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Top 10 Encouraging and Discouraging LDS Growth and Missionary Developments in 2014

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Overview

This case study reviews the 10 most encouraging LDS growth and missionary developments and the 10 most discouraging LDS growth and missionary developments for the year 2014. Limitations to these developments are identified.

Top 10 Encouraging LDS Growth and Missionary Developments

1. The Worldwide Surge in the Full-time Missionary Force Begins to Stabilize with Larger Numbers of Missionaries than Originally Expected

The Church not only maintained the size of its full-time missionary force but experienced additional increases in the number of members serving full-time missions during 2014. This stood as a major achievement as church leaders anticipated a drop in the number of full-time missionaries beginning in 2014. The executive director of the Missionary Department Elder David F. Evans of the First Quorum of the Seventy noted in July 2014 that the number of full-time missionaries serving was expected to reach a high of 88,000 in the fall of 2014 and then decline to the "high 70,000s."[1] This anticipated decline in the number of full-time missionaries was attributed to the reduced minimum age for missionary service instituted in October 2012 that culminated in a double cohort of missionaries serving from October 2012 to late 2014. The Church reported 83,035 full-time missionaries serving at year-end 2014[2] and reported over 88,000 full-time missionaries serving in October 2014;[3] a six percent increase in 10 months.

In September, LDS apostle Elder Russell M. Nelson stated the following in regards to trends in the number of members serving full-time missions during the latter-half of 2014:

Before the announcement in 2012 about the age change, we had 58,000 missionaries. Now we are over 87,000. We expected a big bump. We also expected a drop after two years' supply of men were taken care of in one year and more than that for the women. But we're not seeing that drop that we had anticipated because these missionaries are having such a fabulous experience that they are telling their younger brothers and sisters to get ready to go on missions."[4]

The Church also noted progress in augmenting the number of convert baptisms. Elder Evans stated in July 2014 that "Every month, if you compare month over month, the baptisms are up. Right now for this year, there's about an overall 15 percent increase in the number of convert baptisms this year compared to a comparable period last year."[5] If the total number of converts baptized in 2014 is 15% higher than in 2013, then the Church would be expected to baptize 325,387 convert - the second highest number of converts baptized in a single year in the history of the Church.

Significant strides were also achieved in 2014 with larger numbers of previously unreached cities opening to full-time missionaries. Most countries in Latin America had cities opened to missionary work for the first time and the Church organized member groups in many of these locations. The missionary complements in many missions significantly increased during the year as resources were channeled into national outreach expansion efforts. Notable examples of countries where the number of missionaries assigned appeared to substantially increase include Brazil, Cambodia, Ghana, Guatemala, the Philippines, and Thailand.

2. Largest Net Increase in the Worldwide Number of Stakes since 1998

The worldwide Church experienced its most rapid growth in the number of stakes operating in over 15 years. The Church organized at least 64 new stakes and discontinued only one stake in 2014, thus yielding a net increase of 63 stakes for the year. The advancement of districts into stakes accounted for 20 of the new stakes organized in 2014; a significantly larger number than most years. Larger net increases in the number of stakes signals improvements in reactivation and retention, maturing local leadership in areas where leadership development has been a challenge, and some successes utilizing surplus missionary manpower to prepare districts to become stakes. The largest all-time net annual increase in the number of stakes occurred in 1996 when the Church reported a net increase of 146 stakes.

3. Rapid Growth in West Africa

The Church sustained rapid membership and congregational growth throughout West Africa during 2014. Nearly 20,000 converts joined the Church in the Africa West Area in 2013[6] and similar numbers of converts appeared to join the Church in 2014. Although no official LDS membership or congregational data will be released until April 2015, the Church experienced impressive net increases in the number of congregations in most West African nations during 2014 including Nigeria (+37, 9.8% increase), Ghana (+35, 20.8% increase), Cote d'Ivoire (+22, 30.6% increase), Sierra Leone (+9, 30.0% increase), Cape Verde (+5, 16.1% increase), Benin (+3, 27.3% increase), Liberia (+2, 9.1% increase), and Togo (+1, 8.3% increase). The Church in Nigeria, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone reported the highest net increase in the number of congregations in the history of the Church in these four nations. Nine new stakes and 10 new districts were organized in West Africa during 2014. This corresponded with a 21% annual increase in the number of stakes and a 31% annual increase in the number of districts.

