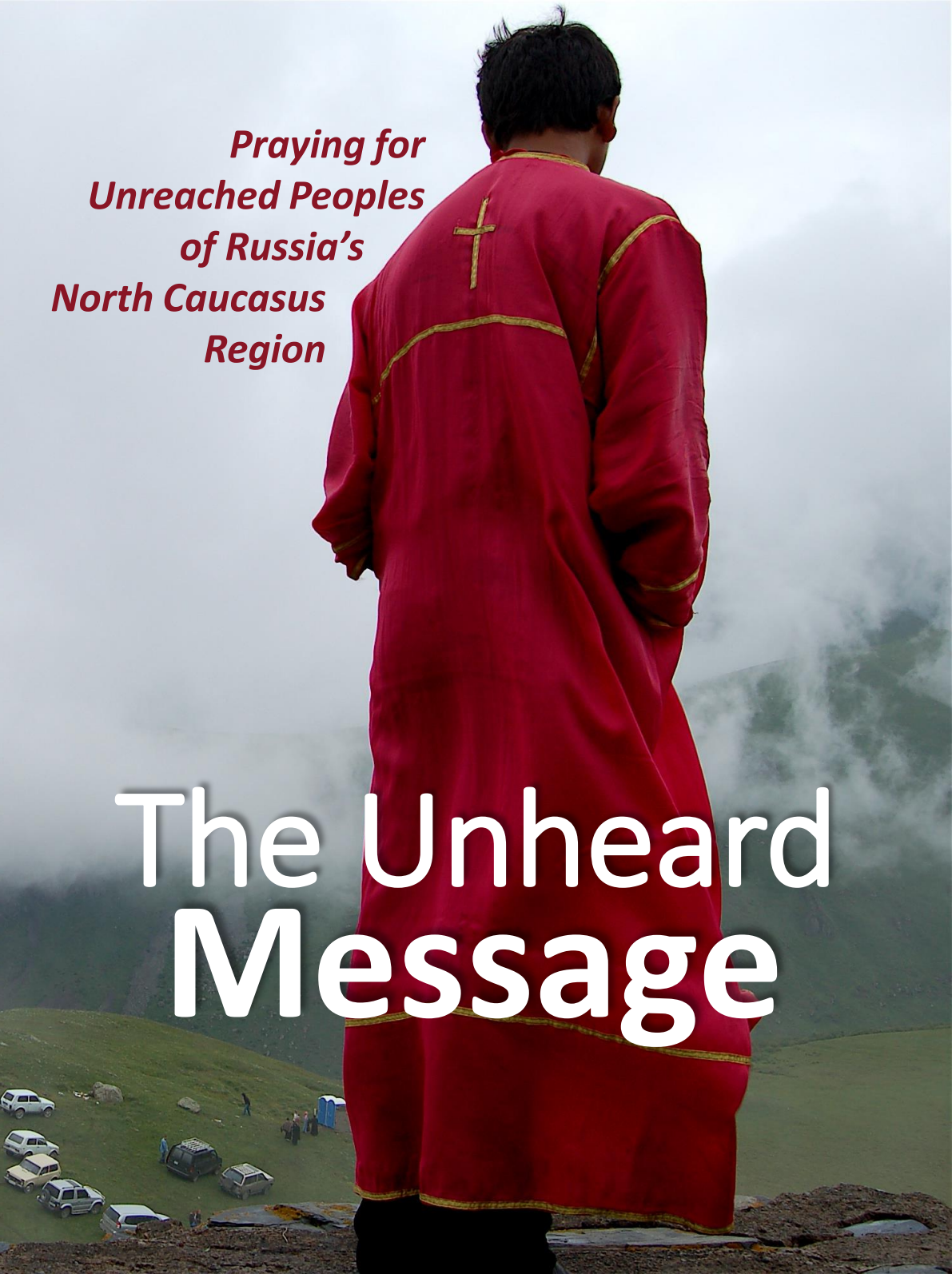


*Praying for
Unreached Peoples
of Russia's
North Caucasus
Region*

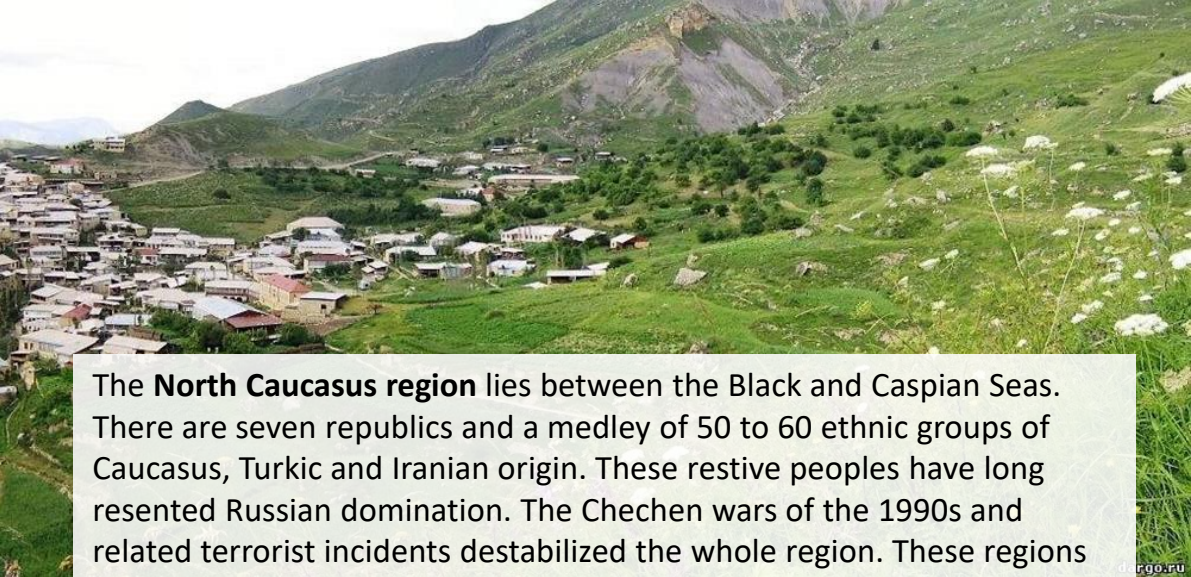
The Unheard Message





North Caucasus





The **North Caucasus region** lies between the Black and Caspian Seas. There are seven republics and a medley of 50 to 60 ethnic groups of Caucasus, Turkic and Iranian origin. These restive peoples have long resented Russian domination. The Chechen wars of the 1990s and related terrorist incidents destabilized the whole region. These regions are not only the least stable but also the poorest, with the highest unemployment and the highest birthrates as well as widespread corruption. Pray for wisdom, restraint and moderation to replace present extremes and rhetoric, and for a fair political solution – especially in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Islam predominates in all the indigenous peoples except the Ossetians, a majority of whom are nominal Orthodox. Islamists, both local and foreign, work to radicalize Islam in this region and to subvert the complex ethnic, political, economic and religious factors of the North Caucasus conflicts into a jihad defined solely along religious lines. Pray that Islamist plans may be thwarted and the whole region experience peace, progress and religious freedom.

The **North Caucasus peoples** remain some of the least reached on earth, and they live in Europe's least-evangelized region. Most of the 50 or so ethnic groups have little by way of Scripture in their languages or churches among their peoples. Thankfully, this is changing. Groups of believers are springing up through the faithful work of Christians from the Russian Federation and beyond. An interagency partnership works to bring blessing in Christ to this region; pray for this partnership. Pray also for IBT and its work of Bible translation in 25 languages of the area.

Suggestions how to use this prayer guide:

At home:

1. Pray for one people group each day.
2. When you hear about these peoples on the radio, TV, or reading news; pray for their needs found in the prayer guide and for the news event that come with them.
3. Read the prayer guide together as a family at home and pray at dinner time.
4. When you see foreigners on the street, in the market, pray for them. Perhaps they haven't heard about God's love. If they are your neighbors, get to know them and pray that they would come to know the love of God.

In church:

1. Pray during the Sunday service for these people groups.
2. If you pray during the Sunday's service, distribute information sheets about the people group so that members of the church can continue to pray at home (see the last page for information on how to receive prepared leaflets for distribution).
3. You can allocate more time to pray for unreached peoples during a weekly prayer service.

Abaza

2,500 years ago the Greek historian, Herodotus, notes that Greek seafarers encountered a tribe named the Abaza along the eastern shores of the Black Sea. The descendants of the Abaza later migrated northeastward into the Caucasus Mountains and became fiercely Muslim over the past 1000 years.

A war-like people, the Abaza have known little grace. Many died in the Caucasus Wars with the Russian Empire in the middle of the 19th Century. The Abaza now live in at least 14 towns and villages in the mountain region of Karachay-Cherkessia in southern Russia. Their ancient language is fascinating—it functions with 63 consonant sounds and only two vowels! For an outsider, it’s definitely a mouthful of intense sounds.

Among the 43,000 Abaza, there are ten known believers. Pray for these courageous ones, who are carriers of the desperately-needed grace of Jesus for their people. When one understands in one’s own heart language that “God in Christ has forgiven me...” it’s so much more possible to “be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven me.” The Fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness...—can start to grow and spread throughout the culture.



Population

43,341

Location

Karachay-Cherkessia,
Stavropol Krai,
Kabardino-Balkaria

Language

Abaza

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Pray for a fledgling effort--which is barely underway--to begin translating portions of the New Testament into the difficult Abaza language.
- Pray for the few followers of Jesus among the Abaza to embody the forgiveness and kindness of Jesus to all whom they meet.

Adyghe

Adyghe are one of the remaining tribes of a large people group known as Circassians. They lived in the North Caucasus region of Southern Russia for more than a thousand years until they were conquered by ethnic Russians during The Caucasus War (1817-1864). Due to the war, in the late 19th Century at least 1 million Circassians (Adyghe & Kabardians) were deported or fled to areas in the Ottoman Empire including Turkey and the Middle East. Although the Adyghe people still regard the North Caucasus as their sacred home, a majority live outside the region.

Ninety eight percent of all Adyghe claim to be Sunni Muslim. There are approximately 100 Adyghe Christians in the world and there is one indigenous church of about 40 members located in southern Russia. The rest are dispersed among Russian Orthodox and Evangelical churches. The entire New Testament and 12 books so far in the Old Testament have been translated into the Adyghe language. Adyghe in southern Russia also have access to the Central Asian Russian Scriptures (CARS) which uses language familiar to Muslims.



