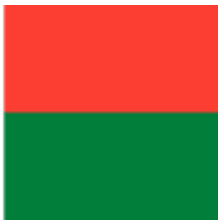


Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

Country reports on the LDS Church around the world from a landmark almanac. Includes detailedanalysis of history, context, culture, needs, challenges and opportunities for church growth.



Madagascar

Population: 23.2 millions (#53 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography

Area: 587,041 square km. Located of the coast of Mozambique, Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island and home to many species of plant and animal life not found anywhere else in the world. Terrain varies from hills to low-laying plains in many coastal areas. Climate ranges from semi-arid to tropical, resulting in a diversity of landscapes including tropical rainforest, temperate forest, scrubland, and grasslands. Cyclones, drought, and locust infestations are natural hazards. Environmental issues include soil erosion, desertification, overgrazing, deforestation, proper waste disposal, and the protection of endangered species. Madagascar is divided into six administrative provinces.

Population: 21,926,221 (July 2011)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.973% (2011)

Fertility Rate: 5.02 children born per woman (2011)

Life Expectancy: 61.62 male, 65.7 female (2011)

Peoples

Most Malagasies are of Malayo-Indonesian ancestry or of mixed Africa, Arab, and Malayo-Indonesian ancestry. There are small numbers of Indians, French, and Comorians. There are no reliable estimates for the percentage breakdown of the population by ethnicity.

Languages: Malagasy dialects and French (99%), other (1%). Standard Malagasy, French, and English are the official languages. Malagasy dialects exhibit many linguistic similarities and most appear mutually comprehensible to one another. French and English are primarily used in official settings and are less commonly spoken than Malagasy. Only Malagasy has over one million speakers (21.7 million).

Literacy: 68.9% (2003)

History

The first known inhabitants of Madagascar are believed to be Malayo-Polynesians originating from Indonesia who colonized the island about 1,500 years ago. For centuries Madagascar became an important stop and post for trade in the Indian Ocean; many traders were Arabs who introduced Islam to some areas of northern Madagascar. Intermixing between the indigenous Malayo-Polynesians, black Africans, and Arabs occurred during much of Madagascar's known history. French colonists also intermingled with the indigenous population during the French colonial period. France annexed the island in the late nineteenth century and Madagascar achieved independence from France in 1960. Only one political party ruled Madagascar for most of the 1970s and 1980s under a revolutionary socialist platform until the early 1990s when free democratic elections were held. Political instability has occurred intermittently since 2000, with presidential election results debated and the nation at times on the brink of civil war. Corruption charges culminated in the step down of President Marc Ravalomanana in 2009 and the instatement of the former mayor of Antananarivo Andry Rajoelina as president.

Culture

Tribalism and indigenous beliefs dominated local culture until the last century as French influence facilitated the spread of Christianity and nationhood was achieved. Poverty and agriculture are major influences on society today. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates rank among the lowest in the world. Unlike most African nations, polygamy is illegal and rarely practiced.

Economy

GDP per capita: $1,000 (2010) [2.11% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.435

Corruption Index: 2.6

Madagascar has an undeveloped economy, a result of failed past socialist policies abandoned in the early 1990s and a lack of foreign investment in recent years. Recent political instability has slowed economic growth and development. Poverty is a major challenge for economic growth as half the population lives below the poverty line. Agriculture accounts for 80% of the labor force and generates 26.5% of the GDP. Industry and services generate 16.7% and 56.8% of the GDP, respectively. Coffee, vanilla, sugarcane, cloves, cocoa, rice, fruit, cassava, vegetables, and peanuts are common crops. Major industries include meat processing, seafood, soap, sugar, breweries, glassware, and cement. France, the United States, and China are the primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and present in all areas of society despite the operation of an anti-corruption bureau. Government is vulnerable to corruption due to complicated administrative procedures.[1] Madagascar is a transshipment point for heroin and a producer of cannabis primary for domestic consumption.