The Church in Cote d'Ivoire experienced several major church growth developments during 2014. In mid-February, the Church organized its first six branches in the city of Daloa, Cote d'Ivoire. Daloa is the fourth most populous city in the country and was the second most populous city without an LDS congregation. The simultaneous organization of six branches is an unprecedented church growth achievement as the Church has never appeared to simultaneously organize as many branches within the same city where no branches previously functioned. Multiple member groups likely operated in the city prior to the establishment of official branches. The Church in Cote d'Ivoire opened its first branches in many cities within the past two years including Bouafle (three branches), Gagnoa (two branches), Aboisso, Adzope, Bonoua, Meagui, and Ouragahio. In 2013, the Church in Cote d'Ivoire experienced its most rapid membership growth since the mid-1990s as membership increased by over 20%. Rapid membership growth appears to have continued into 2014 as evidenced by sustained rapid congregational growth. Unprecedented national outreach expansion has occurred since 2012 as evidenced by the number of cities with an official ward or branch increasing from seven to 16 and the number of wards and branches nationwide increasing from 42 to 94. In July, the Church divided the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan Mission to create the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan West Mission - the second mission in the country. The decision to organize the new mission appeared rooted in rapid membership and congregational growth. The Church organized two new stakes in Abidjan during the year. One stake - the Abobo Cote d'Ivoire Stake - mushroomed from eight wards at the beginning of 2014 to 15 wards and one branch in late 2014 just prior to the division of the stake. Never has the Church appeared to experience as rapid congregational growth within a single stake in so short a period of time. Only African members serve missions in the two Abidjan-based Ivorian missions.

The Church in Ghana created its first branches in Tamale and Techiman. The Church assigned its first young, proselytizing missionaries to these cities in 2013 and has since experienced moderate to rapid growth. The Church has implemented the "Sunyani Model" when opening these cities to missionary work. This model advocates for opening multiple member groups simultaneously through church planting. The Church has traditionally organized new congregations through splitting units when the number of active members necessitates it. The Sunyani Model has been highly effective in accelerating membership and congregational growth and missionary reports indicate that convert retention and member activity rates have been good to excellent where it has been implemented. The Church currently reports four branches in Techiman and three branches in Tamale. The Church in Ghana also organized several new stakes and districts during the year.

The Church in Nigeria organized several new stakes from districts. Many of these districts numbered among the oldest in the Church in Nigeria and have had challenges reaching the qualifications to become stakes for many years such as districts based in Abeokuta, Enugu, and Ibadan. The Church also reinstated a previously discontinued stake. On May 18th, the Church reinstated the Umuahia Nigeria Stake. One of only two stakes to have ever been discontinued in Africa, the Umuhaia Nigeria Stake operated from 1996 to 2005 until the stake divided into two districts based in Umuahia and Okpuala Ngwa. It is unclear why the original stake was discontinued. The original Umuahia Nigeria Stake had five wards and two branches when it was organized in 1996 whereas today the area formerly covered by the original stake now has one stake, two districts, five wards, and 15 branches. Some Nigerian cities also experienced unprecedented rapid congregational growth in 2014 such as Calabar where the number of LDS units climbed from nine to 15.

The Church in Liberia and Sierra Leone continued to create new branches notwithstanding the Ebola epidemic and the evacuation of full-time missionaries in August. Since the departure of missionaries, the Church has organized four new branches in Sierra Leone and one new branch in Liberia. Senior missionaries previously assigned to the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission report that many of the congregations have continued to find, teach, and baptize new converts despite the withdrawal of full-time missionaries. Some branches have reportedly baptized as many as a dozen converts in a single weekend. These developments may indicate that the Church in Liberia and Sierra Leone has reached a critical breakthrough in achieving more self-sufficient growth that depends less on full-time missionaries to occur.

The Church in Benin opened Porto Novo to missionary work and organized a branch. The second most populous city and national capital of Benin, Porto Novo is the first city to have an LDS presence outside of the greater Cotonou area. Missionaries have reported good success baptizing new converts and reactivating less-active members who have relocated to Porto Novo

over the years.