Population

124,835

Location

Adyghe, Krasnodar Krai

Language

Adyghe

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

New Testament

- Pray for God to speak to Adyghe in dreams and visions revealing His plan of salvation. Acts 2:17 Heb.2: 3-4
- Pray for a movement of House Church Planting among the Adyghe in the North Caucasus. Acts 20: 20-21
- Pray for translators to complete the whole Bible in Adyghe within 5 years. II Timothy 3: 15-16

Aghul

21 villages high in the southern mountains of Dagestan—home to the Agul people for millennia. The Aguls were converted to Islam after the Arab conquest of the 8th Century. Many Dagestani peoples who live at lower elevation in southern Dagestan know the Agul because of their annual round-trip sheep migrations from high mountain pastures to lowland pastures near the Caspian Sea. The Agul sheep and their shepherds swarm through lowland territories and temporarily block roads and congest small villages, before they pass on through—heading either further downhill or back up into the high Agul elevations.

The Agul men are renowned shepherds. Many of them also work in construction in urban centers during the winter season, while the women of the family keep the mountain village households going during the long winter months. Most of Dagestan is rugged, but the rocky harsh terrain of the Agul villages represents one of the highest levels of ‘rugged’ for this eastern Caucasus region. Hard-working, weather-beaten faces are the norm in village after village. This mountain lifestyle has created toughness, which is to be highly esteemed. On the other hand, warmer qualities of grace, forgiveness, and compassion are typically in short supply.



Population

34,160

Location

Dagestan, Stavropol Krai,
Krasnodar Krai

Language

Aghul

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Pray for people of peace among the Agul to notice when representatives of the gospel of grace come near to them.
- Pray for those who are serving the Agul people in Christian love to be encouraged—Acts 11:23.
- Pray for the Lord of the Harvest to continue to send the right servants at the right time into the right relationships in the midst of Agul culture (Mt.9).

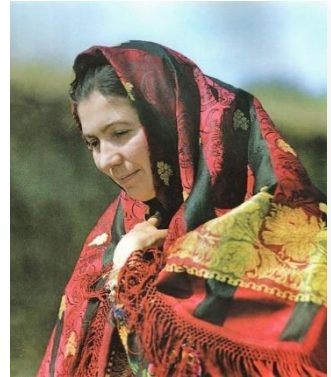
Akhvakh

The mullah wrote the Arabic Qur'an verses with ink pen on a piece of paper, soaked the paper in a cup of water until the ink dissolved in the water and then had the ill girl drink the water, accompanied by memorized Arabic incantations. The ten-year-old girl had been seriously ill for a week with intestinal turmoil and difficulty swallowing, and the family had asked for this special 'folk Islam' ritual.

In a nearby town an Akhvakh family, who had been bothered by a troubling spiritual presence in their home and a string of bad luck, called upon the local exorcist to come and engage in ritualistic work to at first appease the troubling spirits and then seek to overpower and expel them from the family dwelling.

Throughout all the peoples of Dagestan such folk Islam practices are widespread and exist alongside official Islam and its Five Pillars. One Dagestani scholar suggests that such animistic 'folk Islamic' practices are especially strong among the Akhvakh, although not much less so among the other 33 language groups of Dagestan.

The 6,500 Akhvakh of Dagestan, with their own distinct language, live in 9 major villages or towns in the mountainous region of west central Dagestan, and also in several Akhvakh enclaves in Dagestani urban areas.



Population

7,930

Location

Dagestan

Language

Akhvakh

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray for representatives of Jesus' matchless grace to become true friends of Akhvakh culture, honoring and helping preserve the unique Akhvakh language.
- Pray for doors to open for simple prayer in love in the name of Jesus, as His Word goes out with signs and wonders following (Heb.2:4).

Akkin

The Akkin people speak a distinct dialect of the Chechen language and live among village/town clusters at the western edge of Dagestan surrounding the major city of Khasavyurt. The ancient home region of the Akkin is in extreme western Chechnya and eastern Ingushetia. In pre-Soviet history many Akkin migrated eastward toward the border region of Dagestan and Chechnya near Khasavyurt. In 1944, accused of being Nazi collaborators, the Akkin were deported en masse to Central Asia by Stalin's KGB. Thirteen years later, under Krushchev, the Akkin were allowed to return but faced massive confusion--with many Dagestani Laks and Avars already resettled into the old Akkin villages in western Dagestan. Turmoil and conflicts raged off and on over resettlement questions from the late 1950's into the early 21st Century. Eventually some Laks moved to other lowland regions; and the Akkin finally settled into some of their original towns or in nearby locations close to Khasavyurt.

The Akkin have a strong self-identity, in spite of typically being 'buried' in official census statistics as 'Chechen.' To Chechens, Akkin are Akkin. To Russians, Akkin are Chechen. To Akkin, Akkin are Akkin.



Population

100,000

Location

Dagestan, Chechnya

Language

Chechen

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Complete

- Pray that the Akkin will come to know the truth of Jesus Christ.
- Ask the Lord to tear down barriers to the gospel, so that those Christian workers who live and work among the Akkin will see fruit.
- Ask for Christians in Russia to have a burden to share the gospel with the Akkin living in their country and pray for open hearts amongst the Akkin.

Andi

The powerfully-built, broad-shouldered Andi man murmured out loud, “I’m not as tough as my brothers and uncles—I haven’t yet killed a man with my bare hands.” This middle-aged Andi man looked tough enough. He is renowned in his circles for his hard-nosed life and his many wives. The Andi, numbering at least 40,000 in Dagestan, are a mountain people hailing from high mountain villages up next to the western border with Chechnya. The men of the Andi region would resonate with Lamech in Genesis 4—“For I have killed a man for wounding me, and a boy for striking me; if Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

There are great historic strengths in the Andi people—remarkable elements of culture and beauty—but mercy and grace are not in the list of those strengths. ‘Blood vengeance’ is one of the enshrined values, and cycles of violence have continued to ferment on many levels through the generations.

This story, however, continues with an astonishing twist. One of the sons of this very same Andi man—we’ll call the son Aslan--encountered the far-greater power of the Holy Spirit. “What surprised me most...was the amazing love of God.” “And when I understood that God is my Father, I received much joy!” Aslan is the 1st follower of Jesus among the Andi people. Aslan* represents the hope of a powerful life-giving strength that is far greater than the old fleshly way of vengeance and violence. (1 John 4:4) *--Name Changed



Population

11,800

Location

Dagestan, Kalmykia

Language

Andi

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Pray for Aslan* and his family in relationships with Andi relatives and acquaintances—the radiance of the Fruit of the Spirit does shine through him and may many be drawn to the light.
- Pray for divine grace on the fledgling beginning of Bible translation in the Andi language – the Gospel of Luke in Andi is nearly finished and hopefully will be published in 2014.
- Pray for many Andi to see the superiority of the Fruit of the Spirit to the old ways of vengeance.

Archi

The weather-beaten face of the aged Archi man shook back and forth negatively—once, twice, three times. An inquiring visitor had asked this patriarch, “Where do the Archi people originate from?”

“No,” he responded emphatically, with the negative shakes of his head. “All other people come from us!”

High in the southern mountains of Dagestan in southern Russia, the rugged Archi people fiercely cling to their ancient identity. They are so fierce in their identity that they conclude that they are not the off-shoots of anyone.

The distinct Archi language is spoken in eight Archi mountain villages*, with a total population of at least 2,000 Archins. Russian government pressure tried to subsume the Archi under the language category of their near-by neighbors—the Avar—but the Archi never internally agreed. Avar is utilized for writing, and secondarily the Russian language, but the Archi spoken language is alive and well in village families.

The Archi have observed strict Sunni Islam for over 1,000 years. Islam in these mountain villages is a blend of the Five Pillars and ancient superstitious practices, such as veneration of sacred trees, common to folk Islam. The Archi are renowned for their strengths of shepherding, weaving, and vigorous honor; but are not renowned for the qualities of mercy and grace, which have often been in short supply in this culture. No representatives of Jesus’ grace have yet found their way into relationships within Archi culture.



Population

2,000

Location

Dagestan

Language

Archi

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray for the gospel of grace and the love of Jesus to find its way into the Archi world through true friends. Pray that the Word of God will be infused into Archi culture by creative efforts, and find its way into receptive Archi hearts. Pray Matthew 9:36-38 for the Archi people.

Avar

The Avar People of Dagestan are the largest linguistic group of Dagestan, and historically the most powerful. Honor/Shame is a high code, deeply ingrained in the Avar cultural psyche. This is true throughout all 34 of the Dagestani people groups, but perhaps most pronounced in the Avar due to their powerful, leading role in the culture of Dagestan. Indeed, Imam Shamil, arguably the most famous Dagestani in history, was Avar. Imam Shamil was a powerful Muslim religious leader in the 1st half of the 19th Century, who led the political and military resistance to the Russian conquerors from 1834-1859. Shamil accomplished one daring exploit after another to baffle Russian military battalions of Tsarist Russia. Defense of Dagestani and Avar honor was the leading theme of these dozens of battles. The Avar people (and all of Dagestan) were finally subdued by the Russian Empire in 1864, but the code of honor among the Avar has never diminished. In Post-Soviet Dagestan, the Avar (and secondarily the Dargin) carry the primary political power in the internal province [Republic] of Dagestan in southern Russia.



Population

912,100

Location

Dagestan, Stavropol Krai,
Chechnya

Language

Avar

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

New Testament

- Pray that the Lord will break down the walls of tradition that are keeping the Avar from receiving the truth of the gospel.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal the grace and mercy of Jesus to the Avar, and that they will become devoted followers of Jesus.
- Ask God to raise up laborers who understand the Muslim culture and can effectively take the gospel to the Avar.

Azerbaijani

Russia's Azeris are primarily Muslims of the Ithna Ashari tradition, but there are some Hanafite Muslims as well. Twenty percent of the Azeris in Russia do not practice any form of religion.

Traditionally, Islam among the Azeris is a reflection of the historical ties that exist between Azerbaijan and Iran. Until the twentieth century, most Azeris identified themselves as Muslims rather than Azerbaijani or Turks. They believe that being a "spiritual community of Islam" was much more important than being a nation.

Among Azeri Muslims, religious practices are less restrictive of women's activities than in most of the other Muslim countries. The majority of Azeri women have jobs outside the home, and a few have attained leadership positions. However, some evidence of the traditional, restrictive female role remains.

