



Overall LDS Growth Trend Case Studies

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Instances of Slow LDS Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Overview

The LDS Church has overall experienced rapid growth in Sub-Saharan Africa since formal proselytism efforts began among indigenous black African populations in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Despite significant progress for the region as a whole, some countries and locations have experienced stagnant or very slow LDS growth for years or even decades.

This case study identifies many countries and notable locations where the LDS Church has experienced stagnant or slow growth since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Growth trends are reviewed for each of these locations. Factors inherent in locations where stagnant or slow LDS growth occurs are identified. Confirming and disconfirming evidence for how each factor contributes to slow LDS growth is explored. Instances of slow or stagnant LDS growth in other world regions is briefly reviewed. Locations in Sub-Saharan Africa where other missionary-focused Christian groups experience stagnant or slow growth is summarized. Limitations to this case study are identified and prospects for the LDS Church in Sub-Saharan to accelerate growth in locations where stagnant or slow growth has occurred is predicted.

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Locations in Sub-Saharan Africa Where Stagnant or Slow LDS Growth Occurred: 2001-2013

Central African Republic

Located in Central Africa, the Central African Republic has a population of 5.3 million that predominantly speaks French and Sangho. Half the population is Christian, whereas followers of indigenous religions and Islam constitute 35% and 15% of the population, respectively.

In 1992, the Church established its initial presence in the Central Africa Republic through the member-missionary efforts of an American member temporarily residing in the capital city Bangui. The Cameroon Yaounde Mission (later renamed Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan) initially organized two branches in Bangui to improve accessibility for local members. However, the branches were consolidated into a single branch by 1995. One senior missionary couple served in the country during the early 1990s and no full-time missionaries have served within the country since this time. In 1995, there were approximately 100 members in the country. Over the years, the Church has reassigned the country to several missions, namely the Ghana Cape Coast Mission in 2005, the Democratic Republic of the Congo Kinshasa Mission sometime in the late 2000s, and the Republic of the Congo Brazzaville Mission in 2014.

In 2012, LDS apostle Elder Jeffrey R. Holland dedicated the Central African Republic for missionary work. The Democratic Republic of the Congo Kinshasa Mission almost assigned full-time missionaries to Bangui in late 2012/early 2013, but political instability and civil unrest have prevented the implementation of these plans. No restrictions on religious freedom or obtaining foreign missionary visas have appeared to prevent the assignment of full-time missionaries. Past mission presidents have indicated that remote location and low living standards have posed challenges for mission leadership to regularly visit the isolated Bangui Branch and to consider assigning full-time missionaries.

Although significant progress occurred during the first couple years following the Church's establishment in the Central African Republic, stagnant growth has occurred for the past two decades. Official membership totals fluctuated during this period from as high as 427 in 2010 to as low as 100 in the mid-1990s. These fluctuations appeared attributed to the Church updating membership records. In 2013, the Church reported 187 members and one branch.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Ethiopia supports one of the largest populations in Africa with 96.6 million people. Inhabited by 3.3 million people, Addis Ababa is the most populous city and administrative capital of Ethiopia. Christians comprise approximately two-thirds of the national population, whereas Muslims constitute approximately one-third of the population. Ethiopia is culturally unique among African countries due to a Christian legacy since the fourth century and its freedom from colonial rule with the exception of the brief Italian occupation from 1936 to 1941.

In 1992, the Church held its first official meeting in Addis Ababa. The first missionaries arrived in 1993 and the first branch was organized in January 1994. Two additional branches were organized in 2001 and 2013. In 2009, the Church organized a district to service Ethiopia with headquarters in Addis Ababa. The Kenya Nairobi Mission administered Ethiopia from 1991 to mid-2005 and the Uganda Kampala Mission has administered the country since mid-2005. Although membership growth rates for the entire country accelerated during the late 2000s and early 2010s, this growth occurred primarily as a result of new converts joining the Church in cities outside of Addis Ababa, such as Debre Zeit, and in southern Ethiopia, namely Awasa, Shashemene, and Wendo Genet.

