



# Overall LDS Growth Trend Case Studies

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## Is the LDS Church Poised to Make Significant Advancements in Global Mission Outreach?

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### Overview

The April 2015 announcement regarding the establishment of the Central Eurasian Mission in July 2015 constitutes one of the most surprising and unprecedented announcements by the Church in recent memory. The new mission will service several countries where no LDS mission has previously operated. The mission will also support one of the largest populations in the world among LDS missions with approximately 150 million people within its geographical boundaries. The significance and scope of this announcement is comparable to advancements in worldwide LDS mission outreach achieved in the 1980s and early 1990s such as the establishment of the Church's first missions in many Sub-Saharan African nations and Eastern Europe.

This case study identifies five world regions that are underserved by LDS missionary efforts. Basic demographic data, recent LDS growth developments, and prospects for the organization of additional missions is provided and analyzed. Limitations to this case study are identified.

NOTE: Population figures and religious data was obtained from the CIA World Factbook unless otherwise stated.

### Underserved Regions of the World

#### SOUTH ASIA

##### India

The Church maintains a tiny presence in this massive nation of 1.24 billion people. Currently there are a mere 12,000 Latter-day Saints who assemble in 43 congregations. Only two missions operate – each with hundreds of millions of people within its geographical borders. Many of the most populous Indian administrative states have no LDS presence including Maharashtra (112 million), Bihar (104 million), Madhya Pradesh (72.6 million), Rajasthan (69 million people), and Gujarat (60 million). The Church organized its first Indian mission in Bangalore in 1993. A second mission was organized in 2007. The Church has experienced chronic challenges with acquiring foreign missionary visas and modest self-sufficiency of the Indian full-time missionary force. No proselytism or teaching approaches have been tailored to Indian culture or the religious background of Hindus or Muslims. Many of the most commonly spoken languages have no LDS scriptures available or have no LDS materials translated. The predominantly Christian states in northeastern India have yet to receive LDS outreach. The Church has not established branches in any additional cities within the past eight years. Locations that appear likely to have future LDS missions organized include Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai, and Kolkata.

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##### Pakistan

Pakistan is the sixth most populous nation in the world with 196 million people. No LDS mission operates in Pakistan and the India New Delhi Mission administers the country. Muslims constitute 96% of the population. Hindus and Christians constitute the largest non-Islamic religious minorities. The LDS Church has maintained a presence in Pakistan for over two decades and reports approximately a dozen branches organized into three member districts. Although the Church does not publish membership statistics on the Church in Pakistan, there appear to be as many as 3,000 or 4,000 members in this nation. The Church has experienced steady growth due to a tiny, albeit self-sufficient, full-time missionary force entirely staffed by Pakistani

Latter-day Saints. The Church's presence in Pakistan remains extremely limited to only a handful of the most populous cities. However, the organization of a separate mission to service Pakistan may be forthcoming due to the high degree of self-sufficiency in the Church in Pakistan, distance from mission headquarters in New Delhi, and progress with reaching Pakistani Christians through formal missionary efforts. Locations that appear most likely to headquarter a prospective mission include Islamabad, Lahore, or Karachi.

## **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is the eight most populous nation in the world with 166 million people. Muslims constitute approximately 90% of the population whereas Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians comprise the remainder of the population. The LDS Church has never assigned young, full-time missionaries or a senior missionary couple to Bangladesh despite the operation of a branch in Dhaka for over two decades. India New Delhi Mission leadership occasionally visits the sole branch in Bangladesh to provide support to members and prepare converts for baptism. The Church has yet to translate the entire Book of Mormon into Bengali and does not translate any General Conferences addresses into Bengali notwithstanding a quarter of a billion speakers of Bengali worldwide.<sup>[1]</sup> There do not appear to be any legal obstacles preventing the Church from obtaining government registration or the assignment of full-time missionaries notwithstanding the strong influence of Islam on society. It appears highly unlikely that the Church will establish a mission in Bangladesh until it assigns young, full-time missionaries and obtains government recognition.

