



Case Studies on Analyzing Growth Trends by City or Administrative Division

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Analysis of LDS Growth in Nairobi, Kenya

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Overview

Nairobi is the most populous metropolitan area in Kenya and the second most populous metropolitan area in East Africa. There were an estimated 5.05 million people who lived in the Nairobi urban agglomeration as of early 2015.^[1] The metropolitan area includes Nairobi County and adjacent urban areas within the administrative counties of Kajiado, Kiambu, and Machakos. The LDS Church has maintained an API PDF Code official presence in Nairobi since the late 1970s. Slow growth occurred during the remainder of the twentieth century and during the 2000s as evidenced by small increases in the number of congregations and modest membership growth. However, rapid congregational growth has occurred in the 2010s.[Breitling Bentley Replica Watches](#)

This case study reviews the history of the Church in Nairobi. Recent church growth and missionary successes are analyzed. Opportunities and challenges for future growth are discussed. The growth of the Church in other major East African cities is compared to LDS growth trends in Nairobi. The size and growth trends of other missionary-focused Christian groups is summarized. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for future growth are predicted.

LDS Background

The first Church members to live in Kenya were American USAID employees and their families in the 1970s. These members held worship services in their own homes under the jurisdiction of the Switzerland Mission. The first Kenyans joined the Church in 1979 and the Church organized its first branch (today known as the Mountain View Ward). The first senior couple to serve in Kenya began their service in 1980. The Church established the Kenya District in May 1981 (later renamed the Nairobi Kenya District). A second branch was organized in Nairobi in 1989 (today known as the Nairobi 1st Ward).

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The Church obtained government registration in February 1991 and organized the Kenya Nairobi Mission in July 1991. There were approximately 500 members in Kenya at year-end 1991 and the vast majority of these members appeared to reside in the Nairobi area. The Church in Nairobi organized four new branches in 1992 to reduce travel times, expand outreach,[best replica watches](#) and accommodate membership growth. No additional branches were organized until 1998 when the Nairobi 2nd Branch was organized. The Church reached the minimal criteria to organize a stake and advanced the Nairobi Kenya District into a stake in 2001. The district reported 1,760 members at year-end 2000. The new stake initially included five wards (Nairobi 1st, Nairobi 2nd, Upper-Hill, Kasarani and Riruta) and two branches (Westlands and Langata). There were 750 people in attendance at the special conference to organize the new stake.^[2]

Stagnant congregational growth ICC Code Download occurred in Nairobi during the 2000s as no new congregations were organized between July 1999 and February 2011. The Athi River Branch was reassigned from the Kenya Nairobi Mission to the Nairobi Kenya Stake during the late 2000s. There were five wards and three branches in the stake in late 2010.

Rapid congregational growth occurred in Nairobi during the 2010s. New congregations organized included the Kayole Ward (2011), Ongata Rongai Branch (2011), Zimmerman Ward (2012), Kitengela Branch (2014), Westlands Ward (2014), Kayole 2nd Ward (2014), and South B Ward (2014). Two wards were organized from branches during this period: the Mountain View Ward [from the Westlands Branch] (2011) and the Athi River Ward (2012).

The number of congregations in the Nairobi area increased from one in 1979 to two in 1989, six in 1992, seven in 1998, eight in 1999, 10 in 2011, 11 in 2012, and 15 in 2014. A map displaying the year of creation, the location of LDS congregations in the Nairobi area, and the geographic boundaries of the Nairobi Kenya Stake can be found [here](#).

The average ward or branch in Nairobi serviced 337,000 people as of early 2015.

Successes

The Church in Nairobi constitutes the greatest LDS center of strength in East Africa. Nairobi has played an important role in the expansion of missionary activity within the region as it was the first city in East Africa to have an official branch, a mission, and a stake. No other city in East Africa has as many LDS congregations as Nairobi. Initial missionary efforts in 1992 under the Kenya Nairobi Mission established multiple small branches in various areas of the Nairobi metropolitan area to reduce travel times, increase accessibility to LDS congregations, and spur greater growth. This strategy proved to be effective as demonstrated by the organization of the first stake less than a decade later in 2001.

