



Overall LDS Growth Trend Case Studies

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LDS Growth in West Africa - Review and Projections

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Posted: July 31st, 2017

Overview

The Church in West Africa has experienced the most rapid growth of any world region within the past decade. Nearly all major indicators of LDS growth have demonstrated significant improvements during this period, such as increases in church-reported membership, congregations, stakes, districts, missions, convert baptisms, the number of countries with an official LDS presence, and the number of full-time missionaries serving from the area. Furthermore, convert retention and member activity rates have appeared to remain constant or improve during this period. Recent LDS growth trends in West Africa have mirrored rapid growth experienced by the Church in the Philippines and Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s. As a result, there appears a high likelihood that the Church in West Africa will replicate its rapid growth trends it reported in Latin America and the Philippines during the late twentieth century, but with higher self-sustainability and better convert retention and local leadership development outcomes.

This case study reviews historical LDS growth trends in West Africa since the official establishment of the Church in the late 1970s. These growth trends are analyzed in regards to the number of members, missions, congregations, stakes, districts, temples, and cities reached by the Church. LDS growth trends in several Latin American countries and the Philippines are also reviewed and compared to current LDS growth trends in West Africa. Projections for each of these LDS statistical measurements are provided. Limitations to this case study are identified. [rolex replica watches](#)

NOTE: Only continental West African nations are included in this case study. LDS growth trends in Cape Verde (Cabo Verde) are not discussed.

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History of LDS Growth in West Africa

Membership

There were tens of thousands of self-identified Latter-day Saints in Nigeria and Ghana during the 1960s.^[1] However, the first convert baptisms did not occur in these nations until 1978. There were 3,081 church-reported members in West Africa by 1983. At the time, 73% of church membership in the region resided in Nigeria, whereas the remaining 27% lived in Ghana. LDS membership in West Africa reached 13,500 in 1987, 30,600 in 1991, 48,800 in 1995, 81,736 in 2000, 124,816 in 2005, 174,920 in 2010, and 273,053 in 2015. Annual membership growth rates for West Africa as a whole were higher than 50% in the late 1970s and early 1980s, 20-30% from 1985 to 1991, approximately 10-15% from 1995 to 2002, 5-9% from 2003 to 2012, and 10-11% between 2013 and 2016. There were approximately 300,300 members in West Africa by year-end 2016. A country-by-country breakdown of year-end 2016 membership data reported by the Church was as follows: Nigeria (152,903), Ghana (72,535), Cote d'Ivoire (39,589), Sierra Leone (17,671), Liberia (11,135), Togo (3,804), and Benin (2,638). Country-by-country annual membership growth rates during the past five years has been as follows: Nigeria (6-10%), Ghana (7-10%), Sierra Leone (9-16%), Liberia (8-21%), Cote d'Ivoire (15-23%), Togo (16-24%), and Benin (17-60%). No official membership data were available for year-end 2016 for Guinea, Mali, or Senegal. However, church membership in each of these countries appeared to be less than 100 based upon reports from local members and senior missionaries who serve in the region. Despite significant membership growth during the past four decades, church membership in West Africa constituted only 1.89% of worldwide LDS membership in 2016.

The majority of West African Latter-day Saints have historically resided in Nigeria. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of LDS

membership in West Africa resided in Nigeria in 1995, whereas 29% resided in Ghana. The remainder of LDS membership were located in Cote d'Ivoire (6%), Sierra Leone (5%), and Liberia (3%). LDS membership in Nigeria constituted 59.3% of membership in the Africa West Area in 2005. The percentage breakdown of membership for the remainder of the area in 2005 is as follows: Ghana (23.5%), Cote d'Ivoire (8.2%), Sierra Leone (5.0%), Liberia (3.5%), Togo (0.4%), and Benin (0.1%). Membership has increased proportionally throughout the area within the past 20 years (e.g. 57% versus 52% in Nigeria, 29% versus 25% in Ghana, 5% versus 6% in Sierra Leone, 3% versus 4% in Liberia) although Cote d'Ivoire has been an outlier (6% versus 12%). Fifty-two percent (52%) of LDS membership in West Africa resided in Nigeria as of year-end 2015, whereas 25% resided in Ghana, 12% lived in Cote d'Ivoire, 6% in Sierra Leone, 4% in Liberia, 1% in Togo, and 1% in Benin.