## **Afghanistan**

There are 31.8 million people who reside in Afghanistan. The population is 99% Muslim and primarily speaks Dari or Pashto. The Church has maintained a presence solely among American military personnel since 2001. Isolated reports indicate that a handful of Afghanis have joined the Church in Afghanistan and India. However, the Church maintains no official presence. Governmental and societal restrictions on religious freedom indicate no feasible prospects for conducting LDS missionary activity within the foreseeable future.

## **Nepal**

A diverse collection of ethnolinguistic groups are represented in Nepal's 31.0 million people. The most populous ethnic group (Chhettri) constitutes a mere 16.6% of the national population.<sup>[2]</sup> Nepali is the official language but spoken by less than half the population. Hindus comprise four-fifths of the population. Sizable religious minorities include Buddhists (9%), Muslims (4.4%), Kirant (3.1%), and Christians (1.4%). The Church has operated a branch in Kathmandu since 2001 and has experienced slow but steady growth. A senior missionary couple has been assigned to Nepal for approximately 15 years and the Kathmandu Branch has been led by local Nepalese members. The India New Delhi Mission has administered Nepal for nearly a decade although no young, full-time missionaries have ever served in the country. Sizable numbers of young adults have served full-time missions outside of their nation. Challenges with government prohibitions on proselytism and the Church lacking registration with the government appear primarily responsible for no formal proselytism presence today. The Church has yet to translate a sizable number of materials into the Nepali language, including the Book of Mormon. The likelihood of the Church organizing a mission in Nepal will likely hinge on the Church obtaining approval to assign young missionaries and receiving government registration.

## **Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka has a predominantly Buddhist (70%) population of 21.9 million people. Sinhalese constitute three-quarters of the population and speak the Sinhala language. The Church has maintained a presence in Sri Lanka for nearly four decades but has experienced slow or stagnant growth for most of this time. The India Bangalore Mission has administered Sri Lanka for over two decades. Rapid membership growth occurred during the 2000s but came to a rapid halt in 2008 when young, full-time missionaries left the country due to visa renewal problems. Four Sri Lankan members previously serving full-time missions in the Philippines reopened Sri Lanka to proselytism in late 2014. Today there are nearly 1,400 members and three branches. The Church in Sri Lanka continues to be unable to sufficiently staff its missionary needs as evidenced by two companionships administering three branches. Resolution of problems with obtaining foreign missionary visas will be critical for a mission in Sri Lanka to become a realistic possibility.

## **Bhutan**

Bhutan supports a small population of 733,000 that is predominantly Buddhist. Tribal languages are spoken by most of the population. The Church assigned Bhutan to the India New Delhi Mission in 2007, but does not appear to maintain a presence in the country. Prospects for an LDS establishment appear poor due to a comparatively tiny population, remote location, and governmental and societal intolerance of proselytism-focused Christian groups.

## **SOUTHEAST ASIA**

## **Indonesia and Timor-Leste**

A quarter of a billion people reside within the boundaries of the Indonesia Jakarta Mission - the only mission to service the entire country. Most the population speaks Indonesian as a first or second language. Muslims constitute the majority of the population. There are sizable numbers of Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians. The Church has yet to establish branches on many major islands or island groups such as Kalimantan and the Maluku Islands. The Church maintains only one branch on some of the most populous islands including Sumatra (50 million) and Sulawesi (18 million). No LDS outreach has occurred in Timor-Leste where there is a homogeneously Christian population and no restrictions on religious freedom. Problems acquiring foreign missionary visas and no improvements in augmenting the number of Indonesian Latter-day Saints serving full-time missions during the past 30 years will likely continue to delay the opening of additional missions to service Indonesia despite many locations presenting good opportunities for growth.