While there is more freedom to share the Gospel in Russia than Azerbaijan, the Azeris remain very resistant. Progress has been very slow.



Population

603,100

Location

Dagestan

Language

Azerbaijani

Religion

Islam (Shia)

Bible Translation

Complete

- Pray for God to bring vision for outreach to Russian believers who are currently living among the Azeri.
- Pray that God will open doors for Christian businessmen to share Christ with the Azeri.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften their hearts towards Christians so that they will be receptive to the gospel.

Bagulal

Winter up among the high Caucasus peoples, such as the Bagvalal, really runs from late September to the end of April. The ridge above the Bagvalal village of Kvanada sits at 8500 feet. Southeast of Tlondada

village the mountains soar to 11,000 feet. Numbering at least 6000 people, the Bagvalal people of western Dagestan speak their own distinct language and live in six major villages at high altitude.

Snow covers the Bagvalal villages typically from October until the end of April. For the cattle and sheep to survive the winter, it's crucial to accomplish massive hay gathering from the nearby hillsides in July, August, and September. Other items of the harvest are stored and pickled for the winter, and the residents hope that 4-wheel drive vehicles can successfully make it in and out of the region several times during the winter for resupply.

The Bagvalal are rugged, with fierceness on many points and few elements of grace. The atmosphere is complemented by traditional Sunni Islam, with its dictates of 'works righteousness' and a distant, stern Allah God. The Bagvalal would be greatly warmed by the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit—but for centuries now among the Bagvalal it's felt like "forever winter, and never Christmas."



Population

6,500

Location

Dagestan

Language

Bagvalal

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

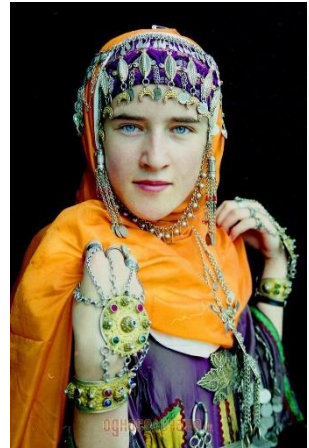
None

- Pray for carriers of Jesus' grace to become true friends of the Bagvalal, studying and respecting (and helping preserve) their amazing, complex language.
- Pray that bridges of relationship for God's love and the joy of the Holy Spirit will open up, perhaps starting with connections with the few Bagvalal who live in urban areas of Dagestan.

Balkar

The life of a shepherd has never been easy. In ancient times, we read of the shepherd boy David, who fought against wild animals to save his flock. For centuries, the historically-Muslim Balkar people have lived in the highlands of the Caucasus Mountains (southern Russia) in the province of Kabardino-Balkaria, shepherding their flocks and their livestock. This livelihood is passed from father to son, beginning at a very young age. It's never-ending, strenuous work. Expanding their property to accommodate increased herds is something shepherds strive for, since a man's fortune is ranked by the number of cattle or sheep he owns. Pray that the Shepherd of souls would reveal Himself to them, and that they would receive the guidance of the Good Shepherd in their lives.

The Balkar originally lived in homes made of mud and wood. Today, their houses are built with brick or stone and have tile or slate roofs. The homes usually have two stories and most have porches. Pray that they would build their spiritual homes on a solid foundation (Mt.7:24-27) that never fails.



Population

112,900

Location

Stavropol Krai,
Kabardino-Balkaria

Language

Karachay-Balkar

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

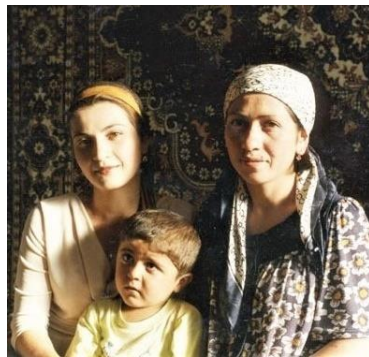
New Testament

- Ask the Lord to send loving Russian Christians to minister Life to their Muslim neighbors. Matthew 9:36-38
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will soften the hearts of the Balkarian people toward the Gospel. Hosea 10:12
- Ask God to call forth teams of intercessors who will rise up and faithfully stand in the gap for the Balkar. Luke 18:1-8
- Pray for the salvation of key Balkar leaders who will boldly proclaim the Gospel. Acts 4:13

Bezhta

“The first book ever published in our language!” The Bezhta man was celebrating the historic breakthrough which took place for his people in 1999. This breakthrough is even highlighted regarding the Bezhta in the definitive secular linguistic work by Koryakov, The Register of Caucasus Languages—“The first book in the Bezhta language was published in 1999, using the Cyrillic script.”

What is doubly remarkable is that “this first book” was the Gospel of Luke from the New Testament. How did this amazing gift of grace happen among this staunch Muslim people? Magomed*, the trailblazer of the Bezhta Gospel of Luke, must be ‘a man of peace’ as described by Jesus in Luke 10. Sometime in the early 1990’s Magomed was exposed to Jesus and the Gospels and decided to make it his project to get the Gospel of Luke into a published form in his Bezhta language. This was not only a translation process. He also needed to create the first written Bezhta alphabet! To do this, Magomed worked from the Cyrillic script used by Russian and the nearby Avar language and then added additional letter symbols to cover Bezhta sounds which are in neither Avar or Russian. For thousands of years the Bezhta language had been only an oral language. [*-- Name Changed]



Population

8,280

Location

Dagestan

Language

Bezhta

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Pray for representatives of Jesus’ love to come who are linguistically gifted and ready to serve the Bezhta people with “language respect.”
- Pray for these servants to honor the Bezhta language and help preserve it. This will touch the hearts of Bezhta people.
- Pray for these friends to team up with linguistically-gifted Magomed, and ultimately bring more of Jesus’ words of grace into the Bezhta language.
- Pray for the grace of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to break through into open hearts among the Bezhta and spread from clan to clan and village to village(II Chron.16:9). To date, there are no known followers of Jesus among the Bezhta.

Botlikh

The elderly Botlikh man implored him, “Come and see me—I may not have many years yet to live.” The year was 2004 and this Botlikh ‘man of peace’ [see Luke 10:6] was living in the capital city of Dagestan in southern Russia, 200 miles from his home village up in the western mountains of Dagestan. The Christian friend responded and that afternoon Khalil, with a noble spirit, welcomed the grace of Jesus into his life while his aged wife, Patimat, watched attentively.

A few years later Khalil died; but back up in the large mountain village of Botlikh no others had yet come to Jesus. Traditional Islam, tinged with ancient folk customs, holds sway in this region. The people of Botlikh, speaking their distinct Botlikh language and Russian as a second language, number at least 7,000. Botlikh village is high in the mountains but it sits in a secluded valley. The region is famous for its fruit trees, even grapes and apricots, which grow bountifully in this unusual environment amidst the rugged mountain ranges of western Dagestan.



Population

7,200

Location

Dagestan

Language

Botlikh

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray that the Fruit of the Spirit, which was born in Khalil’s life that fall afternoon in 2004, will multiply 30-60-100-fold to his relatives and descendants among the Botlikh people.
- Pray that the few urban followers of Jesus in Dagestan who have connections into the Botlikh culture will follow the voice of the Spirit like Philip did on the road to Gaza in Acts 8, and reach key men and women inside the Botlikh world. —PLS

Chamalal

“Which way do we go to get to this big wedding?” Rasul and Ibraghim, the two young Chamalal fellows, asked their older friend. “Take the river road along the Andiskie Koisu all the way up from Cherkata. It’s three hours to Agvali. At Agvali turn west high up into the mountains till you reach Gadiri village. That’s where the big wedding is.”

Rasul and Ibraghim were two young Chamalal men from an urban region of Dagestan, but they were under instructions to find a Chamalal wife. The most hopeful settings for such a find were large weddings in Chamalal mountain villages where hundreds of young people gathered for two days of dancing.

Agvali and Gadiri are two of the 14 Chamalal villages in the high mountains of extreme western Dagestan. In these 14 villages, plus eight more across the ridge in the adjacent mountains of southeastern Chechnya, the distinct Chamalal language is spoken by approximately 10,000 Chamalal people. All Chamalal people consider themselves proudly Muslim and follow traditional Sunni Islam mixed with ancient animistic practices. Pray that the rich but harsh heritage of Chamalal culture will be graced with the mercy of Jesus and the Fruit of the Spirit. To date there are no known Chamalal believers.



Population

9,500

Location

Dagestan, Chechnya

Language

Chamalal

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray that trained linguists will befriend the Chamalal people and honor their ancient complex language, and in so doing open the door for oral recordings of the good news of Jesus in the Chamalal language.
- Pray that young Chamalal such as Rasul and Ibraghim will connect with Dagestani followers of Jesus in urban areas and become messengers to their own people.

Chechen

Over a meal of the Chechen national dish Malika wiped her tears as she told the story of her recent job search. A Russian-Armenian family needed a full-time house cleaner, and Malika came highly recommended. But when they found out about her Chechen ethnicity, the family refused to discuss the job further. As a widowed mother of five children, Malika's hope for a \$1400 per month job was shattered, and she wondered why she bothered to come to Moscow. You see, Chechens as a people are widely hated by the majority Russian population.

Then she remembered how free she is in Moscow to fellowship with other people from Muslim background who follow Jesus. She knows she has true freedom from the bondages and consequences of life under Satan's authority—that's how she describes her family heritage of witchcraft and pagan worship hidden within her former Sufi Islamic community. When the Wahhabis came to "violently correct" the religious practices of her village, Malika knew she had to get out.

Malika's life parallels the life of Ruth, and she knows that her true "Kinsman Redeemer" is only found in the life, message, and community of Jesus. Of 1.4 Million Chechens, hundreds of thousands are living as internally displaced (in Russia, but not in Chechnya) or as diaspora (outside of Russia).



