



Reaching the Nations International Church Growth Almanac

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



Philippines

Population: 107.67 millions (#13 out of countries)

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Geography

Area: 300,000 square km. Located in Southeast Asia between Taiwan and Indonesia, the Philippines are an archipelago of 7,100 islands which borders the Philippine, Celebes, and South China Seas. The archipelago is divided into three main island groups: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The largest islands include Luzon, Mindanao, Negros, Samar, Palawan, Panay, Mindoro, Leyte, Cebu, and Bohol. Most islands consist of mountains and valleys formed by past and ongoing volcanism with some coastal lowlands. Tropical climate modified by monsoons prevails in most areas. Rainforest or farmland occupy most areas. Typhoons, landslides, volcanoes, earthquakes, and tsunamis are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, soil erosion, pollution in large cities, and damage and degradation to coral reefs and mangrove swamps. The Philippines are administratively divided into 80 provinces and 120 chartered cities.

Population: 97,976,306 (July 2010)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.957% (2010)

Fertility Rate: 3.23 children born per woman (2010)

Life Expectancy: 68.17 male, 74.15 female (2010)

Peoples

Tagalog: 28.1%

Cebuano: 13.1%

Ilocano: 9%

Bisaya/Binisaya: 7.6%

Hiligaynon Ilonggo: 7.5%

Bikol: 6%

Waray: 3.4%

other: 25.3%

Tagalog reside in central Luzon and Mindoro. Cebuano populate eastern Negros, Cebu, western Leyte, and northwestern Mindanao. Ilocano live in northern Luzon. Bisaya/Binisaya reside in areas of Leyte and eastern Mindanao. Hiligaynon Illonggo are found in Negros and Panay. Bikol live in southern Luzon and Waray reside in Waray and eastern Leyte.

Languages: Filipino [based on Tagalog] (26%), Tagalog (22%), Cebuano (16%), Ilokano (7%), Hiligaynon (6%), Bicolano (5%), English (3%), Waray-Waray (3%), Pampango [Pampangan] (2%), Pangsinan (1%), Maguindanao (1%), other (8%). Filipino and English are the official languages. Over half the population speaks English; most speak Filipino, Tagalog, or Cebuano as a second language. 171 native languages are spoken in the Philippines. Languages with over one million speakers include Filipino (25 million), Tagalog (21.5 million), Cebuano (15.8 million), Ilocano (6.92 million), Hiligaynon (5.77 million), Bicolano dialects (4.6 million), English (3.4 million), Waray-Waray (2.57 million), Pampangan (1.9 million), Pangasinan (1.16 million), and Maguindanao (1 million). The Philippines boasts one of the highest literacy rates among developing nations.[\[1\]](#)

Literacy: 92.6% (2000)

History

Indonesians and Malays migrated to the Philippines in several waves over thousands of years prior to recorded history. Arab traders visited the southern islands and introduced Islam between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan claimed the Philippines for Spain. Christianity spread throughout the archipelago during the following several centuries. Filipino intellectuals aspired for independence in the late nineteenth century, which was interrupted by the United States annexing the islands during the Spanish-American War in 1898. Civil conflict and resentment of American rule continued into the 1900s, especially in Muslim-dominant areas of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. The United States facilitated the formation of self-governing institutions to prepare for Filipino independence. In 1935, the Philippines became a self-governing commonwealth. Japan invaded the islands in World War II resulting in the surrender of US forces in 1942. General Douglas MacArthur began to liberate the Philippines in late 1944 and retook the islands by late 1945. In 1946, the Philippines became independent from the United States but continued to receive American post-war reconstruction assistance. The government worked to diversify the economy and strengthen ties with neighboring Asian nations during the first two decades following independence. President Ferdinand E. Marcos ruled from 1965 to 1986, declared martial law, and limited democratic freedoms. Corruption worsened during this period and economic growth was poor. President Marcos was forced into exile in 1986. Instability persistent in several areas controlled by communist insurgencies and Muslim separatists improved in the mid-1990s by government signed agreements with militant groups in the highlands of northern Luzon and granting autonomous status in predominantly Muslim areas in Mindanao. In the 2000s, the Philippines continued to face serious challenges with corruption in all areas of society and sporadic fighting in Mindanao with Muslim insurgencies.[\[2\]](#)

Culture

Philippine culture generally consists of a blend of indigenous, Spanish, American, and Asian customs and practices. Some areas retain a greater degree of native cultural characteristics, such as the Solo Archipelago. Over three centuries of Spanish rule heavily influenced local languages, art, dance, names, and religion. American control of the islands familiarized most the population with English. Cuisine consists of pork, fruit, vegetables, rice, seafood, egg dishes (such as Balut), noodles, and many dishes and foods common in China. Cigarette consumption rates compare to the United States whereas alcohol consumption rates are lower than most nations. Prostitution is illegal but widespread. Homosexuality among males is common in many areas and is tolerated by most of the population.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$3,300 (2009) [7.11% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.751

