

# Keeping Large Unreached People Groups in Focus

## Introduction

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 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 7<sup>th</sup>, 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 engagement is only the first step toward reaching a people group. 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.
- Every one 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 or closed countries.

## Thousands of UUPGs?

If 81% of Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus do not know a Christian<sup>1</sup>, then an estimated 1.2 billion individuals (1.48 billion x 81%) would be considered unengaged in these 50 largest UPGs. Yes, we ought to celebrate and rejoice in a shrinking number of unengaged

unreached people groups, but these 50 largest UPGs represent thousands of unengaged population segments and millions of unengaged individuals.

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 many thousands of unengaged unreached people group segments”?

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 over 10,000 in population, larger than most remaining UUPGs. Every unreached people group needs an indigenous movement to Christ that has sufficient numbers and resources so as to be self-replicating, self-funding and capable of reaching the rest of the people group without outside assistance.

## Observations

- The increase in general population of these 50 largest groups during 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 among these people groups.
- 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.

Reaching unreached people groups of all sizes and engagement status must be a priority of the global Church.

Soli Deo Gloria.

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<sup>1</sup> “Religious Demography and Mission Strategy”, Johnson and Hickman, [http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/29\\_1\\_PDFs/IJFM\\_29\\_1-Johnson&Hickman.pdf](http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/29_1_PDFs/IJFM_29_1-Johnson&Hickman.pdf).

# 50 Largest Unreached People Groups



[www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net) 09/2016

Country	Unreached People	Population	Primary Religion
Afghanistan	Pashtun	13,293,000	Islam
Algeria	Algerian, Arab	26,315,000	Islam
Bangladesh	Shaikh	137,313,000	Islam
Cambodia	Khmer, Central	14,039,000	Buddhism
China	Han Chinese, 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	Islam
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 and have very limited access to the Gospel.
- One in five people on earth live in these 50 unreached peoples.
- These 50 unreached people groups are comprised of 1.48 billion souls.
- 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 or closed countries.
- For every dollar of Christian resources less than a penny is directed at reaching unreached people groups.