Global Christian Publishing – Findings from the Field

Full Report for the ECPA C-Suite Symposium

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Media Associates International (MAI) is a global network that equips, connects, and encourages Christian writers, editors, and publishers to create locally relevant content that strengthens the Church and impacts society. Between April and August 2026, we conducted a global listening study of Christian publishers in our community, guided by the central question: *How can publishing organizations serve and strengthen one another through collaboration, for mutual benefit and global growth?*

Most of the publishers in this study work in regions that have historically had few locally authored Christian books including Sub-Saharan Africa; Asia; the Middle East/North Africa; parts of Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe; the Caribbean; Latin America; and the Pacific. The study includes publishers working across a wide range of economic contexts, many in markets where limited consumer purchasing power, infrastructure constraints, and other local conditions shape what is commercially possible.

Our findings challenge several potential assumptions that can shape publishing and licensing partnerships:

- Partnership begins with paperwork.
- Publishers in underserved contexts primarily need Western content to translate.
- A lack of financial sustainability signals a lack of progress.
- Operational friction is a funding problem alone.
- Expertise flows primarily from the West to the rest.

Across five findings, our research shows that Christian publishers in this study:

- Prioritize trust before terms.
- Increasingly produce locally authored content.
- Pursue sustainability in ways that reflect their stage of development and context.
- Navigate operational barriers that funding alone can't fix.
- Participate in partnerships where learning and expertise flow both ways.

Together, these findings invite publishers to work differently across borders and consider three practical questions: What is your partner already doing? Where should your models and processes adapt to their context? And what could you learn from each other?

This report explores each finding through survey data, publisher interviews, and examples from the field (pages 4–17), before considering what they mean for how publishers work together across borders (pages 18–19). Each finding ends with questions for reflection and discussion. These are consolidated on page 20 for use with your team. Page 21 contains additional information about MAI and how your publishing house can get involved in MAI's ministry.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Who Was Studied

Our study participants came from our network and spanned every inhabited continent. Among those who took part:

- At least five work in countries with open hostility toward Christians.
- Four work in active conflict zones.
- Three work in places recovering from widespread societal trauma including genocide and displacement.
- One works under strict government censorship.
- One operates amid extreme currency volatility.
- One is in a predominantly Catholic country where Evangelicals can be viewed with suspicion.
- One is in an English-speaking Western market where the quantity of imported US and UK books impacts the availability of locally authored Christian books.

Across both research phases, 91 individuals took part representing 87 distinct publishing houses. Of the 77 survey respondents, seven were based in the UK and seven were in the US. The remaining 63 are based in other parts of the world. These included publishers in countries such as India, Argentina, Poland, Cameroon, Kenya, Peru, the Philippines, and Slovakia.

Because US and UK responses can differ from the rest of the sample, each finding includes a second look at the data with those 14 respondents set aside.

The 87 publishing houses that participated spanned eight regions. Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia comprised more than half of the sample, but meaningful participation also came from the rest of the world.

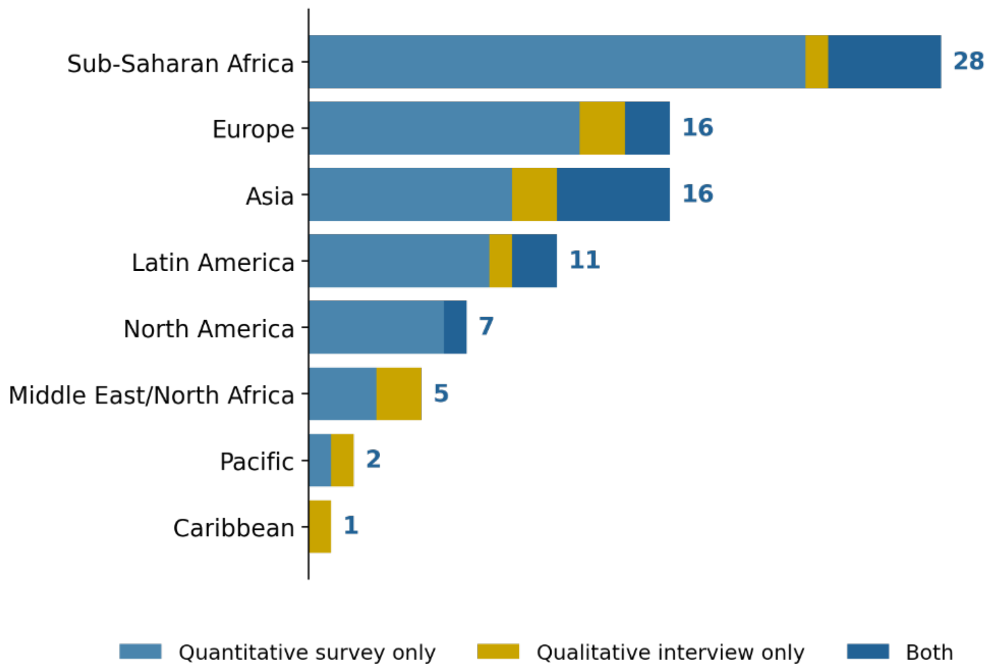


Figure 0.1: Regional distribution of research participants.

