



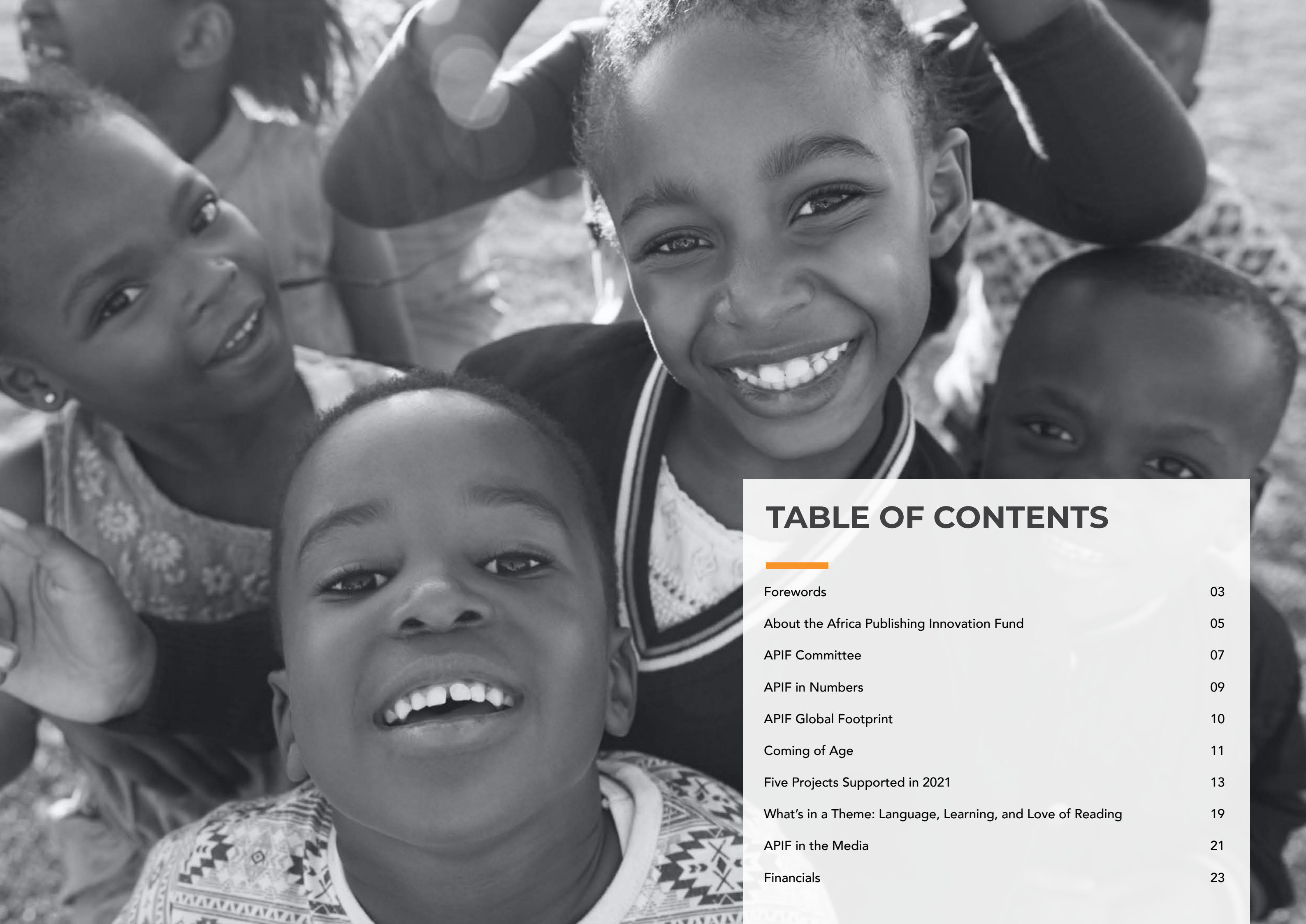
# ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



international  
publishers  
association





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# FOREWORD



**BODOUR AL QASIMI**

President of International Publishers Association

The Africa Publishing Innovation Fund (APIF) has is halfway through its four-year mandate, and everyone behind it is so honoured and gratified to have been able to help get some truly inspiring ideas off the ground in the first two years. So far, the Fund has disbursed US\$ 400,000 to 12 separate initiatives, bringing books and stories to life, developing much-needed libraries, and providing learning opportunities to many underprivileged people.

