

REACHING THE NATIONS

REACHING THE NATIONS

INTERNATIONAL LDS
CHURCH GROWTH ALMANAC

VOLUME II

DAVID G. STEWART, JR.
MATTHEW MARTINICH

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FOREWORD

Armand L. Mauss

STARTING in 1984, prominent sociologist Rodney Stark pointed to the remarkable growth of the LDS (Mormon) Church around the world, whose membership had been doubling about every twenty years. At that rate of growth, Stark declared, we could be seeing the rise of the first new world faith since Islam.¹ Stark was simply projecting into the future the annual growth figures from the Church's own almanac, which, as he has recognized, is always hazardous. Such straight-line projections make no allowance for intervening contextual factors that can slow growth rates, nor do they take account of failures to retain new converts.² Significant losses from the low LDS retention rate have been apparent since at least 1996.³ More recently, scholars have been able to compare official Church membership figures with personal religious identifications reported in the censuses of various nations. Such comparisons consistently show self-reported LDS identification as half or less of the official Church figures in North America and only about a fourth of self-reported figures elsewhere in the world.⁴

The new century brought a new and powerful voice to the discussions on LDS Church growth. Dr. David G. Stewart, Jr., a successful pediatric orthopedic surgeon, proved to have a passion well outside his professional practice. As a former missionary for the Church in Russia and a periodic traveler to various LDS mission fields, Stewart recognized the weaknesses not only in the official figures on church growth, but also in the actual proselytizing and retention efforts of the Church operationally. For the past decade at least, he has carried on a personal crusade to remedy those weaknesses through generating solid knowledge of both numerical and methodological kinds. This effort began with the establishment of the Cumorah Foundation, a private non-profit organization whose objective is to promote the growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by analyzing the factors that facilitate and constrain that growth. Such analysis inevitably focuses largely on the effectiveness of the missionary program of the Church, requiring a thorough and realistic evaluation of the church's proselytizing methods and prospects.

Yet the Cumorah Foundation is not connected to the Church but is the product primarily of the creativity, dedication, and resources of its founder, Dr. Stewart. The principal project of this Foundation has been the website cumorah.com, which has accumulated an expanding encyclopedia of data about Mormons throughout the world and an ambitious mapping project. As the work of the Foundation has increased, Stewart has been joined by a few colleagues and assistants, most notably coauthor Matt Martinich.⁵ The Cumorah website also provides access to many other resources of potential interest to both scholars and lay members interested in the Mormon experience around the world. Not least among these resources is Stewart's own 450-page book

¹Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research* 26:18-27 (1984). The full and correct name of the LDS or Mormon Church is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

²See Stark's explanation and updating in his more recent *The Rise of Mormonism* (Columbia University Press, 2005), where he shows that official Church figures still continue to track his projections closely.

³See the several relevant articles in Armand L. Mauss (guest editor), "Mormons and Mormonism in the Twenty-first Century: Prospects and Issues," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29:1 (Spring 1996).

⁴See Rick Phillips, "Rethinking the International Expansion of Mormonism," *Nova Religio* 10(1):52-68 (2006); and Ronald Lawson and Ryan T. Cragun, "Comparing the Geographic Distributions and Growth of Mormons, Adventists, and Witnesses," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51(2):220-40 (2012).

⁵ Martinich also maintains an informative website and blogsite of his own at <http://ldschurchgrowth.blogspot.com>.

surveying the problems and predicaments of LDS worldwide expansion since the middle of the twentieth century.⁶

The new almanac, offered here, is truly unique among publications on the Mormons. It is unique, first of all, in its *auspices*—namely, the Cumorah Foundation, not the Church or any commercial publisher. In some ways, the almanac can be seen as a culmination of the work started earlier by the website, though the overlap between the two is only partial. Thus a second way in which this publication is unique is in its *scope*. No assessment of Mormon missionizing effectiveness would be meaningful without relevant information on such large-scale contextual variables as geography, culture, economy, and politics, as well as on specific methodological variables. The latter would include the proselytizing policies, methods, techniques, and outcomes in the Church generally and of its local mission presidents in particular. Such comprehensive information can be found nowhere else but in the cumorah.com website and now more fully in this published almanac, which covers eleven regions and more than two hundred countries.

A third truly unique aspect of this almanac is its *candor*, which can be seen especially in how it deals with such topics as church growth, convert retention, member activity, and future prospects. In most parts of the world, the realities surrounding these topics are not very promising for LDS Church growth and expansion, despite optimistic expectations sometimes found in official Church sermons and statements. LDS convert retention and member activity are especially weak in comparison with what is achieved by such other proselytizing denominations such as Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. This almanac makes all too clear why the Latter-day Saints are less successful than these others in achieving realistic and permanent church growth in most of the world.

Finally, this almanac is remarkable for the variety of *sources* on which it is based. These include not only the most reliable and independent secondary sources in the scholarly literature but also important primary sources that run the gamut from official Church publications to archival documents, including internal reports from missionaries and mission presidents. In future research and publications on growth patterns in the LDS Church around the world, this almanac will be the most reliable and indispensable source available. Conscientious reporters, commentators, academics, or spokespersons, whether Mormon or otherwise, will not be able to ignore it if their work is to be credible.

Armand L. Mauss
Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Religious Studies
Washington State University

⁶ Stewart's Law of the Harvest: Practical Principles of Effective Missionary Work (privately published, 2007) is also available in electronic form on the cumorah.com website. A condensed, somewhat updated and very valuable version of Stewart's work can be found as "Growth, Retention, and Internationalization," Chapter 12 (328–361) in Revisiting Thomas F. O'Dea's The Mormons: Contemporary Perspectives, edited by Cardell K. Jacobson, John P. Hoffman, and Tim B. Heaton (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008).

INTRODUCTION

ORIGINALLY founded in 1830 in the United States in upstate New York, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) has church members and an organized presence in approximately 180 countries and territories today. The Church experienced an acceleration in membership and congregational growth during the latter half of the twentieth century as congregations were organized in previously unreached nations and territories, and missionaries were introduced to these locations. As a result of these efforts, church membership increased from one million members and 2,574 wards and branches in 1947 to ten million members and 24,697 wards and branches in 1997. Notwithstanding this progress, the Church has faced serious shortcomings in most countries retaining new converts, maintaining acceptable member activity rates, achieving commensurate unit and membership growth rates, and consistently opening new areas to proselytism. In 2011, we estimate that approximately 30% of worldwide Latter-day Saints regularly attend church meetings and that 22% of the world's population resides in a location with an LDS congregation that they can legally attend.

This almanac-styled book provides the most comprehensive statistics, historical data, and analysis on LDS Church growth available at present. Individual profiles were completed for 211 countries and territories, and regional profiles were completed for ten world regions. We have organized country and territory profiles by region in this book and have also produced regional profiles providing a synopsis of issues relating to church growth for ten of the eleven regions. Topics examined in regional and country profiles include geography, people groups, population, languages, history, culture, economy, religion, religious freedom, largest cities, LDS history, membership growth, congregational growth, member activity and convert retention, finding, language materials, meetinghouses, health and safety, and humanitarian and development work. Each profile includes an analytical section that examines opportunities and challenges for LDS growth in regards to religious freedom, cultural issues, national outreach, member activity and convert retention, ethnic issues and integration, language issues, missionary service, leadership, temple, comparative growth, and future prospects. Information on indices cited in profiles such as the Human Development Index and Corruption Index can be found in the bibliography section.

Aside from our desire to create a resource that catalogs facts on LDS Church growth and presents demographic, historic, economic, cultural, and religious background by country and region, we have analyzed the interplay of these factors on LDS growth and identified challenges, opportunities, and prospects for future growth. The analytical nature of this book is such as to help educate the general public about the distribution of LDS membership and issues that have favored and hampered growth in the past, as well as to suggest useful methods from accumulated experience to achieve the greatest real growth possible in locations around the world. We hope that this work will encourage lay members and leaders alike to learn from prior successes and failures around the world and adopt and implement growth strategies that are scripturally based, consistent with church teachings, and promote local self-sustainability in growth and leadership.

This work is divided into two volumes, with the first volume covering regions that have traditionally had a strong LDS presence or longstanding missionary outreach, including the Americas, Oceania, and Europe. The second volume covers the continents of Asia and Africa, where sustained missionary efforts have begun more recently and LDS populations are typically smaller. Although there are some exceptions to these generalizations – for example, the Philippines is home to the largest population of LDS members outside of the Americas, whereas some nations in the Caribbean and Eastern Europe have relatively few members and small

missionary programs – we have felt that this arbitrary geographic division is suitable for the need to divide the work into two volumes of similar length.

We gathered data from approximately two dozen primary sources listed in the bibliography and have sought to find the most accurate and current information available, including hundreds of member, returned missionary, and mission president reports, and our own research. Most of the information in this book is current as of mid 2013. We are solely responsible for any views expressed; these are not those of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

David G. Stewart, Jr.,

Matthew Martinich

CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan,
Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

REGIONAL PROFILE

Geography

AREA: 4,189,494 square km. A region of stark contrasts in geography and climate, Central Asia and the Caucasus primarily consist of deserts, grasslands, rugged mountains, forest, lakes, and inland sea coastline. Continental climate prevails in most areas and is characterized by little precipitation and extreme temperature variations. The greatest precipitation occurs in mountainous areas. Notable deserts include the Kyzyl Kum and Karakum. Northern areas of Central Asia are primary semi-arid grasslands called steppes. Major mountain ranges include the Caucasus, Tien Shan, Altay, Pamir, and Alay. The Aral Sea, the Caspian Sea, Lake Balkhash, Lake Issyk-Kul, and Lake Sevan are the largest bodies of water; the Naryn, Syr Darya, Amu Darya, and Ertis are major rivers. Earthquakes, drought, and flooding are natural hazards. Environmental issues include excessive pesticide use, increasing soil salinity, pollution, fresh water scarcity, and the shrinking size of the Aral Sea caused by the redirection of rivers for irrigation.

Peoples

Uzbek: 33%
Kazakh: 12%
Azeri: 10%
Russian: 10%
Tajik: 10%
Georgian: 5%
Kyrgyz: 5%
Turkmen: 5%
Armenian: 4%
Karakalpak: 1%
Tatar: 1%
Ukrainian: 1%
German: 0.5%
Other: 2.5%

Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Azeris, Kyrgyzs, Turkmen, Karakalpaks, and Tatars are Turkic ethnic groups. Indo-European ethnic groups include Russians, Tajiks, Armenians, Ukrainians, and Germans. Georgians are Caucasian. Other ethnicities include Uighur, Dagestani, Dungun, Kurd, Talysh, Greek, Belarusian, Korean, and Poles.

Population: 77,134,392 (July 2010)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.78% (2010)

Fertility Rate: 2.05 children born per woman (2010)

Life Expectancy: 66.45 male, 74.09 female (2010)

Languages: Uzbek (32%), Kazakh (13%), Azerbaijani (11%), Russian (10%), Tajik (9%), Georgian (5%), Kyrgyz (5%), Turkmen (5%), Armenian (5%), Ukrainian (1%), Tatar (1%), German (1%), other (2%). Official languages in the region include Armenian, Azerbaijani, Abkhaz, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Russian, Tajik,

Turkmen, and Uzbek. Up to 75% of Armenians in Armenia speak Russian as a second language.⁷ Russian is spoken as a first or second language by 95% of the population in Kazakhstan. Russian is commonly used in business and government in most countries of the region. Languages with over one million speakers in the region include Uzbek (24.4 million), Kazakh (10.8 million), Azerbaijani (8.6 million), Russian (7.9 million), Tajik (7.2 million), Georgian (3.9 million), Kyrgyz (3.6 million), Turkmen (3.6 million), Armenian (3.6 million), Ukrainian (1.3 million), Tatar (1.2 million), and German (1.2 million). Languages spoken by over 100,000 speakers but less than one million include Talysh (800,000), Karakalpak (510,000), Mingrelian (500,000), Uighur (380,000), Lezgi (370,000), Korean (304,000), Kurdish dialects (219,000), Belarusian (183,000), Polish (120,000), Osetin (105,000), and Abkhaz (101,000).

Literacy: 98.8%–100%

History

The Caucasus has a long and complex history. Genesis states that Noah's Ark came to rest on Mount Ararat (Genesis 8:4), which is identified with the mountain of the same name in modern Turkey near the Armenian border. Greeks and Romans invaded areas of the Caucasus before the birth of Christ. Nomadic tribes primarily of Turkic origin populated Central Asia since ancient times. Persian tribes began populating and influencing Tajikistan and Azerbaijan as early as the birth of Christ, and Azerbaijan was an ancient Zoroastrian center. Islam began to spread into Central Asia during the seventh and eighth centuries. The Samanid Empire was based in present-day Uzbekistan and heavily influenced much of Central Asia from the ninth to the thirteenth century. The Mongols conquered Central Asia and the Caucasus during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, laying waste to once-powerful Georgia. Russian Tsar Alexander I defeated Napoleon's armies and conquered much of the Caucasus in the early nineteenth century. Russia and Persia divided the Azeri homeland in half in 1828. The Russian Empire conquered Central Asia in the nineteenth century, placed the region under colonial administration, and encouraged Russian settlers to colonize the territory and cultivate cotton. During the late 1910s, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia each enjoyed a brief independence from Russia until becoming integrated into the Soviet Union. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Central Asian republics became Soviet Socialist Republics. Russian immigrants began arriving and settling Central Asia especially in the 1950s and 1960s when the USSR sought to rapidly increase agricultural output through the "Virgin Lands" program. The program increased agricultural productivity somewhat but with drastic environmental consequences that continue today. All nations in the region declared independence in 1991 upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Since independence, nations in the region have experienced a cultural, linguistic, and religious revival that been dominated by the predominant ethnic group of each nation; consequently many Russians have emigrated. Relations with Russia remain positive for most nations in the region except Georgia. Kazakhstan has enjoyed greater stability and economic prosperity than other former Soviet Republics in Central Asia since independence. Political conditions remain the most unstable in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan due to ethnic conflicts, corruption, and recent civil war in Tajikistan. Revolutions occurred in Georgia in 2003–2004 (the Rose Revolution) and in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 (the Tulip Revolution) and again in 2010. Armenia and Georgia have attempted to strengthen their relations with the West in recent years. Most nations have highly centralized governments and retain many of the societal controls, regulations, and infrastructure inherited from the Soviets.

Culture

Zoroastrianism and Christianity initially influenced areas of the Caucasus and Central Asia prior to the introduction of Islam. In Central Asia, Turkic ethnic groups originally lived nomadic lifestyles on the steppes relying on livestock for survival. Islam traditionally shaped local culture and customs, but decades of former Soviet

⁷"Armenia," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 9 March 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenia>

rule have heavily influenced attitudes toward religion. Russian and Soviet rule heavily influenced contemporary government, art, and theater.

A revival of faith and indigenous cultural identity has begun to gather momentum in recent years. Surrounded by Muslim nations or ethnic groups, Armenia and Georgia are among the world's oldest Christian nations, and their cultures have endured for thousands of years. The influence of the Armenian Apostolic and the Georgian Orthodox Churches remains strong in these nations today. Commonly eaten foods in the Caucasus include soup, bread dishes, and vegetables. Cuisine in Central Asia includes plov (pilaf), meat, green tea, nuts, fruit, meat, and soup.⁸ Azerbaijan continues to retain some aspects of the Zoroastrian faith, notwithstanding the predominantly Muslim population as evident by the celebration of Novruz. Several nations in the region are internationally renowned for carpet weaving, especially Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Cigarette consumption rates vary by nation from among the highest in the world to rates comparable to the world average. Polygamy is illegal in all nations in the region.

Economy

Average GDP per capita: \$6,100 (2009) [13% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.661

Corruption Index: 2.4

Most nations in Central Asia have underdeveloped economies and national infrastructure, which combined with a landlocked location and high rates of corruption seriously restrict opportunities for trade and foreign investment. Russia remains a major economic power in the region due to close proximity, usage of the Russian language in business, and a shared Soviet legacy. The population overall is among the most well educated among less-industrialized nations, offering opportunities for future growth with skilled labor. Tajikistan has the lowest HDI, whereas Kazakhstan has the highest.

Governments have struggled to diversify and privatize the economy, with the greatest success occurring in Armenia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan. Remittances from workers abroad often constitute a sizeable portion of the economy. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan rely heavily on oil, natural gas, and mineral exploitation for revenue leading to sporadic economic growth that is dependent on world prices. Several new oil pipelines were completed since 2000, which has made Central Asian and Caucasian oil more available internationally. Oil, natural gas, valuable minerals, precious metals, farmland, and hydropower are abundant natural resources. Agriculture and services employ approximately one-third to one-half of the labor force in all nations in the region. Fruit, vegetables, livestock, cotton, grains, tea, and tobacco are primary agricultural products. The percentage of the GDP generated by industry is generally twice the percentage of the work force employed in industry, generally due to high prices for exploited natural resources. Major industries include oil, natural gas, mining, machinery, food processing, metallurgy, steel, iron ore, diamond processing, cement, chemicals, textiles, and aircraft manufacturing. Primary trade partners include Russia, China, Ukraine, and Turkey.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and as a serious issue that has destabilized the economy on all levels and has instigated political turmoil. A few individuals, their families, and close associates often control national and local economies. There has been little improvement in addressing corruption in the region, and Georgia appears to have experienced the greatest progress. Governments often control civil liberties and maintain economic regulations that dissuade foreign investment. In Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, corruption is most apparent in the police force and the judicial system.^{9, 10} Most governments lack transparency regarding legisla-

⁸ "Culture of Tajikistan," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 1 November 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Tajikistan

⁹ "Azerbaijan," 2010 Index of Economic Freedom, retrieved 8 October 2010. <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/azerbaijan>

¹⁰ "Kazakhstan country profile," Business Anti-Corruption Portal, retrieved 24 April 2010. <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/en/country-profiles/europe-central-asia/kazakhstan/show-all/>

tion and expenditures. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are regarded as the most corrupt nations in the region and are transshipment points for illicit Afghan drugs. In Uzbekistan, regional human trafficking of girls and women for commercial sexual exploitation and of men for forced labor in construction, cotton, and tobacco industries is a major problem. Child labor is a serious concern, especially in cotton harvesting.¹¹

Faiths

Muslim: 72%
 Christian: 24%
 Other: 4%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Russian Orthodox ~10,600,000
 Georgian Orthodox ~4,000,000
 Armenian Apostolic ~3,000,00
 Catholic 403,450
 Jehovah's Witnesses 55,000+ 262+
 Greek Orthodox 15,000
 Seventh Day Adventists 8,335 117
 Latter-day Saints 3,600 18
 Latter-day Saint and Jehovah's Witness figures are approximations.

Religion

Virtually all ethnic groups in the Caucasus and Central Asia have strong ethno-religious ties with Orthodox/Apostolic Christianity or Islam. With the exception of Armenia and Georgia, nations in the region are traditionally Muslim. Nearly 90% of Armenians adhere to the Armenian Apostolic Church, whereas over 80% of the Georgian population is Georgian Orthodox. Muslims comprise 75% or more of the population in Azerbaijan (93%), Tajikistan (90%), Turkmenistan (89%), Uzbekistan (88%), and Kyrgyzstan (75%). The Kazakhstani population is approximately half Muslim and half Christian (primarily ethnic Russians). Few Muslims are active in their faith, but a revival of Islam has occurred since independence in many of these countries through the funding and support of Islamic missionary groups from the Middle East. Governments in several nations have attempted to limit their influence out of fear of the spread of fundamentalist Islamic ideals. Success of Muslim proselytism efforts has been strongest among youth. Slavic ethnic groups are Christian, whereas Turkic ethnic groups are generally Muslim. Christians are generally concentrated in the largest cities of predominantly Muslim countries and demonstrate low levels of religious participation. Protestant Christians are concentrated among Germans and Koreans. Nontraditional Christian groups are often marginalized and ostracized by society and the government. Yezidi—a monotheistic religion that incorporates some aspects of nature worship—is followed by many Kurds in the region.¹²

Religious Freedom

The constitutions of all countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia protect religious freedom, but most governments restrict this right. Government restrictions on religious freedom are generally motivated out of

¹¹ "Background Note: Uzbekistan," Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, 19 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2924.htm>

¹² "Armenia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127297.htm>

desire to maintain social order and control and fear of the spread of militant Islam rather than for theological reasons. Most countries require religious groups to have a minimum number of members to register, ranging from as few as five to as many as two hundred. In Armenia and Georgia, the Armenian Apostolic and Georgian Orthodox Churches maintain special relations with the government and influence government policies and laws,^{13, 14} which have eroded some freedoms of proselytism and assembly for religious minority groups. The status of religious freedom in Azerbaijan has steadily declined since independence as the government has prohibited proselytism, demanded reregistration for all religious groups, selectively granted registration to religious groups, required the registration of all individual congregations, and conducted raids on religious groups deemed a threat to society.¹⁵ In Central Asia, religious freedom is most severely limited in Turkmenistan as registered and unregistered religious groups alike are subject to restrictions on proselytism, owning property, the visits of foreign religious leaders, and the dissemination of religious material.¹⁶ Restrictions of religious freedom have also been severe in Uzbekistan as proselytism, importation, or distribution of religious literature, private religious instruction, the wearing of religious clothing in public places by nonclergy, and teaching religious subjects in public schools are illegal. Many unregistered religious groups have been subject to harassment, raids, and imprisonment, especially those that allegedly proselyte.¹⁷ In Kyrgyzstan, legislation protecting religious freedom has steadily eroded since independence, including prohibitions on the switching of one's religious affiliation and barring of youth and children from involvement in religious organizations. In recent years, the government of Tajikistan has gained greater power in regularizing religious activities and legitimizes religious bans, surveillance, and restrictions to reduce the spread and influence of Islamic extremism.¹⁸ Several religious groups have been banned in Tajikistan, including Latter-day Saints.¹⁹ Religious freedom appears in Kazakhstan as the only major requirement for religious groups is that they must register each individual congregation, although a required number of members for registration limits the opening of congregations in new cities. Generally Jehovah's Witnesses and evangelical Christians are the most heavily persecuted religious groups in the region. There have been few reported societal abuses of religious freedom in the region, although the media in most nations portrays nontraditional religious groups in a negative light.

Largest Cities

Urban: low (26%—Tajikistan); high (64%—Armenia)

Tashkent, Baku, Almaty, Yerevan, Tbilisi, Ashgabat, Bishkek, Dushanbe, Astana, Shymkent.

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

Four of the ten cities with over half a million inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Sixteen percent (16%) of the regional population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

The first LDS missionary outreach in the Caucasus and Central Asia or among ethnic groups indigenous to the region was to Armenians in Turkey in the late nineteenth century. These efforts were sporadic due to

¹³ "Armenia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127297.htm>

¹⁴ "Background Note: Georgia," US Department of State, 21 June 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5253.htm>

¹⁵ "Azerbaijan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127299.htm>

¹⁶ "Turkmenistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2002, retrieved 9 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/13987.htm>

¹⁷ "Uzbekistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127374.htm>

¹⁸ "Tajikistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127372.htm>

¹⁹ "Tajik Court Suspends Baptist Church's Activities," Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 10 February 2010. http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajik_Court_Suspends_Baptist_Churchs_Activities/1954581.html

conflict in the region, and by 1950 most of the Armenian converts had lost contact with the Church or immigrated to the United States.²⁰ In 1989, the Church announced that it would begin long-term assistance in Armenia, rebuilding and distributing humanitarian aid following the severe 1988 earthquake.²¹ In June 1991, Elder Dallin H. Oaks dedicated Armenia for missionary work.²² The Armenia Yerevan Mission was created in 1999 from the Russia Rostov Mission. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland dedicated Georgia for missionary work in March 1999. Georgia was assigned to the Armenia Yerevan Mission shortly thereafter.²³ In 2005, the Church registered with the Georgian government, allowing the first full-time proselytizing missionaries to be assigned in March 2006. In 2008, missionaries assigned to Georgia were withdrawn for nearly three months due to conflict with Russia. As of early 2013, Azerbaijan remained unassigned to an LDS mission and was assigned to the Europe East Area. In the early 2010s, the Church organized its first branch in Azerbaijan for expatriate members in Baku.

The LDS Church was first introduced to Central Asia through American expatriate LDS families who first arrived in the late 1990s and lived in Almaty. The first convert baptism occurred in November 1999,²⁴ and Kazakhstan was included in the Europe East Area in 2000. The Church received official recognition from the Kazakhstani government in December 2000,²⁵ and the first branch was organized in 2001. In 2002, half a dozen members serving in the United States military stationed in Kyrgyzstan held meetings in a tent used for religious services on a U.S. military base.²⁶ Elder Russell M. Nelson visited Central Asia in 2003, met with government leaders, and dedicated Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan for missionary work.²⁷ Full-time missionaries were first assigned to Kazakhstan in the early 2000s. In the late 2000s, Kazakhstan was reassigned from the Russia Moscow Mission to the Russia Moscow West Mission. Elder Paul Pieper represented the Church at a world religions conference held in Kazakhstan in the late 2000s. The Church attempted to register with the Kyrgyzstani government in 2004 but remained unregistered as of early 2011.²⁸ In 2007, Europe East Area President Elder Paul B. Pieper reported to the Inter Press Service News Agency that the LDS Church had a congregation in Dushanbe.²⁹ In early 2010, Tajikistani government authorities reported that they banned the LDS Church as the request for re-registration was apparently not granted.³⁰ In 2010, the Church reported that a small group for American military personnel met in Turkmenistan.³¹ As of early 2011, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan had not been assigned to a mission and were under the administration of the Europe East Area. In 2013, the Church organized its first stake in the Caucasus in Yerevan, Armenia.

²⁰ "Armenia," *Deseret News 2010 Church News Almanac*, p. 423-424.

²¹ "Church will help Armenian homeless," *LDS Church News*, 19 August 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18894/Church-will-help-Armenian-homeless.html>

²² "Two republics in USSR are dedicated," *LDS Church News*, 28 September 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20974/Two-republics-in-USSR-are-dedicated.html>

²³ "Gospel taking root in Republic of Georgia," *LDS Church News*, 25 November 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49785/Gospel-taking-root-in-Republic-of-Georgia.html>

²⁴ "Kazakhstan," *Country Profiles*, retrieved 23 April 2010. <http://lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/kazakhstan>

²⁵ "Kazakhstan recognizes Church," *LDS Church News*, 17 February 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39339/Kazakhstan-recognizes-Church.html>

²⁶ Swensen, Jason. "Fellowship in a far-off land," *LDS Church News*, 10 August 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42253/Fellowship-in-a-far-off-land.html>

²⁷ "Elder Nelson Dedicates Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic," *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 124-25.

²⁸ http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/uploads/images/qmR4Hig4Aunwg4bnNBClyA/Kyrgyzstan_IRFR09.pdf. Accessed 17 May 2010.

²⁹ "Mormon Church Spreads Out in Russia," *IPS.com*, 18 July 2007. <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=38583>

³⁰ "Tajik Court Suspends Baptist Church's Activities," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 10 February 2010. http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajik_Court_Suspends_Baptist_Churchs_Activities/1954581.html

³¹ "Church Organization in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Isolated Areas," *Military Relations*, retrieved 8 November 2010. <http://lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,9138-1,00.html>

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 3,600 (2012)

There were no known Latter-day Saints in the region in 1990. In 2000, all countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia had fewer than one hundred members with the exception of Armenia (792). In 2009, there were approximately 3,300 members in the region, including 2,833 members in Armenia (86%), 184 members in Georgia (6%), and 141 members in Kazakhstan (4%). Countries with less than one hundred members in 2009 included Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan (4%). In 2009, one in 23,400 was LDS in the Caucasus and Central Asia. At the time, one in 1,047 was LDS in Armenia, one in 25,000 was LDS in Georgia, and one in 109,600 was LDS in Kazakhstan.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 13 Groups: 5+ (2012)

In early 2011, the LDS Church reported independent branches operating in Armenia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan. Only home groups for expatriate members were operating in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The first branch in the Caucasus was organized in Yerevan, Armenia in 1994. In 1995, the first district was organized in Yerevan. Additional cities opened for missionary work in Armenia during the 2000s included Ararat, Ashtarak, Charentsavan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, and Alaverdi. The first home group in Georgia was organized in Tbilisi in 2001, and the group became a branch the following year. A second branch in Tbilisi was organized in 2007. By early 2011, there were two districts, fifteen branches, and several home groups in Armenia and two mission branches in Georgia. There have been no reports of an LDS group ever operating in Azerbaijan.

A home group began functioning in Almaty, Kazakhstan in the late 1990s. The group became the first LDS branch in Central Asia in 2001. During the 2000s a home group operated periodically in Astana. In early 2011, four full-time missionaries opened Astana for missionary work but faced delays obtaining government accreditation. Home groups operating in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are for expatriates and American military servicemen. A home group functioned in Dushanbe, Tajikistan for a period in the 2000s but did not appear to operate in early 2011. In 2013, the Yerevan Armenia Stake was organized and included five wards and four branches.

Activity and Retention

LDS convert baptisms appear to have only occurred in Armenia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan. Nationwide church meetings in Armenia have been traditionally well attended. Eight hundred of the 2,000 Latter-day Saints in Armenia attended a meeting with Elder M. Russell Ballard in 2006,³² and in 2008, 700 members assembled to witness the creation of a second member district. The number of active members varies by branch in Armenia from as few as twenty to as many as seventy-five. There were approximately seventy active members in Kazakhstan in early 2011. During the 2009–2010 school year, 231 were enrolled in seminary and institute in Armenia (8% of total church membership), and nineteen were enrolled in Georgia (10%). Kazakhstan appears to have the highest percentage of active church members (50%), whereas Armenia appears to have the lowest (20%). Active LDS membership for Central Asia and the Caucasus is estimated at 700, or 20% of total church membership.

Finding

Missionaries serving in Kazakhstan in 2010 reported that many investigators were found through teaching English and piano lessons. Missionary street contacting has also been helpful in finding new investigators in

³² Stahle, Shaun D. "Preaching gospel that gospel is hard," LDS Church News, 16 September 2006. <http://www.ldschurch-news.com/articles/49438/Preaching-gospel-that-gospel-is-hard.html>

Kazakhstan, whereas in Armenia finding new investigators generally occurs on a member referral and self-referral basis as street contacting is prohibited.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Armenian (East), Russian, German, Arabic, Korean, Armenian (West), Farsi.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Armenian (East), Russian, German, Arabic, and Korean. The *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, *Book of Mormon selections*, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are translated in the western dialect of Armenian, which is spoken outside of Armenia. Georgian LDS materials include *Gospel Fundamentals*, several church declarations and proclamations, Book of Mormon stories, the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, the Articles of Faith, and limited numbers of family history and teaching resources. Kazakh LDS materials are limited to the sacrament prayers, a basic unit guidebook, the Articles of Faith, and hymns and children's songs. The Church has translated all LDS scriptures and many church materials into Russian, German, Ukrainian, Arabic, and Korean. Book of Mormon selections are available in Farsi. Although spoken Farsi (Persian) and Tajik are mutually intelligible, Farsi is written in the Persian script, which most Tajiks cannot read, whereas Tajik is written in Cyrillic. *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Farsi. The *Liahona* magazine has twelve issues a year in Russian, Ukrainian, German, and Korean, and four in Armenian (East).

Meetinghouses

In 2002, the first meetinghouse LDS meetinghouse in the region was dedicated in Yerevan.³³ In early 2011, there were twelve LDS meetinghouses in Armenia, most of which were renovated buildings or rented spaces. The first church meetings in Georgia were held in the humanitarian missionaries' home. Shortly thereafter, the Church began renting facilities for Sunday meetings. In 2010, each of the Tbilisi branches met in separate rented facilities. The Almaty Branch meets in a large rented facility. Any church meetings in other countries occur on U.S. military bases or in members' homes.

Health and Safety

Threats of violence or physical intimidation directed toward nontraditional Christian groups and political instability are greatest in Azerbaijan, outside of Georgia proper (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. In Azerbaijan, nontraditional Christian groups report frequent government surveillance, arrests, and police raids. In Turkmenistan, many religious groups that do not comply with the law are heavily persecuted by the government and have many of their members imprisoned in harsh conditions. In Uzbekistan, many religious groups that do not comply with the law are heavily persecuted and have many members imprisoned in harsh conditions. Health care infrastructure is moderate in most large cities in the Caucasus and Central Asia but underdeveloped in small towns and rural areas.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Limited LDS humanitarian work has occurred in every country in the Caucasus and Central Asia with the exception of Turkmenistan. There have been thirty-three projects in Armenia, twenty-three in Kazakhstan, nineteen in Georgia, seven in Kyrgyzstan, six in Tajikistan, three in Azerbaijan, and two in Uzbekistan.³⁴ In Armenia, the Church donated 10,000 pounds of powdered milk in 1989.³⁵ In addition to large amounts of

³³ "Armenia," Deseret News 2010 Church News Almanac, p. 423-424.

³⁴ "Locations—Asia," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 8 March 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-3,00.html>

³⁵ "Church sends dry milk to Armenia," LDS Church News, 2 December 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18595/>

food donated, the Huntsman family constructed a cement plant in the late 1980s and early 1990s that provided concrete to rebuild homes for the 500,000 homeless following the earthquake. Humanitarian missionaries participated in a private aid relief effort that feeds over 200,000 needy Armenians.³⁶ In 2008, the Church conducted clean water projects³⁷ and donated wheelchairs.³⁸ In Georgia, humanitarian projects have primarily consisted of donating powdered milk and orphanage modules, appliances for the needy, emergency relief for victims of conflict, computer equipment for the deaf, and hospital equipment.³⁹ Most projects carried out in Kazakhstan have consisted of donating supplies to orphanages, emergency relief to conflict victims, neonatal resuscitation training, and medical equipment and furnishings to hospitals and other agencies. In Kyrgyzstan, the Church has donated clothing for the needy, 250 new wheelchairs to the disabled in Osh and Batken, and furnishings for special needs schools for children.⁴⁰ Humanitarian efforts in Tajikistan provided clothing and food to the needy.⁴¹ LDS humanitarian projects in Azerbaijan provided clothing or hygiene kits to the needy.⁴² In 2001, the LDS Church shipped winter clothing to Afghan refugees in Uzbekistan.⁴³

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church enjoys the privileges of a registered religious group and assigns proselytizing missionaries to Armenia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan. However, recent proposed amendments to religious freedom laws in Armenia and Georgia may restrict future LDS missionary efforts. Past humanitarian projects have fostered cooperation with the government and the many who benefited from church assistance. Current laws and government policies severely restrict any prospective LDS activity in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan as LDS meetings in these nations must occur in private. Foreign missionaries are specifically barred from proselytism in Azerbaijan and face restrictions in several Central Asian countries, which create an insurmountable obstacle for the LDS Church as these countries have no indigenous Latter-day Saint communities to staff local missionary needs. LDS military personnel and expatriate members in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan do not appear to face any major restrictions on their private worship.

The Church appears unable to meet the minimal requirement for the number of members needed for registration in all unreached nations in the region at present. Some nations like Azerbaijan prohibit foreigners from establishing religious communities, which continues to delay any prospective LDS presence.