The Church has reversed stagnant congregational growth trends that persisted during the 2000s as evidenced by the number of congregations nearly doubling from eight to 15 within less than five years. Local member reports indicate that the number of active members has substantially increased. This progress has appeared to occur as a result of stake leaders organizing branches in lesser-reached areas and dividing larger wards to reduce travel times for members. Larger numbers of full-time missionaries have also been assigned to Nairobi in recent years.

Missionaries have reported that many Kenyans have exhibited strong receptivity to the LDS gospel witness. Missionaries serving in Nairobi have reported as many as 15 investigators attending church on a single Sunday in some congregations.

Opportunities

There are good opportunities to organize branches and member groups in lesser-reached communities where there at least some active members, but distance to the nearest meetinghouse has prevented members and investigators from regularly attending church services. Greater emphasis on member-missionary activity can make better use of limited numbers of full-time missionaries so that full-time missionaries spend most of their time teaching rather than finding investigators. There are good opportunities to increase the number of local members serving full-time missions through seminary and institute and focus from bishops and branch presidents on preparing youth for missionary service.

Former LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley encouraged local members to be faithful and patient as they lived the gospel and shared it with others. President Hinckley promised members that a temple would one day be built in East Africa, possibly in Nairobi. The Church may one day organize a separate area for East Africa from a division of the Africa Southeast Area with headquarters in Nairobi due to the large administrative burden of the Africa Southeast Area.

Challenges

The Church in Kenya has experienced chronic challenges with obtaining foreign missionary visas. The Church has been unable to significantly increase the number of foreign missionary visas within recent years, resulting in a fixed number of missionaries available for the entire country of 44 million. Consequently worldwide increases in the number of full-time missionaries will likely have no effect on increasing the number of missionaries assigned to Nairobi unless greater numbers of Kenyan members serve missions and are called to serve within their home country.

Lower receptivity to the Church and few mission resources allocated to the city have appeared responsible for little growth in Nairobi over the past 40 years. The Church has experienced some of the slowest growth in Nairobi among metropolitan areas in Sub-Saharan Africa with over one million inhabitants and an LDS presence maintained for at least three decades. Other metropolitan areas with a comparable population size and duration of an LDS presence have experienced significantly greater growth such as Accra, Ghana where in 2014 there were seven stakes, a missionary training center, and a temple.

The Church only extends missionary activity in English. The Kenya Nairobi Mission has yet to extend Swahili-specific outreach among millions of Swahili speakers who reside in the Nairobi metropolitan area. A lack of Swahili outreach may have resulted in reduced receptivity among Swahili speakers due to language barriers. The Church in Kenya has traditionally required prospective converts to pass a baptismal interview conducted in the English language. Although this has resulted in higher convert retention rates in some locations due to more devoted converts diligently studying English to be baptized, this has also resulted in challenges with the Church addressing cultural compatibility issues and achieving greater growth.

Local members report significant challenges regarding the economic self-sufficiency of many members. Unemployed Latter-day Saints constitute a sizable minority or a majority in some congregations. High unemployment rates among Kenyan Latter-day Saints appears attributed to missionaries primarily conducting finding activities in slums or locations where there are no guards

or security fences that prevent door-to-door proselytism. Consequently, the Church has had challenges with baptizing larger numbers of middle class individuals and families.