4. Church Creates its First Stakes in Four Nations

Albania

On March 9th, the Church organized its first stake in Albania. The Tirana Albania Stake was created from the Tirana Albania District and includes the following six wards and four branches: the Durrës, Tirana 1st, Tirana 2nd, Tirana 3rd, Tirana 4th and Vlorë Wards and the Elbasan, Fier, Lushnjë, and Shkoder Branches. Prior to the creation of the stake, Albania ranked as the country with the fifteenth most members without a stake. Church leaders have set a goal to organize a second stake in Albania within the next three years. Albania is the fourth country in Eastern Europe to have had a stake organized after Ukraine (2004), Hungary (2006), and Russia (2011).

Federated States of Micronesia

On March 16th, the Church organized its first stake in the Federated States of Micronesia on Pohnpei. The Panasang Pohnpei Stake was organized from the Pohnpei Caroline Islands District and includes the following five wards and three branches: the Eirike, Palikir, Panasang, Sapwalap, and Sekere Wards and the Kitti, Mand, and Uh Branches. Prior to the creation of the new stake, Micronesia ranked as the country with the tenth most members without a stake. The Federated States of Micronesia is the fourth country or territory in the Micronesia subregion of the Pacific to have had a stake organized after Kiribati (1996), the Marshall Islands (2009), and Guam (2010).

Cambodia

On May 25th, the Church organized its first two stakes in Cambodia. Two of the four member districts in Phnom Penh (Phnom Penh North and Phnom Penh South) became stakes, marking the second time in LDS history that the Church has created two stakes on the same day in a country where no stakes previously operated. Prior to the organization of the new stakes, Cambodia was the country with the most members without a stake. Mission and area leaders have prepared membership for the organization of stakes in Phnom Penh for approximately a decade, but convert retention and member activity problems delayed the establishment of stakes for many years. With the organization of stakes, prospects appear favorable for mission leaders to redistribute mission resources from leader and member support in Phnom Penh to expanding national outreach in areas outside of Phnom Penh where no LDS presence currently operates. There are now two stakes and three districts in Cambodia.

Jamaica

On June 8th, the Church organized its first stake in Jamaica. The Kingston Jamaica Stake was organized from the Spanish Town Jamaica District and includes the following six wards and two branches: the Boulevard, Constant Spring, Linstead, Portmore, Spanish Town 1st, and Spanish Town 2nd Wards and the Kingston and Old Harbour Branches. The Church has worked for over a decade to organize a stake in Jamaica but inadequate numbers of active, full-tithe paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders delayed the organization of a stake. Jamaica was previously the country with the sixth most members without a stake.

5. Reversing Stagnant Growth in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan

The Church in Hong Kong accelerated congregational growth during 2014. This stands as a significant achievement as congregational decline occurred during the 2000s. The number of congregations declined from a high of 41 in 2001 to 39 in 2002, 37 in 2003, 36 in 2005, 33 in 2006, and 32 in 2008. The Church began to experience net increases in the number of congregations in 2012 and today reports 37 congregations. Three new wards were organized during 2014 in Pokfulam, Castle Peak Bay, and Kowloon City. Missionaries report that there are plans to organize additional wards within the near future. The Church in Hong Kong's progress in reversing congregational growth trends deserves the praise and the attention of church leaders worldwide. Rarely has the Church reversed trends of declining or stagnant congregational growth within industrialized countries where Western secularism exhibits a strong influence on society. Analysis of the principles utilized and vision adopted by the China Hong Kong Mission and the four Hong Kong stakes may reveal approaches that can be implemented in other industrialized and secularized countries to accelerate real LDS growth.

The Church in Macau created a third branch to service Mandarin Chinese speakers. The two other branches are designated for English and Cantonese Chinese speakers. Although the Church previously operated a third branch in Macau between 2001 and 2007, the reestablishment of the branch may signal improvements in member activity, convert retention, and leadership development. At year-end 2013, there were 1,347 members and two branches in Macau.

The Church in Taiwan organized its twelfth stake and experienced the highest net increase in the number of congregations since 2008. Progress has also appeared to have been made preparing the remaining two member districts to become stakes

within the foreseeable future. These developments signal possibly a reversal in decelerating LDS growth trends in Taiwan that have persisted for the past decade.