According to year-end 2016 membership data, the Church in Sierra Leone reports the highest percentage of Latter-day Saints in the general population of any West Africa country at 0.29%. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in other West African nations as of year-end 2016 is as follows: Ghana (0.27%), Liberia (0.26%), Cote d'Ivoire (0.17%), Nigeria (0.08%), Togo (0.05%), Benin (0.03%), and Guinea, Mali, and Senegal (less than 0.001%). There are few members and no official church presence in Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Niger, and Western Sahara. The combined population of these countries as of 2016 was 58.0 million, or 15.8% of the total population of the Africa West Area.

The annual number of convert baptisms has nearly tripled since 2010 from approximately 10,000 in 2010 to 19,993 in 2013^[2] to 23,000 in 2014 and approximately 27,000 in 2016.

Missions

The Church organized the Africa West Mission in 1980 and later renamed this mission the Nigeria Lagos Mission. The mission divided in 1985 to organize a separate mission headquartered in Ghana. The number of missions in West Africa increased to four in 1990, five in 2000, and eight in 2010. The Church organized its first mission in Liberia in 1988 (discontinued in 1991 and reorganized in 2013), Cote d'Ivoire in 1993, Sierra Leone in 2007, and Benin in 2011.

The Church reported 15 missions in West Africa in 2016 that operated in Nigeria (6), Ghana (4), Cote d'Ivoire (2), Benin (1), Liberia (1), and Sierra Leone (1). Several of these missions currently administer countries where no LDS missions are headquartered. For example, the Benin Cotonou Mission administers Togo, whereas the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan West Mission administers Senegal, the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan Mission administers portions of Mali, and the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission administers portions of Guinea. Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, and Niger have never been assigned to missions. Instead, the Africa West Area Branch administers any isolated members in these nations as well as portions of Guinea and Mali. West African missions constituted 3.56% of the number of LDS missions worldwide as of 2016.

Congregations

The first official LDS branches in West Africa opened in 1978. Less than a decade later, the Church reported 100 official congregations in West Africa in 1987. The number of congregations totaled 149 in 1991, 211 in 1995, 299 in 2000, 370 in 2005, 513 in 2010, and 927 in 2015. There were approximately 1,076 congregations in 2016. The year that the first official branch was organized in each West African country with an LDS presence is as follows: Nigeria (1978), Ghana (1978), Liberia (1980), Cote d'Ivoire (1988), Sierra Leone (1988), Togo (1999), Benin (2005), Senegal (2016), Guinea (2017), and Mali (2017).

Annual congregational growth rates in West Africa widely varied between the late 1980s and the late 1990s from as high as 19% to as low as 1%. Annual congregational growth rates slowed to less than 10% a year between 2000 and 2008 with most years reporting an approximately 4% annual increase. Congregational growth accelerated in the late 2000s to 14% in 2009 and between 13-17% between 2012 and 2016. Country-by-country annual congregational growth rates during the past five years is as follows: Liberia (0-25%), Benin (0-100%), Togo (6-83%), Nigeria (8-11%), Sierra Leone (11-30%), Ghana (14-23%), and Cote d'Ivoire (26-40%). Forty-nine percent (47%) of congregations in West Africa operated in Nigeria in 2016, whereas 26% operated in Ghana. The remainder of West African congregations functioned in Cote d'Ivoire (17%), Sierra Leone (5%), Liberia (3%), Togo (2%), Benin (1%), and Senegal (0.1%). The Church reported approximately 550 congregations in Nigeria, 300 congregations in Ghana, 200 congregations in Cote d'Ivoire, 60 congregations in Sierra Leone, 32 congregations in Liberia, 17 congregations in Benin, 17 congregations in Togo, one branch in Guinea, one branch in Mali, and one branch in Senegal as of in mid-2017. The majority of new congregations organized in the worldwide church during the first six months of 2017 were located in West Africa.