## **Vietnam**

Vietnam is the fourteenth most populous nation in the world with 93.4 inhabitants. The Viet constitute a strong majority of the population and most speak Vietnamese. The Church operates no mission in Vietnam. The Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission has administered Vietnam for nearly two decades. Young, full-time missionaries have served in Vietnam for approximately one decade and have been assigned in increasing numbers within the past couple years. There have been approximately one dozen young, full-time missionaries serving in Vietnam within the past couple years. The Church obtained official government recognition in 2014. Today there are approximately 1,600 members and four branches. Prospects appear favorable for the Church to establish a mission in Vietnam within the foreseeable future due to the Church recently obtaining government recognition, increasing numbers of full-time missionaries assigned to the country, and a target population of nearly 100 million.

## **Burma**

Burma supports a population of 55.7 million. The Burman ethnic group constitutes the majority and most the population speaks Burmese as a first or second language. The Church maintains no mission in Burma as the Thailand Bangkok Mission has administered the country for several decades. Missionaries report that the translation of the Book of Mormon into Burmese has recently begun as there are no LDS scriptures available in Burmese or other languages native to Burma. Few LDS materials have been translated into Burmese. The first missionaries in modern times were assigned to Burma in February 2014. These missionaries have focused on finding investigators through member referral, strengthening local members, and learning the Burmese language. Prospects for the establishment of a mission in Burma will hinge on increasing numbers of full-time missionaries assigned to the country and the Church registering with the government.

## **Laos**

Laos is one of the least populated Southeast Asian nations with 6.8 million inhabitants. The Lao constitute a slight majority and speak the Lao language. Buddhists account for two-thirds of the population. The Thailand Bangkok Mission has administered Laos since the organization of the first branch in Vientiane in 2003. The Church assigned young, full-time missionaries in 2013. Missionaries indicated that they primarily provided humanitarian service and only taught and baptized converts through member or investigator referral. The Church completed its full translation of the Book of Mormon into Lao in 2012. Government restrictions on religious freedom pose significant challenges for the Church to expand outreach outside Vientiane and conduct traditional proselytism. Laos appears unlikely to have a mission organized due to its relatively small population, government restrictions on religious freedom, and minimal LDS presence.

## **CENTRAL AFRICA AND EAST AFRICA**

### **Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is the thirteenth most populous nation in the world with 96.6 million inhabitants. The Omoro constitute one-third of the population and speak the Omoro language whereas the Amhara comprise 27% of the population and speak Amharic. Christians constitute the majority and Muslims comprise one-third of the population. The Church has yet to establish a mission in Ethiopia notwithstanding nearly 1,900 members, six branches, and the government and society protecting religious freedom. Significant cultural and language differences have posed challenges for effective administration of Ethiopia by the Uganda Kampala Mission within the past decade as missionaries have historically struggled to learn Amharic and other indigenous languages. The Church has maintained a presence in Ethiopia for over two decades and has translated the Book of Mormon and a small number of gospel study and missionary materials into Amharic. Prospects appear highly favorable for the establishment of a mission headquartered in Addis Ababa within the foreseeable future due to Ethiopia's massive population, steady membership growth within the past decade, cultural differences with Uganda, and distance from the Uganda Kampala Mission.

### **Tanzania**

Tanzania supports a predominantly Swahili-speaking population of 49.9 million. The population is evenly divided between Muslims, Christians, and followers of indigenous beliefs. The Church has maintained a presence in Tanzania for over two decades although LDS outreach remains limited to only three cities. No LDS mission operates in the country despite the Church reporting over 1,300 members and six branches. The Kenya Nairobi Mission has administered Tanzania for over two decades.

The Church initially used English as its language of church administration and missionary work until Swahili was adopted as the official church language in 2012. Prospects appear favorable for the organization of a mission headquartered in Dar Es Salaam within the foreseeable future due to the large, minimally reached Tanzanian population, distance from mission headquarters in Nairobi, and good opportunities for national outreach expansion in the predominantly Christian northwest.

