

# LANGAA 2009 ANNUAL REPORT



Langaa Research and Publishing  
Common Initiative Group

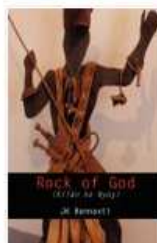
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## Catalogue

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## LANGAA MISSION

The mission of Langa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group (Langa RPCIG) is to contribute 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. Langa, not set up for monetary profit-making, is supported by founding members and other contributors, financial grants and efforts of volunteers.

### 2009 OBJECTIVES and OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

*Objective 1:* **Increase publications output by thirty books**

*Results:* A total of 49 titles were published in 2009, compared to 37 in 2008 and 9 in 2007 for a total of 95 by the end of 2009.

*Objective 2:* **Expand books to include non-Cameroonian authors**

*Results:* Books were published from Cameroon, in addition to two plays by Diki from Zimbabwe; a book by Yanou on access to land in South Africa; a book in French by Dieng on francophone Black African literature; and a book on mobile phones in Burkina Faso, Sudan, Tanzania and other countries. These in addition, in 2008, to a book on urban transformation in Malawi and one on the use of computers in schools in Benin, Mali, Ghana and Senegal.

*Objective 3:* **Acquire technology and equipment**

*Results:* A computer was donated to one of the volunteer page formatters.

*Objective 4:* **Acquire funding for both publishing and research**

*Results:* Research continued with universities in Africa and with the African Studies Centre at Leiden University. A small grant was received from IDRC for publishing.

*Objective 5:* **Solicit collaboration and cooperation, together with raising awareness about the initiative**

*Results:* A contribution was received from a librarian in the south of the Netherlands upon her retirement, along with a contribution from the Dordrecht-Bamenda Foundation, to make Langa books available in several school libraries in Cameroon. Awareness of Langa was raised through the launch of a web site which is updated weekly and now receives 220 visitors per day.

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## 1. BOOKS PUBLISHED

The titles published by Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group (Langaa RPCIG) numbered 95 by the end of 2009.

Our thematic focus continues to expand. About 60% of titles are fiction (novels, poetry, short stories, and drama), while about 40% are non-fiction. The non-fiction titles include literary criticism, biographies and autobiographies and books on youth, history, culture, communication and writing, as well as on development-related themes such as education, environment, governance, economic growth, access to land, women's empowerment, rural and urban development, and technology.

Appeal across Africa increased. We received many more manuscripts from other African countries, and were able to publish from Senegal and Zimbabwe, in addition to Cameroon.

We published more books by women, including Joyce Ashuntantang's *Landscaping Postcoloniality*; Lilian Lem Atanga's *Gender, Discourse and Power in the Cameroonian Parliament*; Roselyne Jua's handbook *To the Budding Creative Writer*; Frida Mbunda's *Shadows from the Abyss*; and Susan Nkweni Nde's *Second Engagement*.

We also republished classics by Linus Asong, Nchami Azanwi, Albert Mukong, and Bernard Fonlon and continued to attract publications in French (see Dieng, Vakunta, Matateyou and Ndi) and Pidgin English (see Vakunta).

For next year we intend to increase the number of publications in French and expand to southern, East and West Africa and also to attract European authors. We also plan to increase the number of publications in indigenous languages.

## 2. BOOK SALES AND DISTRIBUTION

Via print-on-demand technology through African Books Collective and Michigan State University Press, 45 different titles were sold from July to December 2008 and 67 from January to June 2009, thus a 49% increase in the number of titles sold over the second six-month period. Of the 67 titles sold to date, there are 41 different lead authors, 7 or 17% of which are women.

There are 20 titles that sold more than 40 copies and these titles were by 21 different authors/co-authors, 7 or 33.3% of which are women.

**Table 1: Table of 20 titles that sold over 200, over 100, and over 40 copies (AUTHOR(S): Title)**

Over 200:	de BRUIJN, NYAMNJOH, BRINKMAN: <i>Mobile Phones: The New Talking Drums</i> NDI: <i>K'cracy, Trees in the Storm and other Poems</i>
Over 100:	VAKUNTA: <i>Cry my Beloved Africa</i> PERCIVAL: <i>The 1961 Cameroon Plebiscite</i>
Over 40:	ASHUNTANTANG: <i>Landscaping Postcoloniality</i> ANYANGWE: <i>Imperialistic Politics in Cameroun</i> DOH: <i>Africa's Political Wastelands</i>