Kyrgyzstan experienced a window of substantial religious freedom in the 1990s during which thousands of Protestant missionaries were sent and built up strong indigenous churches, but LDS missionaries were never

Church-sends-dry-milk-to-Armenia.html

³⁶ "Assistance proffered in Armenia," LDS Church News, 1 April 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26295/Assistance-proffered-in-Armenia.html>

³⁷ "Clean water," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 11 May 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6212-1-3216-1,00.html>

³⁸ "Wheelchairs," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 11 May 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6213-1-3215-1,00.html>

³⁹ "Projects—Georgia," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 8 March 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-46,00.html>

⁴⁰ "Projects—Kyrgyzstan," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 8 March 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-46,00.html>

⁴¹ "Projects—Tajikistan," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 1 November 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-53,00.html>

⁴² "Projects—Azerbaijan," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 8 October 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-49,00.html>

⁴³ "Winter clothing shipped to Afghan refugees," LDS Church News, 10 November 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40853/Winter-clothing-shipped-to-Afghan-refugees.html>

assigned to the nation as it was not deemed a priority for outreach at the time. The Church was denied registration when it finally applied in the early 2000s, likely because of lacking the ten native members required at the time. A law implemented in 2009 increased the requirements for religious groups to register from 10 to 200 adult citizen members, presenting a currently insurmountable barrier to registration, as there are fewer than ten known native members in Kyrgyzstan today. The Kyrgyz expatriate community is small in cities like Moscow and Almaty with LDS mission outreach, leaving the LDS Church with no present opportunity to enter Kyrgyzstan after missing a substantial opening during the 1990s.

In Turkmenistan, the number of members needed to register a religious group declined to five in 2003 and increases the likelihood of an official Church establishment one day. A window may therefore exist for the establishment of the LDS Church in Turkmenistan that does not appear to exist in some other Central Asian nations, but few if any Turkmen had joined the Church as of early 2011, and there are very few Turkmen abroad in nations with LDS missions.

In Uzbekistan, the LDS Church would face significant challenges importing religious literature, conducting member-missionary work, and would likely be unable to place any foreign full-time missionaries even if their assignment was for humanitarian purposes. Uzbek LDS converts baptized abroad returning to their homeland appear to be the only realistic means of establishing a church presence among the native population in the face of religious freedom restrictions.

Cultural Issues

Strong ethno-religious ties and low levels of church and mosque attendance in the region are the primary cultural barriers to LDS mission outreach. Any prospective outreach would need to address the potential needs of a population that has little familiarity of religious principles such as prayer, scripture reading, and church service. The marginalization of nontraditional religious groups challenges the prospects of many considering membership in the LDS Church, as investigators would likely face social reprisal and potential government harassment. Religious practice and identity have undergone a revival in recent years as ethnic identity, traditional faiths, and nationalism have been rediscovered. Strong societal and family ties of Christians to the Armenian Apostolic, Georgian Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches and to Islam create challenges for missionaries to find investigators and for potential converts to be baptized and remain active. Negative societal attitudes regarding nontraditional Christian groups and Latter-day Saints are common in the Caucasus and are often reinforced by the media. High rates of smoking and green tea consumption in most nations in the region are contrary to LDS teachings.

National Outreach

Armenia is the most reached nation by the LDS Church in the Caucasus and Central Asia as LDS congregations provide potential outreach to 48% of the national population. LDS congregations in Tbilisi, Georgia provide potential opportunity to 25% of the national population, whereas LDS congregations in Almaty and Astana, Kazakhstan can potentially reach 12% of the national population. Actual outreach is a tiny fraction of these figures due to most missionary work relying on word of mouth of local members; community-based outreach has been minimal. Yerevan is the only large city in the region with potential for widespread mission outreach as six of the twelve neighborhoods have an LDS congregation, but this potential is largely unrealized due to restrictions on open proselytism. Tbilisi, Astana, and Almaty receive extremely limited outreach, and many must travel long distances to attend church meetings. No LDS mission outreach occurs in breakaway de facto states such as Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and South Ossetia. With the exception of a very few with close personal associations with Latter-day Saints, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan remain totally unreached by the Church.

Limited missionary manpower, reservations, and low priority assigned by mission planners to commencing missionary work in predominantly Muslim countries, no LDS missionary approaches tailored toward Orthodox Christians and Muslims, government restrictions, a lack of LDS materials in local languages, few or no indigenous Latter-day Saints, ethnic strife, political instability, war, and distance from established mission outreach centers have contributed to a lack of LDS mission outreach in the Caucasus and Central Asia today. Georgia has the strongest potential for increased national outreach due to the close proximity of the Armenia Yerevan Mission, few restrictions on religious freedom, a sizeable population, and the mission's small stewardship limited to just Armenia and Georgia. With greater religious freedom than most nations in the region, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan could have been opened for missionary work in the 1990s if mission planners had desired, as the Church frequently opened new missions in nations with large populations and very few members during this period. Small numbers of missionaries have been assigned to Georgia and Kazakhstan in the 2000s.

The Church's presence today in Armenia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan is largely fortuitous, having entered each country only after congregations were built up through member-missionary efforts of expatriate members rather than through any initiative of the institutional missionary program, notwithstanding wide religious freedoms in these nations throughout the 1990s. Nations that did not benefit from the efforts of LDS expatriates in the 1990s, especially Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan, remain without LDS congregations today. This limitation is serious, as it has hindered the opportunity to build up a membership base in nations with religious liberties that could be instrumental in outreach to neighboring, currently unreached nations due to ties of language, kinship, and geographic proximity. The Church has been unable to enter Kyrgyzstan due to recently increased requirements for registration that now exclude groups without a large base of native members, notwithstanding continued large-scale activities of many Protestant churches, and Christians in Azerbaijan have faced increasing restriction and harassment. Other groups, especially Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists, have built strong native memberships in nations of Central Asia and the Caucasus that today, with the exception of Armenia, have only a tiny LDS presence.

Few are aware of the LDS Church in countries with an LDS presence in the region as the Church performs only small-scale outreach in the largest cities. Cottage meetings in Georgia, Armenia, and Kazakhstan may be a useful means of reaching isolated members or investigators and encouraging them to invite friends and family to meet with missionaries to discuss Church doctrines and principles. Over time, this may lead to the opening of additional cities to missionary work and expansion of national outreach. LDS missionary work in Kazakhstan will be crucial toward expanding a church presence in unreached Central Asian nations. The majority of the Central Asian population resides in rural areas, presenting additional challenges in extending extremely limited missionary resources to sparsely populated remote areas.

There were no LDS Internet websites for any countries in Central Asia or the Caucasus in early 2011. Launching websites for Armenia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan in native languages with the assistance of local members may facilitate the expansion of missionary outreach and provide correct information about the Church for those with access to the Internet. Only Armenia has some online LDS materials available.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Low levels of participation in traditional religious faiths throughout the region and traditions of liturgy rather than active member participation in church service create major challenges for Latter-day Saint missionary efforts to instill long-term church attendance and other aspects of member activity into investigators and new converts. Armenia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan have each demonstrated low member activity and poor convert retention rates in recent years. Quick-baptism tactics in Armenia and the emigration of active members are primary reasons for low member activity in Armenia, although in the late 2000s one-year convert retention rates at least temporarily improved to over 50% as a result of consistently applying higher standards for converts

to be baptized. Burnout of active members who sometimes hold two or three callings and missionary overreliance on the few active members to shoulder the bulk of the responsibility for finding investigators have also generated challenges for fellowshiping and keeping members active. Full-time missionaries were first introduced to the Almaty Branch in Kazakhstan in the mid-2000s, but church attendance increased only slightly despite membership nearly doubling between 2003 and 2010, as most converts were not retained during this period. In Georgia, the 2008 conflict with Russia resulted in significant member attrition due to heavy member reliance on foreign missionaries for church administrative tasks and testimony-building support. The lack of Georgian-language church materials may have further contributed to low convert retention and member activity rates due to limited understanding of second language materials in Russian and English and possible resistance to such materials. Similar language challenges may impact the retention of converts in other currently unreached nations once an LDS presence is established. Seminary and institute programs may be effective programs for facilitating testimony building, providing fellowshiping, and addressing language barriers. As of early 2011, there had been no LDS convert baptisms, no organized congregations, and no LDS missionaries assigned to Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic integration issues vary by country in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Armenia have exhibited little ethnic strife since independence, whereas Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Georgia have demonstrated considerable ethnic conflict. Ethnic groups remain highly segregated in the Caucasus, reducing ethnic integration challenges at church as many ethnic groups are geographically separated. Many ethnic groups in the region have never received LDS mission outreach and have no known Latter-day Saints, such as the Abkhaz, Ossetians, Karakalpaks, and Dagestanis.

Language Issues

With few or no LDS materials translated into most native languages, Central Asia and the Caucasus are among the least reached by Latter-day Saint scripture and materials, as only Armenian and Russian have a sizeable quantity of LDS materials and LDS scriptures translated. The Church has relied heavily on Russian LDS language materials for outreach in Central Asia and the Caucasus, as Russian was commonly spoken during the Soviet era. LDS mission outreach in currently unreached nations in the region will likely initially occur in Russian due to a current lack of LDS materials in the most commonly spoken native languages. The utility of Russian materials in many of these countries today is diminishing because many of the younger generation are not fluent in Russian, which is the case in Georgia. Russian is much more functional in Kazakhstan for LDS mission outreach as it is spoken by 95% of the population as a first or second language, but increasing Kazakh nationalism and the aging of the generation educated during the Soviet era will diminish Russian language usage in the coming years.

Nearly three-quarters of the population in Central Asia and the Caucasus are native speakers of languages spoken by over one million people with few or no LDS materials and no available LDS scriptures (Uzbek, Kazakh, Azerbaijani, Tajik, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen). Lack of priority assigned to translating church materials and LDS scriptures into even widely-spoken languages with few Latter-day Saints is the primary reason for the lack of LDS materials in the most commonly spoken languages of Central Asia and the Caucasus today. The lack of any LDS language materials in Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, and Azerbaijani, and very few materials in Kazakh and Uzbek pose additional barriers of outreach to speakers of these languages. Waiting to translate LDS materials until a sizeable number of speakers join the Church has resulted in missed opportunities to reach ethnic populations at a time in which they are most receptive, such as during the 1990s. Languages spoken by over one million speakers are in the greatest need for translations of LDS materials and scriptures, including Uzbek, Kazakh, Azerbaijani, Tajik, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen. The increasing number of LDS materials translated

into Georgian during 2010 and the early 2010s and the translation of the Articles of Faith into Uzbek in 2010 are encouraging developments that may indicate increasing awareness and effort by LDS mission planners.

Missionary Service

LDS missionary work only occurs in Armenia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan with small numbers of missionaries. Missionaries dedicate a large amount of their time to reactivating less active members in Armenia and Georgia. Armenians regularly serve full-time missions, but not in sufficient numbers for Armenia to become self-reliant in its full-time missionary force. Few, if any, Georgian members have served as full-time missionaries. A lack of youth converts and male members limits the availability of local missionaries. Prospects to increase the size of the local full-time missionary force will depend on increases in retained converts who are mission-aged. Kazakh members have willingly served missions despite their small numbers. In mid-2008, four missionaries were serving from the Almaty Branch. The first LDS member to serve a mission from Uzbekistan was an ethnic Korean who began his mission in 2010. No members from Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan are known to have served a full-time mission, and full-time missionaries had never been assigned to serve in any of these countries as of early 2011. Limited receptivity, few LDS materials in only a couple native languages, and the lack of native Latter-day Saints in these nations will likely further delay the introduction of missionaries for many years to come.

Leadership

Limited native leadership remains a major obstacle to greater church growth. In Armenia, emigration of returned missionaries has reduced potential leadership and set back long-term growth. Available leadership appears to be well-trained and dedicated. Arayik V. Minasyan from Artashat became the first Area Authority Seventy from Armenia in 2010.⁴⁴ In Georgia, prior to the calling of the first local branch president in 2006, senior missionaries served as branch presidents.⁴⁵ In 2010, both Tbilisi branches had foreign missionaries serving as branch presidents due to few active priesthood holders. In Kazakhstan, the first Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations occurred in early 2001.⁴⁶ A traveling Patriarch visited Kazakhstan in 2008 and gave eighteen Patriarchal blessings. Local members have led the Almaty Branch through most of its history although the congregation was initially led by expatriate members. Any church leadership in other Central Asian and Caucasian nations has been limited to expatriate Latter-day Saints as any native church members remain unable to staff leadership positions due to their limited numbers and lack of training. As most current membership is nonnative in nations without an official LDS presence, foreign members will likely constitute the local leadership for the foreseeable future.

Temple

Central Asia and the Caucasus are assigned to the Kyiv Ukraine Temple district. Organized temple trips appear to only occur from Armenia twice a year, whereas temple trips in other nations occur on an individual basis. Prior to the completion of the temple in Kyiv, members attended the Bern Switzerland and Helsinki Finland temples. The costs of travel, lodging, and document preparation were largely paid by the Church for Armenian members in the late 2000s, as few local members would be able to afford such trips on their own. Long distances to temple and inadequate funds for travel result in many being unable to attend the temple. There are no realistic prospects for the construction of a closer temple in the foreseeable future.

⁴⁴ "New Area Seventies," LDS Church News, 24 April 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59238/New-Area-Seventies.html>

⁴⁵ "Gospel taking root in Republic of Georgia," LDS Church News, 25 November 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49785/Gospel-taking-root-in-Republic-of-Georgia.html>

⁴⁶ "Kazakhstan recognizes Church," LDS Church News, 17 February 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39339/Kazakhstan-recognizes-Church.html>

Comparative Growth

The Caucasus and Central Asia are among the least reached regions in the world by Latter-day Saint missionary efforts as most nations do not have an official church presence. Except for Armenia, the church presence in nations with congregations is limited to only one city (Georgia) or two cities (Kazakhstan). Uzbekistan is among the most populous nations in the world without an official LDS presence. With over 75% of LDS members in the region, Armenia ranked eighty-first in LDS membership worldwide in 2009. Since the establishment of the Church in the 1990s, membership growth rates have compared to Eastern Europe although Eastern Europe has approximately ten times as many Latter-day Saints today. Member activity rates are low and comparable to most regions.

Many Christian denominations report slow growth and consistent problems with government regulations and restrictions on religious freedom. Most Christian groups experienced the greatest growth in the 1990s when conditions were most favorable for missionary activity due to greater religious freedom and societal interest in foreign religious groups. The revival of Islam among Turkic peoples in the region appears to have reduced receptivity in recent years. Evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced the greatest growth since independence from the Soviet Union. Seventh Day Adventist membership and congregations have generally remained stagnant or slightly declined over the past decade due to emigration and few convert baptisms. Most missionary-oriented Christians report indigenous communities of believers in all nations in the region. Some nontraditional Christian groups reported small numbers of followers in several areas prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Many of these groups struggle to import, print, and distribute religious literature due to bans and tight government regulation of printed religious materials.

Future Prospects

Having missed the window of opportunity in the 1990s when laws and government policies regarding nontraditional Christian groups were most liberal, there are no realistic medium-term prospects of establishing an LDS Church presence in unreached nations in the region due to proselytism bans, government restrictions on religious freedom in most nations, a lack of native Latter-day Saints, no government recognition, distance from the nearest mission, and a lack of church materials in native languages. Barriers to greater growth in countries with an LDS presence include low member activity rates, the ongoing emigration of active members, challenges developing larger numbers of self-sufficient priesthood leadership, limited national outreach, poor public image, small numbers of full-time missionaries assigned, few local members serving full-time missions, inconsistent pre-baptismal preparation, low member activity rates, and few LDS materials translated into Georgian. Prospects for future growth of the LDS Church in Central Asia appear highest in Kazakhstan, as evidenced by member involvement in missionary work, native members staffing leadership for the Almaty Branch, and government registration. Significant obstacles for growth remain, including the lack of a culturally-tailored missionary approach to Orthodox Christians and nominal Muslims, low national outreach by the Church partially due to challenges gaining government approval to open additional cities, and no nearby LDS mission. Increasing the LDS humanitarian presence in unreached nations, where possible, may provide a means of establishing a positive relationship with government officials and pave the way for a future LDS presence. The translation of LDS scriptures and some church materials into Uzbek, Kazakh, Tajik, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen may be warranted to extend functional LDS mission outreach in coming years.

INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY PROFILES

ARMENIA

Geography

AREA: 29,743 square km. Located north of the Middle East in the Caucasus, Armenia borders Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkey, and Georgia. Two Azerbaijani enclaves are in extreme northeast Armenia, and one Armenian exclave is in Azerbaijan near Lake Sevan. Highlands cover most areas, with large rivers and fertile valleys for agriculture. Hot summers and cold winters characterize the climate. Lake Sevan occupies 5% of Armenia and is the largest lake in the Caucasus Mountains. Severe earthquakes and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include contaminated soil from chemicals, deforestation, and water pollution.

Peoples

Armenian: 97.9%
Yezidi (Kurd): 1.3%
Russian: 0.5%
Other: 0.3%

Almost the entire population is Armenian. Most ethnic Armenians live outside Armenia in neighboring Middle Eastern nations, Eastern Europe, the United States, and other Western nations. Yezidi (Kurds), Russians, and Azerbaijanis are minority ethnic groups. There may be as many as 100,000 Azerbaijani refugees displaced from the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Low birth rates and emigration result in a negative population growth rate.

Population: 2,970,495 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 0.107% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 1.38 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 69.85 male, 77.56 female (2012)

Languages: Armenian (97.7%), Yezidi (1%), Russian (0.9%), other (0.4%). Azerbaijani is also spoken. Eastern Armenian is spoken in Armenian and border regions of neighboring nations. Western Armenian is spoken outside of Armenia. Up to 75% of Armenians speak Russian as a second language.⁴⁷ Armenian is the official language and only language with over one million speakers (2.9 million).

Literacy: 99.4% (2001)

History

Armenia has a long and complex history. The Bible states that Noah's Ark came to rest on Mount Ararat, which today sits in Turkey near the Armenian border. Several ancient kingdoms occupied the region until the formation of the Kingdom of Armenia in 600 BC. Greeks and Romans invaded the region in the following

⁴⁷ "Armenia," en.wikipedia.org, retrieved 1 January 2010. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenia>

centuries. Armenia became one of the first areas Christianity spread to and by the fourth century became the first country to officially adopt Christianity. For the following centuries, various kingdoms conquered Armenia, although there were some periods of autonomy. The Byzantine, Sassanid, Mongol, and Ottoman Empires at one point controlled Armenia. Integration of Eastern Armenia into the Russian Empire occurred in the early 1800s, whereas Western Armenia was annexed into Turkey. The Armenian Genocide in the 1910s resulted in between 500,000 and 1.5 million deaths of Armenians in Eastern Turkey. These events remain disputed by Turkey, and the topic remains sensitive for both Armenians and Turks.

Brief independence occurred in the late 1910s until the arrival of Soviet troops. During Soviet rule Armenians continued to voice their discontent with foreign occupation and their desire for greater autonomy. In 1988, a massive earthquake severely crippled much of the country, killing approximately 50,000. Conflict over predominantly Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh, which was the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan, intensified in the late 1980s, and war with Azerbaijan began. Armenia won independence in 1991 and remained at war with Azerbaijan until 1994. Turkey protested Armenian endeavors to regain Nagorno-Karabakh by closing the border in 1994. The borders of Turkey and Armenia remain closed today as a result of ongoing tensions, limiting trade and economic development, and restricting access of Armenians to ancestral territory in what is now eastern Turkey.

As a result of progressive encroachments on the Armenian homeland, persecution of Armenians under the Ottoman Empire, and economic pressures, Armenia has a large diaspora estimated at approximately eight million—more than twice the number of Armenians remaining in Armenia.

Armenia is one of the only nations in the world to simultaneously maintain good relations with Russia, Iran, and the United States, although its relations with other neighbors are not as favorable. Surrounded by hostile neighbors along the long Turkish and Azerbaijani borders, Armenia retains close ties with Russia. Russian troops guard Armenian borders with Turkey and Iran.

Culture

Armenia possesses a unique culture that has endured for thousands of years. There is a rich legacy of dance and art. The Armenian alphabet was created in the fifth century. The Armenian Apostolic Church strongly influences culture and daily life. Marriage and engagement ceremonies are elaborate and traditional and often are accompanied with alcohol, although alcohol use is lower than most nations. Cigarette consumption rates rank among the highest in the world.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$5,400 (2011) [11.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.716

Corruption Index: 2.6 (2011)

Armenia has successfully privatized much of the small- and medium-sized government enterprises over the past two decades. Financial ties with Russia remain pronounced as trade with Armenia's most populous neighbors is restricted due to conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and historic tensions over the Armenian Genocide. The Turkish border remains closed, resulting in greater geographic isolation. High GDP growth rates were maintained for much of the 2000s but the financial crisis in the late 2000s initiated a severe economic recession. Agriculture employs 46% of the workforce and produces 19% of the GDP. Services account for 38% and 48% of the workforce and GDP, respectively. Fruit, vegetables, and livestock are primary agricultural products, whereas diamond processing and machinery are major industries. Russia, Germany, and the United States are primary trade partners.

Government attempts to reduce corruption have been unsuccessful. Some drug trafficking and illicit drug use occurs.

Faiths

Christian: 98.7%

Yezidi: 1.3%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 110,000

Jehovah's Witnesses 11,115 130

Latter-day Saints 3,024 11

Seventh Day Adventists 884 18

Religion

Nearly 90% of Armenians adhere to the Armenian Apostolic Church. Most of the non-Apostolic population resides in Yerevan. Catholics tend to live in northern regions. Yezidi—a monotheistic religion with incorporates some aspects of nature worship—is followed by many Kurds around Mount Ararat.⁴⁸

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Some minority groups experience a few legal restrictions that are not enforced by government officials. The Armenian Apostolic Church maintains special relations with the government as it is considered the national church. Only registered religious groups can rent spaces for worship services and must be deemed socially acceptable. In 2009, steps by government were taken to limit the religious freedom of nontraditional religious groups. The proposed legislation would restrict proselytism, only recognize Trinitarian Christian denominations, and increase the number of adult members required for registration. The legislation was reviewed by the European Commission for Democracy through Law, which concluded that many proposed changes would reduce religious diversity and religious freedom and offered suggestions for revisions that would maintain rights for minority religious groups. Jehovah's Witnesses receive the most persecution.⁴⁹

Largest Cities

Urban: 64%

Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, **Ejmiatsin, Hrazdan, Abovyan, Kapan**, Ararat, **Armavir, Gavarr**.

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

Four of the ten largest cities have a congregation. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the national population lives in the 10 largest cities.

⁴⁸ "Armenia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127297.htm>

⁴⁹ "Armenia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127297.htm>

LDS History

Missionary work commenced among Armenians outside Armenia in the late nineteenth century particularly in Turkey. These efforts were sporadic due to conflict in the region, and by 1950 most of the Armenian converts lost contact with the Church or immigrated to the United States.⁵⁰ Elder Russell M. Nelson delivered a check for \$100,000 to the Soviet Ambassador to provide relief for victims of the 1988 Armenian earthquake.⁵¹ The Church gained converts among American-Armenians by the late 1989.⁵² In 1989, the Church announced that it would begin long-term assistance in Armenia, rebuilding and distributing humanitarian aid following the severe earthquake.⁵³ In June 1991, Elder Dallin H. Oaks dedicated Armenia for missionary work.⁵⁴ Seminary and institute programs began in 1995. The Armenia Yerevan Mission was created in 1999 from the Russia Rostov Mission, and the translation of the Book of Mormon in Eastern Armenian was completed in 2000.⁵⁵ In 2000, Armenia became part of the Europe East Area. Elder M. Russell Ballard visited the Armenian President in 2006.⁵⁶ In 2013, the Church organized its first stake in Armenia.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 3,024 (2012)

Membership has grown rapidly since the establishment of the Church in the early 1990s. There were 200 members in 1995 and by year-end 1997, there were 656 members. By year-end 2000, there were 792 members.

Growth continued in the 2000s as membership reached 1,265 in 2002, 2,083 in 2005, and 2,650 in 2007. During this period the first missionaries were assigned outside of Yerevan and additional congregations were organized. Membership growth rates ranged from 10–20% during most of the 2000s. In 2008 and 2009, membership growth rates slowed dramatically to 3% to 4%. Missionaries reported that the drop in membership growth was attributed to increased reactivation efforts and raising the standards for investigators to be baptized.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 5 Branches: 5 Groups: 1+ (July 2013)

A branch was organized in Yerevan in 1994. In 1995, the first district was organized in Yerevan. The sole Yerevan branch met in six groups, and each group became a branch in the new district.⁵⁷ In 2000, there were seven branches, all in Yerevan and surrounding communities. Additional cities were opened for missionary work in the 2000s, including Ararat, Ashtarak, Charentsavan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, and Alaverdi. Congregations increased to eight in 2001, ten in 2003, and fifteen in 2006.

The Yerevan Armenia District was divided to create the Yerevan Armenia South District in 2008, the former

⁵⁰ "Armenia," Deseret News 2010 Church News Almanac, p. 423–424.

⁵¹ "Plans for building discussed with ambassador," LDS Church News, 24 December 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18025/Plans-for-building-discussed-with-ambassador.html>

⁵² Hart, John L. "Los Angeles: Hispanics, other minorities strengthen inner-city wards," LDS Church News, 17 June 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18725/Los-Angeles-Hispanics-other-minorities-strengthen-inner-city-wards.html>

⁵³ "Church will help Armenian homeless," LDS Church News, 19 August 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18894/Church-will-help-Armenian-homeless.html>

⁵⁴ "Two republics in USSR are dedicated," LDS Church News, 28 September 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20974/Two-republics-in-USSR-are-dedicated.html>

⁵⁵ "97th translation, Armenians receive Book of Mormon," LDS Church News, 5 May 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39834/97th-translation-Armenians-receive-Book-of-Mormon.html>

⁵⁶ Stahle, Shaun D. "Preaching gospel that gospel is hard," LDS Church News, 16 September 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49438/Preaching-gospel-that-gospel-is-hard.html>

⁵⁷ Hughes, Jack. "The sons on the prophets," retrieved 10 May 2010. <http://www.cumorah.com/index.php?target=main&wid=10>

included eight branches and the latter consisted of six branches. A branch for the Armenia Yerevan Mission administers to members living in remote regions of the country. The most recently created branch was in Alaverdi. In 2011, the two districts in Yerevan were consolidated into a single district and the Alaverdi Branch became a group. In 2013, the Yerevan Armenia District became a stake with five wards and four branches.

Activity and Retention

In 2001, 75% of the 220 convert baptisms were retained in early 2002. Nationwide meetings tend to be well attended. Eight hundred of the 2,000 Church members attended a meeting with Elder M. Russell Ballard in 2006.⁵⁸ In 2008, 700 members assembled to witness the creation of a second member district.

The number of inactive members has increased substantially over the 2000s as membership more than tripled, whereas congregations only doubled. The average number of members per congregation increased between 2000 and 2009 from 113 to 190, respectively. The number of active members varies from branch to branch. The Gyumri Branch had approximately forty active members and hundreds of inactive members in late 2009. A branch in Yerevan had 340 members on the records and only thirty attending weekly in 2010. The Alaverdi Branch had between twenty and thirty active members in 2009. Most branches appear to have between fifty and seventy-five active members. Two hundred forty-six were enrolled in seminary and institute in 2008–2009. Nationwide, approximately 20% of LDS members are active, or between 550 and 600.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Armenian (East), Russian, Armenian (West).

All LDS scriptures are available in Armenian (East) and Russian. A wide selection of Church materials is translated in Russian, whereas several priesthood, unit, temple, Relief Society, Sunday School, teacher development, young women, primary, missionary, audio/visual, family history, church proclamations, hymns, and children's songs are available in Armenian. *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, Book of Mormon selections, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are translated in the western dialect of Armenian, which is spoken outside of Armenia.

Meetinghouses

In 2002, the Church dedicated its first meetinghouse in Yerevan.⁵⁹ Most congregations meet in renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church donated 10,000 pounds of powdered milk in 1989.⁶⁰ In addition to large amounts of food donated, the Huntsman family constructed a cement plant in the late 1980s and early 1990s that provided concrete to rebuild homes for the 500,000 homeless following the earthquake. Humanitarian missionaries participated in a private aid relief effort that feeds over 200,000 needy Armenians.⁶¹ In 2008, the Church

⁵⁸ Stahle, Shaun D. "Preaching gospel that gospel is hard," LDS Church News, 16 September 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49438/Preaching-gospel-that-gospel-is-hard.html>

⁵⁹ "Armenia," Deseret News 2010 Church News Almanac, p. 423–424.

⁶⁰ "Church sends dry milk to Armenia," LDS Church News, 2 December 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18595/Church-sends-dry-milk-to-Armenia.html>

⁶¹ "Assistance proffered in Armenia," LDS Church News, 1 April 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26295/Assistance-proffered-in-Armenia.html>

conducted clean water projects⁶² and donated wheelchairs.⁶³ By 2010, thirty-three humanitarian projects had been carried out by the Church in Armenia.⁶⁴

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church enjoys the privileges of a registered religious group, and missionaries openly proselyte. Past humanitarian projects have fostered cooperation with the government and the many citizens who benefited from Church assistance. Potential legislation may create future challenges for the Church in regards to open proselytism and maintaining government registration. Societal abuses of religious freedom directed toward the LDS Church have not been reported, and for the time being legislation that may jeopardize the Church's missionary activity in Armenia appears on hold as it is undergoing revision.

Cultural Issues

Strong societal and family ties to the Armenian Apostolic Church create challenges for missionaries to find investigators and for potential converts to be baptized and remain active. Missionaries report that many Armenians do not view the Church in a favorable light, but that the Church does not receive persecution like Jehovah's Witnesses. Some cultural practices, like drinking alcohol during engagement or marriage festivities, may create friction between Latter-day Saints and the general population. High cigarette consumption rates create challenges for potential converts to quit smoking because there is likely a high frequency of investigators who smoke. Converts who quit and join the Church may be more prone to relapse than in other nations due to societal influences.

National Outreach

Yerevan is central to national outreach as it is home to 37% of the population. Six of the twelve neighborhoods have congregations and several of the neighborhoods without congregations—which amount to approximately half a million inhabitants—have missionaries assigned. The combined population of all cities with branches accounts for 48% the national population.

In recent years, mission efforts have expanded into smaller towns, the smallest with an independent congregation being Alaverdi. Missionaries have conducted periodic visits to towns—such as Stepanavan in northern Armenia—where small groups of members meet. In the late 2000s, a district branch was created for members living and meeting in isolated areas within the boundaries of the Yerevan Armenia District. The mission branch allows for flexible and dynamic outreach in unreached areas with the organization of small groups of members for Sunday meetings. Outreach in rural areas, particularly in the southern areas of the country, will be challenging due to distance for Yerevan, a small population dispersed over rough terrain, and conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Nagorno-Karabakh—a de facto republic in Azerbaijan bordering Armenia—is predominantly Armenian and has a population of over 100,000 inhabitants. Violence and political instability in the region have prevented LDS mission efforts in the breakaway state under Azerbaijani sovereignty, but close proximity to Armenia

⁶² "Clean water," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 11 May 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6212-1-3216-1,00.html>

⁶³ "Wheelchairs," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 11 May 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6213-1-3215-1,00.html>

⁶⁴ "Humanitarian activities worldwide," Provident Living, retrieved 11 May 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-3,00.html>

and a large ethnic Armenian population provide opportunities for future expansion of missionary work in the region and establishing a Church presence in Azerbaijan, which as of 2010 had no members meeting in congregations.

Mission efforts among Armenian diaspora around the world can assist in expanding mission efforts in Armenia through referrals of relatives and friends. An Armenian branch once functioned in Glendale, California and was discontinued in the early 2000s. Efforts to reactivate and strengthen Armenian members in the area were renewed in May 2010 with the assignment of a senior missionary couple. The missionary couple reported that they frequently asked members for references of interested individuals back in Armenia who may be taught by missionaries.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity rates have decreased over the past decade as most converts have not been retained. Missionaries report that many branches have a small, yet organized, leadership but have been overwhelmed with the large numbers of new converts. Leadership was initially developed rapidly in the 1990s, which may indicate that converts in the 2000s have been less able to integrate into established congregations. Many active members emigrate, especially young people, lessening local resources in addressing and preventing convert attrition.

The Armenia Yerevan Mission has been the top-baptizing mission in the Europe East Area since the mid-2000s. However, much of this nominal growth has not been reflected in active membership. For several years, a policy was in place that missionaries were not allowed to teach a second discussion to investigators who did not accept the baptismal commitment on the first discussion. While the intent of this policy was ostensibly to increase baptisms and to focus missionary time on receptive investigators, it fueled patterns of very low convert retention in which investigators were rushed to baptism without first establishing positive gospel habits and overcoming substance abuse and other difficulties. There are also serious theological questions about how investigators were expected to gain a testimony based on a single missionary encounter without adequate opportunity to read, pray, study, and investigate the church. Sincere, more potentially committed investigators may have been driven off by such high-pressure approaches.

In 2008, President Ronald Dunn reversed the policies of his predecessor and emphasized the need for higher quality pre-baptismal preparation of new converts, leading to substantially higher retention rates. In 2009, missionaries reported that the average convert attended church for at least six weeks before baptism, and one-year convert retention had increased to over 50%. Convert retention may increase further as higher standards become consistently enforced.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The lack of ethnic diversity simplifies mission outreach. Integration issues have not been reported. Conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis may be a future source of friction once Azerbaijanis join the Church, although very few Azeris live in Armenia.

Language Issues

The Church has translated a large amount of ecclesiastical materials in Armenian, allowing for concentrated efforts in outreach distributing proselytism literature. There are no church materials in Azerbaijani or Yezidi because these groups have few if any LDS members.

Missionary Service

Eighteen full-time missionaries served in the Armenia Yerevan Mission in early 2001.⁶⁵ A missionary zone was created in Gyumri in early 2002. In 2010, missionaries reported spending significant amounts of time on reactivating less active members. Armenians regularly serve full-time missions, but not in sufficient numbers for Armenia to be self-reliant on its full-time missionary force.

Leadership

Limited leadership remains a primary obstacle for greater church growth. Emigration of returned missionaries has reduced potential leadership and set back long-term growth. Available leadership appears well-trained and dedicated. Arayik V. Minasyan from Artashat became the first Area Authority Seventy from Armenia in 2010.⁶⁶ The organization of a stake in 2013 indicates that the Church in Armenia has developed a sufficient number of quality church leaders to meet the administrative demands of stake responsibilities.

Temple

Armenia pertains to the Kyiv Ukraine Temple district. Prior to the completion of the Kyiv Ukraine Temple, temple trips to Switzerland occurred at least twice annually. The costs of travel, lodging, and document preparation are largely paid by the Church, as few local members would be able to afford such trips.

Comparative Growth

No other nation in the Middle East or Caucasus have as many members, congregations, and missionaries as Armenia. Georgia is the only other nation in the Caucasus with a Church presence and had fewer than 200 members and only two branches in 2009. War in Chechnya, few members, and distance from Rostov has prevented a Church establishment in Russian areas of the Caucasus. In the Middle East, there are no nations with an active missionary program and most members are nonnatives. Armenia achieved some of the most rapid membership and congregational growth in the 2000s among former-Soviet republics. However, only a fraction of nominal members are active, and so LDS growth achievements in Armenia are much more modest than they may appear on paper.

Many Christian denominations report slow to moderate growth. Evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced the greatest growth. Seventh Day Adventists gain few converts annually as Adventists increased by about one hundred between 2002 and 2008.

Future Prospects

Emigration of Armenian Church members and poor convert retention over the past decade stunt greater church growth. Half of the population remains unreached by mission outreach and will likely receive little outreach in the coming years due the high use of full-time missionaries in reactivation efforts in cities with congregations. Continued and consistent implementation of appropriate pre-baptismal preparation is necessary to break low retaining patterns of the past and foster long-term indigenous growth. Greater member-missionary efforts will be required to expand national outreach and organize additional congregations.

