



## In these two issues of *MF* the main thrust is to enable informed choices of where to work.

Ralph D. Winter



### Dear Reader,

Don't let the masses of numbers deter you from enjoying this valuable issue of *Mission Frontiers*. This presentation will give you a peek into some of the factors mission leaders mull over in deciding where to work.

But, first of all, rejoice that both the Nov-Dec issue and now this Jan-Feb issue display an awesome abundance of data. This is far more than we had when we gathered on the world level in 1980 at Edinburgh for the World Consultation on Frontier Missions. We have come a long way!

Second, note the fascinating tension between two different and valid approaches. In these two issues of *Mission Frontiers* the main thrust is the first of two kinds of approaches. The thrust presented in these two issues is intended to *enable informed choices of where to work*.

If your agency or your church is seeking out the most needy people groups, you need to rely on some objective factors, such as the reported language (how different is it from your own?) or caste or clan, as well as what initial Christian efforts have already been expended for a given group.

Thus, one thrust is *deciding which group to approach*.

The second approach, which is equally necessary, is to *decide (after work has begun) just where the meaningful boundaries are for the group with which you are working*.

As Todd Johnson points out, it would be nice to know in advance



*Ralph D. Winter is the Editor of Mission Frontiers and the General Director of the Frontier Mission Fellowship.*

which groups are integral (are really one) and which are composed of mutually alienated sub-groups. Remember, people are usually more harshly divided from near-neighbors whom they don't like than by major differences of language or culture.

Thus, to go beyond major differences of language and culture, you must also take into account more subtle factors if you want to talk about truly *Unreached Peoples*, also called *Unimax Peoples*, which are defined as:

The largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church-planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance. (See page 14.)

Note the all-important final word: acceptance. Of this you can't be sure before you get there.

Only *after* missionaries begin work in a group (if all else fails to tip them off concerning an invisible barrier they have encountered), simply *acceptance* (not linguistic similarity or whatever) will tell them they have more than one group to deal with, and that they have to make more than one beachhead. Many missions work for years in a group that at first seems like one group but that eventually reveals sectors which after years of outreach simply don't respond.

Even in the United States churches very often are puzzled because their congregations simply don't absorb many (or any) members of certain social or ethnic groups. What to do? First, realize that it may not happen at all in this life. They may need to call in another mission or denomination because of high feelings of estrangement between two local groups. This is what denomina-

tions are for!

Denominationalism? Yes, if America did not have hundreds of denominations, we would not see our faith so deeply embedded in this country. Despite all that has been said negatively about the Body of Christ being split up, the Bible nevertheless portrays the different parts of the Body, each of which is performing a different function.

That is why, once a missionary gets things going in a people group, he or she must watch carefully for invisible barriers which may possibly require a new beginning. For example, just as the large majority of Black Muslims in America have grown up within the culture of the black churches, and their choice of Islam is mainly based on their disinclination to follow the white man's religion, so in every mission field we can expect new groups to spin off in order to keep their distance from Western culture.

Thus, the Unreached People and Unimax approach is mainly a help to those *already* working in an area, country, or language and who may think that once a church-planting movement has started, it can easily spread (as the same movement) more widely than it actually can.

It would be nice to know in advance just what the Unimax list would be like.

Unimax thinking is certainly the most important way of defining mission tactics on the ground (not strategy at a higher level). But, prior to entering a people, guesswork on this approach is very necessary. See the estimates on page 15 on what may turn out to be truly Unreached or Unimax peoples.

So, relax if you thought that we need to await a definitive list of Unreached Peoples *before* we can choose which to reach. We find out, *after* we land and begin the work, just what may be the subdivisions of expansion.

By the way, this is where the concept of Unreached Peoples came from in the first place. Overlooking a group that is sufficiently different creates a bypassed or unreached people. Donald

**Missionaries must watch carefully for invisible barriers which may possibly require a new beginning.**

**R**elax if you thought that we need to await a definitive list of Unreached Peoples before we can choose which to reach. We find out, after we land and begin the work, just what may be the subdivisions of expansion.

McGavran's insights came from India, where subtle and invisible caste distinctions effectively wall off millions of people even if there is a church within walking distance. The same thing is happening in America, where we don't even talk about caste.

But, back to the higher-level approach of where to choose a new mission field: the data of the kind in these two issues is of great value.

I would add one word of caution about the use of labels. Most of the high-priority lists here consist of Muslim peoples. Since today we know of many Muslims who have found Christ without rejecting their families and cultural tradition (and we also know of millions of people who are still culturally Hindu as well as devout followers of Christ), let's remind ourselves that we are preaching *Christ*, not Christianity. Followers of Christ in the New Testament did not call themselves Christians; some in the Semitic sphere,

I am guessing, may have called themselves "muslims" (surrendered to God).

Reflections on the shape and mission of the Church have recently surfaced in several places. *Christianity Today* (November 2004) has a cover story about the "emerging church" phenomenon. One of the leaders in this movement, Brian McLaren, is quoted as saying,

One of the greatest enemies of evangelism is the church as fortress or social club; it sucks Christians out of their neighborhoods, clubs, workplaces, schools, and other social networks and isolates them in a religious ghetto ...warehoused as merchandise for heaven, kept safe in a protected place to prevent spillage, leakage, damage, or loss until their delivery (p. 43).

He wants Christians to go out into the world and work for God:

What does it mean to be "saved"? When I read the Bible I don't see it saying [merely] 'I'm going to

heaven after I die' (p. 40).

In other words, we have work to do, now, before we die!

Nancy Pearcey, in her new book *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity*, in the first sentence of her Introduction quotes a friend as saying,

Your earlier book says Christians are called to redeem entire cultures, not just individuals ...I've always thought of salvation strictly in terms of individual souls (p. 17).

This is certainly a must-have book, by the way, for every serious believer, just loaded with profound insights. Our mission is clearly bigger than getting people to heaven. I intend to make use of it when I teach a course on "Frontiers in Mission" at Columbia International University in South Carolina in January. 🌐

# Available Now! Be sure to get your copy!

A 470-page, \$29.95 book (retail)  
for **\$12** postpaid.



