

People List Methodology

Purpose of the Joshua Project Peoples List

The main purpose of the Joshua Project people group list is to support church planting (CP) efforts that result in church planting movements (CPM).

People Group Definition

"For evangelization purposes, a people group is the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance" (Source: 1982 Lausanne Committee Chicago meeting.)

Two Lists Combined to Make a Global List

The Joshua Project peoples list might be best viewed as two distinct people group lists that together provide a comprehensive global perspective. One list is the all people groups outside South Asia where people groups are almost always language groups and subdivisions of language groups i.e. exclusively ethno-linguistic. On this list understanding is the greatest barrier to the spread of the Gospel.

The second list is all the people groups in [South Asia](#) ([India](#), [Pakistan](#), [Bangladesh](#), [Nepal](#) and [Sri Lanka](#)) where people groups are defined by the long-established traditional caste communities of the Asia sub-continent. This is how people in this part of the world self-identify at the deepest level. On this second list acceptance is the greatest barrier to the spread of the Gospel. These two lists have been combined to generate a global peoples list.

Assumptions – Where Understanding is the Most Significant Barrier

- Each language group will require at least one CP project, possibly more than one. Language groups will need more than one CP project if either (a) dialect differences are great, or (b) societal / relational / religious differences are great.
- A people group is to be identified for each language group and for each sub-division of language group that needs its own CP project. In addition, people groups not needing a CP project may optionally be included (such as expatriate groups) for the sake of completeness.
- The Ethnologue provides a dependable list of language groups in each country, but this list will seldom include all language groups in a country. Languages not found in the Ethnologue may be found in census reports, the World Christian Database, CPPI, and miscellaneous other sources.
- Populations found in the Ethnologue and existing people group lists should generally be considered to be reliable within plus / minus 20% of the true number. JP and WCD populations have been adjusted to the current year but Ethnologue populations have not been adjusted.
- New populations provided for a language group and all its sub-divisions should not greatly differ from the population given in the Ethnologue for that language. If the new population greatly differs an explanation must be provided.

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Assumptions – Where Acceptance is the Most Significant Barrier

- This applies to situations where cultural, religious or caste issues are considered a [greater barrier than language](#) to the spread of the Gospel, particularly when considering church planting movements (CPM). For more information see the articles [Why Use Caste to Define Peoples?](#) and [Clash in Worldview and the Peoples of South Asia](#).
- Using language to subdivide caste communities would create over 14,000 entries in India alone. On-site saturation CP may eventually require this many initiatives, but for simplicity, Joshua Project does not currently consider language when defining people groups in [South Asia](#). However, because of Omid research, the data is available to subdivide caste communities by language if needed.
- If language is considered as a secondary barrier within caste communities it ought to be done uniformly across all caste communities in [South Asia](#).
- Religion also defines caste communities so peoples such as Mahar, Hindu and Mahar, Muslim and Mahar, Christian are distinct entries on the Omid list.
- Sociological, occupational, economic, gender and age distinctives are not considered when defining peoples on the Joshua Project list.

Developing a People Group List

Outside South Asia

- Assure that all language groups needing a CP project are on the list.
- Assure that all language subdivisions needing a CP project are on the list.
- Assure there are no language groups or language group subdivisions NOT needing a CP project on the list, except for the possibility of expatriate groups. If language group subdivisions are removed from the list, their population is to be added to the main language group.
- Before adding a people group to the list, try hard to assure this group is not already on the list under a name not recognize. Evaluate alternate names and dialect names for this language, provided by the Ethnologue.

Within [South Asia](#) (Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka)

- Assure that all caste communities are represented, Joshua Project uses Omid data exclusively. For more information see the articles [Why Use Caste to Define Peoples?](#) and [Clash in Worldview and the Peoples of South Asia](#).

Populations

- The sum of populations of all people groups must not exceed the UN country population for the current year. Ideally, this sum will be a few percentage points below the UN population.

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