## **Cameroon**

Cameroon has a population of 23.1 million people. French and English are the official languages although most speak an indigenous language as a first language. Christians and followers of indigenous beliefs each comprise 40% of the national population whereas Muslims account for the remaining 20% of the population. The Church has maintained a presence in Cameroon for over two decades although the Church reports congregations in only two cities. No LDS mission operates in the country notwithstanding approximately 1,500 members and nine branches. Missions that have administered Cameroon included the Ivory Coast Abidjan Mission (1993-2005), the Ghana Cape Coast Mission (2005-2008?), the Democratic Republic of the Congo Kinshasa Mission (2008?-2014), and the Republic of the Congo Brazzaville Mission (2014-present). The Church has reported rapid membership growth within the past 12 years as annual membership growth rates have exceeded 10% for all but one year during this period. Mission leadership reports preliminary plans within the coming years to organize additional branches in Douala, create a district in Douala, and advance the Yaoundé Cameroon District into a stake. Prospects appear highly favorable for the organization of a new mission headquartered in Douala or Yaoundé due to Cameroon's large population that has been minimally reached by the Church, steady growth in reached locations, distance from mission headquarters in Brazzaville, good opportunities for national outreach expansion and greater saturation of Douala and Yaoundé with mission outreach, and no government restrictions on religious freedom.

## **Malawi**

There are 17.4 million people who reside in Malawi. Most the population speaks English and Chichewa. Approximately a dozen indigenous African languages are spoken. Christians comprise 83% of the population. Muslims are a sizable religious minority and constitute 13% of the population. The Church has maintained a presence in Malawi for two decades and experienced slow growth until the late 2000s. Rapid membership and congregational growth has occurred within recent years and today the Church reports 1,931 members, eight branches, and two districts. The Zimbabwe Harare Mission administer Malawi prior to the organization of the Zambia Lusaka Mission in 2011. Missionaries have reported several self-organized groups of prospective members in northern Malawi have formed in recent years such as in the cities of Kasungu, Mzuzu, and Nkhata Bay. These conditions suggests excellent opportunities for future growth albeit the Church in Malawi has struggled with few mission resources available. The establishment of a separate mission to administer Malawi appears highly likely within the near future due to the Church's recent efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa to organize additional missions; a large, highly receptivity populations to LDS outreach; and distance from mission headquarters in Lusaka.

## **Rwanda**

Rwanda supports a homogenously Christian and Kinyarwanda-speaking population of 12.3 million people. The Uganda Kampala Mission has administered Rwanda since the Church established its initial presence in 2008 with only 17 members. The Church reported 281 members and three branches at year-end 2014. A sizable target population, a significant need for Kinyarwanda-speaking missionaries, and recent rapid growth suggest that the establishment of a separate mission to administer Rwanda may yield significant results. However, there are several other Sub-Saharan African nations that appear more likely to have missions organized before the Church organizes a mission in Rwanda due to larger populations and greater distance from current mission headquarters such as Cameroon, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Tanzania. A future mission that administers Rwanda and Burundi appears likely in the medium term.

## **South Sudan**

There are 11.6 million people who reside in predominantly Christian and animist South Sudan - the world's newest country that gained independence from Sudan in 2011. English, Arabic, and indigenous languages such as Nuer, Dinka, and Bari are widely spoken. The Church in South Sudan organized its first official branch, the Juba Branch, in late 2009. However, the branch was discontinued in early 2015. A senior missionary couple has been periodically assigned although civil unrest has prevented the consistent assignment of senior missionaries. No young, proselytizing full-time missionaries have been assigned to South Sudan. The Church has received previous reports of thousands of individuals who have requested membership in the Church in the Nyamliell area. However, remote location and a lack of LDS infrastructure in the country have prevented the organization of LDS units outside of Juba. A minimal LDS presence, civil unrest, security concerns, and low living standards present significant challenges for the Church to assign full-time missionaries and eventually organize a mission headquartered in the country.