⁶⁵ "97th translation, Armenians receive Book of Mormon," LDS Church News, 5 May 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39834/97th-translation-Armenians-receive-Book-of-Mormon.html>

⁶⁶ "New Area Seventies," LDS Church News, 24 April 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59238/New-Area-Seventies.html>

AZERBAIJAN

Geography

AREA: 86,600 square km. Located in southwestern Asia in the Caucasus, Azerbaijan borders Iran, Armenia, Georgia, Russia, and the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijan also includes the exclave of Naxcivan, which is sandwiched between Armenia and Iran. The Apsheron Peninsula stretches into the Caspian Sea and houses the capital city, Baku. The Kura-Araks Lowland consists of low-lying plains that occupy the central interior. The Caucasus Mountains reach into the north, and the Karabakh Upland dominates the west. Semi-arid climate occurs in most interior areas, with temperate climate along the coast and subtropical conditions in the extreme southeast. Droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include severe air, soil, and water pollution. Azerbaijan is administratively divided into fifty-nine rayons, eleven cities, and one autonomous republic.

Peoples

Azeri: 90.6%
Dagestani: 2.2%
Russian: 1.8%
Armenian: 1.5%
Other: 3.9%

Azeri constitute most of the population and are a significant minority group in neighboring Iran. Dagestanis and Russians populate the Baku area and in the north by the Dagestan border. Nearly all Armenians reside in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Population: 9,493,600 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.017% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.92 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 68.38 male, 74.68 female (2012)

Languages: Azerbaijani (90.3%), Lezgi (2.2%), Russian (1.8%), Armenian (1.5%), other (3.3%), unspecified (1%). Azerbaijani is the official language and only language with over one million speakers (7.44 million).

Literacy: 98.8% (1999)

History

The ancient Persians heavily influenced modern-day Azerbaijan, which in antiquity was a Zoroastrian center. Arabs conquered the region in the seventh century and spread Islam, which several centuries later was followed by the Mongol invasions. Prosperity returned between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, during which time the Mongols, Shirvan Shahs, and the Persian Safavid Dynasty successively ruled the country. In the nineteenth century, regional powers fought for control over Azerbaijan, resulting in the splitting of the original Azeri homeland between Russia and Persia in 1828. The vast oil fields in the region began to be exploited in the late nineteenth century. Azerbaijan gained brief independence from 1918 to 1920, during which time it became the first democratic Muslim nation and granted women the right to vote. Azerbaijan was subsequently annexed by the Soviet Union. Following independence in 1991, Azerbaijan and Armenia continued to fight

over disputed Nagorno-Karabakh until a cease-fire agreement in 1994. Oil export revenues have funneled more money into the country, yet most citizens have experienced little improvement in standard of living. Human rights conditions have deteriorated in recent years, with stricter government control of the media, religious affairs, and politics.⁶⁷

Culture

One of the most Western Muslim nations in the Middle East/Caucasus region, Azerbaijani culture draws upon native, Persian, Western, and Arabic influences. Islam is a traditional cultural influence. A proud legacy of carpet weaving has endured for millennia, known for its intricate and beautiful designs. Numerous native dances are performed at festivals or special occasions, such as Novruz, which is a widely celebrated national holiday that traces its origins to the Zoroastrian faith. Cigarette consumption rates compare with the United States, and alcohol use is among the highest for Muslim nations in the region.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$10,200 (2011) [21.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.700

Corruption Index: 2.4 (2011)

Azerbaijan has posted some of the most rapid economic growth rates worldwide since the mid-2000s due to increasing oil exports and growth in other sectors of the economy, namely construction, banking, and real estate. Oil profits have been made possible primarily due to the construction and use of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline, which made previously land-locked Azerbaijani oil accessible to the international market. Prospects for greater economic growth are favorable, due to Azerbaijan's geographical location, well-educated population, and sizeable population. Trade has significantly expanded into Europe as a result of new oil pipelines. Natural resources include oil, natural gas, iron ore, and bauxite. Services employ half the labor force and generate a third of the GDP, whereas industry employs 12% of the work force and generates 61% of the GDP. Primary industries include oil, natural gas, steel, iron ore, cement, chemicals, and textiles. Agriculture accounts for 38% of the work force and generates 6% of the GDP. Cotton, grain, rice, fruit, vegetables, tea, and tobacco are common crops. Livestock is also an important agricultural commodity. Primary trade partners include Italy, Turkey, Russia, India, and the United States.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and a major deterrence toward greater economic growth and reducing wealth-poverty divides. Government control over civil liberties and the economy have hurt foreign investment. Corruption appears most severe in the judicial system and the police force.⁶⁸

Faiths

Muslim: 93%

Christian: 5%

Other: 2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,019 9

⁶⁷ "Background Note: Azerbaijan," Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, 14 June 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2909.htm>

⁶⁸ "Azerbaijan," 2010 Index of Economic Freedom, retrieved 8 October 2010. <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/azerbaijan>

Seventh Day Adventists 715 6

Catholic 400

Latter-day Saints ~40 1

Religion

Muslims account for over 90% of the population; two-thirds are Shi'a and a third are Sunni. Few Muslims are active in their faith, but the number of religiously active Muslims has slightly increased in recent years. Orthodox Christians account for much of the rest of the population, but few practice their religion. There are approximately 20,000 Jews. Traditional religious groups consist of Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, Russian Orthodox Christians, and Jews. Other religious groups are deemed untraditional and primarily consist of Protestant Christians and other Muslim groups, many of which tend to reside in the Baku area.⁶⁹

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 38th

The constitution protects religious freedom, but the government has restricted this right. In 2009, religious legislation reduced the ability of religious groups to proselyte in an effort to reduce the spread of militant Islam. The government generally tolerates religious activity among Shiite and Sunni Muslims and Russian Orthodox. The constitution protects the individual right for citizens to convert to another religion, but forbids the propagation of religion, especially by foreigners. Raids conducted by national and local authorities have occurred on nontraditional Muslim and Christian groups. Recently approved religious legislation mandates most religious groups to reregister with the government by January 2011. The registration process is difficult, time consuming, and allows the government to regulate the practice of religion by the selective harassment of religious groups that are denied registration. The government requires a religious group and each of their individual congregations to register. The law bans political parties from participating in religious activity. The government generally permits expatriate Christians in Baku to worship freely. Religious freedom is restricted in Nagorno-Karabakh; some Christian groups have had proselytizing materials confiscated. Evangelical Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and some Muslim groups are the most heavily persecuted.⁷⁰

Largest Cities

Urban: 52%

Baku, **Ganca**, **Sumgait**, **Mingacevir**, **Qaracuxur**, **Naxcivan**, **Sirvan**, **Bakixanov**, **Seki**, **Yevlax**.

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

One of the ten largest cities has an LDS congregation. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

In 2000, Azerbaijan was assigned to the Europe East Area.⁷¹ In 2010, the Europe East Area administered Azerbaijan as the country has never been assigned to an LDS mission. Any church activity occurs under the Europe East Area Presidency.

⁶⁹ "Azerbaijan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127299.htm>

⁷⁰ "Azerbaijan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127299.htm>

⁷¹ Lloyd, Scott. "European continent realigned into three new areas," LDS Church News, 16 September 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38475/European-continent---realigned-into-three-new-areas.html>

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: about 40 (2012)

There are no known Azerbaijani Latter-day Saints. Missionaries in Eastern Europe have occasionally taught Azerbaijanis, but few, if any, appear to have joined the Church. Any members in the country likely consist of expatriates from Europe and North America.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 1 (2012)

The Europe East Area Branch solely administered Azerbaijan until the early 2010s when the Baku Branch was organized.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Russian, Armenian (East), Armenian (West).

All LDS scriptures are available in Armenian (East) and Russian. A wide selection of Church materials is translated in Russian, whereas several priesthood, unit, temple, Relief Society, Sunday School, teacher development, young women, primary, missionary, audio/visual, family history, church proclamations, hymns, and children's songs are available in Armenian (East). *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, Book of Mormon selections, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are translated in the western dialect of Armenian, which is spoken outside of Armenia.

Health and Safety

Nontraditional Christian groups report frequent government surveillance, arrests, and police raids.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Latter-day Saints have participated in at least three humanitarian projects in Azerbaijan, each of which provided clothing or hygiene kits to the needy.⁷²

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Current laws and government policies severely restrict any activity by Latter-day Saints. Prospects for attaining government registration appear unlikely for the foreseeable future. The constitution prohibits the use of foreign missionaries in proselytism, which the LDS Church greatly relies upon for establishing the Church. Member-missionary efforts also face government restrictions, requiring any local members to be passive in their conversations with others about their beliefs. Foreign members are unable to take an active stance in establishing the Church among Azerbaijani citizens.

Cultural Issues

Azerbaijan experiences low levels of religious participation comparable to many former Soviet Republics. Few have a background in Christianity or have developed regular habits of mosque or church attendance, although

⁷² "Projects—Azerbaijan," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 8 October 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-49,00.html>

Islamic influence has increased significantly in recent years. Any prospective Latter-day Saint outreach would need to address the potential needs of a population that has little familiarity or background knowledge with religious principles, such as prayer or scripture reading. The marginalization of nontraditional religious groups challenges the prospects of Azerbaijanis considering membership in the LDS Church, as investigators would likely face social reprisal and potential government harassment. The lack of Azerbaijani Latter-day Saints abroad challenges future efforts to understand local culture and develop suitable proselytism approaches and resources.

National Outreach

The entire population remains unreached by Latter-day Saints. Those who have met a member of the Church or are aware of church teachings are limited to those who have traveled abroad and come into contact with missionaries or a member, or those who have close personal contacts with any expatriate members who have lived in Baku over the years. The Church did not establish a presence in the 1990s, likely due to distance from operating mission outreach centers, the lack of any language materials in Azerbaijani, few, if any, local or expatriate members, warfare with Armenia over disputed Nagorno-Karabakh, and the high percentage of Muslims. The recent implementation of new religious legislation further reduces the prospects of any future LDS Church establishment. Armenia and Georgia (also administered by the Armenia Yerevan mission) are the only nations that border Azerbaijan with nearby LDS congregations. The Azerbaijan-Armenia border is totally closed, and the Azeri-Russian border is closed to foreigners. It is unlikely that the Armenia Yerevan Mission would one day administer church work in Azerbaijan due to severe tensions and closed borders.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Local Latter-day Saints may struggle to develop regular church attendance and other habits indicative of a lifestyle directed by church teachings due to low religious participation in traditional faiths.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Azerbaijanis have historically demonstrated little conflict with other ethnic groups, but in recent years face significant challenges interacting with Armenians due to conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Among Caucasian ethnic groups, Latter-day Saints have experienced the greatest success attracting converts and establishing the Church with Armenians. Almost all Armenians have left Azerbaijan since the early 1990s. Ongoing tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia have contributed to the marginalization of Christians and increased Islamic solidarity.

Language Issues

As of 2010, there remained no LDS scriptures or materials translated into Azerbaijani dialects, which are spoken by some 19 million people in Azerbaijan and Iran. Restrictions on proselytism, the lack of any known LDS presence in either country, and few if any Azerbaijani-speaking Latter-day Saints worldwide will likely delay any forthcoming translations of LDS materials for many decades to come. LDS materials translated into Armenian dialects can be utilized in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Missionary Service

No Azerbaijanis are known to have served a full-time mission. LDS missionaries have never been assigned to Azerbaijan.

Temple

Azerbaijan pertains to the Kyiv Ukraine Temple district.

Comparative Growth

Azerbaijan is one of the least reached former Soviet Republics and the only one in the Caucasus without an official Church presence. All former Soviet Republics in Central Asia are Muslim-majority, and most are unreached by Latter-day Saints. However, most of these countries have a few known local Latter-day Saint converts or LDS expatriate families. Azerbaijani is the language with the tenth most speakers worldwide without any LDS materials.

Several missionary-oriented Christian groups entered Azerbaijan after the dissolution of the Soviet Union but have faced increasing restrictions regarding their operation and religious freedoms. Seventh Day Adventists have baptized fewer than fifty converts a year over the past decade but have experienced no noticeable growth in membership. Jehovah's Witnesses have gained hundreds of followers but are heavily persecuted by the government. Limited success by these groups indicates that Latter-day Saints have missed their opportunity to enter Azerbaijan for the foreseeable future and that meaningful church growth opportunities exist despite challenging social and political conditions.

Future Prospects

There appear to be no realistic opportunities for Latter-day Saints to enter the country and establish the Church unless recent government restrictions prohibiting foreign missionary proselytism and member-missionary activity are amended. There may be some unexplored development projects that humanitarian senior missionary couples based in Armenia can implement. The translation of basic proselytism materials in Azerbaijani will be greatly needed for any missionary work to occur one day.

GEORGIA

Geography

AREA: 69,700 square km. Occupying a strip of land in the Caucasus, Georgia borders Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, and the Black Sea. The Great Caucasus Mountains and Lesser Caucasus Mountains form the northern and southern borders, respectively. The wide range in elevation and terrain allows for a wide range of climates. Low-lying plains line the Black Sea coastal areas, whereas the central and eastern regions consist of plains and plateaus. Mediterranean climatic conditions prevail along the coast, whereas interior climate ranges from semi-arid to temperate to alpine. Heavy rain and snowfall support some temperate rainforests in the west. Earthquakes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include air, soil, water pollution, and water shortages. Georgia is administratively divided into nine regions, one city, and two autonomous republics. Two small de facto states along the Russian border—Abkhazia and South Ossetia—are officially part of Georgia, but maintain separate administrations with close political ties with Russia.

Peoples

Georgian: 83.6%

Azeri: 6.5%

Armenian: 5.7%

Russian: 1.5%

Other: 2.5%

Georgians reside in all areas of Georgia proper except for some southern border regions. Azeris primarily reside south of Tbilisi, whereas Armenians reside south of Tbilisi and in pockets in Abkhazia. Russians populate northern areas.

Population: 4,570,934 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: -0.327% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.46 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 73.99 male, 81 female (2012)

Languages: Georgian (71%), Russian (9%), Armenian (7%), Azeri (6%), other (7%). Georgian is the official language and only language with over one million speakers (3.9 million). Abkhaz is the official language in Abkhazia. Several languages have approximately 100,000 speakers or more, including Abkhaz, Azerbaijani, Mingrelian, Ossetian, and Urum.

Literacy: 100% (2004)

History

The kingdoms of Colchis and Kartli-Iberia ruled the region until the Roman Empire expanded into the Caucasus after the birth of Christ. By the 330s, Christianity became the state religion. Roman influence waned, and Persians, Turks, and Arabs occupied the region. Georgia reached its most powerful and influential height between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries that ended as a result of the Mongol invasions. The Ottomans and Persians gained control of Georgia until it came under Russian rule in the nineteenth

century. A brief three-year independence from 1918 to 1921 came to an end when Georgia was integrated into the Soviet Union. In 1991, Georgia regained independence from the Soviet Union. During the first decade following independence, little progress occurred fighting corruption and addressing separatist movements in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Adjara. The Rose Revolution began in late 2003 following disputed presidential election results and resulted in major changes in government policy and administration and instigated economic reform. Mikheil Saakashvili came to power in 2004 following the Rose Revolution and regained control over the previously de facto state of Adjara. The geopolitical issues regarding the continued separatist control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia reached greater complexity as these de facto states received assistance from Russia and maintained close political ties that included the intention of joining the Russian Federation. For instance, in South Ossetia, Russia issued Russian passports and provided electricity. A major military conflict occurred in August 2008 over a Georgian military response to South Ossetian and Russian provocation that resulted in the Russian military occupying both de facto republics and large areas of Georgia proper. Russia withdrew its forces shortly thereafter from most areas and officially recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Culture

Georgian culture has endured for thousands of years and has developed over time through indigenous and foreign influences to produce a proud tradition of art, theater, architecture, folklore, music, and dance. Georgia has been a renowned producer of wine for centuries that has been especially popular in Russia. Cuisine is diverse and includes Khinkali (dumplings), soup, bread dishes, and vegetables. The Georgian Orthodox Church is among the oldest Christian faiths and strongly influences local culture and social attitudes. Cigarette consumption rates are moderate and alcohol consumption rates are low.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$5,400 (2011) [11.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.733

Corruption Index: 4.1 (2011)

The establishment of the new government in 2004 led to many improvements in economic policy and administration. Strong economic growth occurred until the 2008 Russian conflict. In 2009, Georgia suffered a recession mainly due to declining demand for Georgian goods, a lack of foreign investment, and the global financial crisis. Due to its position bridging Asia and Europe, Georgia has begun to better capitalize on its potential as a transporter of goods between these regions and is economically integrated into the region. In recent years, several pipelines—notably the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline—have been completed bringing oil and gas from the energy-rich Caspian Sea to Asia Minor and the Black Sea for distribution in Europe. Services produce 62% of the GDP and employ 36% of the workforce, whereas industry accounts for 26% of the GDP and 9% of the workforce. Major industries include steel, aircraft manufacturing, machinery, mining, and wine. Agriculture employs over half of Georgians but generates only 12% of the GDP. Primary crops include citrus, grapes, tea, and hazelnuts. Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine are the primary trade partners.

Georgia has made progress fighting corruption and is perceived as the least corrupt nation in the Caucasus. The government has pledged to address corruption problems and develop the economy, which it has generally carried out. Issues the government has sought to improve include strengthening the law, implementing a fair university entry exam system, and reforming the judicial system.⁷³ However perceived corruption rates remain far worse than most of Western and Central Europe.

⁷³ "Background Note: Georgia," US Department of State, 21 June 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5253.htm>

Faiths

Christian: 88.6%

Muslim: 9.9%

Other: 0.8%

None: 0.7%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Georgian Orthodox 3,864,693

Catholic 35,000

Jehovah's Witnesses 18,035 191

Greek Orthodox 15,000

Seventh Day Adventists 423 8

Latter-day Saints 216 2

Religion

Religious affiliation is highly correlated by ethnicity and location. Most ethnic Georgians are Georgian Orthodox or adhere to other Orthodox denominations. Additional traditional religious groups include Armenian Apostolic, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam. Muslims primarily consist of Azeris, ethnic Georgians in Ajara, and Chechen Kists. Nontraditional Christian denominations together constitute less than 1% of the population.⁷⁴

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is generally upheld by laws and government policies. The government has made considerable progress improving religious freedom and tolerance for non-Orthodox groups on a national level. The media continues to portray non-Orthodox groups in a negative light. Religious conflicts tend to most often occur with local police or between Georgian Orthodox individuals and nontraditional religious minorities and Muslims. Jehovah's Witnesses appear to be the group that reports the most instances of harassment among newly arrived religious groups. The Georgian Orthodox Church has strong influences on government policy due to its prominence among the national population. At times some view the Orthodox Church's influence and treatment by the government as unfair and unequal compared to other religious groups.⁷⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 53%

Tbilisi, **K'ut'aisi**, **Bat'umi**, **Sokhumi**, **Zugdidi**, **P'ot'I**, **Gori**, **Ts'khinvali**, **Samtredia**, **Khashuri**.

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

One of the ten largest cities has an LDS congregation. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

⁷⁴ "Georgia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127311.htm>

⁷⁵ "Background Note: Georgia," US Department of State, 21 June 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5253.htm>

LDS History

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland dedicated Georgia for missionary work in March 1999. Georgia was assigned to the Armenia Yerevan Mission shortly thereafter. Humanitarian missionaries were assigned in June and began donating relief supplies to orphanages and teaching English.⁷⁶ In September, the first Georgians to join the Church were baptized in Armenia due to the Church's unregistered status. The first priesthood ordinations and Relief Society, priesthood, and young women meetings were held in 1999 and 2000.⁷⁷ In 2000, Georgia became part of the Europe East Area. In 2005, the Church registered with the government, allowing the first full-time proselytizing missionaries to be assigned in March 2006. In 2008, missionaries were withdrawn for a nearly three months due to conflict with Russia. The seminary and institute programs were introduced in 2008.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 216 (2012)

In March 2000, there were fourteen members, which increased to thirty by June 2001.⁷⁸ In 2003, there were sixty-three members. Membership doubled to 126 in 2006 and reached 178 in 2008.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 Groups: 1 (2012)

The Church created its first group in September 2001. The following June the first branch was organized in Tbilisi.⁷⁹ In 2007, the Tbilisi Branch split into two branches, the Avlabari and Saburtalo Branches, and in 2011 the two branches were consolidated into a single branch. The sole branch reports directly to the Armenia Yerevan Mission. In 2012, a group was organized in Rustavi.

Activity and Retention

Eighteen were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2008–2009 school year. Active membership in 2007 may have reached as high as eighty to one hundred, initiating the creation of a second branch. The 2008 conflict with Russia resulted in reduced member activity rates. In 2010, active membership was between forty-five and fifty-five, or 25% to 30% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Russian, Armenian.

No scriptures are available in Georgian. All LDS scriptures are available in English, Russian, and Armenian (East). Georgian LDS materials include *Gospel Fundamentals*, several church declarations and proclamations, Book of Mormon stories, the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, the Articles of Faith, and limited numbers of family history and teaching resources. A wide selection of Church materials is translated in Russian, whereas several priesthood, unit, temple, Relief Society, Sunday School, teacher development, young women, primary, missionary, audio/visual, family history, church proclamations, hymns, and children's songs are available in Armenian.

⁷⁶ "Gospel taking root in Republic of Georgia," LDS Church News, 25 November 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49785/Gospel-taking-root-in-Republic-of-Georgia.html>

⁷⁷ "First branch created in Republic of Georgia," LDS Church News, 10 August 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42262/First-branch-created-in-Republic-of-Georgia.html>

⁷⁸ "First branch created in Republic of Georgia," LDS Church News, 10 August 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42262/First-branch-created-in-Republic-of-Georgia.html>

⁷⁹ "First branch created in Republic of Georgia," LDS Church News, 10 August 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42262/First-branch-created-in-Republic-of-Georgia.html>

Meetinghouses

The first church meetings were held in humanitarian missionaries' homes. Shortly thereafter, the Church began renting facilities for Sunday meetings. In 2010, each of the Tbilisi branches met in separate rented facilities.

Health and Safety

Conditions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain politically unstable and dangerous for full-time missionary work. Georgia proper is generally safe.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has conducted at least nineteen humanitarian or development projects in the past decade. Most of these projects have donated supplies to orphanages, provided emergency relief to conflict victims, and supplied medical equipment and furnishings to hospitals and other agencies.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Georgia has experienced increasing levels of religious freedom especially since 2000. Orthodox denominations continue to receive favoritism from government. Public opinion and media reports portray non-Orthodox religious in a negative light, which may include the LDS Church.

Cultural Issues

The surge in Georgian nationalism has also resulted in a revival of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Many newly arrived religious groups such as the LDS Church tend to struggle creating effective approaches tailored to Georgian Orthodox believers. Negative media exposure on recently arrived religious groups reduces interest and tolerance for the majority. In recent years, Georgia has strengthened political and economic ties with Western Europe but retains the xenophobia characteristic of many post-communist nations toward Protestant or nontraditional Christian groups.

National Outreach

Georgia has a strong potential for increased national outreach due to the close proximity of the Armenia Yerevan Mission and the mission's small stewardship limited to just Armenia and Georgia. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the national population resides in the largest city, Tbilisi, the only location with a Church presence until 2012. Only a single branch serves Tbilisi and its population of 1.1 million. However, due to the recent arrival of missionaries and their limited numbers, most in Tbilisi likely know little or nothing about the Church and its beliefs and practices. Cottage meetings may be an effective means to meet with isolated members or investigators and encourage them to invite friends and family to meet with missionaries to discuss Church doctrines and principles in lesser-reached areas of Tbilisi and beyond. Larger cities in government-controlled territory near Tbilisi appear most likely to open for missionary work, such as Gori.

Abkhazia and South Ossetia will likely remain unreached for many years due to political conflict in these de facto states. However their combined population constitutes only 6% of the national population. The political situation in Ajara has stabilized in the past decade, which increases the likelihood of mission outreach in this

autonomous region especially due to the large population of its capital, Batumi. Ajara also has a large Muslim population, which could potentially offer unique proselytism opportunities for missionaries.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The 2008 conflict with Russia resulted in significant member attrition likely due to members relying on foreign missionaries for Church administrative tasks and testimony-building support. The lack of Georgian language Church materials may have further contributed to low convert retention and member activity rates due to limited understanding of the Church through second language materials like Russian and possible resistance to use such materials. Seminary and institute programs may be effective to increase local members' knowledge and understanding of Church doctrines and strengthen their testimonies, thus improving member activity and convert retention rates. Low member activity rates and the demand of administrative responsibilities on the few active Georgian leaders prompted the consolidation of the two branches in 2011.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic minorities residing Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and southern Georgia have segregated themselves from the ethnic Georgian majority and many remaining Georgians in these areas have moved to predominantly Georgian areas. The Church appears to have had few ethnic conflicts at church and may not experience many future ethnic integration issues due to the continued segregation of ethnicities. Outreach targeting Armenians, Azeris, Ossetians, and Abkhaz will require the establishment of mission centers in their respective areas of Georgia.

Language Issues

With the possible exception of the sacrament prayers, basic forms, and the Articles of Faith, there were no LDS Church materials available in Georgian until late 2010 despite the presence of Georgian-speaking Latter-day Saints for almost a decade in Georgia and for several decades in the United States and Europe. The increased number of Georgian-language resources is encouraging; a Georgian translation of *Preach My Gospel* is reportedly in progress. In early 2012, senior missionaries facilitated the creation of a translation team to begin translating the Book of Mormon into Georgian. All LDS scriptures and many materials are translated in Russian and Armenian.

Church meetings were held in Russian following the creation of the Tbilisi Branch. Full-time missionaries first communicated with members in Russian and Armenian before they began learning the Georgian language in 2006.⁸⁰

As there is no translation of the Book of Mormon and limited church curriculum materials in Georgian, talks are given in Georgian, whereas scriptural passages are often read in Russian. This produces some difficulties for comprehension because although many older Georgians educated during the Soviet era can speak and read Russian, few young people under thirty are fluent in Russian. Many young people study English, but few are proficient. Missionaries are trained in Georgian but not Russian, and so missionaries themselves cannot always follow the flow of talks and lessons that switch between Georgian and Russian. There is a great need for Georgian translations of LDS scriptures, which are likely within the next several years.

Language materials in other minority languages—such as Azeri and Mingrelian—may not be produced for decades, if ever, as these groups reside in areas without mission outreach and have few if any current Latter-day Saints.

⁸⁰ "Gospel taking root in Republic of Georgia," LDS Church News, 25 November 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49785/Gospel-taking-root-in-Republic-of-Georgia.html>

Missionary Service

Few if any Georgian members have served as full-time missionaries. A lack of youth converts and male members reduces the availability of local missionaries. Prospects to increase the size of the local full-time missionary force will depend on increases in retained converts who are mission aged. By 2008, an entire zone of missionaries served in Tbilisi.

Leadership

Prior to the calling of the first local branch president in 2006, senior missionary couples served as the branch president.⁸¹ In 2010, both Tbilisi branches had foreign missionaries serving as branch presidents. The current lack of local leadership may be related to the recent introduction of full-time proselytizing missionaries as the few active members may depend on them to hold administrative positions and for gospel instruction. In early 2012, a senior missionary served as the branch president in Tbilisi.

Temple

Georgia pertains to the Kyiv Ukraine Temple district. Temple trips may occur, and members depend on other members to assisting in performing temple work due to their small numbers. Long distances to temple and inadequate funds for travel result in many unable to attend. There are no foreseeable prospects for a future temple closer to Georgia.

Comparative Growth

Georgia is one of the most recently opened former Soviet republics to the Church and has experienced comparable membership growth to Kazakhstan. Georgia has one of the lowest convert retention rates and one of the least developed local church leaderships in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe.

Missionary-oriented Christian groups generally have few members and slow membership growth. For example, since 2006 there has been no increase in the number of Seventh Day Adventists. Jehovah's Witnesses are among the most successful Christian groups as they have moderate membership growth rates and number among the largest nontraditional religious groups. Those seeking to become Jehovah's Witnesses complete extensive study and preparation prior to baptism and participate in member-missionary work approaches to proselytism, resulting in a high degree of long-term self-sustaining growth for this denomination.

Future Prospects

Opportunities for expanding national outreach and proselytism remain abundant but restricted by the lack of Georgian-language materials. The lack of adequate Georgian-language LDS materials has hampered outreach efforts to expand the Church in Georgia and to retain converts and existing members.

The consolidation of the two Tbilisi branches and a senior missionary serving as the branch president indicates that the Church struggles to develop local leadership despite having native members for over a decade. The brief 2008 war with Russia caused no damage or casualties in the capital of Tbilisi, where both LDS branches are located. Other denominations including Jehovah's Witnesses weathered this conflict well, yet the LDS Church in Georgia suffered massive attrition following this conflict. The temporary removal of missionaries

⁸¹ "Gospel taking root in Republic of Georgia," LDS Church News, 25 November 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49785/Gospel-taking-root-in-Republic-of-Georgia.html>

during this conflict demonstrates that LDS presence in Georgia remains fragile and heavily dependent on foreign missionaries; efforts to develop greater local self-sufficiency are needed.

Negative social attitudes concerning nontraditional religious groups will likely continue to affect most Georgian's perception of the LDS Church. Missionary programs targeting youth may help Georgia to send more missionaries who can later return and serve in leadership positions.

KAZAKHSTAN

Geography

AREA: 2,724,900 square km. Occupying a vast area of Central Asia, Kazakhstan borders Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan and is the ninth largest country in the world. Kazakhstan experiences a continental climate characterized by cold winter, hot summers, and arid to semi-arid conditions. The vast majority of the landscape is flat steppe. High, rugged mountains stretch along much of the southeastern border. The Tian Shan Mountains along the Kyrgyz border reach heights of over 20,000 feet (7,000 meters), and the Altai Mountains are found in extreme eastern Kazakhstan. The Caspian Sea, the largest inland sea in the world, forms the southeastern boundary. Lake Balkhash, which has both fresh and salt water regions, sits in east central Kazakhstan and the salty Aral Sea, which occupies only 10% of its original size, straddles the Uzbek border. Important rivers include the Syr Darya, Ural, and Irtysh. Desert covers many areas on the southwest. Earthquakes and mudslides in the south are natural hazards. Environmental issues include radioactive and toxic contaminants in the soil from the Soviet era, the diversion of rivers for irrigation from the shrinking Aral Sea, chemical pesticides and salts from the Aral Sea driven in large dust storms, water pollution in the Caspian Sea, and inefficient agricultural practices such as the overuse of fertilizers and pesticides. Russia leases the city of Baikonur for its space program. Kazakhstan is administratively divided into fourteen provinces and three cities.

Peoples

Kazakh: 53.4%
Russian: 30%
Ukrainian: 3.7%
Uzbek: 2.5%
German: 2.4%
Tatar: 1.7%
Uyghur: 1.4%
Other: 4.9%

Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tatars, and Uyghurs are Turkic ethnic groups, whereas Russians and Ukrainians are Slavic ethnic groups. Kazakhs populate all regions and constitute the majority of the population everywhere except in most areas of northern Kazakhstan. Russians are concentrated in northern Kazakhstan where they are the largest ethnic group as well as in patches stretching from Almaty to Russia along the Chinese border. Ukrainians live in pockets along the Russian border and northern Kazakhstan from the Zhayya (Ural) River to northeast Kazakhstan, whereas Germans live in pockets in northern Kazakhstan. Uzbeks live in the southernmost areas, and Uyghurs reside in areas between Almaty and China. Kazakhstan's population has slightly contracted in size since 1989 due to emigration of Russians.

Population: 17,522,010 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.235% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.41 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 64.34 male, 74.59 female (2012)

Languages: Kazakh (64.4%), Russian (12.6%), German (6%), Ukrainian (6%), Tatar (2%), Uyghur (2%), Uzbek (2%), other (5%). Kazakh is the state language, and Russian is an official language used in business and communication between ethnicities. Russian is spoken as a first or second language by 95% of the population. Only Kazakh (9.9 million) and Russian (1.9 million) have over one million native speakers.

Literacy: 99.5% (1999)

History

Kazakhstan finds its roots in Turkic and Mongol tribes in the thirteenth century. A Kazakh national identity began to take shape over the following centuries as the Kazakh language became more distinguished. Warfare and conflict with neighboring nations and peoples occurred in the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, Russia gained control of Kazakhstan, which in 1936 became a Soviet Republic. During the 1930s, a massive famine resulted in large population decreases. Immigrants began arriving and settling regions of Kazakhstan, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s when the USSR sought to rapidly increase agricultural output through the “Virgin Lands” program. The program increased agricultural productivity somewhat but with drastic environmental consequences that continue today. Independence from the Soviet Union occurred in 1991 and resulted in many Russians leaving the country as Kazakh nationalism reemerged. Almaty was the original capital until Astana became the capital in 1998. Kazakhstan has enjoyed greater stability and economic prosperity than other former Soviet Republics in Central Asia since independence.

Culture

Kazakhs are traditionally pastoralists and have relied heavily on their livestock for survival. Meat is widely consumed, and fermented mare’s milk is a national beverage. Alcohol consumption rates are lower than most nations, whereas cigarette consumption rates are higher than most nations. The Kazakh New Year is a major celebration. The government moved the capital from Almaty to Astana to facilitate greater cooperation between Kazakhs and Russians and to better administer the large country from a more centralized location.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$13,000 (2011) [27% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.745

Corruption Index: 2.7 (2011)

Partially due to infrastructure developed by the Soviets, Kazakhstan has the most developed economy out of the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia. Wealth is unevenly distributed and is most concentrated in the hands of oligarchs. Abundant mineral deposits and oil reserves drive much of the strength and development of the economy. Oil pipelines have begun to flow over the past decade, carrying oil to surrounding nations with ocean access for worldwide distribution. China in particular has taken keen interest in Kazakhstan’s oil potential. Large amounts of productive farmland form an integral part of the economy as 31% of the workforce labors in agriculture. Services account for over half the workforce and GDP. Industry produces 38% of the GDP and employs 18% of the workforce. Primary agriculture products include grain, cotton, and livestock, whereas primary industries include oil and mineral extraction. Nearly four-fifths of export commodities come from oil or mineral extraction. Primary trade partners include Russia, China, and Germany.

Kazakhstan experiences high levels of corruption that have persisted over the past decade. Law enforcement has been accused of corruption by demanding bribes for crossing borders. Bribery and corrupt practices have worsened in the oil industry as additional drilling and exploration has occurred. Corrupt practices are claimed to be most prevalent in administration.⁸²

⁸² “Kazakhstan country profile,” Business Anti-Corruption Portal, retrieved 24 April 2010. <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/en/country-profiles/europe-central-asia/kazakhstan/show-all/>

Faiths

Muslim: 47%
 Christian: 46%
 Other: 7%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Russian Orthodox 6,775,752
 Catholic 250,000
 Jehovah's Witnesses 17,641 223
 Seventh Day Adventists 3,217 51
 Latter-day Saints 216 2

Religion

Nomadic lifestyles and a communist legacy have been responsible for low levels of religious conviction among Kazakhstanis. Many are culturally Muslim or Christian but do not view their identified faiths as important in everyday life. Religious demography differs greatly based upon location and ethnicity. Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Uyghurs, and Tatars are historically Muslim. Eastern Orthodox Christians typically include ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, and other Eastern Europeans. Most Catholics are ethnic minorities from Germany and Eastern Europe. The highest concentration of practicing Muslims is along the Uzbek border.⁸³ Protestants groups form 2% of the population and include many Germans and Koreans.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 48th

The constitution protects religious freedom, but government legislation limits some aspects of this right. Some minority, nontraditional religious groups face government interference from worshipping, although most of these are not registered. Religious organizations must have at least ten members, and unregistered groups can be fined. Government has stepped up its fight to combat religious extremism. There were no recent reports of societal abuses of religious freedom. Formal registration of missionaries is required, including a submission of what materials will be used in proselytism.⁸⁴

Largest Cities

Urban: 58%

Almaty, **Qaraghandy**, **Karagandy**, **Shymkent**, **Taraz**, Astana, **Pavlodar**, **Ust'-Kamenogorsk**, **Kyzylorda**, **Semipalatinsk**, **Aqtöbe**, **Qostanay**, **Petropavlovsk**, **Taldyqorghana**, **Oral**, **Atyrau**, **Temirtau**, **Aktau**, **Kökshetau**, **Rudnyy**, **Ekibastuz**, **Zhezkazghan**.

