

Joshua Project 2000: Research, Profiles, Prayer and Church Planting for Unreached Peoples

by David Robinson

Joshua Project 2000 is a vision developed from within the world wide AD2000 and Beyond Movement. Its objectives are threefold: 1) to identify unreached peoples, 2) to research, produce people profiles and enlist prayer for those identified, and 3) to mobilize church-planting teams for each prioritized people. Joshua Project 2000 works cooperatively through many churches, agencies and individuals: supporting plans in progress, encouraging and educating those people who are making plans which fulfill Joshua Project 2000 objectives.

Joshua Project 2000 gained its name and strategies from the book of Joshua. God's promise in Joshua 1:3, "I will give you every place where you set your foot," is a guiding scripture for the immense task. Just as Joshua's spies infiltrated Jericho, Joshua Project 2000 research teams explore the land and gather accurate information. Just as Joshua prayed for Jericho's walls to fall, strategic prayer crumbles spiritual and cultural barriers to the gospel.

Project Origins

On a practical level, Joshua Project 2000 and its list of priority peoples came out of a strategy process surrounding GCOWE'95 (The Global Consultation on World Evangelization, May, 1995, Seoul, Korea). On a deeper spiritual level, it was the spontaneous fruit of seeking God and interceding for the world's unreached peoples. At GCOWE, nearly 4000 missions leaders representing ministries in 186 countries met together in a working consulta-

tion to assess the status of world evangelization. A 264 page book entitled "The Least Evangelized Peoples of the World" was given to all GCOWE'95 delegates. The book, calling itself "a list of lists," merged separate lists of data collected from several sources. As the chart shows, the Joshua Project 2000 unreached peoples list began as a listing

of those unreached peoples common to four different sources of unreached peoples information. (Note these sources and their editors are noted in this issue of the Journal in the introduction to the Unreached People List.)

In the GCOWE'95 book, unreached peoples were listed three different ways. The third list was titled "Key List of Priority Least Evangelized Peoples for the AD2000 and Beyond Movement." This list contained 2,466 ethno-linguistic political peoples. Their high priority was determined because with but few exceptions they had populations over 10,000 and less than 2% Evangelical (the term "Christian" was actually used). The term ethno-linguistic political peoples refers to a

distinct culture and language, bounded by a country's border. For example, the Uzbeks of Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks of Kazakhstan were listed separately.

In November 1995, *Mission Frontiers*, Bulletin of the U.S. Center for World Mission printed a revised version of the priority peoples list. The list had been renamed "Joshua Project 2000—Peoples List." Because of further input and analysis since GCOWE 95, the list now contained 1685 peoples.

That edition of *Mission Frontiers* was devoted to launching Joshua Project 2000. It described the three key objectives (listed above) which would fulfill its goals. While the rallying cry for the AD2000 and Beyond Movement has always been "A Church for Every People and the Gospel for Every Person by the year 2000", planting reproducing churches through Joshua Project 2000 would be its implementation strategy.

In that edition Luis Bush called the Joshua Project 2000 a "global cooperative strategy," and proclaimed the Joshua Project 2000 goal: Establishing, as a minimum a pioneer church-planting movement resulting in 100 or more believing Christians in one or more reproducing churches within every ethno-linguistic people of over 10,000 individuals by December 31, 2000.

Project Launch

Joshua Project 2000 was officially launched at a four-day meeting in Colorado Springs in November 1995. Two hundred and sixty two participants from 77 countries attended, repre-

Joshua Project 2000

sending 140 different ministries. The focus of this meeting was not only to present Joshua Project 2000 strategy, but to determine how AD2000's Networks and National Initiatives would contribute.

Since November, Joshua Project 2000 has been further launched at several regional and national mobilization gatherings in West Africa, Brazil, India, Myanmar, Indonesia, Singapore, Colombia and South Korea. At these events, significant portions of the Church in Asia, Africa, and Latin America committed to sending out church-planting teams to the least-evangelized peoples inside their own borders and beyond. Joshua Project 2000 provided (and will continue to provide) focus and research information to these Third World mission movements.

Korean church leaders, meeting in Seoul this past May, committed to adopt at least 1150 of the current list of 1739 Joshua Project 2000 peoples and to launch a church-planting movement in each one.

South African Willie Crew, a key planner for the upcoming Global Consultation on World Evangelization (GCOWE '97), states a desired spirit of cooperation to "research and reach all of the Joshua Project 2000 peoples in all countries south of the equator [of Africa] by the year 2000."