6. Unprecedented National Outreach Expansion in Brazil

The Church in Brazil has implemented an aggressive national outreach expansion campaign that aims to open nearly 150 additional cities to missionary work by the end of 2015. The Church made significant strides in 2013 and 2014 expanding LDS outreach into additional cities where it previously reported no presence. During this two-year period, the Church organized official branches in 25 cities and towns where the Church previously reported no ward or branch and established member groups in 38 cities and towns where no known LDS presence previously operated. This significant expansion in LDS national outreach culminated in the opening of at least 63 cities and towns, with the vast majority of these urban areas supporting populations of 20,000 or greater. To contrast, during the period from 2006 to 2012 the Church appeared to open wards, branches, and member groups in less than 50 cities and towns where no LDS presence previously operated.

7. Philippines Growth

There has been a significant expansion of missionary work in the Philippines within the past year. The Church reported a net increase of 32 congregations during 2014 - the largest congregational increase in the Philippines since 2001. The Philippines Area has made significant progress opening member groups and branches in lesser-reached and unreached cities, towns, and villages within the past couple years. The Church has also opened many new wards in many major metropolitan areas such as Metro Manila, Davao, Cebu City, and Angeles. The Church also organized five new stakes during the year in Dumaguete, Taguig, Davao West, Escalante, and Alicia. There have also been impressive gains made in the Church attaining greater self-sufficiency in meeting its missionary needs. The Philippines Area Presidency noted that the number of full-time missionaries assigned to serve in the Philippines increased from 2,380 in August 2012 to 4,482 in June 2014.[7] In June 2014, 2,383 of the full-time missionaries were Filipinos. This indicates that the number of Filipino missionaries equaled the number of total missionaries assigned to the Philippines just two years earlier.

8. The Vietnamese Government Officially Recognizes the Church in Vietnam; Progress in Missionary Work Continues

The Church obtained government recognition from the Vietnamese government in May 2014 after many years of preparation and collaboration with government officials. The official news release noted that the recognition paves the way for additional areas to open to the Church outside of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City where the only official branches operate. The Church disclosed that it has more than 1,600 members in Vietnam;[8] a substantial increase from the mere 100 members in the country reported by the Church in 1997. The Church also reclassified its presence in Vietnam from sensitive to non-sensitive in December 2014, thus permitting internet users to search for LDS meetinghouse locations in Vietnam.

The Church also significantly expanded its missionary operations within Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The Church is only permitted to assign missionaries of Vietnamese descent to Vietnam. By late 2014, one branch in Ho Chi Minh City had four missionary companionships assigned. Organized in December 2010, the Hanoi Vietnam District currently has four branches: Hanoi, Hanoi District Branch, Tan Son Nhat, and Thao Dien.

9. First Young, Full-time Missionaries Assigned to Burma and Gabon; Missionaries Return to Sri Lanka

In February 2014, the Church assigned young, male missionaries to Yangon, Burma for the first time in modern times to help strengthen the Yangon Branch and teach and baptize investigators referred by local members. Yangon numbered among the most populous metropolitan areas in Southeast Asia without full-time missionaries assigned. The Church has maintained an official branch in Yangon since 2003 and has had senior missionary couples serve in the branch for over a decade. Progress has occurred with local members serving full-time missions. In early 2014, three Burmese members from the Yangon Branch were serving full-time missions in Australia (2) and Utah (1). Missionaries at the time also reported that the Church had begun translating the Book of Mormon into Burmese.

The Church assigned its first full-time missionaries to Gabon in January 2014. The Libreville Branch was organized in December 2012. The first convert baptismal service occurred in the spring of 2014 when 21 converts were baptized in a single weekend. Missionaries report that the Church has experienced challenges obtaining foreign missionary visas. This may result in difficulties to maintain a continuous proselytism presence. In July 2014, Gabon was reassigned from the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission to the newly organized Republic of Congo Brazzaville Mission.

