



# People-Specific LDS Outreach Case Studies

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## LDS Outreach among the Quechua of Peru

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### Overview

Numbering over 10 million, the Quechua constitute a collection of Amerindian peoples that reside in the Andes of South America. Quechua peoples reside from as far north as Colombia to as far south as northern Chile. Ethnographers and linguistics report that there are 46 different Quechua sublanguages. Although these languages possess similar linguistic properties, the majority are not mutually intelligible.<sup>[1]</sup> The majority of Quechua peoples reside in Peru where approximately one-third of the national population is Quechua.<sup>[2]</sup>

This case study reviews the background of the Quechua people and the history of LDS outreach among the Quechua in Peru. Past missionary and church growth successes are described and opportunities and challenges for future growth are discussed. The growth of the Church among other Amerindian peoples in South America is compared to LDS growth among the Quechua. A brief synopsis of the growth trends of other missionary-focused Christian groups among the Quechua is provided. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for future growth are predicted.

NOTE: "Quechua homelands" in this case study include areas in the Peruvian Highlands where Quechua constitute the majority or a large minority, namely areas stretching from Puno to Huaraz.

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### Quechua Background

The Quechua directly descend from the ancient Incas. The Inca Empire steadily expanded during the centuries prior to European exploration and colonization of the Americas and maintained its capital city in Cuzco, Peru. At its zenith, the empire stretched from southern Colombia to northern Chile as additional peoples were conquered by the massive Incan army and subjugated to tribute and taxes. The spread of the empire throughout the Andes resulted in the introduction, use, and adaptation of the Quechua language among many people groups resulting in nearly four dozen varieties of Quechua spoken at present day. The Spanish conquered the Incas during the sixteenth century and introduced Catholicism and the Spanish language.

Cusco Quechua is the most commonly spoken Quechuan sublanguage with at least 1.5 million native speakers. Bilingualism in Spanish for Cusco Quechua speakers is 90-95% among those who reside in urban areas and 65% among those who reside in rural areas.<sup>[3]</sup> Literacy rates for Quechua speakers are extremely low for Quechua sublanguages (less than 10%) and range from as low as 25% to as high as 75% for Spanish. According to 2007 census data, administrative regions of Peru with the highest percentage of Quechua speakers include Apurimac (71%), Huancavelica (64%), Ayacucho (63%), Cusco (51%), Puno (38%), Ancash (31%), Huánuco (29%), Madre de Dios (17%), Arequipa (15%), and Moquegua (10%).<sup>[4]</sup>

Most Quechua continue to reside in highland areas and rely on subsistence agriculture and pastoralism for survival. Intricate land terraces are frequently utilized for crop cultivation. In recent years, increasing numbers of Quechua have relocated to major cities such as Lima. Excessive alcohol use, particularly among men, is a major societal problem.<sup>[5]</sup>

### LDS Background

The first Peruvian Quechua Latter-day Saints appeared to join the Church in the 1960s. In 1973, the Church reported a list of

languages spoken by mission and indicated that the Andes-Peru Mission utilized only Spanish. Only one mission officially had Quechua as a language spoken for a mission (Bolivia).<sup>[6]</sup> By 1977, the Church reported that many Quechua had joined the Church in Peru.<sup>[7]</sup> In 1979, the Church published select passages of the Book of Mormon into Quechua (Peru). Although not explicitly stated by the Church, Quechua (Peru) translations appear to be in the Cusco Quechua sublanguage. The first branches and districts that were predominantly ethnic Quechua appeared to be organized sometime in the mid to late 1970s. In 1985, the Church created its first stake in the Quechua homeland in Cuzco. In late 2013, there were 14 stakes (Ayacucho, Cajamarca, Cerro de Pasco, Cusco, Cusco Inti Raymi, Huancayo, Huanuco, Huanuco Amarilis, Huarez, Juliaca, Mantaro, Puno Bellavista, Puno Central, and Sicuani) and seven districts (Abancay, Andahuaylas, Ayaviri, Lambayeque, Quillabamba, Tarma, and Valle Sagrado) that had at least one congregation operating in areas where Quechua sublanguages are commonly spoken. Most of these stakes and districts were organized between 1984 and 1997.

