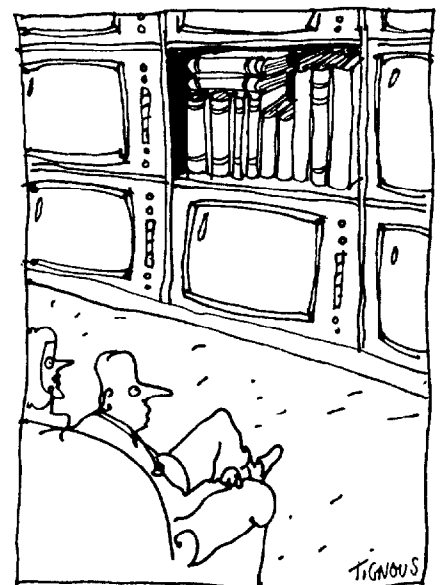
During the course of the gathering, each publishing house was invited to present its realisations, its options, its problems and its projects. This information was analysed, discussed and reflected in the global framework of the religious, moral, cultural and social-economic situation in Africa today. The seminar programme included the sharing of professional information. Even - and possibly especially - when it is put at the service of evangelization, the work of the publisher requires a high degree of professionalism. A long-term editorial programme requires a well-defined policy - a *Mission Statement* - with an expert knowledge of what the readers expect. There must be a fair balance of these two elements, and maintaining this balance is one of the publisher's most serious problems. In Africa, the limited market, the restrained financial means of the population and numerous other obstacles mentioned above are a constant threat to the survival of publishing enterprises.

Publishing for Evangelization means not only to produce Bibles, liturgical and strictly religious books. All social and educational issues, "justice and peace" and all topics related to the whole development of the people have to be integrated into the publishing programmes of Catholic publishers. But publishers have to produce and put on the market attractive, "popular" and affordable books, according to the expectations, demands and living standards of the readers.

The interest of any publisher is of course to sell his books, and not to keep them in storage. Therefore the books have to be distributed and to be made known to sellers and buyers. However, sales promotion and advertising are expensive. Publishers cannot afford to print catalogues for 6 or 8 new titles. Advertising rates in newspapers are high and newspaper circulation is very limited. And it is true that sales promotion tours are difficult! But why not make joint-efforts in this field? Why not produce catalogues together? Why not an exchange of mailing lists, make mailing operations together or launching common promotional operations? Why not have a combined stand at the various national Book Fairs? Joint book marketing and distribution would be cost-effective if sufficient publishers join the venture. Reading-promotion campaigns have to be conducted

(5) From "The Study on Technical Publishing in Africa: Findings and Conclusions", by P. Osborn and D. Chabrol, in "Promoting Technical Publishing in Africa. Seminar Proceedings", Arnhem, Netherlands, 3-6 November 1992, published by CTA, 1994.

(6) From "Africa: Lessons of the Eighties", by Eva Rathgeber, in "Publishing and Development in the Third World", Hans Zell Publishers, 1992, p. 78 - 79.



Association of Catholic Publishers in Africa
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Fax: ++254-2-44 21 44

The African Publishers' Network, APNET: established in February 1992 by thirteen publishers, APNET membership has grown to 1365 publishers, booksellers and librarians in 44 African countries. APNET objectives are the following:

- to produce an all-African journal every two months reporting and circulating up-to-date book news;
- to organize training programmes
- to facilitate a trade programme, especially for importation into African countries from other African countries;
- to lobby at the World Bank and major international organizations involved with African book development,
- publications of directories, training handbooks, catalogues and research.

Address: APNET, P.O. Box 4209, 78 Kaguvi Street, Harare, Zimbabwe. Tel.: ++263-4-73 96 81 and 75 12 02. Fax: ++263-4-75 12 02 and 72 99 05. E-Mail: apnet@mango.zw.

The African Books Collective (ABC): started in 1990, ABC is a self-help initiative of a group of African publishers to promote, market and distribute their books more effectively in Europe, North America, and in Commonwealth countries outside Africa. ABC produces a wide range of joint lists and catalogues.

Address: ABC, The Jam Factory, 27 Park End Street, OX1 1HU Oxford, UK. Tel.: ++44-865-72 66 86. Fax: ++44-865-79 32 98.

CODE-Europe' s programme (same address as ABC), started in April 1995 when more than 70 African and European publishers and staff from development organizations investigated ways for commercial arrangements between African and European publishers. CODE publishes a quarterly "Partners in African Publishing".

and outlets visited to promote books. On the book market, it is vital to create access, to put books where they are visible, where the people are, and not only where the publishers are! It is especially necessary to promote books in rural or remote areas, and so in this way to create a 'reading and writing culture'.

An Association of Catholic Publishers in Africa

Such suggestions and many others were proposed to the participants by contributors to the seminar. Ways for implementing them were discussed and searched for. Alone one cannot overcome all the difficulties in book publishing in Africa. Only collaboration and joint-ventures can be of some assistance to become better, more creative and more viable. Therefore the idea to form an Association of Catholic Publishers in Africa (ACPA) came into being, for the purpose of supporting the necessary steps.

The strategies adopted by the seminar and by ACPA include: collaboration in writing and editing, co-editing, exchange of publication and translation rights, common promotion of the members' publications. New editorial programmes will be initiated for the dual purpose of making known and strengthening the message of the African Synod among African society and the cultures of Africa. Concretely, a newsletter - as a means of contact between members - will be edited. A joint catalogue of members' most successful books shall be prepared. The association will also organize training courses in book-publishing, e.g. in cover design, for cartoons and comics, for distribution and marketing, but ACPA also has in mind the planning and organizing of training opportunities for writers and book-sellers.

To a closer link with the book industry

The way to self-sustainability for book publishers in Africa requires collaboration with the booksellers, including the street vendors. Indeed the booksellers are one of the most important links in the book publishing chain: they are an indispensable intermediary between publisher and reader. They provide guidance to the reader on the choice of titles, and to the publisher about the readers' needs and demands. Therefore it is essential to involve bookshops in all publication-related activities in all countries.

Setting up their own Association, Catholic publishers are very well aware that they must be part of the whole book industry in Africa, and obviously the new ACPA is bringing them in closer relationship with existing professional organisations and ventures, like the African Publishers' Network (APNET) or the CODE - Europe or the African Books Collective, which are reinforcing the book industry in Africa.

"Perhaps the special task of the publisher will be to coordinate in some way part of the work of many others, establishing with them a series of projects that will help bring the Synod alive in the Churches of our various countries", a theologian, Fr. Cecil McGarry, told the participants at the seminar. Among many suggestions which helped to reflect on the role of Catholic publishers in Africa and which were used to develop the strategy of the new Association, Fr. McGarry challenged them as follows:

"What role, if any, should Catholic Publishers play in providing simple media education, helping people to read, hear and view the media more critically, helping them to distinguish between news, facts and propaganda on behalf of those who control the media? What contacts is it possible to have with the world of the media, associations of publishers, journalists, etc. so as to ensure some presence of the Church in that world and to support lay members who may wish to stand for professional values? Have Catholic Publisher any role in acting as a watchdog on behalf of the Church in the matter of freedom of expression and freedom of discussion of all topics important for the life of the people in each country? The Synod frequently reminded us that the media belongs to the people and should serve the people, not some vested interests". ■