In the pages of this volume of the first four years of *Mission Frontiers* the reader will find the fascinating story of those "crucial, cliff-hanging years" of the U. S. Center for World Mission, written down as they were happening. I can hardly wait to pore over once more the drama recorded in this illuminating record.

Jim Montgomery, Chairman, Founder, Dawn Ministries  
(Member of USCWM founding board of directors)

I appreciate the sense of energy, unexpected insights, up-to-the-minuteness, and glimpses of the new edges of mission that I find between the covers of each issue.


Evy Hay Campbell, Associate Professor, Wheaton College  
Missions and Intercultural Studies

All you need to do is to send us your mailing address, and we will send the book along with an invoice for \$12. Write: *Mission Frontiers*, c/o Betty Leung, 1539 E. Howard St., Pasadena, CA 91104. Or email [Betty.Leung@uscwm.org](mailto:Betty.Leung@uscwm.org), or call 626-296-7501.

# Priority Peoples:

## A Customized Approach

Todd M. Johnson and Peter F. Crossing



*Editor's note: in this Mission Frontiers we present the second part of a cover theme introduced in our previous issue – "Which peoples need priority attention?" In that issue we invited Dan Scribner (of Joshua Project) to share his perspective, and in this issue we have invited Todd Johnson and Peter Crossing (of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity) to tackle the same question. We encourage our readers to compare and contrast the authors' approaches and answers. Our intent in this series is to help churches, mission agencies, and others to reflect on how and where they might deploy their resources most strategically. As always, we welcome your comments and questions in response.*

**We cannot adequately assess the unfinished task of world evangelization without a careful inventory of Christians within the world's total population.**

Every year Christian churches spend over \$1 billion to collect detailed information on their membership. Much of this information is collected, collated, and analyzed in the World Christian Database (WCD), where it is also integrated with demographic information from the United Nations, religious data from half of the world's national censuses, scholarship on religion, and numerous other sources. The result is two sets of data tables: one recording the number of religionists (including nonreligious and atheists) for every country (Table 1 in each country article of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, or *WCE*); and the other offering estimates for membership of every Christian denomination in the world (Table 2 in each country article of the *WCE*). While one result of this effort is a startling portrait of the diversity of global Christianity, an unintended consequence is an equally compelling picture of where Christianity is *not* present. In fact, we

cannot adequately assess the unfinished task of world evangelization without a careful inventory of Christians within the world's total population.

### Building an ethnolinguistic taxonomy

This picture of the world's Christian and religious situation can then be further broken down into a classification of over 13,000 *ethnolinguistic* peoples. This classification is built upon two separate approaches to the world's peoples, described below as *ethnometrics* and *linguametrics* (and explained in detail in Table 18-1 of *World Christian Trends*, p. 615).

### Ethnometrics: a culture code

First, this enumeration is built on the taxonomy and classification of races, ethnicity, cultures, peoples, and families, with physical/geographical/genetic characteristics as portrayed in *The new Encyclopedia Britannica* (15th edition, 1975-2001 versions). The inclusion of this type of analysis is an affirmation of several key points:

- the centrality of indigenous cultures to local expressions of Christianity
- the right to exist of minority tribes and peoples
- their autonomy in their own areas
- their importance from the Christian standpoint vis-à-vis the world's dominant peoples and cultures
- the need to reduce the imperialistic influence of more dominant peoples (especially Western culture) in non-Western local churches and lands.

It is also an affirmation of the necessity to view people, not primarily as nationals of a given country, but primarily as members of the natural *homogeneous units* to which they belong and through which they may most effectively be described. Example: Kazakhs, who are coded *MSY41e* as a culture.

## Linguametrics: a language code

The second approach emerges from the study of the world's languages and their relationships, including language speakers, language influence, language usage, and lingua francas. This approach is called *linguametrics*, with all languages classified by a language code. It results in seeing the world divided among 5,000 different *clusters* (or outer languages) and 13,500 different *languages* (or inner languages) enumerated in the 'World Language Classification' and described in detail in *World Christian Encyclopedia*, Part 9 ("Linguametrics") and in the two-volume survey *The Linguasphere Register*. Example: the Kazakh language is coded as 44-AABC-c under the Turkic cluster.

## Ethnolinguistics: a culture/ language code

These first two approaches can be merged to provide a third approach involving both culture and language, resulting in a single integrated listing of what are here termed *ethnolinguistic* peoples. Example: combining the two codes above, the Kazakhs of Kazakhstan speaking Kazakh are coded MSY41e—44-AABC-c as an *ethnolinguistic* people. Some cultures are identified with a single language (e.g., Kazakhs), while others may consist of peoples speaking hundreds of different languages yet still identifiable as single cultures (e.g., New Guinea Papuans).

## Measuring Christian outreach by ethnolinguistic people

To utilize this ethnolinguistic classification to set mission priorities, the first task is to measure the various forms of Christian outreach at the level of each people. This begins with a careful assessment of the number of Christians in every people in every country, keeping in mind that the total number of Christians by people must add up to the totals by denomination in each country. Next, evangelistic tools utilized by Christians for evangelism can be tallied by people. Because most of these resources relate to a particular language, each resource (scriptures, radio, audiovisuals, etc.) is assigned to a single language code. This provides a bridge by which the information can be applied to every ethnolinguistic people. Finally, these language tools are combined with other evangelistic factors (e.g. cross-cultural mission presence, and mass evangelism) to estimate the number of non-Christians who have

been evangelized, i.e. are adequately aware of Christ, Christianity, and the gospel. (See pages 756-757 in *World Christian Trends* for a detailed explanation of these factors.)

## An updated approach to prioritization

This article offers an update to the approach we took in the January 2002 issue of *Mission Frontiers*. There we focused on the application of our *targeting code* (T), which measures the presence or absence of 24 basic Christian ministries. Our 2002 article identified 815 peoples with the lowest coverage (T=1). This is still a valid approach, and a short visit to the World Christian Database (WCD) reveals that this list now includes 926 peoples. The increase is explained by, first, the addition of new peoples to the WCD in the past three years and, second, the updating of the World Christian Database from mid-2000 to mid-2005 estimates.