Between 2001 and late 2013, stakes in the Quechua homelands that experienced an increase in the number of congregations included Huánuco (two wards, one branch), Juliaca (two wards), and Puno Bellavista (one ward) whereas stakes that experienced congregational decline included Mantaro (one ward created; three branches discontinued), Puno Central (one ward), and Cerro de Pasco (two branches). Stakes that experienced no change in the number of congregations during this period included Ayacucho, Cusco, Cusco Inti Raymi, Huancayo, Huánuco Amarilis, and Sicuani. Districts or areas administered by missions that experienced increases in the number of congregations included Huancavelica (two branches) and Andahuaylas (one branch) whereas congregational decline occurred in Tarma [including original La Oroya Peru District] (five branches), Abancay (two branches), Quillabamba (two branches), Ayaviri (one branch), and Valle Sagrado (one branch).

In the late 2000s and early 2010s, missionaries reported renewed efforts to establish member groups and branches in additional cities and towns within the Quechua homelands. Locations that appeared to have groups functioning for the first time during this period include Chinchero, Izcuchaca, Maras, Urcos, and possibly Ollantaytambo. Church attendance in these groups generally ranges from 20 to 40. The Church also organized a new branch in Lampa.

In 2013, church leaders indicated that there were at least 17 congregations that operated in the Quechua homelands with Quechua-speaking members. In late 2013, there were at least 44 cities and towns with an LDS presence located in areas where Quechua is traditionally spoken. Although the Church has never released the number of ethnic Quechua or Quechua-speaking members, there may be as many as 175,000 ethnic Quechua Latter-day Saints in Peru and 69,000 Latter-day Saints in Peru who speak Quechua as a first language. These estimates assume that the percentage of LDS membership that is ethnically or linguistically Quechua is representative of these percentages in national population.

In late 2013, the Church reported four gospel study and proselytism materials translated into Quechua (Peru) including a family guidebook, the Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith pamphlet, the old edition of Gospel Principles, and a book of hymns and child songs.<sup>[8]</sup> Audio translations of General Conference addresses into Quechua (Peru) are available online.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Successes

The Church initially established a presence among the Quechua during the early years of the Church's operations in Peru. Early successes included the translation of select passages of the Book of Mormon into Quechua (Peru) when there were only 29,000 members in Peru, the establishment of congregations in predominantly Quechua areas such as Cuzco, and the creation of the first stakes in the Quechua homelands within the first two decades of formal proselytism efforts. These early successes are almost entirely responsible for the current extent of LDS outreach among the Quechua in Peru as relatively little progress expanding outreach has occurred within the past 15 years.

The extent of LDS outreach among the Quechua has remained consistent or has slightly increased within the past decade. A handful of areas within the Quechua homelands experienced a net increase in congregations between 2001 and 2013 such as in Huancavelica Region and member groups were organized in several previously unreached cities and towns. Only a couple locations appear to once have a branch and no longer do. It is likely that these locations continue to have a member group functioning.

The Church extends minimal outreach to half of the Quechua ethnolinguistic groups native to Peru. LDS congregations currently function in locations where 15 of these 32 Quechua sublanguages are traditionally spoken, providing minimal LDS outreach to these peoples.

## Opportunities

The Church operates a widespread presence in Peru and maintains a self-sufficient full-time missionary force. Virtually all cities with over 20,000 inhabitants have at least one ward or branch. In 2012, 1.77% of the population was nominally LDS. In 2013, Peru had the sixth most nominal members of any country in the world and was one of only four countries to have at least 100 stakes. With good self-sufficiency in meeting its own missionary and administrative needs, the Church in Peru has significant opportunities to engage in ethnolinguistic-specific outreach among the Quechua in their homelands utilizing a combination of foreign, Peruvian Mestizo, and Quechua missionaries and local church leaders. The wise utilization of Quechua-speaking full-time missionaries will be key toward revitalizing outreach expansion and ethno-specific missionary activity. The assignment of these missionaries to missions with sizable Quechua populations such as the Peru Cusco and Peru Huancayo Missions can provide mission leaders with immediate Quechua language resources. Some of these ethnic Quechua missionaries can later

serve as teachers in the Missionary Training Center in Lima following completion of their missions in order to provide basic language and cultural instruction to missionaries serving in missions where Quechua outreach is needed.