Organizations range in size, with some employing 50 or more people and others consisting of a single founder working from a home office. What connects them is not geography, size, or economic circumstances, but firsthand experience navigating collaborative relationships across contexts.

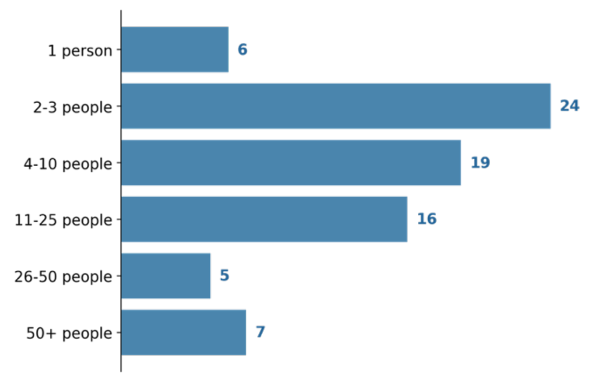
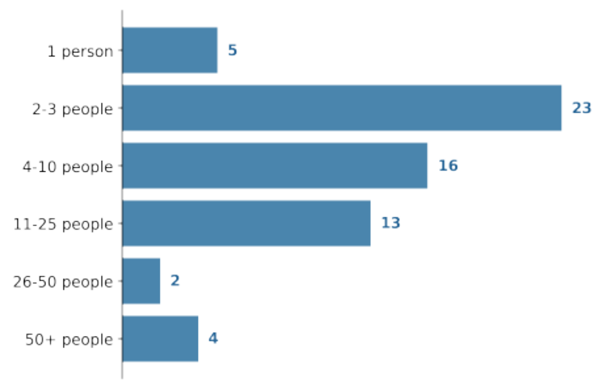
TOTAL RESPONDENTS (77)	RESPONDENTS MINUS US/UK (63)
	

Figure 0.2: Publishing house size. *Excluding the 14 US and UK respondents (n=63) reduces the number of larger publishing houses.*

Methodology

The study was conducted in two phases. Phase I consisted of in-depth qualitative interviews with 25 publishing leaders (26 individual voices, including one joint interview) representing 24 countries and 25 publishing houses. The survey yielded 77 unique respondents from 42 countries representing at least 67 publishing houses. Another nine responses were anonymous, and one respondent was part of a publishing network representing several publishing houses rather than one. Twelve people, 15 publishing houses, and 19 countries overlapped in both phases of the research.

Framework

The findings move on a continuum starting with how a partnership begins, to what it produces, to why it exists, to how it runs, to the way partners relate to each other.

1. Relationship: Trust comes before terms
2. Product: Content is increasingly locally authored
3. Purpose: Same mission, different stages
4. Process: Context shapes what’s possible
5. Posture: Learning is a two-way street

Sourcing and Standards

The statistics in the report come from the survey and interview data. Every percentage represented in charts comes from the surveys. A handful of numbers describing the study itself draw from data from both the surveys and interviews.
Quotes throughout this report are anonymized in line with the confidentiality terms under which this research was gathered. Attributions only provide regions and not the individual names or names of organizations.

FINDING 1: RELATIONSHIP

Trust comes before terms

Publishers overwhelmingly pointed to relational proximity rather than a business channel as the source of their most successful collaborations. More than four in five trace them back to a personal referral or an in-person gathering. Fewer than one in ten started with a cold outreach.

Question: Where did your most successful collaboration start?

TOTAL RESPONDENTS (77)

Does not total 100%: 5 of 77 respondents did not answer this question.

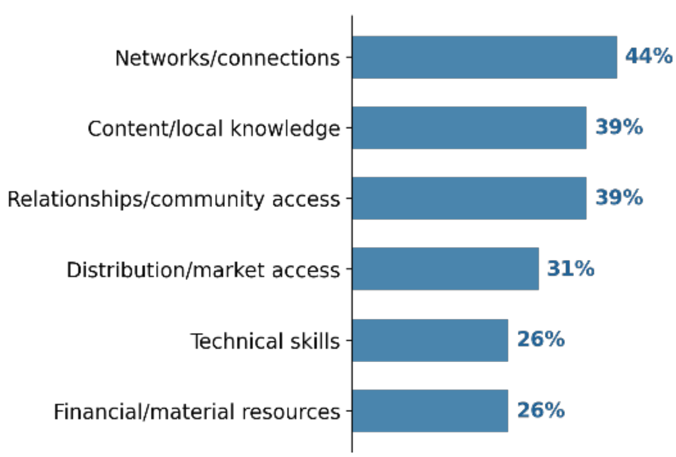
RESPONDENTS MINUS US/UK (63)

Does not total 100%: 4 of 63 respondents did not answer this question

Figure 1.1: Sources of successful collaboration. *Excluding the 14 US and UK respondents (n=63), the pattern holds: 46% personal referral, 38% in-person conference – relational starts remain dominant either way.*

Question: What kinds of contributions from other publishers have been most valuable to you?