Corruption Index: 2.4

Corruption, instability, and inefficient government have limited economic growth for decades, during which time nearby Asian nations have experienced rapid development and modernization. Poverty is a major issue as a third of the population lives below the poverty line. Underemployment contributes to poor standards of living. Remittances from the nearly five million Filipinos abroad constitute an important part of the economy. Services employ 51% of the work force and generate 55% of the

GDP whereas industry employs 15% of the work force and generates 30% of the GDP. Electronics, clothing, pharmaceuticals, wood products, petroleum refining, and fishing are major industries. Timber, petroleum, salt, and valuable minerals/metals are abundant natural resources. Agriculture employs a third of the labor force and accounts for 15% of the GDP. Primary agricultural products include sugarcane, coconuts, rice, corn, fruit, pork, eggs, beef, and fish. Primary trade partners include the United States, Japan, China, and Singapore.

The Philippines is perceived as one of the most corrupt nations in Asia. Corruption is perceived as widespread and preset in all areas of society. Past efforts to address corruption have been unsuccessful and inconsistent. Many face significant challenges finding work and attaining suitable living standards due to corrupt practices in business and local government. Poor economic freedom and living conditions drive many Filipinos abroad in search of employment. The expatriate Filipino community may number as many as 10 million and consists primarily of migrant workers.

Faiths

Christian: 93%

Muslim: 7%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 73,800,000

United Methodist 1,000,000 1,371

Iglesia ni Cristo 970,000 5,600

Latter-Day Saints 631,885 1,100

Seventh Day Adventists 620,896 4,293

Jehovah's Witnesses 166,130 3,087

Episcopal Church in the Philippines 125,000

Religion

Catholics constitute between 80 and 85 percent of the population. Muslims are the largest minority group and are estimate to account between five and nine percent of the population. Filipino Muslims, also known as Moros, primarily populate Mindanao, the Solo Archipelago. Primary non-Catholic Christian denominations include Seventh Day Adventists, the United Church of Christ, United Methodist, the Episcopal Church in the Philippines, Assemblies of God, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Southern Baptists, Philippine Independent Church, and the Iglesia ni Cristo. Some Christians incorporate indigenous beliefs into their religious practice. Many Christian Filipino workers in the Middle East convert to Islam for economic and social benefits and return to the Philippines as Muslims known as Balik Islam (Islam returnees).[\[3\]](#)

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

The constitution protects religious freedom which is generally upheld by the government. The government requests religious groups to register with the government but does not limit the religious freedom of non-registered religious groups. Registration grants tax-exempt status to religious groups. Religious instruction occurs in public schools but students must have their parents' written consent to attend classes. The dissemination of religious literature may occur in public schools. The Government has respected religious freedom for all religious groups, but there has been ongoing religious conflict in Mindanao between Christians and Muslims. There is some persecution of the Muslim minority in Mindanao by the Christian majority, which is also fueled by socio-economic differences. There are no proselytism bans in Muslim-populated areas, but the Muslim minority has resented Christian proselytizing efforts as they are viewed as an attack on their identity and homeland. Muslim separatist groups control some areas of Mindanao.[\[4\]](#)

Largest Cities

Urban: 65%

Quezon City, Manila, Kalookan, Cebu, Davao, Antipolo, Pasig, Taguig, Valenzuela, Dasmariñas, Cagayan de Oro, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Makati, Bacolod, Muntinlupa, General Santos, Bacoar, San Jose del Monte, Marikina, Iloilo, Pasay, Zamboanga, Malabon, Calamba, Mandaue, Angeles, Mandaluyong, Baguio, Lapu-Lapu, Cainta, San Pedro, San Fernando, Santa Rosa, Biñan, Taytay, Lipa, Cotabato, Imus, Navotas, Cabanatuan, Binangonan, San Pablo, Lucena, Olongapo, Malolos, General Trias, Tacloban, Cabuyao, Santa Maria, Tarlac, Mabalacat, Meycauayan, Montalban, Batangas, San Mateo, Legazpi, Talisay, **Marawi**, Tanza, Naga, Marilao, Dagupan,, Roxas, Tanauan, **Jolo**, Baliuag, General Mariano Alvarez, Hagonoy, San Juan del Monte, Urdaneta, Tagum, Dumaguete, Iligan, Ozamis, Cavite, Guagua, Santa Cruz, Minglanilla.