The Quechua are the most populous Amerindian people and present some of the greatest opportunities for LDS outreach expansion and revitalization of missionary efforts among indigenous peoples in South America. There remain hundreds of lesser-reached and unreached small cities and towns within the Quechua homeland that appear favorable for LDS outreach. Locations that appear most favorable for mission leaders and full-time missionaries to visit and engage in church planting practices include the Cuzco-Sicuni area, the Huancayo-Jauja area, the Andahuaylas-Abancay area, the Puno-Ayaviri area, and the Huaraz-Caraz area as all five of these areas have large numbers of small cities and towns within reasonably close proximity to LDS outreach centers. There are likely small numbers of members and investigators who reside in many of these locations, providing an initial base upon which missionaries and local church leaders can begin formal missionary efforts. Designating some full-time missionary companionships as traveling missionaries who regularly visit cities, towns, and villages and hold cottage meetings within these five areas presents a dynamic, cost-effective approach to identifying which locations are most receptive to outreach and eventually establishing a permanent LDS presence. Mission and local church leaders may organize member groups in additional cities, towns, and villages once is a least one active priesthood holder to serve as group leader. Avoiding the assignment of a full-time missionary companionship to individual member groups can encourage local members to engage in member-missionary work and prepare individuals to be taught and baptized by traveling missionaries or missionaries assigned to a nearby ward or branch. This approach strives for effective use of finite missionary resources to maximize outreach potential. A map displaying populated places within the Quechua homelands and the status of LDS outreach can be found [here](#).

To illustrate a church-planting approach to LDS outreach expansion in suburban and rural areas of the Quechua homelands, a single missionary companionship designated as traveling missionaries could be based from the Sicuni area to reach locations that are lesser-reached and unreached by current congregations and missionary companionships. These missionaries can spend several days at a time meeting isolated members in each populated location and find and teach investigators. If feasible, missionaries can stay overnight in hotels or in member homes that are deemed appropriate by mission leaders. Missionaries can rotate from location to location in order to provide minimal outreach and assess conditions for where to concentrate more time and energy in proselytism efforts. Locations in the Sicuni area that may be visited and targeted by missionaries include Acopia, Checachupe, Combapata, Marangani, Mosoc Llacta, Onocora, Pampamarca, Pomacanchi, Quehue, San Pablo, San Pedro, Tinta, Ttumi, Tungasuca, and Yanaoca. Local stake leaders in Sicuni can assist missionaries by accompanying them to these locations and sharing information on known members and investigators who reside in these communities. Collaboration with local church members and leaders will be essential towards instilling self-sufficiency and strengthening member-missionary activity.

Many Quechua reside in rural areas. Provided with the percentage of the population residing in urban areas, six of the eight administrative regions of Peru with the lowest percentages of urbanization have Quechua speakers constituting at least 25% of the population (Huancavelica - 32%, Huánuco - 43%, Apurímac - 46%, Ayacucho - 58%, Puno - 50%, and Cusco - 55%). The organization of a subtype of official LDS congregation called "district branches" may be a practical and efficient solution to the challenges of expanding missionary outreach among rural populations separated by long distances and rugged geography. District branches service areas within the boundaries of a district but outside the boundaries of ordinary branches. These areas generally consist of vast geographical areas where members meet for church in member groups or where members do not have the support of any type of congregation. The organization of district branches provides local district leadership with opportunities to head these expansion and church administrative efforts, thereby conserving the limited energy, time, and resources of the mission. The creation of mission branches and reduction of the size of stake boundaries may be another method to help the Church better service rural areas with sizable numbers of Quechua towns and villages.

There are some good opportunities to begin LDS outreach among Quechua ethnolinguistic groups that have never appeared to receive a Latter-day Saint gospel witness. There are five Quechua sublanguages with 50,000 or more speakers that are traditionally spoken in areas where no LDS congregations operate including Northern Conchucos Ancash (250,000), Southern Conchucos Ancash (250,000), Margos-Yarowilca-Lauricocha (83,400), Huamalíes-Dos de Mayo Huánuco (72,400), and Panao Huánuco (50,000). All five of these sublanguages are traditionally spoken in rural areas where there are no cities with 20,000 or more inhabitants. Mission leaders have likely avoided expanding missionary work into these rural areas due to the lack of medium-sized or large cities and difficulty accessing these areas due to distance from established LDS centers and rugged terrain. Identifying small cities and towns that are easily accessible and with known members and investigators will be essential towards beginning an LDS Church establishment among these peoples.