TOTAL RESPONDENTS (77)



RESPONDENTS MINUS US/UK (63)

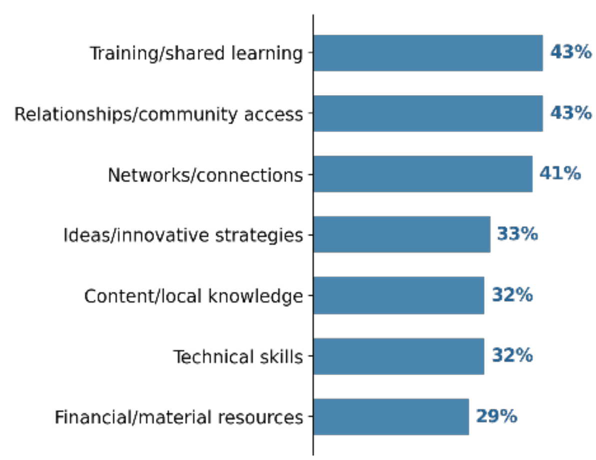


Figure 1.2: Valuable contributions from other publishers. *Outside the US and UK (n=63), training/shared learning and relationships/community access move to the top spot alongside networks. The relational preference is slightly stronger once those two markets are set aside.*

Question: How have your collaboration agreements usually been structured?

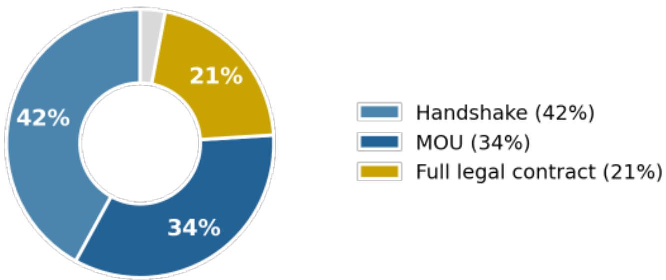
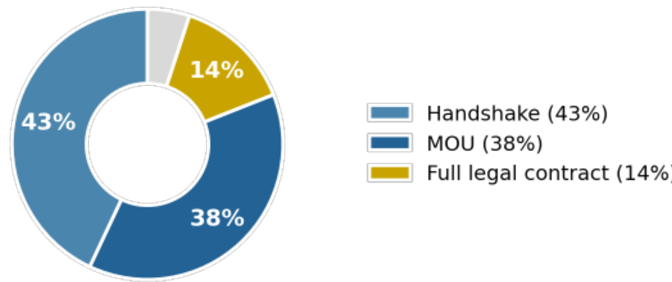
TOTAL RESPONDENTS (77)	RESPONDENTS MINUS US/UK (63)
 *Does not total 100%: 3 of 77 respondents did not answer this question.*	 *Does not total 100%: 3 of 63 respondents did not answer this question.*

Figure 1.3: Collaboration agreement structure. *Excluding US and UK publishers (n=63), full legal contracts drop even further, to 14%, while MOU use rises to 38% – the informal-to-MOU pattern this finding describes is, if anything, more pronounced outside those two markets.*

PUBLISHER QUOTES	REGION
"It's always a matter of trust. …[W]ithout trust, there would not be any common project."	Europe
"[F]irst we understand each other and have relationship… [T]his is very important for collaboration. Because I feel like collaboration without seeing, without talking. Cannot work."	Asia
"Knowing is very important. And if you don't know the people you are collaborating with, there's bound to be crisis. There is bound to be problems."	Africa
"There's no better way to work together than a prior barbecue with whoever we're working with. After a barbecue, every other meeting will be fine."	Latin America

Clarity Still Matters

While 76% of agreements are handshake (42%) or MOU (34%) and not full legal contracts, this is not an argument against structure. When we asked what most often prevents good collaboration, 32% cited unclear expectations or poor communication – not lack of trust, funding, or cultural difference – as the top barrier. In open-ended responses, it appeared a further 35% of the time, more than four times as often as the next most common answer.

Read together, these data points reveal a helpful sequence: trust is built best when relationships lead, yet written agreements remain critical to keeping that trust from breaking down and keeping expectations clear. MOUs were used more frequently than full legal contracts and may be a more familiar tool to use with global publishing partners when it is a viable option.

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

The Danger of Zero Paperwork – Middle East/North Africa

"It was a bit of … a mess. In the first place, because we are not used to doing this together, and we're not used to formalizing things. So, you know how our culture works. Everything is informal. We are all friends – brothers and sisters."

"We learned … to formalize everything in written agreements and MOUs before we start, so that everyone would know their role and their place and their position."

Relationships don't end with the agreement – Asia

A related challenge can emerge after a partnership is established. A publisher in Asia described partnerships that become "a one-way street:" a partner takes a book and proceeds independently, with little accountability or shared visibility into its impact. "It doesn't seem like it's a joint project anymore… but I understand why sometimes these things happen."