The List Refined

The newest revision of the Joshua Project 2000 list is presented in this issue of the Journal. From its inception, it has elicited a great deal of discussion. List editors have received over 250 separate revisions from people asserting more accurate or up-to-date information. Many of these revisions are reflected in this listing. Other proposed revisions are still under review. The list was presented to the International Society for Frontier Missiology (ISFM) at its September 1995 conference in Colorado Springs. Since then, much discussion about definitions and methodology has

taken place in an e-mail ISFM conference.

The list committee recently decided that an interim edition of the list will be published in October 1996. A fully revised list will be published in April 1997 and updated annually thereafter. The October interim edition will deal with the 15% of the list currently marked with asterisks as "under review." The peoples which were removed from the original Joshua Project 2000 list will also be reconsidered and rationale given for their removal.

Keith Butler, one of the editors of the Joshua Project 2000—Unreached Peoples List, made the following statement on July 31, 1996:

The Editorial Committee for the Joshua Project 2000 list never intended that it be a comprehensive list. Rather, it is our desire to help focus attention on peoples we feel are in most need of the gospel, making a church among them a priority for the closing years of the 20th century.

While many different selection criteria could have been used, we were limited to using the information available to us from recognized researchers. Since one major database uses percent Christian and another percent Evangelical to indicate the status of the Church among a people group, the committee elected to use a combination of both. We chose people groups with a population of over 10,000 with less than 5% Christian and less than 2% Evangelical. We must remember that each of these figures are somewhat subjective. Therefore there is a great deal of subjectivity in determining which groups would be included.

In setting up the selection criteria for inclusion on the list, the committee recognized the need for flexibility. Some peoples that should have been included may not fit the criteria of 5% Christian and 2% Evangelical. Other peoples may fit the criteria but may not need to be included for any number of reasons. Exceptions to the 5% Christian and 2% Evangelical will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

While the Joshua Project 2000 list was made up primarily from the world's unreached ethnolinguistic peoples, the committee also recognized the need to focus attention on the world's ethnocultural peoples. However, based upon information

available to us at the time of production, we focused on the world's approximately 12,000 ethnolinguistic peoples. As more information about ethnocultural groups becomes available and can be verified, we plan to submit a sister list. However, we should remember that regardless of which view we are taking, ethnolinguistic or ethnocultural, we have the same motivation: to focus attention on groups most needing the gospel.

Recognizing that no list will ever be perfect—meeting everyone's desire for who should or should not be include—let us focus on the positive aspects of an imperfect list, and let us move forward for the glory of God among those in most need of the gospel.

Ralph Winter, founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission, says the Joshua Project 2000 list is "a logical intermediate goal and always has been an intermediate goal. Almost all unreached peoples are either in it or represented in it." Winter has long stated that there are probably as many as 10,000 remaining unreached people groups when both ethnolinguistic and ethnocultural distinctions are considered.

The vast majority of the individuals who live in unreached peoples can be found in the 1739 peoples on the Joshua Project 2000 list which adds up to 2.2 billion individuals. But the AD2000 and Beyond Movement does not limit its focus to peoples over 10,000 in population. It still maintains the goal of a church for "every" people regardless of size. National church workers, often working through AD2000 National Initiatives, are engaging local peoples under 10,000 in population.

The AD2000 national coordinator for South Africa, devised a strategy to send research teams and eventually church-planting teams to the 111 least-reached peoples in southern Africa. Many of these peoples are less than 10,000 in population, such as the unreached Mikea people of Madagascar which number only 1500. Recently, a South African research and ministry team visited the Mikea people, and produced a prayer profile. While not

within the bounds of the Joshua Project itself, such teams are well in line with the overall goals of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement.

On-Site Research and Prayer

After identification of the unreached peoples, the second objective of Joshua Project 2000 is to research and produce people profiles. Research for profiles is often done through the mobilization of on-site research and prayer teams. Resulting profiles can then be used by churches, agencies and individuals to enlist prayer among those identified and to send church planting teams.