Faiths

indigenous beliefs: 52%

Christian: 41%

Muslim: 7%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 4,000,000

Seventh Day Adventists 117,648 653

Jehovah's Witnesses 23,681 447

Latter-day Saints 6,736 31

Religion

Approximately half of the population follows indigenous beliefs. Christians constitute 41% of the population, half of which are Catholic. Some percentage estimates for Muslims range as high as 10-15%. Muslims principally reside in the north, northwest, and southeast.[2]

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

The constitution protects religious freedom which is generally upheld by the government. There has been increasing debate in the role of Christianity in government, with some officials advocating for transforming Madagascar into a "Christian state." Major Christian holidays are recognized national holidays. Religious organizations have free access to state media. The law requires religious groups to register with the government to operate. To register as a religious organization, a religious group must have 100 members and an elected administrative council comprised of native citizens. Religious groups with leadership based outside Madagascar may register with the government as foreign-based religious associations. Societal abuse of religious freedom has been infrequent. There have been some governmental abuse of religious freedom for religious groups who are politically active in opposing government leaders.[3]

Largest Cities

Urban: 30%

Antananarivo, Toamasina (Tamatave), Antsirabe, Fianarantsoa, Mahajanga, **Toliara, Antsiranana, Antanifotsy, Ambovombe, Amparafaravola.**

Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

Five of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. 15% of the national population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

One of the first known Malagasies to join the Church was Razanapanala Ramianadrisoa who was attending school in France in the 1980s. Ramianadrisoa was ordained an elder a year after his baptism and returned to Madagascar where he held meetings on Sundays in a small room of his father's home. Madagascar was assigned to the Mascarene Islands Mission in 1988,[4] the mission president visited in late 1988, and the first convert baptism in Madagascar was performed. By this time, there were approximately 15 investigators attending meetings in Ramianadrisoa's home. In May 1990, five additional converts joined the Church and the Church secured a rented space for meetings. The first branch was organized in September 1990 with 50 in attendance. In 1991, the first two senior missionary couples were assigned to Antananarivo and in 1993 the Church was officially recognized by the government.[5] The Madagascar Antananarivo Mission was organized in 1998 from the South Africa Durban Mission and also included Mauritius and Reunion. The Malagasy translation of the entire Book of Mormon was completed in 2000. The first stake temple trip occurred in late 2001 to Johannesburg South Africa Temple where 33 members participated in temple ordinance work.[6] Foreign missionaries were withdrawn from Madagascar between 2002 and 2003 due to political instability. Political instability nearly prompted mission leadership to evacuate nonnative missionaries again in 2009. Madagascar is currently assigned to the Africa Southeast Area. In recent years, Madagascar has experienced rapid membership and congregational growth.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 6,736 (2010)

There were 100 Latter-day Saints in 1993, 350 in 1995,[7] and 700 in 1997. By 2000, LDS membership reached 1,810. Slow membership growth occurred during the mid-2000s whereas rapid membership growth occurred in the early and late 2000s. Membership totaled 2,634 in 2002, 3,088 in 2004, 3,683 in 2006, 4,769 in 2008, and 6,736 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates ranged from a high of 34% in 2001 to a low of 7.6% in 2003 but varied from 7-10% between 2002 and 2006 and steadily increased after 2006 to 13% in 2007, 14.6% in 2008, 15.7% in 2009, and 22.1% in 2010. In 2010, one in 3,255 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 12 Branches: 19 Groups: 3+

The number of LDS congregations increased from only one branch between 1990 and 1995 to four branches and a district in

Antananarivo by 1997. In 2000, the first stake was organized from the district in Antananarivo and included the Ambohipo, Ampefiloha, Analamahitsy, Anjanahary, and Antananarivo 1st Wards and the Betongolo Branch. The Madagascar Antananarivo Mission Branch also operated at this time for members residing outside the capital city. By year-end 2000, there were eight LDS units in Madagascar.