PUBLISHER QUOTES	REGION
"There is the need to sign a memorandum of understanding to guide the operation of the partnership in projects…. Think through to ensure that risks and dangers are minimized."	Africa
"I think having a personal relationship helps because you are able to discuss and negotiate without rancor, without getting nasty with each other or misunderstanding intentions."	Asia
"I'll always get an MOU – you're going to do this, this and this. We're going to do this, this… I don't ever do it just on a conversation or email chain. Always something signed so it's clear."	North America

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Where in your organization's partnership process does a contract appear before a relationship has had room to form?
2. Would a tiered agreement model – informal for exploratory work, formal once money or exclusivity is involved – fit how your team currently operates?
3. Who on your team is responsible for building the relationship, versus drafting the paperwork, and do they talk to each other before the first draft is sent?

FINDING 2: PRODUCT

Content is increasingly locally authored

Our study shows that the traditional picture of global publishing flowing from original content in the West to translations distributed around the world appears to be changing. Most publishers in our survey report a catalog built primarily on original, locally authored content with fewer than one in five still depending mainly on translated materials. Some of these locally authored books are finding audiences beyond their borders, introducing new flows for original content.

Question: What is the current balance of your publishing house catalog comparing the percentage that is translated content versus the percentage that is original locally authored content?

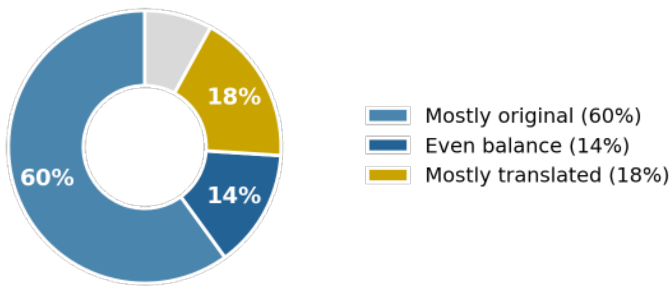
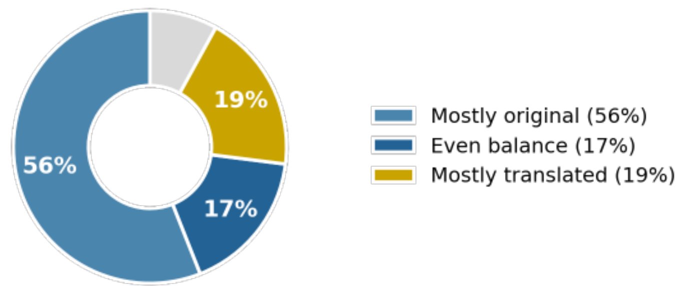
TOTAL RESPONDENTS (77)	RESPONDENTS MINUS US/UK (63)
	
Does not total 100%: 6 of 77 respondents did not answer this question.	*Does not total 100%: 5 of 63 respondents did not answer this question*

Figure 2.1: Publishing house catalog balance*. Zooming in on publishers outside the US and UK (n=63) tells nearly the same story: 56% mostly original, 17% even balance, 19% mostly translated.*

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

A textbook goes pan-African

A professor in West Africa authored a work on African Christian ethics. Initially, it was known only in his own country. Through a local publisher's partnership with an international literature network, the book was distributed across Africa, then picked up by a major US publisher. It became a worldwide textbook that was published in multiple languages and used in seminary training across the Majority World. The same West African publisher produced a companion volume on African traditional religion with similar international reach.

An expanded vision for editorial collaboration

One Latin American publisher's decades-long partnership with a US publisher produced a bestselling devotional series in the 1990s and early 2000s. Rather than simply translating existing US titles, the Latin American team began originating new topics in that same series, proposing them to the US publisher, drafting content proposals with local editors, and receiving sign-off from the original author before publication. New titles, never released in the US market, were created for a different cultural context.

PUBLISHER QUOTES	REGION
“Over the years, we have done mostly translation from books originally written in English from the UK or the US. But over the last 10 years, that’s shifted towards [local] writers.”	Latin America
“I think if it’s theology and Bible exposition and all that, yes, that crosses borders very well. But if we’re talking about topical issues and societal issues, I think you really need to know your country….”	Asia
“…there are too many authors to be published. What is the problem? The problem is that there are not enough publishing houses in Africa to be able to handle these authors.”	Africa

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. If your global publishing partners are becoming less reliant on content to translate, what other products, services, or expertise could your organization offer?
2. Is your organization equipped to recognize and act on opportunities when a global publishing partner has content that could reach your market – or ideas for new content that could expand your reach in theirs?

FINDING 3: PURPOSE

Same mission, different stage

Of the total respondents, 96% describe their core motivation as either ministry-driven or a hybrid of ministry and business. Purely commercial orientations are rare – 2.6% of respondents.

Question: How would you describe your primary organizational motivation?

