

Official publications

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Official publications comprise all publications produced under the official auspices of legislative bodies, decision-making and judicial organs, civil service departments, courts of law, independent institutions, committees, people in authority, etc. IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) describes official publications as follows: "An official publication is defined by the status of the issuing source regardless of the subject matter, content or physical form" (Nurcombe 1997, p. xix). "Official documents" is the general search term for material of this nature in the Nordic Africa Institute's online library catalogue. [AfricaLit](#).

The library began acquiring official publications back in 1962 when the Nordic Africa Institute commenced its activities, since they were considered to constitute fundamental and crucial source material within the field of the social sciences. With time, an acquisitions profile came to be established in line with the library's subject focus and based on the material's significance, accessibility and demand. Official publications are essential to social scientific studies on Africa as they are principal information sources for economic, legal, government and political data and are considered to be scientific tools of lasting value.

An important problem to keep in mind regarding official publications from certain African countries is the question of reliability. The reason is that such publications may be used as mouthpieces by governmental powers in order to further their political goals or to give expression to political values during times of crisis. This mainly concerns countries with small volumes of official documents that tend to limit access to information. Thus, even collections of official publications from colonial times should be read with a critical eye. Political instability and catastrophes that repeatedly befall the African continent sometimes make it impossible to gain access to certain official publications. A connection can be made between conflict and war on the one hand and the number of official documents issued on the other. In addition, the economic crisis affecting many African states has left a mark on the way in which public administrations function in those countries. Other problems arise when certain official publications are difficult to obtain as few lists are available for checking newer publications and also because, in the absence of a central government printer, it is sometimes necessary for various sectors of the government administration to publish their own material. Library acquisitions are made via agents, from bookshops, by direct contact with the producers, or through embassies. Today it is possible to procure official publications via email in certain cases, from countries whose central statistical agencies have their own websites.

Thanks to developments in the field of information technology, a radical change has begun to take place. Nowadays, authorities with the important task of disseminating basic decision-making data are choosing with greater frequency to make their official publications available on the Internet. The range, however, is still extremely uneven. Some states, such as South Africa, Tanzania, Mali, and Senegal, offer a rich collection of official publications in full text, many in PDF format; there are other countries that supply only a limited number of official publications in summarized form. Yet it can be anticipated that a basic range of official publications from all of Africa's countries will be available before long on the Internet in the form of constitutions, censuses, development plans, budgets, economic reports, diverse statistics, and so on. A problem, however, is that this type of material could be removed from the Net as soon as it loses its current interest value. Therefore, the Nordic Africa Institute, with its aim of preserving such publications for future research, must continue to purchase them in the form of paper publications, CD-ROMs and microfiche. Under discussion at present are questions of copyright policy regarding the preservation of important documents only available on the Internet.

On the IFLA's website [Government Information and Official Publications](#), the debate surrounding government information and official publications can be followed. There is even a special interest group "[ATINA](#) – Access To Information Network – Africa", whose aim it is to "assess and promote free public access to government information and information about governments, as well as freedom of expression and democracy across the African continent, through libraries and library professionals".

A large selection of the Nordic Africa Institute library's collection of official publications can be located in the library catalogue, [AfricaLit](#), and in the Swedish libraries database, LIBRIS. A small number of older publications held by the library are uncatalogued and are kept in storage. It is quite simple to search in AfricaLit. If, for example, one enters "official documents Mali" in the search field "all fields", a chronological list of official publications from Mali in the library's catalogue will come up; if one enters "population censuses Kenya", the search result will be a list of documents on population censuses in Kenya that are available in the library. In recent years the growing number of official publications being catalogued in [LIBRIS](#) has led to a considerable increase in the demand for such material. In response to this, the library at the Nordic Africa Institute has begun to lend out publications (on 3 weeks reading room loan), chiefly to Nordic research libraries.

Heavy, dull and monotonous official publications are now being replaced by monograph-type formats that make for easier reading. It is enough to take a quick look at publications to see that there are not only numbers and tables in these publications, but also pictures, colour maps and diagrams, printed on high quality paper. In short, these volumes are easy to handle and pleasant to read.

Principal types of official publications

The library acquires official publications that fall into the following main groups:

1. Parliamentary documents, bills and other related documents: annual and audit reports, official reports of investigations commissions, budget proposals and reports, conference papers, policy documents, etc.
2. Parliamentary debates: the Nordic Africa Institute's library holds a particularly comprehensive collection of debates from South Africa's parliament.
3. Constitutions and legislation.
4. Statistics: annual statistics, statistical abstracts, national accounts, economic and financial indicators, as well as statistical data on agriculture, education, housing, health issues, transport, tourism, the environment, gender, labour, migration, trade and industry. Also available are household surveys and statistics concerning household consumption, social conditions, etc.
5. Population censuses: at regional as well as national level. These are probably the most important statistical data.
6. Development plans, both national and local.
7. Policy documents concerning all areas of interest in the field of the social sciences.
8. Research reports.
9. Government gazettes: these are only purchased from a few countries at present, although older collections have been kept and are available for scrutiny in the Nordic Africa Institute Library.

