



Prospective LDS Outreach Case Studies

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Opportunities for LDS Outreach Expansion in the Southern DR Congo

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Overview

Located in the southern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), Katanga Province supported a population of nearly 10 million people as of 2007.^[1] Ethnolinguistic groups pertain to the Bantu language family. Most speak French or Congolese Swahili as a second language. Many speak Luba-Katanga (Kiluba) as a first language. Christians constitute a strong majority of the population.

The LDS Church in Katanga Province has experienced rapid growth in the handful of major cities such as Lubumbashi, Kolwezi, and Likasi. However, the Church has experienced slow national outreach expansion in the region since the initial establishment of the Church in the late 1980s. Excellent opportunities exist for the establishment of the Church in additional cities and towns within the province.

This case study provides background information on outreach expansion trends and congregational growth in Katanga Province. Successes, opportunities, and challenges for growth are examined. Outreach expansion efforts in Katanga Province are compared to other provinces in the DR Congo. The growth of other proselytizing Christian groups in Katanga Province is compared to the LDS Church in the DR Congo. 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 Katanga Province since the late 1980s when the first branches were organized in Lubumbashi. The Church quickly established branches in two additional cities in Katanga Province including Kolwezi and Likasi in 1991. The Church later organized branches in additional cities within the region, including Kipushi (2009), Kakanda (2011), and Kasumbalesa (2011). The number of cities and towns in Katanga Province with at least one ward or branch increased from one in the late 1980s to three in 1991 and six in 2011. Approximately one-quarter of the provincial population appeared to reside in locations with an LDS congregation as of mid-2015. Senior missionaries report that member groups operate in approximately 20 to 30 cities and towns within the DR Congo Lubumbashi Mission where there are no nearby official branches or wards. Most of these units appear to operate within Katanga Province such as in the city of Fungurume.

A map displaying the status of LDS outreach by major cities can be found [here](#).

Opportunities for Additional Outreach Expansion

The Church in the DR Congo has experienced some of the most rapid growth in the worldwide Church during the past 20 years. The self-sufficiency of local leadership has been high in many locations. Some areas of the country had no full-time missionaries assigned for years or even decades yet local members have regularly baptized and retained thousands of new converts. Notable examples of rapid growth in cities where no full-time missionaries previously served include Kananga and Luputa.

Lubumbashi has emerged as a center of strength for the Church in Katanga Province. Today there are three stakes, 24 wards, and one mission in Lubumbashi. Two cities in Katanga Province are emerging centers of strength, namely Likasi (nine branches) and Kolwezi (seven branches). Centers of strength play an important role in supplying the Church with full-time

missionaries and local and regional leadership manpower. These emerging centers of strength will likely serve as a catalyst for mission, stake, and area leadership to identify additional cities to open to the Church within Katanga Province

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

Kamina

Kamina is the administrative capital of the Haut-Lomami District and supports a population of over 100,000.^[2] The city plays an important role in transportation and commerce within the vast area between Kolwezi and Luputa. The Songe and Luba-Katanga are the largest ethnolinguistic groups in the area and are predominantly Christian.^[3] Most speak Congolese Swahili, French, or Luba-Katanga. No LDS presence operates within 100 miles (160 kilometers) of Kamina as the nearest LDS congregations function in Kolwezi and Lusuku. The Church likely has small numbers of isolated members in this city that may be organized into a member group. Prospects appear favorable for the establishment of several member groups throughout the city in order to adequately saturate the urban area with LDS mission outreach. Other missionary-focused groups operate in Kamina and have experienced moderate growth. Jehovah's Witnesses reported at least five congregations in the city as of mid-2015.^[4] The Seventh-Day Adventist Church reports 12,672 members, 50 churches (large or well-established congregations), and 56 companies (small or recently-established congregations) in Kamina and the surrounding area of Haut-Lomami District.^[5]