Full-time missionaries assigned to Ethiopia have historically struggled to learn the Amharic language to teach gospel lessons and converse with others as a result of no formal LDS language study program for Amharic in missionary training centers (MTCs) and missionaries transferring between Ethiopia and Uganda. Slow growth in the number of active members has occurred in Addis Ababa within the past two decades. In 2014, there appeared to be approximately 200 active members in the Addis Ababa metropolitan area despite missionaries proselytizing the city for over two decades.

Mauritius

Inhabited by 1.3 million people, Mauritius is a small island nation in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar and Reunion. Hindus comprise approximately half of the population, whereas Christians and Muslims account for 33% and 17% of the population, respectively. Most the population speaks Mauritian Creole, although English is the official language.

In 1979, the Church established a permanent presence in Mauritius. The first branch was created in 1982. A second branch briefly operated in the late 1980s, closed in the early 1990s, reopened in the early 1990s, closed in the mid 1990s, and reopened in 2004. The South Africa Johannesburg administered Mauritius until the country was reassigned to the Reunion-based Mascarene Islands Mission (renamed South Africa Durban in 1991 and relocated to Durban, South Africa) in 1988. The Madagascar Antananarivo Mission has administered Mauritius since its creation in 1998. Extremely slow membership growth has occurred since the establishment of an LDS presence as the number of members increased from 200 in 1989 to 333 in 2001, 406 in 2010, and 442 in 2013.

Although no legal obstacles prohibit or restrict proselytism, the Church has had significant challenges with obtaining foreign missionary visas. For many years, only a couple young elders and a senior missionary couple have been assigned to service the entire country. Additionally, the prominence of Hinduism in society and higher living standards and cultural ties with Western Europe have appeared to reduce receptivity to LDS outreach compared to other Sub-Saharan African nations.

Namibia

Inhabited by 2.2 million people, Namibia is located in southwestern Africa and has a population that is predominantly Christian. English is the official language although most the population speaks Ndonga, Kwanyama, Herero, and Nama as a first language.

The Church maintained a minimal presence in Namibia from 1973 until the Church organized its first branch in the capital city of Windhoek in 1983. Full-time missionaries sporadically served in the country during these years and no permanent missionary presence was established until 1990. In approximately 1990, Church organized a second branch in Rehoboth but closed the branch shortly thereafter. In 2006, the Church organized a second branch in Windhoek. Slow membership growth has occurred over the years as the Church reported 100 members in 1993, 336 members in 2003, and 775 members in 2013. In the early 2010s, a member group began functioning in Swakopmund. The South Africa Cape Town Mission administered Namibia until 2013 when Namibia was reassigned to the newly organized Botswana/Namibia Mission headquartered in Gaborone, Botswana.

The Church has struggled over the years to obtain and maintain foreign missionary visas, resulting in limitations on the number of missionaries permitted to serve in the country and disruptions to missionary activity. In 2012, the Church withdrew its young missionaries and has since been unable to obtain foreign missionary visas for young missionaries

Calabar, Nigeria

Calabar is the administrative capital of Cross Rivers State and has a urban population of approximately 375,000.^[1] Efik is the

predominantly spoken first language in the region and many speak English as a second language.

The Church established a presence in Calabar sometime in the 1980s as a district operated in the city by 1988.^[2] In late 2002, the Calabar Nigeria District became a stake with five wards and one branch.^[3] By the mid-2000s, there were eight wards and one branch in the stake. In 2008, the Nigeria Uyo Mission was relocated to Calabar and renamed the Nigeria Calabar Mission.

Although a mission has operated in the city for six years, the Church in Calabar experienced no increase in the number of congregations until 2014. Poor member-missionary participation and lower receptivity compared to other large cities in Nigeria appear responsible for stagnant growth as the availability of mission resources does not appear to be a factor in stagnant growth trends since the mission began operating in the city many years ago.

Jos, Nigeria

Jos is the administrative capital of Plateau State and has a population of nearly one million people.^[4] Although many residents originate from the Jos area and central Nigeria, the city population has a significant number of nonnative Nigerians from southern areas of the country. Within the past 15 years, Jos has experienced some of the most frequent and violent religious clashes in Nigeria between Christians and Muslims.

