

Case Studies on Recent LDS Missionary and Church Growth Successes

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Recent Church Growth and Missionary Successes in Mozambique

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Overview

Mozambique has a population of 24.7 million people and is located in southern Africa. Portuguese is the official language but spoken by only one-tenth of the national population as a first language. Bantu peoples essentially constitute the entire population. Major indigenous peoples include the Makhuwa, Tsonga, Lomwe, and Sena. Christians comprise 56% of the population and are evenly divided between Roman Catholics and Protestant groups. Sizable religious minorities include nonreligious individuals (19%) and Muslims (18%). The LDS Church has maintained a presence in Mozambique since 1996. The Church initially experienced rapid growth in the early 2000s although membership and congregational growth rates substantially slowed in the late 2000s. The Mozambique Maputo Mission has achieved significant progress accelerating growth during the early 2010s as evidenced by a net increase in the number of congregations operating in 2014, increasing numbers of active members, larger numbers of local members serving full-time missions, and the organization of the Church's first two stakes in the country in early 2015.

This case study reviews the history of the Church in Mozambique. Recent church growth and Swiss Panerai Replica Watches missionary successes are identified. Opportunities and challenges for future growth are predicted. The growth of the Church in other southern Sub-Saharan African nations is reviewed. The size and growth trends of other missionary-focused Christian groups that operate in Mozambique are summarized. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for future growth are predicted.

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LDS Background

The Church in Mozambique established a permanent presence in 1996 when the first branch was organized in Maputo and government registration was obtained. The South Africa Johannesburg Mission administered Mozambique until the organization of the Mozambique Maputo Mission in 2005. The Mozambique Maputo Mission administered Mozambique and Angola from 2005 until 2013. The Church added Swaziland to the jurisdiction of the Mozambique Maputo Mission in mid-2014. Today the mission includes Mozambique and Swaziland.

Membership totaled 200 in 1997. Membership reached 528 in 2000, 1,352 in 2002, 3,472 in 2005, 5,392 in 2010, and 7,943 in 2014. Annual membership growth rates exceeded 20% during the seven-year period from 1997 to 2004 but declined to less than 10% during the four-year period from year-end 2008 to year-end 2012. Annual membership growth rates rebounded to 14.4% in 2013 and 15.1% in 2014.

The number of branches totaled one in 1997, three in 1999, five in 2000, seven in 2002, nine in 2003, 14 in 2004, 17 in 2005, 15 in 2007, 18 in 2008, 17 in 2009, 18 in 2010, 20 in 2012, and 26 in 2014. The Church organized its first member districts in 2003 in Beira and Maputo. The average number of members per congregation has increased since the organization of the Mozambique Maputo Mission from 211 at year-end 2004 to 306 at year-end 2014 as membership growth rates have surpassed congregational growth rates.

The Church currently operates official branches in nine cities. Provided with the year the first branch was organized, these cities include Maputo (1996), Beira (1999), Marromeu (2000), Nampula (2005-2007, 2008), Quelimane (2005-2007, 2012), Tete

(2005), Chimoio (2012), Maxixe (2013), and Dondo (2014). Only two cities have multiple congregations: Beira (11) and Maputo (7). One location used to have an official branch but currently has only a member group: Luaha (operated as a branch from 2011 to 2013).

The Church has organized nine new branches since 2012: Chimoio (2012), Quelimane (2012), Maxixe (2013), Chamanculo [Maputo] (2014), Chamba [Beira] (2014), Dondo (2014), Macurungo [Beira] (2014), Mascarenhas [Beira] (2014), and Maraza [Beira] (2014). Four of these branches previously operated as branches, namely Chimoio, Dondo, Maxixe, and Quelimane. New branches organized in Beira during 2014 were created from a massive realignment of previously operating branches. In late 2014, the Church organized a new branch in Maputo from a division of the Maputo 1st and Maputo 2nd Branches. The Church has discontinued two congregations since 2010 including the Marromeu 2nd Branch (2011) and Luaha Branch (2013).

In the mid-2000s, returned missionaries reported that most branches had between 50 and 130 active members. In early 2015, missionaries reported that most branches had between 50 and 150 active members. Missionaries reported that over 1,000 attended the Beira District Conference in early 2015.

The mission noted several significant church growth achievements within the past couple years. In early 2015, missionaries reported that the mission has baptized over 500 "complete families" since mid-2012. The focus on baptizing entire families instead of individuals has resulted in significant increases in the number of active members, improvements in convert retention rates, and accelerated membership and congregational growth. The mission has also focused on augmenting the number of Mozambicans serving full-time missions. The number of local members serving missions appeared to more than double within a matter of a couple years. Reports from the Mozambique Maputo Mission indicated that over 100 local members were serving full-time missions by late 2014 – approximately the same number of missionaries assigned to serve within the mission.