Kalemie

Kalemie is the administrative capital of Tanganyika District and is located on the western shores of Lake Tanganyika. The city serves as an important center of commerce and transportation for the area. The most recent population estimate indicates there are at least 90,000 people who reside in the city.^[6] Most the population speaks French, Congolese Swahili, or Taabwa. The Taabwa people are the indigenous people in the area and are homogenously Christian.^[7] Although the city is located approximately 400 miles (650 kilometers) from mission headquarters in Lubumbashi and 180 miles (300 kilometers) from the nearest LDS branch in Uvira, a well-maintained airport operates with regular flights to Lubumbashi. The Church may have a small number of members in the city and possibly a member group. Visits from mission leadership to assess conditions, locate isolated members, and establish a member group or branch appear favorable. There appear good opportunities to assign full-time missionaries and organize multiple member groups to spur greater growth. Other missionary-focused Christian groups maintain a presence in Kalemie. Jehovah's Witnesses operate two congregations in the city.^[8] Seventh-Day Adventists appear to operate several congregations in the city.

Kikondja

Kikondja is located in the Haut-Lomami and supported a population of approximately 27,000 in 2004.^[9] The indigenous population pertains to the Luba-Katanga ethnic group and is homogenously Christian. Most speak Luba-Katanga, French, or Congolese Swahili. The Church has a small number of members who reside in the Kikondja area. A senior missionary reported in approximately 2010 that although no official member group had been organized, there were 15 members, 20 investigators, and 30 "tithe payers" who attend unofficial church services on Sundays. Members regularly traveled hundreds of miles to attend district conference in Kolwezi and carried back boxes of copies of the Book of Mormon to distribute in their communities.^[10] It is unclear whether the DR Congo Lubumbashi Mission has organized these members into a member group since this time. Prospects appear highly favorable for the establishment of a member group, if no member currently operates, and visits from mission leadership to train, teach, and baptize new converts. The introduction of full-time missionaries to the city appears favorable as there appear good opportunities for proselytism within Kikondja and nearby cities on the shores of Lac Kisale such as Buya-Bwa-Dalamba and Kalombo. However, remote location possess challenges for regular mission visits and the assignment of full-time missionaries due to poorly developed infrastructure in the area and long distance from the nearest city with an official LDS presence. It is unclear whether major nontraditional Christian groups who engage in aggressive proselytism have a presence in the Kikondja area; however, Seventh-Day Adventists likely maintain at least a couple congregations in Kikondja and surrounding areas.

Kitotolo/Manono

The twin cities of Kitotolo and Manono are located in Tanganyika District and appeared to have a combined population of approximately 48,000 in 2004.^[11] The area is rich in minerals and mining is an important industry. The cities were severely damaged during the Second Congo War approximately 15 years ago. The population is homogenously Christian and appears to predominantly pertain to the Luba-Katanga ethnic group. Most speak Luba-Katanga. Visits from mission leaders to assess conditions, identify isolated members, and organize isolated members into a member group appear likely methods for the Church to establish a presence in Kitotolo and Manono. Other proselytizing groups maintain a presence in the cities. Jehovah's Witnesses operate four congregations in the city that hold worship services in the Luba-Katanga language.^[12] Seventh-Day Adventists also appear to maintain congregations in the city.

Bukama

Bukama is located in Haut-Lomami District and supported a population of 61,000 in 2004.^[13] The population is homogenously

Christian and appears to predominantly pertain to the Luba-Katanga ethnic group. 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. No information is available on whether Jehovah's Witnesses or Seventh-Day Adventists operate in the city.