What we perhaps didn't foresee is just how integral to our lives this work has become. Akoss, Brian, Gbadega, Lawrence, Mohamed, and I have found ourselves deeply invested in the projects and uplifted by the creative thinking, unwavering motivation and pure dedication of the people behind the projects.

This is the busiest and most exciting time in the APIF annual cycle. Not only are we seeing our most recent projects come to fruition, but the moment is fast approaching when we will select the innovations to support in our third year. The theme for 2022 is 'cultivating reading culture beyond the classroom', and we have again received hundreds of high-quality applications from across the African continent.

Mercifully, while the COVID-19 pandemic caused us some delays and necessitated some adjustments during 2020-2021, it did not lead to any derailments. And thanks to Dubai Cares' steadfast faith in the IPA and our shared commitment to improving literacy, reading and book access in Africa, there is every reason to think we can continue to bring positive change to African lives in the next two years.



**DR TAREQ AL GURG**

CEO and Vice-Chairman of Dubai Cares

A deep love of reading is essential to children's literacy development and their overall learning and education. As an organization that understands and advocates the importance of education in building the future of our communities, Dubai Cares has always taken great pride in its strong belief in promoting a culture of reading amongst children. Our partnership with the International Publishers Association (IPA) is therefore a natural extension of our commitment to ensuring that children around the world can take advantage of the life-long benefits of this crucial skill.

Since 2019, which marked the beginning of our collaboration with IPA and the establishments of the African Publishing Innovation Fund (APIF) to transform the future of African publishing, we have witnessed some remarkable outcomes that are contributing towards expanding IPA's literacy promotion efforts. The restoration of the historical McMillian Memorial library in Nairobi, for example, will allow children in the area to easily step inside the wonderful world of books and make the most of the treasure trove of knowledge they offer.

Each successful effort in this direction will go a long way in ensuring that our children grow up feeling empowered with a sound understanding of the world they live in. Equipped with this understanding, they can then select their own paths and create their own opportunities that will guide them towards forging their future, regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances. This is the vision we have always believed in at Dubai Cares and this is the vision we will continue to work towards to make equal access to quality education a reality for all.

We thank IPA for their continuous efforts in improving literacy, book access, indigenous publishing, and library restoration in Africa, and we look forward to continuing our work together and positively impacting the lives of people across Africa.



# ABOUT THE AFRICA PUBLISHING INNOVATION FUND



Since May 2019, the IPA has been in partnership with UAE-based philanthropic organization, Dubai Cares, to support literacy, book access, indigenous publishing, and library services in Africa. Under the agreement, the IPA created the Africa Publishing Innovation Fund, to administer Dubai Cares' US\$ 800,000 donation at a rate of US\$ 200,000 per year from 2020 to 2024, ensuring the funds yielded the greatest possible impact on the ground.

To carry out this task, the IPA formed the Africa Publishing Innovation Fund Committee, which is chaired by IPA President, Bodour Al Qasimi, and comprises five experienced African publishers.

From the outset, the APIF has sought to focus its attention on two key areas, namely publishing innovations and library support, disbursing funds according to the most urgent current needs in those areas.



# APIF COMMITTEE

The IPA Africa Publishing Innovation Committee is responsible for vetting and selecting the projects and initiatives that receive grants under the Africa Publishing Innovation Fund. They also set the fund’s annual objectives, depending on the changing circumstances in and around African publishing. It is made up of senior publishing leaders from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tunisia and South Africa, and operates under the leadership of IPA President, Bodour Al Qasimi, also CEO and founder of UAE-based Kalimat publishing house.

In its first year, 2019, the APIF’s priority was the promotion of indigenous languages in 2020 the Committee called for innovations to tackle Africa’s digital and remote learning challenges, which had been dramatically worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, the APIF’s attention has turned to developing African reading culture beyond the classroom.



**Bodour Al Qasimi**

Bodour Al Qasimi, President of the International Publishers Association (IPA); CEO and Founder of Kalimat Publishing Group; Chair of the Africa Publishing Innovation Committee.



**Akoss Ofori-Mensah**

Managing Director, Sub-Saharan Publishers; Member of the Council of Management of African Books Collective, UK.



