

## **ASSESSMENT OF PEOPLE GROUP INFORMATION**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The goal of the MANI Country Assessment Process (CAP) is to improve the existing people group information. In other words errors must be sorted out and the information must be updated. As simple as this process might sound, experience has shown us that the process requires a careful and systematic way of collecting and analysing data. This takes time and discipline to go through all the names and other data on the list.

In this paper I have tried to highlight some of the issues you might encounter when going through this process.

### **ETHNOLINGUISTIC INFORMATION**

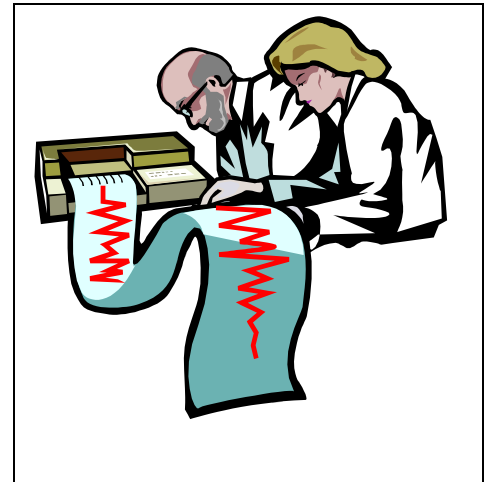
Statistics on the number of people groups on earth keep changing. This is so because researchers keep updating the old lists and as they do so, new groups that are being discovered or were omitted are being added to the lists.

The other reason for the increase is that new ways or methods of classifying people groups have been developed. According to Dr. Todd Johnson and Peter Crossing (Priority Peoples: A customized approach - Mission Frontiers, January-February 2005 edition, p.8-9 ) people groups can be classified according to **CULTURE** - (ETHNOMETRICS). This type of classification is an affirmation of several important points regarding people: (1) the centrality of indigenous cultures to local expressions of Christianity, (2) the right to exist of minority tribes and peoples, (3) their autonomy in their own areas, (4) their importance from the Christian standpoint vis-à-vis the world's dominant peoples and cultures, (5) 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.

The other way of describing a people group is through **World LANGUAGES** and their relationships – LINGUAMETRICS. This includes language speakers, language influence, language usage, and lingua francas.

The two methods can be combined to provide a third approach involving culture and language, resulting in a single integrated listing of what is termed **ETHNOLINGUISTIC PEOPLES**. Some



cultures may be identified with a single language, while others may consist of people speaking several different languages yet still identified as single cultures.

### **Implications**

Since people can be classified in three different ways, the following must be considered when verifying and updating such information:

1. that demographic data for language speakers and population figures for cultural ethnicity will be different.
2. that census population information in Southern African countries is based on language and not cultural ethnicity

### **DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

The biggest challenge in the CAP process is trying to verify and update ethnic population information. Ethnic demographic data is simply not available. The unavailability of official government census information on ethnic populations in Southern Africa is largely due to the reluctance of governments to gather ethnic census information. The reasons for this could be largely political. In Botswana for example, the last data on ethnicity was collected in 1946 and since then it has not been possible to have reliable data on ethnic affiliation.

Therefore you must know that almost all statistical data on ethnic populations in Southern Africa from various sources have been the product of extrapolation, interpolation and some good guess work.

However, in this research educated guess work done by knowledgeable people is acceptable. This means that you are free to come up with your own educated guesses as long as there is consensus among knowledgeable people.

### **ORTHOGRAPHY**

The Dictionary defines Orthography as:

1. The art or study of correct spelling according to established usage.
2. The aspect of language study concerned with letters and their sequences in words.
3. A method of representing a language or the sounds of language by written symbols; spelling.

Different orthographies were used to develop the spelling for the written languages of the world. Things to consider when verifying and correcting people group names:

1. Researchers or writers sometimes use different spellings of the same name from another orthography; eg. Tabwa and Tabua
2. Sometimes spellings are changed because the reader can't give a correct pronunciation of the name, eg

Mungu and Mongu, or Kalanga and Kalaka (in seTswana),

3. At other times the spelling is completely wrong.
4. But other times a different spelling could simply mean that this is a different group of people.

### NAMES

Note that sometimes people groups and languages can have similar names but are totally unrelated, eg., Tonga of Zambia and Tonga of Malawi are not related groups. Their languages and culture are not the same.

The other important thing to consider about names is that one group might have more than one name. In the Joshua Project list you find people's name in the country, people's name across countries and alternative name.

Therefore remember that the same group might be known by another name across the border.

### DEFINITIONS

Be aware that different Christian research organizations use different definitions for issues like Evangelicals, unreached people groups, Christian Adherents, Least Researched, etc.

They also use different mathematical calculations for determining the percentages of different fields and categories in the data base, eg, percentage of Evangelicals, percentage of adherents, percentage of least reached, etc.

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

There is no one source of information in research. Even though the main aim of this work is to verify and update the existing people group information, it is inevitable to check with other sources of information for accuracy. Sometimes this will require you to interview certain people who have knowledge in the field you are researching on.

The following are few of the many sources of information.

1. News letters, prayer bulletins
2. People
  - a) Interviews with members of the target group themselves living abroad.
  - b) Interviews with those who have been on the field long enough and know the area very well but are now back home.
  - c) Interviews with local people (members of the target group) on the field.
3. Libraries (state, city, University, organizations).

4. Mission agencies and missionaries (e.g., interviews with missionaries who are working in or near the target group area, or those working with the same topic which you need information; for example child evangelism, Bible translation etc).
5. Internet (information on computer networks). Be aware that not all information on the net is correct.
6. Research institutes or Institutes of specific studies.
7. Theology and Anthropology departments in universities.
8. Government census bureau or department of statistics.
9. Urban and city councils (in their city and country planning departments).
10. State departments (e.g. the department of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, the department of Tourism etc).
11. Health, Education and Social Service agencies.
12. Travel agencies
13. Embassies
14. Christian media organizations (for literature and Bibles).
15. Bible Societies
16. Museums
17. Your own observations
18. Specialists  
Sometimes it is a good idea to invite a person with a particular knowledge and skill like a linguist, Anthropologist, Historian, etc.