



# Ethnê '06 Accelerates, Coordinates Efforts Toward

# “Least-Reached Peoples”

Profiles in Partnership

**Justin Long**

Here's a quick test:

How many Christians does it take to send one missionary? It depends: the United States, sends one missionary per 2,000 Christians. Mongolia, sends one missionary for every **220** believers!

What country has over 5,200 missionaries serving in 56 countries, is planning to bring the Gospel through many countries “back to Jerusalem,” and wants to invite the world to join them and China in hosting a tea party in Israel in 2020? The answer: Nigeria!

Finally, what region of the world went from 1,635 cross-cultural workers in 1987 to 8,000 today, working in more than 150 nations? Latin America!

These reports, and more, were heard by over 350 mission leaders from 50 countries and every continent, who gathered in Southeast Asia for four days in March at Ethnê '06. The purpose of this

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global consultation: to celebrate progress, assess status, and accelerate efforts to reach the least-reached peoples (LRPs) of the world.

Over a third of the participants came from Asia. Ten percent came from Africa. Due to the costs there were fewer from Latin America and the Middle East, but representatives from those regions' major networks were present. Another ten percent came from Europe, including many from Eastern Europe. Less than 25% were from North America, and of these, many have worked for years among unreached peoples.

## **The Focus: the “One-Fourth World”**

Participants were delighted by wonderful reports from around the world – and also sobered by the realities related to the world's LRPs. Our world is enduring rapid cultural changes, numerous wars, millions who are hungry and hurting, and intensifying persecution in some areas.

Yet 100,000 new Christians are “born” in the world every day. 4,500 new congregations are established every week. The “center of Christian gravity” has shifted to the south (with two-thirds of all Christians) and the east (where 115 million believers live in East Asia). Many gospel movements have blossomed among peoples such as the Bhojpuri of India, the Masai of East Africa, and sub-groups of Han Chinese.

Missions is also changing. More missionaries are being sent from non-Western churches than from the West, and there are now over 4,000 Third World mission agencies. Most notably, exclusively “sending” and “receiving” nations no longer exist: virtually every country both sends and receives. Many non-Western agencies are allocating substantial workers to the unreached; COMIBAM, for example, has 14% of its workers focused on the unreached, and Singapore has an estimated 25%. Many new global and regional networks focus on the unreached.

In spite of these advances, the unfinished task remains. Over 28% of the world has no access

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to the Gospel. Over 39% belong to an ethnic group without viable churches. There are over 4,000 “least-evangelized” ethnolinguistic groups and over 6,700 “unreached” peoples. Nearly two billion still need to hear the Good News for the first time.

The majority of Christians in the world are still not aware of the challenge of the unreached, and many that are aware feel little or no responsibility. Many church and mission leaders believe that missions to the unreached has been over-emphasized. Of the US\$15 billion given to missions, less than 2% is given for mission to the unreached, and less than 5% of the world’s missionaries are focused on the unreached.

Will we change? If current patterns continue, the unreached will still represent *one-fourth* of the world’s population in 2025. “Insanity,” wrote Albert Einstein, “is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.” Participants at Ethnê ’06 were challenged to ask not “What can we do?” but rather “What must be done?”



### The Goal: Transformational Church Planting Movements

A strategic Ethnê ’06 focus was how truly “holistic gospel movements” (or church-planting movements using radical methodology) could be stimulated where churches, businesses, humanitarian and mission streams cooperate to develop holistic efforts that address spiritual, social, economic and cultural needs of each population segment. Least-reached groups do not have a viable church which can reach their own people. The goal is that each formerly unreached group will have a movement of consistently reproducing, indigenous churches that will take

the major responsibility for sharing the Gospel and discipling their own people group and *also* will begin reaching out to other groups in the world.

Once these least-reached peoples come to this point, God is obviously not finished with them. He wants to do much more both in the present and with future generations as the gospel is lived out in transforming ways for the glory of God.

### The Distinctives of the Ethnê Initiative

The movement to reach the LRP’s got a shot of energy from the late 1980s and 1990s, when the AD2000 & Beyond Movement popularized the “10/40 Window” and launched huge initiatives – like “Praying through the Window” and research projects like Joshua Project. The AD2000 Movement also nurtured many national and regional mission networks focused on unreached people groups (UPGs).