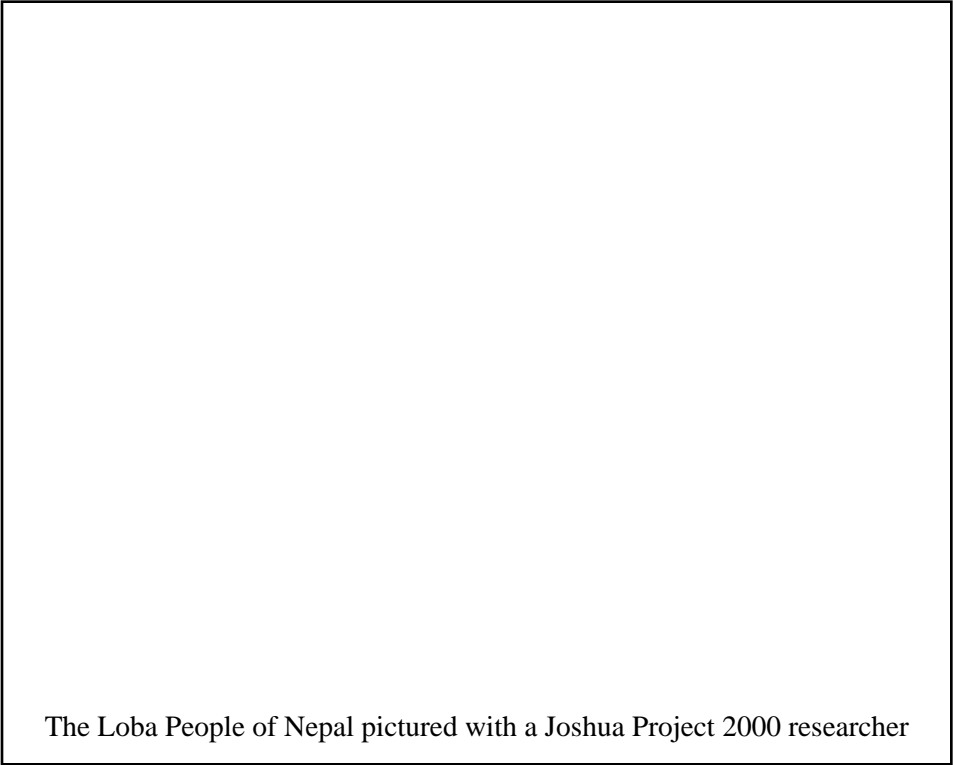
Ten on-site research teams have gone out so far, and twenty-four teams registered with the AD2000 International Office are planning to go soon. Ninety-four people and 119 churches or agencies have indicated that they plan to organize research teams. In addition, agencies have selected 285 unreached peoples for future research trips. One U.S. based Joshua Project team recently returned from researching the Loba people of Nepal. Upon their arrival in Kathmandu, this team linked with two Nepalese Every Home for Christ workers. Trekking twelve days into the restricted access area of Mustang, team leader Mike Clinton of Colorado Springs Every Home for Christ said that they discovered no Loba Christians. The team distributed printed gospel presentations to an estimated 90% of Loba homes.

An important aspect of a successful team experience is the link to nationals or experienced expatriots living in the country to be visited. Over 100 missionaries and national workers have offered to assist on-site research teams in 57 foreign countries, representing 1028 of the 1739 Joshua Project 2000 peoples.

Adequate pre-field training is also vital. Caleb Project, Youth With a Mission

effort.

The over 20 million strong "Praying Through the Window" movement which prayed in October 1993 for the countries of the 10/40 Window and in 1995 for the 100 Gateway Cities is now shifting its focus to the Joshua Project 2000 unreached peoples. Praying Through the Window III in October 1997 will center on the 137 Gateway Peoples from the Joshua Project 2000 list.



The Loba People of Nepal pictured with a Joshua Project 2000 researcher

(YWAM) and Kingdom Building Ministries have offered training and coordination to individuals or teams. Caleb Project has produced a 102-page training manual entitled *Life-Changing Encounters* to prepare research teams before they begin to travel.

This training manual also contains a form delineating the specific information needed to produce a prayer profile. As each team submits its completed form, Bethany World Prayer Center of Baton Rouge, Louisiana will complete the profiles. All interested church-based or agency-based teams are asked to register their trip with the AD2000 and Beyond Movement International Office before going in order to assure a coordinated

Gateway People represents one of the peoples in that cluster which is a strategic "gateway" for purposes of evangelism for that cluster. For example, the Arabian Arab cluster contains 29 peoples; the Arabian Arabs are the Gateway People. On-site intercessors plan to visit the 137 Gateway Peoples during October 1997. It is hoped that all 1739 peoples will have on-site prayer between now and 1998. The Praying Through the Window III book and video will be available in October of this year from Caleb Project of Littleton, Colorado. Book translations in twelve languages are planned.

One prayer team now associated with Joshua Project 2000 took a group of

List editor Patrick Johnstone has identified gateway people clusters as closely related peoples who, for strategic purposes, may be clustered together. These relationships are often based on a common identity of language and name but sometimes on the basis of culture, religion, economy or dominance of one group over another. The

Joshua Project 2000

fifteen people from a church in Kansas City to the Nakhi people of China (a Joshua Project priority people). The leader of the team had met a local family preparing to go as career missionaries to the Nakhi. These fifteen prayer journeyers decided to travel to the Nakhi to pave the way in prayer for this missionary family. In addition, 200 people at home in Kansas committed to intercede in prayer for the Nakhi and the team.