But the innovation we introduce here results from the advent of the online version of the World Christian Database, which contains 100 variables related to each ethnolinguistic people. Over 50 of these variables can be utilized directly by various users to generate a variety of tailored, prioritized lists of peoples. Prioritization is no longer limited to a single list. The following examples show how lists can differ when differing criteria are used to generate them.

## Priority lists and the WCD

These seven lists show that there is a significant level of customization built into the World Christian Database (WCD) in producing priority lists of peoples. Our hope is that users will use the sorting and filtering capabilities of the WCD to narrow down their priorities. For frontier mission applications, one only has to look at peoples who are the least Christian, the least evangelized, the least targeted, the least resourced, the least disciplined, and so on.



This article offers an update to the approach we took in the January 2002 issue of *Mission Frontiers*.



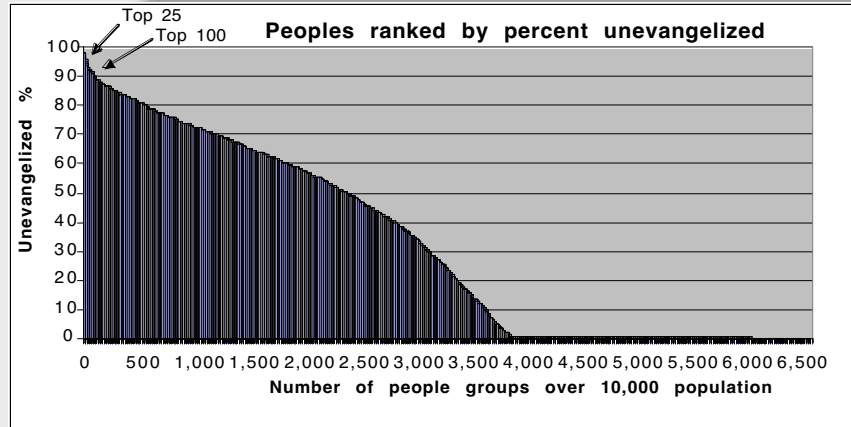


List 1 shows that, at the extreme end of the least evangelized, most of the groups are very small, though three of the top 25 are over 100,000 in population. Note that although most of the top 25 are Muslim, extending the list to the top 100, 500, or 1000 would quickly produce a variety of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and ethnoreligionists. It is clear from the related graph that follows that any of these top 100 or so, each with >90% unevangelized, could be considered as almost equal in need on a global scale, and even the top 1000 peoples each are over 70% unevangelized. Most missionary effort is reported as occurring among peoples who plot on the right hand side of the graph, but the primary task of world evangelization is depicted here as the dark area of the graph.



List 1. Top 25 least evangelized peoples over 10,000 in population, mid-2005

Country	People	Pop 2005	%Unevangelized	Majority Religionist
Afghanistan	Northeast Pashayi (Pashai)	64,900	98.70	Muslims
Afghanistan	Northwest Pashayi (Pashai)	64,900	98.70	Muslims
Afghanistan	Southeast Pashayi (Pashai)	64,900	98.70	Muslims
Afghanistan	Gawar-Bati (Narisati)	15,600	98.70	Muslims
Afghanistan	Guhjali (Wakhi, Wakhani)	11,400	98.70	Muslims
Afghanistan	Waigeli (Nuristani)	15,600	98.05	Muslims
Afghanistan	Shughni (Kushani)	27,500	98.05	Muslims
Afghanistan	Ashkuni (Wamayi)	12,500	98.05	Muslims
Somalia	Dabarre	34,100	97.98	Muslims
Somalia	Garre	227,000	97.30	Muslims
Afghanistan	Tagau (Southwest Pashayi)	64,900	96.74	Muslims
Nepal	Northern Lorung (Lohorong)	13,100	96.63	Hindus
Sudan	Andang (Mima)	90,100	96.38	Muslims
Sudan	Sungor (Assagori, Shaale)	14,000	96.38	Muslims
Sudan	Dar Fur Daju (Fininga)	161,000	96.38	Muslims
Sudan	Midob (Meidob, Tiddi)	68,500	96.38	Muslims
Nepal	Loba (Mustang)	29,900	95.95	Buddhists
Nepal	Yakha	12,000	95.95	Buddhists
Niger	Zaghawa	56,600	94.75	Muslims
Nepal	Dhimal	20,500	94.60	Buddhists
Nepal	Thami	19,700	94.60	Ethnoreligionists
Chad	Daza	355,000	94.58	Muslims
Bhutan	Gurtu	13,400	94.53	Buddhists
Bhutan	Khen	53,800	94.53	Buddhists
Iran	Khunsari	21,200	94.45	Muslims



List 2. Top 25 World A peoples over 1,000,000 in population, mid-2005

Country	People	Pop 2005	% Unevangelized	Majority Religionist
Turkey	Dimili Kurd (Southern Zaza)	1,260,000	88.90	Muslims
Sudan	Beja (Beni-Amer)	1,076,000	88.40	Muslims
Afghanistan	Southern Pathan	1,299,000	87.64	Muslims
Egypt	Bedouin	1,498,000	87.20	Muslims
Iran	Bakhtiari	1,180,000	87.05	Muslims
Indonesia	Banjarese (Banjar Malay)	2,253,000	86.35	Muslims
Malaysia	Banjarese (Banjay Malay)	1,188,000	86.11	Muslims
India	Khandeshi	1,796,000	84.99	Ethnoreligionists
Algeria	Tajakant Bedouin	1,348,000	84.70	Muslims
Pakistan	Western Baluch	1,213,000	84.00	Muslims
Mali	Soninke (Sarakole)	1,027,000	83.99	Muslims
China	Khamba (Khams Bhotia)	1,767,000	82.96	Buddhists
Iran	Qashqai (Kashkai)	1,682,000	82.43	Muslims
Iran	Zott Gypsy (Nawar)	1,343,000	82.43	Muslims
Iran	Luri (Lori, Feyli)	3,958,000	81.50	Muslims
Algeria	Shawiya (Chaouia)	1,722,000	81.00	Muslims
Afghanistan	Southern Uzbek	2,101,000	80.99	Muslims
Algeria	Hamyan Bedouin	2,295,000	79.99	Muslims
Afghanistan	Afghani Tajik (Tadzhik)	6,493,000	79.99	Muslims
Indonesia	Lampungese (Lamponger)	2,194,000	79.50	Muslims
India	Bagri (Bahgri, Bagari)	2,038,000	79.40	Ethnoreligionists
India	Nimadi (Nimari)	1,546,000	79.40	Hindus
Pakistan	Southern Baluch	3,014,000	79.00	Muslims
Morocco	White Moor (Bidan)	2,515,000	79.00	Muslims
China	Li (Paoting)	1,280,000	78.80	Ethnoreligionists