At the Great Commission Roundtable in 2001 many UPG-focused leaders voiced their concern that the phasing out of the AD2000 Movement would lead to less emphasis and collaborative planning toward the unreached. The recommendation of the UPG working group at the Great Commission Roundtable was that UPG “global forums of relationship” should be continued. Singapore ’02 and then Ethnê ’06 were the direct results of that recommendation.

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### Ethne: All Regions Listing

(from [www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net))

Region	Region Name	-----Countries-----		-----Peoples-by-Country-----			-----Population-----		
		Total	with Least-Reached	Total	Least-Reached	% Least-Reached	Total	In Least-Reached	% in Least-Reached
1	South Pacific	27	27	1,500	26	1.7 %	32,972,000	510,000	1.5 %
2	Southeast Asia	11	11	1,809	663	36.7 %	551,352,000	271,769,000	49.3 %
3	Northeast Asia	7	7	605	454	75.0 %	1,522,533,000	332,013,000	21.8 %
4	South Asia	7	7	3,217	2,898	90.1 %	1,288,182,000	1,109,032,000	86.1 %
5	Central Asia	11	11	1,023	849	83.0 %	397,366,000	385,495,000	97.0 %
6	Middle East and North Africa	19	19	591	366	61.9 %	278,847,000	183,092,000	65.7 %
7	East and South Africa	27	27	1,290	349	27.1 %	392,605,000	59,426,000	15.1 %
8	West and Central Africa	24	24	2,197	499	22.7 %	355,833,000	111,499,000	31.3 %
9	Eastern Europe and Eurasia	20	20	656	188	28.7 %	334,261,000	24,836,000	7.4 %
10	Western Europe	29	29	943	227	24.1 %	397,249,000	19,761,000	5.0 %
11	Central and South America	21	21	1,066	96	9.0 %	413,830,000	1,604,000	0.4 %
12	North America and Caribbean	30	30	984	82	8.3 %	475,755,000	5,619,000	1.2 %
Totals: 12 Regions		233		15,881	6,697	42.2 %	6,440,785,000	2,504,656,000	38.9 %



Out of Singapore '02 came three global "calls." The first was a call for secure communication. The second was a call for a global network of mission agencies focused on the unreached. (The Global Network of Mission Structures is the result.) The third was a reiterated call for ongoing gatherings. Ethnê '06 grew out of this call, after SEALINK (a network of ministries focused on the UPGs of Southeast Asia) volunteered to convene a global committee to foster a worldwide UPG network.

The Ethnê '06 consultation was a culmination of a careful process intent on building a strong, long-term foundation. Some (mainly from the West) urged the steering committee to set out specific goals and outcomes which would be presented for adoption by others in the Body of Christ. This urging was resisted because it was felt that such a course would be presumptuous and would prevent true collaborative planning.

Instead, the key initiatives offered (and described below) were developed by careful consensus by a large, multi-national grouping. No movement or initiative really gains ground if just "announced." True movements gain momentum only as all feel they are full participants in shaping and leading the effort. This "shared ownership" has been a key goal of Ethnê.

The greatest distinctive of Ethnê might be that for the first time, leaders from non-Western countries felt like they were a full part of global decisions (as stated at Ethnê '06 by leaders from Korea and Latin America). The ultimate achievement will hopefully be centered around the Ethnê Vision: "Peoples Joining Together to Glorify God among all peoples" where no region dominates mission efforts and all believers in all the world are mutually responsible to reach all peoples. Rather than one region having ultimate responsibility, this is to be shared by all regions.

### Desired Strategic Outcomes

Ethnê '06 participants came together to accomplish three strategic outcomes.

First, we came to *celebrate Great Commission progress among the least-reached*. This goal was successfully achieved as we acknowledged and built on the strength of past initiatives in order to honor pioneers who have led the Body forward. We were also challenged by the many initiatives and strategies which continue to move forward in great ways.