Population

1,431,400

Location

Chechnya, Dagestan,
Ingushetia

Language

Chechen

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Complete

- Presently, of the 1.4 Million Chechens, there are 100-200 known Chechen believers living in many scattered places, few inside Chechnya. Pray for these widely scattered Chechens who follow Jesus to find or build faith communities.
- Pray for the Russian and European church to grow in maturity of fellowship with believers of Muslim background. Pray for competent ministries to reach out to diaspora and displaced Chechens.
- Pray for breakthroughs of Jesus' grace even inside Chechnya. "For with God... nothing shall be impossible"—Luke 1:37

Cherkess

The Cherkess live mainly in northern Karachay-Cherkessia. They also inhabit the villages of Khodz, Blechepsin, Koshekhabl, and Ulyap in nearby Adygeya. They are the descendants of the Besleney Circassians and speak the Besleney Kabardian dialect. During the 4th-16th centuries the religious representations of Circassians combined elements of Christianity and traditional ethnic beliefs. The process of accepting Islam was gradual. The first Circassians to embrace Islam were the ethnographic groups who lived on the Black Sea and Azov coast. To date, the vast majority of Circassians are Sunni Muslims. Approximately 7% of the total number of Circassians in Russia profess Circassian monotheistic religion.



Population

73,184

Location

Karachay-Cherkessia,
Adygea

Language

Kabardian

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

New Testament

- Pray that just as Joseph was a light to the Egyptians thousands of years ago, the few Cherkess believers who exist today will be Christ's ambassadors to their own communities.
- Pray that the God of wandering peoples (Deut. 26:17) will lead them to seek a home made without hands (Heb. 11:13-16).
- Pray that the Cherkess people will become interested in God's Word and that strong believers will tell them Jesus is more than a prophet, but that He is the God who sacrificed Himself for them.

Chirag

“I’m so happy, but what will my family say? What will they do to me?” Nefizat*, the first believer in Jesus among the Chirag people, expressed her deep dual feelings. Nefi-zat had been touched by the grace of Jesus. A city friend had told her a personal story about how the true God was a loving

Father who had provided for total forgiveness of sins. The next day Nefizat along with her younger sister took the step of repentance and received this gift of forgiveness through Jesus and the promised Holy Spirit.

Three years ago these two sisters became the first believers in Jesus among the mountain Chirag people. But what will happen with their family? Many times when women come to Jesus in austere Muslim families they are threatened with death. Nefi-zat and her younger sister have gone through the fire of opposition but are still alive. Will there be reconciliation with their family? It partially depends on how fierce the Muslim intensity is in a family circle. Many times the radiance of the Fruit of the Spirit in the new believer’s life touches family members deeply. But sometimes, even that isn’t enough.

The Chirag are a rugged mountain people from high in the south-central mountains of Dagestan. Their home village in a high river valley sits at nearly 6000 feet in elevation. Combined with the closely-connected sister language of the Amuq people, all together there are five Chirag-Amuq villages and an approximate 3000 total population in this distinct language group. Many Chirag- Amuq now live in the city regions of Dagestan.



Population

3,000

Location

Dagestan

Language

Dargwa

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray for divine protection for the new Chirag believers.
- Pray that the radiance of Christ in their lives will touch other open hearts among their relatives, and that the precious grace of Jesus will spread from clan to clan among the Chirag-Amuq. Isaiah 60:1-3 Colossians 1:6

Crimean Tatar

In the spring of 1944, the Red Army regained control of the Crimea. Stalin immediately had the entire Crimean Tatar population deported to Central Asia and Siberia. His excuse for their exile was their collaboration with German occupation forces. Many Tatars perished during their relocation. The alleged collaboration charges were removed in 1967 allowing limited migration of Crimean Tatars back toward Crimea. Since they were not allowed to return to their homeland Crimea, some of them settled in places near Crimea like Krasnodar Krai. It wasn't until 1989 that they were allowed to return to their homeland.

Crimean Tatars are historically Muslim, though for most their religion is more a matter of cultural identity than personal faith. But because they lost so much during the exile, they hold tightly to what remains of their former identity. For many, to be Crimean Tatar is to be Muslim. There are only 100-200 known Crimean Tatar believers and no Crimean Tatar churches.



Population

2,500

Location

Krasnodar Krai, Kabardino-Balkaria

Language

Crimean Tatar

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Complete

- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften their hearts toward Christians, so that they will be receptive to the gospel.
- Ask the Lord to raise up a strong church among Crimean Tatars.
- Pray that Crimean Tatars will come to know Jesus as God's Son and Savior of the world.
- Pray for the distribution of the recently completed Crimean Tatar Bible.

Dargin

Sunni Islam first arrived in the Dargin region of Dagestan by the 8th Century, and became firmly established as the official religion by the 14th Century. The Islam of the Dargins, though, has a strongly syncretistic nature, with a substantial heritage of pre-Islamic beliefs given folk Islamic form. The agricultural calendar & ceremonies and household & family rites have retained many elements of their original animism--practices for warding off evil and other forms of magic. Pre-Islamic traditions are reflected in the rite of the first furrow--the most important and ceremonially richest Dargwa rite—also in the rites for causing and stopping rain, calling out the sun, veneration of sacred trees, and shrines of deceased holy men. Local Islam is ruled by the jamaat, the council of elders in each village.

The Dargin come from a powerful ethnic tradition—indeed the very name ‘Dargwa’ means ‘strong, free communities.’ However, bondage to superstition, violent power struggles, pervasive male drunkenness, and other endemic forms of human sin, leave this proud collection of peoples far from free. Present-day Dagestan is beset by increasing cycles of violence--squelching trade, tourism, and economic well-being. In the past two decades there are now 40+ Dargin followers of Jesus in Dagestan.



Population

589,400

Location

Dagestan, Stavropol Krai,
Kalmykia

Language

Dargwa

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Thank God for the new believers among the Dargin—Pray for their number to continually increase. Col. 1:6
- Pray for dreams and visions among open-hearted Dargin, both young and old. Acts 2:17 & II Chron.16:9
- Pray for blessing upon God’s Word in Dargin, into many Dargin lives, both urban & rural. Isaiah 55:11

Dido (Tsez)

The Muslim Didoi people—also known as ‘Tsez’—have lived on the edge over the past couple decades. 1st, their location in the southwest corner of Dagestan became ‘the edge’ of Russia when the Soviet Union broke up in 1991. Immediately south is the nation of Georgia. 2nd, internal power factors in Dagestan left them on ‘the edge’ of Dagestani life, and in 2011 a Didoi delegation even appealed for help from Georgia. 3rd, in 2012 mysterious fires started breaking out in a number of mountain Didoi villages, devastating whole villages, and the Dagestani military took over the whole region. The Didoi region—at least 38 total villages—has been ‘on edge’ for the past two years. On top of that, most Didoi villages are literally built on the edge of ridges, with houses stacked vertically on top of each other. One burned out village, Khutrakh, by translation literally means “The Edge.”

Will this crisis among the Didoi lead to new openness to the love of Christ? Caring Christians have reached out to the suffering Didoi people—over 20,000 total—but have been mostly blocked by Dagestani powers. If you will pray for the Didoi according to Jesus’ compassion in Matt.9:36-38, there is hope.



Population

11,700

Location

Dagestan

Language

Dido

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- In light of the hostility from Muslim powers in Dagestan, PRAY for more ‘men and women of peace’ (Luke 10:6) among the Didoi to welcome the love of Christ.
- Pray for the Father (Mt.9:38) to send the right people at the right time into the right relationships, bringing the grace and power of Jesus into the Didoi world.

Digor

“I am Digor and I am Muslim. I am also Ossetian and I am also Russian.” The Digor middle-aged man was reflecting on the many layers of his identity. More than 100,000 Digor people live in southern Russia, mostly in the mountainous northwest section of the province of North Ossetia.

The Digor also have many layers of language. The Digor speak their own Digor Ossetian language. Digor Ossetian is a sister language to the dominant Ossetian language (based on the Iron dialect)—but the two languages are orally incomprehensible to each other; and both groups resort to Russian as a lingua franca. Digor Ossetian is the most ancient Ossetian branch; and the Persian-related Ossetian language descends from the barbarian Scythians, mentioned in Colossians 3:11.

A high percentage of Digor Ossetians have been Muslim since the 17th Century; whereas most other Ossetians identify as Russian Orthodox. Have any Muslim Digor people found their way to Jesus’ saving grace? A handful have, in several cities of the Digor region in northwestern Ossetia. But the barriers are great. 1st, there is deep-seated Muslim resistance to Jesus as Savior. 2nd, intense Digor traditional ways are rooted in Islam and animism. 3rd, “Christianity is seen as for others, not for us.” But, 4th, there is a deep hunger for grace.

Most helpful will be advances, both in written and audio form, of the message of the gospel in the native Digor language. The Gospel of John is completed, and Matthew is half done. When the message of Jesus is in the heart Digor language, doors begin to open to Digor hearts.



Population

100,000

Location

North Ossetia

Language

Digor

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Pray for the Gospel of John in Digor, now in audio form, to be widely distributed.
- Pray for further progress on Matthew and other books of the New Testament.
- Pray for new Digor believers to offer the grace of Jesus in Digor style to their friends, so that the promise of Colossians 3:11 can be fulfilled in our generation—“Christ is all, and in all.”
- Pray for Men & Women of Peace in Digor towns and clans—Luke 10:6

Ginukh

If you get to the steep mountains where Georgia, Russia(Dagestan), and Azerbaijan come together in the Caucasus Range, you're in the vicinity of the Ginukh people. Then, in southwestern Dagestan, head west from the Bezhta region. When you cross the high range to the west of Bezhta and start down—before you get into the Didoi language region—you will first come to a large village where they speak neither Bezhta nor Didoi. This is Ginukh village where more than 600 people speak the distinctive Ginukh language. When the Ginukh need to communicate with their neighbors to the west and to the east, they resort to Russian as the common language.

All told in Dagestan there are 600 to 1000 Ginukh-speakers, with small numbers also living in several Ginukh enclaves in the northern lowlands. Just as it says in Acts 17, the Ginukh know “the boundaries of their habitation.” They raise sheep and cattle as part of their subsistence agriculture economy; and they know where the boundaries of their pasture lands are, bordering with Bezhta territory up on the ridge to the east and with Didoi pasture lands to the west. Small amounts of agriculture also supplement, but the climate is rugged with long winters and short summers.

The Ginukh have been Sunni Muslim since the 8th Century, with strong elements of animism, magic, and the occult mixed in. God loves the Ginukh people. As His Word tells us in Acts 17:26, God honors the distinct Ginukh culture and language. But to date, grace has not broken through. When Jesus told His disciples in Luke 24 that “repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all ethnos,” He was thinking of the Ginukh people.

Most helpful will be advances, both in written and audio form, of the message of the gospel in the native Digor language. The Gospel of John is completed, and Matthew is half done. When the message of Jesus is in the heart Digor language, doors begin to open to Digor hearts.