Bilingualism reduces the need for organizing segregated congregations for Spanish-speaking Mestizos and Quechua-speaking Amerindians in urban areas as the vast majority of Quechua speakers who reside in urban areas are bilingual in Spanish. Organizing Quechua-speaking Sunday School classes may be all that is needed to accommodate any language or cultural needs to facilitate gospel learning, testimony development, and socialization with fellow members.

## Challenges

One of the most concerning challenges for the Church to achieve greater growth among the Quechua in Peru centers on the lack of LDS outreach that specifically targets this population. None of the Church's 12 missions in Peru appears to maintain a Quechua-speaking language program notwithstanding the Quechua currently ranking as the most populous Amerindian people in the Americas. With one of the largest full-time missionary forces in the world, it is puzzling why the Church in Peru does not maintain Quechua-specific outreach due to significant missionary manpower and resources available and likely tens of



thousands of Latter-day Saints who speak Quechua as a first language. The Church has had to rely on bilingual leaders and members to make significant inroads among the Quechua and these efforts have yielded few results within the past decade as evidenced by slow or stagnant congregational growth in predominantly Quechua-speaking areas. A lack of LDS outreach in small cities, towns, and villages appears correlated with missionary activity focused on large and medium cities where 90% or more of Quechua speakers are bilingual in Spanish. Spanish language outreach in small cities and towns in the Quechua homelands would encounter significant challenges due to lower rates of bilingualism in Spanish. These conditions will require some type of Quechua language outreach to achieve greater growth.

Low member activity and convert retention rates in Peru pose serious challenges for the Church to achieve greater growth among the Quechua. In 2012, the average ward or branch in Peru had 671 members in its boundaries yet most congregations appear to have between 75 and 150 active members. No more than 20% of Latter-day Saints on church records appear to attend church on a regular basis. Inactivity challenges have been highly problematic in the Quechua homelands. In 2013, missionaries reported that the city of Quillabamba had three branches and approximately 600 active members yet there were over 3,000 members on church records who lived in the city. Missionaries indicate that few active priesthood holders, reactivation challenges, rushed prebaptismal preparation, and convert retention difficulties have prevented some member groups to reach the minimal qualifications to become branches.

Within the past decade, congregational decline has occurred in some stakes and districts that operate within the Quechua homelands. Most congregations that closed during the past decade operated in urban areas. A lack of congregational growth in urban areas within the Quechua homelands suggests major problems with convert retention and member activity rates. Little progress expanding missionary work among the Quechua will likely occur until these problems are rectified and stagnant or declining congregational growth trends are reversed.

The Church has yet to translate the entire Book of Mormon into Quechua (Peru) as well as larger numbers of gospel study and proselytism materials. Extremely low literacy rates among speakers of Quechua sublanguages in Peru suggest that written translations of scriptures and church materials will have little use among most of the population. There may be a need for audio translations of the scriptures and gospel study materials due to illiteracy in the Quechua language and poor to moderate literacy rates in Spanish.

There appear challenges with the Church extending consistent outreach among the Quechua in Peru due to multiple missions servicing the Quechua homelands and Quechua populations who have relocated to major cities such as Lima. Although multiple missions provide potential for greater resource allotment, past experience in other Latin American countries with sizable Amerindian populations has shown that multiple missions servicing Amerindian populations results in a diffusion of responsibility among mission leaders as few or no mission leaders take the initiative to conduct ethnolinguistic-specific outreach. Collaboration with area leaders may be an effective method for better standardizing a Quechua-specific approach to proselytism that is uniform and provides for greater communication between mission presidents who preside over missions within the Quechua homelands.

## **Comparative Growth**

The Church has established a visible, widespread presence among the Quechua of Peru that surpasses the size of the Church among most other Amerindian peoples in South America. Only the Aymara, Quechua (Bolivia), and Guarani appear to have similar numbers of Latter-day Saints as the Quechua of Peru. The Church has translated the Book of Mormon into only four other Amerindian languages native to South America, namely Aymara (full book), Guarani (full book), Quechua [Bolivia] (selections), and Quichua (full book). Provided with the number of materials translated in parentheses, other Amerindian languages spoken in South America with translations of LDS materials include Aymara (14 materials), Quichua (seven), Guarani (four), and Nivacle (one). The Church among Amerindian groups in South America has established its most pervasive presence among the Otavalo Quichua of Ecuador and the Nivacle of Paraguay. The Church has maintained official language programs in Quechua (Bolivia) and Aymara among some missions in Bolivia. Within the past decade, the Church has experienced slow or stagnant growth among other Amerindian peoples in South America.