West African wards and branches comprised 3.55% of official LDS congregations worldwide as of 2016 even though LDS membership in West Africa constituted only 1.89% of worldwide membership. This finding indicates that LDS congregations in West Africa have significantly fewer nominal members on their records than LDS congregations elsewhere. Fewer members per congregation in West Africa appears primarily the result of higher member activity rates that require the organization of additional congregations with fewer members on church records and the steady expansion of the Church into previously unreached areas as newly created branches in these locations were generally organized with the minimum number of members required.

Stakes

The Church organized its first stake in West Africa in Aba, Nigeria in 1988. Provided with the year the first stake was organized

in parentheses, the Church has since organized stakes in Ghana (1991), Cote d'Ivoire (1997), Liberia (2000-2007^[3], 2016), Sierra Leone (2012), Togo (2013), and Benin (2016). There were seven West African countries with stakes as of year-end 2016.

The number of stakes in West Africa increased from one in 1988 to five in 1995, 19 in 2000, 22 in 2005, 27 in 2010, 59 in 2015, and 75 at year-end 2016. With the exception of the decade during the 2000s, the Church in West Africa has at least doubled the number of stakes every five years since the late 1980s. The country-by-country breakdown for the number of stakes at year-end 2016 is as follows: Nigeria (42), Ghana (18), Cote d'Ivoire (11), Benin (1), Liberia (1), Sierra Leone (1), and Togo (1).

Districts

The number of stakes in West Africa increased from 15 in 1989 to 19 in 2000, 28 in 2009, and 48 at year-end 2016. Net increases in the number of districts in West Africa since 2009 has been primary attributed to the organization of many new districts in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Sierra Leone during this period. The country-by-country breakdown for the number of districts at year-end 2016 was as follows: Nigeria (16), Ghana (12), Cote d'Ivoire (11), Sierra Leone (6), Liberia (3), Benin (0), and Togo (0). No districts have ever operated in Guinea, Mali, or Senegal.

Temples

The Accra Ghana Temple was the first temple announced in West Africa in 1998. Additional temples were announced for Aba, Nigeria (2000) and Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire (2015). Upon completion of the Aba Nigeria Temple in 2005, the average West African temple administered 11 stakes. By year-end 2016, there was an average of 38 stakes per operating temple.

Cities/Towns Reached

The Church operated wards and branches in at least 102 cities and towns in West Africa in 2001, including approximately 70 in Nigeria, approximately 24 in Ghana, three in Cote d'Ivoire, three in Sierra Leone, one in Liberia, and one in Togo. In early 2017, the Church reported 340 cities and towns with an official LDS presence including 192 in Nigeria, 91 in Ghana, 41 in Cote d'Ivoire, seven in Sierra Leone, four in Benin, three in Liberia, one in Senegal, and one in Togo. As a whole, the number of cities with an LDS presence in West Africa increased by 233% between 2001 and early 2017.

The percentage of the population that resides in cities where LDS wards or branches operate is as follows: Liberia (32%), Ghana (31%), Cote d'Ivoire (31%), Sierra Leone (27%), Nigeria (24%), Senegal (24%), Togo (24%), Guinea (19%), Benin (18%), and Mali (17%).

LDS Growth Trends in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and the Philippines during the 1970s and 1980s

Overview

Excluding the United States, the Church in 2016 reported that Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and the Philippines had the largest numbers of members. Although annual membership growth rates and congregational growth rates in all four of these nations is significantly lower at present than during previous decades, each of these countries reported rapid growth primarily during the 1970s and 1980s. These previous growth trends exhibit many similarities with current growth trends in several West African nations in regards to annual membership growth rates, the organization of new missions, and congregational growth.^[4]

Rapid LDS growth trends in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and the Philippines

The Church in Brazil reported annual membership growth rates of 10-21% during a 13-year period between 1978 and 1991. Church membership during this period dramatically increased from 51,080 to 400,000. The number of Brazilian missions tripled from five to 15.