Population

600

Location

Dagestan

Language

Ginukh

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray for carriers of Jesus' grace to become friends of the Ginukh people. Pray for those to come who will honor the remarkable Ginukh language and help preserve it.
- Pray that oral recordings of the Good News can be prepared in their heart language. Pray Matt.9:36-38 for the Ginukh people.

Godoberi

“You say that Uncle Gadzhi has just died?” the young Godoberi woman, Madina, asked intensely. “How did you hear?” “Aunt Fatimat just called from the mountains,” her cousin Ragimat answered. These two young Godoberi women lived in the capital city of Dagestan with their young families.

“We must reach our husbands immediately. We’ll have to leave this afternoon—the funeral will be tomorrow in Godoberi in the mountains. We can’t be late!” It was a 7-hour drive to the mountain village of Godoberi, the ancient home region of at least 3000 Godoberi-speaking people in this mountainous region of Dagestan in southern Russia. “If we leave quickly, we can get there by midnight and be ready for the funeral observances first thing tomorrow morning.”

The Godoberi people, located in the far western mountains of Dagestan next to Chechnya, observe strict Sunni Islam. At a funeral the male relatives will repeat endless ritual prayers, hoping to reach a total of 70,000 repetitions. Local Muslim traditions say that if you reach that number, the deceased will have a better chance of making it into heaven—but you’ll never know for sure.



Population

3,000

Location

Dagestan

Language

Godoberi

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray that Godoberi families in the city will come into relationship with one of the several thousand followers of Jesus in the urban regions of Dagestan.
- Pray that they’ll come to understand the gift of Jesus to the human race—“for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it’s a gift of God” (Eph.2:8).
- Pray that such a breakthrough will then be passed by Godoberi clan relationships up into the Godoberi heartland in the western mountains.

Gunzib

“We’re going to have to do something about this!” the young Ghunzib man exclaimed vigorously. “We can’t ignore this kind of insult to our honor. We must retaliate or we’re not men!” Plans were made by the aggrieved party to exact vengeance on the perceived culprits in the nearby Bezhtinski village.

The dispute may have come over animals or over a land boundary or over something relating to women and marriage or over a contested political upheaval. The Ghunzib step of ‘honor vengeance’ would likely result in a retaliatory attack of honor from the Bezhta side.

The Ghunzib live in 5 high mountain villages in extreme southwestern Dagestan. Their distinctive Ghunzib language is mutually unintelligible from their nearby neighbors, the Bezhtas. Russian is used as a common language. Ghunzib is spoken by at least 2500 people in Dagestan and in neighboring northeastern Georgia. These villages have been 100% Muslim for over 600 years, with mosques restored in each village in the last two decades.

The Ghunzib are a noble people with carefully guarded ancient traditions, but are also renowned for their quarrels with neighboring mountain peoples. In this they are representative of ‘graceless’ patterns of ‘honor vengeance’ among the mountain peoples of Dagestan. Cycles of violence or alienation separation are all too common. Pray for carriers of the amazing grace of Jesus to become true friends of the Ghunzib people.



Population

2,400

Location

Dagestan, Chechnya

Language

Gunzib

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray that ‘men and women of peace’ among the Ghunzib will understand that “keeping away from strife is an honor for a man”(Prov.20:3); and that there is even greater honor in forgiveness and 2nd-mile love (Rom.12:17-21) than in vengeance.
- Pray that true friends will honor the Ghunzib language and bring the Good News to this people in their heart language.

Ingush

Imran stood over the fresh grave, enduring the cold winds of the mountain valley that leads to Magas, the capital of the province of Ingushetia in southern Russia. Imran's Ingush grandfather had been seven years old when his family and whole nation were gathered into rail cars by Stalin's KGB on February 23rd, 1944. His grandpa survived the three-week rail journey to the Central Asian steppe of Kazakhstan with no heat, no food, and only melted snow for water. Finally, in 1957, his grandfather was allowed to return to his home region of Ingushetia. Sadly, Ossetian families had resettled his village home, where Stalin had put them to take over Ingush lands. Imran, whose own father died in the 1992 war between the Ingush and Ossetians, now couldn't bury his grandfather in the centuries-old family cemetery. Mercifully, Imran's new boss in a Russian construction firm happened to be a Protestant Christian. His new boss was very helpful to Imran in his search to find a location to bury his grandfather. His boss even helped pay for the burial plot! Imran was left with a lot of questions, the foremost being, 'where does such love and compassion come from?'



Population

444,800

Location

Ingushetia,
North Ossetia-Alania

Language

Ingush

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Pray for the Muslim Ingush people who feel double-harmed by both Russians and Ossetians, which are both known as majority-Christian nations.
- Pray for more of Christ's ambassadors to practice audacious love for Ingush people.
- Pray for the Ingush people to seek and find their Savior. John 13:34—"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
- Presently, of the 415,000 Ingush, there are approximately 30 known Ingush believers living in many scattered places, including a few inside Ingushetia. Pray for breakthroughs of Jesus' grace in Ingush villages.

Kabardian

Like many other Kabardian newly-married couples in Nal'chik, capital of Kabardino/Balkaria Republic, Azamat and Zalena exit the government building where marriages are registered and—in a noisy honking caravan with family and friends—drive their way to Pse Zhyg (“Tree of Life”). They lay flowers, hear solemn words from the wedding master and extend upturned palms as an imam prays. Why – with the later exuberance of traditional dancing, joyful feasting, accordion and drum playing, celebratory pistols firing into the air – is this sober, serious place an obligatory first stop?

The Kabardians—over one million total in worldwide population, perhaps 600,000 in the North Caucasus—are the largest surviving ‘tribe’ of the northwestern Caucasus’ Circassian language family. In an earlier era, venerating sacred trees – also mountains, horses, fire and a pantheon of gods – was part of the Kabardians’ eclectic pagan/Christian/Islamic blend of religious practices. But this “Tree of Life,” its seven sets of branches woven to form a skyward arrow, is a monument to the victims of the century-long Russo-Circassian wars that ended in 1864. Considering the Circassians’ epic devastation and the tragic expulsion/emigration/destruction of ninety percent of their population from their homelands in Russia, the Kabardians’ national survival in any form into modern times is almost unbelievable. So now, every Kabardian wedding represents future hope for a people who came so dangerously close to ethnic extermination.



Population

516,826

Location

Kabardino-Balkaria

Language

Kabardian

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

New Testament

- Against this backdrop, the 75-100 scattered Kabardian believers have an opportunity to shine as lights. PRAY for boldness, unity, and vision. Isaiah 60: 1-3 Philippians 2:15
- Pray for the circulation of translated Scriptures into Kabardian cultural circles. The Kabardian New Testament was published in 2011. Audio versions of Luke, Ruth & Jonah are also prepared—and soon Proverbs. Pray for the completion of the entire Bible in Kabardian in the next decade. Heb.4:12
- Pray that spiritual barriers that have kept the gospel from advancing would be broken down. II Corinthians 10: 3-5

Kaitag

“What language are you speaking?” the Dagestani spice seller asked. “We’re speaking English,” we replied. “And what is your language?” we asked. “Dargin,” he said. Conversations continued as we graciously sampled dried herbs and mountain grasses used for tea. Noting our purchase choice, he exclaimed, “Oh that grass is from my home village! I speak Dargin, but really, I am Kaitag! You will have the healthiest tea in all of Dagestan,” he boasted.

Muktar, the spice seller, then proudly escorted us to our car as his new guests. He helped load our purchases into the trunk. He wrapped his arm around our driver and in a nose-to-nose whisper said, “It’s essential that you live for God, dear brother. You must set your life apart for God.” We exchanged phone numbers and accepted his very sincere invitation to “come to my village.” We know a visit to the Kaitag people will require precision and alignment like their embroidery. It will require nuanced relationships and permission by elders to enter. There will be difficulty, but when it comes together it will be beautiful!



Population

21,000

Location

Dagestan

Language

Kajtak

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray for God to fulfill His complete revelation to the Kaitags, most of whom are Sufi mystic Muslims, worshipping the creation but not the Creator.
- Pray that their spiritual zeal will lead them to Isa (Jesus) the savior of all nations.
- Pray for near-neighbor Dargin Christ-followers to reach out to the Kaitags with respect, wisdom, and love.

Kalmyk

The Kalmyk of Russia are Mongolian in origin. In the 16th century, the Kalmyk, or Oirat, left their homeland, now known as areas of northwest China, to avoid political and economic pressures. They had hopes of settling in the rich pastures of the northern Caucasus Mountains. Although the Torgut and Kalmyk-Oirat are closely related and speak the same language, they view themselves as distinct tribes. The Kalmyk are one of the main branches of Mongolian people. One expert described the Kalmyk as physically smaller, more talkative, friendlier and more inquisitive than other Mongols.

In the late 1500s, the Kalmyk adopted Tibetan Buddhism. The people looked to the lamas and shamans for spiritual, medical, and political guidance. In the mid 1900s, the Soviet government exiled most Kalmyk people from their homes and sent them to Siberia. When they returned to Kalmykia, many were forced to conform to Soviet lifestyle, which included being forced to convert to Russian Orthodoxy. Kalmyk Buddhism is a mixture of ethnic beliefs and Shamanism. Occultism is very prominent as Kalmyks have the custom of going to a Buddhist temple and inviting the gods to live inside them.



Population

183,400

Location

Kalmykia, Volgograd Oblast, Astrakhan Oblast

Language

Kalmyk

Religion

Tibetan Buddhism,
Shamanism

Bible Translation

New Testament

- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of the Kalmyk people, so that they will be receptive to the love of Jesus.
- Pray that God will free Kalmyks from occultism and fear of evil spirits.
- Pray that God will grant wisdom and favor to the mission agencies that may be currently focusing on the Kalmyk.

Karachay

Over the past 600 years the Karachai people have experienced life much like a grape placed in a wine press. Formerly part of the once mighty Alan Empire (nominally Christian), the Karachai were defeated in the 14th Century and forcibly converted to Islam by the Turko-Mongol invader Timur. Conquered again in the 19th Century by Russian czarist imperialism, the Karachai people are all too familiar with distress brought about by defeat at the hands of invading nations. During World War II they were swallowed up by the German advance through the Caucasus, only to be re-conquered by Stalin's Soviets shortly thereafter. Due to their "acceptance" of German rule, Stalin then deported the Karachai--numbering roughly 80,000 at the time--from their Caucasus homeland to remote parts of Central Asia 1943-1957. Despite 35 percent of their population dying during the forced relocation, many Karachai have returned to their homeland and have begun repopulating their home area in the Russian province of Karachai-Cherkessia.