Young, full-time missionaries returned to Sri Lanka to reestablish a formal proselytism presence in November 2014. Four Sri Lankan missionaries were reassigned from Philippine missions to serve in the India Bangalore Mission and given the task to reopen Sri Lanka to missionary work. The last young, full-time missionaries to serve in Sri Lanka left the country in 2008 due to visa renewal problems. There are currently three branches and 1,300 members in Sri Lanka.

10. First General Conference Addresses Given in Languages Other than English

For the first time, the Church permitted speakers in the October 2014 General Conference to give talks in their native language instead of English. Talks were given in Cantonese Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish and translated into English and other languages for general church membership. This development marks a significant milestone in the internationalization of the LDS Church and portrays a sense that the Church is compatible with cultures, languages, and societies that have traditionally had a minimal or no previous LDS presence.

Top 10 Discouraging LDS Growth and Missionary Developments

1. Trends in Congregational Decline Intensify in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay and Persist in Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela

The Church in Argentina reported a net decline of 27 congregations for 2014; a 3.4% decrease. The Church has posted year-to-year losses in the number of wards and branches since 2008. The number of congregations has declined from an all-time high of 863 in 2007 to 765 at present - decrease of nearly 100 units in less than a decade. Membership has continued to increase despite congregational decline. Membership increased from 363,990 in 2007 to 421,971 in 2013. The Church also organized two new missions in 2013 which have not appeared to make an impact on reversing nationwide trends of congregational decline and low convert retention and member activity rates.

The Church in Chile reported a net decline of 10 congregations for 2014; a 1.6% decrease. The Church has posted year-to-year losses in the number of wards and branches since 2013. The number of congregations has declined from a recent high of 622 in 2012 to 604 at present. Membership has continued to increase despite congregational decline. Membership increased from 577,716 in 2012 to 583,359 in 2013. The organization of a new mission in 2013 has appeared to make no impact on curtailing congregational decline and improving activity rates.

The Church in Uruguay reported a net decline of nine congregations for 2014; a 5.9% decrease. The Church has posted year-to-year losses in the number of wards and branches since 2011. The number of congregations has declined from 162 in 2010 to 143 at present. Membership has continued to increase annually by approximately 1.7-2.5% within the past decade despite stagnant congregational growth in the mid to late 2000s and congregational decline in the 2010s. Membership increased from 95,726 in 2010 to 101,449 in 2013.

The Church in Colombia reported a net decline of three congregations for 2014; a 1.1% decrease. The Church has posted year-to-year losses in the number of wards and branches since 2012. The number of congregations has declined from 274 in 2011 to 263 at present. Membership has continued to increase annually by approximately 2-3% within the past decade despite stagnant congregational growth in the mid to late 2000s and congregational decline in the 2010s. Membership increased from 176,128 in 2011 to 185,891 in 2013.

The Church in Paraguay reported a net decline of three congregations for 2014; a 2.2% decrease. The Church has posted year-to-year losses in the number of wards and branches since 2011. The number of congregations has declined from 149 in 2010 to 136 at present. Membership has continued to increase annually by approximately 2-5% within the past decade despite stagnant congregational growth in the mid to late 2000s and congregational decline in the 2010s. Membership increased from 80,788 in 2010 to 86,790 in 2013.

The Church in Peru reported a net decline of two congregations for 2014; a 0.26% decrease. The Church has posted year-to-year losses in the number of wards and branches since 2012. The number of congregations has declined from 788 in 2011 to 774 at present. Membership has continued to increase annually by over three percent since congregational decline began in the early 2010s. Membership increased from 508,812 in 2011 to 543,869 in 2013. The organization of two new missions in 2013 have appeared to make little to no impact on reversing nationwide trends of congregational decline despite ongoing membership growth.

The Church in Venezuela reported a net decline of one congregation for 2014; a 0.37% decrease. The Church has posted year-to-year losses in the number of wards and branches since 2012. The number of congregations has declined from an all-time high of 283 in 2011 to 268 at present. Membership has continued to increase annually by approximately two percent within this period despite congregational decline. Membership increased from 153,701 in 2011 to 161,309 in 2013.