The Church in Chile reported annual membership growth rates of 14-35% between 1976 and 1985. During this nine-year period, church membership increased from 24,249 to 169,000. The number of congregations increased from 51 in 1975 to 544 in 1987. The number of Chilean missions increased from two in 1975 to five in 1985.

The Church in Mexico experienced annual membership growth rates of 20-44% between 1960 and 1977, and 11-29% between 1984 and 1989. Church membership increased from 12,695 in 1960 to 199,557 in 1977, and 238,889 in 1983 to 570,000 in 1989. The number of Mexican missions increased from one in 1960 to seven in 1977, and from eight in 1983 to 15 in 1989.

The Church in the Philippines reported annual membership growth rates of 13% or higher every year between 1960 (the year

when an official LDS presence in the Philippines was first established) and 1991. More specifically, annual membership growth rates were 41-76% between 1966 and 1975, and 13-35% between 1976 and 1991. LDS membership totaled 11 in 1960, 4,603 in 1970, 18,981 in 1975, 56,717 in 1981, and 266,000 in 1991. The number of wards and branches in the Philippines increased from 57 in 1975 to 497 in 1987 and 769 in 1991. The number of Philippine missions increased from two in 1975 to 12 in 1991.

Similarities with current West African LDS growth trends

Annual membership growth rates in West Africa have ranged between 10-11% since 2013 and annual membership growth rates in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and the Philippines were previously maintained at 10% or higher a year for several consecutive years when church membership in these nations was comparable to the size of church membership in West Africa at present. Some individual West African countries such as Cote d'Ivoire have reported annual membership growth rates that exceed 20% – a rate consistent with periods of rapid membership growth in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and the Philippines.

Significant increases in the number of missions has occurred both in West Africa and in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and the Philippines. The number of missions in West Africa increased from eight to 15 between 2010 and 2015, whereas the number of missions in these four nations often doubled or tripled during past periods of rapid growth that persisted for approximately five years. For example, the number of Mexican missions increased from eight to 15 between 1983 and 1989. Increases in the number of missions both in these four nations and West Africa has been consistent with steady increases in the number of convert baptisms and augmentation of the size of the full-time missionary force.

Rapid expansion of LDS outreach into previously unreached nations has occurred in some West African nations and during periods of rapid growth in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and the Philippines. Hundreds of previously unreached cities and towns had branches organized in these four nations during the 1970s and 1980s. The Church in Cote d'Ivoire has most closely replicated this rapid outreach expansion as evidenced by the number of cities, towns, and villages with an LDS presence increasing from three in 2001 to 44 as of mid-2017. The number of populated places with an official ward or branch also significantly increased in Ghana and Nigeria during this period from 24 to 91 and 70 to 192, respectively.

Differences with Current West African LDS growth trends

The Church in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and the Philippines reported periods of membership growth that occurred at a more rapid rate and at a time when there were more members than the Church in West Africa at present. For example, there were some years in the 1980s when the Church in Mexico reported over 100,000 members and annual membership growth rates as high as 29%. However, the Church in West Africa reports more than 100,000 members only in Nigeria and therefore the opportunity for more rapid growth with a larger membership base has yet to be presented in most nations. Nevertheless, more rapid annual membership growth rates also occurred in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and the Philippines when LDS membership was less than 100,000 in each of these nations. For example, the Church in the Philippines reported an average of 35.4% annual growth during the early 1980s when there were between 30,000 and 60,000 members. Furthermore, the Church in Chile reported annual membership growth rates of 25-35% during the late 1970s and early 1980s at a time when there were between 24,000 and 96,000 members. Only the Church in Cote d'Ivoire has come close to replicate this rapid growth with this size of a membership base in West Africa (e.g. 22.7% annual membership growth rate when membership has ranged between 30,000 and 40,000).

The Church in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and the Philippines experienced lower convert retention and member activity rates during past periods of rapid growth in comparison to the Church in West Africa. Many of the thousands of wards and branches the Church organized in these four nations during periods of rapid growth were minimally staffed and had few active members despite sizable numbers of members on church records. A sizable minority, if not a majority, of new converts baptized during periods of rapid growth did not experience any period of meaningful church activity before or after baptism. Due to compounding inactivity problems, the Church in these four nations currently reports member activity rates ranging from 10-25%, whereas the Church in most West African nations report member activity rates of 35-55%.