List 2 illustrates how even very large peoples can still be a priority of Christian outreach. Again, the majority are Muslims, but three are predominantly ethnoreligionists. Note also that these range all across the unevangelized world from Morocco to Indonesia.

List 3. Top 25 least targeted peoples over 100,000 in population, mid-2005

Country	People	Pop 2005	% Unevangelized	Target code	Majority Religionist
Somalia	Garre	227,000	97.30	1.02	Muslims
Sudan	Dar Fur Daju (Fininga)	161,000	96.38	1.02	Muslims
Chad	Daza	355,000	94.58	1.03	Muslims
Chad	Kuka	116,000	93.80	1.03	Muslims
China	Jyarung (Rgyarong)	167,000	93.17	1.03	Buddhists
Chad	Bilala (Boulala)	207,000	93.03	1.04	Muslims
Chad	Zaghawa (Zeghawa, Beri)	107,000	92.25	1.04	Muslims
Pakistan	Indus Kohistani	267,000	92.00	1.04	Muslims
Sudan	Zaghawa	174,000	91.30	1.04	Muslims
Pakistan	Kho (Chitrali, Khowar)	278,000	89.59	1.04	Muslims
Turkey	Dimili Kurd (Southern Zaza)	1,260,000	88.90	1.04	Muslims
China	Daguor (Dagur, Qiqihar)	140,000	88.94	1.05	Ethnoreligionists
Iran	Takistani	314,000	88.90	1.05	Muslims
Pakistan	Kolai (Kohistani-Shina)	363,000	88.79	1.05	Muslims
Sudan	Masalit	196,000	88.39	1.05	Muslims
Iran	Ghorbati Gypsy (Kowli)	141,000	87.97	1.05	Muslims
Iraq	Ghorbati Gypsy	143,000	86.40	1.05	Muslims
Indonesia	Banjarese (Banjar Malay)	2,253,000	86.35	1.05	Muslims
Indonesia	Gayo (Gajo)	224,000	86.34	1.05	Muslims
Sudan	Fur (Furawi)	851,000	86.23	1.05	Muslims
Iran	Mamasani	131,000	85.19	1.05	Muslims
Indonesia	Southern Pesisir	650,000	84.39	1.05	Muslims
Indonesia	Pubian	649,000	82.44	1.05	Muslims
Iran	Zott Gypsy (Nawar)	1,343,000	82.43	1.05	Muslims
Nepal	Rana Thakur Tharu	273,000	91.23	1.06	Ethnoreligionists

List 3 returns to the criteria that we used in our January 2002 *Mission Frontiers* article, where we produced a list of 815 priority peoples with a target code of "1". This list of 25 represents the least targeted over 100,000 in population. Note again that most are Muslim peoples. A search on the WCD of all peoples with target code 1 (926 at last count) would reveal a much broader religious base.



List 4. Top 25 most responsive peoples over 10,000 in population, mid-2005

Country	People	Pop 2005	% Unevangelized	Responsiveness	Majority Religionist
Afghanistan	Tagau (Southwest Pashayi)	64,900	96.74	3,457	Muslims
Bhutan	Khen	53,800	94.53	2,875	Buddhists
Bhutan	Gurtu	13,400	94.53	2,154	Buddhists
Bhutan	Dzalakha	20,100	93.86	2,104	Buddhists
China	Jyarung (Rgyarong)	167,000	93.17	2,045	Buddhists
Nepal	Athpare Rai (Rai Kirati)	65,700	91.85	1,649	Hindus
Afghanistan	Bashgari (Kati, Kafar, Kamtoz)	20,600	92.79	1,623	Muslims
China	Zhongzhai (Western Jiarung)	55,300	93.17	1,585	Buddhists
Bhutan	Central Bhutanese (Bhotia)	706,000	89.13	1,517	Buddhists
India	Monba (Memba, Menpa)	52,100	89.13	1,479	Buddhists
Bhutan	Eastern Bhutanese (Shar chop)	458,000	90.52	1,402	Buddhists
Afghanistan	Brahui (Kur Galli)	323,000	90.84	1,357	Muslims
Bhutan	Sangla	185,000	90.54	1,342	Buddhists
Nepal	Western Magar	263,000	89.18	1,333	Ethnoreligionists
Nepal	Thulunge Rai	26,300	91.85	1,330	Hindus
Bhutan	Kirati Rai	35,900	91.87	1,324	Ethnoreligionists
Afghanistan	Balkh Arab	10,200	92.07	1,301	Muslims
Nepal	Chhathar Limbu	18,400	91.84	1,292	Hindus
India	Khandeshi	1,796,000	84.99	1,288	Ethnoreligionists
China	Ba Pai	67,200	90.06	1,274	Ethnoreligionists
Nepal	Saptari Tharu	342,000	87.84	1,265	Ethnoreligionists
Iran	Gurani (Bajalani, Hawrami)	21,200	91.60	1,263	Muslims
China	Tu (Monguor, Tu-jen)	221,000	88.92	1,250	Buddhists
Nepal	Bantawa Rai	46,500	89.13	1,239	Ethnoreligionists
Myanmar	Rumai Palaung	214,000	83.85	1,230	Buddhists

List 4 introduces a different concept. Here we are no longer focusing on peoples without resources but instead highlighting those where the investment of resources (however small) has produced impressive results. Specifically, the *responsive code* measures the number of baptisms per million hours of evangelism. One surprising finding is that almost half the top 25 are predominantly Buddhist. Another significant fact is that a very large people (1.8 million) can be found along with much smaller peoples; what additional investment could be made among the Khandeshi of India?