## **Burundi**

The Church does not operate a mission in Burundi where 10.4 million people reside. The predominantly Christian Burundian population primarily speaks Kirundi, Swahili, and French. The Church initially organized a branch and assigned full-time missionaries in the early 1990s. However, missionaries were withdrawn and the branch eventually closed due to civil war. The Church reestablished a presence in 2010 through the Democratic Republic of the Congo Lubumbashi Mission. Rapid church growth has occurred since the reintroduction of full-time missionaries as the number of members increased from 39 at year-end

2010 to 526 at year-end 2014. Currently the Church operates three branches in Bujumbura. Several young, African full-time missionary companionships served in Burundi from September 2010 until May 2015 when missionaries were withdrawn due to civil unrest. Strong receptivity to LDS outreach, steady growth in the maturity of local leadership, and a sizable population suggest that the organization of a new mission in Burundi may be likely in the medium term once civil unrest is resolved. However, it appears most likely that a new mission would include both Burundi and Rwanda due to close proximity to one another and the tiny presence of the Church in each of these nations.

## **Somalia**

Somalia supports a homogenously Muslim population of 10.4 million people who primarily speak the Somali language. There is no LDS presence in Somalia. Chronic civil disorder and war, a homogenously Muslim population, intolerance of Christian groups, bans on the proselytism of non-Islamic religions, and no LDS Somali community pose insurmountable barriers to the establishment of an LDS mission within the foreseeable future.

## **Eritrea**

Eritrea has a population of 6.4 million that predominantly speaks Semitic languages such as Tigrigna and Tigré. Arabic and English are commonly spoken second languages. Orthodox Christians and Muslims each constitute approximately 50% of the population. There is no LDS presence in Eritrea. A combination of significant government restrictions on religious freedom, no LDS Tigrigna community, and no translations of LDS materials into Tigrigna pose insurmountable barriers to the establishment of an LDS mission within the foreseeable future.

## **Central African Republic**

The Central African Republic supports a population of 5.3 million that primarily speaks French or Sango as first or second language. Christians constitute half the population whereas animists and Muslims comprise 35% and 15% of the population, respectively. The Church has maintained a presence in the Central African Republic for over two decades but has operated only one branch in the capital city of Bangui since the mid-1990s. The country has been infrequently visited by mission leaders due to its isolation from mission headquarters and perceived low living standards. Mission leaders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Kinshasa Mission made initial plans to assign full-time missionaries in late 2012 and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland dedicated the country for missionary work,[\[3\]](#) but the Church retracted these plans due to the overthrow of the federal government and subsequent civil unrest and disorder. Increasing numbers of Central African young single adults have served missions in recent years, but there are no feasible prospects to assign full-time missionaries and organize a mission headquartered in Bangui within the near future.

## **Gabon**

Gabon has a small population of 1.7 million people that primarily speaks French and indigenous languages such as Fang. Christians constitute the majority of the population. The Church maintained a member group in the capital city, Libreville, for several years prior to the organization of the Libreville Branch in late 2012. The Church assigned Gabon to the Democratic Republic of the Congo Kinshasa Mission in September 2012, stationed the first senior missionary couple in Libreville in 2013, and assigned the first young, full-time missionaries in early 2014. The Church reassigned Gabon to the Republic of Congo Brazzaville Mission when the mission was organized in July 2014. The Church has experienced challenges with acquiring foreign missionary visas for young missionaries since this time. The comparatively small Gabonese population, challenges obtaining greater numbers of foreign missionary visas, distance from mission headquarters in Brazzaville, the relatively recent establishment of the Church, and perhaps as few as 100 members in the country indicate that the organization of a separate mission to service Gabon appears many years, if not decades, away from fruition.

## **Equatorial Guinea**

Equatorial Guinea is a predominantly Roman Catholic nation of a mere 722,000 people. Spanish is the most commonly spoken language. No LDS presence operates in Equatorial Guinea although the country was assigned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo Mission in the early 2010s and reassigned to the Republic of Congo Brazzaville Mission in 2014. Corruption, distance from mission headquarters, few known members in the country, an emphasis on the Church expanding missionary work in currently-reached Sub-Saharan African nations, and a small target population appear responsible for the lack of an LDS presence in Equatorial Guinea today. Thus, these conditions predict a poor likelihood that the Church will organize a mission in this nation for decades to come.