The Church has maintained a presence in Jos since the early 1990s. In 1992, the Church organized a new mission headquartered in Jos and reported that there were 30 members within the boundaries of the new mission.^[5] In 1993, the Church organized a member district in Jos but relocated the mission to Enugu and renamed it the Nigeria Enugu Mission. In mid-2001, there were three branches in Jos (Bukuru, Jos, and Dogon Dutse). Sometime in the 2000s, the Church closed the Bukuru Branch. In mid-2014, there were just two branches in the city.

Religious violence poses significant safety concerns for the Church to engage in formal proselytism efforts and appears primarily responsible for stagnant growth in the Jos area in the early twenty-first century. It is unclear whether full-time missionaries serve in Jos due to these conditions and whether any special protocols exist for ensuring the physical safety of members and investigators.

Yorubaland, Nigeria (Excluding Lagos)

The Yoruba number among the most populous peoples in West Africa with approximately 38 million people.^[6] Nearly 37 million Yoruba reside in southwestern Nigeria in a cultural region known as "Yorubaland." Approximately 60% of Nigerian Yoruba are Christian, whereas 40% are Muslim.^[7]

In 1980, the Church organized its West Africa Mission with headquarters in Lagos (later renamed the Nigeria Lagos Mission in 1985). The Church appeared to establish a presence in Yorubaland outside of Lagos sometime in the early to mid 1980s. In 1992, the Church organized a second mission headquartered in Yorubaland in the city of Ilorin but discontinued the mission the following year. In 2002, the Church organized a second mission headquartered in Yorubaland based in Ibadan. In 2007, the Nigeria Ibadan Mission was relocated to eastern Lagos and renamed the Nigeria Lagos East Mission, but the mission was ultimately consolidated with the original Nigeria Lagos Mission in 2009.

The LDS Church has maintained a presence among the Yoruba for more than 30 years and has experienced slow to moderate growth in most locations during this period. During the 2000s and early 2010s, the Church experienced mixed congregational growth trends and moderate rates national outreach expansion within Yorubaland. In the early 2000s, the Church operated congregations in 10 cities within traditionally Yoruba-speaking areas of Nigeria including Lagos (12), Abeokuta (6), Ibadan (6), Ijebu-Ode (6), Ile-Ife (3), Akure (2), Ondo (2), Ilorin (1), Imodi (1), and Osogbo (1). In late 2013, the Church operated congregations in 16 cities and towns within traditionally Yoruba-speaking areas of Nigeria including Lagos (25), Ibadan (7), Abeokuta (6), Ile-Ife (5), Ijebu-Ode (3), Akure (1), Ikorodu (1), Ilesa (1), Ilowo-Orile (1), Ilorin (1), Imodi (1), Ipetumodu [Edunabon] (1), Odeda (1), Ondo (1), Osogbo (1), and Sagamu (1). The total number of congregations in Yoruba-speaking Nigeria increased from 40 in the early 2000s to 57 in late 2013. However, the net increase in the number of congregations in Lagos accounted for 13 of the 17 unit increase experienced during this period. Church services appeared to be conducted in English for most, if not all, congregations that operate in Yoruba-speaking areas.

The Yoruba appear to exhibit significantly lower receptivity to LDS outreach compared to other major ethnolinguistic groups in Nigeria. Within the past two decades, the Church has attempted on multiple occasions to augment the size of the missionary force in Yorubaland and make other accommodations to improve receptivity, but these measures have yielded frustratingly few results. Efforts to create a second mission to better service the massive population of southwestern Nigeria have thus far been unsuccessful as evidenced by the Nigeria Ilorin Mission operating for only one year, the Nigeria Ibadan Mission operating for only five years, and the Nigeria Lagos East Mission operating for only two years. Safety and security concerns regarding active proselytism in areas with a mixture of Christians and Muslims, and ongoing religious conflict between these two groups in central Nigeria may have impacted past decisions by the Church to consolidate missions and exercise caution in expanding outreach. The translation of the Book of Mormon into Yoruba has appeared to have little impact on reversing slow to stagnant growth trends outside of Lagos within the past five years. Slow growth in Yorubaland is also illustrated by only the Lagos Nigeria District and the Ibadan Nigeria District becoming stakes within the past 20 years. Two of the four districts (Abeokuta and

Ijebu-Ode) have operated for 20 years and continue to fall short of meeting the minimum requirements to function as stakes. Although data is unavailable on the circumstances surrounding the consolidation of branches in some cities in Yorubaland (Ijebu-Ode, Akure, and Ondo), few convert baptisms, local leadership development challenges, active members relocating elsewhere, and inactivity problems appear to have contributed to the closure of branches in these locations.

