

Langaa Scholarly and Creative Writing Workshops

2011

Writing is a way to express culture, share interpretations of the world, and build knowledge. Writing is also an integral part of education and research processes. Words are a powerful tool. They can make or mar depending on how they are used. Those who employ words should be skilled in how to harness them.

Langaa Publishing and Research Common Initiative Group (Langaa RPCIG) works on the African continent to boost opportunities for learning, practicing, and sharing writing. Langaa contributes to the cultural development and renaissance of Africa. This is achieved by conducting research, providing training in research and writing, and publishing and promoting African scholarship and creative writing. Since 2006, Langaa has published 150 fiction and non-fiction books.

Many African writers lack the freedom and solidarity to explore and defend their creativity fully. Work and even research environments are not conducive to writing. There are few training opportunities and incentives. This calls not only for significant investment in publishing but also for writing workshops to nurture and guide African writers in their creativity and collective interests.

To support Cameroonian cultural production in particular, Langaa provides training in research methodologies and in creative and scholarly writing. This includes training and development for teachers, researchers, writers and artists as consciences of society who propose lenses, challenge misrepresentations, and provide alternative narratives in complex, negotiated and nuanced ways.

The writing workshops organised by Langaa have as their main aim to introduce those, for whom writing is part of their profession, to contextually informed, socially relevant, and accessible writing that meets the generally accepted standards of “good” writing. Writing is a skill that that can be acquired through training and practice, even if some people are admittedly naturally more talented than others.

As a group that promotes and publishes both scholarly and creative writing, Langaa designs its writing workshops to accommodate both types of writers. Journalists, novelists, playwrights, poets, students and academics are amongst those targeted by the Langaa Writing Workshops, which are sufficiently flexible and adaptable to suit the needs of particular groups of people. Civil servants, municipal workers, employees of nongovernmental and civil society organisations who need to deepen their writing skills to fulfil their missions also find the Langaa Writing Workshops relevant and adaptable to their needs.

Designed to take place at the Langaa RPCIG centre (www.langaa-rpcig.net) in Bamenda or Buea, each Writing Workshop can accommodate 10 to 20 participants. Resource persons are drawn from amongst established Cameroonian women and men and other African and non-African academics, writers, journalists and teachers of English and French. As cities with so many schools and colleges, universities, several newspapers, and radio and television stations, Bamenda and Buea are peopled by professional and budding writers constantly in quest of acquiring or improving their writing skills. While it is possible for resource persons to be identified from the various schools, universities and media institutions in Bamenda and Buea, Langaa does not hesitate to look beyond for resource persons, depending on the needs of those seeking training.

The workshops are both theoretical and practical and based on the research and writing aspirations of the participants. They are highly participatory and interactive, include individual and group work, and can be run in English and/or French. In some instances, participants are requested to submit in advance outlines or drafts of work in progress. It is preferable to have a good balance of male and female participants in each workshop. In some instances, workshops are organized for women only, in recognition of the particular constraints they face when it comes to scholarly and artistic production, and the need for a safe environment to explore their creativity. Special workshops can also be designed for elementary and high school students and/or teachers.

Good food, music, poetry and nature can stimulate or support good writing, so these aspects of life, creativity, and scientific rigour are integrated into the workshop programme. See a sample programme below as well as a list of possible modules. Please complete and return the information sheet below as the first step in designing with Langaa the workshop you envision.

Langaa Scholarly and Creative Writing Workshops Information sheet

Please provide the following information regarding the Writing Workshop you would like to organise with Langaa and send it to workshop@langaa-rpcig.net.

Date:

Name (First and Last):

Organisation:

Address, including city and country:

Phones:

Email:

Preferred month and year for the writing workshop:

Expected number of participants in the workshop:

Briefly describe the profile of the participants:

Your two main objectives for the workshop:

Any preferred trainers, or characteristics of trainers:

Other helpful information:

Langaa Scholarly and Creative Writing Workshop

Example of a programme

Date:

Venue: Langaa, Bamenda or Buea, Cameroon

Day 1

9: 00 - 9.30	Opening and presentation of Langaa
9:30 - 10:15	Self introduction of Resource Persons & Participants
10:15 - 10:45	<i>Juice/Tea/Coffee break</i>
10:45 - 11:00	Presentation of the workshop programme
11:00 - 13:30	Steps and considerations in scholarly or artistic writing
13:30 - 14:30	<i>Lunch/Déjeuner</i>
14:30 - 16:30	Structure of article, Introductions and Abstracts
16:30 - 17:00	<i>Music break</i>

Day 2

9:00 - 11:00	Styles of academic writing / Styles of artistic writing
11:00 - 11:30	<i>Juice/Tea/Coffee break</i>
11:30 - 13:30	Styles of writing, continuation
13:30 - 14:30	<i>Lunch/Déjeuner</i>
14:30 - 16:30	Tips on paper or story structure and integration of findings
16:30 - 17:00	<i>Walk around town</i>

Day 3

9:00 - 11:00	Effective writing for scholarly communities
11:00 - 11:30	<i>Juice/Tea/Coffee break</i>
11:30 - 13:30	Critical appraisal of theoretical assumptions in scholarly writing
13:30 - 14:30	<i>Lunch/Déjeuner</i>
14:30 - 16:30	Readability of scholarly writing / Attractiveness of creative writing

16:30 - 17:00 *Break for drumming and dancing*
Alternatively: Afternoon could be used for a cultural outing