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

77 of the 79 cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. 28% of the national population resides in the 79 largest cities.

LDS History

Church President Joseph Fielding Smith dedicated the Philippines for missionary work in 1955.^[5] Latter-day Saint servicemen from the United States established an informal church presence toward the end of World War II. In 1961, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley visited and initiated full-time missionary efforts, which occurred under the Southern Far East Mission headquartered in Hong Kong. At the time, there were only around 100 members.^[6] Both seminary and institute were operating by 1972. Church President Spencer W. Kimball visited Philippine President Marcos in 1975 and met local members.^[7] In 1981, the Church announced the first Philippine temple in Manila which was dedicated in 1984. Missionary work began on Masbate in 1987^[8] and on Mindoro in 1988.^[9] Tagalog became the first Philippine language with Book of Mormon translation of select passages published in 1988, followed by select passages of the Book of Mormon translated into Ilokano and Cebuano in the early 1990s.^[10] In 1998, Micronesia became part of the Pacific Area and the Philippines became its own area.^[11] The Philippines became one the first nations in which the Perpetual Education Fund was implemented in the early 2000s.^[12]

Between 2002 and 2004, the Church assigned Elder Dallin H. Oaks to serve as president of the Philippines Area as a result of poor convert retention, low member activity, low temple attendance, and challenges training local leadership, marking the first time an apostle was assigned abroad in half a century.^[13] A missionary in the Philippines Bacolod Mission died from a car accident in 2008.^[14] The first temple in the southern Philippines was dedicated in 2010 in Cebu City.

Missions

The LDS Church organized the Philippine Mission in 1967, later renamed the Philippines Manila Mission in 1974. A second mission was headquartered in Cebu City (1974) [relocated to Bacolod in 1988], and a third in Davao (1977). The Church created additional missions in Quezon City (1979) [relocated to Baguio in 1981], Quezon City (1986), Cebu East (1987) [renamed Cebu in 1988], Cagayan de Oro (1988), Quezon City West (1988) [relocated to San Fernando in 1991 and later to Olongapo in 1994], Naga (1989), San Pablo (1990), Tacloban (1990), Ilagan (1990), Cabanatuan (1992) [relocated to Angeles], Laoag (2004), Butuan (2006), and Iloilo (2010). In late 2010, mission leaders reported that the Baguio Philippines Mission will relocate to Urdaneta in 2011. The number of missions increased from two in 1975 to four in 1980, twelve in 1990, thirteen in 2000, and sixteen in 2010.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 631,885 (2009)

Membership totaled 20,000 in 1975. Between July 1973 and June 1974, 2,000 converts joined the Church, most of which were entire families.^[15] Membership stood at 55,000 in 1982,^[16] 75,000 in 1984,^[17] and 127,000 in 1988.^[18] 22,000 converts were baptized in 1987 alone.^[19] There were 22,500 convert baptisms in 1990 and 250,000 members.^[20] Membership reached 300,000 in 1992.^[21] By year-end 2000, Philippine Church membership totaled 470,486.

Membership growth rates slowed dramatically in the 2000s due to efforts to reduce poor convert retention by increasing standards for convert baptisms, which resulted in fewer convert baptisms. There were 517,374 Latter-day Saints in 2002, 537,014 in 2004, 572,619 in 2006, and 614,585 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates ranged from a high of 5.4% in 2000 to a low of 1.7% in 2003. Most years experienced annual membership growth rates around three to four percent.

Membership growth occurred later in the southern Philippines as missionary work did not commence until the late 1960s. In

2006, Mindanao had 70,000 members^[22] and in 2010, there were over 200,000 Latter-day Saints in the Visayas and Mindanao.^[23] In 2010, the bulk of LDS membership resided on Luzon, numbering around 400,000. In 2009, one in 155 was nominally LDS.

Stake and District Growth

The Church created its first stake in Manila in 1973. In 1975, there was one stake and four districts in the Philippines Manila Mission and four districts in the Philippines Cebu City Mission.^[24] In the late 1970s, additional stakes were created in Makati and Quezon City. There were 15 stakes by 1984,^[25] most of which were organized in the Manila area. During the first half of the 1980s, the first stakes were created in the Visayas and Mindanao in Cebu City, Bacolod, and Davao. There were 32 stakes and 34 districts by April 1988.^[26] During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the number of districts increased rapidly as over 35 new districts were created during this period throughout the Philippines.

There were 42 stakes and 52 districts in May 1990^[27] and by late 1992, there were 48 stakes and 65 districts.^[28] Between 1996 and 2001, over a dozen new stakes were created from districts. At year-end 2000, the Church operated 77 stakes and 73 districts.

