



Prospective LDS Outreach Case Studies

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Prospective LDS Outreach in Northern Nigeria

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Overview

There were 42.5 million people who resided in the eight northern Nigerian states as of 2011.^[1] The Hausa people constitute the majority of the population in northern Nigeria and number 28.6 million.^[2] The Hausa are homogenously Muslim as 99.9% adhere to Islam.^[3] The Kanuri comprise the second largest ethnic group and number 6.4 million. The Kanuri are essentially 100% Muslim.^[4] Muslims appear to constitute as much as 95% of the population in northern Nigeria. Small numbers of Christians reside in the region. Most Christians have relocated to the region from other areas of Nigeria and appear to primarily reside in the most populous cities. No LDS presence operates in northern Nigeria notwithstanding a church presence in the country since the late 1970s, a population exceeding 40 million people, and small numbers of Christians who have relocated to the region.[best replica watches](#)

This case study reviews the history of the Church in areas closest to northern Nigeria and proselytism efforts targeting peoples native to the region. Opportunities for the establishment of a church presence in the region are examined. Challenges for LDS missionary activity in northern Nigeria are identified. The growth of the LDS Church in other regions of Nigeria is summarized. The growth and size of other Christian denominations with a presence in northern Nigeria is reviewed. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for future growth are predicted.

NOTE: Northern Nigeria in this case study is defined as the eight Nigerian states of Borno, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara

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LDS Background

No LDS congregations operate in the eight northern Nigerian states of Borno, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara. Northern Nigeria currently pertains to the Nigeria Enugu Mission Branch. The Church organized a mission in Jos in 1992 to administer central and northern Nigeria; however, the mission was relocated to Enugu in 1993. Cities with LDS congregations nearest to northern Nigeria include Bauchi, Bauchi State; Jos, Plateau State; and Kaduna, Kaduna State. All three of these cities have had an official LDS presence since as early as 2001.

The Church has translated The Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and Gospel Principles (old edition) into Hausa and two Fulani languages (Fula and Futa). However, no overt missionary activity has appeared to occur among the Hausa or Fulani.

Opportunities

The most populous cities present the greatest opportunities for growth due to easier accessibility, sizable numbers of nonnative Nigerians who adhere to Christianity, and high population densities concentrated into small geographical areas. The enforcement of Shari'a law in twelve northern states imposes Islamic religious code on the Muslim population but does not significantly impact the operation of Christian denominations like the LDS Church.^[5] Kano is the most populous city in Sub-Saharan Africa without an LDS presence. With nearly four million people, the Church likely has at least a small number of members who reside in the city that can be formed into a member group if one does not currently operate. Visits from mission leaders to Kano to determine the number, activity status, and church experience of isolated members has good potential to establish an official church presence. There is a sizable Christian minority in Kano and most major proselytizing Christian groups with a presence in Nigeria report congregations in Kano. Other major cities such as Maiduguri and Sokoto may also

present opportunities for the organization of member groups or branches to administer isolated members or target Christian populations.

Several peoples native to northern Nigeria are predominantly Christian or have sizable Christian minorities. The Chibuk Kyibaku reside in southern Borno State, number 186,000, and are 78% Christian. The Lela reside in Kebbi State number 154,000 and are 20% Christian. The Glavda reside in extreme southeastern Borno State, number 45,000, and are 20% Christian. The Dghwede reside in extreme southeastern Borno State, number 67,000, and are 12% Christian. The Ngamawa Ngamo reside in Yobe State, number 103,000, and are 11% Christian. The Ngizmawa Ngizim reside in Yobe State, number 148,000, and are 7% Christian. The Pabir Bura reside in southern Borno State, number 450,000, and are 5% percent Christian.^[6] LDS outreach among these peoples likely has better potential to gain converts and establish a permanent church presence in comparison to the more populous, homogenously Muslim peoples.

Challenges

The Hausa and Kanuri exhibit strong ethnoreligious ties to Islam and have staunchly resisted Christianization and evangelization efforts for centuries. Strong ethnoreligious ties to Islam pose a significant challenge for establishing an LDS presence among traditionally Muslim peoples such as the Hausa and Kanuri. Islam has become inextricably connected to these and many other peoples who traditionally inhabit northern Nigeria. The Church may discourage or prohibit missionary activity among traditionally Muslim peoples due to concerns with the safety of investigators and converts. The implementation of Shari'a Law has potential to limit religious freedom for Christians and seriously challenges missionary efforts directed towards Muslims. Prospective missionary efforts among these peoples may yield very few converts even if mission leaders consistently extend specialized outreach for extended periods of time.

Only recently have Protestant Christians reported small numbers of Hausa-speaking converts in some of the major cities. The small successes of Protestant groups among the Hausa suggests that the LDS Church can achieve similar results if missionary activity and church planting are properly pursued. Latter-day Saints have not developed any missionary resources tailored to teach investigators with a Muslim background. Effective gospel teaching for Fulani investigators will require the adaption of the missionary lessons to the understanding of Muslims, the emphasis of similarities in beliefs and teachings between the LDS Church and Islam such as the importance of daily religious practice and the centrality of family in society, and the assurance and social support for converts that face ridicule and ostracism for conversion to Christianity.