**Brian Wafawarowa**

Chief Content and Product Officer at Juta and Company (Pty) Ltd.



**Gbadega Adedapo**

Chairman of Nigeria Book Fair Trust; CEO Rasmed Publications Limited.



**Lawrence Njagi**

Chairman, Kenya Publishers Association; Founder and Managing Director, Mountain Top Publishers (Kenya); Treasurer and board member, African Publishers Network (APNET).



**Mohamed Salah Maalej**

General coordinator of Tunisia’s International Book Fair; President of the Arab and International Exhibitions Committee in the Arab Publishers Association; CEO of Kounouz Publishing.

# APIF IN NUMBERS

US\$ 400,000  
DISBURSED



US\$ 226,000  
TO PUBLISHING  
INNOVATIONS



US\$ 114,000  
TO LIBRARY  
PROJECTS



8 PUBLISHING  
INNOVATIONS  
FUNDED



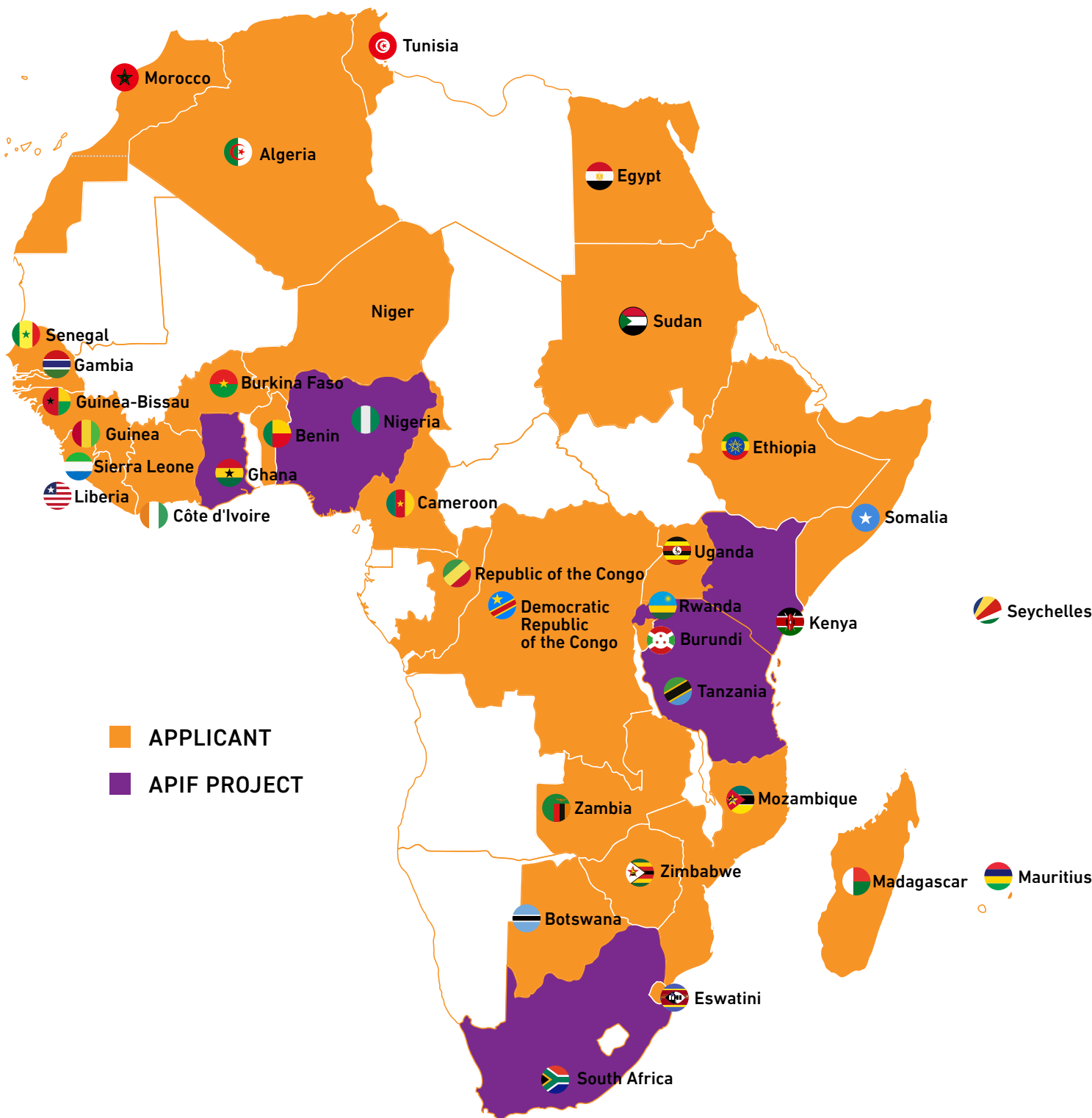
4 LIBRARY  
DEVELOPMENTS  
SUPPORTED



500+  
APPLICANTS FROM  
38 COUNTRIES



# APIF FOOTPRINT





## COMING OF AGE

### PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

When the International Publishers Association (IPA) and Dubai Cares agreed to join forces in May 2019 to cooperate on tackling some of Africa's publishing, literacy, and indigenous language challenges, it took the IPA into the grant-giving domain for the first time in its 125-year lifetime.

Two years on, and the purpose-built governance, administrative, and procedural mechanisms are running smoothly and efficiently, leaving fewer distractions from the business of finding the next big ideas. The APIF Committee has been through two exhaustive selection rounds and is embarking on its third at the time of writing. With experience, the committee members (page 7-8) are becomingly increasingly adept at their task.



With professional communications support from a specialised South African agency, the APIF's now trilingual outreach has become truly pan-African, with announcements in English, French and Arabic. As a result, we have seen a palpable increase in the number and variety of non-English submissions received.

Of course, the great complicator that is COVID-19 has forced the APIF, like the rest of the world, to find ways to function at distance, allow greater flexibility when needed and widen the objective to keep the horizon – and the foreground – in equal focus.

## AFRICAN CHALLENGES BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE PANDEMIC

With the pandemic monopolising humanity's attention throughout 2020, it was logical that the APIF call for ideas to address the interrupted education of African children through digital solutions to the continent's deepening remote learning challenges. However, even as the world grew somewhat accustomed to lockdowns and travel bans, it was clear that many of the obstacles that had beset African publishing pre-pandemic had been exacerbated by the health emergency.



