



Prospective LDS Outreach Case Studies

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Opportunities for Further LDS Outreach Expansion in Ghana

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Overview

Ghana supports one of the largest populations of West Africa with 25.8 million inhabitants. Most ethnolinguistic groups pertain to the Kwa or Gur divisions of the Niger-Congo language family. Christians constitute a large majority (71%) whereas Muslims comprise a sizable minority (18%).

The LDS Church in Ghana has experienced some of the most rapid national outreach expansion in the world within the past five years. No other country has appeared to have as many wards, branches, and groups organized in locations that previously had no reported LDS presence. Recent progress opening additional cities, towns, and villages to the Church has accelerated overall LDS growth trends for Ghana. Conditions remain highly favorable for additional national outreach expansion.

This case study provides background information on outreach expansion and congregational growth in Ghana. Successes, opportunities, and challenges for growth are examined. Outreach expansion efforts in Ghana are compared to other Sub-Saharan African countries. The growth of other proselytizing Christian groups in Ghana is compared to the LDS Church in Ghana. Lastly, prospects for future church growth and national outreach expansion are predicted.

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LDS Background

The Church has maintained a presence in Ghana since the late 1970s when the first official missionaries visited self-affiliated groups of prospective Latter-day Saints and baptized the first converts. The most populous cities in the southern half of the country had an LDS presence established by the late 1980s. Initial missionary efforts concentrated on Accra, Cape Coast, Kumasi, and Sekondi-Takoradi. The Church established stakes in all four of these cities by the late 1990s. Branches began operating in several medium-sized cities in southern Ghana during the late 1980s and 1990s such as Assin Foso, Asamankese, Koforidua, and Swedru. A handful of rural villages also had branches organized during the 1980s and 1990s such as in the Abomosu area. The Church reported official congregations (wards or branches) in 24 cities, towns, or villages as of 2001. At the time 20% of the national population resided in locations where wards or branches operated.

Scores of additional cities opened to the Church between 2005 and 2015. The reassignment of other nations previously within the boundaries of the Ghana Accra Mission (i.e. Liberia and Sierra Leone) to other missions and the organization of three additional missions headquartered within Ghana played a critical role in the expansion of the Church into additional areas. New missions were organized in Cape Coast (2005), Kumasi (2012), and Accra West (2013). The Church organized its first congregations (wards, branches, or member groups) in many medium-sized or small cities in southern Ghana during this period. Prominent examples include Axim, Dunkwa-On-Offin, Ho, Hohoe, Tarkwa, and Twifu Praso. The Church also opened several large or medium-sized cities in central and northern Ghana such as Sunyani, Tamale, and Techiman. These three cities had multiple member groups organized prior to the establishment of the first branches due to efforts by mission and area leaders to adequately saturate large urban areas with LDS meetinghouses and missionary companionships. This church planting approach yielded impressive results within short periods of time and has encouraged local leadership development in locations where there were few Latter-day Saints. The number of populated places in Ghana with at least one ward, branch, or member group increased to 54 at year-end 2010, 66 at year-end 2012, and 86 in April 2015. Approximately one-third of the national population resided locations with an LDS congregation as of April 2015.

National outreach expansion has corresponded with accelerated membership and congregational growth in Ghana. The Church

reported 5,500 members and 50 branches in 1987, 20,416 members and 63 congregations in 2001, and 62,031 members and 207 congregations in 2015.

A map displaying the status of LDS outreach by cities, towns, and prominent villages can be found [here](#).

Opportunities for Additional Outreach Expansion

Recent trends in LDS national outreach expansion in Ghana indicate that the Church has an enormous opportunity to establish a presence in hundreds of additional locations. The Church maintains one of its strongest centers of strength in Sub-Saharan Africa in the Accra metropolitan area where there are 70 congregations (wards and branches), seven stakes, two missions, one temple, and one missionary training center. Three additional Ghanaian metropolitan areas are emerging centers of strength including Kumasi (23 congregations, two stakes, one mission), Cape Coast (14 congregations, one stake, one mission), and Sekondi-Takoradi (16 congregations, one stake). Centers of strength play an important role in supplying the Church with full-time missionaries and local and regional leadership manpower. These centers of strength will likely play an important role in mission, stake, and area leadership identifying additional cities to open to the Church.

There appear many opportunities to perpetuate recent rapid national outreach expansion. The most populous unreached cities present some of the greatest opportunities for growth due to high population densities that maximize the number of people reached by LDS missionary efforts and easier accessibility than many smaller cities or rural communities. There are also many regions of Ghana where there are sizable numbers of small cities and towns. These locations also present good prospects for future growth.