The expansion and growth of the Church in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and the Philippines heavily depended on North American full-time missionary manpower, whereas the Church in West Africa has exhibited significantly less reliance on North American missionaries to meet its missionary needs. Black African members from Sub-Saharan African constitute the majority of the full-time missionary force. Furthermore, eight West African missions (six in Nigeria and two in Cote d'Ivoire) have generally not had young North American missionaries assigned for many years or have never assigned North American missionaries due to safety concerns. Despite this limitation in missionary resource availability, many missions where extremely few or no North Americans serve number among the highest baptizing missions per missionary serving in the world. On the other hand, North American missionaries have historically constituted a majority or a large minority in most Latin American missions even into the twenty-first century. Greater self-sufficiency in meeting full-time missionary needs has appeared to significantly help achieve “real growth” in the Church in West Africa without unduly drawing upon worldwide missionary manpower to maintain and expand the Church's missionary presence in the region.

There are significant differences in culture and religion between West Africa, and Latin America and the Philippines. Poignant societal and religious differences between Sub-Saharan African, Latin America, and the Philippines have also appeared to influence growth rates and LDS proselytism tactics. Religious differences between West Africa and Latin America are especially dramatic. Muslims likely comprise more than half of the population in West Africa, whereas there are very few Muslims in Latin

America. Moreover, most Latin American Muslims reside in immigrant communities concentrated in major metropolitan areas. However, there is a small percentage of Muslims in the Philippines (5% of the population) that constitutes the majority of the population in only the Sulu archipelago and a few locations in southern Mindanao.

West African LDS Growth Projections

Membership

The Church in West Africa has reported annual membership growth rates of 5-14% since 2000. If LDS membership in West Africa consistently increases by 10% annually, then LDS membership would reach 400,000 in 2020, 500,000 in 2022, 600,000 in 2024, 700,000 in 2025, 800,000 in 2027, 900,000 in 2028, one million in 2029, and 1.14 million in 2030. If membership in West Africa increases by 5% annually, church membership would reach 400,000 in 2022, 500,000 in 2027, and 595,000 in 2030.

Membership growth trends in individual West African nations indicate that more rapid LDS growth in West Africa will occur during the next 13 years than if these projections are made using the sum of regional church membership. Provided with the range of estimated membership by the year 2030 per low (e.g. 5% for Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone; 7.5% for Liberia; 10% for Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, and Benin) and high (e.g. 10% for Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone; 15% for Liberia; 20% for Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, and Benin) growth rates given historical growth trends, projected LDS membership by nation for the year 2030 is as follows: Nigeria (300,000-600,000), Ghana (145,000-275,000), Cote d'Ivoire (150,000-500,000), Sierra Leone (35,000-67,000), Liberia (30,000-80,000), Togo (15,000-50,000), Benin (10,000-34,000), Senegal (1,000-2,000), Guinea (1,000-2,000), and Mali (1,000-2,000). The Church in 2030 may report several hundred members to 1,000 members in additional West African countries that currently have no official LDS presence such as Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau. Other West African nations currently unreached by the Church (e.g. Mauritania, Niger, and Western Sahara) appear unlikely to have more than 200 members each by the year 2030 given growth trends of other nontraditional Christian groups in these nations, religious freedom restrictions that appear highly unlikely to change, and/or strong ethnoreligious ties of most ethnolinguistic peoples to Islam.

Nigeria appears most likely to be the first country to reach one million members in West Africa by the year 2036 if annual membership growth rates are sustained at 10%. However, the Church in Nigeria would not reach one million members until the year 2051 if annual membership growth rates are sustained at 5%. There is a less likely possibility that the Church in Cote d'Ivoire will be the first West African nation to reach one million members by the year 2034 if annual membership growth rates are sustained at 20%. However, this scenario appears extremely unlikely given LDS membership growth trends in other countries that have previously experienced similar membership growth rates like Cote d'Ivoire.

