

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.



Burkina Faso

Population: 18.37 millions (#60 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 274,200 square km. Landlocked in sub-Saharan West Africa just south of the Sahel, Burkina Faso borders Mali, Niger, Benin, Togo, Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire. The climate is tropical, with dry and warm winters and hot, humid summers. Most of the terrain is flat with few hills. The Volta River has its headwaters in Burkina Faso, where the river is divided into the Red, White, and Black Volta Rivers. Desertification is a serious issue due to the close proximity of the Sahara Desert, intensive agricultural activities and recurrent droughts.

Population: 16,751,455 (July 2011)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.085% (2011)

Fertility Rate: 6.14 children born per woman (2011)

Life Expectancy: 51.75 male, 55.71 female (2011)

Peoples

Mossi: Over 40%

Other (Gurunsi, Senufo, Lobi, Bobo, Mande, and Fulani): 60%

Burkina Faso sits in the crossroads of many different peoples. Mossi and Gurunsi live in the center of the country, Senofu in the far west, Lobi in the south, Bobo and Mande in the south and west, and Fulani in the north. Most of these ethnic groups differ greatly from one another and are either indigenous to the center of Burkina Faso or have substantial populations across the border in nearby nations.

Languages: Moore (30%), Jula (6%), other or unknown (64%). French is the official language. 90% of languages spoken in Burkina Faso belong to the Sudanic family. 68 languages are spoken. Languages with over one million speakers include Moore (5 million) and Jula (1 million).

Literacy: 21.8% (2003)

History

African tribes inhabited Burkina Faso for thousands of years, establishing powerful kingdoms hundreds of years ago. British and French interests in the region resulted in warfare with the Mossi Kingdom, causing its downfall and integration into French colonial possessions. The territory was named French Upper Volta in 1919. Independence from France occurred in 1960 under the name of Upper Volta. Several military coups overthrew the government in the 1970s and 1980s. The name Burkina Faso was adopted in 1984. President Blaise Compaore took control in 1987 in a coup and currently rules the country after recurrent democratic elections. Poverty and lack of employment result in many Burkinabe working in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire.

Culture

Burkinabe culture draws heavily upon French and native influences. The French spread Catholicism and contributed to the importance of theater and film. Typical foods in Burkina Faso are also found in other West African countries such as sorghum, potatoes and yams. Palm wine is a common beverage. Polygamy is widely practiced.

Economy

GDP per capita: $1,200 (2010) [2.53% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.389

Corruption Index: 3.1

Burkina Faso ranks among the poorest countries of the world due to its landlocked position, undeveloped infrastructure, and lack of natural resources and skilled workers. 90% of the workforce labors in agriculture and services account for half of the GDP. Cotton is the most valuable cash crop, which is vulnerable to drought and world prices. Privatization of government owned enterprises began in the 1990s. Recently government has begun to exploit limited gold resources. Most export partners are neighboring African or Southeast Asian nations. The largest import partners are Cote d'Ivoire and France. Corruption in government is problematic, but less prevalent than in many other poor West African nations.

Faiths

Muslim: 50%

Indigenous beliefs: 40%

Christian: 10%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 1,500,000

Seventh Day Adventists 3,692 11

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,495 36

Latter-Day Saints less than 10

Religion

Christians are concentrated in urban areas and the center of Burkina Faso. Muslims mainly reside along the northern, eastern, and western borders. Syncretism of Christianity and Islam with indigenous beliefs is widespread.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and generally upheld by the government. No restrictions exist on proselytism. [1]

Major Cities

Urban: 20%

Ouagadougou, Bobo Dioulasso, Koudougou, Ouahigouya, Banfora, Dedougou, Kaya, Tenkodogo, Fada n'gourma, Dori

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

None of the 10 largest cities have an LDS congregation. 11% of the national population lives in the 10 largest cities.

LDS History

Burkina Faso was included in the Africa West Area in 1998. There has never been a reported LDS presence.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 10 (2010 estimate)

A few members live in Burkina Faso who joined the Church in other countries. Burkinabe communities in the Cote d'Ivoire have likely seen some membership growth due to some Church materials translated into Mossi.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0

No organized branch or group appears to function, but members likely meet unofficially in small groups in their homes.

Activity and Retention

All members in Burkina Faso were baptized in other nations. Their current level of Church activity and understanding depends on the quality of the teaching they received, whether they continue to study the Church, and how long they lived in an area with a Church presence.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French

Most Church materials are available in French. The Church has translated Gospel Principles and the Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith in Fulani, Mandinka, and Moore.