Population

218,400

Location

Karachai-Cherkessia,
Stavropol Krai, Kabardino-
Balkaria

Language

Karachai-Balkar

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

New Testament

- Please Pray that in their distress the Karachai will turn to the Lord Jesus, not for political power, but for spiritual deliverance from the bondages of Islam and from the devastations of sin and past suffering. Isaiah 61: 1-4
- Pray that Jesus followers will multiply as joyful lives are modeled by believers, and that numerous churches will be firmly established as the body of Christ grows amongst the Karachai.
- Pray for men and women of peace (Lk 10:6) in each Karachai town/village, to be keys to welcoming the love of God, the grace of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit into each community in the years ahead. II Cor.13:14

Karata

From the rushing waters of the Andiskie Koisu River at the lower Karata village of Nizhni Inkhelo, the mountains catapult upward to the east in the Karata region. Just three miles in, the mountains already tower to nearly 7000 feet. Add another three miles and the mountain ridge to the south reaches 8500 feet.

The 6400 Karata people in western Dagestan live in 10 major villages in this mountainous region and speak their distinctive Karata [accent on last syllable] language. The Karata have been Sunni Muslim for more than 500 years and are defensive of their Muslim traditions.

The most famous mountain in the Karata region is rendered by translation—The Eye of the Needle. Unlike the Rich Young Ruler story in the Gospels, the Karata are not plagued by riches. But other factors in the Karata world make it difficult for them—like ‘through the eye of a needle’—to find their way into the kingdom of Jesus’ grace. Pride and defense of tradition and penalties against violating ‘collective conformity’ are three major barriers in front of a Karata person who would consider a new spiritual option.

On the other hand, in mountain Dagestani cultures such as the Karata there is a deep, abiding hunger for: 1)unselfish overflowing love and 2)for true spiritual power. A courageous person will even go through the eye of a needle when they find the pure love that their heart has been longing for. We know many stories such as this from within Dagestan. But it has not yet happened for the first Karata person.



Population

6,700

Location

Dagestan

Language

Karata, Tokita

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray for a first ‘Cornelius’ or ‘Lydia’ among the Karata to courageously respond to the resurrection power of Jesus.
- Pray for loving Christian friends to honor the Karata language and culture and become ‘bridge people’ into Karata relationships.

Khvarshi

“Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins; they will raise up the former devastations, and they will repair the ruined cities—the desolations of many generations.” Look at pictures of Khvarshin villages high in the southwest mountains of Dagestan, and these words of hope, out of Isaiah, speak volumes.

From 1944-1957 the ancestors of the Khvarshin were forced out of their mountain homeland region and resettled by the Soviets into lowland Chechnya. Only in the late 1950's were they allowed to return to Dagestan; in years following some returned to their abandoned mountain villages and some settled in the northern lowlands of Dagestan.

In current pictures of Khvarshi mountain villages, you see rebuilt, repaired houses standing alongside still-visible ancient ruins. The approximately 4000 Khvarshin people of Dagestan speak their own distinct Khvarshi language, and are located in eight mountain villages and in several lowland settlements in northern Dagestan. For centuries they have followed Sunni Islam mixed with folk superstitious practices. Life is hard for the Khvarshi. Hope is needed.

To date there are no known Khvarshi who have come to the refreshing grace of Jesus. Pray that bridges of relationship and friendship will be built so that Khvarshi can begin to grasp that “times of refreshing can come from the presence of the Lord”(Acts 3). In Jesus, God is not far distant—and as a loving Father He will gladly give His Spirit to those who ask (Luke 11).



Population

4,000

Location

Dagestan

Language

Khvarshi

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray that true friends representing God’s grace will come to the Khvarshi, honoring their unique language and culture.
- Pray that, across these bridges of friendship, grace will flow; and times of refreshing will come spiritually, emotionally, economically to the Khvarshi people—per the promise of Isaiah 61:4.

Kist

Kist people belong to the larger Caucasian ethnic group called Vainakh, just like the Chechens from Chechnya and the Ingush from Ingushetia. All three peoples – Chechens, Ingush and Kists – are Vainakh people and share similar cultural features. The term “Kists” refers to ethnic Chechens who came from Chechnya to settle in Pankisi Gorge in the 18th century, and it is the name that the Georgians originally gave them.

Kist people are Caucasian mountaineers. They are proud people, honest and fair, with a hard, austere, cold character. They don't like expressing their feelings. They know the value of friendship; they are even able to give their life for the other if they are a true friend. They are also very hospitable, and they respect their elders and traditions. The Kist community also managed to preserve its original Chechen dialect, culture and traditions. Most members of the community are bicultural and bilingual, and a large number have also lived in Chechnya at some point.

Throughout time and until now, traditions like hospitality, friendship, mutual help and blood feud have remained. Kist people are proud to show how they can still respect them while coping with modernity and the changes which come along.



Population

707

Location

Chechnya, Ingushetia

Language

Chechen

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Complete

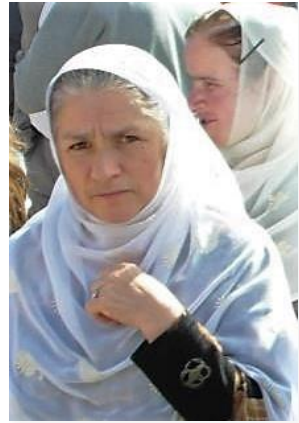
- Pray that the Kist will come to know the power, love, and truth of Jesus and will recognize that He is the only way to God.
- Pray for God to send strong Christians to the Kist who will be able to share the good news and hope of Jesus.
- Pray that God will bring the Kist near to Himself, and that they will be satisfied with the goodness of His presence (Ps. 65:4).

Kubachi

“Son, listen to me carefully, and watch exactly how I do this. This week I will teach the ancient prescription for our silversmithing production. You must always guard this carefully.” The Kubachi elder was speaking to his oldest son. This was a matter of honor among the Kubachi who are the renowned masters in the Caucasus of silversmithing and fine metalware. In the high mountain village of Kubachi their swords, necklaces, fine goblets, and intricate filigree metalwork have been produced for centuries—with the secrets of their methods carefully guarded from generation to generation.

The distinct Kubachi [accent on last syllable] language of Kubachi town is mutually unintelligible from the languages of all surrounding villages in this Dargin region of south central Dagestan. At least 7000 Kubachi live in their fog-shrouded central village and in several Kubachi enclaves in Dagestani cities. Honor is a central theme of the Kubachi tradition, and strong prohibitions inhibit any young Kubachi from marrying outside the guarded Kubachi circle.

For more than 10 centuries, Islam has blended in to the proud Kubachi culture. Rigid defense of Kubachi traditions and rigid defense of Islam often go hand in hand. Is there hope of grace for this proud and guarded people? The Kubachi need a Nicodemus who will honorably seek out grace-filled answers for his spiritual dissatisfaction from a representative of Jesus’ salvation in a nearby people group of Dagestan. Given the proud traditions of Kubachi, he may need to initially do this at night— just as Nicodemus did in John 3.



Population

7,000

Location

Dagestan

Language

Kubachi

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Pray for courageous Kubachi who will understand that highest honor comes from the one true God and not from created things (Rom.1). And pray that the hope of I Peter 1:7 will spread through the Kubachi people—“...that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Kumyk

The elderly Kumyk man--looking out over Makhachkala, Dagestan, from his home on the ridge above the city--exclaimed, "Dagestan has the best caviar, the best cognac, and the best swimming in the world!" Tragically, in the past 25 years, few from the outside world have ever enjoyed these amenities, due to the relentless cycles of violence and instability plaguing the region of Dagestan.

An agricultural people located along the northwestern coast of the Caspian Sea inside Dagestan in southern Russia, the Kumyk people make their livelihood primarily by farming, vineyards, and raising cattle. Although the modern era has led a few Kumyk -- totaling 503,000 as a people group--to settle in other regions of the North Caucasus, as a whole they've chosen to live close to their ancestral home on the upper terraces of the Kumyk Plateau in Dagestan for over 1000 years. The reason is most likely due to the fertile soil that this pleasant plateau has always offered their people. Estimated Kumyk population inside Dagestan is 425,000. The Kumyk are one of two Turkic-language peoples among the 34 languages of Dagestan (the Nogai the other Dagestani Turkic language).

Despite ideal soil, the hearts of the Kumyk have not been fertile to the gospel of Jesus since the 9th century. Few cultural remnants of Christianity remain for a people whose 1000 years of Islamic beliefs mix with pagan practices to mark the traditions passed down to each new generation. Starting in the 10th Century the Kumyk gained increasing power in Dagestan, and from the 16th-19th Centuries under the Shamkhal Khanate exerted major political leadership in the region of central Dagestan.



Population

503,100

Location

North Ossetia-Alania,
Dagestan

Language

Kumyk

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

New Testament

- Just as the land they live on is ideal for growth, please pray that new humility will make the hearts of the Kumyk people fertile to the good news of Jesus Christ. Hosea 10:12
- Pray that Jesus' followers will multiply as the gospel is sown like a seed into the lives of these agricultural people, and that there will be a great harvest of souls from those God has working among the Kumyk. John 4:35

Lak

Laks are located in approximately 10 towns/villages in the northwestern NovoLakskoe Region, in approximately 12 villages in northeastern Dagestan, and perhaps 50 still-active villages in the original mountain homeland region in southcentral Dagestan. Many Lak have also relocated to the urban center of Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan. All of these upheavals have ‘stretched’ the Lak, not only geographically but also emotionally and relationally. The Lak were one of the first of all Dagestani peoples to convert to Islam in the 8th Century, and for many centuries their mountain central town of Kumukh was a center of Islamic learning. Now in this era the Lak hold a position of respect for many Dagestanis, partly due to their ancient leadership and also now due to their unifying influence as they have stretched into many sectors of Dagestan. Starting in the 1990’s a significant number of urban Lak came to faith in Jesus— there are now more than 50 Lak believers, mostly in urban sectors of Dagestan.

