

A Balanced People Group Focus

Introduction

On June 6th, 1944 the largest amphibious landing in history occurred on the beaches of Normandy, France. The initial goal was to establish a beachhead, but it was not the final goal. The final goal was the freeing of occupied Europe. The Allied commanders did not focus on June 7th, 1944 thinking their objectives were accomplished. Establishing a beachhead among every people group is a vital first step to fulfilling the Great Commission, but it cannot be the final goal.

Cause for Celebration – Cause for Attention

The shrinking list of unengaged unreached people groups (UUPGs) is certainly great cause for excitement and celebration, but it is not the final goal. While substantial focus and resources are rightly being directed toward unengaged people groups, at least as much attention ought to be given to the largest, technically engaged, but still highly unreached people groups.

Consider the 50 Largest Unreached People Groups

- All 50 of these people groups have less than 2% Evangelicals, very limited access to the Gospel, and minimal missions activity in their midst.
- These 50 unreached groups are comprised of 1.48 billion souls. One in five people on earth live in these 50 unreached peoples.
- Each of the 50 largest unreached people groups is larger than 10,000,000 in population.
- None of these groups have an indigenous church capable of taking the Gospel to the entire group.
- 44 of these 50 unreached people groups are in the 10/40 Window, 47 are in sensitive countries.

120,000 UUPGs?

If 81% of Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus do not know a Christian¹, then an estimated 1.2 billion individuals (1.48 billion x 81%) might be considered unengaged in just these 50 largest UPGs. Using the current unengaged population cutoff of 10,000, this

¹ “Religious Demography and Mission Strategy”, Johnson and Hickman, http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/29_1_PDFs/IJFM_29_1-Johnson&Hickman.pdf, pg. 17.

would be the equivalent of 120,000 UUPGs! Yes, we ought to greatly celebrate and rejoice in a shrinking number of unengaged people groups. Yet at the same time realize that the unengaged individuals in just these 50 largest UPGs represent the population of 120,000 UUPGs.

Count downs are motivating and helpful for mobilization, but they can easily create a false sense of finality and completion. How many well-intended speakers have presented the number of remaining UUPGs with the implication that the Great Commission is almost finished? What would the reaction be if the message were “there are still 120,000 unengaged unreached people groups”?

Engaging unengaged people groups represents an initial beachhead, yet an enormous amount of Spirit-led thinking, planning, strategizing and on-the-ground tilling, planting, watering and gathering still needs to occur. There are thousands of Shaikh, Yadav, Rajput, Turk, Persian, Hausa and Sunda villages totally unengaged and unreached with the Gospel. Many of those villages may be larger in population than entire UUPGs.

Observations

- The increase in general population of these 50 largest groups during in a two-year timeframe is greater than the total population of all UUPGs.
- The great majority of these 50 largest have Scripture and ministry tools available in their primary language. The need seems to be manpower committed to establishing church planting movements.
- There may be substantial unreported progress among some of these UPGs due to outreach done by national initiatives that global tracking efforts are unaware of.

A healthy balance of promoting both the engagement of UUPGs and the discipling of UPGs seems appropriate. May the Lord guide us to the right balance and emphasis.

Soli Deo Gloria.

50 Largest Unreached People Groups



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Country	Unreached People	Population	Primary Religion
Afghanistan	Pashtun	12,909,000	Islam
Algeria	Algerian, Arab	26,315,000	Islam
Bangladesh	Shaikh	137,313,000	Islam
Cambodia	Khmer, Central	14,039,000	Buddhism
China	Hakka	35,638,000	Ethnic Religions
China	Han Chinese, Xiang	38,377,000	Ethnic Religions
China	Hui	13,468,000	Islam
China	Uyghur	11,537,000	Islam
India	Bania	27,966,000	Hinduism
India	Bhil	14,826,000	Hinduism
India	Brahman	59,118,000	Hinduism
India	Chamar	53,069,000	Hinduism
India	Dhobi, Hindu	12,284,000	Hinduism
India	Gond	13,810,000	Hinduism
India	Jat, Hindu	17,657,000	Hinduism
India	Jat, Sikh	11,295,000	Sikh
India	Kapu	15,325,000	Hinduism
India	Koli	12,693,000	Hinduism
India	Kumhar	14,843,000	Hinduism
India	Kunbi	16,423,000	Hinduism
India	Kurmi	17,754,000	Hinduism
India	Mahratta	28,116,000	Hinduism
India	Nai	11,394,000	Hinduism
India	Pashtun, Northern	11,473,000	Islam
India	Rajput	44,413,000	Hinduism

Country	Unreached People	Population	Primary Religion
India	Shaikh	78,754,000	Islam
India	Teli	17,593,000	Hinduism
India	Vanniyan	11,899,000	Hinduism
India	Yadav	58,296,000	Hinduism
Indonesia	Java Pesisir Lor	36,069,000	Islam
Indonesia	Sunda	34,986,000	Islam
Iran	Azeri Turk	15,570,000	Islam
Iran	Persian	30,513,000	Islam
Iraq	Arab, Iraqi	14,148,000	Islam
Japan	Japanese	120,383,000	Buddhism
Korea, North	Korean	24,767,000	Non-Religious
Morocco	Arab, Moroccan	14,801,000	Islam
Myanmar	Burmese	30,905,000	Buddhism
Nigeria	Hausa	28,566,000	Islam
Pakistan	Jat, Muslim	31,921,000	Islam
Pakistan	Pashtun, Pathan	24,573,000	Islam
Pakistan	Rajput, Muslim	16,704,000	Islam
Pakistan	Shaikh	12,419,000	Islam
Saudi Arabia	Arab, Saudi Najdi	12,079,000	Islam
Taiwan	Han Chinese, Min	13,372,000	Ethnic Religions
Thailand	Isan, Thai	17,779,000	Buddhism
Thailand	Thai, Central	19,278,000	Buddhism
Turkey	Turk	53,485,000	Islam
Uzbekistan	Uzbek, Northern	23,939,000	Islam
Yemen	Yemeni, Northern	10,867,000	Islam

Sobering Facts

- All these people groups have less than 2% Christ-followers.
- Individuals in these groups may have very limited, if any, access to the Gospel.
- These 50 unreached people groups are comprised of 1.48 billion souls.
- One in five people on earth live in these 50 unreached peoples.
- Every group is larger than 10,000,000 in population.
- None have an indigenous church capable of taking the Gospel to the entire group.
- Primary religion: 23 are Muslim, 18 Hindu, 6 Buddhist, 2 Ethnic Religions, 1 non-Religious
- 44 of these 50 unreached people groups are in the 10/40 Window, 47 are in sensitive / restricted countries.
- For every dollar of Christian resources less than one penny is directed at reaching unreached people groups.