2. At least 106 Countries and Dependencies Experience No Net Change in the Number of Official Congregations for 2014

The Church reported no change in the number of wards and branches for over 100 countries, territories, and dependencies in the world during 2014. The Church achieved progress in some of these nations organizing new stakes, augmenting the number of convert baptisms, advancing branches into wards, and opening new member groups. However, the Church did not experience a net increase in official congregations in many of these nations due to member inactivity, convert retention problems, and insufficient numbers of priesthood holders to serve in leadership positions. These world entities included Albania, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Aruba, Austria, the Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bermuda, Bonaire,

Bulgaria, Cayman Islands, Central African Republic, Cook Islands, Croatia, Curacao, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Falkland Islands, Fiji, Finland, France, French Guiana, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada Guadeloupe, Guam, Guernsey, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Isle of Man, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Jersey, Jordan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Lesotho, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malta, Martinique, Mauritius, Federated States of Micronesia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, Nauru, Netherlands, New Caledonia, Nicaragua, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Norway, Oman, Palau, Poland, Qatar, Reunion, Romania, Rwanda, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Maarten, St. Vincent, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Vanuatu, Vietnam, British Virgin Islands, US Virgin Islands, and Zambia.

3. Continued Challenges Achieving "Real Growth" in Mexico

Although the Church in 2014 reported its largest net increase (16) in the number of congregations in Mexico since 2009, congregational growth inched upwards by only 0.81%. To contrast, annual membership growth rates in Mexico ranged between three and four percent between 2004 and 2012. The Church in Mexico has achieved dismal progress rectifying member inactivity and convert attrition woes within the past five years. The Church reported more congregations in 2009 (2,007) than in 2014 (1,996) notwithstanding membership increasing by 146,666 between 2009 and 2013. The organization of eight new missions in 2013 has made this progress even more sobering as productivity in missions has continued to decline with no noticeable improvement in publicly-reported statistical measures of member activity such as congregational growth and the organization of new stakes.

4. Trends in Congregational Decline Persist in Japan and South Korea

The Church continued to post steady declines in the number of wards and branches in Japan and South Korea.

The Church in Japan reported a net decline of 12 congregations for 2014; a 4.3% decrease. The Church has posted year-to-year losses or no increase in the number of wards and branches since 2000. The number of congregations has declined from 317 in 2000 to 267 at present. Membership has continued to increase annually by 0.5-0.9% within the past decade. Membership increased from 112,203 in 2000 to 126,981 in 2013. The Church conducted a massive realignment of congregations in Okinawa during 2014 that resulted in the discontinuation of the Ginowan Japan Stake.

The Church in South Korea reported a net decline of two congregations for 2014; a 1.6% decrease. The Church has posted year-to-year losses or no increase in the number of wards and branches since 1999. The number of congregations has declined from 175 in 1999 to 126 at present. Membership has generally increased by 1-3% a year within the past decade. Membership increased from 71,166 in 1999 to 86,170 in 2013.

5. Contraction of LDS Outreach in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea Continues

The trend of congregation consolidations in the Port Moresby area persisted during 2014. The Church discontinued four congregations (three branches, one ward) in 2013 and two branches in 2014. At its height in the mid-2000s, the Church in the most populous metropolitan area in Papua New Guinea operated one stake (Port Moresby), three districts (Gerehu, Nine Mile, and Port Moresby Central), and nearly 20 congregations. Today, the Church operates one stake (Port Moresby), one district (Gerehu), and 10 congregations within the Port Moresby area. Challenges establishing multiple stakes in Port Moresby, augmenting the number of active members, and maintaining self-sufficient church leadership will likely continue to delay prospects for the announcement of a temple to service Papua New Guinea within the foreseeable future. Currently Papuan members must travel to Australia to participate in temple ordinances - a trip that is costly and difficult to plan. At year-end 2013, Papua New Guinea was the country with the fifth most members on church records without a temple.

6. Little to No Expansion of National Outreach Occurs in several countries in the Africa Southeast Area

The Church made minimal to no progress expanding its presence in many Sub-Saharan African nations notwithstanding local populations exhibiting high receptivity to LDS outreach and the recent massive surge in the number of members serving full-time missions. The Church in Malawi reported several locations where individuals have self-organized and have petitioned mission leaders to be baptized and establish official congregations within their communities. Senior missionary couples and young full-time missionaries note that mission and area leadership have denied permission to open these areas to proselytism in order for mission resources to be utilized to build "centers of strength" in locations where an LDS presence already operates. Additional countries in the Africa Southeast Area where the Church has not appeared to have opened additional cities to missionary work within the past two years include Botswana, Burundi, Cameron, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, the Republic of the Congo, Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zambia. No proselytizing missionaries are currently assigned to four countries in the Africa Southeast Area where official LDS units operate including the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Namibia, and South Sudan.