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

One of the twenty-two cities with over 100,000 inhabitants has a congregation. Forty-seven percent (47%) of the national population lives in the twenty-two largest cities.

⁸³ "Kazakhstan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127366.htm>

⁸⁴ "Kazakhstan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127366.htm>

LDS History

The first LDS members to live in Kazakhstan lived in Almaty in the mid and late 1990s for business, and were instrumental in establishing a congregation in Almaty and introducing many native Kazakhs to the gospel. Prior to 1999, there were no native Kazakhstani members. The first baptism occurred in November 1999.⁸⁵ Kazakhstan was included in the Europe East Area in 2000. The Church received official recognition from the Kazakhstani government in December 2000.⁸⁶ The first branch was organized in July 2001 in Almaty. At the time no foreign missionaries served in Kazakhstan.⁸⁷ Elder Nelson visited Kazakhstan in September 2003 and dedicated the country.⁸⁸ Foreign missionaries first arrived in the early 2000s but were restricted to Almaty. Jurisdiction for missionary work in Kazakhstan transferred from the Russia Novosibirsk Mission to the Russia Moscow Mission and then to the Russia Moscow West Mission. Elder Paul Pieper represented the Church at a world religions conference held in Kazakhstan in the late 2000s. LDS missionaries were assigned to Astana in March 2011.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 216 (2012)

In early 2001, Almaty had 25 members. By the end of the year, there were 46 members nationwide. Membership increased to 80 in 2003, 102, in 2005, and 125 in 2007. Nearly all members live in Almaty. In mid-2009, one native member lived in Astana.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 Groups: 1 (2012)

As of April 2013, only one branch met in Almaty. In recent years, a group began meeting in Astana.

Activity and Retention

Seventy attended a cultural night held shortly following the Church's recognition in 2001.⁸⁹ Forty-four attended the organization of the Almaty Branch in 2001.⁹⁰ Elder Nelson visited in September 2003 with ninety in attendance. Some members in attendance traveled up to thirteen hours from distant cities.⁹¹ In early 2010, missionaries reported that approximately fifty members were active in Almaty, but some estimates place the number of active and semi-active members as high as eighty. Active membership nationwide is likely between sixty and seventy, or 43–50%.

Finding

Street contacting and the member referrals of interested friends and associates have represented the main

⁸⁵ "Kazakhstan," Country Profiles, retrieved 23 April 2010. <http://lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/kazakhstan>

⁸⁶ "Kazakhstan recognizes Church," LDS Church News, 17 February 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39339/Kazakhstan-recognizes-Church.html>

⁸⁷ "First LDS branch created in Kazakhstan," LDS Church News, 11 August 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40323/First-LDS-Branch-Created-in-Kazakhstan.html>

⁸⁸ "Elder Nelson Dedicates Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic," Ensign, Nov. 2003, 124–25.

⁸⁹ "Kazakhstan recognizes Church," LDS Church News, 17 February 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39339/Kazakhstan-recognizes-Church.html>

⁹⁰ "First LDS branch created in Kazakhstan," LDS Church News, 11 August 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40323/First-LDS-Branch-Created-in-Kazakhstan.html>

⁹¹ "Elder Nelson visits Kazakhstan," LDS Church News, 13 September 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44312/Elder-Nelson-visits-Kazakhstan.html>

finding methods for missionaries in Almaty. Missionaries in 2010 reported that many investigators were found through teaching English and piano lessons.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Russian, German, Ukrainian, Korean.

All LDS scriptures are available in Russian, German, Ukrainian, and Korean. Large amount of Church materials are translated in these languages. The *Liahona* magazine has twelve issues in Russian, German, Ukrainian, and Korean a year. Kazakh LDS materials are limited to the Sacrament Prayers, a basic unit guidebook, the Articles of Faith, and hymns and children's songs.

Meetinghouses

The Almaty Branch meets in a small church-owned meetinghouse.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has participated in humanitarian work in some hospitals and orphanages. In 2003, aid was distributed to those affected by the May 2003 earthquake.⁹² In the late 2000s, the Church conducted neonatal resuscitation training and donated hospital equipment.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church is legally registered with the government. Full-time missionaries may openly proselyte once approval is granted to missionaries on an individual basis. Sometimes this approval can take weeks to obtain, limiting proselytism activities for newly arrived missionaries to Kazakhstan. Local members provide invaluable service and assistance in maintaining legal standards and obtaining required documents for missionaries, humanitarian projects, and church registration. Recent revisions in the Kazakh religious law interrupted proselyting activity in 2012 as the Church had to re-register congregations in Almaty and Astana.

Cultural Issues

Irreligiosity and secularism challenge church growth as most have little or no interest in learning about religion as a result of decades of communist rule. With few members and a tiny foreign missionary force, diligent and efficient missionary programs are required to gain converts. Suppressed religious freedom during the Soviet era provides opportunity for growth because many do not actively participate in their identified religions, although have some religious background. Tolerance for non-Muslim religious groups appears higher among Muslims in Kazakhstan than in many other Central Asian nations due to the large Orthodox minority and the suppressed religious expression of Islam for much of the twentieth century.

National Outreach

Mission outreach only occurs in the city of Almaty, which accounts for 8% of the national population. An additional 6% of the population lives in Almaty Province, leaving 86% of Kazakhstanis residing in provinces with no Church outreach centers. Over 700,000, or 5% of the national population, live in Astana, where missionary work commenced in March 2011. Although the population currently reached by the Church

⁹² "Kazakhstan," Country Profiles, retrieved 23 April 2010. <http://lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/kazakhstan>

remains small, abundant opportunities for missionary work and Church growth exist in Almaty as it is the largest city and a major center for business and industry in Central Asia. Most living in Almaty are unaware of the Church's presence in the city and know little of LDS beliefs, teachings, and practices. Large areas of the city remain unreached and provide an easily accessible, highly populated field for expanded outreach with the assistance of local members and missionaries.

Visits by mission leaders occur regularly despite Kazakhstan's remoteness from the rest of the Russia Moscow West Mission. This has been partly due to foreign missionaries serving in Russia leaving periodically to renew their visas. The low productivity of the mission in Russia has reduced missionary numbers, creating greater challenges in expanding proselytism with full-time missionaries in Kazakhstan as missionary resources become stretched between the two countries and Belarus.

The Church has explored prospects for opening missionary work in Astana for many years. In late 2009, mission leadership began pursuing registration for a congregation in Astana, but the lack of native members challenged more immediate outreach. Some members live in remote, large cities without congregations that may one day facilitate expanded mission outreach in those cities. Many missionaries and Church leaders agree that the Church's progress in Kazakhstan will be integral in developing outreach in other Central Asian nations without a current Church presence.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Convert retention between 2003 and 2010 appears poor to modest as church attendance in Almaty only increased slightly over this period despite membership increasing from 80 to 140 nationwide. Early efforts of expatriate members in sharing the gospel quickly developed a congregation and introduced many Kazakhs to the gospel; retention rates have dropped with the exodus of key expatriate families and the shift to missionary-based proselytism. The first native converts fellowshiped with one another and taught and baptized new converts without the assistance of full-time missionaries. The introduction of full-time missionaries appears to have reduced convert retention levels, in part due to periods of focus on monthly baptismal goals and reduced contact of investigators with local members before baptism. Cooperation in proselytism efforts between full-time members, older converts, and new members will be essential for high retention of new converts to ensure long-term church growth.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The diversity in cultures in Kazakhstan creates challenges integrating various ethnic groups into the same congregation. The Soviet legacy has helped to mute some of these differences and allow for greater cooperation between ethnicities. Missionary efforts in Almaty are directed toward both Kazakhs and Russians, and the Almaty branch has successfully integrated members of various ethnicities. Other ethnic groups are largely unreached. Future proselytism efforts in northern Kazakhstan will need to meet needs of both Russians and Kazakhs simultaneously as both live in the same region in large numbers.

Language Issues

Foreign missionaries have not developed proficient language abilities in Kazakh for gospel teaching. This has resulted in some reliance on local members for teaching, providing greater opportunity for convert fellowshiping. Missionary work is conducted in Russian, which is widely spoken across Kazakhstan and learned by foreign missionaries in the Missionary Training Center and in the Moscow Russia West Mission. Senior missionary couples rely on translators to accomplish much of their humanitarian work.

Additional translations of Church materials and LDS scriptures into Kazakh appear likely. Minority Turkic

groups speaking languages such as Uyghur and Uzbek will likely not have Church materials until greater membership growth occurs among them. Russian language appears to be highly functional for initial outreach for these groups because it is spoken by 95% of the population, although not all second-language speakers speak and read at a high level of proficiency.

Missionary Service

As of early 2010, about fifty full-time missionaries had served in Kazakhstan since Almaty opened to full-time missionary work. A missionary zone functions in Kazakhstan, and senior couple missionaries serve in Almaty and Astana. In October 2009, six elders and two sisters served in Almaty. Kazakhstani members have willingly served missions despite their small numbers. In mid-2008, four missionaries were serving from the Almaty Branch.

Leadership

The first Melchizedek Priesthood ordinations occurred in early 2001.⁹³ A traveling Patriarch visited Kazakhstan in 2008 and gave eighteen Patriarchal blessings. Local members have led the Almaty Branch through most if not all of its history.

Temple

Kazakhstan is assigned to the Kyiv Ukraine Temple district. Temple trips occur infrequently due to the small size of membership, travel expenses, and long distances. Prospects for a closer temple appear unlikely for many more years.

Comparative Growth

Two LDS congregations, 51 Seventh Day Adventist Churches, 195 Jehovah's Witness congregations, and 543 Protestant churches, 265 Orthodox churches, and 93 Catholic churches operate in Kazakhstan. Many Christian denominations have experienced membership decline over the 1990s through emigration. However, these groups have gained converts among the Kazakh and other historically Muslim peoples. Seventh Day Adventists have seen decreasing numbers of congregations and converts over the past decade, although Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced continued expansion of national outreach.

Kazakhstan is the only former Soviet Republic with an official Church presence. Most former Soviet Republics outside Central Asia have experienced greater membership and congregational growth than Kazakhstan. Russia and Ukraine each had over 10,000 members by 2006 and over 50 congregations. Growth in some other Muslim nations has been greater than Kazakhstan, such as Pakistan and some nations in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. However membership growth in Pakistan, Indonesia, and many other Muslim-majority nations has come primarily from among Christians rather than Muslims, whereas in Kazakhstan success has been achieved among both groups. The Church operates openly in Kazakhstan but not in Pakistan due to threats of violence from extremist groups. Kazakhstan offers a relatively pluralistic and favorable environment for outreach among both Muslims and Christians, in contrast to most other Muslim-majority nations.

Of the six Turkic nations (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan), Kazakhstan is the only nation where the Church has gained a significant foothold with strong native membership. The only other Turkic nation with an official Church presence is Turkey, where congregations are led primarily by expatriate members, and most of the few converts are non-Turks.

⁹³ "Kazakhstan recognizes Church," LDS Church News, 17 February 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39339/Kazakhstan-recognizes-Church.html>

Notwithstanding Kazakhstan's key strategic and geopolitical location as the gateway to Central Asia, its status as the most religiously pluralistic and tolerant of the Central Asian nations, and relatively wide religious freedom, the Church's entry into Kazakhstan has been belated and anemic. No LDS missionaries were sent to Kazakhstan throughout the initial years of religious freedom in the early 1990s when other denominations experienced rapid growth. The Church gained a foothold in Almaty around the turn of the century only fortuitously through the efforts of capable expatriate members, and not through any planning or effort of the institutional missionary program. When missionaries finally entered in the middle of the decade of the 2000s, receptivity had waned considerably from that experienced in the initial years, political conditions had become less favorable, and both Muslim and Orthodox groups had implemented counter-proselytism policies. Whereas Jehovah's Witnesses maintained 195 congregations and Adventists had 51 congregations across Kazakhstan in 2009, only a single LDS congregation operated in the nation until missionaries entered Astana in early 2011. Although visa and registration requirements limited expansion of missionary efforts during the 2000s, the lack of utilization of favorable opportunities for church growth throughout the 1990s appears to reflect a lack of priority and resources assigned to the nation by LDS mission planners and the focus of resources on Russia and better-known nations in Eastern Europe rather than any absence of opportunity.

Future Prospects

High member involvement in missionary work, developed local leadership, and registration with the government provide a positive outlook for future growth. A mission headquartered for Central Asia is likely due to long distances from mission headquarters in Moscow. Kazakhstan appears the most likely nation to support a potential mission among former Soviet Republics in Central Asia. Church efforts for establishing mission outreach in neighboring nations have been based from Kazakhstan and will likely continue. The severely limited number of members living outside of Almaty and Astana as well as membership requirements to register congregations in new areas will restrict missionary work outside of these two cities for the foreseeable future.

KYRGYZSTAN

Geography

AREA: 199,951 square km. Landlocked in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan borders China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Several enclaves from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan dot the extreme southwest. Terrain consists of the high peaks and valleys of the Tien Shan Mountains. Lake Issyk-Kul in the northeast is the second largest mountain lake in the world. Large rivers exit to Uzbekistan to the west. High elevations experience cold, snowy climate and low elevation areas are subject to temperate or subtropical climates. Environmental issues include water pollution and increasing soil salinity. Kyrgyzstan is administratively divided into seven provinces and one city.

Peoples

Kyrgyz: 64.9%

Uzbek: 13.8%

Russian: 12.5%

Dungan: 1.1%

Ukrainian: 1%

Uyghur: 1%

Other: 8.2%

Like many Central Asian former Soviet Republics, Kyrgyzstan is a patchwork of differing ethnic groups. Turkic groups include Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Uyghur. Russians and Ukrainians come from Eastern Europe. Dungan are Chinese peoples who adhere to Islam.

Population: 5,496,737 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.887% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.73 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 65.27 male, 73.91 female (2012)

Languages: Kyrgyz (64.7%), Uzbek (13.6%), Russian (12.5%), Dungan (1%), other (8.2%). Kyrgyz and Russian are the official languages. Only Kyrgyz has over one million speakers (3.5 million).

Literacy: 98.7% (1999)

History

The Kyrgyz are a Turkic people who have lived in Central Asia for over two thousand years, with evidence of statehood dating back to the third century BC. The Kyrgyz were originally nomadic raiders living in the Altai and Yenesei regions of Siberia near the northwestern borders of China. With the defeat of the Uyghur Khanate in 840 AD, Kyrgyz hegemony expanded south to the Tien Shan mountain range. The Kyrgyz were most influential around 1000 AD. In the twelfth century, Mongol raids progressively reduced Kyrgyz territory to the region between the Altai and Sayan Mountains. In the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the Kyrgyz tribes migrated south to their current location in Kyrgyzstan, displacing or assimilating indigenous tribes before being conquered by Genghis Khan in 1207 AD. Early Chinese and Muslim records dating from

between the seventh and twelfth centuries AD describe the Kyrgyz of that time as having red hair, blue eyes, and light skin. Modern Kyrgyz have primarily Mongoloid features, reflecting the genetic legacy of the Mongol conquest as well as centuries of intermixing with other Central Asian peoples.

For the following centuries Kyrgyzstan was ruled by many surrounding nations. Kyrgyzstan was ruled by the Khanate of Kokand for most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Russia took control of most present-day Kyrgyzstan by 1876. Approximately one-sixth of the population perished in a rebellion in 1916. Kyrgyzstan became a Soviet Republic by 1936 and achieved independence in 1991. Kyrgyzstan is regarded as one of the more free and Western-leaning of the Central Asian former Soviet republics. However, political instability and corruption have been major issues that have not been fully resolved since independence, contributing to popular uprisings and regime change in 2005 and again in 2010. The Tulip Revolution in spring 2005 removed President Askar Akaev, who had served as president since independence, and provided hope for a more democratic government. However since 2005, corruption has continued to worsen, and political instability and ethnic hostilities have been exacerbated. The April 2010 riots throughout the country overthrew the government of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and installed a provisional government. Land reform and energy prices are additional issues that have further destabilized the country.

Since Kyrgyz independence, there has been a gradual exodus of Russians from Kyrgyzstan. 18.8% of the population was Russian in 1993; reliable present figures are not available but the percentage of Russians is believed to be under 10%.

Culture

The Kyrgyz take pride in their nation's historical legacy as nomadic herders. Decades of former Soviet rule have heavily influenced architecture and attitudes toward religion. There are some distinctions between northern and southern areas involving living conditions, culture, etiquette, and food. Southern areas are seen as more traditional and conservative. Agriculture is dominant in the south, whereas herding is most prominent in the north. The Kyrgyz language was not written until the twentieth century; consequently, oral tradition influences modern culture. Family roles are traditional. Alcohol consumption rates are lower than many nations and comparable to Kazakhstan. Cigarette consumption rates are similar to the United States.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,400 (2011) [4.99% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.615

Corruption Index: 2.1 (2011)

One of the poorest former Soviet Republics, Kyrgyzstan has an agriculturally based economy that primarily produces cotton, tobacco, wool, and meat. Agriculture produces 31% of the GDP and employs 48% of the workforce; services produce 53% of the GDP and employ 40% of the workforce. Growth in the economy is largely dependent on gold prices and gold mine productivity. However little has been done to extract the abundant precious metals and develop hydropower potential. Forty percent (40%) of the population lives below the poverty line, and 18% of Kyrgyz were unemployed in 2004. Primary trade partners include Russia, Switzerland, China, and neighboring Central Asian nations.

Corruption is a major factor that has limited economic growth and deterred foreign investment. Accusations of corruption have strongly influenced political instability in the 2000s and were at the forefront of riots in April 2010.

Faiths

Muslim: 75%
 Christian: 20%
 Other: 5%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Russian Orthodox 600,000
 Jehovah's Witnesses 5,013 67
 Seventh Day Adventists 903 14
 Catholic 500 3
 Latter-day Saints less than 50

Religion

Religious affiliation usually coincides with ethnicity. Islam is the dominant religion and the primary religion of Turkic peoples. Most Christians are Russian Orthodox and consist of Russians or Ukrainians. Participation in religious practices is low to modest for most of the population, with southern areas experiencing the highest levels of religious activity. Many nontraditional Christian groups have arrived in the past two decades and are registered with the government.

Islam is the primary religious influence. Although some Islamic influences date back as early as the eighth century, more widespread conversions occurred only in the seventeenth century. Kyrgyz Islam is not as deeply ingrained or as fundamentalist as in many other Muslim nations, although that has begun to change in recent years.

During the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan experienced the most rapid and dynamic Christian growth of any Central Asian or Turkic nation. In the mid-2000s, a resurgent Islamist backlash and cultural pressures led to progressive declines in receptivity to Christian proselytism and to significant attrition among Christians. Well-funded Islamic groups from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and other Muslim nations bankrolled the construction of mosques across the country, hired unemployed young Kyrgyz men to serve as Islamic preachers, missionaries, and mosque builders, and introduced strict interpretations of Islam, such as the Wahabbi sect. Kyrgyz Islam, which was previously fairly superficial outside of the Ferghana Valley, is hardening into a more fundamentalist faith as a result.

A 2009 analysis by the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan reported that registered religious communities included forty-nine Jehovah's Witness, forty-nine Pentecostal, forty-three Charismatic, thirty-five Presbyterian, forty-eight Baptist, thirty Seventh Day Adventist, twenty-one Lutheran, and three Catholic congregations. There are over 50,000 Protestants, nearly 5,000 active Jehovah's Witnesses and over 1,000 Seventh Day Adventists in many congregations. The Protestant Church of Jesus Christ claims over 11,000 members and is the country's largest denomination. Since 1996, over 1,200 foreign citizens have been registered as missionaries in Kyrgyzstan, but not a single LDS missionary has served in the country.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 49th

The constitution ostensibly protects religious freedom and forbids religious discrimination, although recent changes have eroded these protections. The government does not sponsor any religious groups but recognizes

Islam and Russian Orthodoxy as traditional religions. Some laws and practices restrict religious freedom. A religion law came into effect in 2009 limiting religious activities, including switching religious affiliation and barring children and youth from involvement in religious organizations. To register with the government, religious groups need at least 200 Kyrgyz adult citizen members. Prior to the passage of the new legislation, only ten adult citizen members were required for registration. Foreign missionaries may operate with restrictions and must register with the government annually. Missionaries often report delays obtaining visas.

Largest Cities

Urban: 36%

Bishkek, Osh, Jalal-Abad, Karakol, Tokmok, Kara-Balta, Özgön, Talas, Kyzyl-Kiya, Bazar-Kurgan.

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

No cities in Kyrgyzstan have an LDS congregation. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the national population lives in the twenty-two largest cities.

LDS History

In 2000, Kyrgyzstan became part of the Europe East Area. In 2002, half a dozen members serving in the United States military stationed in Kyrgyzstan held meetings in a tent used for religious services on a U.S. military base. Elder Russell M. Nelson visited in August 2003, met with government leaders, and dedicated the country. The Church attempted to register with the government in the 2004 but was still unregistered at the end of 2009.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2011)

LDS members in the U.S. military have lived in Kyrgyzstan for nearly a decade. The only native members are Kyrgyz baptized in Kazakhstan or Russia who have returned to Kyrgyzstan. As of late 2009, there were fewer than ten known LDS Kyrgyz members living in Bishkek.

Congregational Growth

Groups: 1? (2011)

A small group for U.S. military and foreign members meets in Bishkek. However, this group is not accessible to native Kyrgyz. It is unclear whether the group continues to function at present. No proselytism occurs.

Activity and Retention

No missionary activity has occurred. Kyrgyz members baptized abroad who have returned to Bishkek are unable to hold meetings or proselytize.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Russian

All LDS scriptures and many church materials are available in Russian. The Kazakh language is mutually intelligible with Kyrgyz; Kazakh LDS materials are limited to the Sacrament Prayers, a basic unit guidebook, the Articles of Faith, and hymns and children's songs.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings are held on the U.S. military base. No home meetings occur.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In November 2008, the Church donated 250 new wheelchairs to the disabled in Osh and Batken.

Future Prospects

After missing the initial window of opportunity in the 1990s, there are currently no realistic prospects for the LDS Church to enter Kyrgyzstan. The reason for the nonapproval of the Church's 2004 application is unclear but may be related to the possible lack of the ten adult citizen members required at the time. The current requirement of 200 adult citizen members for a religious organization to be registered poses a virtually insurmountable barrier, as no proselytism may occur without registration, and there are very few Kyrgyz living in cities of Russia or Kazakhstan with LDS congregations who could conceivably join the church there and return to their homeland.

The LDS Church is respectful toward other faiths, Christian and Islam alike, and has a great deal to offer the people of Kyrgyzstan. Beyond the many spiritual benefits of gospel teachings, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also teaches the importance of strengthening the family, respecting culture and heritage, and avoiding harmful substances like alcohol and tobacco, which have resulted in substantial morbidity in Kyrgyzstan. Latter-day Saints are loyal and patriotic citizens who support their nations, obey the law of the land, and pursue education and skills to build up their native lands. Pray that the leaders of Kyrgyzstan may be blessed with wisdom to understand the many lasting benefits that their nation and people would experience from having The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints among them.

TAJIKISTAN

Geography

AREA: 143,100 square km. Landlocked in Central Asia, Tajikistan is the smallest Central Asian nation and borders China, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Rugged, tall peaks in the Pamir and Alay Mountain ranges dominate the landscape, reaching heights of over 7,000 meters and constituted the highest peaks in the former Soviet Union. Several large rivers traverse the country, including the Daryoi Panj, Vakhsh, and Kofarnihon, creating deep, fertile valleys. Continental temperate climate occurs, marked by hot summers, mild winters in low-lying areas, and alpine conditions year round in high elevation areas. Earthquakes and floods are natural hazards. Environmental issues are a lack of waste treatment facilities, increasing soil salinity, excessive pesticide use, and heavy industrial and agricultural pollution. Tajikistan is administratively divided into two provinces, one autonomous province, and one region.

Peoples

Tajik: 79.9%
Uzbek: 15.3%
Russian: 1.1%
Kyrgyz: 1.1%
Other: 2.6%

Significant demographic population shifts have occurred since independence. In 1995, Russians and Uzbeks constituted 8% and 24% of the population, respectively.⁹⁴ As a result of heavy emigration in the past two decades, Russians account for 1% of the population today. Tajiks primarily populate central and western areas, whereas Uzbeks reside in pockets mainly in the southwest and extreme northwest. Russians live mainly in or near the largest cities. The Kyrgyz typically populate sparsely populated areas in the east near the Kyrgyzstani and Chinese borders. As many as one million Tajiks live abroad in search of employment, primarily in Russia.

Population: 7,768,385 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.823% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.85 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 63.3 male, 69.61 female (2012)

Languages: Tajik (80%), Uzbek (15%), Russian (1%), Kyrgyz (1%), other (3%). Closely related to Farsi, Tajik is the official language. Russian is commonly used in business and government. Languages with over one million native speakers include Tajik (6 million) and Uzbek (1.1 million).

Literacy: 99.5% (2000)

History

Persian tribes have populated modern-day Tajikistan since around the birth of Christ. Islam arrived in the Middle Ages, and the Samanid Empire heavily influenced the area around 1000 AD.

⁹⁴ "Tajikistan," Rand McNally World Facts and Maps: 1995 edition, Rand McNally, 1995, p.195.

Tajiks are essentially Persians, and their language is a dialect of Persian mutually intelligible with Iranian Farsi. Tajiks constitute a Persian or Indo-Iranian ethnicity, distinct from the Turkic heritage of the other four former Soviet nations of Central Asia. Persians once inhabited a larger region of Central Asia, including Turkmenistan and southern parts of Uzbekistan, until Turkic and Mongol invaders drove back the Persians and repopulated much of Central Asia between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. Persians retained hold on the mountainous region of what is now Tajikistan while becoming separated from their relatives in Iran, becoming the Tajiks.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Russian empire began expanding into Tajikistan, subjecting the population to communist rule in the 1920s after widespread rebellion and conflict with local resistance movements. By 1929, Tajikistan became an independent Soviet Socialist Republic. As part what has been referred to as Stalin's "reverse ethnic gerrymandering" that sought to prevent unified nationalist movements by dividing ethnic groups among several republics while introducing minority nationalities, the borders with neighboring Uzbekistan were redefined. Tajikistan lost the historical cities of Samarkand and Bukhara to Uzbekistan while gaining the Sughd region that includes the primarily Uzbek city of Khujand, founded by Alexander the Great and known anciently as "Alexandria Eschate" (Alexandria the Furthest). The northern, Uzbek-dominated Sughd region includes most of Uzbekistan's arable land and produces two-thirds of the country's GDP. The resulting ethnic tensions resulting from Stalin's "jigsaw borders" has been a cause of ongoing tension and conflict in Central Asia. 3.5 million ethnic Tajiks also live in northern Afghanistan and constituted the principal opposition to the Taliban as the Northern Alliance in the 1990s and early 2000s.

During the Soviet era, the Tajik economy was heavily subsidized, receiving up to 40% of its GDP from Moscow. Tajikistan declared independence in September 1991 and experienced economic collapse from which the nation has yet to emerge. Tajikistan fell into civil war from 1992 to 1997, characterized mainly by ethnic violence and lawlessness. The civil war severely damaged the nation's infrastructure and educational system; the younger generation of Tajiks are generally less educated than their Soviet-era parents.

Russia has maintained a minor military presence primarily staffed by local Tajiks. Recent elections in the 2000s were deemed fraudulent by most observers but did not escalate violence. The government has been credited with improving safety and diffusing ethnic tensions, although road infrastructure remains poor, and economy and education have not returned to the level attained during the Soviet era. Tajikistan at present faces many challenges with widespread corruption.⁹⁵ Drug smuggling routes from Afghanistan to Russia and on to Europe primarily transit Tajikistan due to the weak central government, endemic corruption, porous borders, and remote, mountainous terrain.

Culture

Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion and influence from neighboring Persia until the introduction of Islam by the Arabs over a millennia ago. Today, Islam is a strong influence on daily life and cultural practices, which has experienced a steady revival since independence. The Silk Road as well as the entrance to the entire Fergana Valley region passed through Khujand in ancient times, which contributed in the development of Tajikistani culture. Russian and Soviet rule heavily influenced contemporary government, art, and theater. Following independence from the Soviet Union, a revival of indigenous cultural identity has occurred. Cuisine consists of many common foods in Central Asia, such as plov (pilaf) and green tea. Nuts, fruit, meat, and soup are widely eaten.⁹⁶ Unlike many Muslim countries, polygamy is illegal and is informally practiced by few. Cigarette consumption rates appear comparable to the worldwide average, whereas alcohol consumption rates are very low.

⁹⁵ "Background Note: Tajikistan," Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, 22 September 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5775.htm>

⁹⁶ "Culture of Tajikistan," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 1 November 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Tajikistan

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,900 (2009) [4.1% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.607

Corruption Index: 2.3 (2011)

One of the poorest former Soviet Republics, Tajikistan suffers from widespread poverty and corruption, high unemployment, outdated infrastructure, damage to the economy from the 1990s civil war, and limited trade opportunities due to its remote location and rugged terrain. Hydropower, petroleum, uranium, mercury, coal, lead, zinc, tungsten, silver, and gold are natural resources, most of which have been unexploited. In the 2000s, Russia forgave most of Tajikistan's debt and in the latter portion of the decade funded infrastructure improvement projects such as additional hydroelectric dams. China has also offered loans for improving road networks and electricity infrastructure, and the United States has improved some road networks to help expand trade prospects. Remittances from Tajiks abroad account for a significant portion of the economy. In 2009, 60% were estimated to live below the poverty line. Agriculture employs half of the work force and generates 20% of the GDP. Primary crops and agricultural goods include cotton, grain, fruit, vegetables, and livestock. Services employ 37% of the work force and account for 58% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 13% of the work force and generates 22% of the GDP. Aluminum, zinc, and lead mining are the primary industries. Other important industries include chemicals, fertilizers, cement, machinery, and household appliances. Russia, China, Turkey, and Uzbekistan are major trade partners.

The government lacks transparency regarding legislation and due process, which has deteriorated economic conditions and civil freedoms. A few individuals control much of the country, and corruption is viewed as widespread and present in every area of society.⁹⁷ Transparency International ranks Tajikistan as one of most corrupt nations.

Faiths

Muslim: 97%

Christian: 2%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Russian Orthodox 140,000

Evangelical 3,000

Catholic 2,500

Seventh Day Adventists 627 7

Jehovah's Witnesses 500 8

Latter-day Saints less than 50 0

Religion

Most of the population is Sunni Muslim. The Muslim identity of Central Asian peoples in Tajikistan endured communist rule, and religious service attendance has increased since independence as a result of the efforts of Muslim missionaries and the revival of Tajikistani identity. Muslim missionaries regularly proselyte, and the government has attempted to reduce their influence. Russians are predominantly Russian Orthodox. Since

⁹⁷ "Background Note: Tajikistan," Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, 22 September 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5775.htm>

before independence, nontraditional Christian groups have gained few converts but continue to maintain a church presence. Society overall is tolerant of religious diversity.⁹⁸

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 44th

The constitution protects religious freedom rights, but in practice the government restricts religious activity and emphasizes secularism. The government legitimizes religious bans, surveillance, and restrictions to reduce the spread and influence of Islamic extremism. In 2009, new legislation was passed, which granted the government more power to regulate religious activities, such as setting population quotas for mosques to operate and restricting locations in which future mosques can be constructed. Religious education is highly regulated by the government. To register with the government, a religious group must have at least ten local members, submit a religious charter, and provide evidence from local government that a meetinghouse location has been approved. The government has banned several radical Islamist sects, a few evangelical groups, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Religious groups importing religious literature face many challenges and government regulations. Missionaries from registered religious groups may operate in the country, but open proselytism is discouraged.⁹⁹ Nine additional religious groups were banned in 2010, including Latter-day Saints.¹⁰⁰

Largest Cities

Urban: 26%

Dushanbe, Chuçand, Ku-lob, Kurgan-T'ube, Iztaravšan, Vahdat, Konibodom, Tursunzoda, Isfara, Pançakent

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

LDS History

In 2000, the LDS Church assigned Tajikistan to the Europe East Area.¹⁰¹ When Elder Russell M. Nelson visited Kazakhstan and held a special member meeting in 2003, one member from Tajikistan attended.¹⁰² In 2007, Europe East Area President Elder Paul B. Pieper reported to the Inter Press Service News Agency that the LDS Church had a congregation in Dushanbe.¹⁰³ In early 2010, Tajikistani government authorities reported that they banned the LDS Church as the request for reregistration was apparently not granted.¹⁰⁴

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

Church members residing in the country appear to primary consist of a few local converts who most likely joined the Church abroad. There may be a few foreign members.

⁹⁸ "Tajikistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127372.htm>

⁹⁹ "Tajikistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127372.htm>

¹⁰⁰ "Tajik Court Suspends Baptist Church's Activities," Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 10 February 2010. http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajik_Court_Suspends_Baptist_Churchs_Activities/1954581.html

¹⁰¹ Lloyd, Scott. "European continent realigned into three new areas," LDS Church News, 16 September 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38475/European-continent--realigned-into-three-new-areas.html>

¹⁰² "Elder Nelson visits Kazakhstan," LDS Church News, 13 September 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44312/Elder-Nelson-visits-Kazakhstan.html>

¹⁰³ "Mormon Church Spreads Out in Russia," IPS.com, 18 July 2007. <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=38583>

¹⁰⁴ "Tajik Court Suspends Baptist Church's Activities," Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 10 February 2010. http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajik_Court_Suspends_Baptist_Churchs_Activities/1954581.html

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches or groups: 0 (2012)

Church members met in private as a small group under the direct supervision of the Europe East Area Presidency before the group was closed. Tajikistan has never been assigned to an LDS mission.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Farsi, Russian, Ukrainian, German, Arabic, Kazakh, Korean.

The Church has translated all LDS scriptures and many church materials in Russian, German, Ukrainian, Arabic, and Korean. Book of Mormon selections are available in Farsi. Although spoken Farsi and Tajik are mutually intelligible, Farsi is written in the Persian script, which most Tajiks cannot read, whereas Tajik is written in Cyrillic. *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Farsi. Kazakh LDS materials are limited to the Sacrament Prayers, a basic unit guidebook, the Articles of Faith, and hymns and children's songs. The *Liahona* magazine has twelve issues a year in Russian, Ukrainian, German, and Korean.

Meetinghouses

Any church gatherings occurred in a private setting like a member's home. There is presently no official church presence in Tajikistan.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has conducted at least six humanitarian projects in Tajikistan. These projects provided clothing and food to the needy.¹⁰⁵

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints face no realistic prospects of an official Church presence in the foreseeable future as the government has banned the LDS Church. The Church likely cannot meet the minimal requirements of at least ten local members to register with the government. The Church appears to have a mediocre relationship with the government.

Cultural Issues

Communism has left a heavy legacy on the government's relationship with religion in that religious freedom has become increasingly restricted for Muslims and Christians. Most do not actively practice their religious faith but strongly identify with their religious group along ethno-linguistic lines. If LDS missionaries enter Tajikistan one day, they will need to tailor their finding approaches to address the strong ethnic ties with Islam among Persian peoples. Low levels of religious study and participation will require appropriate gospel teaching approaches in order to instill gospel study and regular church attendance among investigators and converts. Proselytism and the conversion of Muslims to Christianity are frowned upon, which will necessitate strong member-missionary programs that rely on member referrals for full-time missionaries. The drinking of green tea is contrary to LDS teachings.