Official publications on the Internet

The two most important websites for official publications on the Internet are [African Governments on the Internet](#) and [WorldLII](#). The first website is produced by the UNECA (United National Economic Commission for Africa). Each country can be reached from the start page. From there, you can find links to individual ministries, other public authorities, national banks, media, embassies, and so on. There are also links to strategy documents, planning programmes and projects within the IT sector. [WorldLII](#) (World Legal Information Institute) is a good website with many useful links that also include legislation.

Another website of interest is the German [African Governments on the WWW](#), which was created in 1995 and is very user-friendly. In many respects, it is similar to the above-mentioned [African Governments on the Internet](#) (unfortunately the last update is dated 2002). Two further websites are [Political Resources](#) and [The Keele Guide to African Government and Politics on the Internet](#). They both include some links to official publications.

The World Bank's web page [The World Bank – Countries and Regions](#) includes a comprehensive collection of official publications as full text documents. Search-

ing is done by going to the country in question and selecting 'Publications (&Documents)' or 'Topics (in development)'. Most documents are scanned from original documents. Here you can find various types of statistics, such as household surveys, policy documents, etc. The most interesting collections relate to countries for which it is usually very difficult to find documents, such as Angola, Mali, Benin and São Tomé e Príncipe.

In order to search for information about Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Libya or Tunisia, scroll through Middle East and North Africa. However, Réunion (France) is not covered by this web page.

[*The World Bank – Poverty Assessments – Sub-Saharan Africa*](#) concerns mainly poverty follow-up and measurement.

On the website of the African Development Bank, [*African Development Bank*](#) there are collections about subject such as country strategies, gender profiles, economic reports and poverty reduction and follow-up.

The website of the International Monetary Fund, IMF, holds collections of strategies for poverty reduction [*Poverty reduction strategy papers*](#) (PRSP). These have been prepared in collaboration with the governments of the individual countries. The documents provide a concrete picture of the macro-economic prerequisites and various structural and social action programmes to reduce poverty. The database also covers a collection of current statistics within various areas.

The documents are updated every third year. The collections are available for most African countries, with the exception of countries in northern Africa and also Botswana, Gabon, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

[*Demographic and Health Surveys*](#) is a website produced by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Here you can find official documents and statistics relating to population, health and nutrition for most African countries. Statistical collections contain unique data and provide information about subjects such as ethnic groups, education, female circumcision, etc.

For the French-speaking African countries, there are some interesting websites. For example, [*Investir en Zone Franc*](#) contains current development plans and statistics for several countries. On [*Afristat*](#) there is, for example ' [*Bulletin de Données Conjoncturelles*](#)' with statistics and economic cycle indicators for member countries.

Mali now has a fantastic website, [*Malikunnafo*](#), with all types of statistics.

For Senegal, there is much interesting statistics collected on the website [*Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie*](#) (ANSD).

Constitutions can also be found on the Internet. Two websites that may be useful are: [*Constitution Finder*](#) University of Richmond, School of Law and [*International Constitutional Law*](#) (Countries) Universität Bern, Institut für öffentliches Recht.

On [*Law Library of Congress*](#) there are links to various websites. In the case a constitution cannot be found on these websites, you can search using a search engine such as Google.

On the Internet, you can also find various parliamentary documents, bills and other documents as well as collections with legislation. On the Inter-Parliamentary Union's website, there is [PARLINE Database](#) with a link collection to practically all African parliaments.

A number of interesting documents can be found on [Parliament of the Republic of Uganda](#), and the website [Parliament of South Africa](#) also contains much information.

An interesting collection of [White Papers](#) as from 1994 is included on South Africa Government Online. On the website [National Treasury](#) there are government budget bills, budget accounts and so on.

Tanzania has two websites, [The Official Tanzania National Website](#) and [Tanzania Online](#), which also have a lot of content.

National statistics agencies

In the Nordic Africa Institute Library's link collection, [A Guide to Africa on the Internet](#), compiled by the library, you can find links to the central statistics agencies of various countries under the heading 'Links sorted according to region or country – (Statistics)'. Development is rapid, and new links are continuously being added; currently over 46 countries are represented.