7. Stagnant National Outreach Expansion in India

The Church in India has made no noticeable progress expanding its presence into additional cities within the past year.

Currently only five percent of the national population resides in a city where an LDS congregation operates. No progress has been made in the Church rectifying challenges with obtaining and renewing foreign missionary visas. Foreign missionaries have been essential in making progress expanding outreach for the Church in India due to less than 12,000 members living in a country of 1.2 billion people. Many North American missionaries have had to leave the country within the past year when they experience challenges renewing visas. This has resulted in significant disruptions to missionary operations. Although progress has been achieved improving the self-sufficiency of the Indian full-time missionary force in recent years, mission resources available remain totally inadequate to capitalize on opportunities for growth and expansion of the Church into additional areas of the country. The Church in India currently operates branches in only 15 cities and towns.

8. Only Two New Missions Organized Despite Surge in the Number of Members Serving Full-time Missions

The Church organized only two new missions in 2014 notwithstanding the Church sustaining the massive increase in the number of members serving full-time missions during the year. The average mission had 217 missionaries by October 2014 - a significantly higher number than the historical average number of missionaries per mission of 163 from 1979 to 2011. If the Church were to maintain this historical average, there would need to be an additional 134 missions organized. Delays in organizing additional missions in 2014 may have been attributed to church leadership waiting for the double cohort of missionaries to transpire in order to ensure that the organization of additional missions will be necessary to accommodate larger numbers of missionaries serving in the long-term.

9. Conflict in Ukraine Closes the Ukraine Donetsk Mission - All LDS branches discontinued in Donetsk

War and political conflict have taken a heavy toll on the Church's presence in eastern Ukraine. All full-time missionaries serving in the Ukraine Donetsk Mission were evacuated due to these hostilities and the Church closed the mission by the summer. Conditions have driven many of the active members away from the war-torn areas within and surrounding Donetsk. In late 2014, the Church discontinued all four of its branches in the Donetsk area and reassigned the area to the Donetsk Ukraine District Branch. There are likely small numbers of active members who remain in Donetsk who worship in member groups rather than branches due to their reduced numbers and challenges holding worship services because of ongoing war and political turmoil.

10. Missionaries Removed from Liberia and Sierra Leone

The Church removed all 274 missionaries assigned to the Liberia Monrovia Mission and the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission in August. Most of these missionaries were reassigned to missions in Ghana. There is no indication when missionaries will be reassigned back to Liberia and Sierra Leone due to the severity of the Ebola epidemic in these two nations. The spread of the Ebola virus and the removal of full-time missionaries came at an unfortunate time as the Church was experiencing unprecedented success in augmenting the number of full-time missionaries serving in these two nations. The Church was also achieving significant progress organizing many new branches. The Church in Liberia and Sierra Leone has historically experienced some of the most concerning local leadership development problems and inactivity frustrations in Sub-Saharan Africa due largely to rushed baptismal preparation, cultural conditions, and no missions headquartered in these countries until the past decade. Time will tell whether local church leadership will be able to exhibit greater self-sufficiency within their respective jurisdictions and perpetuate growth despite the absence of a full-time missionary force.

Limitations

The subjective nature of determining which LDS missionary and church growth developments numbered among the most significant for 2014 constitutes the greatest limitation to this case study. There may be some major developments that were unknown to missiology researchers due to limited access to LDS statistical data and a lack of reports from members, missionaries, and church leaders from particular areas of the world. Data obtained regarding the organization of new congregations and stakes and the expansion of national outreach was retrieved from official LDS sources such as lds.org/maps. Local member, full-time missionary, and church leader reports also contributed to the findings in this case study. Official country-by-country membership data for year-end 2014 will not become available until April 2015. Some 2014 data regarding congregational growth and stake and district growth in this case study may be inaccurate due to lags in the Church updating these changes for the year 2014.

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