During the first half of the 2000s, districts increased by 14 primarily due to the Church discontinuing six stakes and creating multiple districts from congregations once part of discontinued stakes. Five years later there were 76 stakes and 87 districts. Since 2006, three new districts were created in Baler, Roxas Isabela, and Sogod, and three stakes were created from districts in Tacloban, Catarman, and Sagay. In late 2010, there were 79 stakes and 86 districts.

The Church has discontinued 10 stakes in Munoz (1992), Olongapo (1993), Ozamiz (1993), Kidapawan (1995), Bauang (2003), Camiling (2003), Mangaldan (2003), Agoo (2004), La Carlota (2004), and Burgos (2005). Primary reasons for the Church discontinuing these stakes include inadequate numbers of active priesthood holders, slowing growth, poor retention among new converts, and transportation challenges. The eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991 damaged 80% of members' homes in the Olongapo Philippines Stake, leading to relocations which likely contributed to the discontinuation of the stake.^[29]

Congregational Growth

Wards: 495 Branches: 605

In 1975, there were five wards, 52 branches, and 25 groups.^[30] By year-end 1989, there were 596 congregations (including 186 wards). Rapid congregational growth occurred in the first half of the 1990s as total congregations increased by 401, reaching 769 in 1991 and 995 in 1995. There were over 1,000 congregations in 1998.^[31]

By year-end 2000, the Church operated 1,157 congregations, (including 490 wards. The number of congregations increased to a high of 1,234 in 2002, including 525 wards. Over the next three years, 159 wards and branches were consolidated resulting in 1,075 congregations in 2006 (469 wards). The number of congregations has slowly increased since 2006, numbering 1,087 in 2008 and 1,100 in late 2010.

Activity and Retention

The average number of members per congregation increased substantially during the 2000s from 407 in 2000 to 577 in 2009, indicating poor retention of new converts and low member activity. Most of this increase occurred between 2003 and 2007 as a result of congregation consolidations. Elder Dallin H. Oaks reported in 2004 that convert retention, member reactivation, tithing payments, and church magazine subscriptions had increased during this tenure over the Philippines.^[32]

The Church initially experienced moderate to high member activity rates as in 1975, 18,000 attended a nationwide church conference when there were only 20,000 members at the time,^[33] although an unknown number of non-member acquaintances and investigators were present. There were 2,000 seminary and institute students in 1975.^[34] In the late 1980s, convert retention rates improved from 18 to 75 percent over a two and a half year period in the Philippines Baguio Mission.^[35] In 1988, there were over 1,000 enrolled in the Institute of Religion in Manila.^[36] That same year, institute and seminary enrollment were expected to reach 11,000^[37] and convert retention rates were over 50% in every mission.^[38]

In 1988, President Hinckley met more than 23,000 members throughout the country in member meetings, one of which in Bacolod had 7,000 in attendance.^[39] In 1990, 74% of converts baptized in the Philippines Naga Mission were retained according to church leaders.^[40] Convert retention rates appeared to decline throughout the remainder of the 1990s. In 2004, 41,000 members in 72 stakes attended a nationwide satellite broadcast.^[41]

In 2006, 70% of church members in the Camaligan Branch attended a handcart trek.^[42] During the first half of 2006, over 29,200 youth attended 55 regional youth conferences.^[43] In 2007, 400 attended the groundbreaking for the temple in Cebu

and 3,000 attended a special devotional with Elder Dallin H. Oaks.[\[44\]](#) 33,229 were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2008-2009 school year. In 2010, 45,103 attended the Cebu City Philippines Temple open house.[\[45\]](#) 10,000 attended a cultural celebration the night prior to the temple dedication, including 2,000 youth performers.[\[46\]](#) In 2005, Elder Oaks noted that around 100,000 members attend church at least once a month,[\[47\]](#) although average weekly church attendance is somewhat lower.

Some branches have over 100 active members whereas others have fewer than 50. Most wards appear to have between 70 and 120 active members. Nationwide active membership is estimated at no greater than 120,000, or 20% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, Bikolano, English, Waray-Waray, Pampango, Pangasinan, Chinese

All LDS scriptures are translated into Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilokano, Pangasinan, and Chinese. Translations of the Book of Mormon are available in Hiligaynon, Bikolano, Waray-Waray, and Pampango. The 2009 revised Gospel Principles is translated in Tagalog, Cebuano, and Chinese (simplified and traditional characters) whereas the original version is available in Bikolano, Hiligaynon, Ilokano, Pampango, Pangasinan, and Waray-Waray. The missionary instruction manual Preach My Gospel is translated in Cebuano, Tagalog, and Chinese (traditional characters, Mandarin Romanized, Cantonese Romanized). The Restoration DVD is available in Cebuano. The Liahona magazine has 12 Cebuano, Chinese, and Tagalog issues a year.