The number of LDS congregations declined to seven in 2001 and remained unchanged until 2005 when six new congregations were organizing bringing the total of LDS congregations to 13. Rapid congregational growth began in the late 2000s. There were 16 congregations in 2005, 15 in 2006, 17 in 2008, 24 in 2009, and 28 in 2010. The first congregations outside of Antananarivo were organized in the mid-2000s in Toamasina, Antsirabe, Fianarantsoa, and Fort Dauphin. A second branch was organized in Toamasina in 2008 and by late 2010 there were five branches in Toamasina which were organized into a district. In Antsirabe, additional branches were organized in the late 2000s and by late 2010 there were three branches in the immediate city of Antsirabe, one branch in the small village of Manandona, and groups meeting in Enjoma and Sarodroa. Antsirabe become its own district in late 2010. In Antananarivo, there were six wards and four branches in 2007 within the boundaries of the stake and by late 2010 there were twelve wards and two branches. In early 2011, a second stake was organized in Antananarivo. A new mission branch was organized in Mahajanga in 2009. In early 2011, groups under the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission Branch appeared to be operating in Ambositra and Ankazobe. By mid-2011, there were two stakes and two districts. A second branch was organized in Fianarantsoa in late 2011.

Activity and Retention

Receptivity to the LDS Church is high and convert retention rates range from moderate to high levels depending on the congregation. Nearly all independent congregations have over 100 active members. Over 100 attended church meetings in Mahajanga in May 2011. Over 500 attended the special meeting to organize the Toamasina Madagascar District in October 2010. Some congregations in Antananarivo have more than 200 active members. LDS units in Antananarivo appear to experience lower retnetion rates as missionaries report that some units have only 100-150 active members and 400 nominal members on church records. It is not uncommon for investigators to number in the dozens at Church meetings and for large baptismal services to occur weekly in units outside of Antananarivo. The number of members per congregation declined from 347 in 2000 to 241 in 2010. Enrollment in seminary and institute increased from 508 in 2007-2008 to 666 in 2009-2010. Nationwide active membership is estimated to range between 4,000 and 4,500, or 60-65% of total church membership.

Finding

Most investigators and converts are introduced to missionaries by member referral or street proselytism. Meetinghouse open houses have been an effective tool for finding investigators. The Church in Toamasina held an open house in April 2009 that was attended by 500 and generated about 100 referrals.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Malagasy, French

All LDS scriptures are translated into Malagasy and French. Most church materials are translated into French and a large selection of LDS materials are available in Malagasy. The Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and Gospel Principles are translated in Comorian. The Liahona magazine has four Malagasy issues a year.

Meetinghouses

There were at least 13 LDS meetinghouses in early 2011. The first LDS chapel was built and dedicated in 1999.[8] Many congregations meet in renovated buildings or rented spaces. Some newer congregations in remote locations lack sufficient facilities. Church services in Manandona were held outside under a large tent on dirt floors until LDS missionaries and local members constructed a meetinghouse in 2010.

Health and Safety

The risk for the spread of infectious disease is very high for chikungunya, malaria, plague, typhoid fever, schistosomiasis, hepatitis, and bacterial and protozoal diarrhea. Unlike many African nations, HIV/AIDS infects less than one percent of the population (0.2%). Periodic political instability has disrupted missionary activity in the past and poses a safety concern particularly for North American missionaries.

Humanitarian and Development Work

LDS humanitarian and development work has primarily consisted of clean water projects. There have been at least 15 major projects completed by the Church in recent years. Additional projects have included donating Braille machines, wheelchairs,

and materials for dental training and providing vision care and equipment to install electricity in buildings.[9] Local members and full-time missionaries have participated in Mormon Helping Hands projects.

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church benefits from full religious freedom for members and missionaries to worship, assemble, and proselyte. Foreign missionaries regularly serve and report no major challenges obtaining needed documentation.

Cultural Issues

Many Malagasies exhibit a high degree of receptivity to the LDS Church and other missionary-focused Christian groups. The eight missionaries serving in Antsirabe reported in September 2009 that over 100 investigators attended church meetings among the three branches in the Antsirabe area. Before the assignment of missionaries to Fianarantsoa, the branch had only a handful of baptized members and dozens of investigators regularly attending. Christianity is a dominant influence on society in many areas and has provided many with a basic background in Christianity but few have strong ties to particular denominations. Poverty and low living standards have likely increased the receptivity of many to the LDS Church but impede economic self-sustainability for most the population and deter mission leaders from more readily opening rural areas to missionary activity. The LDS Church has primarily focused on improving access to fresh water, but abundant opportunities exist for teaching efficient farming techniques in rural areas, literacy classes, employment training, proper sanitation and hygiene to reduce the risk of spreading disease, and neonatal resuscitation training. Political instability has setback missionary work in Madagascar from time to time. Periods of governmental turmoil has left missionaries sometimes unable to leave their residences for several days or limit time devoted to missionary work do daylight hours. The brief absence of missionaries or interruption of missionary activity has likely facilitated greater independence among local members in church responsibilities than in many other nations.