¹⁰⁵ "Projects—Tajikistan," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 1 November 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-53,00.html>

National Outreach

The LDS Church has no official presence in Tajikistan at present as a result of missing the window of opportunity to establish a Church presence in the late 1990s and early 2000s when conditions were most favorable for foreign, missionary-based, nontraditional Christian groups. Factors that have likely contributed to the Church not establishing a presence during this period include the lack of any official presence in any other Central Asian nations with the exception of Kazakhstan starting in 2000, distance from operating mission outreach centers, the predominantly Muslim population, civil war and conflict in the region, a tenuous security situation, and a lack of expatriate American or Western Latter-day Saints living in the country. New religious legislation renders prospects for LDS national outreach in Tajikistan unfeasible until greater flexibility and religious freedom is granted to foreign religious groups. Three-quarters of the population resides in rural areas that are often difficult to access and sparsely populated. Reaching the majority of the population will require strategic planning and proper vision with limited mission resources from church leaders if LDS proselytism efforts are to take place one day.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

No convert baptisms appear to have occurred in Tajikistan, and no full-time missionaries have ever been assigned.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Troubled ethnic relations between Tajiks and other Central Asian peoples may manifest themselves in LDS congregations if established one day. Relations between Tajiks and other nationalities, including Russians, Ukrainians, and Koreans, are often better than relations between Tajiks and Uzbeks.

Language Issues

There remain no LDS materials in Tajik and Uzbek, the native languages of 95% of the population. However, many Tajiks speak Russian, especially in large cities like Dushanbe. Due to linguistic similarities between Tajik and Farsi, some Farsi LDS materials may be used in Tajikistan. However, Tajik has traditionally been written in the Cyrillic script for much of the past century, which reduces the utility of LDS Farsi materials. Nonetheless, LDS Farsi materials may be utilized in the future because Tajik was originally written in the Persian alphabet prior to Soviet occupation and the government has experimented with transitioning back over to the Persian alphabet script in recent years.

The translation of basic proselytism materials in Tajik and Uzbek, such as *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, will greatly facilitate missionary work among speakers of these languages in the event that Latter-day Saints conduct missionary activity among these ethnic groups. Russian translations of LDS materials will likely be first utilized as no materials are translated into other local languages, and use of Russian by the Church can foster communication between various ethnic groups.

Missionary Service

No known Tajikistanis have served a full-time mission, and no missionaries have been assigned to the country.

Leadership

It is unclear whether a native or a foreign member has previously led church activities in Tajikistan. Foreign members likely have played and will continue to play an important role mentoring native members. Local

church membership remains unable to staff leadership positions due to their limited numbers and lack of training.

Temple

Tajikistan is assigned to the Kyiv Ukraine Temple district. No regular temple trips occur, and there are no foreseeable prospects for a closer temple.

Comparative Growth

Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian nation with an official LDS presence and full-time missionaries assigned, whereas other former Soviet republics like Tajikistan have neither an official Church presence nor full-time missionaries assigned. Only Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have a few local members, whereas Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan appear to have no known native Latter-day Saints. Azerbaijan, the only other Muslim-majority former Soviet Republic, has no LDS presence.

Many Christian groups that proselyte report a presence in Tajikistan but experience slow growth and have few members. Jehovah's Witnesses have operated in Tajikistan for over fifty years.¹⁰⁶ Active Witnesses appear to number around 500.¹⁰⁷ Seventh Day Adventists baptize few converts and have experienced stagnant membership and congregational growth for much of the 2000s. Most Christian groups will likely grow slowly in the coming years due to government restrictions and cultural conditions, but a continued presence allows these denominations to lay dormant until conditions for missionary work improve. Latter-day Saints have no such advantage.

Future Prospects

The government specifically banning the LDS Church in 2010, the steady decline in religious freedom since independence, cultural proselytism restrictions, a lack Latter-day Saints, and no mission outreach centers in close proximity create an unfavorable climate for an official Church establishment in the near future. Latter-day Saints have missed the opportunity for an official Church establishment in the late 1990s and early 2000s following the civil war and prior to deterioration of religious freedom. There are ample opportunities for the Church to conduct humanitarian and development work that over time may improve relations with the government and better the living conditions of many, but a lack of a Church presence in Central Asia restricts the scope and frequency of aid and outreach in Tajikistan. Translations of Tajik and Uzbek LDS language materials will be needed to conduct missionary outreach if political conditions improve one day.

¹⁰⁶ "Jehovah's Witnesses appeal to the Supreme Court of Tajikistan," Jehovah's Witnesses Official Media Web Site, 2 February 2010. <http://www.jw-media.org/tjk/20100202.htm>

¹⁰⁷ "Written statement on Tajikistan by the European Association of Jehovah's Christian Witnesses," retrieved 1 November 2010. http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2007/09/26593_en.pdf

TURKMENISTAN

Geography

AREA: 488,100 square km. Landlocked in Central Asia, Turkmenistan borders Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, and the Caspian Sea. Most terrain consists of sandy dunes and plains of the Karakum Desert. Mountains line the Iranian border, and some plateaus and low hills are found near the Caspian Sea. Two large bodies of water are in the north: Sarygamysh Lake along the Uzbekistani border and a large lagoon of the Caspian Sea named Garabogazkol. The Amu Darya River runs along the Uzbekistani border. One of the longest canals in the world, the Karakum Canal carries water over 1,300 kilometers from the Amu Darya River across the desert to Ashgabat. Environmental issues include soil and groundwater contamination from agricultural chemicals and pesticides, soil salination, poor irrigation methods, Caspian Sea pollution, and the reduced ability of the Amu Darya River to replenish water in the Aral Sea as a result of large amounts of water diverted by the Karakum Canal. Turkmenistan is administratively divided into five provinces and one independent city.

Peoples

Turkmen: 85%

Uzbek: 5%

Russian: 4%

Other: 6%

Demographics have shifted since independence as a result of Russian and Uzbek emigration. In 1995, Russians accounted for 10% of the population and Uzbeks for 9%,¹⁰⁸ around twice the percentage in 2010. Turkmen and Uzbeks are traditionally Muslim and are Central Asian Turkic ethnic groups. Turkmen constitute the majority in nearly all populated areas. Uzbeks are concentrated along the Uzbekistani border, especially in the border town of Turkmenabat, where they constitute a majority. Russians reside in the largest cities and some isolated areas. Other ethnic groups account for a small minority and primarily consist of Central Asian Muslim groups.

Population: 5,054,828 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.143% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.14 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 65.87 male, 71.96 female (2012)

Languages: Turkmen (official) 72%, Russian (12%), Uzbek (9%), other (7%). Turkmen is the official language and the only language with over one million speakers (3.56 million).

Literacy: 98.8% (1999)

History

Humans have populated Turkmenistan for millennia, likely arriving from nearby areas that are more suitable

¹⁰⁸ "Turkmenistan," Rand McNally World Facts and Maps: 1995 edition, Rand McNally, 1995, p.200.

for human habitation. In the fourth century BC, Alexander the Great conquered the region. The Parthian Kingdom began ruling the area 150 years later, establishing its capital nearby modern-day Ashgabat. Islam spread to Turkmenistan as a result of Arabs invading the region in the seventh century AD. The establishment of the famed Silk Road occurred around this time, providing greater trade between Europe and Asia and traversing Central Asia. In an attempt to expand into Afghanistan, the Seljuk Empire based many of its resources in Turkmenistan in the mid-eleventh century. The Mongols conquered the region in the twelfth century, which was subsequently followed by foreign occupation by various empires and intertribal wars for the following seven centuries. Turkic groups entered the territory of Turkmenistan and gradually displaced or assimilated with indigenous peoples.

Merv, located in eastern Turkmenistan, is believed by many historians to have been the largest city in the world in the twelfth century before it was destroyed by the Mongols and its population massacred in 1221.¹⁰⁹ Turkman tribes were feared as nomadic raiders who raided surrounding settlements and carried off captives to be sold as slaves. The Russian Empire began expanding into Turkmenistan in the late nineteenth century, successfully capturing the area by 1894. Most large cities in Turkmenistan today are relatively young, dating back to the era of Russian colonialism.

In 1924, the Soviets formed the Turkmen Republic, one of the fifteen Soviet republics at the time. Turkmenistan became independent in 1991, and Saparmyrat Niyazov ruled as president until his death in 2006. The government remains highly centralized and maintains a monopoly on many sectors of the economy as well as tight control of the press. Many aspects of the constitution are not recognized by the government.¹¹⁰ Today, Turkmenistan is one of the most closed nations in the world. Foreign tourists must be accompanied by a registered tour guide, and visas list allowed areas of travel. Even residents of nearby Turkic Central Asian nations often face difficulty getting a visa.

Culture

Turkmen traditionally lived as nomadic horsemen in clans. Local carpet weaving is renowned internationally due to its intricate designs. Russian and Soviet occupation introduced the Russian language, spoken by nearly the entire urban population. Unlike many Muslim nations, polygamy is illegal in Turkmenistan. Cigarette consumption rates compare to the worldwide average, whereas alcohol consumption rates are low.

Genetic studies demonstrate that most Turkmen have European mitochondrial DNA lineages, with about 20% having Mongoloid lineages; the Turkmen ethnicity is characterized by a full phenotypic spectrum from European to Mongoloid.¹¹¹

Economy

GDP per capita: \$7,500 (2011) [15.6% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.686

Corruption Index: 1.6 (2011)

Irrigation has transformed many arid desert areas of Turkmenistan into productive agricultural land for cotton. Lower crop yields for cotton have dropped the country's former position as the tenth largest cotton producer worldwide. Turkmenistan has the world's fifth largest estimated natural gas reserves, contributing to the higher GDP per capita than in most other former Soviet Central Asian Republics. The government remains cautious about privatizing industry and economic reform. High unemployment rates (60% in 2004), widespread

¹⁰⁹ "Merv," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 9 December 2010. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merv>

¹¹⁰ "Background Note: Turkmenistan," Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, 19 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35884.htm>

¹¹¹ "Turkmen people," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 9 December 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkmen_people

poverty, government monopoly on oil and natural gas revenues, a limited education system, and corruption are barriers to greater economic development. Prospects appear highest for economic growth fueled by oil and natural gas exports, which are more easily transported through recently completed pipelines through China and Iran.

The president is the source of political power in Turkmenistan. Corruption is perceived as widespread and present in all areas of society. Transparency International ranks Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as the most corrupt among former Soviet republics. The government lacks financial transparency and severely limits many democratic freedoms. Turkmenistan is a transshipment point for Afghan narcotics destined for Russia and Europe, although the Turkmen government has taken steps to combat narcotic trafficking.

Faiths

Muslim: 89%
 Christian: 9%
 Unknown: 2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Russian Orthodox 100,000
 Armenian Apostolic 10,000
 Jehovah's Witnesses 500?
 Seventh Day Adventists 97 1
 Catholic 50
 Latter-day Saints less than 50 1

Religion

There is a strong link between Turkmen ethnicity and Islam. Most the population is Sunni Muslim. Since independence, there has been a revival of Islam, tightly controlled by the government as the number of mosques operating grew from 4 to 398 in 2009. Turkmenistan boasts the largest mosque in Central Asia in the village of Gypjak, the hometown of former president Saparmurat Niyazov, situated not far from the capital of Ashgabat. Local interpretations of Islam are a greater social influence than the traditional mosque-focused practice of Islam due to seventy years of Soviet rule, government restrictions, and the infusion of local culture with religious beliefs and practices. The Turkmen practice of Islam places a heavy influence on birth, marriage, death, and shrine pilgrimage. Christians constitute less than 10% of the population and are predominantly Russian Orthodox. There are approximately 1,000 Jews, most originating from Ukraine during World War II.¹¹²

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 19th

The constitution protects religious freedom, but the government restricts this right. The government limits activities of minority religious groups not for doctrinal reasons, but out of fear such groups will destabilize the government and lead to civil unrest, both from the side of Islamic extremist groups seeking to establish Sharia law and Western Christian groups perceived to desire greater democratic freedoms. There is no state religion. Religious groups must register to gain legal status; unregistered religious activity is illegal. The government

¹¹² "Turkmenistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127373.htm>

continues to refuse to register some religious groups and restricted registered religious groups from owning property, hosting foreign visitors, printing and importing religious material, and proselytism. Restrictions on religious freedom have increased since independence. However, the number of adult citizen members needed for a religious group to register with the government has declined. Until the 2003, the government required a religious group to have at least 500 members in a single locality for a congregation to be officially registered,¹¹³ whereas after 2003 only five adult members were required for a congregation to be registered. In 2003, a new religious law required all religious groups to register, made the operation of unregistered religious groups a crime, limited religious education, and tracked foreign financial and material assistance to religious groups. The government later retracted the criminalization of unregistered religious activity due to international pressure. The government has made little effort to disclose to the public which religious groups are officially registered, which may allow some repression of registered religious groups without societal backlash. Nine religious groups became the first to register with the government aside from Muslims and Russian Orthodox Christians in 2004. Some of the groups recognized at this time included an Evangelical Baptist church, Seventh Day Adventists, and Pentecostals. There have been no recent reports of societal abuse of religious freedom. Individuals from predominantly Muslim ethnic groups who convert to Christianity can be ostracized from the community. Many religious groups, whether registered or unregistered, report challenges locating meetinghouses for worship. The law bans foreign missionary activity and religious organizations and also requires the head of a local church to be a Turkmen citizen. Jehovah's Witnesses appear to be the most harassed religious group due to their noncompliance with mandatory military service and persistent proselytism. In the late 2000s, the government had relaxed some religious freedom restrictions, but at present religious freedom restrictions remain severe.¹¹⁴

Largest Cities

Urban: 49%

Ashgabat, Türkmenabat, Mary, Balkanabat, Bayramaly, Türkmenbasy, Tejen, Büzmeýin, Gowurdak, Atamyrat.

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

None of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Thirty percent (30%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

In 2000, Turkmenistan was assigned to the Europe East Area.¹¹⁵ In 2010, there was no official church presence. The Europe East Area directly administers Turkmenistan, which has never been assigned to an LDS mission. In 2010, the Church reported that a small group for American military personnel met in the country.¹¹⁶

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

With the possible exception of one or two individuals, Latter-day Saint membership appears to be entirely comprised of American expatriates or military personnel.

¹¹³ "Turkmenistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2002, retrieved 9 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/13987.htm>

¹¹⁴ "Turkmenistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127373.htm>

¹¹⁵ Lloyd, Scott. "European continent realigned into three new areas," LDS Church News, 16 September 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38475/European-continent---realigned-into-three-new-areas.html>

¹¹⁶ "Church Organization in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Isolated Areas," Military Relations, retrieved 8 November 2010. <http://lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,9138-1,00.html>

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 Groups: 1 (2012)

One LDS congregation meets in the country,¹¹⁷ likely in Ashgabat or Mary.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Russian

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are translated into Russian. The *Liabona* magazine has twelve Russian issues a year.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings appear to be held in the privacy of members' homes.

Health and Safety

Many religious groups that do not comply with the law are heavily persecuted by the government and have many of their members imprisoned in harsh conditions.

Humanitarian and Development Work

As of 2010, the LDS Church had no reported humanitarian or development projects occurring in the country.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The tight control of religious affairs by the government is the primary obstacle for Latter-day Saints to establish an official presence in Turkmenistan. Nonetheless, the decrease in the number of members required for a congregation to be registered in a city to five and the some relaxation of religious restrictions in the late 2000s under President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov are positive signs at a time when other Central Asian nations are further abrogating religious freedoms. Even if registered with the government, the Church could not proselyte and would most likely face harassment and monitoring from government authorities as with other registered nontraditional Christian groups. The LDS Church's careful respect for the law and emphasis on being good citizens diminishes these concerns. The reduction in the number of members needed to register a religious group in 2003 is a positive development for the LDS Church that increases the likelihood of an official Church establishment one day. A window may therefore exist for the establishment of the LDS Church in Turkmenistan that does not appear to exist in some other Central Asian nations. Latter-day Saints at present meet in a small group in private.

Cultural Issues

The strong ethno-religious tie between most Central Asian ethnic groups in Turkmenistan and Islam challenges efforts to establish the LDS Church among the indigenous population. Turkmen Islam differs from Islam practiced in many other nations as it is not as mosque-centered, but this difference will likely not make the population more receptive to the LDS Church due to deeply entrenched cultural customs intertwined

¹¹⁷ "Church Organization in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Isolated Areas," Military Relations, retrieved 8 November 2010. <http://lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,9138-1,00.html>

with Islamic beliefs and practices. There have been no reported instances of recent societal abuses of religious freedom, which may indicate that the population is more tolerant of religious minority groups than most nations in the region.

National Outreach

With the exception of those with close associations with the few Latter-day Saints in the country, the entire population remains unreached by the Church. There are no nearby LDS mission outreach centers in any bordering nations. Distance from the closest LDS mission, tight government restrictions since independence, prohibitions on foreign proselytizers, and predominantly Muslim population are factors that have prevented an official Church establishment. Prospects for establishing a future Church presence will most likely depend on progress made by expatriates building up the Church, concentrated outreach to Russian and Turkmen Christian minorities, and obeying the law.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

There have been no LDS convert baptisms in Turkmenistan. Member activity rates will most likely resemble the home nations of foreign members or the nations in which local members joined the Church.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

There have been no major ethnic conflicts in Turkmenistan in recent years. Ethnic integration issues will likely not be a significant problem for Latter-day Saints. Assimilating foreign and local members into the same congregation may be the greatest challenge.

Language Issues

Widespread use of Russian among the general population facilitates initial mission outreach efforts by Latter-day Saints as the Church has translated all LDS Scriptures and many church materials into this language. There are no LDS materials translated into Turkmen, spoken by 6.6 million worldwide primarily in Turkmenistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. No LDS materials are translated into Uzbek, spoken by 20.3 million worldwide. Few if any Latter-day Saints speak Turkmen, which may result in efforts to translate materials not coming to fruition for several more decades.

Missionary Service

No known Turkmen have served full-time missions. No missionary work had occurred in Turkmenistan as of 2010.

Leadership

As most of current LDS membership is nonnative, foreign members will likely constitute the local leadership for the foreseeable future.

Temple

Turkmenistan is assigned to the Kyiv Ukraine Temple district.

Comparative Growth

Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian nation with an official LDS presence and full-time missionaries assigned. Only Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have a few local members, whereas Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan appear to have no known native Latter-day Saints. Azerbaijan, the only other Muslim-majority former Soviet Republic, has no LDS presence. Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan each appear to have small groups of Latter-day Saints on United States government assignment.

Nontraditional Christian groups have established small communities among the indigenous population. The most successful groups appear to be Jehovah's Witnesses and Evangelicals. These groups experience steady government harassment and persecution that has limited their growth. Seventh Day Adventists report a small group of local members who regularly baptize new converts. Each of these missionary-oriented Christian groups arrived shortly after independence and some have obtained government registration.

Future Prospects

Proselytism bans, government restrictions on religious freedom, a lack of native Latter-day Saints, no government recognition, distance from the nearest mission, and a lack of church materials in Turkmen and Uzbek are significant obstacles that have prevented a formal Church establishment. Prospects appear poor for Latter-day Saints to perform missionary activity. Expatriate and local converts baptized abroad appear to be the only feasible means of a greater LDS establishment in the coming years. However, there is little international Turkmen diaspora in nations with LDS missions, and so prospects for an LDS presence in Turkmenistan in the medium term appear dim.

UZBEKISTAN

Geography

AREA: 447,400 square km. Doubly landlocked in Central Asia, Uzbekistan borders Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan. The low elevation desert plains and sand of the Kyzyl Kum Desert occupy most the terrain, with some mountainous areas in the extreme northeast and southeast. Continental climate occurs in most areas, characterized by hot, dry summers and cold, dry winters. Massive irrigation schemes that began diverting water to grow cotton starting in the 1960s from the Amu Darya and other major rivers that empty into the Aral Sea has resulted in the almost entire demise of the sea by the late 2000s in what many refer to as one of the greatest environmental disasters caused by mankind. Other environmental issues include blowing dust containing chemical pesticides and salts from the Aral Sea, water pollution, overuse of pesticides, increasing soil salinity, and nuclear and chemical contamination of the soil. Uzbekistan is administratively divided into twelve provinces, one autonomous republic, and one city.

Peoples

Uzbek: 80%
Russian: 5.5%
Tajik: 5%
Kazakh: 3%
Karakalpak: 2.5%
Tatar: 1.5%
Other: 2.5%

Constituting the majority, Uzbeks principally reside in the most densely populated areas of the east, south, and some areas of the west bordering Turkmenistan. Russians tend to live in the largest cities and in pockets of eastern Uzbekistan. Tajiks are concentrated in the east near the Tajikistani border and in the historical Persian cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, whereas Kazaks are primarily found in the Tashkent area, border regions with Kazakhstan, and in central Uzbekistan. Karakalpaks populate Karakalpakstan, located in west Uzbekistan south of the Aral Sea. Tatars populate a small area west of Samarkand.

Population: 28,394,180 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 0.94% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 1.86 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 69.74 male, 75.98 female (2012)

Languages: Uzbek (74.3%), Russian (14.2%), Tajik (4.4%), other (7.1%). Uzbek is the official language. Languages with over one million native speakers include Uzbek (20.7 million) and Russian (3.96 million).
Literacy: 99.3% (2003)

History

Nomadic tribes have populated Uzbekistan for millennia. Alexander the Great visited the region in 327 BC on his journey to India and married a local woman. The Arabs invaded Uzbekistan in the eighth century and

introduced Islam. Headquartered in present-day Uzbekistan, the Samanid Empire arose in the ninth century and ruled until the Mongol invasions in the early thirteenth century. In the fourteenth century, Samarkand became the capital of an empire established by Timur, which later divided into several city-states with political ties to Persia. The Silk Road traveled through the region, bringing additional commerce and exposure to foreign influences. The Russian Empire conquered Central Asia in the nineteenth century, placed the region under colonial administration, and encouraged Russian settlers to colonize the territory and cultivate cotton. Uzbekistan became a Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924, with the historically Tajik regions of Bukhara and Samarkand being annexed to the Uzbek Republic. Prior to independence in 1991, the Soviets took advantage of the abundant natural resources and cotton production potential. Islam Karimov, former Secretary of the Communist Party in Uzbekistan, has been the president of Uzbekistan since independence in 1990. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has instigated a low-intensity insurgency since the late 1990s, resulting in several terrorist attacks in Tashkent.

A 2005 massacre at Andijan, a city in the Ferghana Valley near the Kyrgyz border, and allegations of government cover-up, continue to strain relations between Uzbekistan, Western governments, and human rights groups. Allegations of human rights violations remain a concern, particularly with the lack of political opposition, the torture of prisoners, and the poor health conditions in prisons.¹¹⁸ The government maintains that nondemocratic measures are necessary to maintain stability and check the tendency of Islamic extremism and drug trafficking from surrounding nations. Uzbekistan has experienced relative stability in contrast to the violence and lawlessness in neighboring Tajikistan and Afghanistan and has largely succeeded in eradicating the poppy cultivation.

In mid-2010, approximately 100,000 ethnic Uzbeks residing in Kyrgyzstan sought temporary refuge in Uzbekistan due to ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan. The Uzbek government exercised considerable restraint and was commended by the U.S. ambassador for its humanitarian efforts.

Culture

Uzbeks and other Turkic ethnic groups originally lived nomadic lifestyles on the steppes of Central Asia. Islam traditionally shaped local culture and customs, but Russian and Soviet occupation have muted religious activity and participation. A revival of faith has begun to gather momentum in recent years. Cultural practices and attitudes often vary by ethnic group and location, with large cities exhibiting more ethnic diversity. Breads, noodles, mutton, palov (a rice-meat-vegetable dish), Shurpa (a vegetable-meat soup), and green tea are common foods. Several Uzbekistani athletes have competed in the Olympics and other worldwide sporting events.¹¹⁹ Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are low. Like many other Central Asian Muslim nations, polygamy is illegal.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$3,300 (2011) [6.86% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.641

Corruption Index: 1.6 (2011)

Uzbekistan posted steady economic growth in the late 2000s and possesses plentiful mineral resources and fossil fuels, namely natural gas, oil, gold, uranium, silver, copper, tungsten, molybdenum, lead, and zinc. Uzbekistan benefits from a highly literate, educated populace despite limited economic development. Tight government controls over the economy have limited economic growth, trade, and foreign investment, which has reduced effects from the global financial crisis but has increased underemployment and decreased wages.

¹¹⁸ "Background Note: Uzbekistan," Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, 19 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2924.htm>

¹¹⁹ "Culture of Uzbekistan," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 24 November 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Uzbekistan

In recent years, trade opportunities have expanded with Russia, the United States, China, and South Korea. Twenty-six percent (26%) of the population lives below the poverty line, and many experience poor standards of living. Services employ 36% of the labor force and generate 33% of the GDP. Industry accounts for 20% of the labor force and generates 40% of the GDP, whereas agriculture employs 44% of the labor force and generates 27% of the GDP. Major industries include textiles, food processing, machinery, metallurgy, gold, natural gas, and chemicals. Cotton, vegetables, fruit, grain, and livestock are agricultural products. Primary trade partners include Russia, Ukraine, China, and South Korea.

Transparency International ranked Uzbekistan as the seventh most corrupt nation worldwide in 2009. Human trafficking of girls and women for commercial sexual exploitation in the region and men for forced labor in construction, cotton, and tobacco industries is a major problem. Child labor is a serious concern, especially in cotton harvesting. Uzbekistan is a transshipment point for illicit Afghan drugs to Europe and Russia. The government has eradicated most of the opium poppy crops and has pledged to fight trafficking in recent years. Corruption has worsened in the past decade, permeating all areas of society and weakening the education system.¹²⁰

Faiths

Muslim: 90%

Christian: 9%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 5,000

Seventh Day Adventists 1,237 12

Jehovah's Witnesses less than 100 1

Latter-day Saints less than 100 1

Religion

Sunni Muslims are estimated to account for 90% of the population, but many do not actively participate in their faith. Russian Orthodox Christian constitutes the majority of the remaining population. Religious participation has increased in recent years among both religious groups, primarily among youth who account for the majority of active adherents. Most indigenous Jews have emigrated to Israel or the United States, but today there are between 15,000 and 20,000 Ashkenazi and Bukharan Jews who principally reside in Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand. 3% of the population follows other Christian denominations, atheism, Buddhism, the Baha'i faith, or Hare Krishna.¹²¹ Most non-Muslims and non-Orthodox Christians reside in the largest cities.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 16th

The constitution protects religious freedom, but the government restricts this right. The status of religious freedom continues to deteriorate. The 1998 Religious Law permits only recognized religious groups to operate

¹²⁰ "Background Note: Uzbekistan," Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, 19 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2924.htm>

¹²¹ "Uzbekistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127374.htm>

and regulates which religious groups may register with the government. Registered religious groups may worship, establish schools, train clergy, and are granted freedom from persecution. However, the government frequently interferes with religious activities of registered religious groups despite previous granting of approval. Proselytism, importing or distributing religious literature, private religious instruction, the wearing of religious clothing in public places by nonclergy, and teaching religious subjects in public schools are illegal. Religious groups must obtain a license to publicize or distribute religious material. To register, religious groups must provide a list of one hundred citizen members to the Ministry of Justice. Training religious workers and clergy for registered religious groups is only permitted if a religious group has a registered central administrative body, which requires a presence in eight of the thirteen administrative provinces. The government differentiates between “illegal” and “prohibited” groups. Participation in prohibited groups, many of which are extremist Islamic groups, is a criminal offense. Many unregistered religious groups have been subject to harassment, raids, and imprisonment, especially those that allegedly proselyte. The media frequently portrays some minority religious groups in a negative light. Although the government provides little room for minority religious groups to operate, Uzbek society is generally tolerable of other religious groups. Uzbeks who have recently converted to Christianity may experience some social pressure, especially outside the larger cities. Many nontraditional Christian groups are unable to register additional congregations, lose registration status for functioning congregations, or are unable to register at all.¹²²

Largest Cities

Urban: 37%

Tashkent, Namangan, Samarkand, Andizhan, Nukus, Buchar, Karshi, Kokand, Fergana, Margilan, Chirchik, Urganch, Dzizak, Angren, Termez, Navoi, Almalyk.

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

None of the seventeen cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Twenty percent (20%) of the national population resides in the seventeen largest cities.

LDS History

The Europe East Area began administering Uzbekistan in 2000.¹²³ A small group for LDS United States military personnel began meeting in the 2000s. In 2010, a Korean Uzbekistani LDS convert, became the first Uzbekistani to serve a full-time mission in the Korea Daejon Mission. In late 2010, the Europe East Area directly administered Uzbekistan.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 100 (2012)

Latter-day Saint membership appears to entirely consist of American expatriates or military personnel. There may be a couple of local Uzbek LDS converts who joined the Church abroad and returned to Uzbekistan.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 Groups: 1 (2012)

There is one LDS group that meets the needs of U.S. military personnel.¹²⁴ Uzbekistan has never been assigned to an LDS mission.

¹²² “Uzbekistan,” International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127374.htm>

¹²³ Lloyd, Scott. “European continent realigned into three new areas,” LDS Church News, 16 September 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38475/European-contin---realigned-into-three-new-areas.html>

¹²⁴ “Group Leader Locations,” Military Relations, retrieved 24 November 2010. <http://lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,5463-1,00>.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Russian, Arabic, Turkish, Korean, Ukrainian, Armenian (East), Armenian (West).

All LDS scriptures and most materials are translated into Russian, Arabic, Korean, Ukrainian, and Armenian (East). LDS materials translated in Uzbek are limited to the Articles of Faith. *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, Book of Mormon selections, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are translated in the western dialect of Armenian, which is spoken outside of Armenia. The only LDS scripture in Turkish is the Book of Mormon. Many unit, temple, priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, young women, primary, missionary, and family history materials are available in Turkish. Kazakh LDS materials are limited to the Sacrament Prayers, a basic unit guidebook, the Articles of Faith, and hymns and children's songs. Uzbek translations of LDS materials are limited to the Articles of Faith. The *Liahona* magazine has twelve Russian, Korean, and Ukrainian issues, and four Armenian (East) issues a year.

Meetinghouses

The group likely meets on a military base or in the privacy of members' homes.

Health and Safety

Many religious groups that do not comply with the law are heavily persecuted and have many of their members imprisoned in harsh conditions. Health care infrastructure is moderate in large cities but is underdeveloped in small towns and villages. Violent crime is infrequent.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 2001, the LDS Church shipped winter clothing to Afghan refugees.¹²⁵ No other LDS service projects have occurred in Uzbekistan as of late 2010.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Tight government control over religious freedom and the regulated operation of nontraditional religious groups severely limits any prospective Latter-day Saint presence among the indigenous population at present. There are no realistic prospects of the LDS Church to gain recognition from the government at present due to few or no Latter-day Saint Uzbekistani citizens, as religious groups must have at least one hundred citizens to register. If registered, the LDS Church would face significant challenges importing religious literature, conducting member-missionary work, and would likely be unable to place any foreign full-time missionaries even if their assignment was for humanitarian purposes. Uzbekistani LDS converts baptized abroad returning to their homeland appear to be the only realistic means of establishing a Church presence among the native population in the face of religious freedom restrictions. In view of the small number of Uzbek converts abroad (primarily in Russia), few of whom return to their homeland, there appear to be no realistic medium-term prospects for meeting the threshold of one hundred citizen members required for registration, and it is not clear that registration would be granted even if this threshold were met. LDS military personnel do not appear to face any major restrictions in their private worship.

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¹²⁵ "Winter clothing shipped to Afghan refugees," LDS Church News, 10 November 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40853/Winter-clothing-shipped-to-Afghan-refugees.html>

Cultural Issues

Uzbeks are among the most tolerant of minority religious groups among ethnically Muslim Turkic peoples in the region. Prospective LDS converts would likely face harassment and isolation from their local communities for a time for leaving their traditional religious groups, but these effects would likely not impact the long-term activity of LDS members. Karakalpaks have maintained rigid observance of Islam despite past communist influence that has lessened religious activity and affiliation rates among most ethnic groups in Uzbekistan. Karakalpaks appear to be the ethnic group that may be most resistant to prospective Christian proselytism. In recent years, mosque and church attendance have steadily increased due to an increase of religious interest among male youth. Historically low religious activity rates among Muslims may favor future LDS missionary activity one day, but increasing activity rates among traditional religious groups may reduce receptivity as the population becomes more entrenched in traditional religious beliefs and practices that discourage involvement in nontraditional religions.

National Outreach

The entire population is unreached by the LDS Church with the possible exception of the personal contacts of LDS military personnel and expatriates. No LDS missions operate in Central Asia, which challenges efforts to extend outreach in Uzbekistan if government restrictions are relaxed one day. In late 2010, the nearest LDS mission outreach center functioned nearly 700 kilometers away in Almaty, Kazakhstan and extended no additional outreach outside the Almaty area. Latter-day Saints have not established an official presence due to Uzbekistan's isolation from LDS mission outreach centers, a Muslim-majority population, the tightening of restrictions of religious freedom since 1998, few LDS expatriates, and no noticeable breakthrough with Uzbeks joining the Church abroad in countries with LDS missions. Tashkent will be central to future LDS mission outreach if pursued one day as it is the largest city and located close to the most densely populated areas of Uzbekistan. Prospects for a greater LDS presence in the future will depend on greater numbers of Uzbeks joining the Church abroad, the development of a nonmilitary LDS expatriate community, the translation of church materials and scripture into Uzbek, and improvement in religious freedom conditions for nontraditional religious groups. The withdrawal of American military personnel prior to the development of a small group of self-sufficient local members may severely impair the Church establishing an official presence over the long term.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

There have been no LDS convert baptisms in Uzbekistan. Member activity rates will most likely reflect those exhibited by LDS military members and in the home nations of foreign members or the nations in which local members joined the Church.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

There have been no major challenges integrating differing ethnic groups into society in recent years. The potential for conflict appears highest between Russians and Turkic peoples due to religious, cultural, linguistic, and historical differences. If LDS missionary activity commences one day, the Church will have to appropriately assimilate foreign and local members into the same congregation initially.

Language Issues

As of late 2010, LDS materials in Uzbek consisted of just the Articles of Faith, which were likely translated in 2010. Uzbek is a macro-language not only spoken in Uzbekistan but in many other Central Asian and southwestern Asian nations with 20.3 million speakers. Prior to the translation of the Articles of Faith, Uzbek

was the language with the ninth most speakers without LDS materials worldwide. Widespread use of Russian in large cities by many may permit the use of Russian language LDS scriptures and materials initially if proselytism occurs one day.

Missionary Service

Only one local member has served a full-time mission. No missionary work had occurred in Uzbekistan as of 2010.

Leadership

As most of current LDS membership is nonnative U.S. military, nonnatives will likely constitute the local leadership for many years.

Temple

Uzbekistan is assigned to the Kyiv Ukraine Temple district.

Comparative Growth

Uzbekistan is the most populous of the former Soviet Central Asian republics, yet Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian nation with an official LDS presence and full-time missionaries assigned. Other former Soviet Republics have neither an official Church presence nor full-time missionaries assigned. Only Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have a few local members, whereas Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan appear to have no known native Latter-day Saints. Azerbaijan, the only other Muslim-majority former Soviet Republic, has no LDS presence. Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan each appear to have small groups of Latter-day Saints on United States government assignment.

Many missionary-oriented Christian denominations have gained small numbers of converts, especially among Uzbeks and Russians. Fifty-eight Korean Christian, twenty-three Baptist, twenty-one Pentecostal, and three Lutheran churches were registered in May 2008.¹²⁶ In the late 2000s and in 2010, many of these groups reported low membership growth rates and few new converts. Seventh Day Adventists have experienced membership and congregational decline over the 2000s. The number of annual convert baptisms is less than half of the numbers prior to 2007. Legal obstacles and government interference have significantly reduced the impact and reception of these religious groups by Uzbek society. Many of these groups struggle to import, print, and distribute religious literature due to bans and tight government regulation of printed religious materials.