When the team returned, they mobilized 93 people to pray and fast for the missionary family one day each month for a year. The missionary family is now in China learning the language. The team produced a professional video people profile which has been used to spread the vision for praying for the Nakhi. The journey leaders have started a group called Kansas City Missions Mobilizers which has brought together many churches in monthly meetings. As a result, several other Joshua Project 2000 peoples have been adopted.

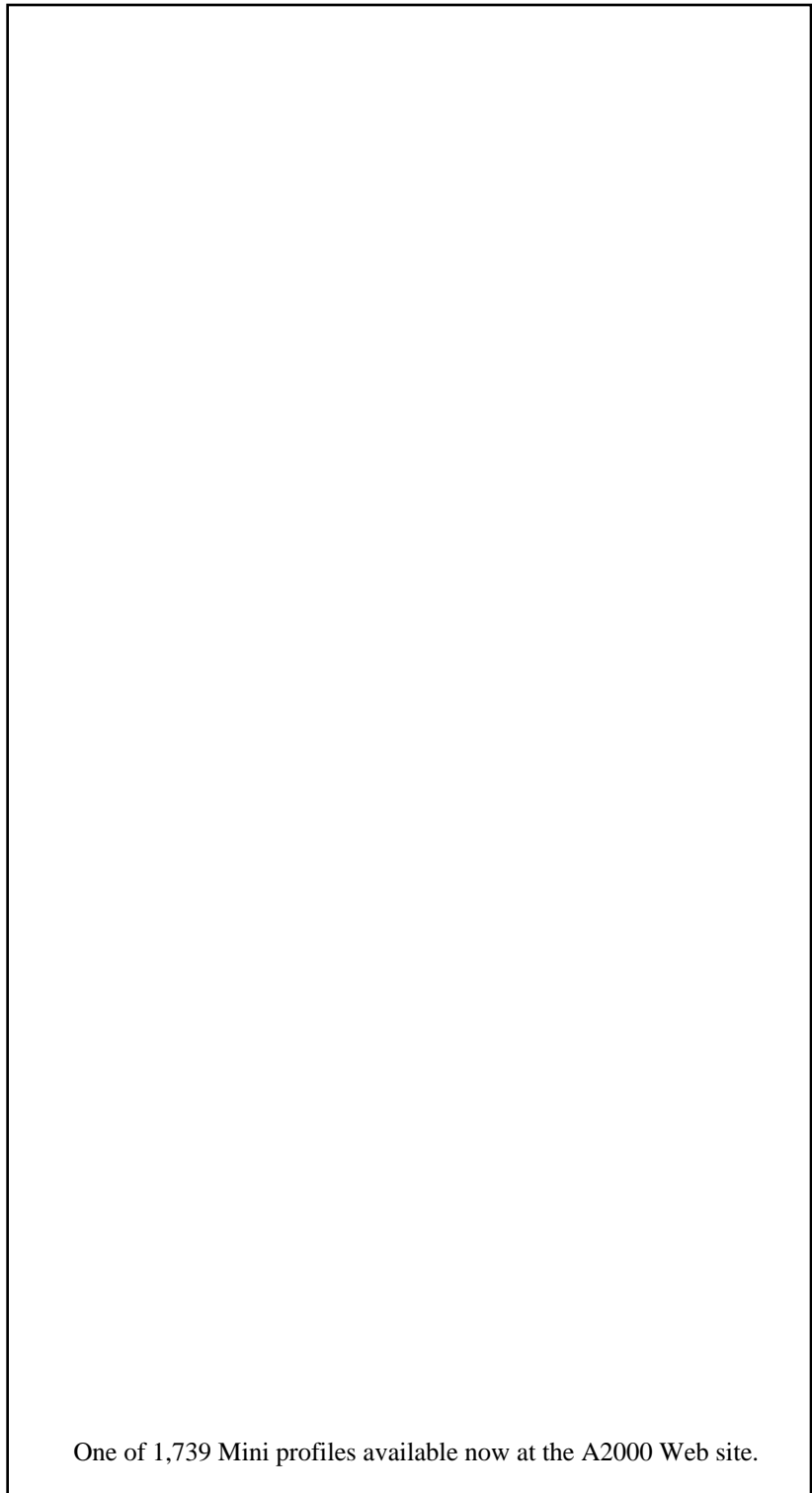
Joshua Project 2000 People Profiles

Much of the data for profiles already exists but needs to be organized and extracted into the profile format. Bethany World Prayer Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana has taken on the task of formal production. Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse contributed their unreached people data. As of mid-July, 1996, Bethany has organized research on 287 Joshua Project 2000 peoples for profile production. Thirty-five of those peoples have complete profiles ready for printing. Those remaining of the 287 are in the editing process. Additional peoples are being assigned to researchers, but many more researchers are needed. They have also acquired photographs of 417 of the peoples, along with location maps for 130 peoples. Distribution plans for the profiles are still in progress.