Most missionary-focused Christian groups report a more widespread presence among the Quechua of Peru than the LDS Church. Evangelicals claim approximately two to three percent of most Peruvian Quechua ethnolinguistic groups.<sup>[10]</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses maintain significantly more Quechua-speaking congregations in Peru than the LDS Church. Witnesses report congregations or groups that conduct church services in Ayacucho Quechua (50), Cusco Quechua (36), Ancash Quechua (19), Huallaga Huánuco Quechua (1), and Huaylla Wanca Quechua (1).<sup>[11]</sup> Witnesses publish proselytism materials into four Quechuan sublanguages (Ancash, Ayacucho, Cusco, and Huallaga Huánuco).<sup>[12]</sup> Notwithstanding significantly more Quechua-designated congregations than Latter-day Saints, Witnesses maintain approximately the same number of congregations as the LDS Church in most administrative regions with sizable numbers of Quechua speakers. The Seventh Day Adventist Church maintains a pervasive presence among the Quechua. In 2012, Adventists reported 101 churches and 226 companies within the regions of Apurimac, Cuzco, and Madre de Dios whereas the LDS Church reported only 34 wards and branches within these three regions. Adventists maintain significantly more congregations than Latter-day Saints in other regions with sizable numbers of Quechua speakers and have maintained steady congregational and membership growth within the past decade. Adventists publish materials into only one Quechua sublanguage spoken in Peru (Cusco Quechua).<sup>[13]</sup> The Church of the Nazarene reports a sizable presence among the Quechua of Peru and likely organizes over 100 congregations within the Quechua homelands.

## **Limitations**

Although abundant data from current and returned full-time missionaries was available during the writing of this case study, there were no reports from local members and church leaders. The Church does not publish the official language designation of individual congregations or the number of members who speak Quechua or other languages that are not within the ten most commonly spoken languages in the worldwide church. The Church does not publish data on member activity or convert retention rates. No data is available on the number and location of member groups. Consequently it is unclear how many locations receive minimal LDS outreach through these semi-official congregations. Data on what locations have full-time missionaries assigned is unavailable. The distinction of Quechua versus Mestizo can be difficult to pinpoint in some locations due to centuries of intermingling between pure Quechua and Mestizos and varying degrees of fluency in Quechua sublanguages. The Church does not clarify into which Quechua sublanguage LDS materials are translated. Many language estimates and figures for Quechua sublanguages were ascertained many years or decades ago. No population figures for cities and towns in Peru with less than 15,000 inhabitants were available during the writing of this case study.

## Future Prospects

The outlook for LDS growth among the Quechua of Peru appears favorable within the coming years as the number of missions in Peru increased from seven to 12 between 2009 and 2013 and two missions are now headquartered in the Quechua homelands (Peru Cuzco and Peru Huancayo). In recent years, mission leaders focusing on establishing member groups in previously unreached areas has enormous potential to reverse stagnant congregational growth trends experienced within the past decade as long as reasonably high convert baptismal standards are maintained and newly organized groups become self-sufficient in meeting their leadership and administrative needs. The establishment of Quechua language programs in missions that service significant Quechua populations such as the Peru Cuzco and Peru Huaycano Missions will be warranted to make greater inroads reaching Quechua-speaking populations in small cities and towns where lower rates of Spanish bilingualism occur. The implementation of nontraditional missionary tactics such as travelling missionaries and organizing district or mission branches will be necessary in order for more rapid progress to occur in establishing the Church in the hundreds of unreached small cities and towns within the Quechua homeland.

[1] "Peripheral Quechua," [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com), retrieved 22 October 2013. <http://www.ethnologue.com/subgroups/peripheral-quechua>

[2] "Quechua," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 22 October 2013. <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Norway-to-Russia/Quechua.html>

[3] "Cusco Quechua," [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com), retrieved 26 October 2013. <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/quz>

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[9] <http://www.lds.org/general-conference/sessions?lang=eng&clang=quz>

[10] "Quechua," Joshua Project, retrieved 26 October 2013. <http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-clusters.php?peo2=274>

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[13] "Statistical Report for 2010," sda.org, p. 81-83