

Results based focus by Durk Meijer, August 4, 2016

Our best planning processes should focus predominantly on the results we hope to achieve and not on the production of a product. Products are part of that process, but only in context of obtaining a desired result. The measurements we use for stewardship and accountability are ironically still often focused on statistically measurable factors. This can mean counting the people responding to the gospel, Bible stories produced, materials distributed, or church attendance. These are valuable measures, but only to a certain extent. The real change of an individual or community can only be measured over time and may be more reflected in values changed and life styles changed in the midst of a changing worldview. Unless these changes happen, we can propagate impressive numbers and show temporary changes that will likely be overshadowed by things that are more attractive, interesting, or beneficial for immediate life.

I have been working with several projects where the tension is high between facilitating real local ownership and producing a certain amount of recorded oral Scripture narratives. Funders and supporters expect statistics that not necessarily reflect real change in communities. In a world where sometimes investments seem to have limited returns because of mismanagement and corruption, there needs to be accountability and we should not shrink back from that. Still, we should not encourage people to invest money by telling them how much it costs to save one soul... it is not like feeding meals to hungry people that can be calculated to the penny.

The reason I am bringing this up in the context of 'Engaging with the Eternal' is that developing local ownership is key to successful ministry. Though we can be wise stewards in encouraging this, we cannot force this. If we rush it, we may produce lots of materials and even establish congregations, but will the materials help them engage with God and will the congregations last? If not, then God is not truly being glorified in and through the communities we serve.