Meetinghouses

In 1992, a new building housing church administration offices was dedicated in Manila.[\[48\]](#)

Health and Safety

The LDS missionary department has not sent non-natives to Mindanao for over a decade due to political instability and threats against Americans from Muslim separatist groups. Traffic safety is a challenge due to poorly maintained roads and inconsistent observance of traffic laws. Some tropical and subtropical diseases are endemic. Health care infrastructure is limited outside of large urban centers.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 1988, the Philippines Manila Mission organized a health fair providing free medical check-ups and mini-lessons on health related issues in Binan.[\[49\]](#) In the 1980s, a group of LDS sister missionaries called the Mormon Christian Services taught English and prepared Filipino refugees for immigration to other countries in Moron, Batan.[\[50\]](#) In the early 1990s, Church leaders assisted local members become more self reliant through assigning family garden plots on meetinghouse land and teaching employment skills.[\[51\]](#) In 1992, the Philippines/Micronesia Area Presidency met with Philippines President Fidel Ramos and presented a check for \$41,000 to assist those displaced by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo.[\[52\]](#) In 2006, the Church provided humanitarian aid to mudslide victims in Guinsaugon.[\[53\]](#) Later that year, Latter-day Saints in 19 stakes and districts in the Metro Manila area donated clothing and toys for children to aid typhoon victims in southeast Luzon. Six members perished from the disaster and the Church also donated humanitarian aid.[\[54\]](#) Additional humanitarian activities in recent years include clean water projects, vision care, wheelchair donations, and emergency relief for victims of natural disasters.[\[55\]](#)

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints worship openly and full-time missionaries proselyte in most areas. Foreign missionaries have served regularly without government restrictions. Missionary activity encounters some restrictions in Mindanao among the Muslim population. Full-time missionaries avoid proselytizing Muslims out of respect for local customs and due to ongoing conflict with Christians in Mindanao.

Cultural Issues

Unemployment and underemployment have been major challenges which deter church growth and the self-sustainability of local congregations. In 1988, as many as half of Latter-day Saints were unemployed and 30% of employed members were

underemployed.^[56] In the early 1990s, Latter-day Saints were less wealthy on average compared to the general Filipino population.^[57] The Church has begun to address some of these issues through the establishment of the Perpetual Education Fund in order for members to gain needed education for future employment.

Most have a Christian background as a result of centuries of missionary activity headed by the Catholic Church. Many Filipino Catholics do not appear to be as traditionally entrenched in their faith as their counterparts in many other nations, which has contributed to high receptivity of the population to Protestant groups and Latter-day Saints. Strong missionary activity among non-Catholic Christians today creates competition for prospective converts among Catholics.

LDS apostle Elder Dallin H. Oaks noted in 2005 that modesty was a cultural value in the Philippines which stands in line with Latter-day Saint teachings. Elder Oaks further noted that separation of spouses for extended periods of time for employment purposes, a common practice in the Philippines, should be avoided.^[58]

National Outreach

39% of the national population resides in cities with LDS congregations and at least 20,000 inhabitants. Many wards, branches, and groups operate in smaller cities or in rural areas. The percentage of Filipinos residing in areas with a mission outreach center is estimated at 50%, but is difficult to ascertain as the Church does not report the number of groups operating and population estimates for many villages or small cities in less populated areas are only approximate. 47 of the 284 cities with over 20,000 inhabitants do not have mission outreach centers, amounting to two percent of the national population. Conditions are favorable to open many of these larger unreached cities to missionary work outside of Muslim majority areas in Mindanao.

68 of 80 provinces (85%) have a mission outreach center and account for 95% of the national population. 12 provinces have no known LDS mission outreach centers and include in order of descending population Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Zamboanga Sibugay, Shariff Kabunsuan, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Romblon, Mountain Province, Dinagat Islands, Apayao, Siquijor, and Batanes. Areas predominantly populated by Muslims account for the most populous unreached provinces whereas isolated, mountainous areas or small islands account for the majority of the least populated unreached provinces. Over the past several decades, separatist movements occurred in many of the currently unreached provinces. Among currently unreached provinces, prospects appear highest for missionary work commencing in Romblon due to its sizeable population over 260,000, relative stability, and mission outreach centers operating on nearby Mindoro island. The population on Romblon and other unreached provinces often speak indigenous languages without LDS language materials translated, which may delay the commencement mission outreach in these areas and create language barriers between full-time missionaries and the local population.