Kambove

There were approximately 58,000 people who reside in Kambove as of 2004.^[14] The city is located in Haut-Katanga District and is only 13 miles (21 kilometers) from the nearest LDS congregation in Likasi. A second city with an LDS presence (Kakanda) is located approximately 16 miles away (26 kilometers). Mining is the primary industry. The Lamba and Sanga ethnic groups are indigenous to the area and both are homogenously Christian. Most appear to speak Congolese Swahili and French. There is likely a sizable number of Latter-day Saints who reside in the city that joined the Church in Likasi or Kakanda. Opportunities appear excellent for the establishment of a branch and the assignment of missionaries due to close proximity to Likasi, the strong possibility of a sizable number of members who have moved to the city over the years, and the city's sizable population. Other missionary-focused groups report a presence in Kambove. Jehovah's Witnesses operate two congregations in the city that hold worship services in Congolese Swahili.^[15] Seventh-Day Adventists also appear to operate congregations in the city.

Luambo

The city appears to support a population of at least 20,000 people although no population estimates are currently available. The city is located in Haut-Katanga District and is 11 miles (18 kilometers) from the nearest LDS congregation in Likasi. The Lamba and Sanga ethnic groups are indigenous to the area and both are homogenously Christian. Most appear to speak Congolese Swahili and French. There is likely a small number of Latter-day Saints who reside in the city that have joined the Church in Likasi. Opportunities appear excellent for the establishment of a member group and the assignment of missionaries due to close proximity to Likasi, the strong possibility of members who have moved to the city over the years, and tens of thousands of people to proselyte. Other missionary-focused groups report a presence in Kambove. Jehovah's Witnesses operate one congregation in the city that holds worship services in Congolese Swahili.^[16] Seventh-Day Adventists also appear to operate congregations in the city.

Lukuni

Lukuni is a large town located on the northern outskirts of Lubumbashi. Close proximity to wards in Lubumbashi and a predominantly Christian population that speaks Congolese Swahili present good opportunities for growth. The designation of a missionary companionship in Lubumbashi to visit Lukuni, identify isolated members, and hold cottage meetings appears an effective intervention to establish a member group or branch one day. It is unclear whether Jehovah's Witnesses or Seventh-Day Adventists operate congregations in Lukuni.

Challenges

The lack of progress expanding national outreach and assigning larger numbers of full-time missionaries appears largely the byproduct of the Africa Southeast Area implementing a conservative interpretation of the "centers of strength" policy. The Africa Southeast Area has numbered among the most reluctant administrative areas within the worldwide Church to open unreached locations to missionary activity. A conservative interpretation of the centers of strength has resulted in the Church intentionally restricting its operations to only a handful of predetermined locations with the goal to develop a self-sustaining and self-sufficient core of church leadership and members. Unfortunately this policy has had many negative consequences as a finite number of missionary resources are consistently allocated to the Church's centers of strength instead of exploring opportunities for national outreach expansion. This has ultimately resulted in many areas remaining unreached for years or decades notwithstanding no restrictions on religious freedom, large populations receptive to Christian proselytism who have yet to receive the Latter-day Saint gospel witness, and increasing numbers of Congolese serving full-time missions. Delays in opening additional cities the DR Congo may result in previously receptive individuals becoming disciplined into other proselytism-focused Christian groups or missed opportunities to establish an LDS presence during periods of political stability.

Difficulties allocating sufficient numbers of meetinghouse locations that are large enough to accommodate the number of members and investigators attending church services poses one of the greatest challenges in the DR Congo. Senior missionary couples and previous mission presidents have complained of a lack of modernization in the region, very low living standards, and a lack of suitable buildings that can be rented or purchased for housing wards and branches. Many meetinghouses cannot accommodate those attending church services within the building structure resulting in many members and investigators sitting outside the building and viewing sacrament meeting services through windows and doors. Some congregations hold nearly all church services outdoors due to limited indoor space. In the early 2010s, the Church began a pilot meetinghouse construction program in Kinshasa that trained returned missionaries in construction and masonry skills so that they can be hired as contract laborers for construction companies that the Church selects to build meetinghouses. In early 2013, senior missionaries reported that the program had been introduced to the DR Congo Lubumbashi Mission but it was unclear whether the building program had been implemented in cities outside of Lubumbashi. The program has good potential to ameliorate the extreme shortage of sufficiently large meetinghouses in the region, but poorly developed infrastructure poses many challenges for shipping construction materials.

