

Developing Nations Prefer Radio

La Mirada, California—A survey of people in four developing countries shows that they are decades behind their Western counterparts in the adoption of emerging technologies. Radio remains vital for information they use in their everyday lives. According to A. Larry Ross Communications, interviews showed that old technologies may still be the best technologies for communicating with people in the developing world whose daily priority is survival.

The survey was conducted by the International Center for Media Studies (ICMS), host of the symposium “Emerging Technologies, Globalization and the Developing World” at CBS Studio Center in Studio City, California, April 6, 2010. The International Center for Media Studies, founded in 2007 as a division of Far East Broadcasting Company, is a non-profit organization that conducts strategic research into the use of media and technologies in the developing world.

“Radio was an important means of gaining information in Africa long before these countries gained independence in the 1950s and ’60s, and it’s still the dominant means of communications,” Dr. Robert Fortner, executive director of ICMS, said.

“The same trends hold true elsewhere in the developing world as well. For the missionary who works in Asia, or the nonprofit organization that provides relief in the Middle East or Latin America, this information is just as valuable.”

According to Fortner, the advent of new means of communications (e.g. the Internet and cable television) had little impact in the areas surveyed, where the availability of electricity was spotty, at best. Many of the respondents had not entered the Television Age, let alone the Digital Age. Less than 25 percent of each language group surveyed said they used a computer.

The news release went on to say, “Most of the areas covered by the survey have recently been scenes of conflict, and everyday life can be a challenge. With few exceptions, people rely on radio for up-to-date information on potential threats, such as the movement of troops, giving the medium credibility when it is disseminating other messages. Respondents also indicated that they were interested in information about political power (its use and abuse), the nature of evil and its manifestations in human life, hygiene, disease prevention and basic treatments for common childhood ailments.”

“There is little doubt that media will continue to have the broadest reach and be the most effective way to reach people with the Gospel and life-saving information,” Fortner added. “But for ministries and other organizations that work in the developing world, it is not the newest trend or technology, but the most culturally appropriate and timely message and medium, that will prove successful.”

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