Among these is the fact that African publishing tends to lean heavily towards education – up to 90% of sales in some markets – with reading commonly regarded as a necessity to further schooling, employability or personal skills. Unfortunately, reading for pleasure remains a widely undiscovered pastime, despite Africa's rich storytelling heritage and reading's proven benefits to mental wellbeing, intellectual capacity, and social aptitude.

Consequently, while a significant number of African publishing houses are working hard to develop the fiction space, many still depend on selling printed textbooks to governments, meaning they have no direct relationship with consumers. When COVID-19 closed schools and drove learning online, it crystallized the precariousness of this model. A diversified, digitally capable book sector is in the public interest as much as it's good for publishing and its numerous adjacent industries, which together employ hundreds of thousands of people in Africa alone.

# FIVE PROJECTS SUPPORTED IN 2021



In its second year, the Africa Publishing Innovation Fund received more than **300 applications** from innovators in 26 African countries. This marked a huge increase in demand, which made the APIF Committee's job of deciding whom to sponsor even harder than in 2019.

School closures and the subsequent transition to online learning amid the COVID-19 emergency forced the APIF's attention onto scalable, digital learning innovations to help the millions of African students in under-resourced rural communities. Many of them are beyond the reach of national efforts to transition to remote learning and do not have access to libraries.

After a long, rigorous process spanning June to November 2020, the Committee settled on **five projects** that are expected to impact the lives of 11 million young Africans in five countries.



## GHANA

LEARNERS GIRLS FOUNDATION  
GRANT AMOUNT: **US\$ 16,000**



### GIRLS' EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN RURAL GHANA

Learners Girls Foundation (LGF) is a small, ambitious NGO committed to keeping girls in Ghana's rural Upper East Region in school, despite significant cultural pressure to leave. Led by Bushiratu Kumuriwor Alira, LGF is investing its APIF grant in a mentorship and e-library initiative for girls aged six and up, where trained volunteers will mentor and tutor them, and cultivate their skills and interests.

