VISION AND ACTION

Posted on April 26, 2013 by Eddie

Category: Bible Translation

Do you have a vision for the things you do or the reason you do them? It is a question that all Christians need to ask from time to time.

In Christian ministry, the work can be so absorbing and interesting that we easily get bound up in it and lose sight of why we are doing it. When we focus on what we are doing rather than the goal, we become reluctant to change or to adapt to circumstances: â€˜Weâ€™ve never done it that way before!

When Sue and I joined Wycliffe in the 1980s, we were excited about what we were going to do. We were going to live in a village, learning the local language, doing language research, teaching literacy and helping to lead a translation project. After many years of work we were able to hold a newly-printed Kouya New Testament in our hands.

That approach was typical of many hundreds of Wycliffe workers all round the world. This was how we did things. But the important thing was not what we did, but why we did it. Today, Kouya people are able to read the New Testament in their language and are drawn into a deeper relationship with God as a result.

Our vision is not to â€˜do translationâ€™; it is to see people engaging with Godâ€™s word in the language they understand the best. This means that we have to be flexible. We work in new and different ways to help people engage with the Bible.

In some parts of the world, Wycliffe members do something very similar to what Sue and I did: living in a village, learning the language and heading up the translation. For those circumstances, itâ€™s the best approach. There are other places where the day-to-day work of translation goes ahead without a Wycliffe missionary anywhere in sight. Local Christians lead the work, with expatriates serving as advisors and consultants.

Most projects still aim to produce printed Scriptures, just as we did in Kouya. But in some situations, the translated Scriptures arenâ€™t actually printed, but are downloadable from theÂ web and shared on mobile phones; persecuted Christians canâ€™t carry around a big Bible the way that we can!

We worked on a book to be read, but millions of people around the world canâ€™t read. They can gather together and listen to the Scriptures read out on an MP3 player â€“ just as the very first Christians listened to Scripture being read to them.

The vision doesnâ€™t change, but the things we do to accomplish it do.

This is an article I wrote for the latest edition of Words for Life: the Wycliffe Bible Translators magazine.