Reunion

Inhabited by over 840,000 people, Reunion is a small island overseas department of France located in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar and west of Mauritius. Christians comprise 85% of the population, whereas Hindus and Muslims account for 7% and 2% of the population, respectively. Nonreligious individuals account for 6% of the population. Most the population speaks Reunion Creole French, although French is the official language.

In 1979, the Church established a permanent presence in Reunion and organized its first branch. In 1982, the first and only district was organized. In 1987, there were three branches. In 1988, the Church organized the Mascarene Islands Mission with headquarters on Reunion, although the mission was later relocated to Durban, South Africa in 1991. The number of branches totaled four in 1993, five in 2000, four in 2001, five in 2005, four in 2008, five in 2011, and four in 2013. Extremely slow membership growth has occurred over the past two decades as membership totaled 500 in 1991, 600 in 1995, 700 in 1997, 821 in 2009, and 903 in 2013.

Although the Church in Reunion has not faced any notable challenges obtaining foreign missionary visas or conducting its operations, essentially stagnant growth has occurred for many years. The influence of Western secularism and materialism on society due to close cultural and political ties to France appear at the root of the population exhibiting low receptivity to LDS outreach. Although district and mission leaders have attempted to open additional congregations within the past two decades, these efforts have yielded no long-term results as evidenced by these newly organized branches closing within a matter of a couple years.

Kampala, Uganda

Inhabited by 2.3 million people, Kampala is one of the most populous metropolitan areas in East Africa. The population primarily speaks English, Luganda, and Swahili.

Although the Church had several non-African members who visited the country as early as the 1960s and had a handful of Ugandans who joined the Church abroad in the 1980s, no official presence was established until 1990 when a branch began functioning and the first missionaries arrived. In 1993, the Church organized a member district in Kampala and by mid-2001 there were eight branches in the city. In 2005, the Church organized a new mission headquartered in Kampala. In 2010, the Church created a stake with six wards and five branches. In mid-2014, the stake continued to have six wards and five branches.

The Church in Kampala has experienced no significant increase in the number of congregations since the late 1990s notwithstanding a major increase in the number of members on church records for the entire country. The Church added approximately 10,000 members between the late 1990s and 2013, with most of these members joining the Church in Kampala. Despite this rapid membership growth, the Church in Kampala has not organized any new congregations since the organization of the stake in early 2010 and has not had any branches advance to ward status since the stake was organized. Low member activity rates, rushed prebaptismal preparation incurred by full-time missionaries focusing on reaching arbitrary baptismal goals, modest member-missionary participation, reliance on foreign missionaries to staff the missionary force, and a church-splitting versus a church-planting approach to growth all appear responsible for the lack of progress expanding LDS outreach in Kampala and achieving greater real growth within the past 15 years.

Characteristics of Countries and Locations Where Stagnant or Slow LDS Growth Occurs

No Mission Headquartered in the Country or Long Distance from Mission Headquarters

No mission headquartered in the country frequently coincides with slow LDS growth in several Sub-Saharan African nations. Missions are essential for the allocation of mission resources such as senior missionary couples, young full-time missionaries, and funding for church expenses such as renting meetinghouse spaces. Countries without a mission often have few, if any, mission resources dedicated to growing and expanding the church. Oftentimes mission leaders face challenges in fulfilling basic administrative and ecclesiastical needs in these nations due to distance from mission headquarters, the challenges that accompany administering the Church across international borders, and significant differences in language and culture.