The project will provide access to laptops and other materials in a purpose-built structure so the girls can take tutorials and use books and e-books, with STEM subjects being the priority. It will also encourage girls to prioritize education and convince them of their potential to surpass the traditional, family bound roles widely expected of girls in rural Ghana.

Construction of the metal and wood library centre is close to completion, and the LGF team is in discussions with three local schools to train teacher-mentors who will provide guidance for girls in the area. Working with other Ghanaian partners, LGF has launched a STEM Access for Girls program to introduce them to coding and hands-on robotics learning. The next step is a collaboration with the Ghana Library Authority on access to printed and e-books.



*We're grateful to the APIF Committee for supporting our project, which has impacted the educational needs of children in the community. Thanks to this grant we have almost completed the library structure where children will be able to access physical and e-books for the first time in the community, provided practical training on STEM subjects and robotics, engaged three schools on literacy teaching and recruited and trained more volunteers to help execute our projects.*



**Kumuriwor Alira Bushiratu**  
Founder  
Learners Girls Foundation







## KENYA

eKITABU

GRANT AMOUNT: **US\$ 60,000**

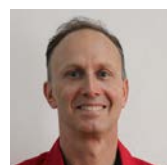


### MAKING ACCESSIBLE DIGITAL CONTENT WORK FOR CHILDREN

eKitabu is a Kenyan, Rwandan, and American company that seeks to increase accessibility and lower the cost of content for quality education. Headquartered in Nairobi, eKitabu creates innovative learning materials with users and partners from the public and private sectors. Since 2012, eKitabu has brought accessible digital content, data collection, and programs to engage, recognize and build evidence with learners and teachers in over 1,500 schools across 47 counties of Kenya and 13 countries of Africa. eKitabu is building a sustainable ecosystem that includes ministries of education, local as well as global publishers for education, international development partners, and technology firms, focusing on content that is ministry-approved for schools.

eKitabu is using the APIF funds to address the damaging impacts of COVID-19 on African education by promoting the accessibility and use of digital content, and by fostering the uptake of sustainable remote learning solutions. In the first half of 2021, the team has engaged teachers to bring them accessible digital content and training and carried out virtual training for 19 Kenyan publishers to build their capacity to develop accessible digital content.

*COVID-19 has forever altered the journey of African education going digital. Since March, Kenyan publishers, eKitabu, and the IPA have been finding solutions together for Africa's remote learning challenges, building a more inclusive and equitable learning ecosystem to leave no one behind. Activities to date included training 19 publishing houses on creating accessible digital content; delivering over 18,000 titles in accessible digital formats to pilot schools; and training and supporting teachers to implement Universal Design for Learning in the pilot schools.*



**Will Clurman**  
CEO  
eKitabu



## RWANDA

SAVE THE CHILDREN

GRANT AMOUNT: **US\$ 50,000**



### DIGITAL READING SOLUTIONS

Save the Children Rwanda aims to reach children aged three to nine and improve their access to stories through the adoption of digital solutions. Save the Children is working with partners to digitize reading materials, including Kinyarwanda language. The organization is also equipping eight community libraries across five districts and training 270 librarians from eight community libraries in technology.

The objective is to inculcate a reading culture among 640 children in rural communities, while providing digitally accessible reading materials in Kinyarwanda that will keep 1.6 million children reading. Save the Children is leveraging its network of community-based volunteers to promote literacy and air 'read aloud' sessions on the radio, benefitting a million Rwandan children.

The team has been developing training on library management, use of tablets and projectors, and digital security. All digital reading materials have been purchased and distributed to the community libraries, and four local radio stations have begun airing the audio stories for children. The next step is to train the community librarians and the library committees, and to support them in conducting read aloud sessions.

*The APIF has supported Save the Children to improve children's literacy by providing the digital reading materials to the existing community libraries across five districts in Rwanda. After the distribution of the digital reading materials to eight community, we have observed amazing, sudden positive changes in the children. The parents have now started escorting their children to the community libraries, which didn't happen before. The digital materials have not only offered the opportunity to easily keep many books in one place, but also availed books in various formats such as audio, and PDF formats. Our hopes are high that children's digital literacy is about to spur exceptionally thanks to APIF support.*



**Paulin Ndahayo**  
Education Program Manager  
Save the Children Rwanda



# TANZANIA

BOOK AID INTERNATIONAL  
GRANT AMOUNT: **US\$ 38,500**



## ZANZIBAR VOYAGER CONTAINER LIBRARY

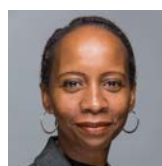
eBook Aid International, the Zanzibar Library Service and the Dunga community have converted three shipping containers into a fully equipped library in rural Dunga, in Zanzibar.

