



# The Risk of Not Risking

*Starting and building new enterprises is exciting and worth the risks.*

*by Isaac Phiri*

The most exciting part of my work here at Cook is witnessing the birth and growth of publishing ventures. It is a thrill to see ideas become reality. It is very encouraging to see catalogs, web sites, and sample products, the results of visions that have become reality.

Take a Hungarian publishing house we first heard of six or seven years ago, when it was more of a dream than anything else. Today it has a backlist of over 100 titles. In Brazil, several publishers have progressed from the idea stage to viable ventures in the last five years. In Russia, one small firm is rapidly becoming a recognized publisher in that great country.

Three years ago, we came across a new publishing house in Kenya. At that time the director was purchasing computers and trying to find office space. I recently met him at the Christian Booksellers Association convention. He and his staff are promoting their first six titles and working on six more.

Another exciting experience is witnessing new leaders succeed. In the Philippines a couple of publishing houses were at a standstill when new directors revamped them. Today, these are thriving companies providing excellent books. In South Africa one Christian magazine had stagnated and was about to die. A new editor revamped the publication, making it one of the leading Christian magazines in that country.

It is thrilling to see publishing houses start and grow in places where the economic, religious, and political conditions have not been favorable. There are publishers in such countries as Venezuela, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Indonesia who continue producing literature despite numerous challenges. It is encouraging to see such publishing houses grow. A publisher in India has developed a back list of some 200 titles and just released a four-volume Bible dictionary in one of the local languages.

It is even better to see publishing houses become self-sufficient. We are in touch with self-sufficient publishing houses in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe. The idea that Christian publishing must always be subsidized by organizations in North America and Western Europe is disappearing. Virtually all the publishers who come to our publishing institutes are working towards self-sufficiency or have achieved it.

I am even more encouraged when I visit the publishing houses. Their premises are charged with energy and excitement. The thrill of starting something is infectious. Every step is exciting. Evaluating a manuscript. Issuing the first contract. Sending the first few books to production. Receiving the first printed copies. Shipping the first order. Seeing your products in a bookstore. And, of course, receiving that first check. Starting an enterprise is a great experience.

I enjoy our institutes and conferences because of the opportunity to mingle with entrepreneurs. It is much more stimulating than being in the company of individuals who talk about what cannot be done and focus on negatives. They say publishing is a high-risk business, yet the risk of not publishing is far greater. If Indian entrepreneurs avoid publishing because it is "too risky" who will communicate Christ to India? If Chinese Christians fail to publish books for their culture, who will? The same can be asked of other Asians, Africans, Latinos and Europeans. Who will take the risk?

Here at Cook, we look for and partner with entrepreneurs like those featured in this issue of *InterLit*. We encourage and equip publishers to build effective and viable organizations for and within their cultures. We partner with organizations that produce literature to communicate Christ. The risk of not risking is too high. Millions need Jesus. ❖