This section identifies several of the most populous unreached cities that appear favorable for the establishment of an LDS presence and church planting efforts.

Wa

Wa is the administrative capital of the Upper West Region and supports a population of approximately 71,000.^[1] The Southern Dagaaba are the largest ethnolinguistic group in the area and are predominantly Christian.^[2] No LDS presence operates in the Upper West Region where there were 702,000 inhabitants as of 2010.^[3] The Ghana Kumasi Mission currently administers the city. The population of the Upper West Region is approximately one-third Christian, one-third Muslim, and one-third followers of indigenous religions.^[4] Jehovah's Witnesses operate four congregations in the city.^[5] Prospects appear favorable for the establishment of one or two member groups and the assignment of full-time missionaries within the foreseeable future.

Bolgatanga

There are nearly 66,000^[6] inhabitants in Bolgatanga – the administrative capital of the Upper East Region. The Farefare (Frafra) people comprise the majority of the population in both Bolgatanga and the Upper East Region and speak the Farefare language.^[7] Recent estimates indicate that the Farefare people are 51% followers of ethnic religions, 37% followers of Christianity, and 12% followers of Islam.^[8] No LDS presence operates in the Upper East Region where there were over one million inhabitants as of 2010.^[9] The Ghana Kumasi Mission currently administers the city. The population of the Upper East Region is approximately one-half followers of indigenous beliefs. Christians constitute 28% of the population whereas Muslims comprise 23% of the population.^[10] Jehovah's Witnesses operate four congregations in the city, including two Farefare-speaking congregations.^[11] Latter-day Saints who reside in Tamale note that there is a small group of members who reside in Bolgatanga although there does not appear to be an official LDS group operating. Prospects appear favorable for the LDS Church to simultaneously organize two or three member groups and assign full-time missionaries within the near future following a similar pattern to the opening of Sunyani, Tamale, or Techiman to missionary work.

Bawku

Bawku is located in the Upper East Region and is the third most populous unreached city in Ghana by the LDS Church with 61,000 inhabitants.^[12] There are two primary ethnic groups native to the Bawku area: the Bissa and Kusaal. The Bissa primarily adhere to ethnic religions (45%), Islam (30%), and Christianity (25%)^[13] whereas the Kusaal are predominantly Christian (61%).^[14] The Ghana Kumasi Mission currently administers the city. Jehovah's Witnesses operate one congregation in the city that holds meetings in Twi, Bimoba, and Kusaal.^[15] The LDS Church may establish a presence in Bawku in the medium term following the establishment of the Church in Bolgatanga. However, only one or two member groups appear likely to be organized when full-time missionaries are first stationed in the city.

Berekum

Berekum is one of the most populous cities in Brong Ahafo Region and supports a population of 56,000.^[16] The population is homogenously Christian and the Abbron (Brong) people constitute the majority.^[17] The Ghana Kumasi Mission currently administers the city. Jehovah's Witnesses operate five congregations in the city that hold worship services in Twi.^[18] Berekum

numbers among the most likely cities in Ghana to have an LDS presence established in the near future due to its sizable population, predominantly Christian population, and close proximity to Sunyani. Three or four member groups could feasibly be organized upon the assignment of full-time missionaries if the Church elects to implement a church planting strategy.

Yendi

Yendi is the most populous unreached city in Ghana's Northern Region and supports a population of nearly 52,000.^[19] The Ghana Kumasi Mission currently administers the city. Jehovah's Witnesses operate one congregation in the city that holds worship services in Twi.^[20] Prospects appear favorable for the establishment of one or two member groups and the assignment of full-time missionaries within the medium or long term.

Kintampo

There are approximately 43,000 people who reside in this medium-sized city in Brong Ahafo Region. Christians comprise a slight majority (62%) whereas Muslims constitute a large minority (30%).^[21] Kintampo is one of the most populous unreached cities in the Brong Ahafo Region and supports a population of nearly 52,000.^[22] The Ghana Kumasi Mission currently administers the city. Jehovah's Witnesses operate three congregations in the city that holds worship services in Twi and English.^[23] Prospects appear favorable for the establishment of one or two member groups and the assignment of full-time missionaries within the foreseeable future.