List 5 limits the list to a single religious majority, Buddhists. In addition, we introduce two qualifiers: the peoples must be larger than 10,000 in size, and they must have no scriptures in their mother tongue. We immediately note that some of the larger peoples from List 4 are on this list as well as less responsive but larger peoples missed by the criteria set in List 4.

List 5. Top 25 majority Buddhist peoples over 10,000 in population with no scriptures, mid-2005

Country	People	Pop 2005	% Unevangelized
Sri Lanka	Rodiya	968,000	59.39
Bhutan	Central Bhutanese (Bhotia)	706,000	89.13
China	Ongbe (Be)	678,000	81.50
Bhutan	Eastern Bhutanese (Sharchop)	458,000	90.52
Nepal	Limbu	342,000	83.40
Myanmar	Silver Palaung (Bonglong)	273,000	83.68
China	Tu (Monguor, Tu-jen)	221,000	88.92
Myanmar	Rumai Palaung	214,000	83.85
Myanmar	Golden Palaung (Shwe)	212,000	76.00
China	Jyarung (Rgyarong)	167,000	93.17
China	Bulang (Pula, Samtao)	94,900	83.34
China	Southern Chiang (Qiang)	85,600	87.17
Japan	Southern Ryukyuan (Miyako)	68,100	52.30
China	Northern Chiang (Qiang)	60,900	87.17
China	Zhongzhai (Western Jiarung)	55,300	93.17
Bhutan	Khen	53,800	94.53
India	Monba (Memba, Menpa)	52,100	89.13
Japan	Yayeyama	47,900	63.00
China	Northern Pumi	45,700	87.08
China	Ergong	38,000	86.40
Bhutan	Limbu (Monpa)	35,900	85.45
China	Monba (Menba, Memba)	34,600	89.78
India	Limbu (Monpa)	31,600	82.40
Nepal	Loba (Mustang)	29,900	95.95
China	Southern Pumi	26,100	87.08

List 6. Top 25 most responsive majority Buddhist peoples over 10,000 in population with no scriptures, mid-2005

Country	People	Pop 2005	% Unevangelized	Responsiveness
Bhutan	Khen	53,800	94.53	2,875
Bhutan	Gurtu	13,400	94.53	2,154
Bhutan	Dzalakha	20,100	93.86	2,104
China	Jyarung (Rgyarong)	167,000	93.17	2,045
China	Zhongzhai (Western Jiarung)	55,300	93.17	1,585
Bhutan	Central Bhutanese (Bhotia)	706,000	89.13	1,517
India	Monba (Memba, Menpa)	52,100	89.13	1,479
Bhutan	Eastern Bhutanese (Sharchop)	458,000	90.52	1,402
China	Tu (Monguor, Tu-jen)	221,000	88.92	1,250
Myanmar	Rumai Palaung	214,000	83.85	1,230
China	Northern Pumi	45,700	87.08	1,213
India	Lalung	25,700	85.66	1,106
China	Southern Pumi	26,100	87.08	1,089
China	Ergong	38,000	86.40	1,083
China	Ongbe (Be)	678,000	81.50	977
China	Monba (Menba, Memba)	34,600	89.78	972
China	Ersu	14,100	87.25	935
China	Bulang (Pula, Samtao)	94,900	83.34	859
Myanmar	Silver Palaung (Bonglong)	273,000	83.68	853
Nepal	Limbu	342,000	83.40	758
Myanmar	Golden Palaung (Shwe)	212,000	76.00	743
Bhutan	Limbu (Monpa)	35,900	85.45	740
Myanmar	Blang (Pula, Bulang)	14,400	79.00	738
India	Limbu (Monpa)	31,600	82.40	703
China	Palyu (Lai)	11,100	86.40	692

List 6 revisits List 5 by re-introducing the responsiveness qualifier. This time the correlation with List 4 shows that many of the most responsive Buddhist peoples are also those who do not yet have the scriptures, raising the question of what could happen among an already responsive people when the power of scripture is released. Filtering in this way – by indicators that are of interest to specific mission efforts – may leave off larger peoples (e.g., the Rodiya of Sri Lanka, shown in List 5) or peoples of higher priority in other terms, but that is precisely the point of the exercise – to “shuffle” peoples in various ways that highlight neglected peoples who are well-suited for work by particular agencies.

### A complementary approach: estimating the number of unreached peoples

With all the of the data presented above, it would be tempting to claim that one or more of these lists represents a definitive list of *unreached* peoples. But this is not the case. Lists of *ethnolinguistic* peoples, even if mixed with lists of castes and other sub-groups (such as the Joshua Project tallies), cannot represent lists of *unreached* peoples

by definition. That is, the very definition of *unreached* (see sidebar on page 14 for definition) tells us that the delineation and status of *unreached* peoples can be definitively assessed only *after* frontier missionaries are on-site and the gospel has been introduced. Before that point we can only estimate what social, ethnic, or linguistic factors will hinder the spread of the gospel. Under these conditions, it is only possible to make rough estimates of the anticipated boundaries of both reached and unreached peoples. To clarify this on the



7. Top 25 most responsive majority Buddhist peoples over 10,000 in population with no scriptures and little access to water, mid-2005.