The Church in Tanzania exemplifies many of the characteristics inherent in Sub-Saharan African countries where the Church experiences slow growth. The Kenya Nairobi Mission has administered Tanzania since the early 1990s, resulting in limited contact and mission resource allocation to Tanzania as the mission has included both of these countries for over two decades as well as Ethiopia and Uganda between the early 1990s and 2005. The Church has struggled to meet the needs of proselytizing the general Tanzanian population with a full-time missionary force numbering only one to two dozen since the initial establishment of the Church in the early 1990s. Additionally, the Church adopted English as its official language for its

missionary operations and church services until transitioning to Swahili in 2011 resulting in significant language barriers with the predominantly Swahili-speaking population until this change occurred. This decision to conduct church services and missionary work in English prior to this time appears attributed to the Church officially adopting English as its language for church operations and missionary work in Kenya. A lack of mission resources has also appeared to influence the extremely limited national outreach of the Church in Tanzania as there was an LDS presence in only one city until the late 2000s and today there are only three cities with branches operating and missionaries assigned.

The decision to delay the establishment of the first LDS mission in a Sub-Saharan African country due to slow growth demonstrates circular logic as a lack of mission resources allocated to the country is often primarily responsible for little to no progress in growing the Church. Consequently there are many countries where the Church would likely experience significantly more rapid growth if mission resources were allocated in greater numbers and if there was greater contact and support from mission leadership. Notable examples of countries where the Church has generally experienced slow growth and where the Church has not headquartered a mission include Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Namibia, and Tanzania.

Although no mission established in a country frequently coincides with stagnant or slow LDS growth, there are several Sub-Saharan African countries without a mission where the Church has experienced moderate to rapid membership and congregational growth. In Malawi, the Church grew from 409 members and two branches in 2003 to 1,653 members and eight branches in 2013, yet missionary operations and church administration were based from Zimbabwe from the early 1990s to 2011 and Zambia from 2011 to present day. In Togo, the Church grew from 417 members and one branch in 2003 to 2,307 members and eight wards and four branches in 2013, yet missionary operations and church administration were based from Ghana from the late 1990s to 2011, Cote d'Ivoire from 2007 to 2011, and Benin from 2011 to present day.

No Missionaries Assigned

Many countries and locations in Sub-Saharan Africa where stagnant or slow LDS have occurred do not have full-time missionaries assigned. With a strong traditional reliance on full-time missionaries to find and baptize new converts, many locations where full-time missionaries do not serve can struggle to augment the number of members and regularly baptize new converts unless local members and church leaders are effective in bringing others into the Church through their own member-missionary efforts.

The Church in Angola experienced essentially stagnant growth prior to the assignment of the first young proselytizing missionaries in 2008. Locations in Sub-Saharan Africa where the Church currently has at least one official branch and no young full-time missionaries assigned, and experiences stagnant or slow growth, include the Central African Republic, Djibouti, and South Sudan.

Surprisingly, the Church in Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced some of its most prolific growth in locations where there were no full-time missionaries assigned. In the central Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Church has likely experienced the most rapid church growth among all areas of the world within recent memory. This achievement has been largely attributed to self-sufficient member-missionary programs that fueled growth without the assistance of full-time missionaries until missionaries arrived in approximately 2011. Local leadership was successful in supervising local missionary efforts while simultaneously meeting the spiritual needs of their members from when the first branches were organized in 1997 until full-time Congolese missionaries arrived in 2011. Two districts (Kananga and Luputa) became stakes without full-time missionaries serving in these locations. Both stakes in Kananga and Luputa reached stakehood shortly after reaching the minimum number of nominal members for a stake to operate due to high member activity rates and successful local leadership development efforts. The Church in Kananga has become a major powerhouse for the Church in Central Africa despite its remote location and relatively recent establishment. Virtually all indicators of growth suggest that the Church has achieved high convert retention and member activity rates notwithstanding the baptism of large numbers of converts year to year and few seasoned church members. The high quality of new converts and the rapid pace at which additional wards and branches have been organized is a testament to the uniquely favorable opportunities for growth that member-missionary efforts can yield.

Foreign Missionary Visa Challenges

Difficulties for the Church to obtain steady numbers of foreign missionary visas or renewing foreign missionary visas is a common characteristic of Sub-Saharan African countries where the Church has experienced stagnant or slow growth. In Namibia, the Church has had its missionary operations severely disrupted, resulting in the removal of all young full-time missionaries in 2012. As the Church in Namibia is in its infancy stages and unable to staff its own missionary needs, the Church has experienced no progress in opening branches outside the capital of Windhoek and accelerating membership growth. In Mauritius, the Church maintains a minimal full-time missionary presence due to a severe government limitation on the number of foreign missionary visas available. This has resulted in challenges for the Church to open additional areas to proselytism and utilize full-time missionaries in motivating local members to engage in member-missionary efforts.