Apart from pure statistical publications, such as [Mid-year Population Estimates, 2009](#) and [Statistics in Brief, 2009](#), the website [Statistics South Africa](#) also includes a number of publications on various subjects such as [Measuring Poverty in South Africa](#), [Women and Men in South Africa](#), [Youth of South Africa](#), etc.

On the website for Tanzania's [National Bureau of Statistics](#) you can already browse the [Statistical Abstract 2006](#), [Analytical Report of 2002 Population Census](#) and [National Accounts](#) and even the latest [Household Budget survey](#) is available online.

The website [Uganda Bureau of Statistics](#) is also worth visiting. Apart from various current statistical publications, you can also find the latest census, [Uganda 2002 Population Census](#) and [Statistical Abstract 2009](#), etc.

[Instituto Nacional de Estatística](#) in Moçambique publishes the latest census, [Census 2007](#).

On the World Bank's website, there is a collection of almost all [National Statistical Offices](#) (North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa).

National banks

The collections with official publications also include a number of publications from national banks that are of interest. In the link collection [A Guide to Africa on the Internet](#) you can find links to the national banks of various countries (Banks). For some countries, such as Sierra Leone and Liberia, you can find

economic statistics and data collections with economic indicators. Angola also has data collections with economic indicators and other types of statistics under *Banco Nacional de Angola* that are not easy to find.

For French-speaking west Africa, there are links to national banks in *Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (BCEAO).

For Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Chad, there are links in *Banque des États de l'Afrique Centrale* (BEAC). For more links, see also the wiki *List of Central Banks* and *Central Bank Websites*.

The chapter about *Statistics* has more information about National statistics agencies and National banks.

References

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- Nurcombe, Valerie, J. (ed.) 1997, *Information Sources in Official Publications*. London: Bowker Sauer.
- Westfall, Gloria, 1997, *Guide to Official Publications to Foreign Countries*. Washington DC and Chicago: CIS and American Library Association.
- Amonoo, Petrina and Azubuike, Abraham 2003, *Government Information and Democracy: African Concerns and Perspectives*. World Library and Information Congress: 69th IFLA General Conference and Council, 1–9 August 2003, Berlin http://archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla69/papers/150e-Amonoo_Azubuike.pdf
- Government Information and Official Publications Section Newsletter (IFLA Website) <http://www.ifla.org/en/publications/government-information-and-official-publications-section-newsletter>

Internet resources

- African Governments on the Internet* www.uneca.org/aisi/nici/africagovinternet.htm
- WorldLII* http://www.worldlii.org/cgi-bin/gen_region.pl?region=250
- African Governments on the WWW* www.gksoft.com/govt/en/africa.html
- Political Resources* <http://www.politicalresources.net/africa.htm>
- The Keele Guide to African Government and Politics on the Internet* <http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/por/afbase.htm>
- The World Bank (Countries and Regions)* <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/0,,pagePK:180619-theSitePK:136917,00.html>
- The World Bank (Poverty Reduction and Equity)* <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPA/0,,contentMDK:20202860-menuPK:435735-pagePK:148956-piPK:216618-theSitePK:430367-isCURL:Y,00.html>

Demographic and Health Surveys <http://www.measuredhs.com/countries/start.cfm>

Investir en Zone Franc http://www.izf.net/espace_general/

Malikunnafooni <http://www.malikunnafooni.com/>

Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie (ANSD) <http://www.ansd.sn/>

Afristat <http://www.afristat.org/>

The Official Tanzania National Website <http://www.tanzania.go.tz/>

Tanzania Online <http://www.tzonline.org/>

South Africa Government Online <http://www.gov.za/>

National Treasury <http://www.treasury.gov.za/>

Alleviation of poverty

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) <http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/prsp.asp>

Constitutions

Constitution Finder <http://confinder.richmond.edu/>

International Constitutional Law <http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/>

Law Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/guide/nations.php>

Parliaments

Web Sites of National Parliaments www.ipu.org/english/parlweb.htm

PARLINE Database <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp>

Parliament of the Republic of Uganda <http://www.parliament.go.ug/>

Parliament of South Africa <http://www.parliament.gov.za/live/index.php>

National statistics agencies

World Bank (National Statistical Offices)(North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa).

[http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/SCBEXTERN
AL/0,,contentMDK:20445729-menuPK:2740285-pagePK:229544-piPK:229605-
theSitePK:239427,00.html](http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/SCBEXTERNAL/0,,contentMDK:20445729-menuPK:2740285-pagePK:229544-piPK:229605-theSitePK:239427,00.html)

National banks

Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest <http://www.bceao.int/>

Banque des États de l'Afrique Centrale <http://www.beac.int/>

List of Central Banks http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_central_banks

Central Bank Websites <http://www.bis.org/cbanks.htm>