Future Prospects

Proselytism bans, government restrictions on religious freedom, a lack of native Latter-day Saints, no government recognition, distance from the nearest mission, and a lack of church materials in Uzbek and other Turkic languages found in the region are significant obstacles that prevent a Church establishment among the general population. LDS missionary activity may occur one day if the government permits greater religious freedom for nontraditional religious groups, substantial numbers of Uzbekistanis join the Church abroad and return to their homeland, and a strong expatriate LDS community is permanently established in Tashkent.

¹²⁶ "Uzbekistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127374.htm>

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Algeria, Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq,
Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania,
Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia,
Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates,
Western Sahara, Yemen.

REGIONAL PROFILE

Geography

AREA: 15,226,838 square km. Spanning the northern portion of Africa, the Arabia Peninsula, Iran, Anatolia, and Cyprus, the Middle East and North Africa primarily consists of hot, arid deserts bisected by large rivers and punctuated by pockets of wetter, more fertile areas that experience Mediterranean climate. Major seas and bodies of water include the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Black Sea, Arabian Sea, Aegean Sea, Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Dead Sea, Lake Van, and Lake Urmia. Major rivers such as the Euphrates, Tigris, and Nile offer sustenance to local populations, moderate local climate, and produce excellent agricultural conditions in the valleys. Notable deserts include the Arabian and Sahara Deserts. Other large deserts occupy vast areas of Iran and the Near East. Large mountain ranges are concentrated in the Near East, Morocco, Algeria, Iran, and Turkey and include the Lebanon, Albortz, Zagros, Atlas, and Ahaggar Ranges. Dust storms, drought, flooding, and earthquakes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include desertification, oil spills, pollution, deforestation, overgrazing, soil degradation, water scarcity, and reliance on desalinating sea water to meet fresh-water needs.

Peoples

Arab and Arab-Berber mix: 58%

Turkish: 11%

Persian: 8%

Kurd: 5%

Azeri: 4%

Other/unknown: 14%

Population: 503,117,127 (July 2011)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.8% (2011)

Fertility Rate: 2.85 (2011)

Life Expectancy: 70.89 male, 74.95 female (2011)

Languages: Arabic dialects (56%), Turkish (9%), Farsi (4.4%), Kurdish (3.1%), Berber languages (2.5%), Azerbaijani (2.2%), other or unknown (22.8%). Arabic dialects are the most widely spoken languages in the region and are the official languages of every nation in the Middle East and North Africa with only a few exceptions. Languages with over ten million speakers include Arabic (281 million), Turkish (46.5 million), Farsi (22 million), Kurdish (15.7 million), Berber languages (12.6 million), and Azerbaijani (11.2 million).

Literacy: 50.2%–97.6% (country average: 78.6%)

History

Many of the world's oldest and most technologically advanced ancient civilizations thrived in the Middle East and North Africa notwithstanding the wide expanses of desert and harsh living conditions. Many nation states and kingdoms were established in fertile areas with modified climate from large rivers or nearby seashore, such as the Nile River delta, Mesopotamia, and isolated regions along the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts. Syria's present-day capital Damascus was founded in about 2500 BC and is one of the oldest continuously

inhabited cities. In Egypt, a unified kingdom arose as early as 3200 BC and maintained control of Egypt until conquered by the Persians in 341 BC. Various ancient civilizations flourished in the Mesopotamian Cradle of Civilization, including the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans. Cuneiform is the oldest known form of ancient writing; it was etched on clay tablets in the region as early as four millennia before the birth of Christ. Many innovations of early civilization derive from this region. Phoenician seafarers and traders established colonies and cities along the North African coast during the second and first millennia before Christ. Formerly known as Persia, Iran is home to some of the longest inhabited cities in the world, which date back several millennia BC. The Medes and Persians unified into the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire by the sixth century BC, which at its height ruled from Egypt to Southeastern Europe on the east and to Afghanistan on the west. The Carthaginians ruled much of North Africa from the seventh century until conquered by the Romans in the second century BC. Additional notable ancient civilizations that ruled portions of the Middle East and Anatolia at one time or another include Hittites, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Phrygians, Hebrews, Arameans, and Mycenaean Greeks. The Greeks and later Romans annexed much of North Africa and the Middle East during the centuries before and after the birth of Christ.

Known as the “Promised Land” of the Jewish people, Israel numbers among the oldest inhabited nations in the known world. The Kingdom of Israel was established around the eleventh century before Christ and divided into two kingdoms (Judah and Israel). The Assyrians and later Babylonians invaded the region, with the latter taking captive the remaining Jews and exiling many to Mesopotamia; a fraction returned decades later. Christianity began in Israel in the first century AD, and the majority of Christ’s ministry occurred in present-day Israel. Saul of Tarsus, who later became the apostle Paul, received his vision of Christ on the road to Damascus, as recorded in the New Testament book of Acts of the Apostles. The early Christian Church had connections to Cyprus, which served as a crossroads for apostles on missionary journeys throughout the eastern Mediterranean. The Romans subdued Jewish revolts in the first century AD and ultimately relocated most of the Jewish population elsewhere in the Roman World, leading to the Diaspora of Jewish peoples throughout North Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

The Parthian Empire emerged in the third century BC in Iran and ruled until the third century AD, holding off Roman advances in the region for several hundred years. Vandal and Visigoth invasions and the collapse of Rome in the fifth century AD led to sporadic independence and self-rule for many areas of North Africa, punctuated by Vandal raids and the expansion of the Byzantine Empire, which at its height ruled nearly all coastal areas of the Middle East and North Africa and most of Anatolia by the sixth century. The advent of Islam in the early seventh century in the Arabian Peninsula resulted in the rapid spread of the religion throughout nearly the entire region in only a couple centuries and severely crippled the power of the Byzantine Empire and significantly reduced its territorial claims. Arabs spread the Arabic language throughout the region and significantly influenced local cultural customs and practices but encountered stiff resistance in Mauritania among local African tribes and Berbers. The Omayyad Empire based its capital in Damascus and at its peak stretched from Spain to India from 661 to 750. The Sassanid Empire ruled until the seventh century in Iran when Islam was introduced and superseded the previously dominant Zoroastrian religion. The Muslim Moors fought with Spain for control of the southern Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages, and Spain attempted to expand its influence in Morocco thereafter. The Sassanids and Qarmatians also ruled areas of the Middle East following the fall of the Roman Empire and before the rise of the Ottoman Empire in the region include. Various Christian crusader states were established in Palestine during the Middle Ages but were eventually overrun.

The Mongols invaded northern areas of the Middle East in the thirteenth century. Based in Constantinople [Istanbul], the Ottoman Empire reached its zenith in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and ruled nearly the entire Middle East and North Africa region, stretching from Hungary, southeastern Europe, and coastal areas of the Black Sea to the north, coastal areas of North Africa and the Red Sea to the south, and the Near East and Iraq to the east. The Portuguese ruled the eastern portions of the Arabian Peninsula for 150

years from the sixteenth to late seventeenth centuries. The introduction of square-rigged, heavily armed ships instead of galleys by Captain Jack Ward, an English privateer and Islamic convert-turned pirate who operated from Tunis, provided the Barbary Pirates with technological superiority that facilitated their domination of the Western Mediterranean for nearly two centuries until the early nineteenth century. Barbary Pirates operating from bases in Algeria and Tunisia captured thousands of ships and raided long segments of the Spanish and Italian coasts; an estimated 1–1.25 million Europeans were enslaved by the Barbary Pirates.

European influence superseded that of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as France conquered or was assigned League of Nations trusteeship over much of North Africa and Syria, whereas Iraq and Transjordan [Israel, Palestine, and Jordan] were placed under League of Nations mandate to the United Kingdom following World War I. In the nineteenth century, the British gained control of Cyprus, Qatar, Sudan, and South Yemen, France annexed Mauritania, and Spain claimed Spanish Sahara [Western Sahara]. In 1869, the Suez Canal began trafficking ships from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, drastically reducing travel times from Europe to Asia and increasing trade and commerce. The British took control of Egypt in 1882. Starting in 1899, Kuwait signed a treaty with the British that gave the British control of foreign relations and defense. Following World War I, France gained control of Lebanon from the Ottoman Empire and separated it from Syria. Italy invaded Libya in 1911 and made it a colony. Italy retained control of Libya until Italian forces were defeated by Allied powers in 1943 during World War II. In Iran, the Qajar dynasty began in 1725 and endured until 1925, followed by the Pahlavi dynasty from 1925 to 1979. European colonialism never occurred in Persia; however, wars were fought with Russia and the British.

Nearly all present-day nations in the Middle East and North Africa became independent, sovereign nations during the twentieth century. Independence was achieved for North Yemen from the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Egypt from the United Kingdom in 1922, Turkey as the successor state to the Ottoman Empire in 1923, Iraq from the United Kingdom in 1932, Saudi Arabia following the unification of various Saudi states in 1932, Lebanon from France in 1943, Jordan from the United Kingdom in 1946, Israel from the United Kingdom in 1948, Libya from a United Nations trusteeship in 1951, Oman from a special treaty with the United Kingdom in 1951, Sudan from the United Kingdom in 1956, Morocco from France in 1956, Tunisia from France in 1956, Algeria from France in 1960, Cyprus from the United Kingdom in 1960, Mauritania from France in 1960, Kuwait from the United Kingdom in 1961, South Yemen from the United Kingdom in 1967, Bahrain from the United Kingdom in 1971, Qatar from the United Kingdom in 1971, and the United Arab Emirates from the United Kingdom in 1971.

The Middle East and North Africa have experienced an extreme imbalance in economic growth and development over the past century largely due to the availability of natural resources, efficiency of national governments, the prevalence of corruption, and interethnic conflict. Lebanon was the regional banking hub until civil war erupted in the 1970s. Rapid modernization occurred in the Gulf States during the latter-half of the twentieth century and during the early twenty-first century due to the exploitation of significant oil and natural gas reserves. Turkey experienced steady industrialization and growth during the twentieth century as it capitalized on its large population, geographic location, and ties with Europe. North African nations face many humanitarian problems due to inadequate housing, poor living conditions, rapid population growth during the twentieth century, and high unemployment. Radical Islamic groups such as Al Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb have perpetrated terrorist acts directed toward governments in North Africa and the West. Sporadic fighting from rebel groups in Algeria has occurred intermittently over the past several decades. With assistance from the Soviet Union, the Aswan Dam was completed in 1971 in Egypt. The dam has prevented nutrient rich waters from inundating agricultural land along the Nile, resulting in declining soil quality. Egypt has recently become one of the most militarily powerful nations in the region.

Significant conflict has occurred in the region from the 1940s to present day as a result of civil and interstate wars, military coups, ethnic conflict, poor economic conditions, and limited democratic freedoms. Jewish

settlers began immigrating to Palestine during the early twentieth century, initiating conflict and violence with Arab Palestinians over the planned Jewish state of Israel. Upon Israeli independence, surrounding Arab states immediately invaded Israel in 1948 but a year later, Israel gained 50% more territory following the signing of armistice agreements. Severe political instability persisted from 1946 to the late 1960s in Syria as successive military coups took control. In 1958, a joint Syria-Egypt state known as the United Arab Republic emerged, but Syria seceded from the union in 1961 following another military coup. In Iraq, a coup overthrew the monarchy and government in the late 1950s, establishing a socialist government that transformed into a totalitarian dictatorship under Saddam Hussein. Civil war plagued Sudan for nearly half a century following independence. In 1967, the Six Days War was fought between Israel and Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and resulted in Israel annexing the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. A formal peace treaty was not reached between Israel and Egypt until 1979. Friction between the two Yemeni states occurred during the 1970s and 1980s, and Yemen has been politically unstable since unification in 1990. Turkey invaded Cyprus in the 1970s, and the de facto state of Northern Cyprus continues to rule areas conquered by Turkey. Significant resistance movements in predominantly Kurdish areas in Turkey and Iraq have led to instability and violence for decades. Morocco annexed Western Sahara in the late 1970s and continues to control the area, although this action is not recognized by the international community. In 1979, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was pronounced “Supreme Leader” in Iran upon the overthrow of the Shah and took power through the establishment of a theocratic government. A long, bloody war between Iran and Iraq was fought from 1980 to 1988 and resulted with mass casualties to both sides. In the 1970s and 1980s, Libyan-leader Muammar Qadhafi attempted to spread his unique political ideologies abroad by sponsoring terrorism, targeting Western interests. Bombings sponsored by Libya in the 1980s in Europe against Western interests resulted in an American militarily offensive in 1986. In Lebanon, civil war lasted from 1975 to 1990, severely damaging the country’s infrastructure and dissuading foreign investment. Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 and was repelled by the United States and coalition forces shortly thereafter. In the 2000s, the international community comprised of the United States, European Union, the United Nations, and Russia have collaborated with Israeli and Palestinian forces for the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state that can peacefully coexist with Israel, but these efforts have met consistent frustration and delay due to ongoing hostilities, the terrorist activities of Hamas, Hezbollah, and other groups, and difficult negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government. In 2003, the United States and coalition forces invaded Iraq due to Iraqi noncompliance with United Nations inspectors and alleged stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, although such weapons were never found. Political instability, terrorist attacks, and ethnic violence enveloped Iraq for much of the remainder of the 2000s. Boundary conflicts and military skirmishes between Lebanon and Israel have occurred over the past several decades, culminating in a month-long conflict in 2006 instigated by Hizballah (Hezbollah) fighters in which Israel crippled Lebanon’s infrastructure. The future status of Western Sahara and Palestinian-controlled territories remained uncertain as of early 2011.

Beginning in late 2010, unprecedented rioting, civil disorder, demonstrations, and protests spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa by social media and the Internet demanding greater democratic freedoms, changes in government administration, and economic reforms. By mid-May 2011, revolutions occurred in Egypt and Tunisia; a civil war enveloped Libya; significant government changes occurred in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, and Syria; and major protests occurred in Algeria, Iran, Iraq, and Morocco.

Culture

Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam each originated from the Middle East, but today Islam is the primary influence on culture and society in all countries in the region except for Cyprus, Israel, and Lebanon. Islamic law, known as Shari’a law, is the primary source of legislation in most nations and is applied in full or in part throughout the region. North African nations have homogenous Arab-Berber populations that have a strong ethno-religious tie to Islam. Many Gulf States have a more cosmopolitan atmosphere due to the large nonnative population from East and South Asia, Europe, and North America, but Islamic law is still

strictly enforced. Hospitality and greeting are heavily emphasized in most Arab countries. Archaeological sites are common throughout the region. Commonly eaten foods in the Middle East and North Africa include chicken, lamb, vegetables, yogurt, olives, spices, rice, nuts, bread, fish, humus, bread, and couscous. Coffee and tea are commonly consumed, and it is impolite for guests to refuse either drink in many nations in the Middle East. Literature in many nations is a fusion of indigenous and colonial influences. Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are generally very low. Pork is often unavailable in many nations in the region or not served publicly due to dietary regulations banning the meat for Muslims and Jews. Polygamy is common and legal in most nations in accordance with Shari'a law, and women generally have fewer rights than men.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$10,350 national median (2011) [21.8% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.687

Corruption Index: 4.0

Abundant petroleum and natural gas reserves have fueled economic growth in the Middle East and North Africa since the mid-twentieth century. Petroleum exports for some nations account for as much as 90% of total export earnings. The Gulf States include some of the world's wealthiest countries due to abundant oil and natural gas reserves, strategic geographic location, and fiscally effective national governments and economic policies. Bahrain competes with Malaysia as a center of banking for the Muslim world. Many governments in the Gulf States have diversified their economies in recent years to include tourism and other services, but a lack of additional natural resources challenges efforts for greater economic diversification. High unemployment rates among the indigenous population in many nations in the region are a major challenge. Standards of living are lowest in North Africa and in nations without significant oil and natural gas reserves, such as Yemen. Tight government controls on the economy have dissuaded foreign investment in many nations and limit economic growth. Limited fresh water is a major concern for governments to address, and many wealthier nations rely heavily on water desalinization to support their burgeoning populations. War, political instability, poverty, and low literacy rates have continued to frustrate greater economic development in many nations. Israel possesses an advanced market economy that has diversified and developed over the past several decades despite limited natural resources and regional instability. Services account for half or more of the GDP in most nations in the region with the exception of some oil-rich nations, such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia, where industry generates the majority of the GDP. Natural resources consist of petroleum, natural gas, valuable minerals, industrial metals, arable land, hydropower, timber, clay, and sand. Common crops and agricultural products include grains, fruit, vegetables, olives, dates, cotton, nuts, beef, mutton, poultry, and qat. Petroleum and natural gas exploitation and refining, chemicals, tourism, clothing, cement, fertilizer, construction, mining, banking, wood products, and metal products are prevalent industries. Primary trade partners include the United States, Western Europe, and East Asia.

Overall, the region experiences high rates of perceived corruption due to few democratic freedoms, little government transparency, the dominance of state-run companies, and highly valuable oil and natural gas earnings in the hands of a small elite. Common challenges include human trafficking, illicit drug trafficking, bribery, embezzlement, intrinsic government corruption, weapons trafficking, and financing terrorist groups. Money laundering is a serious concern in Bahrain, Cyprus, and Israel due to their status as banking centers. There have been some limited anti-corruption efforts in recent years. Corruption is perceived as the least prevalent in the Gulf States and the most rampant in Iraq, Sudan, Yemen, Iran, Mauritania, and disputed territories.

Faiths

Muslim: 92%

Christian: 5.2%

Jewish: 1.2%

Other/unknown: 1.6%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Coptic Christians 8,105,200

Catholic denominations 4,854,381

Orthodox denominations 3,205,833

Seventh Day Adventists 12,200 85

Jehovah's Witnesses 10,900 147+

Latter-day Saints 5,000 78+

Religion

With the exception of Cyprus, Israel, and Lebanon, all countries in the Middle East and North Africa are homogeneously Muslim, and Islam is the primary influence on everyday life, society, and government notwithstanding Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity all being founded in the region. Muslims account for 95% or more of the population in Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Turkey, Western Sahara, and Yemen and between 90% and 95% of the population in Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Syria. Muslims account for smaller percentages in Kuwait (85%), Bahrain (81%), and Qatar (77.5%), and the United Arab Emirates (76%) due to the large number of non-Muslim foreigners from North America, Europe, the Philippines, and South Asia residing in these nations. The indigenous population in each of these four nations is 99% Muslim. All predominantly Muslim nations in the region are Sunni majority with the exception of Bahrain, Iran, and Iraq, which have Shi'a majorities. Conflict between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims occurs in many countries, including Iraq and Bahrain. The percentage of Muslims in Sudan is uncertain due to the secession of South Sudan, but Muslims were estimated to account for 60% of Sudan as a whole in the 2000s. Sixty percent (60%) of the population of Lebanon is Muslim. Muslims account for 18% of the population in Cyprus and 16.8% in Israel. Millions of Muslims from around the world travel to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimages, including the annual Hajj and Umrah, the latter of which can occur at any time during the year.¹²⁷

Christian populations in the Middle East and North Africa have dwindled over the past century due to emigration and low birth rates.¹²⁸ Cyprus is the only Christian-majority nation in the region, and 95% of the population in government-controlled areas adheres to the Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus. In 2006, a poll found that only 19% of Greek Cypriots reported attending church weekly, and over half reported attending only on holidays or rarely attended church services.¹²⁹ The majority of the population in Northern Cyprus is Muslim (98%) but is very secular, and only 10% attended religious services regularly. Lebanon is 39% Christian. Many different traditional Christian groups operate in Lebanon, the largest being Maronite Catholics, followed by Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics. Many small, ancient Christian denominations, including as Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Copts, are established. Egypt supports the largest Christian population of any country in the region, and 80% or more of Christians are Coptic Orthodox. The number of Christians in Iraq halved from 800,000 to 1.4 million in 2003 to between 400,000 and 600,000 in 2010 due to emigration. Associated with the Catholic

¹²⁷ "Saudi Arabia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127357.htm>

¹²⁸ "Israel and the Occupied Territories," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148825.htm>

¹²⁹ "Cyprus," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127305.htm>

Church, Chaldean Christians are the largest Christian denomination in Iraq and account for two-thirds of the Christian population. Assyrian Christians (Church of the East) are the second largest denomination and constitute approximately 20% of Iraqi Christians.¹³⁰ Approximately 10% of Syrians are Christians, although due to emigration the percentage of Christians may have fallen to 8%. The Greek Orthodox Church is the largest Christian denomination in Syria.¹³¹ In Algeria, most Christians and Jews fled Algeria after independence or in the 1990s due to intolerance and violence from Muslim extremists

Traditional Orthodox Christian and Catholic denominations comprised of indigenous ethnic groups account for the majority of Christians in Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Turkey. Minority ethnic groups such as Armenians account for many of these traditional Christians in these nations. Migrant workers and expatriates account for the majority of Christians in Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, and Yemen, as most Christians are Roman Catholics and Protestants. Intolerance of Christians and non-Muslim religious groups is common throughout the region and most severe in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Yemen.

Israel is the only Jewish-majority nation in the world. Three-quarters of the Israeli population is Jewish, of which 44% is nonreligious or secular, 39% is traditionally religious, 10% is Orthodox, and 7% is ultra-Orthodox. Additional Jewish sects include Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Jews. Approximately 30% of the Jewish population was born abroad. Arab Sunni Muslims account for most of the non-Jewish population. Christians and Druze account for a tiny minority, together comprising fewer than 5% of the population. There are approximately 10,000 Messianic Jews. There is a high degree of geographic segregation among religious communities.¹³² There are small communities of Jews in most nations in the Middle East and North Africa, but many of these Jewish communities are shrinking due to emigration to Israel and persecution, as in Yemen.

Other world and regional religions are found in the Middle East. Hindus and Buddhists are concentrated among migrant workers in the Gulf States. In Qatar, Hindus likely number over 100,000, and Buddhists may account for 150,000 to 200,000 people.¹³³ In the United Arab Emirates, some reports indicate that as much as 15% of the population follows Hinduism, and 5% adhere to Buddhism. In Bahrain, half of foreign workers are Muslim, whereas the remainder includes Christians, Hindus, Baha'is, Buddhists, and Sikhs. Baha'i communities function in most countries in the Middle East and are small. Iran supports the largest Baha'i population of any country in the region with an estimated 300,000 to 350,000 adherents. There may be as many as 60,000 Zoroastrians in Iran.¹³⁴ Found in northern areas of Iraq, Yezidis and Shabaks are syncretic religious groups that incorporate indigenous religious beliefs or Christianity into Islam; each claims approximately half a million followers.¹³⁵ Practiced in the Near East, the Druze religion is an Islamic offshoot that incorporates many philosophical elements with adherents in mountainous, rural areas.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ "Iraq," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148821.htm>

¹³¹ "Syria," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148845.htm>

¹³² "Israel and the Occupied Territories," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148825.htm>

¹³³ "Qatar," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127356.htm>

¹³⁴ "Iran," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127347.htm>

¹³⁵ "Iraq," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148821.htm>

¹³⁶ "Lebanon," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127352.htm>

Religious Freedom

The constitutions of nearly all nations in the Middle East and North Africa protect religious freedom and belief, but most governments restrict the right of religious practice for citizens and noncitizens alike. Islam is the state religion or officially sponsored by the governments of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, and Yemen. Shari'a law is adopted in most of these nations, severely limiting the religious freedom for non-Muslims. Turkey maintains a secularist government, notwithstanding 99.8% of the population identifying as Muslim, largely due to the legacy of Atatürk and ties to Europe. Many governments in the Middle East and North Africa rationalize strict prohibitions on religious freedom as preventing the spread of militant Islam, maintaining public order, and protecting the historic Islamic identity of their respective nations. Most countries permit religious nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to perform humanitarian and development work but strictly forbid missionary activity.

Christians and other non-Muslim groups experience the greatest freedom in Bahrain, Cyprus, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. In Bahrain, the government interferes little with the operation of non-Muslim and Christian groups and permits the distribution and sale of religious literature.¹³⁷ In Cyprus, open proselytism in government-controlled areas is permitted, and foreign missionaries must obtain residency permits. Public schools are mandated to teach students about the Greek Orthodox Church. Only students with non-Greek Cypriot parents can have this instruction waved. North Cyprus does not have laws barring proselytism, but missionary activity is rare and discouraged.¹³⁸ In Lebanon, individuals may change religions as long as the leader of the religious group consents and an individual wishes to join. Unrecognized religious groups may operate in the country, assemble, and own property, but do not enjoy the privileges enjoyed by recognized groups, such as tax exemption status and freedom of adherents to run for public office. Proselytism is not illegal but is socially discouraged. At times Maronite Christian leaders attempted to prevent proselytism by Evangelical Christians. Societal abuse of religious freedom has targeted Jews and nontraditional Christian groups, chiefly Evangelicals.¹³⁹ In Oman, conversion from Islam to another religion is not regarded as a crime but does carry potential legal challenges for fathers retaining rights over their children. Proselytism is not illegal but can be stopped if those offended report it to government. Government prohibits foreigners on tourist visas from preaching, teaching, and leading congregations.¹⁴⁰ In Palestine, societal tensions are highest between Jews and the non-Jewish population, but Christian groups generally operate with few restrictions.¹⁴¹ In Turkey, proselytism is not illegal but is socially unacceptable and sometimes dangerous. Christians and other religious groups are allowed to teach and talk to others about their faith. Non-Muslims have faced pressure and threats from the Muslim majority, resulting in diminished religious freedom for these groups.¹⁴² In the United Arab Emirates, all citizens must be Muslims. The government has interfered very little with the religious activities of non-Muslims, but bans proselytism and distribution of non-Islamic literature. Muslims

¹³⁷ "Bahrain," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127345.htm>

¹³⁸ "Cyprus," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127305.htm>

¹³⁹ "Lebanon," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127352.htm>

¹⁴⁰ "Oman," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127355.htm>

¹⁴¹ "Israel and the Occupied Territories," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148825.htm>

¹⁴² "Turkey," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/130299.htm>

who convert to a different religion face societal pressures to return to Islam. The United Arab Emirates is considered perhaps the most tolerant Islamic nation in the Middle East toward non-Muslims.¹⁴³

Non-Muslims and religious freedom are most seriously restricted in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Western Sahara, and Yemen. In Algeria, new legislation was introduced in 2008 regarding the religious practice of non-Muslims that has restricted the freedom of formerly Muslim Christians and has denied any applications for Christian groups to be registered with the government. The Catholic Church is the only officially recognized non-Muslim religious group. Christian groups that have attempted to obtain recognition include the Anglican Church and Seventh Day Adventists. The proselytism of Muslims is illegal, although this law is not entirely enforced. Many Christian converts keep a low profile in order to avoid persecution and violence from Islamic fundamentalist groups that call for the killing and persecution of formerly Muslim Christians. Reports of Bible confiscations and church closures have occurred recently.¹⁴⁴ In Egypt, those committing acts of violence and persecution against non-Muslims are rarely prosecuted. However, most Christians and Baha'is do not report consistent persecution and generally worship without interference. Converts to Christianity from Islam tend to experience marked harassment from society and government. Coptic Christians appear to receive the greatest amount of persecution from Muslim sectarian groups. Muslim-born citizens who convert to Christianity may be monitored by government officials. Many officials consider conversion from Islam for Muslim-born citizens illegal as it is prohibited in Shari'a law. Proselytism is not legally banned, but is restricted by police. Government registration for religious groups requires consent from the pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church or the sheikh of Al-Azhar as well as the president.¹⁴⁵ In Iran, the government has taken an increasingly less tolerant attitude toward non-Shi'a Muslim groups. Religious groups that have received the greatest harassment, violence, and persecution include Baha'is, Evangelical Christians, Sufi Muslims, and Jews. There have been many recent reports of members of religious minority groups being discriminated against, imprisoned, harassed, and intimidated by the government. Non-Muslims are forbidden to publicly disseminate religious material or to proselyte Muslims. The government has made an effort to have Evangelical Christian leaders to sign pledges to not allow Muslims to attend worship services or perform proselytism. Apostasy from Islam is a crime for Muslims and in the past has been punished by death, although no recent executions have occurred. Baha'is have faced the most extreme persecution from government authorities, many of whom deem the religious group as a political entity attempting to disunite Iran and Muslims. Ethnic minority groups must have their religious materials in their respective languages approved by government officials. Minority religious groups frequently report that they are under close government surveillance and have had religious materials confiscated.¹⁴⁶ In Iraq, religious freedom has been consistently upheld by the government since 2003, but its practice has been limited by extremists, terrorists, and gangs that target religious minority groups. Violent attacks on religious leaders and places of worship curtail the freedom of religious practice for many. The government has issued numerous statements and has followed policies that encourage religious tolerance. Religious groups must register with the government to operate. To register, a religious group is required to have at least 500 followers in the country and receive approval from the Council of Iraqi Christian Church Leaders. There are no government restrictions on conversion and proselytism.¹⁴⁷ In Israel, the government discriminates against non-Orthodox Jewish sects and non-Jews. Religious groups recognized by the British prior to independence have been consistently referred to as religious communities by the Israeli government.

¹⁴³ "United Arab Emirates," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127360.htm>

¹⁴⁴ "Algeria," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127344.htm>

¹⁴⁵ "Egypt," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127346.htm>

¹⁴⁶ "Iran," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127347.htm>

¹⁴⁷ "Iraq," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148821.htm>

Only three additional groups have been granted religious community status since 1948: the Druze, the Evangelical Episcopal Church, and the Baha'i Faith. Many large Protestant groups are not recognized by the government but have operated for many years, including Baptists, the Assemblies of God, and Lutherans. Obtaining visas for religious representatives has been challenging for recognized and unrecognized religious groups alike. Any religious group may legally proselyte without restrictions among the entire population, but there have been counter-proselytism efforts by the government to discourage missionary activity. Interethnic and interreligious tensions between Muslim Arabs, differing Jewish sects, and Christians continue to be strained. Messianic Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Evangelical Christians report the greatest societal abuse of religious freedom as they are frequently targeted by anti-missionary Jewish groups such as Yad L'Achim and Lev L'Achim.¹⁴⁸ In Jordan, proselytism of Muslims is not illegal but is strongly discouraged. The government has harassed those accused of proselytizing Muslims. Formerly Muslim Christian converts can lose their civil rights, and the government has at times attempted to reconvert them back to Islam, still considering Christian converts to be Muslims. Expatriate Evangelical Christians appear to have the poorest relationship with the government as they are among the most aggressive proselytizers, are more informal with managing their religious affairs with the government, and have been accused of violating immigration laws.¹⁴⁹ In Kuwait, non-Sunni Muslims face many restrictions, including a ban on proselytism of Muslims that is strictly enforced. Non-Muslim missionaries cannot work in the country. Recognized Christian churches are usually unable to acquire more land for chapels, resulting in severe overcrowding of functioning facilities. Those who criticize or oppose Islam face severe penalties, including imprisonment.¹⁵⁰ In Libya, there is no constitution and no legal basis for religious freedom. The Great Green Charter on Human Rights from 1988 protects some religious freedom rights. The government tolerates religious activity among Muslims and non-Muslims alike with the exception of militant Islamist sects. Religious practices not in harmony with the government's interpretation of Shari'a law are prohibited, including the proselytism of Muslims by other religious groups. Religious activity is regulated and, at times, restricted. At present, there is no legislation prohibiting conversion, religious conversations, and the sharing of religious beliefs, but the government does prosecute those violating the proselytism ban. The government limits each Christian denomination to one meeting location per city. Arabic-language non-Islamic materials are often confiscated by government authorities.¹⁵¹ In Mauritania, the printing or distributing non-Islamic religious materials and non-Islamic proselytism is forbidden. The possession of non-Islamic religious materials is permitted. Christians and non-Muslim religious groups may meet in private but must first obtain official authorization from government authorities. Religious groups do not register with the government, but religious NGOs must agree to refrain from engaging in missionary activities at any time. Christians who have attempted to proselyte in the past have been detained or deported. The few Mauritanian Christians are ostracized by their family and friends.¹⁵² In Morocco and Western Sahara, non-Muslim foreigners may openly practice their beliefs, but local non-Muslims and non-Jews face threats of government surveillance, ostracism, and persecution for worshipping. Local Christian converts tend to meet in private homes to worship. The government bans proselytism and the distribution of non-Islamic literature. Attempting to convert a Muslim to another religion is illegal. Foreign Christian missionaries do operate in Morocco and either work among non-Muslims or secretly among Muslims but can be expelled if their activities are made public.¹⁵³ In Qatar, proselytism by non-Muslims is forbidden and can result in up to a ten-year

¹⁴⁸ "Israel and the Occupied Territories," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148825.htm>

¹⁴⁹ "Jordan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127350.htm>

¹⁵⁰ "Kuwait," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127351.htm>

¹⁵¹ "Libya," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148832.htm>

¹⁵² "Mauritania," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127244.htm>

¹⁵³ "Morocco," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127354.htm>

jail sentence. Those in possession of materials supporting or promoting non-Muslim religions can be imprisoned for up to two years; however, there has never been a case where this law has been enforced since its passage. Law restricts places of worship. Conversion of Muslims to other religions is classified as apostasy and can result in the death penalty, although there has been no instance in which this has been enforced since independence. The publication, importation, and distribution of religious books is controlled by the government, but individuals and religious groups were not restricted in trafficking religious materials for use at home or in congregations.¹⁵⁴ In Saudi Arabia, the law does not protect or guarantee religious rights. Government often restricts the rights of citizens and foreigners to assemble and worship. Private worship is allowed for both citizens and foreigners who do not adhere to Sunni Islam. However, those who practice their religious beliefs can be subjected to government harassment. The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (CPVPV) acts as a religious police to ensure the adherence of the population to Islamic law. The CPVPV has confiscated religious materials from non-Muslims and conducted raids on both illegal non-Sunni Muslim religious meetings and private religious meetings. There has been some recent improvement in allowing non-Muslims to possess personal religious literature. The conversion of Muslims and proselytism can result in the death penalty, although there have been no recent instances where this punishment has been enforced.¹⁵⁵ In Sudan, conversion from Islam to another religion may be punishable by imprisonment or death, but there have been no instances of the government carrying out a death sentence for conversion from Islam. Muslims converting to a different religion have been intimidated by government authorities, persecuted, and pressured to recant their conversion and at times encouraged to leave the country. Defaming Islam and blasphemy are punishable crimes. The government regulates the operation of mosques and imams. The government delays and restricts the number of visas for foreign religious workers and generally only grants visas to Christian clergy to support local congregations and not for Christian missionary activity. The government does not permit missionaries to proselyte in Sudan, but missionaries may perform humanitarian work and promote Christian-Muslim cooperation.¹⁵⁶ In Syria, the government monitors all religious groups and discourages proselytism out of fear that it could disrupt public order. Missionaries accused of proselytizing may be prosecuted for threatening relations between religious groups and receive prison sentences from five years to life, although most sentences are usually reduced to one to two years. The government has demonstrated favoritism to Shi'a Islam and has permitted Shi'a missionaries to proselyte and convert Sunni Muslims. Religious groups must register with the government and receive permits to hold meetings that are not worship services. There are no specific laws that prohibit proselytism or the distribution of religious literature. Conversion is extremely unusual, technically illegal, and often forces converts to move away from their native communities.¹⁵⁷ In Tunisia, the government forbids proselytism directed toward Muslims as it is regarded as disturbing public order and restricts the wearing of some Islamic religious clothing. Muslims may convert to another religion but often face government harassment and manipulation and social ostracism. Most Christian denominations no longer attempt to apply for registration due to government policies denying registration for other Christian groups. The government permits only a small number of foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to operate to offer service and perform charitable activities.¹⁵⁸ In Yemen, the proselytism and conversion of Muslims is forbidden. Apostasy from Islam can result in the death penalty, and the government has detained several Christian converts who left Islam in recent years. Government permits individuals to practice their religious beliefs and allows assembly with some restrictions. In the late 2000s, Jews, Christians, and Baha'is experienced marked persecution from some Muslim groups, with many foreigners facing deportation

¹⁵⁴ "Qatar," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127356.htm>

¹⁵⁵ "Saudi Arabia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127357.htm>

¹⁵⁶ "Sudan," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148722.htm>

¹⁵⁷ "Syria," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148845.htm>

¹⁵⁸ "Tunisia," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148847.htm>

or voluntarily making plans to leave the country. Government does not usually pursue prosecution of those committing violence against religious minorities and has done little to ensure their safety. However, most Muslim groups live harmoniously with the few non-Muslims. Religious minorities have been able to get visas for ministers to serve their communities. Rebel or terrorist organizations have targeted foreigners who are accused of performing missionary activity, several of whom remain missing.¹⁵⁹

Largest Cities

Urban: low (32%—Yemen); high (98%—Kuwait)

Cairo, **Tehran**, Istanbul, Baghdad, **Riyadh**, **Khartoum**, **Alexandria**, Ankara, Casablanca, **Jidda**, Damascus, **Algiers**, Amman, Izmir, **Meshed**, **Aleppo**, Tunis, Tel Aviv-Jaffa, **Sanaa**, **Isfahan**, **Dammam**, Rabat, Kuwait City, **Bursa**, **Mecca**, Dubai, **Gaza**, Adana, Mosul, **Tabriz**, Doha, **Shiraz**, **Gaziantep**, Beirut, **Oran**, **Basra**, Manama, **Tripoli**, Ash-Shariqah, **Medina**, **Fes**, **Ahvaz**, **Qom**, **Konya**.