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<tr><th>TOTAL RESPONDENTS (77)</th><th>RESPONDENTS MINUS US/UK (63)</th></tr>
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Does not total 100%: 1 of 77 respondents did not answer this question.
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Does not total 100%: 1 of 63 respondents did not answer this question
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Figure 3.1: Organizational motivation. *Excluding US and UK publishers (n=63) barely moves the picture: 52% hybrid, 43% missional, 3% commercial – a combined 96% non-commercial mandate either way. This is not a pattern created by a few outlier Western respondents; it holds across the rest of the sample too.*

PUBLISHER QUOTES	REGION
"We have come across partners that believe in profit, and they want good margin. Whereas we want margin to be able to come to the level of our people. As a result, we could not continue [the partnership]."	Africa
"They are looking into everything from the business perspective. So they just see around and find some people who can give them a good rate.... The end result would be useless, really useless."	Asia
"We are a ministry-based publisher. Our area is not commercial for Christian publishing and books. You cannot really make money from that. Most of them, they ask for high royalty. They ask for a big percentage. They ask for big costs. And it's kind of like commercial more than ministry."	Middle East/North Africa
"It's a small market, and if you want to make it on the business side, you have to be very business-minded, which is fine. But then I know situations where that business line became too much, and that destroys their reputation."	Europe

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

Two partners, two frameworks

One publisher in the Middle East/North Africa described a situation with two of its partners where rights were granted on flexible, mission-aligned terms: “If it’s commercial, okay, we pay. If it’s not, we don’t pay.” The relationships have worked well because the terms and alignment were clear. A separate partnership with a different publisher failed because the partner wanted to operate strictly on its own terms without adapting to the different ways the publisher functioned.

The Hybrid Model Shows Progress

In the figures without the US/UK respondents, the 52% that describe themselves as a hybrid of business and ministry suggest a significant group balancing ministry commitments with efforts toward commercial sustainability rather than remaining wholly dependent on outside funding. This deserves recognition and support, not an assumption that “hybrid” still means “unready for a commercial relationship.”

At the same time, some publishers are working on a genuine frontier where a financially sustainable publishing economy doesn’t exist yet and may not for many years. In some cases, their location may remain a frontier indefinitely due to factors out of their control. This is not because of mismanagement, but because the gospel is only beginning to take root or the larger economic situation makes local sustainability nearly impossible.

If the wider church is serious about reaching the frontiers, ongoing outside support isn’t always a gap to eventually close. Rather, it’s an expected cost of frontier work for as long as there are frontiers left to reach.

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

The Long Arc of Sustainability

A number of publishing houses in underserved regions were founded decades ago by Western missionaries. CLC is one such book publishing and distribution group. It was founded by a Western missionary couple in 1941. Like many of the local organizations that grew from this movement, one African CLC group is now led by a national director. This director has personally invested in training local authors, including by launching an author training program in 2017. The result has been more original locally authored titles that the CLC she leads distributes across 23 African countries. This has helped increase its commercial viability.

This follows an arc seen in certain Majority World Christian publishing houses: foreign-founded → locally led → more locally authored inventory → greater commercial viability. The direction is toward greater local ownership and sustainability even if the destination hasn’t been fully reached.

One Way to Make Room for Mission

One publisher in Europe shared her approach to intentional kingdom investments in those who are growing in their sustainability or operating on the frontier. She said that her publishing organization had a category of licensing agreements where royalties were waived entirely so a book could reach a market that could never otherwise afford it. Her publishing house called this kind of agreement, "treasure in heaven."

"[In] South America we did some publishing… [where] we didn't charge, and the author didn't want any kind of royalties. And Romania was another place where we forgo some royalties, just to enable us to publish in a local language and make it affordable for them." She further explained, "It's also having that kind of vision for how whatever you're working on is actually going to benefit the Kingdom – what are the strengths that each of those parties bring to it…."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do your pricing, royalty, and licensing models account for a global publishing partner's mission, market, and stage of development, or do they assume the same commercial framework for every partner?
2. When a publishing house is not financially self-sustaining, do you see that as a stage of development, a characteristic of the market it serves, or a problem that needs to be fixed?
3. Where might your organization intentionally accept a lower financial return to make a partnership viable or extend the Kingdom impact of a product?

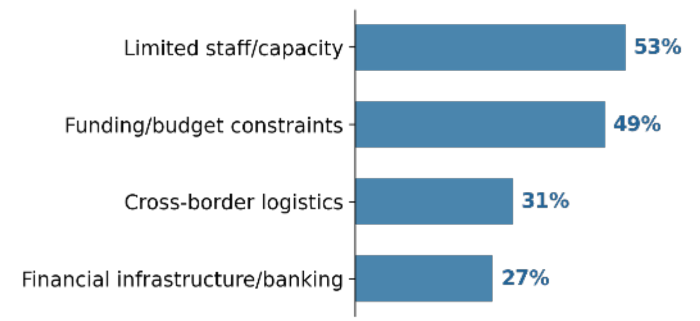
FINDING 4: PROCESS

Context shapes what's possible

The largest obstacles to successful collaboration that publishers pointed out were capacity constraints in staffing and funding. Yet external logistics like cross-border shipping, banking, and payment issues also represent significant challenges beyond their control.

Question: What are the biggest challenges to collaboration between publishers?

