

Christ's Missional Challenge in Bihar by 2020: The Most Urgent Unfinished Task Defined A Report from Transform World Research Conference in Patna – January 13-14, 2014 By Dr. Alex Phillip

Gathering of key researchers creates synergy towards fulfilment of the Great Commission

Introduction:

In order to explore the implications of the term *ethnē* of Matthew 28:19,20 for Bihar state, a group of front-line church planters, mission executives and global researchers gathered in Patna, Bihar January 13-14, 2014. Bihar state with 103 million people and 39,073 villages is considered at the core of the 10/40 window, where the Christian population is currently estimated at around 0.3%. However, the way we consider distinctions within people groups – cultural, linguistic, physical and geographical – impact the way we evaluate the spread of the gospel, church-planting movements and the Great Commission task.

The term *ethnē* in Mathew 28:19 means a large group of people based on various cultural, linguistic, physical or geographical ties. In South Asia where about half of the world's unreached people reside there is a case to include caste/communities in the consideration towards a priority list inclusive of the most unreached and unengaged people groups.

Research Data & Lists:

Servant catalysts representing strategic information lists such as OMID, CPPI, PREM, FTT, Ethnē, OA and Joshua Project shared information with the focus in mind to inform the Church in Bihar of the urgent task remaining in the state. Discussion flowed amongst the group observing each list's distinctiveness and strategic importance. *"It is one thing to evangelise people – reach them with the Gospel message and quite another thing to disciple them so that ongoing (Church Planting Movement) CPM start within the people group"* said a Finish the Task (FTT)/Issachar Initiative leader.

The compelling vision among the leaders gathered was to include and then recommend the list of most unreached and unengaged people groups of Bihar taking into considerations of caste and language. Another key was to place a cut-off on the population size of the Unreached People Groups (UUPG's) recommended, so that the information would be readily comprehensible to the church and mission leaders of the state. At the end of the day, the list would need to be theirs' to run with towards the Christ's Missional Challenge of Transform World 2020 (TW2020) Bihar Summit and beyond.

Affirmations

- We affirm the work of God the Father, Jesus His Son and the Holy Spirit in the work of transformation among all people groups of the state of Bihar.

- We affirm that the role key research catalysts have played and continue to play in serving the global Church towards the task of the completion of the Great Commission. We commend each research stream and thank God for each.
- We sense a *kairos* moment in the history of the Church in Bihar, where pioneer church planters and leaders, evangelists, mission activists and practitioners could focus attention among those who have never heard the Gospel and among those whom a vibrant disciple making initiative is lacking.
- In studying all five key lists - OMID, CPPI, PREM, FTT and JP, it is observed that 26 people groups have emerged as those among which no known Christian activity is seen. These 26 people groups have been classified as the “**most needy**” and is given herewith in the appendix. (List 1) Click here to download the file titled **List of Unreached People Groups in Bihar January 14, 2014**. These people groups use specific major languages of Bihar.
- A further 103 “**very needy**” people groups (List 2) have been included as requiring significant ongoing work amongst them by the Church as they have large numbers of people but not many workers or churches amongst them. Language details are not included but are available.
- Besides these two groups, there are approximately 200 other people groups who will require workers and may have work amongst them recordable today.
- We affirm that List 1 and List 2 represent the most urgent task before the Church in Bihar as a first step towards planting a church among these peoples and recommend to her leadership a process to be defined to take this forward in fulfilment of Christ’s Great Commission to all peoples and cultures.

This is affirmed by all who have participated in the TW Research Conference, Patna, Jan 13-14, 2014 and in anticipation we all and those who read this document that by working together we can bring completion to this urgent task. These people groups need the Church of Bihar, and all her members to be actively involved in these challenging tasks, to serve, to pray and to complete the desire of our Lord Jesus for all people in all cultures of our Bihar.

Appendix:

List of unreached people in Bihar as of 14 Jan, 2014

Link: <http://www.transform-world.net/newsletters/2014/List.pdf>