The New Testament books of Mark and Luke were completed in Lak 12 years ago, but then Bible work stalled due to no team leadership available. Thankfully, in 2010 a young Russian linguist, with his family, has moved to Dagestan and restarted Lak linguistic work; presently the Gospel of Matthew is being translated, with the future goal of finishing the NT. Lak history is majestic, and yet tragic, and often the deficit of loving grace is palpably felt. Pray that the Lak people—in the midst of their many upheavals— will be drawn to ‘the Father of mercies and God of all comfort’ in the love of Christ. II Cor.1:3



Population

178,600

Location

Dagestan, Stavropol Krai

Language

Lak

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Pray for the Lak believers to shine as bright lights in the midst of their Lak families & clans. Phil.2:12-15
- Pray for encouragement & success for the newly reassembled Lak Bible Translation Team. Hebrews 4:12

Lezgin

In the 90 Lezgi towns and villages of Dagestan the Lezgi raise sheep and goats, combined with subsistence agriculture, leather working, and textile production [famous hand woven carpets]. Life is similar in the more than 50 Lezgi towns and villages of northern Azerbaijan; with the exception that in Dagestan Russian serves as the 2nd language, whereas Azeri is the 2nd language for Lezgi in Azerbaijan. The Lezgi language, however, is alive and well—with robust oral activity in Lezgi villages, homes, and schools; and a huge reservoir of Lezgi literature and music. Many Lezgi have also outmigrated from rural Lezgi regions to urban areas of Dagestan and Azerbaijan, primarily for economic reasons. Patriarchal social structure among the Lezgi remains strong, especially in village life and in demarcated urban enclaves.

In the past two decades there are now 75+ Lezgi followers of Jesus in Dagestan, and more than 100 Lezgi believers in Azerbaijan. Pray for their influence to spread and multiply—Colossians 1:6. Of great significance is progress in Lezgi Bible translation. The Four Gospels & Acts and a Children’s Bible have been published in Lezgi, and sixteen additional NT books are in process. From the OT, Ruth, Esther & Jonah have been published, and ten more OT books are in process. There is a strong Bible translation team, including Lezgi believers. This work connects with the heart of Lezgi language and culture. An ancient text in a Lezgi tribal language, from pre-Islamic times, even contains Bible translation portions. Pray that the best of noble Lezgi culture will be infused with the regenerating power of Jesus’ grace.



Population

476,228

Location

Dagestan, Stavropol Krai

Language

Lezgi

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

New Testament

- Pray that God will protect and encourage the small number of Lezgin Christians and use them mightily to make disciples among their people.
- Ask the Lord to raise up strong multiplying churches among the Lezgin.
- Pray for the completion of a Bible translation in the Lezgin language.

Meskhetian Turks

For the past 70 years the Meskhetian Turks have lived a pain-filled existence. The Meskhetian Turks are a Turkish-speaking people whose original homeland was a region of southern Georgia near the border with Turkey. However, in 1944 the Soviet Union under Stalin forcibly deported them en masse to Central Asia where they experienced much discrimination and civil rights abuse. In the 1980's and 90's, when they were finally permitted to return, Georgia did not let them resettle there. Many returned to southern Russia but Russia would not grant them Russian citizenship, and they again experienced severe discrimination and harassment. A small number have been able to emigrate to Turkey or Ukraine or the U.S. Of the approximately 60,000 who remain in Russia, they are located primarily in Kabardino-Balkaria, Stavropol Krai, Krasnodar Krai, or Rostov Oblast.

The Meskhetian Turks are Sunni Muslim, but due to their perpetual exile and the influence of the Soviet Union, many of them are not strict adherents of Islam. Many of their traditions contain a mixture of Muslim, Caucasian, and Russian elements. Family and clan ties are extremely important for the Meskhetian people, and have played a crucial role in preserving their culture through their many displacements.

If ever a people have needed the powerful love of Jesus to encourage, comfort, and bless, it would be the Meskhetian nation. Pray for Christian neighbors and friends in southern Russia, in Ukraine, in the United States, and in places like Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the Meskhetian people. Presently there is one known follower of Jesus among the Meskhetian Turks.



Population

60,000

Location

Rostov Oblast, Krasnodar Krai, Kabardino-Balkaria

Language

Turkish

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Complete

- Pray for God to bring healing and hope to the hearts of the Meskhetian Turks who have been in physical and spiritual exile.
- Pray that the Meskhetian Turks will become citizens of heaven and know that their homeland is with Jesus.

Mountain Jew

The Mountain Jews, or Jews of the Caucasus, have inhabited the North Caucasus region since the 5th century. The Mountain Jews community originated from Ancient Persia and their language, Juhuri is an ancient Southwest Iranian language and a Persian dialect which integrates many elements of Ancient Hebrew.

By early 17th century, Mountain Jews formed many small settlements throughout the mountain valleys of Dagestan. In the 18th–19th century, the Jews resettled from the highlands to the coastal lowlands but carried the name "Mountain Jews" with them. By 1926, more than 85% of Mountain Jews in Dagestan were already classed as urban. Mountain Jews were mainly concentrated in the cities of Makhachkala, Buynaksk, Derbent, Nalchik and Grozny in North Caucasus. With changing economic and political realities following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many Mountain Jews permanently left their hometowns in the Caucasus and relocated to Moscow or abroad. The community has been particularly affected by First Chechen War that saw high incidence of kidnappings and violence at the hands of militants against the local Jewish community. Today, a notable number of Mountain Jews reside in Israel and United States.

The Mountain Jews celebrate Jewish holidays and the Sabbath, and the synagogue is the center of Jewish community. They have their own traditional music, dances and foods, which portrays the mix of Caucasian and Jewish culture. These traditions are what bind the Mountain Jews together as they seek to preserve their culture and religion.



Population

20,000

Location

Kabardino-Balkaria,
Stavropol Krai, Dagestan

Language

Judeo-Tat

Religion

Judaism

Bible Translation

Portions

- Pray that the Mountain Jews would know that Jesus is the True Messiah and Savior of the world.
- Ask the Lord to soften the hearts of the Jews towards Christians so that they might hear and receive the message of Jesus Christ.
- Ask God to preserve the culture and language of the Mountain Jews so that this people will worship the One True God together.

Murego/Gubden

The Murego/Gubden people group lives in south central Dagestan. Their oral language is related to the Dargin family of languages and is spoken in 15 towns and villages. In these villages people raise sheep and chickens along with cattle. Fruit-bearing orchards are also visible on many hillsides.

In the book of Acts, Paul said that before his conversion, “he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees.” If Paul had grown up in Dagestan, he probably would have been like the people from the town of Gubden who have the reputation of being the most fierce and fundamentalist Muslims in the area. Islam in Gubden is influenced by a zealous Salafi strain emanating out of Saudi Arabia. Women dress more conservatively than they do in other Muslim regions of Dagestan. The devout people pride themselves in their adherence to Muslim law and rituals. Paul wrote in Philippians, “...as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal...after the Law, above reproach.” But then he found “the power of the resurrection...the righteousness not based on human strength, but through faith in Christ.” And “...what I previously highly valued, I now consider as rubbish, in contrast to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord!”



Population

39,000

Location

Dagestan

Language

Dargwa

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray that strong believers like the Apostle Paul will come to the religiously zealous Gubden people.
- Pray that the Lord will prepare hearts among this people group to meet the true and living God on a new Damascus road in the mountains of central Dagestan.

Muslim Tat

The Tats in the Caucasus live mostly along the northeast Caspian coastline of Azerbaijan and the adjoining coastal area of Dagestan. Culturally and according to their everyday life, the Tats are almost indistinguishable from the Azerbaijani; however, they have preserved their national identity. Tats do not easily trust outsiders or even one another, so they keep to themselves. This provides an obstacle for those who would take the gospel to them. They speak a number of dialects, and they must borrow the script of another language in order to read or write. As a result, they have no Scriptures available to them, and no evangelistic materials are available in their heart languages.

**Population**

2,300

LocationDagestan, Moscow,
Stavropol Krai**Language**

Tat, Muslim

Religion

Islam (Shia)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Ask God to strengthen, protect, and encourage the Christian Muslim Tats and empower them to share the gospel with family and friends.
- Pray that God will raise up intercessors to faithfully pray for the Tats.
- Pray that the Tats will know the Lord is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds. Pray that they will know the Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth (Ps. 145:17-18).

Nogai

This once-nomadic people, now primarily, live in small villages and work with agriculture and with livestock in particular. A distinctive Nogai cuisine, preserving many of their Mongol roots, survives—embodied vividly by Nogai Tea, a hot tea prepared by boiling milk and tea together, along with butter, salt, and pepper. In southern Russia Nogai patriarchal traditions are mixed with contemporary Russian, Central Asian, and Muslim world influences. Ancient customs are still revered; but life is tempered today by disillusionment from the destabilizing elements of violence/chaos/corruption amidst the ‘graceless’ dynamics of present-day Dagestan. There is a great need for agape love to infuse Nogai culture and Dagestan as a whole. Pray that the descendants of the Golden Horde will find their greatest joy in the generation ahead in the fulfillment of the Golden Rule, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

At present there are believed to be as many as 20 Nogai followers of Jesus. In 2011 the New Testament was published in the Nogai language, and now Genesis, Ruth, Esther, and Jonah have also been completed in Nogai. Pray for many Nogai to come to new openness to the love, peace, and joy of the gospel of Jesus, and for this to spread thru Nogai circles in the Nogai language. Nogai believers risk rejection by their families, as well as a threat to their livelihood, if their identity in Christ becomes known in the midst of the intensely Muslim Nogai society.



Population

103,700

Location

Dagestan, Stavropol Krai,
Karachay-Cherkessia

Language

Nogai

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

New Testament

- Pray that God will raise up qualified linguists to complete the translation of the Bible into Nogai. Pray that the already-completed New Testament will be read and used to powerfully proclaim the gospel of Jesus.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of the Nogai toward Christians so they will be receptive to the good news.
- Ask the Lord to bring forth healthy, triumphant Nogai churches for the glory of His name.

Ossetians

In the 18th Century, Russia waged a violent and protracted war of Imperial conquest in the Caucasus region. Specific aspects of this conquest were facilitated by Ossetians. The establishment of Russian rule elevated the status of Eastern Orthodox Ossetians, and heralded the forced deportation of Islamic activists from the region. These factors directly influence the Ossetian relationship to the predominantly Islamic nations living across the region.