A mini-profile is accessible from any computer via the World Wide Web (<http://www.ad2000.org>). (See mini-profile printout example below.) Two

hundred of these Internet mini-profiles have links to more detailed people profiles on other Web sites. For example, for the Kalmyk people shown, a computer user would click on the World Wide Web address for Caleb Project (under "Links") and be taken immediately to fur-

ther information on the Kalmyk. As the Bethany World Prayer Center completes up-to-date profiles with photos and maps, links to them will be available from the AD2000 World Wide Web site. Many mission agencies and churches are now using this free computer service.



One of 1,739 Mini profiles available now at the A2000 Web site.

As many as 1400 computer users from 18 countries access the AD2000 Web site in a single day.

Tracking

Crucial to the success of Joshua Project 2000 is the collection and sharing of who is working among what unreached people! In May of this year the AD2000 and Beyond Movement International Office sent a mailing to 2400 mission agencies and denominational sending agencies requesting such information. The mailing included a survey form for the Joshua Project 2000 list and an invitation for these leaders to attend the Mission Executives conference, one of nine parallel conferences during GCOWE '97 in Pretoria, South Africa beginning June 30. It requested that leaders provide information for a book, "Global Guide to Unreached Peoples", to be presented at the conference. The proposed compendium would provide work-among information to facilitate better distribution of mission resources.

The results would only be published if there were a 10% or more response. Two months after the mailing was sent, 286 surveys (12%) had been returned to the AD2000 International Office from mission agencies in 53 different countries. They contained an estimated 9400 check marks, each representing a level of involvement targeting one of the Joshua Project 2000 priority peoples. The information that was not marked "secure" is being made available on the AD2000 World Wide Web page. (See "Others Involved with this Group" at the bottom of the example Kalmyk profile.) The final results of the survey will be available in the final book publication.

About 60% of the data received from the survey has been recorded in the AD2000 International Office master data-

base. As of late July 1996, this database shows in regards to the 1739 Joshua Project 2000 unreached peoples:

—533 church planting in progress efforts.

—354 future church-planting efforts

Crucial to the success of Joshua Project 2000 is the collection and sharing of who is working among what unreached people!

planned.

—785 current evangelistic outreaches.

—476 future evangelistic outreaches planned.

—389 peoples that have an agency willing to assist a research team to that people.

—109 agencies that would welcome candidate referrals for people interested in working with unreached peoples.

—728 peoples for which agencies have data they are willing to share.

In addition to the information received from the survey, the following data has been collected elsewhere:

—46 people advocates/nonresidential missionaries registered.

—256 general people group contacts identified.

—266 adoptions by churches or prayer groups.

—195 people wanting to organize an adoption by their church.

—53 people wanting to join a long-term church-planting effort to a Joshua Project 2000 people. Their names were passed on to mission agencies which focus on church planting among the least-evangelized, groups such as Mission to Unreached Peoples, Pioneers, and Frontiers.

Names and addresses for all of the people and agencies that registered the above data are maintained by the

AD2000 International Office. Like-minded people and organizations are being made aware of one another's activities.

Conclusion

A recently published Adopt-A-

People Clearinghouse brochure called "Joshua Project 2000 Adoption Information Packet" indicates that adoption is a serious commitment. This commitment includes prayer as its basis but may also entail research-

ing a people and partnering with others to ensure a church is planted. These partnerships are now being identified and tracked. As is indicated on the list under "Agency Work," Patrick Johnstone estimates that 917 of the 1739 Joshua Project 2000 peoples already have missionaries on site.

As researchers visit the library, surf the World Wide Web and in some cases take an on-site research trip, the report often includes that they found several missionaries targeting that people. Due to security concerns we may never see the entire picture of how much ministry is being focused toward these unreached peoples. Those peoples found to have thriving churches will be moved from the unreached peoples listings. As Joshua Project 2000 proceeds and we see a clearer picture of church-planting efforts, we give God the glory that the unfinished task of a church for every people can be achieved.

After serving five years as a missionary to restricted-access countries, David Robinson now works at the AD2000 and Beyond Movement International Office in Colorado Springs. David has an M.A. in Missiology from Fuller School of World Mission.