Several islands are within the boundaries of provinces with an official Church presence, but have no known LDS congregations. Most have fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. Islands with comparably small populations still provide meaningful mission outreach prospects. With 150,000 inhabitants, the small island of Biliran had a district organized in 2001 and in late 2010 had five branches. Prospects may be favorable for commencing missionary activity on islands like Biliran with smaller populations, such as Lubang, Polillo, Cuyo, Busuanga, Culion, and Siargao.

Poorly developed transportation infrastructure and the high travel expenses have facilitated the creation of additional congregations in closer proximity to small LDS population centers. Prospects remain high for accelerated national outreach expansion in villages with multiple Latter-day Saint families which travel inordinate distances to church on Sundays, but requires proper vision from local church leaders and mission presidents. Groups appear to be readily created in many of these locations, but few have grown into branches in recent years.

Humanitarian service and development work provide valuable opportunities to expand national outreach. Sister missionaries conducting humanitarian service in refugee camps have brought converts into the church through their efforts.^[59] The Church has the needed resources to instigate development projects greatly needed in many areas, but has not undertaken large-scale clean water projects or other work seen in other areas like Africa. Opportunities to solidify church membership and attract additional converts through employment workshops, medical care, and roadway improvement projects have yet to be carefully explored.

Filipino Latter-day Saints living abroad have in the past brought large numbers of converts into the Church through their efforts with friends and relatives. In 2007, a member visited family in Leyte and 40 convert baptisms followed from her efforts to share the gospel with her relatives.^[60] Reaching out to the Filipino community outside their home country can also experience benefits within the Philippines, but few missions conduct specific outreach to Filipinos in other countries, such as the United States and the Middle East.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Notwithstanding a few bright spots, low LDS convert retention and member activity rates have occurred for decades in the LDS Church in the Philippines, compromising rapid membership growth rates in the 1980s and 1990s. Over a decade after formal missionary activity commenced, church activity rates among Latter-day Saints appeared to be among the highest in Asia.^[61] However, the more than a dozen missions in the Philippines were subsequently inconsistent in implementing and enforcing the standards for church attendance and other indicators ostensibly necessary for converts to be baptized. Member activity and

convert retention rates plummeted in the 1980s as a result of converts being rushed into baptism by full-time missionaries without developing habitual church attendance, inadequate pre-baptismal and post-baptismal teaching, and deficient local congregational infrastructure to fellowship and integrate new members.

Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy served as President of the Philippines/Micronesia Area in 1990 and noted that Church leaders were anticipating church membership to double within five years from 250,000 to 500,000. At the time, the greatest challenge toward developing self-sustaining growth was baptizing those who could serve as church leaders and providing them training despite their recent conversions and lack of church experience.^[62] Membership did not reach 500,000 until early 2002. High transportation costs and distance from the nearest meetinghouse also contributed to low member activity rates as noted by Elder Kendrick.^[63]

Low congregational growth rates in the late 2000s following the nearly 200 congregation consolidations which occurred in the mid-2000s indicate that convert retention rates appear to be uncoupled from the number of converts baptized by full-time missionaries in the Philippines. The strongest congregational growth previously occurred during periods of the strongest membership growth

The large number of districts, very few of which have matured into stakes over the past decade despite reported national church membership increasing by 160,000, also evidences low member activity rates and insufficient numbers of Priesthood holders as most districts have enough branches and members on record to become stakes but do not meet the criteria of member activity and tithing faithfulness necessary for stakes to be organized.

Member activity rates as indicated by seminary and institute enrollment demonstrate that activity rates have likely declined slightly over the past two decades. Church membership nearly quadrupled from 164,214 to 631,885 between 1988 and 2009 whereas seminary/institute attendance tripled from 11,000 to 33,000. The number of congregations has increased by only a few congregations per year since the mid-2000s.

The Church has struggled to baptize and retain male converts capable of serving in leadership positions. A large number of male converts in the 1980s and 1990s became branch presidents and other local church leaders within the first year of their baptism due to a lack of Priesthood holders. Leadership in many areas has had little experience and training from mission or area leaders as a result of island isolation. Continued challenges in developing local leadership sufficient in numbers and activity delays many of the 86 districts from becoming stakes. Elder Dallin H. Oaks noted in 2004 that developing local leadership capable of meeting the administrative and ecclesiastical needs of new converts and less active members was still a major challenge in the Philippines to achieve self-sustaining, long-term growth.^[64]

Conditions became so problematic that LDS Apostle Dallin H. Oaks was assigned as the Area President from 2002 to 2004. Prior to the end of his tenure, Elder Oaks stressed the need for missionaries to provide more thorough teaching to investigators and reiterated the need for local leaders to assign new converts callings and provide fellowshiping to improve convert retention and member activity rates.^[65] Standards were raised for prospective converts prior to baptism. Missions that implemented the standards of attending church regularly and developing other gospel habits before baptism experienced substantial improvements in convert retention, although the standards were not consistently implemented or enforced in all missions. Elder Oaks reported in 2005 that tithing membership increased significantly during the previous few years, but urged more members to pay their tithes faithfully.^[66]