## **Sao Tome and Principe**

Sao Tome and Principe is a small, Portuguese-speaking island nation of a mere 190,000 people. No LDS presence operates in the country although the nation enjoys widespread religious freedom and has a predominantly Christian population. The first visit to the nation by a mission president appeared to occur in early 2015 by the Angola Luanda Mission. Distance from mission headquarters, a small target population, and few indigenous Latter-day Saints appear responsible for the lack of an LDS



presence today. Thus, these conditions predict a poor likelihood that the Church will organize a mission in this nation for decades to come.

## EXTERME WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

### Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso supports a population of 18.4 million that is 61% Muslim, 23% Christian, 15% animist, and 1% followers of other religions. French is the official language and two indigenous African languages have more than one million speakers: Moore and Jula. No LDS presence operates in Burkina Faso and no mission administers the country. The Church organized the Africa West Area Branch in 2011 to help keep track of isolated members in West African nations not assigned to missions such as Burkina Faso. Widespread religious freedom, the operation of other missionary-focused Christian denominations, and the conversion of many Burkinabe in West African nations with an LDS presence suggest good opportunities for missionary work and growth. The initial assignment of Burkina Faso to one of the Ivorian missions appears likely in the near future and in preparation to open the nation to proselytism. However, there do not appear to be any immediate prospects for the organization of a mission in Burkina Faso due to no LDS presence.

### Niger

There are 17.5 million people who reside in the homogenously Muslim nation of Niger. French is widely spoken as a first or second language; Hausa and Zarma are the most widely spoken indigenous African languages. No LDS presence operates in Niger. The Nigerien government and constitution protect religious freedom and there have been no recent instances of societal abuse of religious freedom targeting Christians. However, concerns with conflict in neighboring nations may pose challenges for beginning LDS missionary activity. The homogenously Muslim population, remote location, a lack of a Nigerien LDS community, and disinterest by area leadership to open additional West African nations to missionary activity appear responsible for the lack of an LDS presence in Niger today. There do not appear to be any immediate prospects for the organization of a mission in Niger.

### Mali

Mali supports a homogenously Muslim population of 16.5 million. The most widely spoken languages include French, Bambara, Fulani, Dogon, and Soninke. The Church has operated member groups or has held small worship services for isolated members and the handful of Malian converts who reside in the country. One Malian Latter-day Saint named Yeah Samake ran in the 2013 presidential election but received only 0.56% of the vote.<sup>[4]</sup> There are no government or societal restrictions on religious freedom. However, no official LDS presence has ever been established. Few Malian Latter-day Saints, distance from the nearest LDS mission, political instability, reluctance from area leaders to explore opportunities for opening additional West African nations to missionary work, and a predominantly Muslim population appear responsible for no official LDS presence in Mali today. There do not appear to be any immediate prospects for the organization of a mission in Mali.

### Senegal

Senegal has a homogenously Muslim population of 13.6 million. Commonly spoken languages include French, Fulani (Pulaar), Serer-Sine, and Wolof. There are no government or societal restrictions on religious freedom. No official LDS presence has operated in Senegal. A senior missionary couple serving in West Africa reported that they visited a member group that operated in Dakar in mid-2015. Prospects appear poor for the organization of a mission in Senegal for many years or decades due to no official LDS presence, a predominantly Muslim population, reluctance from area leaders to explore opportunities for opening additional West African nations to missionary work, and distance from the nearest LDS mission.

### Guinea

Guinea has a predominantly Muslim population of 11.5 million. Commonly spoken languages include French, Eastern Maninkakan, and Pular. There have been some government or societal restrictions on religious freedom although most missionary-focused Christian groups with a worldwide presence maintain a presence in Guinea. No LDS presence has operated in Guinea. Prospects appear poor for the organization of a mission in Guinea for many years or decades due to no LDS presence, a predominantly Muslim population, reluctance from area leaders to explore opportunities for opening additional West African nations to missionary work, and the recent Ebola outbreak.

### Chad

Muslims constitute half of Chad's 11.4 million people whereas Christians and animists constitute the remainder of the population. French and Arabic are the most commonly spoken languages. There are no government or societal restrictions on religious freedom. No LDS presence operates in Chad although there have been a handful of isolated members in the country. Prospects appear poor for the organization of a mission in Chad for many years or decades due to distance from the nearest

LDS mission, political instability and conflict, low living standards, and the lack of an LDS Chadian community.