NYAMNJOH: Married But Available  
 TOURE, TCHOMBE, KARSENTI: ICT and Changing Mindsets in Education /  
 Repenser l'éducation à l'aide des TIC  
 FOKWANG: Mediating Legitimacy: Chieftaincy...  
 VAKUNTA: Majunga Tok  
 MANYONG: God the Politician  
 KRIEGER: Cameroon's Social Democratic Front  
 ANGWAFO: Royalty and Politics  
 EKOSSO: The House of Falling Women  
 NYAMNDI: Whether Losing, Whether Winning  
 NGWANE: The Power in the Writer  
 VAKUNTA: Green Rape  
 ALOBWED: The Day God Blinkered  
 JUA: The Barn

Again, these books were purchased by readers through African Books Collective and Michigan State University Press. Availability of the books in Cameroon and the rest of Africa remains a challenge.

### 3. RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

January 8-20, 2009, Langaa organised a workshop for the research programme “**Mobile Africa Revisited.**” PhD and MA students and lecturers and professors from Cameroon, Chad, Mali, and Senegal joined in different methodology exercises, guided by a team comprised of Francis Nyamnjoh, Inge Brinkman and Mirjam de Bruijn. After the workshop the francophone students followed an English language course for one month in Bamenda. This course was organised at Langaa.

Participants at the workshop were: Fatima Diallo, Djimet Seli, Prof. Khalil Alio, Prof. Tangie Fonchingong, Naffet Keita, Adamu Ahmadou, Emmanuel Ngang, Walter Nkwi, Francis Nyamnjoh, Inge Brinkman, and Mirjam de Bruijn. For more information on this research programme, see [www.mobileafricarevisited.wordpress.com](http://www.mobileafricarevisited.wordpress.com)

Roos Keja, a student from Leiden University, stayed in the Langaa house for her research on the Fulani in town. She submitted her thesis in August 2009, entitled “Moving in and into the urban: Mbororo generations finding and creating a place in Bamenda, Cameroon.” In August, Sara de Wit, another student from Leiden University, joined Langaa for her research for a stay of six months. Her research is entitled “Between myth and reality: climate change is in the air.” Mirjam de Bruijn of Leiden University’s Africans Studies Centre spent three months at Langaa, from June through August, and was joined by her family. She worked on different projects: Mobile Africa Revisited, Mobility and Resources.

From November 19 to December 3, a workshop was hosted at Langaa for the research project “**Mobility and Resources,**” a collaborative research programme with University of Koln in Namibia, University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, University of the Western Cape in South Africa, Langaa RPCIG, and the African Studies Centre of Leiden University in the Netherlands. The workshop consisted of two parts. The first three days were devoted to a policy gathering discussion and the second to exchange among PhD students on their research and discussions about thesis writing.

During the festival in honour of the 50th anniversary of the Fo Angwafo III S.A.N. of Mankon, Langaa hosted a workshop on December 15 on the **ethnography of the region**. At this workshop, Professors Michael Rowlands, Jean-Pierre Warnier and Jacqueline Leroy, who have researched Mankon since the 1970s, made presentations that drew extensively on their ethnographies of Mankon and the Bamenda Grassfields. Discussions evolved around material culture, archaeology, language and new directions in research in the region.

Among participants at the workshop were linguistics, anthropologists, historians and environmentalists from Cameroon, the USA and Europe. Of particular relevance to the students and budding researchers in attendance was the emphasis by the presenters on the continuities and discontinuities in the ethnographies of the region, and the importance of an historical approach and transdisciplinarity in research.

#### 4. COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

Within the framework of a memorandum of understanding signed in March 2008, Langaa and the **African Studies Centre (ASC), Leiden** University, Netherlands co-published two books: *Mobile Phones: The New Talking Drums of Everyday Africa* edited by Mirjam de Bruijn, Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Inge Brinkman, and *Neoliberal Bandwagonism: Civil Society and the Politics of Belonging in Anglophone Cameroon* by Piet Konings.



Collaboration continues with ASC-Leiden through two projects that commenced in 2008: (i) WOTRO<sup>1</sup> (Netherlands) funded project on ICT and Mobility in Africa, along with the Catholic University of Angola, the University of Buea in Cameroon, Point Sud in Mali, and the University of N'djamena in Chad; (ii) Volkswagen Foundation (Germany) funded 4-year project on Mobility and Resource Management in Cameroon, Namibia, South Africa, and Tanzania.