TOTAL RESPONDENTS (77)



RESPONDENTS MINUS US/UK (63)

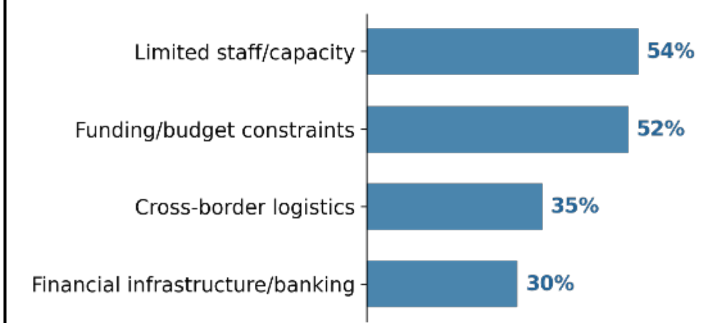


Figure 4.1: Significant collaboration challenges. *Excluding US and UK publishers (n=63), the same two barriers still lead, at nearly identical rates: 54% limited staff/capacity, 52% funding. This isn't a pattern created by resource-rich markets standing out from a poorer majority. It's consistent across the sample either way.*

Internal Constraints

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

One Man, Many Hats

One publisher in Asia operates entirely with volunteers and has no full-time publishing staff. The director has personally translated more than 25 books from English into the local trade language while also serving as a church elder and principal of a theological institute – all on a volunteer basis.

"We really don't have any full-time staff. We don't have even a single person to work in the publication. Everything is volunteer... That is another reason for us for the delay in bringing about the books."

PUBLISHER QUOTE	REGION
"We are all understaffed, overwhelmed, and overworked, and it's not easy to keep these conversations going… and follow up with everything going on and with your huge to-do list…."	Middle East/North Africa

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

When national wealth does not reflect a publisher's reality

One publishing house in Africa operates in one of the continent's larger, more developed economies. But it runs with just two core staff and volunteer support. It serves a local language market with limited purchasing power. The economic reality for this publishing house looks very different from what the country's national GDP might suggest.

"I would say when we've sometimes worked with American publishers, I wish that they would not require us to make certain payments because we're in an entirely different economy here. And what may seem like a minor payment to them is a big, huge thing here."

PUBLISHER QUOTES	REGION
"People think of us like [the larger country near us] … but we have some really big challenges in terms of our isolation."	Pacific
"The market here is pretty non-formal."	Europe

External Constraints

Not every challenge has an internal solution. Publishers in this study described numerous difficulties in logistics and finance.

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

The payment catch-22

One publisher described how her government required proof that publishing rights had already been secured before it would allow money to leave the country – but her international partner required payment before granting those rights. Her workaround was to make the payments through her own personal accounts, which complicated her organization's bookkeeping for years.

When standard processes don't fit

The cost of international wire transfers for a publisher in Asia makes small, frequent royalty payments impractical. Instead, he makes a single upfront payment based on the anticipated print run. "We don't wait until the book finishes… Payment at the beginning for advance. For, let's say, 1,000 books, we pay them $500."

Knowing what won't pass

In one country, every book must be submitted to the government for approval before publication. One publisher has learned to edit manuscripts to ensure they are not rejected. "Sometimes we have to think like, this is sensitive, we have to make a change." Without her intervention, a rights holder's book may never reach readers in her country.

Geography can be expensive

For a publisher in a landlocked country in Africa, basic materials required to produce books must be imported, adding costs that publishers elsewhere may not face. "[Our country] is a landlocked country, so we don't have access to the sea, and everything linked to publication is imported, and it's costly! Like paper, ink… it's just expensive to get some of the things."

When standard shipping isn't the best route

Conventional freight can be costly and difficult. One US-based mission publisher described working with a printer in Niger that produced books locally and then transported them by bus to Côte d'Ivoire in two separate shipments to avoid customs complications that a standard commercial shipment would have triggered. The local printing cost was higher than it might have been elsewhere, but the approach saved significantly on shipping.

One Way Around Barriers

For one publisher in Africa, moving books across borders can mean more than high shipping costs. The publisher described losing entire shipments of books and Bibles at regional border checkpoints. She explained that efforts to recover them can take months. At times, the shipment ultimately must be written off.

Print-on-demand offers another way. "We get the rights for the books, and instead of shipping them, we print them on our print-on-demand here in [our city], and then we can distribute to [our country] and our neighboring countries."

Her publishing house received print-on-demand equipment as a gift. It now allows her team to produce licensed books locally and avoid what she described as "so many challenges or barriers."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does your organization learn a global publishing partner's actual operating reality, and where might your standard processes create unintended costs, delays, or barriers in that context?
2. Could greater flexibility in payment terms, royalty structures, or other requirements make a partnership more workable without compromising its goals?
3. Where could local printing or digital file transfer solve a distribution problem you currently address by shipping physical books?