National Outreach

13% of the national population resides in cities or villages with an LDS congregation. 92% of the population resides in the five administrative provinces with an LDS congregation. All three of the largest cities have multiple congregations and most the population in these cities resides within a couple kilometers of a meetinghouse. The Church has focused primarily on expanding outreach in Antananarivo, Toamasina, and Antsirabe since 2005 by organizing additional congregations. The number of LDS congregations increased from seven to 14 in Antananarivo from 2002 to 2010, from one to five in Toamasina from 2005 to 2010, and from one to three in Antsirabe from 2005 to 2010. LDS missionaries opened Mahajanga and Fianarantsoa to missionary work in 2009 and Fort Dauphin in 2011. With the exception of the Manandona Branch and a couple groups, the entire rural population is unreached.

The recurrent tactic of outreach expansion by LDS mission leadership in newly-opened cities in Madagascar is to employ a centers of strength strategy by establishing a single branch in a given city and wait to organize additional congregations in the city until there are over 200 active members and then readily organize several new congregations thereafter. It has generally taken three to five years for the initial branch to be divided into additional branches and this process has been the pattern for all cities in Madagascar which had more than one LDS congregation as of mid-2011. Recent accelerated congregational and membership growth are strongly linked to the organization of additional congregations in Antananarivo, Antsirabe, and Toamasina and this trend is likely to continue due to the ongoing organization of dependent branches and groups in smaller cities and villages. Forming dependent branches and groups prepare members for the leadership and administrative responsibilities of independent branches and wards and are flexible and versatile to meet more immediate needs as they generally do not require area presidency of First Presidency approval to operate. These units vary widely in size from a handful of active members to hundreds of members. Many local leaders can be found and guided through the creation of these groups which offer a more adaptive approach to reaching populations in rural communities.

LDS national outreach has expanded at a slow pace for most of the Church's history in Madagascar. Outreach was limited to Antananarivo for the first decade and a half following a formal church establishment. Delays in expanding national outreach outside of Antananarivo occurred due to political instability, distance from established church centers in the region, few missionary resources dedicated to Africa, adherence of mission leadership to a centers of strength philosophy of church growth, and low living standards. The organization of Madagascar into its own mission not until 1998 also delayed expanding outreach at an earlier date. In 2011, resources dedicated to the mission remained limited and prevented the opening of additional cities to missionary work and expanding outreach in established church centers. The number of full-time missionaries and the pace of opening additional cities to missionary work has accelerated in recent years, but outreach remains far below its potential given high receptivity, widespread religious freedom, and past sustainability of local leadership and moderate to good convert retention rates. Future expansion of national outreach appears most favorable in the most populous cities with and without LDS congregations and rural areas between Antananarivo and Fianarantsoa.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The LDS Church in Madagascar exhibits some of the highest member activity and convert retention rates in the world among countries with over 5,000 members and also possesses one of the most rapid membership growth rates in the region. Madagascar was one of the few countries in the 2000s in which the Church experienced a significant decline in the average number of members per congregation. Moderate to high rates of convert retention and member activity appear to have been achieved by the involvement of local leadership in missionary activity and cultural habits of church attendance. Converts often appear to be baptized with minimal prebaptismal preparation and teaching, but unlike many other nations this has not been as strongly linked with high rates of convert attrition. Local member and full-time missionary support for converts post-baptism appear to be a critical piece toward understanding past and current successes in retention and member activity. Continued emphasis on seminary and institute attendance, missionary preparation, and youth-oriented teaching and fellowshipping activities will be crucial towards maintaining current moderate to high rates of member activity.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

LDS missionaries have reported no significant challenges integrating differing ethnicities and Malagasy tribes or clans into the same congregations. Shared language and cultural identity and geographic separation of ethnic groups appear to have reduced ethnic integration challenges.