Langaa's international distributor, **African Books Collective**, attended the CODESRIA General Assembly meeting in Yaounde in December 2008. After the meeting ABC's marketing director, **Justin Cox**, visited Bamenda and donated two boxes of African published books to the Langaa resource library. Two Langaa members, Walters Nkwi of the University of Buea and Professor Mirjam de Bruijn of the African Studies Centre in Leiden, were on hand to receive the donation.

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<sup>1</sup> WOTRO is the science division within the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), which division supports scientific research on development issues, in particular poverty alleviation and sustainable development



Upon her retirement, **Liesbeth van Ecke**, the director of the Library of Dordrecht in the south of the Netherlands, asked well wishers for contributions to Langaa. She explained to guests at her farewell party on June 5, 2009 how Langaa's research and publication work is linked to the activities of the Library. A cheque was handed over to two members of Langaa, Henrietta Mambo and Mirjam de Bruijn, who gave a presentation about Langaa and its activities, at the Town Hall in Dordrecht, five days later, on June 10.

The cities of Dordrecht and Bamenda have been sister cities for 16 years, though the relationship between the cities goes back to 1933. The **Dordrecht-Bamenda Foundation** was established in 1996 with the objective of getting the citizens of Dordrecht more involved in the sister city relationship or "twinning." It is through this Foundation that the Library Director learned of Langaa and its efforts and struggles over the past five years to make the work of African writers available to Cameroonians and others around the world.

Langaa is very honoured by the initiative and goodwill of Liesbeth van Ecke and recognizes her commitment to the promotion of cultural development. The gift from her well wishers will be used for the distribution of books published by Langaa in the Bamenda region of Cameroon. A donation of Euro 2000 from the Foundation shall be united with the gift to ensure the availability of the books in two secondary school libraries in Bamenda in early 2010.

In November 2009, Langaa signed a memorandum of grant conditions with the **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** of Canada for a small grant of 25000 Canadian dollars to publish four books to be authored by those involved in IDRC-funded research on gender, climate change, microfinance and eco-health.

## 5. COMMUNICATIONS

Langaa was listed as one of eight "Publishers to Watch" by Frank Bures in a story for *The Africa Report*, October-November 2009.

Frank Bures, who lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the United States, has written for *Esquire*, *Harper's*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Tin House*, *Washington Post Magazine*, *WorldHum*, and other publications. He looks for "art in the material of the world."



In a November 2, 2009 blog posting titled "Books in Africa," Frank Bures wrote: "For those of us who don't want to be online all the time, books are the perfect technology. For places where being online isn't always

an option, they're not bad either. I just did a story for *The Africa Report* about the state of publishing on the continent, which of course is an industry with its challenges. But there is a crop of new, young, smart publishers who are putting out amazing work, places like Kwani?, Story Moja, **Langaa**, Cassava

**PUBLISHERS TO WATCH**

- **Langaa - Cameroon**  
www.langaa-rpcig.net
- **StoryMoja - Kenya**  
www.storymojafrica.co.ke
- **Chimurenga - South Africa**  
www.chimurenga.co.za
- **Farafina Books - Nigeria**  
www.kachifo.com
- **Ama Books - Zimbabwe**  
www.amabooksbyo.com
- **Cassava Republic Press - Nigeria**  
www.cassavarepublic.biz
- **Kwani? - Kenya** www.kwani.org
- **Woeli Publishing - Ghana**  
www.woelipublishing.com

**For more information see:**

- **African Books Collective**  
africanbookscollective.com

Kenyan author Muthoni Garland's novel will be one of the first books published by Storymoja



Republic and others. **They are the ones who know what publishers have always known: that, as important as dollars and naira and shillings are, we put books out into the world for more than that.** [emphases added]

*The Africa Report* story, titled “More people than ever before are reading novels and history books, and not just as textbooks, encouraging local publishers to get into an expanding market,” was written in Nairobi. It goes on to explain that “[c]reative industries receive little attention or support from government.”

See the blog of Frank Bures at <http://frankbures.com/category/africa> Read the full story for *The Africa Report* at [www.langaa-rpcig.net/+Langaa-among-the-Top-10-African+.html](http://www.langaa-rpcig.net/+Langaa-among-the-Top-10-African+.html) or [www.theafricareport.com/archives2/society-a-culture/3284582-books-pages-for-the-people.html](http://www.theafricareport.com/archives2/society-a-culture/3284582-books-pages-for-the-people.html)

The **Langaa RPCIG website** was launched in June 2009 to help promote writing and publishing in Africa. The website was created using dynamic programming tools (Php, Ajax, Css, Javascript, etc.) and integrates Web 2.0 features (Rss feed, sharing possibilities toward social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Netlog, etc.).



