THE BRITISH AND THE UNREACHED

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Category: Observations

I've just started taking a broad look at British mission agencies. The idea is to produce a broad brush-stroke analysis that will complement the more detailed work on a small sample of agencies in my doctorate. I've got a lot of data that I need to sort through, but for now, I thought I'd share a few headline figures.

Money

According to the reports on the Charity Commission website for 2017

Total mission agency income: Â£425,000,000
Agencies doing evangelism income: Â£152,000,000 (36%)
Agencies working with Unreached People Groups: Â£29,000,000 (7%)

In other words, of the money that the Brits give to mission work, only a third goes to groups doing evangelism and less than a fifth of that goes to the least reached people in the world.

Agencies

I sampled 144 agencies. Of these 33 came into being before 1942 and 111 since then.

Of the older agencies, 13 (39%) work with Unreached People Groups
Of the newer ones only 7 (6.3%) work with Unreached People Groups

The moral of the story seems to be that if you are interested in reaching people who haven't heard about Jesus, you might do better to get in touch with one of the "old fashioned" mission agencies.

Working Out

I started with the list of mission agencies that are affiliated to Global Connections. I realise that this means that I missed a few agencies, but there have to be some objective criteria in a study like this. I worked through the list of the agencies, checking their financial reports on the Charity Commission website and looking at the descriptions on the agencies' own sites (along with the descriptions on the Charity Commission and Global Connections pages) to work out what it is they do.

At this point, I eliminated a number of agencies from the study; some such as UCCF because they are primarily focussed on the UK and others because there was no record of them having submitted accounts to the Charity Commission which meant that I didn't have access to detailed information about them.

I coded each agency for a number of factors. Including whether they are actively involved in verbally proclaiming the Gospel and whether they work with Unreached People Groups. Â It is at this point that my analysis might be a little controversial. Groups that said that they were "showing Christ's love by caring for the poor" were not included among those doing evangelism, if there was no indication of an active verbal proclamation (orally or in writing). I fully agree that Christians should care for the poor and needy, I have no struggle with that concept, but if there is no intentional, active spoken or

written witness to Christ, then it can't be called evangelism. You can see more of my thinking on this themeÂ here.

Once again, let me state that I have no problem with groups who focus on community development, advocacy, disaster relief and such like. These are all good things. However, I do struggle when Christians in the UK give such a low proportion of their money to those who are actively involved in announcing the Good News (many of the groups who do evangelism, also do community development, too).

Regarding Unreached People Groups; I know that there are concerns about the use of the term (I have plenty of my own), but theÂ terms are easy to understand, even if there is a lot of baggage behind them. I scored groups as being involved with UPGs if they used a term such as "unreached", "least reached" or "where there is no witness to Christ" on their website. On a couple of occasions, I had to return and take a second or even third look,Â asÂ some agencies I would have expected to be involved in this area weren't.

I fully accept that, in some cases, my analysis of what the agencies do won't agree with the agencies' own view of their activities. In which case, all I can say is that these agencies need to update their website and profiles.

If anyone would like to commission me to write up a newspaper or magazine article on this, please get in touch. If any publishers would be interested in a book which looks at the past, present and future of British agencies from both a theological and an organisational perspective, I'd love to hear from you.