The Church advanced the Maputo Mozambique District into a stake in February 2015. The new stake included six wards and one branch. The Beira Mozambique District was divided in March 2015 to create the Beira Mozambique Stake and the Beira Mozambique Manga District. The new stake in Beira had seven wards and one branch whereas the new district in Beira had four branches. The Church organized a seventh ward in Maputo in May 2015.

In 2014, one in 3,333 was nominally LDS in Mozambique.

Successes

The organization of the first two stakes stands as the crowning LDS growth achievement in Mozambique since the organization of the Mozambique Maputo Mission. Stakes must meet certain numerical standards regarding the number of nominal members, the number of congregations, and the number of active, full-tithe paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders in order to operate. The process for a district to advance to stake status often takes several years to accomplish due to concern from mission and area leaders for the district to not only reach the minimal criteria to become a stake but that these criteria can be sustained in the months and years ahead. Unlike districts, stakes operate without mission president supervision or oversight. The organization of new stakes signals significant progress with the development of a self-sufficient church capable of meeting its own ecclesiastical and administrative needs.

A return to annual net increases in the number of congregations signals a major turning point for the Church in Mozambique overcoming slow or stagnant "real growth" trends that persisted for many years. The majority of new congregations organized within the past couple years have been located in the most populous cities of Beira and Maputo where the bulk of LDS membership resides. Improvements in augmenting the number of active members have been attested by the Church organizing new branches in 2014 in both cities for the first time in many years. Focus from the Mozambique Maputo Mission on the conversion of entire families rather than individuals appears at the root of recent progress in accelerating active membership growth. The baptism of parents and children provides families with greater support and motivation to remain active in the long term as individual family members hold one another accountable to attend church, read the scriptures, and pray. Full-member families also present excellent opportunities for establishing stronger congregations that can provide greater resources to fellowship and offer a greater variety of resources and programs to their congregations. The advancement of member groups to branches in cities that have opened to missionary work within the past decade has also demonstrated progress in establishing a core of self-sufficient leadership in additional cities.

Focus from the Mozambique Maputo Mission to increase the number of Mozambicans serving full-time missions has been tremendously successful. These efforts have resulted in the Church in Mozambique becoming almost self-sufficient in meeting its own full-time missionary needs as evidenced by the number of full-time missionaries serving from Mozambique nearly equaling the number of missionaries assigned to the country. Larger numbers of local members serving full-time missions will likely correspond with substantial improvements in strengthening local leadership manpower as members complete their missions and remain active in their congregations.

Opportunities

The organization of stakes in Beira and Maputo presents good opportunities to redistribute mission resources. A sizable number of full-time missionaries and resources were allocated to districts to provide support to strengthen individual branches to

become wards and ensure that there were a sufficient number of active, full-tithe paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders to necessitate the organization of stakes. Many of these resources can be allocated to other areas of the country to assist in the advancement of the Beira Mozambique Manga District into a stake, the organization of multiple congregations in other cities, and the opening of additional locations to missionary work.

There appear good opportunities for the Beira Mozambique Manga District to become a stake within the near future. The district has experienced significant progress augmenting the number of active members within its branches during the past couple years. This progress has been attested to the organization of five new branches within the original Beira Mozambique District and attendance at district conference surpassing 1,000 in early 2015 prior to the organization of the stake and new district. Diligent efforts from senior missionary couples, mission leadership, and full-time missionaries to strengthen and prepare local church leaders and ordinary members for the responsibilities of a stake have good potential to advance the district to stake status within the near future. Special leadership firesides that help train and motivate priesthood leaders to meet the needed requirements for a stake to operate, ongoing focus on the baptism of entire member families, and consistency in helping new members or reactivated members hold callings in their congregations will be essential to making progress for the Beira Mozambique Manga District to become a stake.

Areas within the boundaries of recently organized stakes also present good opportunities for organizing additional congregations. The creation of a seventh ward in Maputo in May 2015 indicates that active membership growth has continued in the Maputo Mozambique Stake since the organization of the stake. Many areas within the boundaries of stakes are located far from the nearest meetinghouse and support large populations numbering in the hundred thousands. Stake leaders collaborating with mission leadership to organize branches in lesser-reached communities appears an effective method to perpetuate recently achieved rapid growth.