The website is made up of several sections:

- **Book Fairs:** provides dates and locations of book fairs on and off the continent
- **Catalogue:** lists books published by Langaa RPCIG, along with book cover images, blurbs, reviews, and author bios; catalogue searchable by topic, author and keywords
- **Contact Langaa PPCIG:** contains information on how to submit manuscripts; provides access to Langaa’s Annual Reports
- **Partners:** describes institutions with which Langaa collaborates
- **Research:** gives details on research projects Langaa has been undertaking with universities and research centres in Africa and Europe
- **Training:** reports on Langaa training initiatives



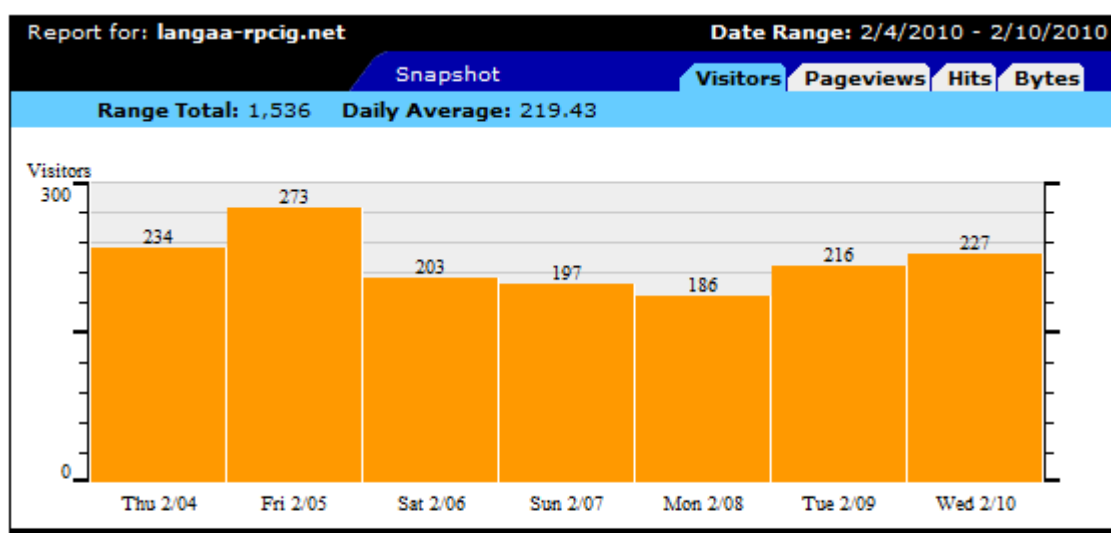
- **Volunteers:** invites people to become a Langaa volunteer for a year or more
- **Writing and publishing :** shares articles, opinions and contributions on writing and publishing issues in Africa

To date, the website contains:

- 95 books titles in a catalogue, searchable by 34 topics
- Over 60 author biographies, many with photos
- 90 news item in the Writing and publishing section
- 160 book reviews

The access statistics have been captured using Urchin, one of the leading tools for analyzing web traffic. In the week of Feb 4-10, 2010, the Langaa website received 1,536 visitors with a **daily average of 220 visitors** (see the graph in Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Weekly web site traffic