Safety concerns pose significant challenges for prospective LDS outreach in northern Nigeria. Violence between Muslims and Christians poses a major safety concern for full-time missionaries and prospective converts. Clashes frequently occur between Muslims and Christians resulting in scores, and even hundreds, of deaths in single incidents.^[7] The radical Islamist terror group Boko Haram has terrorized areas of Borno and Adamawa States for many years through sexual assault, mass killings, mass kidnappings, forced conscription, and forced conversion to Islam.^[8]

The LDS Church remain a small denomination in Nigeria. Nearly all congregations operate in southern Nigeria. The outreach capabilities of the Church in the region are currently insufficient to reach sizable ethnolinguistic groups with millions of members that traditionally adhere to Christianity, let alone the hundreds of ethnolinguistic groups that follow traditional beliefs or Islam. For example, the predominantly Christian Tiv people had no LDS congregations operating within their homelands until late 2015 notwithstanding a population of over four million. Only a small handful of ethnic groups in Africa have received a Latter-day Saint gospel witness due to few locations with LDS congregations. Ethnolinguistic groups native to northern Nigeria that have sizable numbers of Christian are located far from major cities and may remain unreached for many decades to come. The nomadic and pastoralist lifestyle of some peoples in northern Nigeria challenge efforts to extend outreach due to remote location in isolated, rural areas.

Distance from the nearest LDS missions and “centers of strength” may delay outreach for many years or decades. The Church has often postponed outreach to locations distant from mission headquarters due to challenges for church leaders to regularly visit and supervise church activities. This challenge with LDS centralization of administration may pose serious problems for future missionary outreach even if these difficulties regarding safety concerns and strong ethnoreligious ties to Islam are overcome.

Comparative Growth

The Church has reported rapid growth in nearly all areas of Nigeria where congregations operate. The Church claims nearly one percent of the population of Akwa Ibom State in southeastern Nigeria. A significant LDS presence also operates in many major cities in southern Nigeria such as Aba, Benin City, and Port Harcourt. The Church has achieved rapid growth in southwestern Nigeria within the past decade although the size of the Church remains very small in comparison to the population. The Church in central Nigeria operates in only a handful of locations but has experienced rapid growth in the Abuja area. Stagnant growth has persisted in the north-central Nigeria states of Bauchi, Kaduna, and Plateau within the past 15 years.

Evangelicals report a small presence primarily in the most populous cities and among predominantly Christian ethnolinguistic groups or peoples with sizable Christian minorities. Seventh-Day Adventists report a small presence in northern Nigeria. However Adventists nonetheless report more members than most nontraditional Christian denominations with a presence in the region. Adventists reported 13,645 members, 88 churches (large or well-established congregations), and 117 companies (small

or recently-established congregations) in Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara States.^[9] Jehovah's Witnesses report a minimal presence in the region. Witnesses reported congregations in Kano (11), Borno (3), Katsina (2), Kebbi (2), Yobe (1), and Zamfara (1). Several of these congregations hold worship services in the Hausa language.^[10] No Witness congregations appear to operate in Sokoto and Jigawa States. The Church of the Nazarene reports a smaller presence in Nigeria than the LDS Church. Nazarenes maintain congregations in only a handful of locations nationwide.

Limitations

Few reports from local members and returned missionaries were available during the writing of this case study. The Church does not publish the location of its member groups. Consequently, it is unclear whether the Church operates member groups in cities in northern Nigeria where no official wards or branches operate. The Church does not publish state-by-state membership, convert baptismal, or missionary statistics for Nigeria. Member activity and convert retention rates are not available to the public.

Future Prospects

The outlook for the Church to establish an LDS presence in northern Nigeria appears positive within the coming decade. Steady growth in other regions of Nigeria and a sizable, albeit small, Christian community in Kano suggest that there are good opportunities for the Church to organize a member group or branch in Kano. However, there do not appear to be any realistic opportunities for the Church to assign full-time, proselytizing missionaries or open LDS congregations in additional cities within northern Nigeria due to the predominantly Muslim population, safety concerns, distance from the nearest LDS mission and cities with LDS congregations, reluctance by the Church to proselyte Muslims, and the relatively small size of the Church in Nigeria in compared to the massive population of over 180 million.

^[1] "Nigeria: Provinces and Agglomerations," [www.citypopulation.de](http://www.citypopulation.de/Nigeria-Agglos.html), retrieved 28 November 2015.

^[2] "Hausa in Nigeria," Joshua Project, retrieved 28 November 2015. http://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/12070/NI

^[3] "Hausa in Nigeria," Joshua Project, retrieved 28 November 2015. http://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/12070/NI

^[4] "Kanuri, Yerma, Beriberi in Nigeria," Joshua Project, retrieved 28 November 2015. http://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/12509/NI

^[5] "Nigeria," International Religious Freedom Report for 2014, retrieved 28 November 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238248>

^[6] "Country: Nigeria," Joshua Project, retrieved 30 November 2015. <http://joshuaproject.net/countries/NI>

^[7] "Nigeria," International Religious Freedom Report for 2014, retrieved 28 November 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238248>

^[8] "Nigeria," International Religious Freedom Report for 2014, retrieved 28 November 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238248>

^[9] "Northwest Nigeria Conference," [www.adventiststatistics.org](http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=C10324), retrieved 28 November 2015.

^[10] "Find a Meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses," [jw.org](https://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCf), retrieved 28 November 2015. https://www.jw.org/apps/E_FsPnZGTZNCf