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

Nineteen of the forty-four cities with over one million inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the regional population resides in the forty-four most populous cities.

LDS History

LDS apostle Elder Orson Hyde traveled to Palestine and dedicated the Holy Land on October 24th, 1841 for the gathering of the Jews.¹⁶⁰ The first LDS missionaries assigned to the region preached in Turkey in 1850 and four years later the first congregation was organized for British soldiers fighting in the Crimean War. The Turkish Mission was organized in 1884 and the first Arabian converts joined the Church in Aintab in 1889. Initial success occurred with Armenians. LDS missionary efforts in the Middle East commenced in Syria in the late nineteenth century among Armenian Christian communities. A branch established in Aleppo, Syria became one of the largest branches in the Turkish Mission, resulting in the relocation of mission headquarters to Aleppo, Syria from 1907 to 1909. The mission was discontinued in 1909 due to political instability and reorganized in 1921 with headquarters in Aleppo. Headquarters were briefly relocated to Haifa, Palestine in 1928 until the death of the mission president in 1929. Many members died or left the region between 1909 and 1921. The mission president coordinated with French government officials to relocate Armenian members in Aintab, Turkey to Aleppo in 1921. The mission reopened in 1933 as the Palestine-Syrian Mission, was closed in 1939, and reopened again in 1947. The mission was renamed the Near East Mission in 1950 and was permanently closed in 1951. During the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the mission also administered Lebanon. LDS servicemen held worship services in Tunisia during World War II.¹⁶¹

Latter-day Saints have lived in Jordan since approximately the 1950s. Small groups of foreign Latter-day Saints have met for church in Morocco since as early as the 1950s. The first LDS congregation in Iran was established in Tehran in the 1950s.¹⁶² During the latter-half of the twentieth century, expatriate members periodically held LDS services in Syria until a permanent branch was established in 1997. The first LDS group was organized in Cyprus in 1962.¹⁶³ The first proselyting missionaries assigned to Lebanon arrived

¹⁵⁹ "Yemen," LDS Church News, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127361.htm>

¹⁶⁰ "Historical chronology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," 8 February 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58765/Historical-chronology-of-The-Church-of-Jesus-Christ-of-Latter-day-Saints.html>

¹⁶¹ Hart, John L. "Faith overcomes evil of World War II, leads to growth worldwide, 19 August 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/25854/Faith-overcomes-evil-of-World-War-II-leads-to-growth-worldwide.html>

¹⁶² "Comment," Ensign, Dec 1974, 68.

¹⁶³ "Elder Wirthlin dedicates the island of Cyprus for preaching of gospel," LDS Church News, 27 November 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23399/Elder-Wirthlin-dedicates-the-island-of-Cyprus-for-preaching-of-gospel.html>

in late 1965 from the Swiss Mission. Expatriate Latter-day Saints began living in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and 1970s. Latter-day Saints among the United States military held meetings in Libya prior to the removal of all foreign military personnel in the early 1970s.¹⁶⁴ The Church in Israel and several other Near East nations was administered from Switzerland in the early 1970s.¹⁶⁵ In the 1970s, the first LDS congregations began functioning in Bahrain, Egypt, and Kuwait. In Israel, several senior missionary couples were called to serve as special representatives for the Church in the 1970s. Church members have lived in Yemen since the 1970s.¹⁶⁶ In 1974, there was only one LDS family in Tunisia living in Tunis.¹⁶⁷ In 1975, the Church withdrew its missionaries from Lebanon and most Lebanese members emigrated due to civil war. That same year the Church organized the Iran Tehran Mission. Eighteen missionaries learned Farsi and participated in humanitarian and development work such as teaching English and assisting Boy Scout programs, but did not openly proselyte. Approximately fifteen Iranians joined the Church prior to the discontinuance of the mission in early 1979 as a result of the Iranian Revolution. The last sacrament meeting in Iran was held in May 1979.¹⁶⁸ A branch was organized in Ankara, Turkey in late 1979.¹⁶⁹ The first meeting of LDS members in Dubai, United Arab Emirates occurred in 1982.¹⁷⁰ Elder Boyd K. Parker organized the first stake in the Middle East for expatriates living on the Arabian Peninsula in 1983.¹⁷¹ At the time, all wards in the new stake likely met in Saudi Arabia. Special representative missionaries were removed from Israel in 1985 due to conflict regarding the building of the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center. A 1986 deal with the Knesset permitted the LDS Church to build the Jerusalem Center in exchange for the Church promising to refrain from any proselytism activity.¹⁷² The Church has a ninety-nine-year lease for the land on which the Jerusalem Center stands.¹⁷³ In 1989, the Church obtained permission from the government to register a visitor center in Jordan.¹⁷⁴ The center is used for local branch functions and for educating the public about Brigham Young University (BYU). A branch in Tunis, Tunisia was organized sometime in the 1980s or 1990s. Some of the first native Turks to join the Church in the past several decades were baptized in the late 1980s in Germany. There was no LDS presence in Cyprus between 1980 and the early 1990s. Cyprus was assigned to the Greece Athens Mission in 1990.¹⁷⁵ Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin dedicated Cyprus for missionary work in September 1993.¹⁷⁶ During the Persian Gulf War in the early 1990s, more than one hundred groups served the needs of LDS military members throughout the Arabian Peninsula. These groups ranged from four to five to 175 attending worship services on Fridays or Sundays.¹⁷⁷ In late 1992 and early 1993, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir performed in

¹⁶⁴ "The Church in Europe," *Ensign*, Aug. 1973, 16–35.

¹⁶⁵ "The Church in Europe," *Ensign*, Aug. 1973, 16–35.

¹⁶⁶ "Comment," *Ensign*, Dec 1979, 66.

¹⁶⁷ "Comment," *Ensign*, June 1974, 47.

¹⁶⁸ "Iran," *Global Mormonism*, retrieved 28 August 2010. http://globalmormonism.byu.edu/?page_id=82

¹⁶⁹ "Turkey," *Country Profiles*, retrieved 20 March 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/turkey>

¹⁷⁰ Platt, Joseph B. "Our Oasis of Faith," *Liahona*, Oct 1988, 27.

¹⁷¹ Chatterly, Matt. "Middle East stake: 10 cities in 10 days," *LDS Church News*, 7 March 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56729/Middle-East-stake-10-cities-in-10-days.html>

¹⁷² "Israel and the Occupied Territories," *International Religious Freedom Report 2010*, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148825.htm>

¹⁷³ "Dedication of the Galilee Branch House," *jerusalem.nielsonpi.com*, retrieved 17 January 2011. <http://jerusalem.nielsonpi.com/galileebranch.pdf>

¹⁷⁴ "Jordanian leaders approve LDS center," *LDS Church News*, 9 September 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19128/Jordanian-leaders-approve-LDS-center.html>

¹⁷⁵ Cannon, Mike. "Diversity in land, people and climate," *LDS Church News*, 7 December 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21327/Diversity-in-land-people-and-climate.html>

¹⁷⁶ "Elder Wirthlin dedicates the island of Cyprus for preaching of gospel," *LDS Church News*, 27 November 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23399/Elder-Wirthlin-dedicates-the-island-of-Cyprus-for-preaching-of-gospel.html>

¹⁷⁷ Orden, Dell Van; Avant, Gerry; Lloyd, Scott R.; Sheffield, Sheridan R.; Dockstader, Julie A. "LDS groups serve members in Gulf region," *LDS Church News*, 26 January 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21558/LDS-groups-serve-members-in-Gulf-region.html>

Israel.¹⁷⁸ In 1994, the BYU Young Ambassadors performed in Morocco¹⁷⁹ and Tunisia.¹⁸⁰ In the late 1990s, humanitarian missionaries were reassigned to Beirut, Lebanon and assisted the small congregation.¹⁸¹

In Bahrain, the LDS Church received official recognition prior to 2001.¹⁸² The first LDS congregation in Iraq was formed in April 2003 at Tallil Air Base to service LDS American military personnel.¹⁸³ In 2006, humanitarian missionaries were trapped in Beirut, Lebanon during the month-long conflict with Israel; humanitarian activities resumed shortly thereafter. Senior missionary couples are assigned to the Jerusalem Center and in the 2000s were also called to work in the Galilee area in Israel. Elder M. Russell Ballard became the second apostle to visit the United Arab Emirates in 2007 when he visited members in Dubai.¹⁸⁴ In 2008, the seminary program was introduced in Morocco. In 2009, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland presided over the Manama Bahrain Stake conference.¹⁸⁵ In October 2009, Elder Holland dedicated Lebanon for missionary work. The organization of the Baghdad Iraq Military District in late 2009 permitted the organization of branches for LDS American military personnel in Iraq.¹⁸⁶ In the late 2000s, the Arabian Peninsula Stake was renamed the Manama Bahrain Stake, and in early 2011 the stake was relocated to the United Arab Emirates and renamed the Abu Dhabi Stake. At the same time, the Manama Bahrain District was organized to administer Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. In early 2011, three area branches were organized in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia. The first proselytizing missionaries were assigned to Istanbul, Turkey in 2012. In early 2013, the first church-built meetinghouse in the Arabian Peninsula was completed in Abu Dhabi.

The Europe Central Area administered most nations in the Middle East between 2000 and 2008 whereas the Europe West Area administered most nations in North Africa during this period. In 2008, all countries in the Middle East and North Africa were assigned to the newly organized Middle East/Africa North Area with the exception of Cyprus (Europe Area), Turkey (Europe East Area), Sudan (Africa Southeast Area), and Mauritania and Western Sahara (Africa West Area).

There has never been a known LDS presence in Algeria, Mauritania, Sudan, and Western Sahara. Small groups comprised of a few expatriate members may meet on an irregular basis in these nations at present. There has been no formal LDS presence in the West Bank or Gaza Strip since the mid-twentieth century, but a small group operated in Bethlehem in the 2000s.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 5,000 (2011 estimate)

There were likely around 2,000 members in the Middle East and North Africa in 2000, most of which residing

¹⁷⁸ Avant, Gerry. "Music of Tabernacle Choir 'opens the gates of Heaven,'" LDS Church News, 9 January 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23227/Music-of-Tabernacle-Choir-opens-the-gates-of-Heaven.html>

¹⁷⁹ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 27 August 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24522/From-around-the-world.html>

¹⁸⁰ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 27 August 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24522/From-around-the-world.html>

¹⁸¹ Peggy, Fletcher Stack. "Despite wars, Mormons in Beirut persist," The Salt Lake Tribune, 22 July 2006. <http://www.armenianandiaspora.com/showthread.php?p=57506-Despite-wars-Mormons-in-Beirut-persist&p=57636>

¹⁸² Shurtliff, Diane. "Oasis of Faith," New Era, Aug 2001, 34.

¹⁸³ "LDS service group meeting in Iraq," LDS Church News, 24 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43789/LDS-service-group-meeting-in-Iraq.html>

¹⁸⁴ Swensen, Jason. "Message-laden tour," LDS Church News, 10 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50227/Message-laden-tour.html>

¹⁸⁵ Chatterly, Matt. "Middle East stake: 10 cities in 10 days," LDS Church News, 7 March 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56729/Middle-East-stake-10-cities-in-10-days.html>

¹⁸⁶ Askar, Jamshid. "Military district in Iraq will be 'big difference,'" LDS Church News, 21 November 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58227/Military-district-in-Iraq-will-be-big-difference.html>

in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. Membership in the Arabian Peninsula Stake stood at 900 in 2004. By 2009, membership increased to 1,950.¹⁸⁷ The number of members in the Middle East/Africa North Area increased from 2,813 in 2007 to 3,440 in 2009 and 3,795 in 2010. In 2010, Iraq appeared to be the nation with the most members (1,300) followed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Cyprus. In 2011, there appeared to be fewer than fifty members in Algeria, Iran, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, Western Sahara, and Yemen. Nonnative members from North America and Europe on government assignment or business comprise most or all of LDS membership in these nations with the exception of Iran and Palestine. Any Latter-day Saints in Iran consist of Iranian converts baptized abroad who have returned to their home country or early Iranian Latter-day Saints who remained in the country following the revolution. There are no known Latter-day Saints living in Mauritania, Sudan, and Western Sahara. In 2010, one in approximately 100,000 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 6 Branches: 42+ Groups: 10+ (2011)

There were likely fifteen LDS congregations in the region in the early 1980s. The Church began reporting congregational totals for some nations in the Middle East during the 2000s. In 2000, there were approximately twenty-five to thirty LDS congregations in the Middle East and North Africa. At the time, there were as many as five or six congregations in Saudi Arabia, three in Cyprus, two in Israel, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates, and one in Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Syria, and Tunisia. The number of wards and branches in the Middle East/Africa North area increased from twenty-five in 2007 to thirty-one in 2009. The number of wards increased from six to eight during this period. By mid-2011, the number of congregations in the region increased to approximately eighty as there were an estimated thirty-six congregations in Iraq (six of which are independent branches), seven or eight in Saudi Arabia, six in the United Arab Emirates, four in Cyprus, Israel, and Turkey, two in Jordan, Morocco, and Qatar, and one in Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia. Groups may have been operating in Algeria and Yemen in mid-2011.

There are no known independent congregations operating in Algeria, Iran, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, Western Sahara, and Yemen. Dependent branches or groups part of the Middle East/Africa North Area Branch or other area branches appeared to operate in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, and Yemen in 2010. Area branches were specifically organized for Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia in early 2011. There have been no known LDS congregations to have ever operated in Mauritania, the Gaza Strip, Sudan, and Western Sahara. No LDS congregations have operated in Iran since the late 1970s.

In mid-2011, there was only one LDS stake in the region, headquartered in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (1983), and districts operating in Israel (1980), Amman Jordan (2005), Nicosia Cyprus (2007), Baghdad Iraq (2009), and Manama Bahrain (2011). In late 2011, the Baghdad Iraq Military District was closed due to the withdrawal of most American military personnel.

Activity and Retention

The number of active members per congregation is generally small due to few Latter-day Saints being spread over a large geographic area. Overall member activity and convert retention rates correlate most strongly with rates in North America and Europe as most members originate from these nations. Nations with more indigenous members such as Jordan and Lebanon appear to have lower member activity rates. Kuwait (80%), Oman (75%), and Saudi Arabia (75%) appear to have the highest member activity rates, whereas Israel and Cyprus (30%) and Lebanon (33%) appear to have the lowest. Active membership in countries with no

¹⁸⁷ Chatterly, Matt. "Growth, friendship serve as Middle East 'Miracles,'" LDS Church News, 7 March 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56735/Growth-friendship-serve-as-Middle-East-miracles.html>

reported LDS presence is limited to those who attend private meetings in LDS member homes or those who worship independently. Seventy-six were enrolled in seminary in the Arabian Peninsula during the 2008–2009 school year. Regional active membership is estimated at 2,600, or 50%–55% of total church membership. Estimated member activity rates may be inflated due to unknown numbers of inactive or less active members in the region who are difficult to locate.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, Turkish, Farsi, French, Armenian (East and West), Hindi, Telugu, Tagalog, Cebuano, Tamil, Sinhala, Urdu, Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), Russian, Romanian, Polish, Italian, Bulgarian, Korean.

All LDS scriptures and many church materials are available in Arabic, French, Greek, Armenian (East), Tagalog, Cebuano, Russian, Romanian, Polish, Italian, Spanish, Bulgarian, and Korean. The LDS Church recently completed a Spanish-translation of the LDS edition of the Bible complete with full LDS footnotes, Bible dictionary, and topical guide. Limited numbers of church materials and the Book of Mormon are translated into Turkish, Hindi, Telugu, Sinhala, and Urdu; only Book of Mormon selections are available in Bengali and Farsi. General Conference talks have been translated into Farsi at least since 2007, and audio translations are provided on the Church's website.¹⁸⁸ Book of Mormon selections, *Gospel Principles*, *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, and a few additional proselytism materials are available in Farsi. *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, Book of Mormon selections, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are translated into the western dialect of Armenian. Many unit, temple, priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, young women, primary, missionary, and family history materials are available in Turkish. The only Church materials in Malayalam are *Gospel Fundamentals* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Pashto language materials include *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*. Materials translated into Wolof and Pulaar (Fulani) include *Gospel Principles* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Hebrew translations of LDS materials are limited to the sacrament prayers.¹⁸⁹ The *Liahona* magazine has monthly issues in French, Tagalog, Cebuano, Chinese, Russian, Italian, and Korean, four issues a year in Armenian (East), Bulgarian, Romanian, and Polish, three issues a year in Urdu, and one issue a year in Greek.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings occur in rented spaces and villas in most nations in the Middle East and North Africa. In some nations with no official LDS presence or few members, worship occurs in small groups in member homes. A couple of church-owned meetinghouses or chapels are located in Israel, and a church-built meetinghouse was recently completed in the United Arab Emirates. Additional church-built meetinghouses are under consideration in the United Arab Emirates. Latter-day Saint servicemen generally worship at military installations in nations such as in Iraq.

Health and Safety

Political and social conditions in many countries in the region pose significant safety risks for Christian missionaries and nontraditional Christians. In Egypt, terrorist attacks and violence directed towards non-Muslims is a major concern for the LDS Church and any potential missionary activity. Iranian Latter-day Saints face considerable persecution and harassment from government, family, and friends. There have been instances of Iranian LDS converts fleeing relatives who seek to physically harm them. Apostasy from Islam can be punished by death in Iran, although this is uncommon. Christian converts are typically harassed and

¹⁸⁸ "General Conference Reports—Farsi (Persian)," www.lds.org, retrieved 28 August 2010. <http://lds.org/conference/display/0,5234,89-128,00.html>

¹⁸⁹ "Dedication of the Galilee Branch House," jerusalem.nielsonpi.com, retrieved 17 January 2011. <http://jerusalem.nielsonpi.com/galileebranch.pdf>

sometimes arrested. Any travel of American nationals to Iran at present is extremely unsafe. It is not possible for United States citizens to obtain a visa to enter Iran due to the lack of diplomatic relations. Americans who have traveled to Iran or who have wandered into Iranian territory have been detained for extended and indefinite periods, and Iranian-Americans with dual citizenship and family ties to Iran have sometimes been arrested on allegations of spying. Travelers from the United Kingdom and other Western European nations have generally been able to obtain tourist visas, although any religious proselytism is strictly forbidden. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and some other nations in the region have positive relations with Iran, and their citizens experience greater freedom of travel. In Iraq, lawlessness and societal abuse of religious freedom have been extreme in many areas. Religious minorities, Sunnis in predominately Shi'a neighborhoods, and Shi'as in predominate Sunni neighborhoods have frequently reported receiving death threats that demanded their departure. Failure to comply with such threats have often resulted in death. The frequency of these threats has reportedly declined in recent years as stability has been restored but remains a serious problem. Recent acts of violence that were religiously motivated include beheadings, drive-by shootings, suicide bombings, kidnappings, and church and mosque bombings. Islamist extremists and al-Qaeda operatives are common perpetrators of the crimes¹⁹⁰ but are rarely caught or brought to justice due to an inadequate and under-trained police force, widespread corruption, and endemic complicity of various ethnic and religious factions in obstructing investigation into members of their own groups. In Israel, Christian missionary groups are often physically intimidated and harassed by some radical Jewish groups. Terrorist attacks pose a safety risk. In Palestine, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to pose a safety threat due to terrorism and extremist groups targeting Christians that proselyte. Access to healthcare is extremely poor in the Gaza Strip. In Sudan, political instability, war, and ethno-religious conflicts are major safety concerns. Millions have perished over the past few decades as a result of civil war and ethnic hostilities. In Yemen, conditions for foreign missionaries are very precarious and are currently unfavorable even for humanitarian assistance. Several missionaries were kidnapped by Islamic extremists and remain missing.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The LDS Church has conducted or sponsored nearly 200 humanitarian and development projects in the Middle East and North Africa. Countries that have had the most LDS projects performed include Turkey (83), Jordan (35), Egypt (24), and Palestine (23). The Church conducted its first development project, a clean water project, in Algeria in the past decade.¹⁹¹ In Egypt, most projects have provided emergency aid, medical equipment and care, needed appliances, and training.¹⁹² In 2009, the Church donated wheelchairs and provided vision treatment.¹⁹³ The Church sent 975 sleeping bags and 550 family tents to earthquake victims in Iran in 1990.¹⁹⁴ In 2004, the Iranian ambassador to the United Nations thanked the LDS Church for a shipment of medicine to Bam following an earthquake that killed 28,000. The shipment was large enough to treat nearly 100,000.¹⁹⁵ The Church donated 13,000 blankets, clothing, and medical supplies to Kurdish and southern Iraqi refugees in 1991.¹⁹⁶ In 2003, Latter-day Saints in Oxnard, California teamed up with other Christians in

¹⁹⁰ "Iraq," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148821.htm>

¹⁹¹ "Projects—Algeria," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 24 August 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-55,00.html>

¹⁹² "Projects—Egypt," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 18 June 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-255,00.html>

¹⁹³ "Wheelchairs," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 18 June 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6213-1-3215-1,00.html>

¹⁹⁴ "Sleeping bags, tents on way to quake victims," LDS Church News, 7 July 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19849/Sleeping-bags-tents-on-way-to-quake-victims.html>

¹⁹⁵ "Relief sent to Iran," LDS Church News, 3 January 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44912/Relief-sent-to-Iran.html>

¹⁹⁶ "Church supplies aid Middle East refugees," LDS Church News, 20 April 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21374/Church-supplies-aid-Middle-East-refugees.html>

the community to donate school supplies to needy Iraqi school children.¹⁹⁷ A similar service project occurred in 2004 that provided school supplies including nearly 600 books to a school that accommodated children with Down syndrome.¹⁹⁸ Local members in Fort Worth, Texas sent clothing, blankets, pillows, and hygiene kits to Iraq in 2004.¹⁹⁹ LDS American military medical professionals performed service to needy Iraqis by providing eye care that same year.²⁰⁰ Latter-day Saints in the Denver, Colorado area assembled over 3,000 school kits to donate to nine schools in Iraq in 2005.²⁰¹ Additional humanitarian projects completed include donating wheelchairs for the disabled and emergency relief for war victims.²⁰² In Israel, the Church has donated x-ray equipment for dental workers, a computer system for the disabled, equipment for teaching employment skills, supplies for mothers and newborns, and blankets for the elderly. Additional development work has included providing health information to Palestinian women and providing educational materials for children.²⁰³ The LDS Church has completed as many as thirty-five humanitarian and developmental projects in Jordan since 1985. Projects have included donations of wheelchairs, livestock, clothing, appliances, clothing, and bedding. Clean water and education projects have also occurred.²⁰⁴ In 1991, the Church donated a machine for eye surgery to Jordanian doctors.²⁰⁵ In 2004, over 500 wheelchairs were donated to the disabled.²⁰⁶ In 2010, a humanitarian senior missionary couple was stationed in Irbid and also mentored local church members.²⁰⁷ In Lebanon, the Church has completed at least twenty-six humanitarian projects since 1985, including teaching English and donating wheelchairs, food, school supplies, hygiene kits, furniture, and fixtures.²⁰⁸ In 1985, some of the funds donated by Church members for famine relief in Africa went to Mauritania.²⁰⁹ In recent years, the Church provided emergency relief for refugees in Nouakchott.²¹⁰ The Church has conducted a few humanitarian projects in Morocco in recent years, including donating an ophthalmology microscope and providing neonatal resuscitation training.²¹¹ In 2005, French members assembled fifty hygiene and fifty education kits to distribute to needy children in Laayoune, Western Sahara.²¹² In Palestine, the LDS Church

¹⁹⁷ Swensen, Jason. "School supplies reach Iraq," LDS Church News, 19 July 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44074/School-supplies-reach-Iraq.html>

¹⁹⁸ "Helping Iraqi children," LDS Church News, 4 September 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46094/Helping-Iraqi-children.html>

¹⁹⁹ "Some 700 projects completed," LDS Church News, 30 October 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46413/Some-700-projects-completed.html>

²⁰⁰ Swensen, Jason. "Eye doc in Iraq treats eyes, wins hearts," LDS Church News, 20 November 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46502/Eye-doc-in-Iraq-treats-eyes-wins-hearts.html>

²⁰¹ "School supplies donated for Iraq," LDS Church News, 12 February 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46874/School-supplies-donated-for-Iraq.html>

²⁰² "Projects—Iraq," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 9 February 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-59,00.html>

²⁰³ "Projects—Israel," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 17 January 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-253,00.html>

²⁰⁴ "Projects—Jordan," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 7 September 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-63,00.html>

²⁰⁵ "Gift to Jordan aids eye care," LDS Church News, 5 October 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21379/Gift-to-Jordan-aids-eye-care.html>

²⁰⁶ "Jordan's Queen Noor joins in wheelchair ceremony," LDS Church News, 28 August 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46041/Jordans-Queen-Noor-joins-in-wheelchair-ceremony.html>

²⁰⁷ "Pure religion: A new vision," LDS Church News, 19 June 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59482/Pure-religion-A-new-vision.html>

²⁰⁸ "Projects—Lebanon," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 11 August 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-61,00.html>

²⁰⁹ "News of the Church," Ensign, Nov 1985, 99–112.

²¹⁰ "Projects—Mauritania," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 18 August 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-75,00.html>

²¹¹ "Projects—Morocco," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 16 September 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-248,00.html>

²¹² "French members send aid," LDS Church News, 28 May 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47360/French-members-send-aid.html>

has conducted numerous humanitarian and development work projects in association with other nongovernment organizations. In both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Church has donated hygiene kits, dry milk, school kits, newborn kits, blankets, orphanage modules, and wheelchairs. The Church also provided neonatal resuscitation training in Gaza, Nablus, and Ramallah. Aid has also specifically been delivered to the needy in East Jerusalem.²¹³ In Syria, LDS humanitarian and development work as occurred at Damascus University and has included neonatal resuscitation training, hygiene kits for cancer patients, medications, and a career workshop.²¹⁴ In Turkey, tens of thousands of articles of clothing and blankets were sent to Kurdish refugees in 1991.²¹⁵ The Church donated \$50,000 to earthquake relief in 1999.²¹⁶ In 2009, LDS Charities donated tables, chairs, and toys to a needy school in a village outside of Ankara and school supplies in other areas. The Church donated emergency supplies and hygiene kits to victims of a flash flood near Istanbul valued in the tens of thousands of U.S. dollars in the late 2000s.

No known LDS-sponsored humanitarian and development work had occurred in Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya, Sudan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen as of mid-2011. Some members and congregations in these nations may have performed some service projects in their communities on an irregular basis and in accordance with the law, such as a small group of Latter-day Saints cleaning a section of beach outside Muscat, Oman in February 2010.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church experiences full religious freedom in Cyprus, where foreign missionaries regularly serve and proselyte, and local members freely worship and assemble. The LDS Church is partially or fully recognized but experiences some restrictions on proselytism and missionary activity in Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. The LDS Church does not appear to be officially or semi-officially registered with the governments of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, and Yemen. Future recognition for the Church in any of these nations appears unlikely in the medium-term future due to many of these governments refusing to recognize additional Christian groups, the LDS Church failing to meet registration criteria, the harassment of nontraditional Christian groups in many of these nations, and the persecution of formerly Muslim Christian converts. Proselytism bans legally prevent LDS missionary activity among the indigenous Muslim population in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara, and Yemen. Missionary activity among non-Muslim foreign populations in many of these nations is also restricted by national laws but can often occur on an individual basis. The Church refrains from proselytism of Muslims in all nations in the region out of respect for local customs and negative societal views of nontraditional Christian groups proselytizing. LDS worship services occur in private in most nations due to government restrictions. Indigenous Latter-day Saint converts report the greatest restrictions on religious freedom in Egypt. Some Egyptian natives who joined the Church elsewhere and returned did not attend church meetings for fear of harassment and complained of government surveillance.²¹⁷

²¹³ "Projects—Palestinian Territory, Occupied," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 18 January 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-261,00.html>

²¹⁴ "Projects—Syria," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 25 February 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-252,00.html>

²¹⁵ "Turkey," Country Profiles, retrieved 20 March 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/turkey>

²¹⁶ "Church donates cash assistance to Turkey, China," LDS Church News, 4 September 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/36314/Church-donates-cash-assistance—to-Turkey-China.html>

²¹⁷ "Egypt," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127346.htm>

The Church publishes some limited congregational contact information for congregations in Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates due to greater religious freedom for non-Muslims. However, many members report challenges locating the Church in these nations. Prospects for outreach among Muslim populations appear most favorable in Bahrain and Oman due to more liberal laws regarding missionary activity, but the Church does not participate in active proselytism among the indigenous population of either nation out of respect for local customs and to maintain good relations with the government. In Iraq, the LDS Church benefits from greater government protection of religious freedom for Christians and currently meets the needed threshold of 500 members to qualify for registration, but cultural intolerance and physical violence towards Christians renders such freedoms largely nominal and moot. In Israel, Latter-day Saints are permitted to assemble and worship but face many restrictions regarding proselytism, the baptism of converts and LDS children, and the translation and printing of Hebrew-language LDS materials. There are no full-time proselytizing LDS missionaries, and local members are not permitted to conduct missionary work. Many of these restrictions were imposed by the LDS Church itself to safeguard against misunderstandings from the Jewish community and Israeli government and to secure the construction and operation of the BYU Jerusalem Center. Overall, Latter-day Saints have positive relations with the government as the Church has honored agreements. Those desiring baptism in the LDS Church in Israel must travel to a nation in which the Church permits baptisms. Foreign service missionaries appear to serve regularly. In Jordan, the LDS Church is registered as a society but is not officially recognized by the government. Overall, the Church appears to enjoy one of the most positive relationships among Middle Eastern governments with Jordan, which has come as a result of decades of humanitarian and development work, positive member example, and respect for local laws and customs regarding proselytism. There are no legal restrictions for members to teach, although the Church avoids teaching Muslims out of respect for local traditions and to ensure the safety of investigators and converts. In Lebanon, the LDS Church is not an officially recognized religious group despite a presence for forty-five years. The Church is registered under the Greek Orthodox faith²¹⁸ as the LDS Association.²¹⁹ There are no legal obstacles or government policies that prohibit proselytism, but the Church refrains from such activity and conducts missionary work through member referrals. Open proselytism is frowned upon by society, which is striving to maintain a delicate balance between Christians and Muslims.

In Turkey, senior missionaries reported that they could not preach about the Church but only answer questions without instigating a conversation about non-Muslim religion. In February 2012, young full-time missionaries from the Bulgaria Sofia Mission were stationed in Istanbul and began learning Turkish. All missionary activity appears to occur through member referrals.

Cultural Issues

The strong influence of Islam on society, culture, government, and local laws is the primary barrier to LDS missionary activity as proselytism is either illegal or socially unacceptable throughout the region. Conversion to nontraditional Christian denominations is highly stigmatized and generally results in ostracism, harassment, and at times threats to the physical well-being of converts. Receptivity to the LDS Church and other nontraditional Christian groups is consistently low among indigenous populations in the Middle East and North Africa due to these issues. The strong Islamic identity of North Africans and lack of religious diversity is a major cultural obstacle to LDS mission outreach as it is the origin of anti-proselytism legislation and intolerance of non-Islamic religious groups. Prospective converts in North Africa would most likely face severe ostracism and persecution from family and friends. The strong ethno-religious ties of Arabs to Islam present a nearly insurmountable barrier for Latter-day Saints at present due to a lack of Muslim-oriented missionary

²¹⁸ "Lebanon," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127352.htm>

²¹⁹ Peggy, Fletcher Stack. "Despite wards, Mormons in Beirut persist," The Salt Lake Tribune, 22 July 2006. <http://www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?57506-Despite-wars-Mormons-in-Beirut-persist&p=57636>

approaches, the absence of indigenous Latter-day Saint communities in most nations, and societal intolerance of Christian missionary activity and conversion from Islam. In Cyprus, greater tolerance of religious minorities exists than in most nations in the region, yet social barriers dissuade many Greek Cypriots from learning about or joining the Church. Greek Cypriots who join the Church often face ostracism from family and the community as they are no longer considered Greek due to their identification with a non-Orthodox religious group. Continued expansion through LDS humanitarian and development work throughout the region may increase awareness of the Church, foster positive public opinions, and improve relations with governments. The Church has made adjustments to the day of worship for LDS congregations in most nations in the region. In most Muslim-majority nations, LDS worship services are held on Fridays, the Islamic day of worship, whereas in Israel, LDS congregations worship on Saturday in accordance with the traditional Jewish Sabbath.

Several cultural attributes complement LDS teachings, including the importance on the traditional family unit, low substance abuse rates in most nations, and the value and emphasis placed on religion in society. The cosmopolitan atmosphere of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates generates a more accepting and less-oppressive environment for LDS Church activities to occur in harmony with local laws. Consequently the LDS Church has experienced some of its greatest growth in the region in these nations, as receptivity has been highest among Christian foreigners. The large number of foreign Christians provides for some limited missionary activity through member referral, especially among Filipinos. Regarding indigenous populations, receptivity appears highest among some traditional Christian groups in the Near East and Kurds, although no concentrated LDS outreach efforts have occurred among Kurds to date. The high degree of religious pluralism in Lebanon provides an unmatched cultural opportunity in the Middle East for missionary activity by member referral. An established native Lebanese Latter-day Saint community provides fellowship-ping opportunities and strength in the midst of potential societal ostracism and suspicion.

Some common cultural practices in the region oppose LDS teachings, including widespread tea and coffee drinking, the chewing of qat in Yemen, and the practice of polygamy. Those practicing polygamy who desire to be baptized must end polygamous marriages in divorce and get interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency; however, this issue is largely moot as no proselytism is permitted among Muslims.

National Outreach

The LDS Church performs no official missionary activity in the Middle East and North Africa with the exception of Cyprus and Turkey. Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey appear to be the only countries in the region in which the Church permits local members to perform missionary activity among indigenous Christians on a self-referral or member-referral basis. Some limited member-missionary activity occurs in Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates solely among nonnative Christians, principally from North America, Europe, East Asia, the Philippines, and South Asia. The populations of Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Western Sahara, and Yemen are completely unreached by the Church with the exception of close associations a few individuals may have to members in the country. The LDS Church in Israel operates several congregations but does not participate in active missionary programs. Local individuals are not barred from attending church meetings, however.

