

SOLIDARITY CO-PUBLISHING



A SHORT HISTORY OF SOLIDARITY CO-PUBLISHING

The beginnings: “Global Issues” and children’s co-publishing

In the **2000s**, publisher Zed Books (United Kingdom) contacted the [Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer](#) (Switzerland and France) about developing a collection of titles focused on issues relating to globalisation, called “[Global Issues](#)”.

This series was financed using a system of **balancing out costs** between partners in the North and South, thus enabling each publisher to publish the titles at an **appropriate sales price for local purchasing power**. The “[Fair Trade Book](#)” logo appears on the books. A large number of pan-African collections of children’s books were then developed in the same way, based on the principle of solidarity co-publishing. It was in the wake of this activity that the [International Alliance of Independent Publishers](#) was created in **2002**.

The rise of solidarity co-publishing in literature

In **2006**, two new collections of literary titles were published: “**Terres d’écritures**” and “[Terres solidaires](#)”. Solidarity co-publishing became increasingly common: **practices for working collectively in this way** became established (sharing of costs and tasks, pooling printing, etc.) and **shared tools** were created (co-publishing contracts, collection proofs, etc.). As more and more titles were published, the “**Terres solidaires**” collection became a **publishing laboratory**: the number of printing locations increased, with a preference for local printing, and the choice of forms of transport was narrowed to make it easier to bypass complexities in terms of customs.

Co-published books boosting bibliodiversity

For more than 20 years, solidarity co-publishing has contributed to **greater circulation of works** between **different geographical regions and language areas**. The publishing process, based on **solidarity, reciprocity of exchanges** and **trust**, has led to projects to translate texts from one language and from one country to another: from India to South America, Cameroon to the Arab-speaking world and Brazil to Benin and Madagascar. All of this has **contributed to promoting [bibliodiversity](#)**.

THE “TERRES SOLIDAIRES” COLLECTION

The origins of the collection

Geneva, 2006. At the African Book Fair in Geneva, **Étienne Galliard**, then director of the [International Alliance of Independent Publishers](#), met **Véronique Tadjó**, an author from Côte d'Ivoire whose most recent book, *L'Ombre d'Imana*, had just been published in France by Actes Sud. Véronique Tadjó wanted her book to be distributed and read in francophone Africa. Thus began the collection's adventure. Actes Sud agreed to transfer the rights for [L'Ombre d'Imana](#) to the Alliance, which then coordinated the co-publishing process, working with several publishers in francophone Africa. It proved to be a success: **eight publishing houses united to co-publish the book** (in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Rwanda, Senegal and Tunisia), and the book, of which **5,000 copies were printed**, quickly sold out – in Côte d'Ivoire it was even re-printed. This was how the “[Terres solidaires](#)” collection came into being.

The rise of the collection

The collection is based on a **principle of restoration** to Africa of works written by African authors but first published in France. In the majority of cases, books imported from France are too expensive for local readers. Co-publishing makes it possible to **share the costs** and [guarantee a retail price appropriate](#) to local readers' purchasing power (on average 3,500 CFA francs, equivalent to 5 euros). Coordinated by the Alliance and supported by [The Francophonie](#), the collection plays a part in the **dynamics of publishing and the economy in the local markets**: the titles are printed in francophone Africa and available simultaneously in several countries via, in particular, local bookshops, in this way overcoming difficulties of distribution.

An experimental collection

In 2019, books from the catalogues of African publishing houses also began to appear in the collection. This was the case for [Munyal, les larmes de la patience](#), by **Djaïli Amadou Amal**, initially published in 2017 by Proximité in Cameroon. Since the collection's launch, **19 publishers in francophone Africa have co-published** at least one title in the “Terres solidaires” collection and **16 French publishers have participated in projects**. Each co-published title brings with it its share of anecdotes, from stories of the complexity of the transfer of rights from French publishers to books blocked in a port for months, and more. Beyond the adventure experienced by the collective and the individuals concerned, the collection has a **role in terms of advocacy**, and more and more African authors now reserve their rights for Africa when they sign a contract with a French publisher.

"Terres solidaires" is a collection of African literature born in 2006; its books are reprints of texts originally published in France and/or in Africa.

They are co-published by a group of publishing houses based in French-speaking African countries.

CALCULATION OF THE COST PRICE OF A CO-PUBLISHED BOOK

The cost price makes it possible to evaluate what it costs per copy to produce a book. It is calculated from the sum of the costs incurred for the publication of a book, as shown in this example.

Title: -----

Author: -----

Collection: "Terres solidaires"

Print run: 2,450 copies

Transfer of rights:	0,50 €
Rights for reproduction of the cover photo:	0,10 €
Interior and exterior of the proof:	0,40 €
Subtotal for creation:	1,00 €

Printing in Cameroon 500 copies:	0,75 €
Printing in Algeria 1,950 copies:	1,87 €
Transport toward Togo, customs clearance and packing, transport from Togo to Burkina Faso, Senegal and Guinea:	0,47 €
Subtotal for printing and transport:	3,09 €

Working time for coordination and co-publishing:	1,40 €
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Cost price per copy without subsidies:	5,49 €
Subsidies obtained (subsidy per copy):	4,29 €
Cost price per copy with subsidy:	1,20 €

Retail price (cost price X coefficient of 3 or 4) :	4,80 €
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Other costs to add to the cost price, which differ for each publisher (according to customary professional practice in countries): marketing, local transport, bookseller discount, publisher's gross margin.

Nota bene: The budget indicated below in euros is per copy. To calculate it, each line of expense has been divided by the work's print run, 2,450 copies.