Day 4

9:00 - 11:00 **Relating critically to methodologies in scholarly research and writing**

11:00 - 11:30 *Juice/Tea/Coffee break*

11:30 - 13:30 **Making and relating to scholarly arguments**

13:30 - 14:30 *Lunch/Déjeuner*

14:30 - 16:30 **Mechanics of writing**

16:30 - 17:00 *Poetry readings*

Pause

19:00 - 21:00 *Workshop Dinner*

Day 5

09:00 - 11:00 **Discussion of artistic writing – in relation to academic writing**

11:00 - 11:30 *Juice/Tea/Coffee break*

11:30 - 13:30 Workshop evaluation and closing session

13:30 - 14:30 *Lunch/Déjeuner*

Free afternoon or soccer and/or volleyball games or other sports and Departures

Other possible Langaa Writing Workshop themes and modules

Things to consider when writing

Introduction
Writing for whom?
What? How? Why?

What makes a good writer or good writing?

Attitude
Discipline
Information
Significance
Focus
Perspective
Flesh and blood
Form
Voice
Sense of direction
Speed and accuracy
Readers, proofreaders and editors
Publication

Writing for a specialised readership

Subject matter
Presentation

Tips for a good story well told

Interesting, absorbing plot
Characters who are likeable and true-to-life
Natural-sounding dialogue
Emotion
Suspense
Reader identification
Satisfactory ending

Using words well

Adjectives and adverbs
Repetition of words
Clichés
Slang and informal words
Good vocabulary
Punctuation
Spelling
Duty towards language

Publish or perish? or Publish and perish?

Whether and where to publish
African journals and publishers
International journals and publishers
Reasons for rejection of papers and book manuscripts
Role plays in which participants critically review submissions and accept or reject, or accept with modifications
What editors and publishers look for...
What a list of references or bibliography tells about the writer
“Checklist” of characteristics of a “good” paper
Epistemological and ethical issues
Blogs and other social media

Individual participant questionnaire for Langaa Scholarly and Creative Writing Workshop

Date:

Name (First and Last):

Email:

Organisation, including city and country:

Month (even if tentative) and year of workshop in which you hope to participate:

1. In a few sentences, what is your experience with writing to date?

2. Why is it that you need or desire to write?

3. What problems do you encounter in writing (whether psychological, technical or other)?

4. What have been your greatest sources of satisfaction when it comes to writing?

5. Why are you interested in participating in a Langaa writing workshop?

6. What do you hope to gain from your participation in the workshop?

7. Other expectations/comments:

8. If appropriate, attach the outline or draft of a work in progress, indicating here in which ways you seek to improve it:

Sampler Budget in CFA francs for a Langaa Scholarly or Creative Writing Workshop

	CFA		CFA
Air travel (estimated)	600 000	x 15 participants and 2 trainers	1 020 000
Bus to and from Bamenda, including insurance		for 15 persons	300 000
Accommodation with breakfast and internet	35 000	x 17 persons x 6 nights	3 570 000
Workshop room	100 000	x 5 days	500 000
Projector rental	30 000	x 5 days	150 000
Supplies (nametags, notebooks, pens, paper, markers, folders, photocopies, flash disks, etc.)	6 000	x 15 persons	90 000
Documentation (one or several books on writing for each participant)			Add in if necessary
Refreshments	2 000	x 17 persons x 5 days	170 000
Lunches	4 000	x 17 persons x 5 days	340 000
Dinner (1)	12 000	x 17 persons x 1 night	170 000
Participant per diems (for dinners and miscellaneous expenses)	20 000	x 15 persons x 7 days	2 100 000
Trainers' honorarium (amount varies according to experience and reputation)	100 000 to 250 000	x 10 days (including preparation and follow-up) x 2 persons	2 000 000 to 5 000 000
Trainers' per diem	20 000	x 2 persons x 7 days	280 000
Other			
Overhead (15% of funds administered by Langaa)			Calculate and add in
TOTAL* F CFA		for 15 participants	from 10 690 000 to 13 690 000 CFA plus overhead

TOTAL per participant (minimum 10)	from	to	plus overhead
<i>Central African francs</i>	712 667	912 667 CFA	
<i>Australian dollars</i> (rate 486.129) **	1 466	1 877 AUD	
<i>Brazilian reais</i> (rate 290.987)	2 449	3 136 BRL	
<i>Canadian dollars</i> (rate 489.175)	1 457	1 866 CAD	
<i>Chinese yens</i> (rate 73.6498)	9 676	12 392 CNY	
<i>Euros</i> (rate 655.957)	1 086	1 391 EUR	
<i>Indian rupees</i> (rate 10.9456)	65 110	83 382 INR	
<i>Moroccan dirhams</i> (rate 58.4227)	12 198	15 622 MAD	
<i>South African rand</i> (rate 71.8173)	9 923	12 708 ZAR	
<i>UK pounds</i> (rate 774.328)	920	1 179 GBP	
<i>US dollars</i> (rate 490.692)	1 452	1 860 USD	
<i>Other...</i>			

Once the budget is agreed upon, a pro forma invoice is provided, showing the advance amount required; the balance is due on Day 1 of the workshop. A five-page summary of the workshop, including a synthesis of the participant evaluations and suggestions for follow-up is provided by Langaa within ten days after the workshop.

* The cost of transport and guides for cultural outings would be in addition.

** The exchange rates are from 5 December 2010 and would need to be updated.