Foreign missionary visa challenges do not always result in stagnant or slow growth. The Church in Botswana has experienced disruptions to its missionary operations due to a shortage of foreign missionary visas and the government refusing to renew previously issued missionary visas. This has resulted in the Church reassigning many missionaries originally assigned to Botswana to serve the remainder of their missions in other countries. Despite this challenge, the Church in Botswana has experienced rapid membership growth and has achieved several noteworthy church growth developments, including the

opening of several additional cities to missionary activity in the late 2000s and in 2010, the creation of the first stake in 2012, and the organization of a separate mission headquartered in the capital city of Gaborone in 2013.

Political Instability and Conflict

Military conflicts, civil wars, religious violence, interethnic conflicts, disease, and weak government infrastructure frequently coincide with stagnant or slow LDS growth. Mission and area leaders avoid the assignment of foreign, full-time missionaries to locations riddled with civil strife in order to ensure the physical safety of missionaries. Additionally, church leaders also generally avoid proselytism in refugee camps and among populations who are internally or internationally displaced as these populations struggle to meet their basic physiological needs. Rarely does the Church open additional areas to proselytism in countries where there is ongoing political strife and instability, resulting in stagnant or extremely slow congregational growth. The Church has maintained its regular operations and a full-time missionary presence in some locations where civil disorder occurs if the Church can function without outside assistance. Generally the Church only assigns black African missionaries to serve in locations with political instability if conditions are sufficiently safe for any type of formal proselytism. Countries where stagnant or slow membership and congregational growth previously occurred due, in part, to political instability and conflict include Angola (mid-1990s-early 2000s), Burundi (1993-2010), Cote d'Ivoire (2011), Liberia (2003-2005), Madagascar (2002-2006), and Zimbabwe (2005-2009). Stagnant or slow congregational growth due, in part, to political instability and conflict previously occurred in Cote d'Ivoire (2002-2005) and Sierra Leone (1993-2002) due to no additional cities having an LDS presence established and limitations of expanding outreach within cities with an LDS presence. Recent political instability and conflict have delayed the initial assignment of young, proselytizing missionaries to a couple nations where the Church operates at least one branch including the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

Political instability and conflict do not always coincide with stagnant or slow LDS growth. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Church experienced steady gains in membership and congregations during the Second Congo War from 1998 to 2003. Nominal membership and the number of congregations both doubled during this tumultuous period despite widespread military conflict and the country experiencing one of the deadliest conflicts in the world within the past half century.

Language Barriers

Significant language differences between the official language adopted by the Church in a country and language usage by ordinary members, or struggles for foreign missionaries to sufficiently learn the local language to teach and communicate, sometimes occur in countries and locations with stagnant or slow LDS growth. These language barriers pose obstacles for growth because of the member and investigator frustrations and limitations of developing a testimony when studying and worshiping in another language. In Ethiopia, the Church has struggled to have foreign missionaries to sufficiently learn Amharic to teach the missionary lessons and communicate with others. This has affected growth and the efficiency of the missionary program. In Tanzania, the Church did not adopt Swahili as the Church's official language for the country until 2011, resulting in most Tanzanians experiencing difficulty receiving the missionary lessons and worshiping in English. The Church in both these countries has scarcely scratched the surface in reaching its growth potential as there are less than 2,000 members in either country despite both countries supporting populations of approximately 50 million or more.

Language barriers have appeared to improve convert retention and member activity rates in a few locations, such as the Kilungu Hills in Kenya. Mission and area leaders requiring prospective members to pass a baptismal interview in English despite prospective converts having no fluency in the English language has raised the standard for convert baptism preparation. Consequently, these baptismal candidates must take English classes in order to sufficiently pass a baptismal interview in the English language. Although this approach has likely reduced the growth of the Church in many areas, it has nonetheless served as a heightened baptismal standard that generates high-quality converts who are devoted to the Church and become contributing members.

