



How Can We Serve the Latin Missions Movement?

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As I write, I'm in Spain, sitting in the middle of COMIBAM III, a

gathering of 2500 Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking missionaries, mobilizers, trainers, and pastors. Here Latin missionaries and mobilizers are sharing their successes, failures, joys and trials. Researchers are also reporting statistics on 9,265 Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking cross-cultural missionaries (while recognizing that many other Latin workers are off their radar screen because these others aren't connected with sending structures). Of those 9,265 studied here:

- 3092 (33%) work in South America,
- 1495 (16%) work in Europe (548 in Spain and 281 in the United Kingdom),
- 1028 (11%) work in Mexico or Latin America,
- 812 (9%) work in North America, and
- 204 (2%) work in the Caribbean.
- **That totals 6631 missionaries, or 71% of the 9,265 studied.**

Naturally, analysis that divides these workers among continents or large regions is sometimes only marginally helpful – obscuring, for example, those working within unreached tribes in the regions mentioned above. Yet it's clear that more and more Latins are working in unreached people groups, and the conference has featured a clear focus on unreached peoples. (In fact, some have wondered if COMIBAM III has included a disproportionate number of presentations from Latins serving in the Muslim world.) As I turn my attention to the regions where larger numbers of unreached peoples are found, I note these tallies of workers in the COMIBAM statistics:

- 861 (9%) work in Africa,
- 566 (6%) work in Asia, and
- 475 (5%) work in the Middle East.
- **That totals 1902, or 20% of the 9,265 studied.**

All of this reminds us again of (1) the need to recognize how God is working in the Body of Christ to accomplish His global purposes, and (2) the remaining frontiers of the gospel. Those frontiers can include our *own* understanding of the task and the problems that need to be solved.

From what I've been privileged to see in the global missions movement, here are a few reflections for believers from every region:

- Let's recommit ourselves to **pray for the task** before us. (This is why, for example, we at the USCWM are helping to produce *Operation World* in Spanish, after earlier publication attempts broke down amidst much difficulty.) Let's rediscover the good tools we have for prayer, including the *Global Prayer Digest* (www.global-prayer-digest.org).
- Let's **gain knowledge about our world**. My favorite professor in seminary used to say that we should be students of the Word and the world! Study your Bible *and* the newspaper (and now the Web!).
- Let's **look beyond the confines of people like us**. This is a potential stumbling block for all of us. When I graduated from seminary in 1982, I noted that many of my white classmates readily assumed they were called to pastor mainly-white churches in suburban settings. Let's not confuse our comfort zones with God's call, no matter where we live and grew up.
- Let's **be strategic in our mission plans, prayers, and outreach**. Many tools can help this. Information is one tool for discernment of strategic priorities, e.g., noting that less than 5% of the 35,000+ Indian missionaries are focused on Hindus in North India. Keep tracking with the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* (www.ijfm.org) and *Mission Frontiers* (www.missionfrontiers.org).
- Let's **remember that there will always be difficulties**. In Romans 8:17 Paul reminds us that if we are indeed children of God, we are "...heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ". Then he adds the difficult part: "if we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with Him" (NASV). If we become risk-averse, we will unduly hesitate to send workers to the Middle East and other difficult places. 🌐



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