PUBLISHING WORLDWIDE **TAIWAN**

Mission Impossible: Accomplished!

Linda Ku, publishing director of China Sunday School Association (www.cssa.org.tw) in Taipei, Taiwan, reports on its first-ever Christian book fair.

Christians are 4.5 percent of Taiwan's population of 23 million, or well over a million people. For years, the Christian publishers dreamed of having a book fair exclusively for this market—but this seemed impossible.

The Chinese Christian Literature Association (CCLA) is not a permanent organization. It is supported by many Christian publishers, but its members thought it lacked the means for large-scale activities. Despite labor and budget shortfalls, however, the vision for a Christian book fair remained.

Abram Shen, CCLA's director, returned from Hong Kong's 2004 Christian book fair with a new determination to make the impossible happen. Then, during the Taipei International Book Exhibition 2005, CCLA received information on a possible site. After surveying the place, Shen and other CCLA administrators determined it could be secured for an economical rate. They decided to take a chance to fulfill their vision for a Christian book fair.

The schedule was very tight: just two months. The Christian publishers and suppliers had to do their best to achieve this mission impossible. They knew the results would be a milestone for the future of Taiwan's Christian publishing industry.



Securing an affordable and accessible location helped CCLA to make this first Christian book fair in Taipei a reality.



Shoppers browse through the books at the Fair. Sales returns for many publishers at this Christian event exceeded those from the annual Taipei International Book Fair.

To prepare for the fair, and to publicize it, CCLA also arranged for a Gold Medallion Book Award ceremony, held at the Taipei Fortuna Hotel on April 22. The ceremony was a success in encouraging quality Christian publications and offering recognition to outstanding workers. Nearly 200 authors, nominees, and publishers gathered to share their opinions and cement good relationships for the joy of God. The China Sunday School Association took the top two awards with its books *Helping People through Grief* and *Daily Life at the Time of Jesus*.

The Taipei Christian Book Fair took place on April 27 to May 1, at the Pacific Commercial Center. The impossible mission became a reality! The theme of the event was "Reading: Beautify your Life." Publishers came from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and North America.

CCLA set some modest objectives for the fair. CCLA's primary aim was building relationships and generating connections between publishers and churches, rather than physical profit. Yet the

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Linda Ku accepts a Gold Medallion award for the China Sunday School Association, a publishing house that received recognition for two of its titles.

22 publishers and suppliers that joined the Fair got better results from this event than from their participation in the 11th Taipei International Book Exhibition 2005.

The Fair demonstrated publishers are a logical resource for Christians seeking materials for evangelism, training, Sunday school, Bible classes, and group services. Books are effective spiritual teachers. Publishers have the responsibility to produce literature to help churches and believers to become mature and glorify God to advance His Great Commission.

CCLA plans to hold the Christian Book Fair annually, and to give CCLA Gold Medallion Book Awards every two years. With longer preparation, better plans, and greater publicity, Christian publishers hope to not only reach the churches, but also to attract the people in Taiwan and introduce God into their lives. ❖

Right Motivation to Sustain Publisher

Willie Kanthenga (wkanthenga@yahoo.com), news editor with Trans World Radio Malawi in Lilongwe, shares a new magazine publisher's vision.

Malawian Christian readers have long been starved of Christian literature. *Moni,* a top locally published Christian magazine, is believed to have died a natural death. Initially a monthly magazine published by the Catholic Church, *Moni* was turned into a quarterly publication before it suspended publication in March 2003 following financial problems. The Catholic Church has another publication, *Lamp Magazine,* but no magazine addresses Malawi's Protestants.

Inspired by the biblical story about human skeletons coming back to life in the book of Ezekiel, a pentecostal couple has recently decided to venture into magazine publishing.

"About four years ago, during a time of prayer, the Lord showed me a vision of dry bones in the valley and actually gave me the reference, Ezekiel 37," says Dr. Desmond Nkhoma. He and Edith Nkhoma, his wife and co-founder, direct a ministry called Breath of Life Africa (BOLA).

"The Lord said I have chosen you and your family to breathe life to the dry bones of Africa," said Dr. Nkhoma, "meaning people who do not know God."

BOLA is a family magazine because "the family is holistic; it encompasses every type of person," adds Nkhoma. "Our central theme is to bring social and spiritual transformation to the families of Africa. This is truly the only way to conquer current maladies in Africa such as HIV and AIDS, poverty, idol worship, witchcraft and corruption.'' According to Dr. Nkhoma, Africa has been evangelized but the African mind has not yet been captured for Jesus.

In a country like Malawi, where publishing is costly, it is one thing to start a publication and another to sustain it. But Nkhoma is optimistic. He is an accomplished journalist who has worked for the state-run Malawi News Agency (MANA), Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) and South Africa's Channel Africa, among others. "Publishing is sustainable as long as you have the right motivation," he says. And for Nkhoma, the right motivation is to communicate the Gospel.

BOLA, with a circulation of 2000 copies, comes out quarterly. "We want to have enough time to build up quality content," says Nkhoma, "and not just cover every news event."

The Nkhomas are encouraged that the very first edition of the magazine was fully financed through advertisements. But this does not limit their vision to explore other means that could facilitate expansion.

"The long term plan is to expand capital by partnering with people of like mind. This will ensure consistency both in content and production," says Nkhoma. He adds that *BOLA* magazine has a focused readership and a longer shelf-life than other periodicals on the market.

"We believe that meaningful Christian impact results in changed people," he adds, "and only transformed families can facilitate transformation in the society and nation at large." ❖