The library will contain more than 5,000 new books for children and adults and will be fitted with locally sourced shelving and furniture. It will also be staffed by three trained librarians who will promote the resource and run special activities for girls and outreach to local schools.

This project is a community initiative led by the Dunga community, who want their own local library. The structure will make a significant difference to a community that has little or no access to quality reading materials, especially marginalized groups such as women and girls.

Having begun the construction work on the Voyager Container Library Zanzibar in May 2021, the main structure and most of the roof is in place, with wiring, painting and installation of windows and doors due to be completed by late August. the first consignment of books has been received from the UK and processed for dispatch to the library, while most of the local books are currently with the Zanzibar Library Service.

*The APIF grant has helped create the very first community library in rural Dunga in Zanzibar. With support from APIF and Dubai Cares three shipping containers have been transformed into a vibrant library space filled with exciting, brand new books, giving local children (girls in particular) and adults a safe, supportive and inspiring place to read and study. This is truly life changing for a community who previously had no or little access to books or libraries.*



**Samantha Thomas-Chuula**  
Head of Programs  
Book Aid International



# ZIMBABWE

CHIRIKURE CHIRIKURE  
GRANT AMOUNT: **US\$ 15,500**



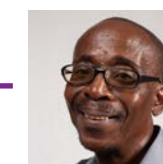
## NEMASHAKWE COMMUNITY LIBRARY AND RESOURCE CENTRE

This initiative is developing a library and resource centre for a rural community in Zimbabwe. The project is the brainchild of noted Zimbabwean poet Chirikure Chirikure, whose family has converted some of its own buildings for the centre. Chirikure is using the funds to ship a container of books from the UK, buy computers, establish internet connectivity, install a solar power generator, and drill a borehole to provide water to the students and school leavers who use the centre. He has also put in place a management committee for the centre, with a caretaker working under its oversight.

The centre will serve people from several local villages and is expected to benefit around 1,000 people, mostly children and teenagers.



*With the support of the APIF grant, we have so far set up a solar powered borehole which is supplying running water, not only to the centre, but to the entire community. The community and other potential partners can by now see that the library and resource centre will be a reality that will have multiple benefits. The grant has already enabled the project to get more buy-ins from the community, as well as attract the interests of other potential partners.*



**Chirikure Chirikure**  
Poet, Author and Songwriter



# WHAT'S IN A THEME: LANGUAGE, LEARNING, AND LOVE OF READING

Every year, the APIF Committee selects a unique theme that informs its call for submissions, which goes out in June. In our first year (2019), the focus was on the protection of indigenous languages, which remains a huge challenge in many African countries. Africa has an estimated 2,140 distinct tongues, or one third of the world's languages, of which 100 are endangered. Despite this linguistic richness, most African states use ex-colonial tongues — English, French, Portuguese — or Arabic as their official lingua franca.

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic reshaped human life. Its devastating impact on education in Africa prompted the APIF Committee to call for innovative solutions to the deepening remote learning crisis. We have been honoured to support some truly inspiring projects that are now coming to fruition in Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe (pages 13-18).

After some reflection, the APIF team in 2021 turned its attention to a longstanding challenge that may be one of African publishing's greatest obstacles: the overreliance on physical sales of educational textbooks. When the pandemic sent students home from school, drew down the shutters on book fairs and forced shops to close, orders dried up and the book market went into lockdown along with the population.

In early 2020, the International Publishers Association (IPA) conducted a survey of its members in 33 countries, including Egypt, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa, whose findings were presented in the report [From Response to Recovery](#). Book sales in these African countries collapsed, with some markets reporting an 80-90% year-on-year drop. Conversely, maturer, digitally ready markets experienced shorter-lived and less dramatic declines in sales.

Of course, these disparities can be partly attributed to the safety net of ecommerce readiness in the more developed economies. But allied to this is the fact that those markets are also awash with a huge variety of books and readers hungry to consume them. A strong recreational reading scene engenders a healthy publishing industry, and vice versa.