The reduced geographic size of the Mozambique Maputo Mission presents good opportunities for the Church to expand national outreach. The Mozambique Maputo Mission included Angola until the Angola Luanda Mission was organized in 2013. Consequently the mission has been able to place greater attention and focus on missionary opportunities within Mozambique instead of balancing administrative needs and resources between two large countries. Major cities with only one branch present good opportunities for the establishment of additional branches or member groups. Nampula and Chimoio appear among the most favorable cities for the Church to consider the opening of additional branches or member groups due to the large population of these cities. The Church in Mozambique has implemented a church-splitting instead of a church-planting approach to growth that has required congregations to reach an arbitrary number of active members in order for additional congregations to be organized. This strategy has been adopted to create self-sufficient congregations that abound in resources to meet local needs and establish "centers of strength." As many reside in locations distant from the sole LDS meetinghouse in many cities, the organization of member groups that assemble in rented facilities or makeshift shelters within the communities of members and investigators presents tremendous opportunities for accelerating growth and improving the penetration of LDS outreach in additional cities. Church planting efforts have been successful in most areas of Sub-Saharan Africa and may begin by holding regular Family Home Evenings (FHE) or cottage meetings in locations distant from the branch meetinghouse to assess conditions for the establishment of additional congregations.

There appear favorable conditions for opening additional cities to missionary work. The Church continues to maintain a limited presence in Mozambique as evidenced by branches operating on only nine cities within a country inhabited by 24.7 million. Opportunities for opening additional cities to proselytism appear most favorable for the most populous, unreached cities. There are 10 cities inhabited by over 100,000 people without an LDS congregation including Nacala, Mocuba, Lichinga, Gurué, Pemba, Nametil, Manhiça, Xai-Xai, Angoche, and Cuamba. Eight of these 10 cities are located in northern Mozambique where the Church has an extremely limited presence.

Challenges

The Church in Mozambique has historically experienced some of the most severe local leadership development, member inactivity, and convert attrition problems in Sub-Saharan Africa. These challenges have been evidenced by the closure of multiple branches within the past decade, delays in districts becoming stakes, incommensurate membership and congregational growth rates, and difficulties establishing multiple congregations in cities outside of Maputo and Beira. The Church has rarely discontinued congregations in other Sub-Saharan African nations despite some of these challenges persisting elsewhere in the region. The consolidation of the two Marromeu branches into a single branch in 2011 and the downgrading of the Luaha Branch to a member group in 2013 indicate significant challenges with local leadership development, member inactivity, and administrative supervision of branches in smaller cities and rural areas distant from mission headquarters. Missionaries continue to serve in leadership positions in some mission branches due to a lack of qualified male members to serve in these capacities. These conditions have discouraged the opening of additional branches in some locations due to focus on strengthening operating branches to become more functional and self-sufficient. Support from full-time missionaries in local leadership development efforts has also appeared to discourage mission leaders from exploring opportunities to open additional cities to missionary work.

The Church has postponed the organization of stakes in Beira and Maputo for several years. Districts in each of these cities appeared to first meet the minimal number of nominal members and congregations required for stakes to operate in the late 2000s. Delays establishing stakes have appeared primarily attributed to local leadership development problems and high rates of member inactivity and convert attrition.

Difficulties with local leadership development and the advancement of districts to stakes appears primarily rooted in rushed

prebaptismal preparation and quick-baptism tactics. Although Mozambicans have exhibited good receptivity to LDS outreach, full-time missionaries have pressured many, if not most, new converts to join the Church within a short period of time. There has historically been little concern to ensure that recently baptized members continue to attend church regularly, steadily increase the strength of their testimony, and develop the necessary devotion and knowledge base to serve in leadership positions or callings. The Church in Mozambique has also had comparatively few members serve full-time missions until recently, resulting in a limited number of priesthood holders with church leadership experience. Countries where the Church has strongly relied on foreign missionaries to staff its missionary needs often experience low member activity and convert retention rates as foreign missionaries generally exhibit less concern on convert retention and place a stronger emphasis on baptizing large numbers of converts within short periods of time. The organization of the Mozambique Maputo Mission has been a disappointment in regards to the lack of real growth experienced by the Church in the country until more recently when the current mission president was able to successfully rectify many of the barriers to progress that began in the mid-2000s. Greater progress occurred during the early 2000s when no mission was headquartered within the country in regards to the organization of multiple congregations within the same city. Nationwide challenges with convert attrition and member inactivity have been evidenced by the average number of members per branch increasing from 204 in 2005 to 345 in 2013.

There appear some cultural conditions that have curtailed diligent efforts by senior missionary couples and full-time missionaries to properly establish the Church and prepare new converts for lifelong discipleship in the Church. Mozambique ranks among the poorest nations in the world. As a result, many have limited employment opportunities and live in poverty. Nearly half the population is illiterate. Low literacy rates pose challenges for education, employment, testimony development, and leadership development as all of these activities generally require some literacy skills. Many couples are not legally married and face challenges to marry due to high marriage certificate costs, cultural practices requiring a dowry, and difficulties to marry as a result of inefficient government regulations. The Church has had large numbers of converts join the Church in some recently opened cities to missionary work although many of these converts stop regularly attending church within a matter of months after baptism. Mozambican cultural conditions have appeared to place less of an emphasis on regular church attendance and active member participation than in many other Sub-Saharan African nations. Thus, these cultural and societal conditions have made new converts more vulnerable to inactivity.