Reactivation and convert retention efforts have been mixed as mission and local church leaders have been unable to sustain rapid membership growth and local leadership development. Mission presidents and local church leaders have struggled for decades to improve convert retention and member activity rates and have shared ideas on methods to address these issues. In 1988, the Philippines Cebu Mission adopted a reactivation and retention program implemented in the Philippines Baguio Mission which stressed greater involvement of local leaders in the fellowshiping and teaching of new converts and tracked their progress over six months.^[67] This and similar programs have the potential to improve activity and retention rates as long as they are consistently implemented and local members are actively involved.

The Philippines continue to lack consistent convert retention and member reactivation programs among its 16 missions. Past efforts to increase convert retention rates have seen sporadic success, but have not been sustained for more than a few years time. The benefit of these periods of contemplative and thoughtful leadership emphasizing convert retention has often been offset or undone by a recurrent emphasis on baptismal numbers as the primary focus of missionary work. Encouraging trends toward greater convert retention have repeatedly been wiped out when standards set by previous mission presidents were reversed by new leaders. The need for consistent, long-term standards for baptism to be maintained and enforced over time is just as important as the training of local leaders and member fellowshiping to the long-term prospects for improved convert retention and member activity in the Philippines.

Receptivity to the LDS Church remains high in many areas. In 2010, 1,500 Cebu City Philippines Temple open house attendees requested missionary visits.^[68] Large numbers of converts continue to be baptized in many missions, although convert retention continues to be a major challenge.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

High demographic diversity occurs with few ethnically-based conflicts, which promotes the integration of various ethnic groups into the same congregations. Some ethnic groups have few or no known Latter-day Saints, due to low receptivity or the lack of a Church presence in areas populated by these groups. Muslim peoples in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago are among the least reached and pose integration challenges. Wards and branches in Mindanao consist primarily of Filipinos which formerly belonged to other Christian denominations. The lack of language materials also reduces mission outreach among some ethnic groups.

Language Issues

Government campaigns to standardize English and Filipino/Tagalog have facilitated growth in many areas where indigenous languages without LDS materials are spoken. Latter-day Saint mission outreach materials are now available in the ten most commonly spoken local languages. Rapid membership growth necessitated the translation of LDS scriptures into various Filipino languages, which in turn has reinforced rapid membership growth and expansion of national outreach.

There are 26 languages with over 100,000 speakers without LDS proselytism materials, which, listed in descending order by number of speakers, include Maguindanao, Tausug, Maranao, Capiznon, Bontoc, Ibanag, Inakeanon, Kinaray-a, Masbatenyo, Surigaonon, Chavacano, Sorsogon dialects, Blaan dialects, Sama dialects, Kankanaey, Bantoanon, Romblomanon, Manobo dialects, Subanen, Davawenyo, Itawit, Cuyonon, Ibaloi, Kalagan dialects, Yakan, Binukid. Prospects for translations of Latter-day Saint materials in these languages will depend on the number and fluency of church members speaking these respective languages and whether scripture or proselytism material translations in these languages would meet a significant need. 600,000 speak Min Nan Chinese, but in late 2010 there were no designated Chinese-speaking LDS congregations.

Missionary Service

Local members constitute the majority of full-time missionaries assigned to the Philippines, but as few as 10% of Filipino LDS youth serve full-time missions. A missionary training center opened in Manila in 1983.^[69] 82% of the 1,100 full-time missionaries in the country were native Filipinos.^[70] In 1988, 80% of the full-time missionary force in the Philippines Baguio Mission were native Filipinos.^[71] 60 to 70 percent of the more than 2,000 full-time missionaries in 1992 were local members.^[72] Emphasis on seminary and institute attendance in many areas can help increase the number of members who serve missions by providing missionary preparation classes, offering opportunities for social interaction with LDS youth, and strengthening gospel study habits and testimonies.

