

Selecting Your Unreached People Group

Selecting a people to adopt often requires a great deal of thought, research and prayer. Below are some aspects to consider which may help you narrow down the field of choices. Bases for decision making may be grouped in three general categories: statistics, existing ties, and counsel. As you pray and gather knowledge about your church's preferences and leadings, statistics about peoples, explore existing ties, and seek wise counsel, your focus will gradually narrow to the choice God has for you.

Statistics

- **Spiritual Need:** Do you want to go where no one has gone before? Take a look at www.joshuaproject.net for information about current unreached and unengaged people groups from all over the world
- **Size:** What is the approximate size of the unreached people among which you'd like to base your project? Some are only several hundred in number while others are several million. Do you want to set minimum and maximum size figures?
- **Religion:** Is there a certain religion that your church wants to target? If it is in the Muslim world, does it want to specifically target a Sunni Muslim, a Shiite Muslim or a people who practice folk Islam? In other words, your church can choose either a broad or a specific religious category.
- **Location:** Is geography of interest? Is there a certain country or region you'd like to reach? Do you want to focus on an urban or rural area?
- **Accessibility:** It won't always be easy to plant a church in unreached areas. Does your church want to send prayer journey teams, research teams or other on-site visitors? Many countries restrict missionaries from entering their borders but maybe allow Christians to enter as business professionals (i.e., tent making missionaries) or aid/relief workers. We call these creative access countries. This is quite common among many people groups. One of the major reasons peoples are unreached is because they are inaccessible to traditional ways of presenting the gospel.
- **Livelihood:** Does your congregation have a special interest in farming, herding, trekking and fishing?
- **Miscellaneous factors:** Should your church work with the poor? Should it choose a people group that has a number of refugees? One church, for example, chose a group that had refugees in a neighboring, welcoming country where it could minister since the host country was closed to missionaries. Should your congregation choose a people that appear to be receptive to the gospel? Or a group that has proven difficult to reach?

Natural Links

- **Nearby Ministry Opportunities:** Should your congregation choose a people that have immigrants living nearby so that it can minister both in the United States and elsewhere

simultaneously? In Nashville, TN, for example, there's a large population of Kurds. A church in Nashville might want to choose to adopt the Kurds in Iraq and at the same time begin ministering to the Kurds in Nashville. That way, the congregation can get its people involved both locally and globally in reaching an unreached pocket of the world.

- **Familiarity:** Do you want to choose a people group already related to your mission program in some way, or choose one specifically because you have had no previous involvement there—to broaden the scope of your mission outreach?
- **Language Link:** Does the church have special language resources among the congregation? This could be valuable on a prayer or research journey. One church chose a particular people because they speak Mandarin, which several of the church-supported missionaries also speak. The hope was that the missionaries could assist, at crucial junctures, in speaking to this people on behalf of the church.
- **Partnerships:** Do you have links to a congregation from another culture? An excellent arrangement is when churches of different cultures can partner to reach an unreached people. Both churches adopt the same unreached people and thereby develop a close relationship with each other as well as conduct a more effective adoption. Do you already have a relationship with a church within your own culture that has adopted an unreached people group? You could team up with them. Contact your U4theU liaison to see if other churches or groups are also interested in your chosen people group.
- **Missionary Links:** Are there any missionaries that your congregation currently supports who are working among an unreached people? Your church can begin to build upon that relationship as it promotes the concept of adopting a people.
- **Business/Vocational Links:** Are there any natural business or educational ties with an unreached people? For example, if some in your church constituency are employed by an oil company, then they might be able to help secure jobs in the Middle East among an unreached people. If there are medical personnel in your congregation, they might be able to go overseas using their profession. If your church is already involved locally with teaching English, members might choose a people where English teachers are in high demand.

Counsel

- **Monthly PACE Webinars:** Try to participate each month in the free U4theU PACE webinars where you can learn from other PACE coordinators while also allowing them to draw from the experiences you're gaining. You'll hear lots of case studies, meet many experienced advisors, and enjoy the small, community atmosphere where you can discuss issues, problems, and praises. You can always listen to past webinars in the archives at www.u4theu.com/webinararchives
- **Kairos/Perspectives Courses:** You can learn much from these intensive missions classes. They'll open your eyes to historical, strategic, cross-cultural, and biblical inputs. Visit www.teamexpansion.org/kairos for more details.

- **Team Expansion/U4theU Projects:** Your congregation might prefer to ask Team Expansion and U4theU for ideas. Maybe Team Expansion has a missionary with a burden for an unreached group but no sending church to provide the support and encouragement they need. Perhaps there's a project already in the dream-stage that is perfect for your church to help launch.

Questions for Discussion

- What factors will be considered most important in deciding the people group you will reach?
- Who in your church needs to have input in order for the adoption to be widely accepted? Who will have the final authority to approve the decision?
- Will this need to be approved by congregational vote, mission committee, pastoral staff, others, or all of the above? When will these meet? Will they need to be part of the decision-making process or will they only need to hear a presentation on what the PACE committee recommends and why?