The Church has not translated LDS materials into indigenous languages. Most Mozambicans speak a Bantu language as a first language and many appear to have limited proficiency in Portuguese. The translation of basic missionary and gospel study materials into additional languages appears warranted for effective church administration, missionary work, and testimony development.

Comparative Growth

The Church in Mozambique has experienced membership and congregational growth trends comparable to other nearby nations. However, the Church in Mozambique has been the most proactive in opening additional cities to missionary work within the past decade. In Zambia, the Church has generally experienced slow growth since a permanent presence was established in the early 1990s. The Church in Zambia has experienced incommensurate membership and congregational growth within the past decade as membership increased by 156% whereas the number of congregations increased by 20%. In 2013, the Church in Zambia reported 12 branches, 2,758 members, and an official presence in four cities. In Tanzania, the Church has experienced slow growth since the initial establishment of the Church in the early 1990s. In 2013, the Church in Tanzania reported six branches, 1,263 members, and an official presence in three cities. In Malawi, the Church has experienced some periods of rapid growth since the establishment of the Church in the mid-1990s but has also experienced some periods of slow growth. In 2013, the Church in Malawi reported eight branches, 1,653 members, and a branch or member group in three cities.

Other missionary-focused Christian groups report a widespread presence in Mozambique that totally dwarfs the size of the LDS Church in the country. All other major proselytism-oriented Christian denominations maintain at least a thousand congregations in Mozambique. Evangelicals maintain a widespread presence and claim 11.1% of the national population. Evangelicals have reported significant growth within the past two decades due to the population exhibiting high receptivity and an under-evangelized population.[1] Jehovah's Witnesses maintain a widespread presence in Mozambique. In 2014, Witnesses reported an average of 51,637 publishers (active members who regularly engage in proselytism), 1,136 congregations, and 2,643 baptisms.[2] The Seventh-Day Adventist Church has reported steady growth within the past decade. In 2003, Adventists reported 181,936 members, 920 churches (large or well-established congregations), and 2,631 companies (small or recently-established congregations) whereas in 2013 Adventists reported 313,080 members, 1,011 churches, and 1,589 companies. Adventists have generally baptized 10,000 to 20,000 new converts a year since 2003.[3] The Church of the Nazarene operates a widespread presence in Mozambique. In 2014, Nazarenes reported 157,021 full members, an average weekly worship of 90,121 people, 918 organized churches (large or well-established congregations), and 967 churches not yet organized (small or recently-established congregations). Nazarenes have recently reported decreasing numbers of members attending worship services although the organization of new congregations has occurred at a steady rate.[4]

Limitations

Although many high-quality reports from current missionaries, recently returned missionaries, and mission leadership were available during the writing of this case study, no reports from local church leaders were available. The Church does not publish data pertaining to the number of active members, sacrament meeting attendance, or the number of members who hold temple recommends. Changes in official LDS statistics that track reactivations or the number of active members were unavailable to analyze in this case study. The Church does not release country-by-country information to the public regarding the number of members serving full-time missions, the number of full-time missionaries assigned, or the number of convert baptisms.

Future Prospects

The outlook for the Church in Mozambique to perpetuate recent church growth and missionary successes appears favorable for the foreseeable future. The Mozambique Maputo Mission has made significant progress with ameliorating member activity and convert retention rates within the past couple years as evidenced by the creation of the first stake in the nation, a return to net annual increases in the number of congregations, the maturation of member groups into branches in recently opened cities to missionary work, and a reduced geographic size of the mission. However, challenges within the past decade with member inactivity, convert attrition, and leadership development may reemerge in the coming years especially if future mission leaders reverse the policies implemented by current mission leadership. Prospects appear favorable for the opening of additional cities to missionary and the greater saturation of lesser-reached cities with additional mission resource and congregations. Cities that appear most likely to have missionaries assigned within the coming years include Xai-Xai and Nacala. Cities within the foreseeable future likely to have additional missionary companionships assigned and additional congregations organized include Chimoio, Maxixe, Nampula, Quelimane, and Tete. The Beira Mozambique Manga District may become a stake in the coming years once additional branches are organized.

[1] "Mozambique," Operation World, retrieved 24 February 2015. http://www.operationworld.org/moza

[2] "2014 Service Year Report of Jehovah's Witnesses Worldwide," jw.org.

[3] "Mozambique Union Mission (2003-Present)," www.adventiststatistics.org, retrieved 24 February 2015. http://adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=2580608

[4] "Church of the Nazarene Growth, 2004-2014," nazarene.org, retrieved 24 February 2015. http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&sqi=2&ved=0CB4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F