Country	People	Weighted Index	Responsiveness	Scripture numeric code	% Safe Water
Bhutan	Khen	18.1	2,875	0	58.0
Bhutan	Gurtu	26.5	2,154	0	58.0
Bhutan	Dzalakha	27.1	2,104	0	58.0
Myanmar	Rumai Palaung	30.0	1,230	0	38.0
Bhutan	Central Bhutanese (Bhotia)	33.9	1,517	0	58.0
Myanmar	Silver Palaung (Bonglong)	34.3	853	0	38.0
Bhutan	Eastern Bhutanese (Sharchop)	35.2	1,402	0	58.0
Myanmar	Golden Palaung (Shwe)	35.6	743	0	38.0
Myanmar	Blang (Pula, Bulang)	35.7	738	0	38.0
Nepal	Limbu	37.6	758	0	44.0
China	Jyarung (Rgyarong)	39.3	2,045	0	90.0
India	Monba (Memba, Menpa)	42.6	1,479	0	81.0
Bhutan	Limbu (Monpa)	42.9	740	0	58.0
Bhutan	Sangla	43.3	1,342	2	58.0
Viet Nam	Tsun-Lao	43.5	383	1	38.0
Myanmar	Riang-Lang (Black Yang)	44.0	657	2	38.0
China	Zhongzhai (Western Jiarung)	44.7	1,585	0	90.0
Nepal	Yakha	46.4	0	0	44.0
Nepal	Dhimal	46.4	0	0	44.0
Nepal	Loba (Mustang)	46.4	0	0	44.0
India	Lalung	47.0	1,106	0	81.0
Sri Lanka	Rodiya	47.0	7	0	46.0
China	Tu (Monguor, Tu-jen)	48.6	1,250	0	90.0
Nepal	Bhotia (Bhutani, Sikami)	48.9	1,061	4	44.0

## Introducing MODA

List 7 introduces an experimental approach to prioritization which is called *Multi-objective Decision Analysis* (or MODA, for short). MODA has its own literature, the most significant of which is Craig W. Kirkwood's *Strategic Decision Making: Multiobjective Decision Analysis with Spreadsheets* (Duxbury Press 1997). Our use of MODA here will be its application to mission strategy. In a nutshell, MODA is a mathematical technique for setting priorities related to multiple variables from a database. In mission strategy MODA is a way for strategists to produce a list of priorities based on demographic, health, evangelistic, and mission variables. The World Christian Database contains hundreds of such variables as they relate to the world's countries, provinces, cities, and peoples. MODA allows the strategist to choose variables, set their ranges, and weigh their importance for particular strategic objectives.

The simple example of MODA we choose in List 7 is to revisit List 6 by adding a countrywide variable having to do with access to water. We did this to illustrate how an agency with a particular kind of expertise, e.g., hydrology, might utilize the intersection of secular and Christian data. We have been testing this system with non-governmental organizations in relation to AIDS/HIV, literacy, and other variables.

MODA's value is found not only in the final lists which it produces, but also by enabling the user to dynamically substitute variables and change the weighting of variables to arrive at the prioritized list that closely matches the user's profile. (If your organization is interested in using MODA, please send an inquiry to [WCDinfo@breuer.com](mailto:WCDinfo@breuer.com).)

accompanying table on page 15, we have expanded the "Unimax" term to "Unreached Unimax Peoples" and "Reached Unimax Peoples".

## Methodology for estimating unreached unimax peoples

Building upon the ethnolinguistic data of the World Christian Database, we have produced an update of the estimates of unreached peoples. The table titled "All Humanity in Mission Perspective, mid-2005" is an update of "All Humanity in Mission Perspective in 2000 AD" found in R. Winter

and S. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, WCL, 1999, p. 521. The methodology to produce this table is as follows:

1. Ethnolinguistic data from the World Christian Database was broken down by major religious tradition. This produced rows 1, 7, and 13. Row 1 is defined as peoples less than 50% evangelized (World A peoples). Row 7 is defined as peoples 50% or more evangelized (or Worlds B and C peoples). Note that, by definition, there are no least evangelized ethnolinguistic peoples (Row 1) that are predominantly Christian. This does not deny the existence of much nominalism within the wider Christian church, nor does it obviate the need for church planting as well as more traditional renewal strategies. It simply means that all of this



The 1982 definitions represent a people as “the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church-planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.” (Ralph Winter and others later coined the term “unimax people” — “the maximum-sized group sufficiently unified to be the target of a single people movement to Christ” — to get at the same idea.) In 1982 an unreached people was defined as “a people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance.”

activity should not be considered frontier missions.

2. The figures in Rows 1 and 7 were further broken down by considering caste, clan, and language to produce estimates of the number of unimax peoples in Rows 2 and 8. There is an enormous amount of literature on this subject, including Francis L.K. Hsu’s classic *Clan, Caste, and Club*. In past estimates of unreached peoples, most attention has been focused on caste. For example, mission planners in India have been greatly helped by the work of K. Singh, who has identified more than 4,000 divisions (many of them castes) in the Indian population. But of equal importance are language and clan. In assessing the potential delineation of unimax peoples, we have utilized the World Language Classification with over 13,000 languages and a growing literature on clans, especially among Chinese and Muslim peoples.
3. Estimates in rows 6 and 12 are built on the analysis of mission agency data found in the World Christian Database. Detailed studies of missionary deployment in recent years have consistently shown that most missionaries work among Christians. (For example, the India Missions Association “pin code” survey in 1997 revealed that relatively few of the

thousands of indigenous Indian missionaries worked among Hindus or Muslims.)

4. Rows 13 through 18 are sums of the corresponding rows in 1-6 and 7-12.

### From 10,000 to 13,000 unreached peoples

One of the major features of this updated table (page 15) is the fact that for the first time since the 1970s, the estimate of the number of *unreached* peoples has *increased*. After the initial estimate

of 16,750 was rounded to 17,000 in 1978, the estimate dropped to 12,000 in 1989, and then to 10,000 in 1995 to represent progress in world evangelization. Here it has been raised to 13,000.

The rationale for this is complex: while there has been undoubted progress among unreached peoples in the past 10 years, there has also been an increasing awareness of the significance of subdivisions among ethnolinguistic peoples. For example, the Somali of Somalia have been represented as a single entry on lists of unreached peoples since the 1970s. But those who work among the Somali are well aware of major clan divisions; the Somali might be considered four or even six peoples at the broadest level of clan affiliation. Furthermore, there are at least 150 clans and subclans among the Somali that are potentially significant as barriers to church-planting. One can quickly see that our estimate of 13,000 might be conservative because this same dynamic of clan is found all over the unevangelized world, ranging from Africa to China.