The following includes projections for when church-reported membership is anticipated to reach 1.0% of the population per high and low LDS membership growth rates in each individual country. The Church in Cote d'Ivoire appears the most likely to first report that one percent of the population is nominally LDS among. Estimated future population figures were retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/OA>.

Cote d'Ivoire: 2028 (20% annual growth), 2041 (10% annual growth)

Liberia: 2029 (15% annual growth), 2046 (7.5% annual growth)

Ghana: 2034 (10% annual growth), 2058 (5% annual growth)

Sierra Leone: 2034 (10% annual growth), 2056 (5% annual growth)

Togo: 2035 (20% annual growth), 2057 (10% annual growth)

Benin: 2040 (20% annual growth), 2065 (10% annual growth)

Nigeria: 2051 (10% annual growth), 2095 (5% annual growth)

Missions

The Church may operate as many as 30 missions in West Africa by 2025 and 37 missions by 2030 given historical growth trends in the number of missions for the region. Nigerian missions may account for between one-third and one-half of West African missions in 2025 given that the number of missions in Nigeria has historically comprised this fraction of West African

missions and that the population of Nigeria constituted approximately half of the population of the West African area as of 2016. The projected number of missions per country in West Africa in 2030 is as follows: Nigeria (13), Ghana (8), Cote d'Ivoire (6), Sierra Leone (3), Liberia (2), Benin (2), Togo (2), and Mali (1).

Congregations

Fifteen percent (15%) annual congregational growth sustained over the next decade will result in the number of West African congregations increasing from 927 in 2015 to 1,882 in 2020, 3,785 in 2025, and 7,613 in 2030. If congregational growth rates are equal across West African nations, the number of congregations by country would be as follows by the year 2030: 3,358 in Nigeria, 1,960 in Ghana, 1,288 in Cote d'Ivoire, 389 in Sierra Leone, 212 in Liberia, 120 in Togo, 99 in Benin, seven in Senegal, six in Mali, and six in Guinea. These growth trends would result in Nigeria and Ghana ranking among the top seven or eight countries in the world in 2025 for countries with the most congregations given historical growth trends for other nations with the most congregations.

A more conservative projection of 10% annual growth in the number of West African congregations would increase the number of congregations to 1,575 in 2020, 2,537 in 2025, and 4,086 in 2030. In this scenario, the number of congregations by country in 2030 would be as follows: 1,899 in Nigeria, 1,052 in Ghana, 691 in Cote d'Ivoire, 209 in Sierra Leone, 114 in Liberia, 65 in Togo, 53 in Benin, four in Senegal, three in Guinea, and three in Mali. These growth trends would result in Nigeria and Ghana ranking among the top 10 countries in the world in 2025 for countries with the most congregations given historical growth trends for other nations with the most congregations as of 2016.

Stakes

Given historical trends in stake growth (e.g. number of stakes doubling every five years), the number of stakes in West Africa may increase from 75 at year-end 2016 to approximately 120 in 2020, 240 in 2025, and 488 in 2030. Thus, it is projected that the Church may operate as many as 264 stakes in Nigeria, 120 stakes in Ghana, 72 stakes in Cote d'Ivoire, eight stakes in Benin, eight stakes in Liberia, eight stakes in Sierra Leone, and eight stakes in Togo by the year 2025 given historical growth trends. Unless more rapid growth occurs in Guinea, Mali, and Senegal than what the Church experienced in Benin and Togo during the first decade of proselytism in these two countries, it is unlikely that stakes will operate in any of these nations by 2025. However, one stake each may operate in Guinea, Mali, and Senegal by 2030 given the timeframe for the organization of the first stakes in Benin and Togo.

The Church has reported an average stake growth rate of 1.62% within the past decade. If this percentage growth rate is sustained for the worldwide church during the next decade, then there may be 3,788 stakes worldwide by 2025. Thus, stakes in West Africa would comprise six percent of stakes worldwide, whereas West African stakes constituted two percent of stakes worldwide in 2015.