Leadership

All local congregations appear to have been led by native Filipino members since 1980, but the LDS Church has struggled for decades to develop adequate local leadership to administer the needs of the large number of converts and less active members. In 1988, training leadership was a major focus for church growth and also a major challenge according to Elder Cannon, President of the Philippines/Micronesia Area at the time.^[73] In the 2000s, the LDS Church has begun to better address leadership training issues through period priesthood leadership training broadcasts.^[74]

In 1990, five of the 12 mission presidents were Filipino.^[75] In 1992, five of the thirteen mission presidents, all eight regional representatives, and all stake and district presidents were Filipino.^[76] Elder Lim from Manila was called to the Second Quorum of the Seventy in 1992.^[77] Following the discontinuation of regional representatives in the mid-1990s, three Filipino Area Authorities were called: Ambrosio C. Collado, Ruben G. Gapiz, and Remus G. Villarete.^[78] In 1996, Elder Lim became the first Filipino member to serve as president of the Manila Philippines Temple.^[79]

In 2000, Edison M. Cabrito (Baguio City), Reynaldo L. Cuyong (Cagayan de Oro City), Fred C. Dimaya (Laguna), and Carlos C. Revillo Sr. (General Santos City) were called as Area Authority Seventies.^[80] In 2003, Julio G. Gaviola (Manila) was called as an Area Authority Seventy.^[81] In 2004, Michael J. Teh (Angono) was called as an Area Authority Seventy.^[82] In 2005, Federico F. Costales (Baguio City), Fabian L. Sinamban (General Santos City), and Miguel R. Valdez (Santa Rosa) were called as Area Seventies.^[83] In 2007, Elder Teh was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy^[84] and Jovencio A. Guanzon (Manila) and Benson E. Misalucha (Cagayan de Oro City) were called as Area Seventies.^[85]

Temple

LDS members attended temples in Japan and Taiwan before the completion of the temple in Manila in 1984. Until the dedication of the Cebu City Philippines Temple, members across the entire country attended the Manila Philippines Temple. The Manila Philippines Temple has been well used by active membership. In late 2010, the temple had endowment sessions scheduled hourly Tuesdays through Fridays and every half hour Saturday mornings. During the first months of operation in 2010, the Cebu City Philippines Temple experienced moderate use and scheduled six endowment sessions on weekdays and five on Saturdays.

Prior to the announcement of the Cebu City Philippines Temple in April 2005, President Hinckley noted that the Church had not built a temple in the southern Philippines due to concerns of inadequate numbers of potential temple-going Latter-day Saints as

evidenced by low numbers of temple recommend holders. President Hinckley challenged members to hold a temple recommend so that a temple could be built in the region one day.^[86] A year following the challenge, the Church announced a temple for Cebu, which was dedicated in 2010. In 2010, the Church announced a third temple, the Urdaneta Philippines Temple, in Pangasinan Province, Luzon. The lack of additional LDS temples reflects low member activity rates and few temple recommend holders in many areas. Prospects for the construction of additional temples appears high over the medium-term and will depend on the increase of temple recommend holders. Cities in which the Church may construct additional temples include Bacolod, Cagayan de Oro, and Naga.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church in the Philippines has the fourth largest church membership, the most districts, the fifth most stakes, the fourth most congregations, and the fourth most missions in the world, although the Philippines rank twelfth in the world by total population. The dedication of the Cebu City Philippines Temple reduced the number of stakes and districts originally assigned to the Manila Philippines Temple district, the district still had the most districts and the fourteenth most stakes of any temple district in the world. The Cebu City Philippines Temple district has the second most districts. In the Philippines, Latter-day Saints constitute the highest percentage of the population in Asia at one LDS member per 155 Filipinos, yet active Latter-day Saints may be as few as one in 800. The Philippines appear to have the largest full-time missionary forces outside of the United States and Latin America.

Other missionary-oriented Christian churches experience strong church growth but have achieved higher member activity and convert retention rates as a result of greater emphasis on pre-baptismal preparation and stronger member involvement in proselytism. Seventh Day Adventists have nearly the same number of members as the LDS Church, but far more active members and four times as many congregations. Iglesia di Cristo has several hundred thousand more adherents, but five times as many congregations.

Future Prospects

The Philippines offer abundant opportunities for establishing additional mission outreach centers, strengthening districts to prepare to become stakes, and increasing the number of local full-time missionaries to reduce reliance on North Americans. Low member activity and convert retention rates and inconsistent mission policies which have vacillated between a focus on quick baptisms with little attention to quality and subsequent clean-up efforts emphasizing higher standards which are often not maintained, frustrate greater real church growth. There remains a great need for widespread implementation and enforcement of the principles taught in the missionary handbook *Preach My Gospel*. The creation of additional stakes continues to be delayed as a result of the lack of adequate numbers of active Melchizedek Priesthood holders, but positive developments regarding increasing numbers of full-tithe payers and active membership in some areas led to the announcement of additional temples in Cebu City and Urdaneta since 2006. Dozens of districts appear close to becoming stakes. Latter-day Saints have yet to establish self-sustaining institutions which help buttress active membership and discourage emigration, such as a church university, church-operated schools or medical facilities, and greater development work in poverty-stricken areas.

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