MANI: PERSONAL THOUGHTS

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One of the great things about attending conferences is that you meet and make friends.
Category: Africa

There is something really satisfying about distance running; it can be gruelling, but there is real joy and pleasure in the process. Being at the MANI conference wasÂ similar. The hours wereÂ long (and made longer by security checks to get into the conference building) butÂ I thoroughly enjoyed my time there, and not just because of the important things that were discussed at the conference.



Wycliffe friends and colleagues. It is so good to bump into some of my Wycliffe colleagues from Africa. These are people that I used to meet on a fairly regular basis at meetings around the continent. However, in my new role, I have very little opportunity to see them. It does me good to see old friends, to catch up on their news and to hear what God is doing in the world of Bible translation in Africa. A slice of my heart will always be here.

In passing,Â it was fantastic to note that the majority of my Wycliffe colleagues at the conference were Africans and not Europeans or Americans. This wouldn't have been the case a few years ago, and it is a sign of the way that theÂ church and mission agencies worldwide are changing.

Other international friends. When you attend a few of these international mission conferences, you start to meet a few of the same people. It's always good to see some familiar faces and to build friendships with people who are involved in similar work and activities. A particular pleasure at MANI was to bump into fellow blogger, Justin Long. We've only met once before, several years ago, but we interact a good deal online. If you are interested in mission and you haven't signed up to receive his blog and news briefings, you should do.

Francophone Africans.Â It's hard to explain, but one of the greatest pleasures in my life is meeting and chatting to Francophone Africans. I enjoy speaking French with anyone, but there is an extra pleasure to be had talking to folks from Africa.Â Best of all is meeting some Ivorians. It's great to discover friends in common and to talk about familiar places and people.



A special treat was being asked to interpretÂ forÂ some of the French speakers when they were giving talks. Interpreting isn't everyone's cup of tea, but I love it. It's part showmanship - I admit, I love being in front of a group of people - and part adrenalin sport. You never quite know what is going to happen and you are always one sentence away from making a complete fool of yourself in front of a few hundred people. It's the intellectual equivalent of white-water rafting. A special challenge was provided by the pastor from Guadeloupe who started speaking in French but they randomly switched to English at odd intervals. I never knew whether I would be translating English to French or vice-versa. Great fun.

There were lots of lovely people at the MANI consultation and some important things discussed; see my earlier posts for these (impressions, issues and implications), but as always, it is the peopleÂ that touched me personally that I will remember.