Volta Region

The Church has maintained a presence in the Volta Region only since 2005 when the first branch was organized in Ho. This region supports a population of 2.1 million people^[24] and has a minimal LDS presence as evidenced by only four official branches operating in three cities (Aflao, Ho, and Tsito) and two member groups (Hohoe and Kpando). The Ewe people constitute two-thirds of the population. Christians comprise two-thirds of the population whereas followers of indigenous religions constitute one-fifth of the population.^[25] There are scores of small cities and towns that appear favorable for the establishment of member groups and the assignment of full-time missionaries.

Ashanti Region (outside Kumasi)

Although the LDS Church has maintained a presence in Kumasi for over three decades, most cities and towns within Ashanti Region have no LDS congregations. There has been some progress opening additional cities nearby Kumasi such as Effiduase and Offinso. However, there remain scores of cities and towns with no nearby LDS congregation that are within reasonably close proximity to Kumasi. Many of these locations appear highly favorable for growth, and several of these locations will likely have LDS congregations organized and missionaries assigned within the near future. Examples of cities that appear likely for an LDS establishment within the short term include Abofour, Bekwai, Ntonso, Mankranso, and Toase.

Towns and Villages in Southern Ghana

There are hundreds of towns and small villages in southern Ghana where no LDS congregations operate. These populated places are generally located between major cities. Mission and stake leaders working together to identify towns and villages with isolated members, visiting these members to assess opportunities to organize member groups, and holding cottage meetings to present simple gospel lessons and encourage socialization among members and investigators present effective and efficient methods to expand LDS outreach into many of these rural communities. The assignment of full-time missionary companionships to individual towns or villages appears impractical in many areas due to small target populations. However, the assignment of several towns and villages to a single missionary companionship may be appropriate to meet teaching needs and expand LDS outreach into locations with few or no known members.

Challenges

High receptivity in most areas where full-time missionaries serve challenges mission leaders to effectively delegate limited mission resources. Many cities and towns with a ward or branch have good opportunities to assign additional missionaries and organize new congregations, particularly in major cities such as Accra and Kumasi. Yet there remain hundreds of unreached towns and villages where the Church would likely experience good receptivity if a church presence is established. Church leaders therefore must balance the distribution of limited resources between further saturating already reached locations and opening unreached locations due to finite mission resources and the comparatively small size of the Church in Ghana in comparison to the size of the national population.

In recent years, the Church has utilized North American missionary manpower to bolster missionary numbers in an era of plentiful opportunities for growth but limited regional missionary manpower. Dependence on North American missionaries to significantly expand the full-time missionary force in Ghana to support new missions within the past decade has potential to erode local self-sufficiency, especially if youth and young single adult converts do not serve full-time missions in appreciable

numbers. The Church in Ghana will achieve greater growth once the Church becomes more self-sufficient in not only staffing its missionary force for the four Ghanaian missions but also in steadily increasing these numbers to enable the expansion of the Church into lesser-reached or unreached areas.

Cultural differences with the traditionally Muslim/animist north and the traditionally Christian south have dissuaded LDS outreach in northern Ghana until 2013; 35 years after the Church's initial establishment in Ghana notwithstanding no legal or societal restrictions on proselytizing, and nontraditional Christian groups operating in traditionally Muslim areas for decades. The opening of Tamale to missionary activity in February 2013 stands as a major breakthrough in expanding outreach in Ghana. However, the Church's infrastructure in northern Ghana where many of the most populous unreached cities are located remains insufficient to steadily expand outreach. Additional missions will likely be needed to continue the expansion of LDS outreach in central and northern Ghana.

Limitations

The Church does not release information regarding plans to open additional cities to missionary work. No data was available regarding the number of members who reside in locations where no LDS congregations operate. The Church in Ghana does not publish the number of member groups or the locations where member groups operate. It is unclear how many member groups currently function in the country.

Future Prospects

The outlook for continued national outreach expansion in Ghana remains highly favorable, namely the establishment of congregations in cities and towns where no previous LDS presence operated. The organization of three new missions within the past decade indicates that greater mission resources are available to open additional cities and towns to missionary activity. This greater infrastructure may accommodate larger numbers of missionaries serving within the country. Additional missions may be organized in order for the Church to take greater advantage of good opportunities for growth. Recent successes implementing church-planting tactics in several Ghanaian cities also suggests that these tactics will be implemented when additional larger or medium-sized cities open to the Church such as Bolgatanga and Berekum.

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- [5] "Find a Meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses," [jw.org](http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF), retrieved 26 May 2015. http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF
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