MISSION AGENCIES AS MULTINATIONALS

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Some challenging thoughts about the relationship between churches and mission agencies.
Category: Observations

Over the last few days, I've written a fair bit about the relationship between mission agencies and local churches. This, rather challenging, quote from Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden gives a fair bit of food for thought:

> *Multinational corporations aim to sell their products as widely and cheaply as possible through efficient packaging and distribution Often they create in the consumers artificial needs, unrelated or even contrary to their real needs The "Two-Thirds World" is littered with such inappropriate products For example, NestlÃ© skillfully markets ready-mix baby milk to illiterate nursing mothers These women replace nature's purest food supply with such milk often mixed with the local polluted water Diseases can occur, even death*
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> *Many strategies for Christian mission are based on a multinational organization that promotes the same clear message, a universal slogan that can apply to all men and women, everywhere The goal is to make this message as widely and easily available as possible, preferably to people who have had no relationship with national Christian groups...*
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> *In multinational mission strategies, the church is defined as a distribution center. If the national churches are considered inadequate because "there are millions of people in the country whom the existing church has no ability to reach and indeed too often no desire to reach," then these churches are judged to be ineffective distribution centers for the mission agency's product. So the agency bypasses the national church and creates its own church or its own distribution system. Many evangelistic organizations sponsor rallies, retreats, conventions, conferences, and a whole system of Christian nurturing for leaders and supporters. Often they build a structure of service activities that prevents people from taking any other part in a local church than its Sunday worship.*
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> *The ideological basis for bypassing the national church comes from the way in which the multinational mission agency defines the challenge of world mission: to reach with the gospel India's 600 millionâ€"or the world's 2.7 billionâ€"non-Christians. This overwhelming challenge dwarfs the efforts of the churches in the "Two-Thirds World" countries wherein most non-Christians live. With few material resources and minimal personnel trained in Western techniques, these churches cannot by themselves hope to meet the challenge stated in such terms or by using such means. The multinational mission agency then presents itself a possible servant to fulfill the challenge that it has already defined. These many "challenges for world mission" sound suspiciously like sales pitches for the Western agencies themselves.*

I would strongly encourage you to read the whole paper which can be downloaded hereÂ (pdf).