THE JOURNEY OF A TITLE

Selecting titles: the role of the Reading Committee

The Reading Committee, which is made up of around 15 co-publishers of the “Terres solidaires” collection, suggests between 6 and 7 titles (either published in France or from their own catalogues). The committee reads the titles and then holds a virtual meeting to deliberate and choose the title that will be published in the collection. This meeting is the starting point for continuous intercultural dialogue between the co-publishers through to the publication of the work at the end of the project.

Negotiating rights: the contract for transfer of rights

The International Alliance of Independent Publishers contacts the publisher that owns the rights to obtain the French-to-French transfer of rights. While many French publishers agree to participate in the initiative by giving up the rights for the requested title in francophone Africa, even now some remain reticent, and it can happen that they categorically refuse. In the majority of cases, refusals come from the publishers' exports departments, who equate this type of operation with a loss of earnings.

Yet the transfer of rights represents an additional prospect for financial profit, with the transfer fee being calculated based on international practice. For French publishers, it is also a question of a strategic choice: transfers of rights enable works to be widely distributed in francophone Africa and therefore guarantee authors a larger audience.

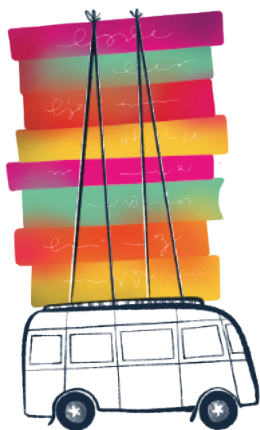
Collective organisation: the co-publishing contract

The co-publishing contract is essential in the smooth running of the project. It outlines all the stages of the process and the division of tasks between the publishers involved: it states who is responsible for the proof, where the books will be printed, who will look after the transport, etc. It lays out a shared schedule and defines the budget. As well as being a collective roadmap, it guarantees a legal framework in the case of disputes between co-publishers.

Sharing of costs: the forecast budget

From the transfer of rights to the moment when the co-publishers receive the printed book, the costs are shared. Since 2008, [The Francophonie](#) has provided financial support for the collection and made it possible to reduce the public sale price (around €4,50 on average) and make the book accessible to the largest potential audience locally.

IN THE "TERRES SOLIDAIRES"



COLLECTION

Printing and transport: strategic choices

The choice of printing location is made on a case-by-case basis and changes from year to year. As a result, there are as many different scenarios for printing and transport as there are projects. The first titles in the collection were printed in one place (often Algeria), then sent to each co-publisher's country, by plane or sometimes by boat – a process which was expensive and very complicated. As more books have been published and local printing capacities have evolved, the number of printing locations has increased.

For example, the co-published book *Munyal, les larmes de la patience* was printed in three different countries: in Cameroon for the Cameroonian publisher, in Morocco for the Moroccan publisher and in Algeria for all the other co-publishers. Copies printed in Algeria were then sent by plane to Côte d'Ivoire for the publisher there and to Mali, for the Malian publisher as well as for the publishers in Guinea, Togo, Burkina Faso and Benin, as bus companies provide regular services between Bamako, Conakry, Lomé, Ouagadougou and Cotonou. This system, the cheapest at the current time, avoids complexities in terms of customs, storage costs and, above all, negotiations and other potential problems with freight carriers and customs officers.

Inter-professional solidarity: towards a better ecosystem for books

The “Terres solidaires” collection has helped strengthen partnerships between the different actors in the book chain. For example, since 2007, co-publishing contracts have contained an additional clause insisting on the necessary solidarity between publishers and bookshops in terms of distribution and marketing of the books. Solidarity co-publishing thus plays a part in consolidating links between the different actors in the book chain and in increasing the circulation of titles through the bookshop network in the countries concerned.

The commitment of the authors

The authors of works published in this way are helping to defend local independent publishing and enable works to be read more widely. Since her adventure with *L'Ombre d'Imana*, the first title in the “Terres solidaires” collection, Véronique Tadjo reserves the African rights for her books when she signs a contract with a French publisher. The principle of co-publishing in this way, with publishers in the North and South working together, presents not insignificant benefits for the authors, who can reserve the right to be published in countries in the North while also making their works available in their country of origin at a price appropriate to its readers.

A FEW WORDS FROM THE AUTHORS



Djaili Amadou Amal

(Cameroon)

Writers being published in the West should consider solidarity co-publishing and encourage their publishers in Europe to facilitate partnerships with publishers in Africa.



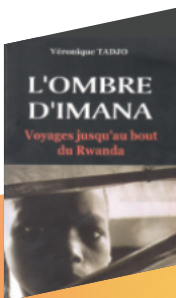
Munyal, les larmes de la patience,
"Terres solidaires", 2020.



Véronique Tadjou

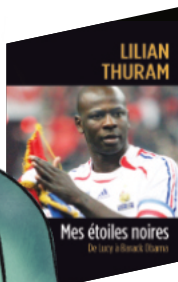
(Côte d'Ivoire / France)

Co-publishing makes it possible to give a second life, a second wind, to titles. This way, ideas continue to circulate and the distance between "those who left and those who stayed" is reduced.



L'Ombre d'Imana, "Terres solidaires", 2006.

Loin de mon père, "Terres solidaires", 2013.



Mes étoiles noires,
Pan-African co-publishing, 2014.

Lilian Thuram

(France)

Co-publishing is a reminder of the extent to which solidarity is the main factor in the realisation of any project. It is a symbol of the strength that can be found when several publishers unite together. The book becomes much cheaper, accessible to the maximum number of readers and reaches several countries at the same time.



International Alliance of Independent Publishers

www.alliance-editeurs.org