FINDING 5: POSTURE

Learning is a two-way street

This finding isn't really about who's the teacher and who's the student. Three separate survey questions point to the same underlying pattern of exchange: whether publishers have taken part in training or mentorship exchanges, what they say they contribute to a partnership, and what they say they most value receiving from one. Nearly a third of all publishers (32%) report having participated in training or mentorship exchange – this is an established, common form of collaboration, not a rare one.

Where the pattern gets interesting is in who shows up as the more active participant in that exchange – on both sides of it. Forty percent of the publishers surveyed outside the US/UK (underserved regions) report contributing training or shared learning, compared with 14% of US/UK publishers. The same gap shows up in reverse: asked what they most value receiving from a partner, publishers in underserved regions name training or shared learning far more often too. It isn't that one side teaches and the other listens. Instead, it's that publishers in underserved regions are more engaged in the exchange itself, as both contributors and seekers of it.

Giving and receiving training or shared learning, by region:

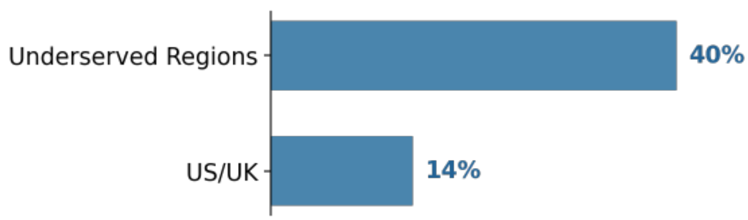


Figure 5.1: Giving and receiving training or shared learning, by region.

PUBLISHER QUOTES	REGION
"What most often hinders fruitful collaboration among publishers is when one party enters without a spirit of humility, seeking to dominate the others as though ignorance were inferiority and knowledge were superiority. The spirit of collaboration is broken when resources create a false hierarchy between the have and the have-nots."	Africa
"[W]e are giving our experience of how to manage … under pressure publishing – how to manage and work and bring the gospel and the good news in an environment that is really under pressure and persecution. …[I]t's going to be even harder for even the West, how to go through this, how can we be more creative."	Middle East/North Africa
"… [L]et's remember that Jesus brought a little kid and he told the adults, 'We can learn from these little kids.' So maybe there are smaller publishing houses that can teach a lot of things to these bigger houses… There are some things that these smaller publishing houses are seeing that the other ones are not seeing and vice versa."	Latin America

"I think that has been a very enriching opportunity for me to connect with different people and to learn, and to know that we can always learn from the big ones and from the little ones."	Latin America
"You're working with publishers that don't have a lot of money – how do they make it work, and what can we learn from that in [our country]? …[P]eople you're working with are tapping into a volunteer network."	Europe

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

Reverse Learning Between Neighbors

Reverse learning doesn't only run from the Majority World to the West. It also runs horizontally, between regional neighbors of contrasting size. A publisher in the Middle East/North Africa region, serving a Christian population of roughly 2–3 million, developed a sophisticated digital media strategy for a shared apologetics project – including short form video and a multi-episode podcast featuring regional scholars. A much larger publisher in a neighboring country, serving a Christian population of roughly 10 million across 13 physical retail outlets but with no social media presence of its own, saw the results and adopted the same approach. Eventually, they hired a social media manager to run the strategy for their full catalog. Scale did not determine who had something to teach.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What is one thing your global publishing partners could train your organization to do better, and when did you last ask them for help?
2. Where in your organization's partnership model is mutual learning built in rather than left to happen by chance?

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Read in sequence, the five findings describe a single shift rather than five unrelated observations. A generation ago, the default global publishing relationship often ran in one direction: a Western publisher held the content, capital, and commercial framework; a global publishing partner translated, distributed, and adapted.

The picture emerging from this study shows that many of the publishers represented are:

- Producing more locally authored content.
- Functioning in different stages of development, with some moving more toward commercial sustainability.
- Persevering in frontier contexts where market size, purchasing power, political conditions, or other structural realities may make ongoing outside support necessary for years to come.
- Adapting to operational realities that standard processes do not always accommodate.
- Contributing expertise that can strengthen publishers well beyond their own markets.

The question is not whether every publisher can arrive at the same destination, but whether partnerships recognize the context in which each is working.

OLD DEFAULT	WHAT THE DATA SHOWS	WHAT TO ASK…
A contract starts and holds the relationship	Trust is established first; contracts formalize what already exists (Finding 1)	Has trust been established before paperwork arrives?
The partner needs our content	74% now produce original content at least as often as translated (Finding 2)	What does this partner already produce, and what other products, services, or expertise could we offer?
The same commercial framework should work everywhere	53% already blend business and ministry – a sign of progress, not compromise – while some are doing legitimate frontier work where support isn't a gap to close but may require long-term support (Finding 3)	Does our pricing and partnership model reflect this partner's mission, market, and stage of development?
Funding solves operational friction	Friction is often structural – understaffing, banking access, and shipping routes neither side can unilaterally fix, though tools like print-on-demand are already solving part of it (Finding 4)	Where might our standard processes need to adapt to fit this partner's operating reality?
We are here to help them	Publishers in underserved regions engage more actively as both givers and seekers of shared learning than US/UK publishers, and the exchange often moves horizontally, between neighbors of very different sizes (Finding 5)	What could we learn from each other?