Temples

The Church in West Africa may operate as many as 13 temples by the year 2030 if the average temple administers 38 stakes given projected stake growth trends. If the Church maintains the average of 11 stakes per temple that existed in 2005, there may be as many as 46 temples in West Africa by 2030. The number of temples per West African country (e.g. one temple per 38 stakes) is as follows per projected numbers of new stakes by the year 2030: Nigeria (7), Ghana (3), Cote d'Ivoire (2), and Sierra Leone (1). However, the number of temples by country may be as follows if the average temple services 11 stakes (e.g. average number of stakes per temple in 2005): Nigeria (24), Ghana (11), Cote d'Ivoire (7), Benin (1), Liberia (1), Sierra Leone (1), and Togo (1).

Cities Reached

The number of cities and towns with an LDS presence in West African increased by 233% between 2001 and 2017. If this rate of outreach expansion is sustained during the next 16 years, the number of West African cities and towns with an LDS presence will increase from 340 to 1,137 by the year 2033. If this rate of expansion is equal across all countries with an LDS presence as of mid-2017, the number of cities with an LDS presence would be as follows in 2030: Nigeria (639), Ghana (303), Cote d'Ivoire (137), Sierra Leone (23), Benin (13), Liberia (10), Guinea (3), Mali (3), Senegal (3), and Togo (3). The Church may have one or two cities with an LDS presence in additional nations by 2030 such as Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Niger. Mauritania and Western Sahara appear unlikely to have any cities with an official LDS presence by 2030 given long-term restrictions on religious freedom and strong ethnoreligious ties of most the population to Islam.

Limitations

LDS growth trends rarely remain constant for extended periods of time. Although the Church in several West African nations has sustained more predictable increases than other areas of the world, past experience indicates that these trends rarely persist for more than 5-10 years at a time. Oftentimes various measures of LDS statistical growth trends fluctuate year to year. Thus, these

fluctuations in growth rates result in significantly different outcomes over the long-term. As a result, modeling LDS growth may result in significant discrepancies from predictions and true data in the future. Changes in receptivity to LDS outreach, political instability, government restrictions on religious freedom, availability of missionary resources, engagement of local members in proselytism, standards for convert baptisms, strength and sustainability of local leadership, and area policies that govern the expansion of the Church in previously unreached areas each significantly impact growth trends. No projections were provided for future district growth. This was due to difficulty in reliably projecting increases in the number of districts in other countries and world regions.

Conclusion

The Church in West Africa has experienced the most rapid growth in the world for more than a decade among major world regions with at least 20,000 members. Prospects appear highly favorable for continued growth in the coming decades that will likely resemble many aspects of rapid LDS growth trends in several Latin American nations and the Philippines during the 1970s and 1980s. It appears highly likely that membership, congregational, and stake growth trends in West Africa will be maintained between 10-15% annually for the foreseeable future given recent growth trends and the historical expansion of the Church into previously unreached or lesser-reached areas. The Church in West Africa may report one million members, one dozen temples, more than 4,000 congregations, 37 missions, 488 stakes, and an official church presence in at least 1,000 populated places by the year 2030. However, the Church will continue to remain a small minority in West Africa as a whole and in individual nations for many decades to come even if high projections for growth rates are maintained due to the comparatively small size of the LDS Church at present. Membership may constitute as high as one percent of the population in a few nations by the 2030s. Despite these predictions, church growth rates are rarely maintained at constant levels for several consecutive decades. Thus, there may be significant different outcomes given contextual factors that affect growth rates.

[1] "Work in Nigeria has deep roots, flowers quickly," LDS Church News, 19 December 1988.
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/34957/Work-in-Nigeria-has-deep-roots-flowers-quickly.html>

[2] Stoker, Douglas G.; Stoker, Rebecca R. "Church Membership Grows in West Africa," 19 February 2014.
<https://www.lds.org/church/news/history-of-west-africa?lang=eng>

[3] The original Monrovia Liberia Stake operated between 2000 and 2007 until it was discontinued and reverted to district status.

[4] The Church did not systematically publish country-by-country congregational figures until 1987. Thus, congregational data for most countries prior to 1987 is unavailable. A few congregational totals have been obtained from other sources such as news media articles or other secondary sources that have provided these data.