Second, we sought to *assess current opportunities and resources*. We examined trends, shared ideas and resources, and built relationships and synergy by which this effort can move forward. Many tangible and intangible successes were experienced at the Consultation, and processes are being worked out for the future – Strategy

## Ethne's prayer mobilization tools (in over 10 languages) include:

- an overview video of the Ethnê movement and Harvest-Linked Prayer Strategy initiative (HeLPS),
- a set of 12 five-minute testimony videos (one per region) of people formerly from LRPs now following Christ and reaching others. These videos, with accompanying bulletin inserts and prayer bookmarks, could be shown during the first Sunday service of the month to celebrate what God has already been doing in response to prayer and to accelerate prayers for the remaining LRPs of each region.
- *The Global Prayer Digest* ([www.global-prayer-digest.com](http://www.global-prayer-digest.com)) will offer parallel issues (in several major languages) from June 2006

through May 2007 with daily prayer requests for the LRPs in each region. These prayer items will be linked to the people profiles and information database of Joshua Project ([www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net)). A special set of youth and children's issues are planned as well, available by free download from the GPD site.

- Ethnê's website at [www.ethne.net](http://www.ethne.net) gives further detailed information about the initiative and each of the 12 regions. Many resources will be available directly from the website. For questions, to receive regular e-updates or to join the Harvest-Linked Prayer Initiative, e-mail [prayer@ethne.net](mailto:prayer@ethne.net). 

Groups which are already planning and leading, website connections, and more.

Finally, we gathered to *accelerate movements to Christ among every people*. The relationships built and the emerging action plans of the strategy groups look especially promising!

### Four Strategy Groups

Ethnè '06 participants gathered in four strategy groups: Harvest-Linked Prayer Initiative, UPG Workers, Crisis Response Network, and Holistic Gospel Movements. Each developed action plans to be implemented over the next few years.

### A regional, year-long prayer focus

The Harvest-Linked Prayer Strategy group carried forward a global initiative to launch a year-long prayer campaign linked with strategic field outreaches to the LRPs of the world. The vision of the Harvest-Linked Prayer Strategy is not to create something new, but rather to encourage existing networks, churches, organizations and individuals to coordinate prayer.

The group will mobilize the global Body of Christ to adapt LRP prayer emphases to match a common calendar. Hopefully, each region will launch outreaches during their specific month of prayer and for the two months immediately following. This initiative will begin just after the Global Day of Prayer (June 4, 2006) with an emphasis on the LRPs of the South Pacific, moving east to west through other regions until finishing in May 2007 with an emphasis on the LRPs of North America and the Caribbean.

Prayer resources for each of 12 regions will include videos, bulletin inserts, bookmarks and more. Currently resources are available in 10 languages, with more translations planned.

### Worker Mobilization

Major changes in a post-9/11 world raises major issues related to how to equip, nurture and send workers. The LRP Workers Strategy Group decided to establish four web-based forums for continuing discussion on the multi-dimensional issues pertaining to worker effectiveness. This will hopefully lead to new initiatives among agencies and networks to pursue relevant, contextual projects regionally and globally.

### Coordinated Disaster Response

This group agreed that Jesus taught (Mt. 24) that disaster and crisis requires our presence in

the middle of relief and recovery as a part of divine strategy in finishing the task of taking the Gospel to the whole world. At Ethnè '06 a strategy group from many nations met to reflect on these issues, and a global Crisis Response Network has begun to form. Participants are assessing readiness among our collective contacts and gathering resources to better respond to needs when crises occur. The network will seek to deliberately partner with local believers so they may be empowered for long-term witness.

### Holistic Gospel Movements

The Holistic Gospel Movement Strategy group will share information, models, events, and initiatives. They are developing secure forums for communication. They will conduct joint research projects: documenting movements, needs, and possibilities. They will hold think-tank meetings. Finally, they will work on training resources including manuals, radio programs, workshops, and a coaching network.

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### Youth

An Ethnè Youth network has developed to facilitate cross-regional youth initiatives focused on LRPs. This network will organize joint outreach, develop cross-cultural mentoring relationships, encourage strategic prayer, promote LRP-focused youth gatherings, connect with student mission movements, share fund-raising strategies, mobilize local church and agency involvement, and compile and distribute youth-related LRP resources through youth-responsive media.

### Beyond Ethnè '06

Now that Ethnè '06 is over, a transitional Facilitation Team is moving ongoing projects forward while looking ahead to the next Ethnè forum. Discussions are continuing with COMIBAM (the Ibero-American mission network) about the possibility of their taking a key leadership and hosting role in the network and possible gathering in 2009.

More details on Ethnè, and for connecting to regional networks, can be found at [www.ethne.net](http://www.ethne.net). A more detailed report may be found in the April issue of *Momentum*, downloadable from [www.momentum-mag.org](http://www.momentum-mag.org). 