## **The Gambia**

English is the official language of The Gambia where 1.9 million people reside. The government upholds religious freedom and there have been no recent societal abuses of religious freedom. Muslims comprise 90% of the population whereas Christians constitute 8% of the population. There is no LDS presence in The Gambia. Isolated location from the nearest LDS mission, the lack of a Gambian LDS community, and reluctance from area leaders to open additional West African nations to missionary work appear responsible for no LDS presence in The Gambia today. Thus, there appear no feasible prospects for the Church to organize a mission within the foreseeable future.

## **Guinea-Bissau**

There are 1.7 million people who reside in the small, Portuguese-speaking nation of Guinea-Bissau. The population is 50% Muslim, 40% followers of indigenous religions, and 10% Christian. As of early 2015, the LDS Church had not established a presence in Guinea-Bissau notwithstanding the government and society upholding religious freedom, most missionary-focused Christian groups with a worldwide presence operating within the country, small numbers of Bissau-Guineans who have joined the Church in other countries, and historic ties with nearby Cape Verde where the LDS Church has recently experienced rapid growth and has had sizable numbers of members serving full-time missions. Guinea-Bissau numbers among the most likely nations to have an LDS presence established and full-time missionaries assigned within the foreseeable future. However, the organization of a mission headquartered in the country appears unlikely until there are several branches organized, rapid growth is consistently achieved, and there is a sufficient number of full-time missionaries assigned to warrant the organization of a separate mission.

## **THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

Strong ethnoreligious ties to Islam and traditional Christian faiths, significant government restrictions on religious freedom, war and civil unrest, and a lack of indigenous members predict no feasible prospects for the Church to establish LDS missions headquartered in the Middle East or North Africa. Most of these nations have predominantly Arabic-speaking populations. These nations, provided with their respective populations in parentheses, include Egypt (86.9 million), Iran (80.8 million), Algeria (38.8 million), Sudan (35.5 million), Morocco (33.0 million), Iraq (32.6 million), Saudi Arabia (27.3 million), Yemen (26.1 million), Syria (18.0 million), Tunisia (10.9 million), Jordan (7.9 million), Israel (7.8 million), Libya (6.2 million), Lebanon (5.9 million), United Arab Emirates (5.6 million), Palestinian Territories (4.1 million), Mauritania (3.5 million), Oman (3.2 million), Kuwait (2.7 million), Qatar (2.1 million), and Bahrain (1.3 million). Lebanon appears the most likely nation to have young, full-time missionaries assigned as there are no legal prohibitions barring proselytism or changing one's religious affiliation.<sup>[5]</sup>

## **Limitations**

The Church does not publish information of the organization of new missions until these missions are approved by the First Presidency of the Church. It is unclear whether the organization of the Central Eurasian Mission in mid-2015 constitutes a significant change in the Church's approach to worldwide proselytism, mission expansion vision, and policies governing centers of strength. Thus, the organization of new missions in some of the world regions identified in this case study may be many years or decades away from fruition. No country-by-country data is published by the Church regarding statistical measures often associated with the decision by the Church to organize additional missions. These statistics include the number of members serving full-time missions, the number of full-time missionaries assigned, the number of convert baptisms, member activity rates, or convert retention rates.

[1] "Bengali," [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com), retrieved 21 September 2013. <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/ben>

[2] "Nepal," [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com), retrieved 5 May 2015.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/np.html>

[3] Renlund, Ruth L.; Avant, Gerry; Holman, Marianne. "A new day begins with a blessing upon its nation and its people," LDS Church News, 8 November 2012.  
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/62931/A-new-day-begins-with-a-blessing-upon-its-nation-and-its-people.html>

[4] "Yeah Samake," [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org), retrieved 4 June 2014. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yeah\\_Samake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yeah_Samake)

[5] "Lebanon," International Religious Freedom Report for 2013, retrieved 16 May 2015.  
<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2013&dliid=222301>