Language Issues

Nearly the entire population speaks Malagasy, reducing the need for mission outreach in additional languages. Variations in Malagasy dialects do not appear to have significantly affected the pace of church growth or the degree standard Malagasy-LDS materials are utilized by local members in differing provinces. Lower literacy rates in rural areas are a barrier to sustainable church growth as some are unable to read scriptures and church literature individually.

Missionary Service

The LDS Church in Madagascar is partially sufficient in staffing its full-time missionary force. Malagasy missionaries regularly serve in mainland Africa and within their home country. There were 50 missionaries serving in Madagascar in 1999.[10] By 2010, there were likely no more than 100 missionaries assigned to Madagascar. Currently larger numbers of missionaries are beginning to be assigned outside of Antananarivo. Mahajanga had eight full-time missionaries in early 2011. Emphasis on missionary preparation for youth will be required to increase the number of local members serving missions. Economic constraints and challenges will likely continue to reduce the number of members serving missions as many youth and young adults help to financially provide for their families.

Leadership

The size and strength of local leadership notwithstanding the limited experience of most church members with administrative affairs due to their recent baptism in the Church is an encouraging development and is attested by rapid congregational growth in recent years. LDS leadership manpower is focused in Antananarivo as evidenced by the operation of two stakes. There have been some minor, periodic setbacks in developing administrative leadership as indicated by mission leadership planning on organizing the first stake in late 1998 or early 1999[11] but this not occurring until 2000, the delayed division of the Antananarivo Madagascar Stake in 2011 notwithstanding the stake having the adequate number of congregations to divide since 2009, and the delayed organization of districts in Antsirabe and Toamasina in 2010 until there were four and five branches in each of the cities and their surroundings, respectively. Training competent and self-reliant leaders in rural areas poses a significant challenges due to limited interaction with seasoned local church leaders and consequently many groups have been unable to become independent branches.

Temple

Madagascar is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Temple trips occur regularly by airplane and at great sacrifice of local members due to long distances and travel costs. The Church has routinely provided financial support for members to attend the temple. With the majority of church membership concentrated in Antananarivo, prospects of a future small temple constructed in the capital appear favorable over the medium or long term and hinge on continued rapid membership and congregational growth and persistent moderately high convert retention rates.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church in Madagascar has experienced some of the most rapid growth for the LDS Church in the 2000s among countries with fewer than 10,000 members. Between 2000 and 2010, no other country in the world experienced as high of a congregational growth rate with as many congregations (250%). In 2010, the LDS Church in Madagascar experienced the second highest annual membership growth rate of any country with over 100 members. The percentage of members in the population is comparable to other countries in the region with over 5,000 Latter-day Saints and the percentage of the population

residing in cities with LDS congregations is comparable to many African nations. Member activity rates are among the highest in the world among countries with over 1,000 members.

Other missionary-focused Christian groups report steady and rapid growth in Madagascar. Seventh Day Adventists report over 100,000 members in over 600 congregations. The number of Adventist churches increased by approximately 200 in 2009 alone.[12] Jehovah's Witnesses number over 20,000 and meet in over 400 congregations. These and other denominations have taken more aggressive and more assertive church planting approaches to expanding outreach and consequently have experienced rapid growth fueled by local leadership.

Future Prospects

Uniquely high rates of receptivity to nontraditional Christian denominations, moderate to good convert retention and member activity rates, a high degree of sustainability among local leadership, increased efforts to expand national outreach in additional cities and rural areas, and moderate rates of missionary service generate an unmatched opportunity for LDS Church growth in the coming years capable of duplicating rapid growth experienced by the Church in many Latin American countries in the 1970s and 1980s but with higher retention and activity rates. Increasing missionary resources dedicated to Madagascar will rely on local members serving missions in greater numbers in an age of stagnant growth in the number of full-time missionaries worldwide. Districts in Toamasina and Antsirabe may become stakes over the near or medium term. Branches in Mahajanga and Fianarantsoa may subdivide into additional branches and districts may be organized in each city within the next five years. Groups meeting in Ambositra, Ankazobe, and Enjoma may become branches in the near future. Remaining large cities without LDS congregations such as Toliara may open for missionary work in the coming years and groups may be established in lesser-reached cities surrounding Antananarivo, such as Ambodiafontsy and Mahitsy.

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