Secularism and Materialism

Although the populations in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa pride themselves with a strong heritage and passion for organized religion and personal religiosity, some locations have strong cultural ties to Western Europe and are also more economically developed. Secularism and materialism appear one of the primary reasons for stagnant or slow growth in locations such as Mauritius and Reunion where there is greater wealth and less of a societal emphasis on participation in religious affairs. European white populations in South Africa have exhibited low receptivity to LDS outreach for decades, resulting in modest growth among this subset of the population.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church experiences slow or stagnant growth in countries and locations within all other world regions. In Latin America, the Church has experienced stagnant or slow growth in most countries primarily as a result of low member activity rates and poor convert retention. In Europe, stagnant or slow growth occurs in nearly all countries and locations largely due to populations exhibiting low receptivity to LDS proselytism. In the Middle East and North Africa, the Church experiences stagnant or slow growth in most countries and locations due to government and societal restrictions on religious freedom that severely limit or prohibit Christian proselytism, a lack of mission resources dedicated to the region, the lack of proselytism resources for proselytizing Muslims and most Muslim populations exhibiting low receptivity to LDS outreach, and political instability in some

areas. In Central Asia and the Caucasus, severely limited numbers of LDS mission resources, government restrictions on religious freedom, local leadership development problems, and modest receptivity to LDS outreach have all posed problems for attaining greater growth. In South Asia, locations without missionaries assigned generally experience stagnant or slow growth. In Southeast Asia, government restrictions on religious freedom, limited mission resources available due to challenges obtaining foreign missionary visas, member activity and convert retention problems, and some populations exhibiting low receptivity to LDS outreach are responsible for stagnant or slow growth in some locations. In East Asia, modernization and secularism have reduced receptivity to LDS outreach. Low member activity rates also pose significant challenges for effective missionary programs. In Oceania, slow or stagnant growth generally occurs in locations and countries where there are few full-time missionaries assigned, difficulties with local leadership development, significant double affiliation and member activity problems, or where populations have become highly secularized. In the Caribbean, the Church experiences stagnant or slow growth in most countries and dependencies as a result of the widespread presence of many other proselytism-focused faiths, small populations distributed over dozens of small islands, and the influence of Western secularism and materialism on local culture. In North America, the Church experiences stagnant or very slow growth in locations where there are significant member activity and convert retention problems, rural areas with predominantly LDS populations, and populations that are either highly secularized or that maintain strong cultural ties to a traditional Christian denomination. North American populations exhibiting decreasing receptivity to LDS outreach within the past half century have also contributed to stagnant or slow growth in many locations.

Other proselytism-focused Christian groups with a presence in most Sub-Saharan African countries report stagnant or slow growth and few members in some locations. Evangelicals report stagnant or extremely slow growth in many predominantly Muslim Sahel countries in West Africa, such as the Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. Extremely slow growth has also occurred in Somalia. Evangelicals report modest membership growth rates in some countries where there are high percentages of evangelicals in the population, such as Ghana and Zimbabwe.^[8] Jehovah's Witnesses report essentially stagnant growth in many predominantly Muslim countries in the Sahel such as Mali and Niger and in Indian Ocean island nations and dependencies such as Mauritius, Reunion, and Seychelles. Witnesses also report slow membership growth rates in many of the countries with the most publishers (active members who regularly engage in proselytism), such as Zambia.^[9] Seventh Day Adventists report very slow or stagnant membership and congregational growth in most predominantly Muslim countries in the Sahel region of Africa.

Limitations

Congregational growth and membership growth were the primary measures for determining whether stagnant or slow growth has occurred in particular nations, regions, or cities identified in this case study. Data on other indicators of real growth such as increases in the number of full-tithe paying, active Melchizedek Priesthood holders, the number of members serving full-time missions, sacrament meeting attendance, the number of temple recommend holders, and the number of convert baptisms per country are not released to the public. Reasons for why stagnant or slow growth occurs in some countries and locations is not entirely clear based on the data available during the writing of this case study. Some countries and locations identified in this case study may be experiencing real growth in indicators unavailable to researchers, such as increasing sacrament meeting attendance. Consequently, growth as measured by the number of congregations and nominal membership may not reflect real growth within the recent past or at present until certain thresholds are reached in the future for the Church to organize additional congregations.

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