Meetinghouses

Meetings likely occur in members' homes if Church meetings occur.

Health and Safety

The spread of disease is a major concern. Prevalent diseases include rabies, meningitis, malaria, yellow fever, and hepatitis A.

HIV/AIDS infects 1.6% of the population. Methods of infection for HIV/AIDS include illicit sexual relations, drug use, contaminated needles, and HIV-positive mothers. Those infected with HIV/AIDS and join the Church are less able to establish the Church over the long term due to the disease significantly shortening their lifespan. The widespread presence of several diseases poses a threat to missionary safety and may have contributed to no official Church presence.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Supplies were sent to help educate Burkinabe about dehydration in the early 1990s.[2] The Church donated quilts to Burkina Faso in 2007.[3]

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Government protects and upholds religious freedom. The Church will not have missionary work restrictions once established in Burkina Faso. Like Sierra Leone, the Church has tremendous potential to work among the large Muslim population without government limitations.

Cultural Issues

The LDS Church will need to tailor teaching approaches to Muslims in order to make proselytism effective. The practice of polygamy may negatively affect potential Church growth. Those married to a polygamous spouse must end their relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of a mission presidency to join the Church. The popularity of palm wine could create cultural barriers between Burkinabe and the Church.

National Outreach

The entire population is unreached by the Church. The Church appears to have had some success in the conversion of Burkinabe living in other countries due to several languages spoken in and around Burkina Faso having Church translations. The nation in which Burkinabe have joined the Church in the greatest numbers is likely Cote d'Ivoire. Better economic conditions and employment attract millions from Burkina Faso, many of which maintain contact with their native country. Outreach among the Burkinabe in Cote d'Ivoire provide a great opportunity to help establish the Church in Burkina Faso as members return to their home country or share their faith with friends and family.

Once missionary work formally begins, mission administration faces the challenge of remoteness from mission headquarters outside Burkina Faso, which will likely be in Cote d'Ivoire. This may result in limited resources and attention devoted and slow progress in outreach. Rural areas will likely not have missionary work conducted for many years following formal Church establishment. Local members will be instrumental in reaching the large rural population.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Current member activity and retention is dependent on whether members continue to study and learn on their own about the Church without direct leadership assistance. Members who maintain their faith despite little to no contact with the Church will be instrumental in strengthening the Church when formally established.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Mossi are the most likely people to join the Church since they are the largest ethnic group and reside in and around Ouagadougou. Ethnic tensions do not appear to challenge Church growth.

Language Issues

Unlike most African nations unreached by the Church, Burkina Faso has three native languages with some Church materials translated. The Church is prepared to enter the country with language materials and be established in larger cities like Ouagadougou. Communication challenges may affect Church growth as converts join the Church from differing ethnic groups and met in the same congregation.

Leadership

Current local leadership does not exist or is too limited for a small branch to be organized.

Temple

Burkina Faso is assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple District.

Welfare

Burkina Faso lacks the humanitarian and development projects seen in many other African nations which do not have a formal Church presence, such as Niger, Somalia and Sudan. Addressing health care needs through well drilling projects to provide clean water in some areas of the country may prepare some to learn about the Church and establish a good reputation.

Comparative Growth

Burkina Faso numbers among the nearly dozen Muslim-majority nations in West Africa without an LDS presence. No landlocked West African nations have an LDS presence due to accessibility challenges, few Christians, low living standards, and few converts from these nations.

Pentecostals have experienced the most rapid and outreaching growth among Christian denominations. Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses experience modest growth despite operating in Burkina Faso for perhaps several decades. Christians have to face the challenge of the high amount of syncretism between indigenous religions and Christianity among Burkinabe.

Future Prospects

LDS mission outreach will not occur until a group is formed dependent on the Africa West Area Branch and the decision is made to begin missionary activity. Once the decision is made to establish the Church, only Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso seem likely candidates for the creation of congregations. Receptivity and retention may be lower than in other West African nations due to widely followed native beliefs, the large number of Muslims, poor health conditions, and moderate growth in most Christian denominations but an LDS establishment at present will provide the needed infrastructure for missionary activity if populations become more receptive to outreach-focused Christians one day.

[1] "Burkina Faso," International Religious Freedom Report 2007. http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90084.htm

[2] Miller, Larayne Sargent. "Ready, Set, Serve!," New Era, November 1993. http://lds.org/new-era/1993/11/ready-set-serve?lang=eng

[3] "Quilt Projects Assist Worldwide Service Efforts," News from the Church, 7 May 2008. http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=7cecc8fe9c88d010VgnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD&locale=0&sourceId=eedd9797