Comparative Growth

The size of the LDS Church in Nairobi is comparable to other metropolitan areas in East Africa where there are at least one million inhabitants. However, LDS growth trends in Nairobi have outpaced nearly all major cities in the region within the past decade. Kampala, Uganda is the best-reached major metropolitan area in the region as attested by one LDS congregation per 242,000 inhabitants. Kampala is the only other city in the region that has an LDS stake (organized in 2010). However, the Church in Kampala has experienced extremely slow growth during the past decade as evidenced by only two new congregations organized. The size of the LDS Church in Nairobi is comparable to Mombasa, Kenya (one LDS congregation per 363,000 inhabitants) and Kigali, Rwanda (one LDS congregation per 387,000 inhabitants). Stagnant congregational growth has occurred in Mombasa during the past decade whereas the Church has achieved rapid congregational growth in Kigali. Some major metropolitan areas in East Africa have had an LDS presence for over two decades, but report a minimal LDS presence and slow growth such as Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania (one LDS congregation per 1.28 million inhabitants) and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (one LDS congregation per 1.12 million inhabitants). There is no LDS presence in Mogadishu, Somalia.

Other missionary-focused Christian groups significantly vary in size and growth trends. Evangelicals number among the largest religious groups in Kenya and maintain a pervasive presence in Nairobi. Approximately half the Kenyan population is Evangelical.[3] The Seventh Day Adventist Church numbers among the largest nontraditional, missionary-focused Christian groups in Nairobi. Adventists have achieved steady growth within the past decade. Adventists in Nairobi and central Kenya reported 75,384 members, 647 churches (larger or well-established congregations), 913 companies (small or recently-established congregations), and 3,810 baptisms in 2004 and 126,759 members, 1,026 churches, 1,082 companies, and 9,211 baptisms in 2013.[4] Jehovah's Witnesses maintain a widespread presence in the Nairobi area. Witnesses operate approximately 100 congregations in the Nairobi metropolitan area – the vast majority of which hold worship services in Swahili and English. Witnesses translate proselytism materials into English, Swahili, Kikuyu, and Kenyan Sign Language. The Church of the Nazarene has appeared to experience little growth. Nazarenes reported approximately two dozen congregations in the Nairobi area in early 2015.[5]

Limitations

No geospatial analysis of LDS growth was conducted due to limited city population data on Nairobi city constituencies. The Church does not publish annual, country-by-country data on the number of convert baptisms, the number of members serving full-time missions, the number of full-time missionaries assigned, or the increase of children of record. No data is available to the public regarding official LDS statistics on member activity and convert retention rates. The Church does not report an official list of its member groups by country or for the entire world. Consequently member groups may operate in the Nairobi area that are not reported in this case study. The Church in Kenya does not publish a breakdown of its membership by administrative division.

Future Prospects

The outlook for future LDS growth in Nairobi appears favorable within the near future. The population has continued to exhibit good receptivity to LDS outreach and the Church has regularly organized new congregations within the past several years to reduce travel times and accommodate active membership growth. The organization of a second stake within Nairobi appears imminent as evidenced by 12 wards and three branches within a single stake. However, problems with member economic self-sufficiency, challenges obtaining foreign missionary visas, and many residing far from LDS meetinghouses pose challenges for greater growth. Church planting tactics that concentrate on organizing member groups or branches within closer proximity to target populations has enormous potential to accelerate growth. Nairobi appears a likely candidate for a temple to service East Africa once there are several stakes within the metropolitan area. The Church may organize a new area to administer East Africa and headquarter the area in Nairobi one day.

[1] "Major Agglomerations of the World," www.citypopulation.de, retrieved 5 February 2015. <http://www.citypopulation.de/world/Agglomerations.html>

[2] Gerland, W. Jensen; Jensen, Carolyn. "First stake in Kenya created," LDS Church News, 29 September 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnewsarchive.com/articles/40567/First-stake-in-Kenya-created.html>

[3] "Kenya," Operation World, retrieved 30 March 2015. <http://www.operationworld.org/keny>

[4] "Central Kenya Conference (2013-Present)," www.adventiststatistics.org, retrieved 30 March 2015. http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=C10065

[5] "Nazarene Church Data Search," [nazarene.org](http://app.nazarene.org), retrieved 30 March 2015. <http://app.nazarene.org/FindAChurch/results.jsp?n=&c=nairobi&y=KE&s=&z=&l=&SearchChoice=>