



Give leaders tools to translate revival fires into solid renewal of believers' hearts and minds. by David Mehlis

**FINAL
FOLIO**

Publish to Transform Africa

Of more than 784 million Africans, just over 351 million profess to be Christians, according to *Operation World*. In sub-Saharan Africa, at least 60 percent of the population profess faith in Christ. The growth of the Church in Africa is well-documented. In Nigeria, evangelicals have grown from some two million 40 years ago, to over 26 million today.

Church growth is not the whole story, however. Thrice, revivals have swept through the African continent—yet corrupt bureaucracies, political upheaval, and genocide still go on. Cults flourish. Where is the transformation, both spiritual and social, that should result from a commitment to the person of Jesus Christ and biblical values?

Content for your context

The Church in Africa must examine which of its values are consistent with a Christian world view, and which are not. Publishers must be a part of this effort.

This cannot be achieved simply by importing Christian bestsellers from the U.S. or the U.K. Westerners think alike; they offer titles that speak to their own cultures.

There must be indigenous Christian publishing to address concerns from an African point of view. Tribalism, nationhood, land reforms, HIV/AIDS, and education, for example, are all concerns unlikely to be effectively addressed for African Christians in Western books. Indigenous publishers must look for ways to build and transform their societies. Embrace Christian values and promote them. Publishers in Africa—and everywhere else—must find ways to translate revival fires into solid renewal of believers' hearts and minds.

Evaluate the market

Africa has over 50 different nations, but the political divisions of the continent are not reflective of its people groups.

In general, national markets are too small, as economic units, to support viable publishing.

Compare Africa's situation to Latin America. That continent has fewer economic units with bigger populations and, for the most part, greater economic stability than many African nations. Brazil, for instance, has a critical mass of 180 million people, and the Christian publishing industry there has grown in unprecedented ways.

So, how can Africa's Christian publishers experience the success of their Latin counterparts? How will the educated African speak to a largely poor and semi-literate population? They must look for viable markets.

In some nations, success is already within reach. Nigeria ranks first, in population size, among all countries in Africa, followed by Egypt, Ethiopia, Congo, and South Africa. Even there, however, it is critical that publishers engage in careful analysis of their audience—even as the Church is exploding and more people are turning to Christ.

We must be committed to both Kingdom ministry goals and to the effective use of limited financial resources. Perhaps the use of tract-like materials is more appropriate than Western hardcover books.

Go forth and publish

What can African publishers do to best serve the church at this critical time? Go forth and publish. Conduct your readership analysis, look for the best writers, study the distribution channels—and then do the work you have been entrusted.

You cannot afford to wait for a reading culture to arise, favorable economic conditions to develop, for a calmer tomorrow when conditions will be perfect. The truth is, conditions are never perfect. They never will be, but God has called us to act and to publish now, today. Fulfill the mission God has given you—and transform Africa with the Gospel. ♦

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