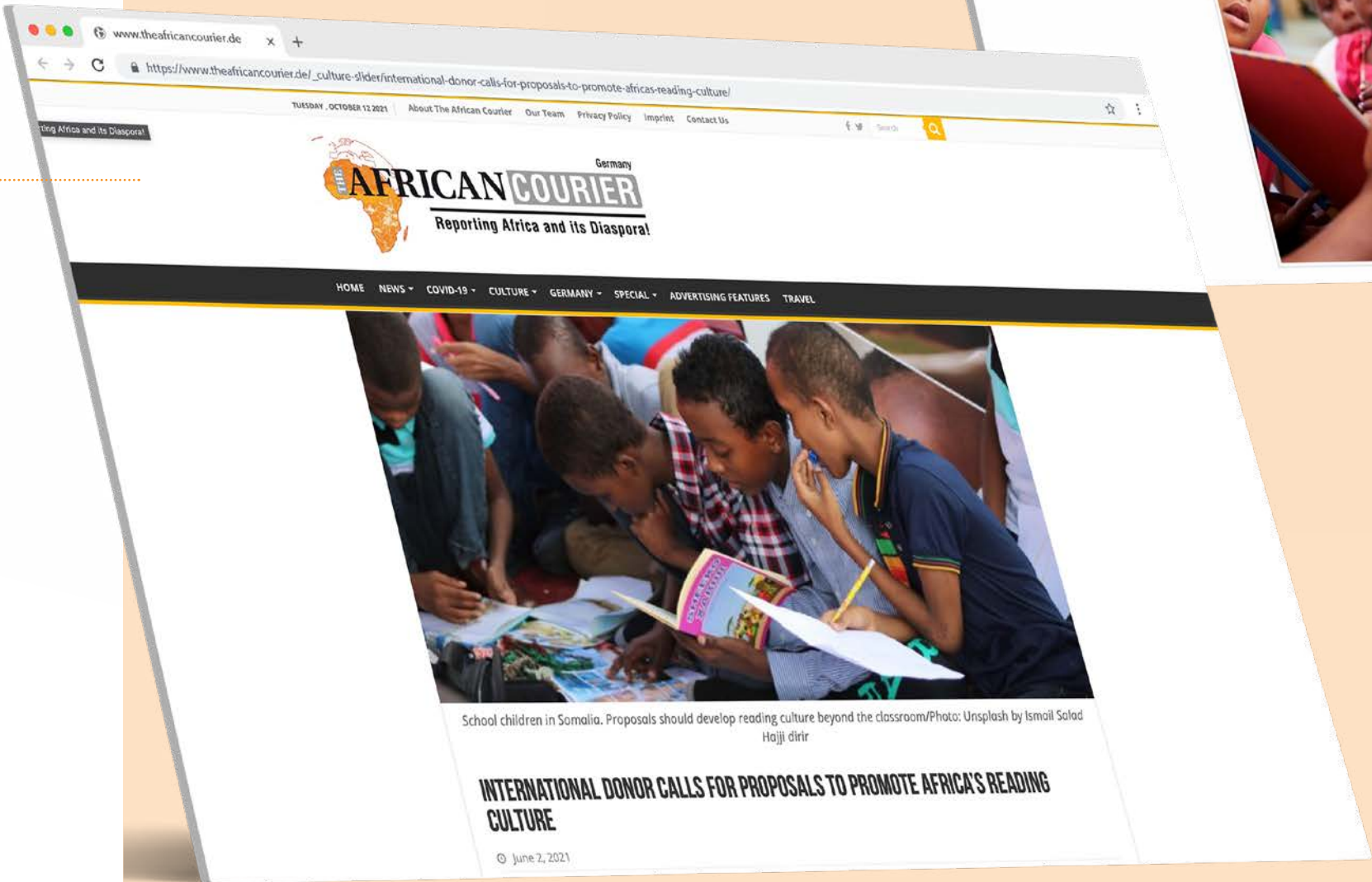
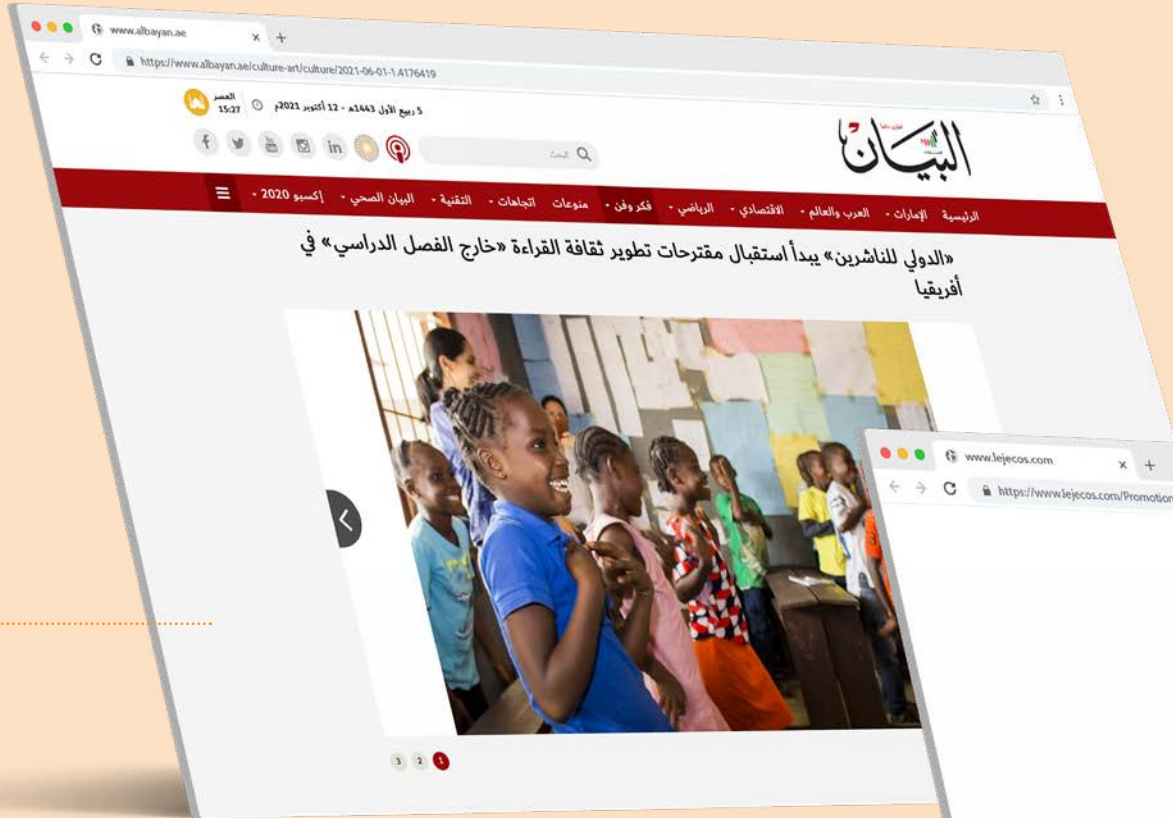
The fertile tradition of African storytelling is well documented, yet the continent's original narrative canon remains largely unpublished and, save some notable exceptions, most stories that make it to print are relatively uncelebrated. France disregarding its wine or Ethiopia ignoring its coffee would be unthinkable, but it is comparable to what is happening in African literature.

Having put out the call in June 2021 for ideas to inculcate reading culture beyond the African classroom, the APIF Committee again received hundreds of submissions. Success in our third funding round will be to find projects that persuade children and adults of the magic of books, because African publishing is replete with untapped potential that could benefit millions of people now and for generations to come.





# APIF IN THE MEDIA





# FINANCIALS

Direct Costs	2021 Expenditures US\$		
	Jan - Jun	Jul - Dec	Full Year
Book Aid International	19,250	19,250	38,500
Chirikure Chirikure	7,750	7,750	15,500
eKitabu	30,000	30,000	60,000
Learners Girls Foundation	3,250	12,750	16,000
Save the Children	25,000	25,000	50,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>85,250</b>	<b>94,750</b>	<b>180,000</b>
Indirect Costs			
Website maintenance	-	3,050	3,050
Communications / PR	7,500	7,500	15,000
Administration	-	2,000	2,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7,500</b>	<b>12,550</b>	<b>27,550</b>
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>92,750</b>	<b>107,300</b>	<b>200,050</b>



[www.apinnovation.fund](http://www.apinnovation.fund)


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


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