Remote location from mission headquarters has deterred greater outreach expansion in the region notwithstanding high

receptivity to LDS teachings, excellent member-missionary participation, and robust local leadership development. For many years, senior missionaries and former mission presidents have reported delays organizing new branches due to challenges for mission leadership to visit these locations and complete the necessary paperwork to receive approval for organizing additional wards and branches. Consequently, there has been extremely little attention given to other major unreached cities and towns, including those with members and sizable numbers of investigators desiring church membership. The Congolese population has exhibited high receptivity in virtually all locations where LDS outreach has been extended and mission outreach continues to operate at only a fraction of the potential that can be harnessed. All cities in the southern DR Congo remain far from reaching a level where meetinghouses and full-time missionary companionships are readily accessible to the majority of the population and there is a sufficient number of wards and branches to adequately saturate these cities with missionary outreach.

The assignment of full-time missionaries to the area has required specific criteria to help mitigate safety concerns. One of these criterion is allocating large homes for housing missionaries. Large homes have security walls affixed with razor wire and a steel gate entrance, providing adequate safety for housing missionaries. Infectious disease and low living standards also pose challenges for full-time missionaries and members.

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 Lubumbashi, Kolwezi, and Likasi. 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 small size of the Church in Katanga Province in comparison to the size of the provincial population.

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 the DR Congo 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 national outreach expansion in the southern DR Congo appears mixed. Additional cities may have member groups and branches organized in the coming years largely due to active members moving to unreached areas or members sharing the gospel with family and friends that do not live in cities currently reached by the Church. However, very low living standards, a lack of economic development, few mission resources, corruption, and poverty will pose ongoing challenges for national outreach expansion. The Africa Southeast Area has focused on a church-splitting approach to growth instead of a church-planting approach to growth within the past decade. Consequently, the expansion of the Church in the DR Congo has been determined by the growth of the Church in currently-reached cities and towns. Additional missions may be organized in order for the Church to take greater advantage of good opportunities for growth, such as a separate mission headquartered in Mbuji-Mayi or Kananga.

[1] "Congo (Dem. Rep.)," [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html), retrieved 7 September 2015.
<http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html>

[2] "Congo (Dem. Rep.)," [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html), retrieved 7 September 2015.
<http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html>

[3] "Country: Congo, Democratic Republic of," Joshua Project, retrieved 7 September 2015.
<http://joshuaproject.net/countries/CG>

[4] "Find a Meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses," [jw.org](http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF), retrieved 7 September 2015. http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF

[5] "North Katanga Field (1997-Present)," [www.adventiststatistics.org](http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=C12023), retrieved 18 September 2015.
http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=C12023

[6] "Congo (Dem. Rep.)," [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html), retrieved 7 September 2015.
<http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html>

[7] "Language: Taabwa," Joshua Project, retrieved 18 September 2015. <http://joshuaproject.net/languages/tap>

[8] "Find a Meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses," [jw.org](http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF), retrieved 7 September 2015. http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF

[9] "Congo (Dem. Rep.)," [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html), retrieved 7 September 2015.
<http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html>

[10] web.archive.org/web/20101210013757/http://www.lds.co.za/index.php/news-a-events/news/aseanews/91-the-giants-of-kinkondja

[11] "Congo (Dem. Rep.)," [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html), retrieved 7 September 2015.
<http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html>

[12] "Find a Meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses," [jw.org](http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF), retrieved 18 September 2015. http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF

[13] "Congo (Dem. Rep.)," [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html), retrieved 7 September 2015.
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[14] "Congo (Dem. Rep.)," [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html), retrieved 7 September 2015.
<http://www.citypopulation.de/CongoDemRep-Cities.html>

[15] "Find a Meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses," [jw.org](http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF), retrieved 18 September 2015. http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF

[16] "Find a Meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses," [jw.org](http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF), retrieved 18 September 2015. http://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCF