WHERE DO MISSIONARIES GO?

Posted on February 5, 2014 by Eddie

One suggestion is that there are more missionaries in the one city of Nairobi than in the whole of Francophone Africa.
Category: Observations

This is another of my posts inspired by talks at the recent Global Connection's Conference. During one of his talks, Daniel BourdannÃ© of IFES came out with a phrase that was very dear to my heart and which I immediately tweeted.

Eddie Arthurâ€ @kouya

Nâ€™oubliez pas lâ€™Afrique francophone @Bourdanne #GCC2014 >> OUI!!!!

"Don't forget Francophone Africa!" To which I added my own YES!!

Daniel was referring to the fact that a huge proportion of missionaries go to places where there are already lots of Christians, or as he also put it:

Eddie Arthurâ€ @kouya

#GCC2014 When you look at the number of missionary agencies who base themselves in Nairobi you wonder if itâ€™s mission or tourism @Bourdanne

This ties up with my experience of Nairobi, where I've often thought that you couldn't throw stones for fear of hitting an evangelical missionary. Interestingly, when I tweeted this a number of people agreed with it, while others suggested that Chiang Mai in Thailand suffers in the same way. Someone else suggested that there are more missionaries in Nairobi than in the whole of Francophone Africa.

I realise there is a need for regional offices and stable, foreigner friendly cities are very attractive for them, but it is surprising how many missionaries you can find in tourist hubs!

However, leaving the issues of the big cities aside, I believe that Daniel has highlighted a significant issue. Missionaries are distributed in a very uneven way and the majority of them go to places where there is an established church and often many other missionaries. As Hannah put it in a post on the Wycliffe blog:

> *or everyÂ **20,000 Christians**Â like you â€“ Bible believing and living out their faith â€“ onlyÂ **one**Â will go to tell the gospel to an unreached people group.*

Or as Martin Lee put it in his excellent talk to introduce the conference:

> *There are still vast numbers of people who have never heard of Christ and many countries still where Christians are few and far between. Indeed some countries have seen Christian fleeing elsewhere due to war and conflict and persecution such as Iraq and Syria.*
>
> *Despite this according to the Atlas of Global Christianity, 85% of all Christian mission is aimed at other â€œChristiansâ€ . Much mission deployment is still trying to sustain the growth of the churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America.*

Often when I am talking to church leaders, they will tell me that their church has a link with a church in Africa. Almost invariably this means in one of the Anglophone Countries in East Africa. This is understandable, it is easier to reach people who speak our language, and the relatively easy climate makes travel easier (not to mention the game parks). But these countries are also the ones that have the most Christians. I have never heard of a church in the UK which has a direct link to a Church in the Central African Republic, Gabon or Togo. These areas tend to be left for the mission agencies!

As we look at world mission, we can't afford to forget Francophone Africa, or those other parts of the world that receive the fewest missionaries.