In the late 1800's Evangelical faith sprang forth among both among Russians and Ossetians. The publication of the four Gospels in the I'ron dialect as well as Ossetian language preaching resulted in the establishment of several Ossetian evangelical congregations. Church planting and evangelistic ministries continued during the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and Russian civil war. However, in the 1930's the Soviet authorities outlawed all religious activity and believers came under deadly persecution. Only during the decline of the Soviet Union in the late 1980's were religious liberties restored. Today there are 25-30 evangelical congregations in North Ossetia. Approximately 7 of these congregations use Ossetian I'ron language during some portion of the Sunday morning worship.



Population

450,000

Location

North Ossetia

Language

Ossetic (Iron)

Religion

Orthodox Christian

Bible Translation

Complete

- Pray that spiritually revived clan elders would lead men of their clans in studying the Bible and in submission to Jesus as the ultimate Elder over all clans.
- Pray that the pleasure of true, holy and joyous worship will set entire clans free from the centuries-old practices of pagan spirit worship and animal sacrifices.

Rutul

What do the mountains of southern Dagestan, the coastal city of Derbent, northern Azerbaijan, Moscow, China, and Ohio all have in common?? In each place, people are praying for the grace of Jesus to break through to the historically Muslim Rutul people who live in 17 mountain villages in southern Dagestan and in several locations across the border in northern Azerbaijan. Does the Lord work through prayer? Yes.

Ten years ago a Christian friend met a Rutul businessman in the city of Derbent in southern Dagestan and began praying for the Rutul people.

A few years later a pastor in Ohio took the challenge to begin praying for the Rutul people until God raised up a whole church to carry the torch for them. About that same time, linguistic research developments in northern Azerbaijan opened up more doors of relationship to the Rutul.

In 2010 fifteen Christians in a house church network in China, after a month of prayer and fasting for Caucasus peoples, felt led to commit themselves to praying Matt.9:36-38 persistently on behalf of Jesus to the Rutul people.

Now, in the past two years a Rutul mother and son in the capital city of Dagestan came to Jesus. And in the spring of 2013, a young Rutul man working for a construction firm in Moscow, gave his life to Jesus through the influence of a fellow worker. These three are the first known believers in Jesus among the Rutul.



Population

35,200

Location

Dagestan, Kalmykia,
Stavropol Krai, Rostov
Oblast

Language

Rutul

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Ask God to use the small number of Rutul Christians to share the message of salvation with their friends and families.
- Pray that God will raise up linguists to devise a written script for the Rutul, and that the Bible may be translated into their native language.
- Pray that God will take authority over the spiritual principalities and powers that are keeping the Rutul bound.

Shapsug

The traditional Shapsug culture had much in common with the Adyghe culture. The Shapsugs were engaged in agriculture, cattle and horse breeding, gardening, viticulture, and bee keeping. In pre-Islamic times, the Shapsugs worshipped gods common among all the Adyghe peoples: Shible (god of thunder and lightning), Sozeresh (god of fertility), Yemish or Yemij (god of war), Akhin and Khakustash (protectors of cattle breeding), Tlepsh (god of blacksmithing), Keshkogwasaha (god of the Black Sea), etc. The Shapsugs used to perform the Hantse Guashe ceremony of rain calling during droughts by carrying a dressed doll through the aul (i.e. village) and then drowning it in the river, and never retrieving the doll before it rained.



Population

3,882

Location

Krasnodar Krai, Adyghea

Language

Shapsug Adyghe dialect

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

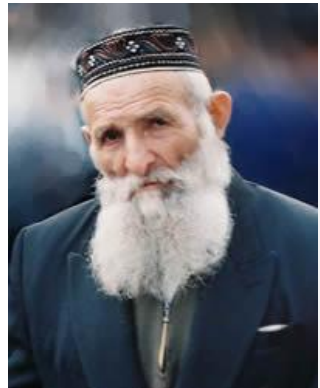
New Testament

- Pray that these Muslims will recognize that Islam cannot save them from their sin, but that Jesus can save them and give them new life.
- Pray for a church planting movement among them that will spread throughout their Black Sea homeland.
- Ask God to reveal Himself and His sovereignty to the Shapsug, and that they will know that He is the One who causes the rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Tabasaran

“Come visit us anytime!” The warm-spirited invitation was given on the village paths in the highland Tabasaran village. The year was 1996. The unusual thing about this invitation was that the invitation was being given by local Tabasarans to the first international family to ever live in this mountain region in southern Dagestan. Furthermore, the international family at first didn’t know what to do— maybe when they would go to visit it would be an inappropriate time, or not convenient? But eventually this family discovered that in this culture to go and visit “without an invitation” is an even higher honor to the hosts than if something is preplanned. And every time that a warm visit was ventured was always a good time. Why is this? In village Tabasaran culture, friendship & hospitality is placed at the highest value. If a person has many friends, they are a ‘wealthy’ person. This was true not only for first-time international friends, but within the culture day by day in friendship hospitality with one another. If a guest came to your home, everything else was dropped and the friendship relationships took first priority.

In 1997 the first Tabasaran-speaking person came to Jesus. This was followed by dozens more in the decade following, both in village regions and in urban regions of Dagestan. There are now more than 100 Tabasaran believers—including in some regions outside of Dagestan. The New Testament has been published in Tabasaran (2010), and translation work is underway in the Old Testament.



Population

146,400

Location

Dagestan, Rostov Oblast,
Krasnodar Krai, Stavropol
Krai

Language

Tabasaran

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

New Testament

- Pray that strong, local churches will be raised up among the Tabasaran that will multiply.
- Pray that God will open the hearts of the Tabasaran to hear and be receptive to the gospel.
- Ask the Lord to save key leaders among the Tabasaran who will boldly declare the good news to their own people.

Tindi

How could a soap opera open the door toward Jesus?! Ask Tadz-utdin*, a young Tindi university student in the capital city of Dagestan in southern Russia. The Turkish soap opera—the most popular TV show in recent years in Dagestan—for some reason frequently has positive things to say about Martin Luther, the Protestant church reformer. This has opened the door for a Dagestani believer Alek* to share the gospel of grace with Tadz-utdin. Pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to reveal the forgiving grace of Jesus to Tadz-utdin and his Tindi family and relatives.

The Tindi hail from the high mountains of extreme south-western Dagestan. The central town of the Tindi people is picture-postcard famous throughout southern Russia. Its multi-tiered levels of homes and winding village streets command a dynamic view of surrounding snow-capped mountains. The distinct Tindi language is spoken in 14 villages in this mountainous region—with more than 10,000 Tindi total living in Dagestan.

Through the winding hilly streets of the town of Tindi, multiple mosques are visible in various quadrants of the settlement. The Tindi have followed Sunni Islam for many centuries, in conjunction with ancient nature worship of the sun, moon, and other created things. So far, the only spiritual hope for the Tindi has been by trying to do enough by Muslim laws or by trying to appease animistic spirits. How much simpler it would be to turn from sinfulness and receive the gift of grace freely offered through Jesus.



Population

10,000

Location

Dagestan

Language

Tindi

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray that God’s Spirit will bring conviction of sin to Tadz-utdin and the Tindi people—“for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, being forgiven as a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”Romans 3:23-24
- Pray for weariness with futile religious striving, and for joy to break out over the marvelous grace of Jesus.

Tsakhur

These lines from Song of Solomon could be the words of a Tsakhur person: “Do not stare at me because I am dark-complected; for the sun has burned me... They made me caretaker of the vineyards, but I have not taken care of my own vineyard.”

The Tsakhur are a proud mountain people, living in 13 villages in the high mountains of southern Dagestan in Russia and in 23 villages/towns across the border in northwestern Azerbaijan—at least 50,000 total population. To the Russians and Azerbaijanis, the Tsakhurs are “the wild mountain ones, primitive, with dark features.” And in the southern reaches of Tsakhur territory, they do tend vineyards, although shepherding and working with wool have been the primary economic feature of Tsakhur village life.

Prior to 1850, for centuries the Tsakhur were ruled by their own Tsakhur sultanate. And the Tsakhur are famous for their proverbs and love of wisdom. Tsakhur history is a rich tapestry of rugged beauty and communal identity, but one also beset with tragedy and a lack of grace. Islam gained ascendancy in the Tsakhur world a millenium ago, and at the present moment there are no known Tsakhurs who are infused with the grace of Jesus and His life-transforming Spirit. “I have not taken care of my own vineyard...”



Population

12,769

Location

Dagestan, Stavropol Krai,
Rostov Oblast

Language

Tsakhur

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

Portions

- Pray for bridges of respect and friendship from bearers of the gospel of Jesus to expand in the Tsakhur world.
- Pray for wide listening of an oral recording of the Gospel of Luke in Tsakhur finished in 2008, and for effective distribution of a brilliant audio version (2013) of the Book of Proverbs in Tsakhur.
- Pray that in this decade many Tsakhur will be infused with Jesus’ grace and the Fruit of the Spirit—Galatians 5:22-23.

Tsudakhar

Looking for a classy furry hat in a bazaar in Russian cities such as Moscow or Krasnodar or Makhachkala? Ask around for the Tsudakhar Dargin men and before long you'll have the hat you're looking for. Throughout Russia many Tsudakhar men are known as hat sellers.

The Tsudakhar hail from central Dagestan at the western edge of the Dargin family of languages. Many Tsudakhar speak Dargin and Russian, but their heart identity is as Tsudakhar People; and it's the Tsudakhar oral language which they speak in their home villages in the Tsudakhar region, and when they're working together selling hats.

The Tsudakhar people—at least 20,000 total, living in eight major towns and many smaller villages— have been staunch Muslims for more than 600 years. Islam in central Dagestan is not only a religion; it also is interwoven with the structure of society. The male council of elders in each village oversees religious behavior and communal decisions. There is great pride in Islamic identity, but when conflicts emerge there is little tradition of grace and reconciliation. And, as we approach death, how can we know if we will receive uncertain grace from a stern and distant God?

Among the Tsudakhar, one person— Sef-utdin*-- has found the grace of Jesus for life now and for all eternity. A Russian friend got delivered from drunkenness through Jesus, and through this friend Sef-utdin found the joy of salvation himself. Now he wears not only a beautiful Tsudakhar Dargin hat, but also “the helmet of salvation.” *--name changed



Population

20,000

Location

Dagestan

Language

Dargwa

Religion

Islam (Sunni)

Bible Translation

None

- Pray that the helmet of salvation which adorns Sef-utdin's life will spread to many more Tsudakhar hat sellers.
- Pray that the Fruit of the Spirit, by the grace of Jesus, will spread through many Tsudakhar lives and families and clans and villages.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Please visit joshuaproject.net or etnopedia.org for further information on each of these people groups.