“We will not give up.”

One publisher in this study has spent years helping theological books reach pastors and seminaries through difficult conditions in his region. He closed his interview with a message he asked to be carried to those who make partnership decisions: “Pray for us. We will not give up. We'll continue to do the best for the church.”

That is who sits on the other side of a licensing decision, contract term, or partnership conversation: not simply a market or a translation vendor, but a publisher persevering despite immense challenges.

The findings of this study do not simply ask Western publishers to do more. They invite a new way of working: build relationship before structure, understand a global publishing partner’s context before applying assumptions, recognize what they are already doing, adapt where standard processes do not fit, and approach partnership prepared to both contribute and learn.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

All of the following questions from this report are consolidated here for team discussion. These questions are designed for a leadership team to work through together, not as a checklist to complete in one sitting. Consider assigning one finding per meeting, with the relevant page of this report as pre-reading, and closing each discussion by naming one concrete change your organization could test in its next partnership conversation.

Finding 1 – Relationship

1. Where in your organization's partnership process does a contract appear before a relationship has had room to form?
2. Would a tiered agreement model – informal for exploratory work, formal once money or exclusivity is involved – fit how your team currently operates?
3. Who on your team is responsible for building the relationship, versus drafting the paperwork, and do they talk to each other before the first draft is sent?

Finding 2 – Product

1. If your global publishing partners are becoming less reliant on content to translate, what other products, services, or expertise could your organization offer?
2. Is your organization equipped to recognize and act on opportunities when a global publishing partner has content that could reach your market – or ideas for new content that could expand your reach in theirs?

Finding 3 – Purpose

1. Do your pricing, royalty, and licensing models account for a global publishing partner's mission, market, and stage of development, or do they assume the same commercial framework for every partner?
2. When a publishing house is not financially self-sustaining, do you see that as a stage of development, a characteristic of the market it serves, or a problem that needs to be fixed?
3. Where might your organization intentionally accept a lower financial return to make a partnership viable or extend the Kingdom impact of a product?

Finding 4 – Process

1. How does your organization learn a global publishing partner's actual operating reality, and where might your standard processes create unintended costs, delays, or barriers in that context?
2. Could greater flexibility in payment terms, royalty structures, or other requirements make a partnership more workable without compromising its goals?
3. Where could local printing or digital file transfer solve a distribution problem you currently address by shipping physical books?

Finding 5 – Posture

1. What is one thing your global publishing partners could train your organization to do better, and when did you last ask them for help?
2. Where in your organization's partnership model is mutual learning built in rather than left to happen by chance?

PARTNER WITH MAI

The findings in this report point toward a different model of global publishing partnership: relationship before transaction, mutual learning rather than one-way expertise, and approaches shaped by local context. For more than four decades, MAI has worked in precisely this space – building relationships with Christian writers, editors, and publishers around the world through training, mentoring, networking, and long-term partnership.

Build Relationships

Some of the most valuable global publishing partnerships begin not with a transaction, but with people knowing one another. MAI can serve as a bridge into those relationships. Come to one of our events to meet publishers outside your normal networks and explore what your organization might contribute and learn through the relationships you develop.

- **Litt América Latina 2026** brings together Spanish-speaking writers, editors, and publishers October 30–November 6, 2026, in Rionegro, Colombia. *Explore Litt América Latina 2026:* https://maiglobal.org/regional-conferences/
- **LittWorld**, MAI's global gathering of writers, editors, and publishers, will next take place in November 2028. *Learn more about LittWorld:* https://maiglobal.org/littworld-history/

Exchange Expertise

Your team has expertise that can strengthen publishers around the world – and those publishers have expertise your team can learn from. Editors, marketers, rights professionals, publishing leaders, and other specialists can teach, mentor, or consult through MAI. Come prepared to learn as well as teach.

- *Explore opportunities to volunteer with MAI:* https://maiglobal.org/volunteer/

Invest in Global Publishing Capacity

MAI strengthens the people and organizations creating Christian content for their own languages, cultures, and communities. Consider MAI as part of your organization's global publishing strategy through annual giving, event sponsorship, matching gifts, or a strategic investment aligned with your organization's priorities. Together, we can strengthen a global ecosystem of trusted relationships, capable publishers, skilled writers and editors, and locally created Christian content.

- *Partner financially with MAI:*
    - Give a gift online: https://maiglobal.org/donate/
    - Give a gift by check: Media Associates International, PO Box 103, Wheaton, IL 60187
    - For questions about giving or to give a gift by phone, call: (+1) 630-580-8229

Explore a strategic partnership with MAI

To discuss how your organization could connect, contribute expertise, sponsor an initiative, or invest in global publishing capacity, contact MAI President Heather Pubols at heather.pubols@maiglobal.org.

Stay connected

Follow the global Christian publishing community through MAI's newsletters and publications, including *Words for the World*, *Community Update*, *MAI News*, and *Bread & Ink*: https://maiglobal.org/mai-news/