PEOPLE GROUPS: WHY WASTE OUR TIME?

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The Christian message isn't all about power, success, size and impact. We are called to reach the lone sheep, not just the 99 who are in safety.
Category: Minority Language Translation

A few years ago a prominent British Christian leader (names withheld to protect the guilty) told me that he couldn't take Wycliffe Bible Translators seriously because we wasted so much time translating the Bible for tiny little people groups.

I might just have ignored this as the ramblings of someone who didn't know what they were talking about, but the person in question had just given the weekly missionary talk at a well known summer gathering.

So what was the problem with my friend's statement?

Well, firstly, it was a rather ignorant caricature. We do work with some very small groups (the Kouya number not much over 10,000), but we also work with some groups of several millions.

However, and much more importantly, the person in question really hadn't grasped the nature of God's mission to the world.

- **It isn't all about size and bang for the buck.** Our culture values efficiency and making the best use of resources in order to have a maximum impact. Now these aren't necessarily wrong, but the Kingdom of God is a place where the shepherd leaves 99 sheep in order to go and look for the one who is lost; it is the smallest of seeds or the little bit of yeast lost in the dough. Just because a people group is small doesn't mean that we shouldn't invest time and energy to bring them the good news. After all, many clergy in the UK invest their whole lives serving Churches of less than 100 people.
- **It is about all peoples.** The Scriptures make it plain that we are to take the Gospel to every people group on the planet and that every tribe, tongue and nation will be represented before the throne of God. There is no get out clause that tells us that we don't have to worry about tiny people groups hidden in the forests of PNG or the Amazon basin.

Of course we have to be wise in our use of resources; a balance has to be reached between our vocation to reach all people groups and the people and finance available to us. However, in the upside-down world of the Kingdom of God, we simply can't say that some groups are too small to deserve our attention. Our God is a God who continually reaches out to people wherever they are; we, his people, can do no less.