The main value of this table is in attempting to lay out a more thorough assessment of the unfinished task. The growth of the Church must be assessed at the most fundamental cultural unit if the Great Commission is to be taken seriously. The barriers or obstacles to the growth of the church are not theoretical and will in the final analysis prove highly significant in world evangelization. Therefore, if we now anticipate that approximately 13,000 new initiatives are needed to reach every unreached unimax people, we can best respond by sharpening our focus on those least evangelized ethnolinguistic peoples overlooked by current mission efforts. 🌐



Todd Johnson

*Todd Johnson is Director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. He is co-author of World Christian Encyclopedia, 2nd edition (Oxford University Press, 2001) and World Christian Trends (William Carey Library, 2001). Peter Crossing, an Australian missiologist, is the data analyst for the World Christian Database; he telecommutes daily from Sydney to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity. To learn more about this Center and the World Christian Database, see [www.globalchristianity.org](http://www.globalchristianity.org).*



Peter Crossing

# All Humanity in Mission Perspective in mid-2005

Row	Predominant Religions Within Culturally-Defined Peoples										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Column	Totals	Christian	Buddhist	Chinese	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Nonreligious	Tribal	Others	
Frontier Missions	1 Least Evangelized Ethnolinguistic Peoples	4,300	-	270	50	300	160	2,000	20	1,400	100
	2 Unreached Unimax Peoples	13,000	-	1,500	300	3,200	200	5,500	100	2,000	200
	3 Christians (in millions)	23	-	0.9	2.9	4.7	0.0	6	4.9	3.7	0
	4 Non-Christians (in millions)	2,242	-	277	97	502	4	932	295	132	3
	5 Total individuals (in millions)	2,265	-	278	100	507	4	938	300	136	3
	6 Foreign Missionaries	12,000	-	1,000	1,200	1,700	100	2,000	1,700	3,800	500
Evangelism and Domestic Missions	7 Most Evangelized Ethnolinguistic Peoples	9,030	7,000	200	100	160	70	450	50	900	100
	8 Reached Unimax Peoples	14,000	10,000	300	200	500	100	600	200	1,700	400
	9 Christians (in millions)	2,113	1,867	14	24	58	0.2	32	82	22	14
	10 Non-Christians (in millions)	2,076	326	68	256	437	12	291	518	62	106
	11 Total individuals (in millions)	4,189	2,193	82	280	495	12	323	600	84	120
	12 Foreign Missionaries	431,000	402,200	1,000	1,500	3,600	1,000	2,000	10,000	7,700	2,000
Global totals	13 All ethnolinguistic peoples	13,330	7,000	470	150	460	230	2,450	70	2,300	200
	14 All unimax peoples	27,000	10,000	1,800	500	3,700	300	6,100	300	3,700	600
	15 Christians (in millions)	2,136	1,867	15	27	63	0.2	38	87	26	14
	16 Non-Christians (in millions)	4,318	326	345	353	939	16	1,223	813	194	109
	17 Total individuals (in millions)	6,454	2,193	360	380	1,002	16	1,261	900	220	123
	18 All foreign missionaries	443,000	402,200	2,000	2,700	5,300	1,100	4,000	11,700	11,500	2,500

Source: World Christian Database, Research Version, June 2004. Methodology and all definitions are found in Barrett and Johnson, *World Christian Trends*, WCL, 2001.

**Notes.**

1. This chart represents a simplified update of "All Humanity in Mission Perspective in 2000 AD" found in R. Winter and S. Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, WCL, 1999.
2. Rows 1,7,13 are defined as "a distinct homogeneous ethnic or racial group within a single country, speaking its own language." Row 1 is defined as a people "less than 50% evangelized".  
Row 7 is defined as a people "50% or more evangelized".
3. Row 2 follows the 1982 definition (without a viable church planting movement or viable, indigenous, evangelizing church).
4. Note that the number of unreached peoples has increased from 10,000 (in the 1999 chart) to 13,000 here. This is due to documentation on the significance of clan in Muslim, Buddhist, and Chinese cultures.
5. The number of unimax peoples are estimates. Clues are taken from linguistic and social factors (e.g. language clusters, caste, clan).
6. Rows 3,9,15 include Christians of all kinds (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, Independent, and Marginal).
7. Rows 6,12,18 include only foreign missionaries. There are at least as many "home" missionaries working cross-culturally in their own countries. Note that these, too, largely work among Christians.
8. Column 10 includes peoples that are predominantly Confucian, Mandeian, Zoroastrian, Sikh, and Spiritist.

Copyright © 2004, Center for the Study of Global Christianity, [www.globalchristianity.org](http://www.globalchristianity.org).

# FROM REFRIGERATOR MAGNETS TO CHURCH PLANTS:

## A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE JESUS FILM PROJECT

Sharyl France-Moran



“As a congregation, we felt that God wanted us to be involved in adopting an unreached people group in the 10/40 Window.”

*Editor's note: the following case study illustrates a good model for “adopting an unreached people,” namely, for one or more congregations to partner with a mission agency on behalf of that people. Related resources can be found at [www.uscwm.org](http://www.uscwm.org). (Click on “Adopt-a-People.”)*

### Nothing is too simple for God to use, or too complex for Him to complete.

The congregation at New Life Community Church in Peoria, Arizona, experienced this on a personal level as they asked God’s help in finding an unreached people group to adopt. “As a congregation, we felt that God wanted us to be involved in adopting an unreached people group in the 10/40 Window,” says Paul Madson, Senior Pastor of New Life Community Church for the past 14 years. “So we prayed.”

To focus their prayers, the church created refrigerator magnets that contained a world map and this simple phrase, “Lord, we want to plant your church among the—people group.”

“We gave them to our congregation in ’96 and told them to pray that God would fill in the blank for us,” Madson explains. “For a year we prayed

that God would lead us to the people group that he wanted us to adopt.”

God answered that prayer through a conversation with a staff member from The JESUS Film Project.

“We were told of a people group in Northeast India, the Borok, with a population of approximately 1 million. Funding was needed to translate the JESUS film into the Kok Borok language,” says Madson. “We were offered the opportunity to adopt the Borok people and partner with The JESUS Film Project (JFP) to translate the film into their language.”