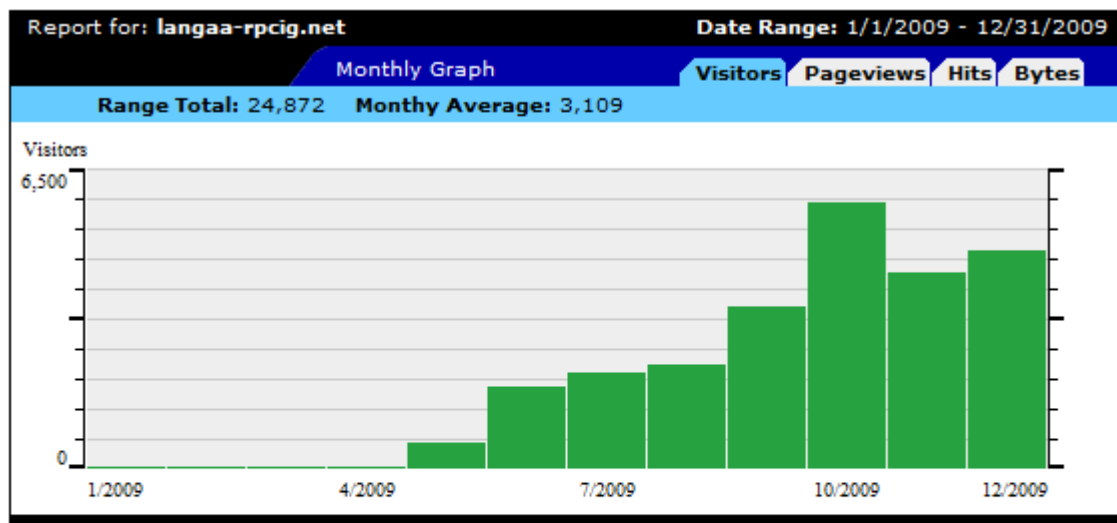


▼ **Help Information:**

Snapshot: The Snapshot is a quick look at the recent activity on your website. The bar graph elements represent Visitors by default, and can be toggled to Pageviews, Hits, or Bytes transferred (bandwidth). If you have the e-Urchin e-commerce module installed, a Dollars tab will also be displayed, allowing you to view this and most other reports' information in terms of actual dollars spent on your site.

In the year 2009 (mid-June through December), the website received 24,872 visitors with a **monthly average of 3,109 visitors**. As you can see in the graph below (in Figure 2), the number of visits has been growing since the launch of the website.

Figure 2: Monthly web site traffic to Langa website



#### ▼ Help Information:

Monthly Graph: This graph shows the traffic to your site on a per-month basis over the last 12 months. If your site has been operational for less than that amount of time, the months for which data is available are reported on. The bar graph elements represent Visitors by default, and can be toggled to Pageviews, Hits, or Bytes transferred (bandwidth).

Figure 3: World map indicating geographic provenance of visitors to Langa website



Since its launch, Langa's website has been visited from **122 countries** (1,435 towns) spread around the world as indicated in the map above (in Figure 3), but primarily in Africa, Europe and North America, with a spattering of visits from the Middle East, Asia, and Australia.

## 6. STAFFING

Volunteers continued with publishing and the situation will remain the same until we are able to acquire funding or raise money to pay permanent staff. Langaa seeks funds to hire an outreach coordinator and eventually a Managing Editor and an office manager.

For the time being, Dr Roselyne Jua has agreed to serve as volunteer managing editor, Dr Divine Fuh as secretary, and Dr Tangie Fonchingong as finance officer.

## 7. FINANCES

### Financial resources in 2009

Payment of about 2 million CFA francs from ERNWACA toward publication of *ICT and Changing Mindsets in Education*.

Remittances from African Books Collective of 890 GBP£ (for July-December 2008 sales) and 1993 GBP£ (for January-June 2009 sales), for a total of 2882 British pounds.

Gift of 650 Euros from Dutch librarian Liesbeth van Ecke upon her retirement and contribution of 2000 Euros from the Dordrecht-Bamenda Foundation, to make available Langaa books in several school libraries in Cameroon.

Grant of 25000 Canadian dollars from IDRC signed for the publication in 2010-11 of four books; first advance payment received in the final quarter of 2009.

Expenditures: none in cash

Expenditures are still covered by contributions from Langaa founders, volunteers, and friends.

The internet connection at the Langaa office in Bamenda was an in kind contribution of a value of approximately 500 000 CFA francs.

The web site design, hosting and maintenance was an in kind contribution of a value of approximately 1 700 000 CFA francs.

Once accumulated remittances per book for a particular author or group of authors total 50 000 CFA francs or more, the authors will be contacted regarding payment.

## 8. OBJECTIVES FOR 2010

Objective 1: **Increase publications output by thirty books**

Objective 2: **Expand books to include non-Cameroonian ones**, including on Kenya, Namibia, and Uganda

Objective 3: **Organize structure:** officialise the editorial committee and hire an outreach coordinator, to be based in Buea or Bamenda, who would also manage the office for some time

Objective 4: **Acquire equipment and software**

Objective 5: **Acquire funding for both publishing and research**

Objective 6: **Solicit collaboration and cooperation, together with raising awareness about Langaa:** including taking Langaa to Facebook and Twitter and attending one major book fair

Objective 7: **Ensure wider availability of Langaa books in Cameroon**