The congregation at New Life talked and prayed, deciding this was God’s will for their church.

Madson says they had always felt God leading them to India, primarily because India has 1 billion people – one out of every six people on earth – in an area only one-third the size of the United States. Among these people, only two to three percent worship Christ.

New Life officially adopted the Borok people group in 1997. Within three months, the church – whose membership at that time numbered between 800 and 1000 people – had raised \$50,000 to pay for the translation of the JESUS film and to equip seven local teams to show the film to this unreached group!

Madson and a businessman from New Life flew to India for the premiere showing of the film in the Kok Borok language in November 1998. Posters had been distributed in one of the main cities of the area, and film teams had invited people to attend, telling them about the film and mentioning that two people from America would be there for the premiere.

When show time arrived, 1,200 people had responded, crowding inside an older, community-type concrete building with no windows. Among those attending were the mayor of the city, several government leaders and one Communist official seated on the front row, all watching the JESUS film together.

“The next day, we took the film to one of the villages, fifty miles out into the mountain jungle area,” says Madson. “About three in the afternoon, the teams began walking around, telling the people in nearby villages that the film would be shown at 6:00 p.m., inviting them to attend. By the time the film started at 6:00, there was a strong 2,000+ people sitting there in the dirt, in front of a 12x12 bedsheet thrown on an old tin shed to serve as a screen. For two to three hours all eyes were glued to that bedsheet – men, women and children. It was amazing – to see and experience it firsthand was phenomenal.”

From 1998 to 2003 JESUS film teams showed the film to approximately 750,000 Borok people, more than 15,000 of whom indicated decisions to trust Christ. They’ve started 30 new church plants. With the outreach continuing, Madson says the

next phase will be “to train and equip pastors and leaders to lead in these churches and to equip all these new believers so they can more effectively reach their own people with the gospel of Christ.”

Madson advises pastors wanting to take part in world evangelization to mobilize their congregations and to connect with The JESUS Film Project.

“That was one of the absolute best things we did. The JFP was able to do that first important wave of evangelism for us – there is no way we could have done that alone.”

“If you want enthusiasm within the pews of your church,” Madson concludes, “adopt an unreached people group. It will light a fire in your congregation like nothing else I’ve ever seen.”

For information on how your church might adopt an unreached people group in partnership with the JESUS Film Project, contact Dave Barry at (949) 361-6012 or [dave.barry@jesusfilm.org](mailto:dave.barry@jesusfilm.org). 🌐

***“If you want enthusiasm within the pews of your church, adopt an unreached people group.”***

## *a Perspectives follow-up* **the journey deepens**

***Go Deeper with Jesus... Journey into Missions***

***Opportunities***

***Retreats***

***Newsletters***

***Ask A Missionary***

- How can I know God's will?*
- What about the money?*
- Who do I go with?*
- Can I use my skills? degree?*
- What if I'm single? married?*

***www.TheJourneyDeepens.com***



## Déjà vu All Over Again: Lausanne 30 Years Later

Greg H. Parsons



“Modern” people like new things: the smell of a new car, getting a new cell phone out of its box, checking out the features of the latest gadget or gizmo — such things get our juices flowing. This is a by-product of a material-focused culture, and I suspect that many people in the non-Western world react differently.

Likewise, in the Western Church we want our mission programs to reflect the “latest thing”, too. We wonder: what is Willow Creek or Saddleback doing about this issue? Such a train of thought can lead us to doubt that older ideas are still valuable or useful; sometimes that’s true, and sometimes it is not.

Take, for example, the priority of focusing on the world’s unreached peoples in what we at the USCWM have called the Third Era of mission history. Some have asked, “What is the ‘next’ emphasis, and is there a Fourth Era?” Is the “next new thing” the world’s cities? The poor? AIDS/HIV victims? Street children? The disabled of the world?


The problem with any of these issues or emphases is not that one is more important than another, but that they can inhibit clarification of *sequence and priority* in world mission, i.e., whom should we seek to reach first so that others will have opportunity? Yet people with a heart for one particular issue or emphasis don’t like it if you don’t choose their issue or emphasis as the highest priority for everyone.

This helps to explain why some people have obscured or neglected Ralph Winter’s seminal presentation at the 1974 Lausanne Consultation on World Evangelization. In that presentation, titled “The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism”, Winter emphasized a basic point that had been overlooked: until a church movement has taken root in a culture, the gospel doesn’t spread among that people.

In other words, without the Church present, there is no outreach to children, disabled, or others in that people group.

There is simply no one there to do it. Winter was not claiming that unreached peoples—as they came to be known—are more *important* than other peoples, but emphasizing they are the *priority* to be reached because once the Church is present in each culture, the door is opened for all kinds of subsequent ministry. The crucial issue, then, is *access*, or to scrutinize each people group for the *presence or absence of the Church*.

If and when others are tempted to call their emphasis the next frontier, we should think a bit deeper and take a longer view. When we’re tempted to look for the “next new thing”, we should remember that we haven’t yet accomplished the foundational, priority task Winter portrayed 30 years ago.

When we look at lists and statistics on peoples — like we have in this issue of *Mission Frontiers* — we are looking for where the most important steps could be taken to open each people group to the gospel. Let’s take this information to heart, to the Lord in prayer, and to our colleagues in consultation. 



Rev. Greg Parsons is General Director of the U.S. Center for World Mission. He’s been on staff at the USCWM for 20 years.

Every day, 45,000 people around the world join together to pray for a specific unreached people group or a key mission effort. You can join them by committing 30 seconds a day and \$12 a year. You can get a prayer group going by ordering at least 10 copies to one address, and the price drops to \$70 for all 10 copies, within the U.S. Single subscriptions within the U.S. are \$12 per year.

**Join!**

**a Worldwide Prayer Effort  
for the Unreached!**



For more information, call (626) 398-2249, or email [dan.eddy@uscwm.org](mailto:dan.eddy@uscwm.org)  
Send payment to: Subscriptions - GPD 1605 Elizabeth St., Pasadena, CA 91104