There are many reasons for the extremely limited level of outreach in the Middle East and North Africa, including the small number of active LDS members in the region, few indigenous Latter-day Saints in the region, the preponderance of members from North America, Europe, and the Philippines who do not speak the languages of many local Christians, limited member-missionary participation, government and societal restrictions on proselytism, church policies dissuading members from proselytism in nations in which proselytism is permitted, low receptivity due to strong ethno-religious ties to traditional faiths, bans on distribution of religious literature, challenges obtaining foreign missionary visas, war, ethnic violence, and political instability.

The lack of LDS teaching and proselytism approaches tailored to the cultural needs of populations in the region has further challenged efforts to expand national outreach for decades.

Eleven percent (11%) of the regional population resides in a city with an LDS congregation, but nearly all are unreached due to government restrictions and church policies on proselytism. Forty-four percent (44%) of the population in Cyprus resides in a city with an LDS congregation. Currently established LDS congregations could reach up to 88% the population in Kuwait, 80% in Qatar, 75% in Lebanon, 47% in the United Arab Emirates, 33% in Oman, 25% in Iraq, 22% in Bahrain and Turkey, 21% in Jordan, 18% in Morocco, 16% in Israel, 10% in Egypt, 8% in Syria, 7% in Tunisia, and 1% in Palestine if active missionary programs were pursued. The highly urbanized populations of several nations benefit from efforts to expand national outreach, as fewer congregations are required to reach the national population of individual countries.

Sizable immigrant populations from the Middle East and North Africa reside in some nations in Europe, North America, and Asia. Over 1.5 million individuals of Algerian descent live in France, and there are over one million North Africans in Italy. Some North Africans have joined the LDS Church in Europe, but few return home due to low standards of living, high unemployment, and repressive environments toward Christians. There are millions of Turks residing in continental Europe in nations with widespread LDS outreach, but there have been no concentrated efforts by the Church to reach Turks in Europe. Iranians have lacked consistent LDS mission efforts over the past several decades due to the closure of the Iran Tehran Mission and changing policies regarding the baptism of former Muslims in different areas of the world. In the late 2000s, the California Anaheim Mission began a Farsi-language Sunday School and proselytism efforts targeting Farsi speakers in the Anaheim area. Returned missionaries report that efforts targeting Farsi-speakers were brought to a halt by regional Church leaders who deemed proselytism efforts among Iranians were too dangerous at the time. Returned missionaries elaborated that currently, mission president approval must be granted to distribute Farsi Latter-day Saint materials to Iranians in the California Anaheim Mission. However, these restrictions have not applied to ordinary members in the Church. In the late 2010s, missionaries serving in Toronto, Canada reported coordinated efforts to reach Iranians through Farsi-speaking full-time missionaries.

LDS Internet outreach may be able to reach some North Africans and populations in the Middle East who cannot be reached by traditional methods. Farsi-speaking LDS members have created Internet-outreach websites containing Farsi LDS language materials, such as <http://www.farsimormon.com/>. In 2010, these sites appear to be the only written Farsi-language LDS materials available on the Internet. Internet sites maintained by Turkish members living inside and outside Turkey have been instrumental in bringing some Turks into the Church. Several Egyptian Latter-day Saint converts initially learned about the Church through websites created by Arabic-speaking LDS converts. As of mid-2011 there have been no official LDS websites in Arabic or other languages indigenous to the region. Official Arabic language materials online are limited to translations of General Conference addresses. The Church provides contact information for its Middle East/Africa North Area desk at Church headquarters online on its meetinghouse locator website that is the only means to make contact with the local Church in most areas of the Middle East and North Africa unless through personal association with branch members.

In the Gulf States, many expatriates have only limited contact with native peoples and often tend to socialize primarily with other expatriates, resulting in few opportunities for sharing the gospel with native peoples. Local and area LDS leadership may have instituted restrictions regarding how, when and where members may speak and teach nonmembers about the Church to respect local cultural sensitivities.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Most convert baptisms in the Middle East and North Africa appear to occur in the Gulf States among Filipinos, North Americans, Europeans, and South Asians. There have only been a few convert baptisms in the Near

East and Turkey, but some of these convert baptisms have been among the indigenous population. No LDS convert baptisms occur in Israel and converts desiring to join the Church must travel outside the country to receive baptism. Few if any Arabs appear to have joined the Church in the Gulf States. No convert baptisms appear to have occurred in most nations in North Africa.

LDS converts from indigenous ethnic groups who have joined the Church in the region generally demonstrate a high degree of devotion and dedication to the Church due to the challenges of overcoming societal and government pressures to conform to traditional religious groups in the region. Consequently, many native LDS converts develop a strong testimony, regular church attendance, and other personal religious habits prior to baptism. The lack of LDS mission outreach in the region due to government restrictions and church policy on proselytism in predominantly Muslim nations significantly reduces prospects for baptizing greater numbers of converts at present. A lack of LDS outreach approaches tailored to those with a Muslim background or to traditional Christian groups like Egyptian Copts may impede efforts to maintain moderate to high rates of convert retention in years to come if missionary activity in the region becomes more widespread. Member activity rates for the LDS Church in North Africa and the Middle East are representative of North America and Western Europe largely due to these populations accounting for the majority of church membership in the region. Activity rates in the region primarily reflect the strength, doctrinal understanding, and habits of church attendance of the nations from which members relocated, with higher activity rates among North Americans and Western Europeans and lower activity rates among Latinos and Eastern Europeans. Filipinos appear to have higher member activity rates in the Middle East than in their home country largely due to members and converts seeking social interaction in a foreign country.

Many factors have contributed to member activity and convert attrition challenges in the region. Due to the sensitive nature of the Church in many countries in the region, membership records are difficult to update and keep accurate, as finding less active or inactive members is very difficult or impossible. Many members are unaware of an LDS Church presence in some countries or are unable to find an LDS church due to a lack of information on meetinghouse locations and worship times due to the sensitive nature of the Church in some countries. Distance to LDS meetinghouses can reduce member activity rates due to long travel times and travel costs for members residing far from church meeting locations. Some congregations like the Kuwait Branch are tight knit, which may make church participation difficult for members or investigators who may not feel that they fit in. In some countries in the region like Lebanon, war, heavy emigration, and turbulent economic conditions have reduced member activity and convert retention. Past conflicts in Lebanon have resulted in many losing contact with the Church. In Jordan, the Church has attempted to maintain a delicate balance in providing economic assistance to local converts in need without attracting converts who join the Church just to obtain financial assistance. Several converts in Jordan joined the Church for welfare purposes and are inactive today. Poor ethnic relations between native converts from differing ethnic groups have occurred in some nations, resulting in some leaving the Church. Most nations in the region lack a community of local Latter-day Saint converts, seriously challenging efforts to attract greater numbers of converts and retain the few converts who join the Church, as they have no social support system aside from expatriate members in some locations. The few native Latter-day Saints from North Africa who have been baptized elsewhere and returned to their home countries likely experience low member activity rates due the lack of organized LDS congregations, societal pressures to conform to Islam, and real or perceived threats from terrorist groups. Some of these societal and governmental pressures to revert back to Islam can be a source of irregular church attendance for LDS converts in Egypt. In areas like the West Bank, isolation from the bulk of church membership in Israel through strict border regulations and limited contact with area church leadership pose challenges for members to attend church meetings and live gospel teachings. Diligent home teachers in the Jerusalem Branch visited Arab Palestinian LDS families in Bethlehem in 2009 to offer encouragement, teaching, and support, as they were unable to cross over the Israeli border to attend church meetings in Jerusalem. Eastern Asians constitute most converts in Cyprus. These members are more transient and challenge the Church's efforts to build self-sustaining local congregations when they return to their home countries or relocate elsewhere. Convert

retention in Cyprus appears modest, as activity rates have declined over the past two decades due to these issues and quick-baptism tactics employed among immigrant groups and migrant workers. Emphasis from local leaders on institute and seminary attendance can help ameliorate some of these issues and strengthen doctrinal understanding and testimony building.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

LDS membership in nearly all countries in the region is not representative of the general population due to the influx of foreign membership on military assignment or temporary employment, proselytism bans, and low receptivity to the LDS Church among indigenous populations. At present, ethnic integration issues in the LDS Church are most apparent between Westerners and South and East Asians due to language barriers and differences in culture. The Church has addressed these issues in areas with sizeable LDS membership by organizing language-specific congregations and dependent branches or groups and in other areas with more limited membership by providing translations of church services when available and holding language-specific Sunday School classes. Appointing members from differing ethnic groups to leadership positions in the same congregation has also appeared to have facilitated ethnic integration in some congregations, such as the Kuwait Branch. Greater religious freedom in the United Arab Emirates, Cyprus, Qatar, and Bahrain for foreigners offers opportunities for outreach among Christians and the establishment of additional congregations.

Tribalism and clan identity is a major challenge for several countries in North Africa and the Middle East in maintaining national stability. The LDS Church may experience challenges of indigenous members from rival ethnic, clan, or tribal groups attending the same congregation if LDS outreach occurs one day. In North Africa, Arabs and Berber peoples have integrated into society due to intermarriage and shared culture and legacy, but clan identity remains an ethnic integration issue. Although considerably more ethnic diversity exists in Iran compared to other nations in the Middle East, little ethnic violence or conflict has occurred. This stability and relative interethnic harmony may result in greater ease in the assimilation of LDS converts into the same congregations. Both Persians and Azeris are Shiites; minority groups from other ethnic backgrounds and religions experience less tolerance. Severe ethnic conflict occurs in Iraq, Sudan, Mauritania, and Palestine. Potential LDS outreach in these nations may require ethnic-specific congregations to facilitate member activity and retention issues if ethnic conflict is manifest in Church. Ethnic integration issues in Jordan have been a major challenge among the small native Latter-day Saint population despite relatively little ethnic diversity in Jordan. These issues occurred primarily in the mid-2000s in Irbid as a result of several Christian Iraqi refugees joining the Church. Some Jordanian members, who do not appear to be active today, persecuted these Iraqi converts to the degree that they returned to Iraq in 2007.

Higher receptivity among some indigenous ethnic minority groups, immigrants, and expatriates has contributed to an ethnic imbalance in LDS congregations in most nations. Many converts from East Asia have joined the Church in Cyprus and very few Greek and Turkish Cypriots have joined the Church, resulting in Chinese comprising a large portion of membership in Cyprus. Higher receptivity among some traditionally-Christian ethnic groups such as Armenians in the Near East has in the past led to LDS congregations principally composed of ethnic minority groups. The LDS Church in Israel is unique regarding the diverse demographic composition of its tiny membership, as congregations do not appear to have any ethnic majority. Members report that the Latter-day Saints in Israel consist of Americans, Spanish-speakers, Russians, ethnic Jews, Arabs, Brazilians, and others. There is a large number of immigrant or migrant worker Filipino Latter-day Saints in congregations in Jerusalem and Galilee.²²⁰

²²⁰ "Galilee Branch facility dedicated," LDS Church News, 31 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50331/Galilee-Branch-facility-dedicated.html>

Language Issues

LDS worship services are primarily conducted in English in the region. Tagalog or Cebuano appear to be commonly used by Filipino members in some Gulf States, and some congregations are specifically designated for Filipino members in order to meet language needs, such as the Doha 2nd Branch in Qatar. Only a few congregations meet the needs of Arabic speakers, such as the Beirut Branch in Lebanon and the North Jordan Branch in Jordan. Some congregations have faced significant challenges meeting the needs of English speakers and Arabic speakers in the past, such as the Amman Branch. Similar challenges have also occurred in Turkey among Turkish speakers, English speakers, and speakers of Eastern European languages. The LDS Church in Israel faces significant challenges meeting the language needs of members despite the tiny size of LDS membership, as in 2007, LDS services were conducted and translated into English, Hebrew, Spanish, and Russian in the Galilee Branch ²²¹ and in English, Russian, and Spanish in Tel Aviv. LDS services in currently unreached countries in the region will most likely have their initial worship services and missionary activity conducted in English, French, Arabic, Persian, or Turkish.

Low literacy rates throughout the region, especially among women, are a major challenge for prospective missionary activity, as many cannot read LDS scriptures and materials, seriously limiting their ability to grow their testimonies and learn about the Church individually. Illiteracy also generates challenges for developing self-sustaining leadership and maintaining member activity rates due to challenges in studying the gospel. Literacy programs sponsored by the LDS Church may improve literacy rates, strengthen positive relations with local and regional governments, and provide an opportunity for proselytism that is culturally appropriate.

The Church has yet to translate all LDS scriptures into Farsi and Turkish, notwithstanding that both languages have over fifty million native speakers worldwide. There are no LDS materials in any Berber languages and no LDS materials in differing Arabic dialects. Very few, if any, Latter-day Saints speak Berber languages or the many Arabic dialects, and LDS proselytism is not permitted in regions where these languages are spoken, creating a barrier for prospective translations of LDS materials in these languages and dialects. Kurdish appears to be the language with the greatest potential for use and application of LDS materials among languages without LDS materials in the region at present due to recent successes among many outreach-oriented Christian groups among Kurdish speakers. Azerbaijani is a favorable candidate for future translations of LDS scriptures and materials, as it is the language with the tenth-most speakers worldwide without LDS materials, although there appear to be few, if any, Azerbaijani-speaking Latter-day Saints. There are no Hebrew translations of LDS scriptures or materials. The Church has not granted permission for the translation of LDS scriptures and materials into Hebrew. Hebrew-speaking Latter-day Saints must use other language materials.

Missionary Service

Nonexpatriate Latter-day Saints appear to have only served missions in the past decade from Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon, as these are among the only countries in the region with small groups of indigenous Latter-day Saints. Expatriate members from the region regularly serve full-time missions. Very few missionaries have been assigned to North Africa and the Middle East and almost exclusively consist of senior humanitarian couple missionaries and senior couple public affairs missionaries. Proselytizing LDS missionaries are assigned to Cyprus, as open proselytism is permitted and the majority of the population is Christian. Turkey is the only traditionally Muslim nation with proselytizing missionaries assigned. A few Iranians living outside their homeland have served LDS missions despite the limited numbers of Iranian members. Returned missionaries provide a valuable source of future leadership for when the Church conducts Iranian-directed proselytism outside Iran. Prospects for increasing the number of indigenous local members serving full-time missions is poor due to few LDS youth and bans on proselytism and mission outreach. Due to the lack of mission-aged

²²¹ "Galilee Branch facility dedicated," LDS Church News, 31 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50331/Galilee-Branch-facility-dedicated.html>

members, member-missionary work is critical in the finding of prospective mission-aged converts. The introduction of seminary and institute may facilitate greater activity and participation in addition to providing opportunities for member-missionary work. Performing youth-directed outreach among local Christians may be an effective means of attracting more youth converts who can serve full-time missions in Jordan and Lebanon.

Leadership

LDS leadership in the Middle East and North Africa is almost entirely comprised of nonnative members from Europe, North America, the Philippines, and South Asia. Only Cyprus, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, and Turkey appear to have had any local members serve in a leadership position in their native country over the past decade. Local leadership in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and other Gulf States is self-sustaining, notwithstanding the lack of any indigenous converts holding leadership positions as expatriate populations are large. Expatriate populations are often itinerant, as most reside in the region temporarily for employment, which can lead to challenges calling new leaders and keeping track of less active members and new converts. Steady congregational growth during the 2000s in the United Arab Emirates has arisen as a result of adequate active priesthood manpower to staff additional congregations. Non-Western members from Asia have held leadership positions in Cyprus and Qatar. Prospects for developing native leadership in North Africa and the Middle East are poor, as there are few Arab members in the region, laws and societal attitudes prevent open proselytism, and language barriers between expatriate leaders and the few Arabic-speaking Latter-day Saints create major challenges in teaching and training Arab membership, notwithstanding several leadership materials available in Arabic. The LDS Church in countries with no sizeable expatriate LDS populations will likely rely on humanitarian missionaries to staff local leadership if assigned by the Church and will play an important role in mentoring future indigenous leaders. The establishment of indigenous leadership in the region will be critical in developing self-sufficiency and laying a foundation for future growth if receptivity increases. Language barriers may warrant separate congregations for expatriate members and local members when membership size is sufficient and could provide greater leadership experience for indigenous membership.

Temple

North Africa, the Saudi Arabian Peninsula, Iran, and Iraq are assigned to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district, Cyprus, Jordan, and Lebanon are assigned to the London England Temple district, Israel and Turkey are assigned to the Bern Switzerland Temple district, Mauritania and Western Sahara are assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple district, and Sudan is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Reasons for the Church assigning countries to different European and African LDS temples is primarily due to the composition of LDS membership in each respective country, the lack of an official church presence in some cases, and the ease of obtaining visas and proper documentation to attend the temple. Temple trips for members in the Middle East and North Africa are costly, time consuming, and infrequent or do not occur at all. Western membership in the region attends the temple most frequently, whereas many indigenous members have not attended the temple before due to time and financial constraints and difficulty in obtaining visas. The lack of Arabic-speaking members in Europe is a major challenge for Arabic-speaking members in the Middle East and North Africa to attend temples in Europe. Once completed, the Rome Italy Temple may serve many countries in the region. The Church may one day construct a small temple in the United Arab Emirates due to a well-established community of expatriates capable of supporting a stake, four wards, and two branches in the country and greater religious freedom for Christians in the United Arab Emirates than in most countries in the region.

Comparative Growth

The Middle East and North Africa are among the least reached regions in the world by LDS missionary

efforts, as formal LDS proselytism only occurs in Cyprus and Istanbul, Turkey. Government restrictions barring missionary activity in most countries are among the most severe in the world and prevent the Church from publishing meeting locations and times for many nations. The percentage of the regional population residing in cities with LDS congregations is higher in the Middle East and North Africa (11%) than Central Asia (5%) and South Asia (4%), but local populations are less reached in the Middle East and North Africa than in Central and South Asia due to proselytism restrictions. Member activity rates are among the highest worldwide largely due to the overrepresented North American and European populations temporarily residing in the region. Missionary and church activity for the LDS Church in the Middle East and North Africa has been disrupted frequently, and most nations have had an LDS presence for a shorter period of time than nations in other world regions. Like Central Asia, local members provide an extremely limited amount of missionary manpower. Congregational and membership growth rates have been among the most rapid in the world in recent years due to expatriates, migrant workers, and military personnel relocating or being stationed in the region.

Nearly all major nontraditional, outreach-oriented Christian groups report more members and congregations in the Middle East and North African than Latter-day Saints. Many of these groups have established small communities among indigenous populations, notwithstanding cultural barriers and government restrictions. The percentage of Westerners among church membership in the region appears higher for Latter-day Saints than any other missionary-focused Christian group. Latter-day Saints appear to experience higher membership and congregational growth rates than most other Christian groups largely due to the high rate of emigration of local Christians in the region to Western Europe and North America.

Future Prospects

The outlook for future LDS Church growth in the Middle East is mixed, as receptivity among nonnative populations is fair and increases in expatriate Latter-day Saints in many nations continue to occur. However, receptivity among indigenous populations is very low and there are no culturally-adapted LDS teaching and proselytism approaches. Political instability in the Near East limits outreach among nations in which some limited missionary activity can occur among the indigenous Christian population, such as in Jordan and Lebanon, and the tiny size of LDS communities in these nations offers no significant outreach potential at present. The outlook for growth in North Africa is poor due to a nearly nonexistent Latter-day Saint community, severe government restrictions, and the strong ethno-religious ties of the population to Islam. There are no realistic medium-term opportunities for LDS outreach in Algeria, Iran, Israel, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan, Syria, Western Sahara, and Yemen. When possible, expanding humanitarian and development work in these nations combined with mission outreach to North Africans in Europe and Arabs and other Middle Eastern peoples elsewhere may lay the foundation for some future growth in the years to come. In many Gulf States, greater religious freedom provides meaningful potential for future growth, although considerable vision and effort will be needed to harness this potential, as full-time missionaries are unlikely to be assigned for the foreseeable future, government restrictions limit open proselytism in most areas, and cultural attitudes oppose conversion from Islam to Christianity. Additional congregations will likely be organized in the Gulf States in the coming years and may include language-specific congregations for Filipinos. Ethnic integration challenges will likely continue in Turkey and the Near East due to ethnic conflict and language barriers. In Iraq, the existing LDS Church infrastructure is largely artificial to meet the needs of military personnel, and an LDS presence may entirely vanish following the removal of American military personnel. The establishment of indigenous Latter-day Saint communities among indigenous peoples will be required for greater stability and investment in long-term church growth in the region.

INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY PROFILES

ALGERIA

Geography

AREA: 2,381,741 square km. Located in North Africa, Algeria is the second largest African country and borders Tunisia, Libya, Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Western Sahara, Morocco, and the Mediterranean Sea. The Sahara Desert, arid mountains and plateaus, and dry basin plains cover all of Algeria except for coastal regions in the extreme north. The narrow coastal plain and nearby Atlas Mountain Ranges experience a Mediterranean climate. In the interior, the dry, sparsely vegetated Ahaggar Mountains stand in south central Algeria and contain the highest peaks. Earthquakes, mudslides, and floods are natural hazards. Environmental issues include soil erosion, desertification, water pollution, industrial waste disposal, and insufficient water supplies. Algeria is divided into forty-eight administrative provinces.

Peoples

Arab-Berber: 99%

European: 1%

Arabs and Berbers have intermarried over several centuries. Twenty percent (20%) of Algerians have predominately Berber roots, compared to 60% of Moroccans. Many Europeans are French.

Population: 35,406,303 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.165% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.74 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 72.99 male, 76.57 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic dialects (85%), Berber languages (14%), other (1%). Arabic is the official language. Languages with over one million speakers include Arabic (29.1 million), Kabyle (2.6 million), and Tachawit (1.4 million).

Literacy: 69.9% (2002)

History

Known anciently as Numidia, Algeria was among the first areas in the Mediterranean to be settled, due to its fertile soil and suitable climate along the northern coast. The Berbers emerged as an ethnic group by the first millennia BC. The Carthaginians ruled many areas of Algeria until losing power as a result of the Punic Wars, initiating the establishment of Berber kingdoms that fell to Roman rule in the second century BC. Roman control was initially confined to the Mediterranean coastal regions of Algeria and reached significant portions of the interior only after the first century AD. Following the Roman Empire until the Vandal invasions and collapse of Rome in the fifth century AD, sporadic independence and self-rule followed, punctuated by Vandal raids and the expansion of the Byzantine Empire. Arabs arrived in the seventh century and influenced local

politics. Algeria was Islamicized, and the Arabic language was adopted between the eighth and eleventh centuries. Muslim caliphates established territorial rule, conquered and Islamicized Morocco, and fought with Spain for control of the southern Iberian Peninsula. The Spanish established small forts along the Algerian coast following victory in the 700-year reconquista of Spain, but Spanish influence never achieved significant reach into the interior. Ottoman influence increased in the seventeenth century. The introduction of square-rigged, heavily armed ships instead of galleys by Captain Jack Ward, an English privateer and Islamic convert turned pirate who operated from Tunis, provided the Barbary Pirates with technological superiority that facilitated their domination of the Western Mediterranean for nearly two centuries. Barbary Pirates operating from bases in Algeria and Tunisia captured thousands of ships and raided long segments of the Spanish and Italian coasts; an estimated 1–1.25 million Europeans were enslaved by the Barbary Pirates. Piracy finally ceased only with the French conquest in 1830.

Algeria achieved independence in 1962, and the National Liberation Front (FLN) has remained in power ever since. In 1991, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) challenged the FLN's central role in politics in an election. The military intervened due to concerns that elections would result in the FIS initiating a radical Islamic government. Between 1992 and 1998, over 100,000 perished from intense fighting between insurgency FIS supporters and the military. Abdelaziz Bouteflika became president in 1999, and the FIS disbanded in 2000. Bouteflika has remained in power and has eliminated the presidential term limits by amending the constitution. Algeria faces many humanitarian problems due to inadequate housing, poor living conditions, and high unemployment. Radical Islamic groups such as Al Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb have perpetrated terrorist acts directed toward the Algerian government and the West.

Culture

Islam influences everyday life and family customs. The government and the population struggle to determine to what extent Islam should influence government and law. Some aspects of Shari'a law are implemented. There is little tolerance for non-Muslims and Westerners, partially due to Algeria's colonial legacy. Literature draws upon Arab and French influences. Rai, a mixture of pop and folk music, is Algeria's most known music genre.²²² Cuisine consists of Mediterranean and Arab foods. Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are low. Polygamy is uncommon but legal.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$7,200 (2011) [15% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.698

Corruption Index: 2.9 (2011)

Abundant oil and natural gas reserves have facilitated economic growth and development. Exports of these fossil fuels account for 30% of the GDP and 95% of export revenue. However, corruption and government inefficiency have slowed the pace of infrastructure improvements and banking development. In 2006, 23% of the population lived below the poverty line. Unemployment is over 10%. Tight government control over the economy and significant corruption have dissuaded foreign investment. Industry generates 61% of the GDP and accounts for 23% of the workforce, whereas services account for 30% of the GDP. In addition to oil and natural gas, mining, chemicals, and food processing are primary industries. Common crops include wheat, oats, barley, fruit, and olives. Primary trade partners include Italy, France, the United States, and Spain.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and tied to state-owned companies and government. In 2006, the

²²² "Culture of Algeria," Wikipedia.com, retrieved 26 August 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Algeria

government agreed to form an anti-corruption agency, which was not approved until 2010. Corruption is linked to the exploitation of Algeria's rich oil and natural gas resources and infrastructure projects.²²³

Faiths

Muslim: 99%

Christian and Jewish: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Protestants 45,000

Catholic 45,000

Seventh Day Adventists less than 100

Latter-day Saints less than 50

Religion

Sunni Muslims constitute all but 1% of the population. Islam strongly influences daily life, government, and society. Most Christians and Jews fled Algeria after independence or in the 1990s due to intolerance and violence from Muslim extremists. Evangelicals are the largest Christian denomination followed by other Protestant groups and Catholics. There are around 2,000 Jews but most are not religiously active. Many Christians consist of foreigners from Western Europe and sub-Saharan Africa.²²⁴

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 29th

The constitution allows for freedom of thought and religious practice as long as an individual's religion does not oppose Islamic teachings and public order and morality. Islam is the official state religion. In 2008, Algeria introduced new legislation regarding the religious practice of non-Muslims that has restricted the freedom of formerly Muslim Christians and has denied any applications for Christian groups to be registered with the government. The Catholic Church is the only officially recognized non-Islamic religious group. Christian groups that have attempted to obtain recognition include the Anglican Church and Seventh Day Adventists. The proselytism of Muslims is illegal, although this law is not entirely enforced. Conversion from Islam is not considered a civil crime. Many Christian converts keep a low profile in order to avoid persecution and violence from Islamic fundamentalist groups that call for the killing and persecution of formerly Muslim Christians. Reports of Bible confiscations and church closures have occurred recently. Citizens and foreigners are permitted to bring religious literature and Bibles into the country, yet their distribution is prohibited. The denial of church registrations has resulted in many Christians holding private meetings in the homes of members. During 2009, at least twenty-two Christian churches publicly or privately reopened, notwithstanding the lack of overt government permission. Non-Muslim religious groups may perform humanitarian service as long as proselytism of Muslims does not occur. Only Muslims may become president. Several laws originate from Shari'a law, particularly regarding family matters. The government regulates the practice of Islam in order to curb radical Islamic influence on society. In recent years, there have been many media reports

²²³ "Algeria creates special anti-corruption agency," Middle East Online, 26 August 2010. <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=40890>

²²⁴ "Algeria," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127344.htm>

of government officials limiting the flow of non-Muslim religious materials and the prosecution of violators of the proselytism ban.²²⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 65%

Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Annaba, Batna, Blida, Sétif, Sidi bel Abbès, Chlef, Biskra, Tlemcen, Djelfa, Tébessa, Skikda, Bejaïa, Tiaret, Béchar, Ouargla, Bordj Bou Arreridj, Mostaganem, Médéa, Souk Ahras, Tougourt, Saïda, Ghardaïa, Guelma, Khenchela, Jijel, El Eulma, El Oued, Relizane.

None of the thirty-one cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Twenty percent (20%) of the national population resides in the thirty-one largest cities.

LDS History

There has never been an official LDS presence in Algeria. Foreigner Latter-day Saints living in Algiers or elsewhere may have begun meeting in groups in the past two decades.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

In 2010, the Church reported no membership totals for Algeria. Europeans and North Americans most likely constitute the majority of Latter-day Saints in Algeria.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 Groups: 1? (2012)

Any groups functioning in Algeria report under the Middle East/Africa North Area Branch.

Activity and Retention

Active membership is limited to those who attend private meetings in LDS member homes or those who follow Church teachings without a nearby congregation. Over half of known membership may be active due to higher activity rates in Middle Eastern and Northern African nations among Westerners, often influenced by increased desire for social interaction.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, French, English.

All LDS scriptures and many church materials are available in Arabic and French.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church conducted its first development project, a clean water project, in Algeria in the past decade.²²⁶

²²⁵ "Algeria," International Religious Freedom Report 2009," 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127344.htm>

²²⁶ "Projects—Algeria," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 24 August 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-55,00.html>

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church is not officially registered with the government, and future recognition appears unlikely in the foreseeable future as no Christian denominations have received official recognition over the past several years. The Church cannot proselyte due to legal restrictions. Opportunities exist for humanitarian and development work, which over time may lead to improved relations.

Cultural Issues

The strong Islamic identity of Algerians and lack of religious diversity is a major cultural obstacle to LDS mission outreach, as it is the origin of anti-proselytism legislation and intolerance of non-Islamic religious groups. Prospective converts would most likely face severe ostracism and persecution from family and friends. Low substance abuse rates correlate with Church teachings. Polygamy is not common in Algeria, providing a cultural advantage for standards of strict monogamy over many Muslim nations where polygamy is more widespread.

National Outreach

With the exception of those with close personal contacts with Church members, the entire population remains entirely unreached by LDS mission efforts due to legal restrictions regarding Christian proselytism and the lack of Latter-day Saints in Algeria. Even if Algiers had a mission outreach center, fewer than 10% of the national population would be reached. With few, if any, native LDS members, Algerians have little or no opportunity to make a personal contact with a Latter-day Saint.

Some European nations that allow proselytism have large Algerian populations; over 1.5 million individuals of Algerian descent live in France. Some Algerians have joined the LDS Church in Europe; however, few return home due to low standards of living, high unemployment, and an oppressive environment toward Christians. LDS Internet outreach may be able to reach some Algerians who cannot be reached by traditional methods.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The few native Algerian Latter-day Saints who have been baptized elsewhere and returned to their home country likely experience low member activity rates due the lack of organized LDS congregations, societal pressures to conform to Islam, and perceived threats from terrorist groups.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Arabs and Berber peoples have integrated into society due to intermarriage and shared culture and legacy, but clan identity remains an ethnic integration issue.

Language Issues

Algeria experiences one of the greatest language complexities of Arab Muslim nations in North Africa and Middle East, as Algerian Arabic is significantly different than Middle Eastern Arabic, and many Berber languages continue to be widely spoken. Current LDS materials in Arabic may be of some use to Algerians, as standard Arabic is used in schools, on television, and in most books, but over 30% are illiterate, and many others have only limited literacy. Algerian Arabic is the most widely spoken in daily life but varies considerably among regions and even villages within a region. The millions of Algerians who speak Berber languages

will remain without LDS materials for perhaps decades following the development of an indigenous Algerian Latter-day Saint community.

Missionary Service

No known members from Algeria have served full-time missions, and no LDS missionary activity has occurred.

Leadership

Potential church leadership may depend on non-Algerians for many years due to the lack of native members. If assigned, humanitarian missionaries may play an important role developing stronger church leadership.

Temple

Algeria pertains to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Temple trips are costly and time consuming. With the exception of the Rome Italy Temple, no temples appear likely to be built closer to Algeria in the near future.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church has the most limited presence in North Africa in Algeria and Libya. Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt have had branches or permanent groups established for several years. Egypt appears to be the only nation in North Africa that has some native members attending congregations, whereas there are greater numbers of native Latter-day Saints in the Middle East in Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. No nations in North Africa have an official LDS presence. No Islamic nations in the Middle East have proselytizing missionaries.

Many Christian groups report that North Africa is more receptive to mission efforts than the Middle East and have an unofficial presence in Algeria. Seventh Day Adventists, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and Jehovah's Witnesses all appear to have a larger presence in Algeria among Arab-Berbers and permanent foreign residents than Latter-day Saints in Algeria or in any other Middle Eastern country. Many of these groups engaged in limited proselytism for several decades to attract a few converts and have proselytized Algerians residing in Europe.

Future Prospects

With one of the largest populations in North Africa, Algeria is a nation that presents no realistic opportunities for outreach at present due to bans on proselytism, persecution of Christians, civil unrest, the small number of expatriate Latter-day Saints in the country, and few if any native members. Although there may be some opportunity for expatriate members to engage in limited worship, there are no opportunities to share the gospel with native Algerians, and the outlook for future growth and official Church establishment is poor. Humanitarian and development work in Algeria combined with mission outreach to Algerians and other North Africans in Europe may bear fruit in coming years, but are unlikely to lead to the establishment of a church presence in Algeria under present conditions.

BAHRAIN

Geography

AREA: 741 square km. Bahrain consists of a small archipelago off the Arabian Peninsula in the Persian Gulf. The surrounding sea creates a humid climate with mild temperatures in the winter and hot, humid conditions in the summer. Most of the islands are low elevation plains with little variation. The King Fahd Causeway connects Bahrain with Saudi Arabia, and another causeway is planned connecting Bahrain to Qatar. Drought and dust storms are natural hazards, whereas desertification, oil spills, the damage to the ocean ecosystems from human activity are environmental issues. Bahrain is divided into five administrative governorates.

Peoples

Bahraini: 62.4%

Non-Bahraini: 37.6%

Between 200,000 and 550,000 foreigners reside in Bahrain. Indians are the largest non-Bahraini group. Other large ethnic groups include Iranians, Pakistanis, and Westerners.

Population: 1,248,348 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.652% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.86 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 76.16 male, 80.48 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic (48%–69%), Farsi (5%–7%), Urdu (3%–4%), English (2%–3%), Filipino languages (2%–3%), Kurdish (2%–3%), Malayalam (2%–3%), Tamil (2%–3%), Telugu (1%–2%), other (3%–33%). Arabic is the official language. No language has over one million speakers.

Literacy: 86.5% (2001)

History

The island of Bahrain is believed by some scholars to be the paradise land of Dilmun referred to in early Sumerian writings. Various ancient civilizations controlled or influenced Bahrain, including the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians. Since the birth of Christ, the islands have been controlled by Persians, Sassanids, Qarmatians, and Portuguese. Islam arrived shortly after its advent in the seventh century. Bahrain returned to Persian rule around 1600 AD until the al-Khalifa family took the island and signed treaties with the British to ensure its protection from neighboring nations. Bahrain became a British protectorate and gained independence in 1971. Greater modernization occurred in the 1970s and 1980s due to Bahrain's abundant oil reserves and efforts to diversify the economy. Bahrain has become a banking center in the Middle East in the past several decades. Tensions between the Sunni and Shi'a Muslims persist over differences in theology, wealth, and government representation.

Culture

Bahrain's tolerance for non-Arabs and non-Muslims has produced a more cosmopolitan atmosphere than in

many Gulf States. Different religious groups peacefully coexist, but Islam is the primary influence on culture. Education has become increasingly emphasized due to competition for employment. Car racing has become increasingly popular in recent years following the completion of the Bahrain International Circuit, the first racing track in the Middle East. Tourism has grown in recent years. Bahrain has one of the highest rates of alcohol consumption in the Middle East due to the sizable non-Muslim population and tourism. Polygamy is legal but not widely practiced.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$27,300 (2011) [56.8% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.806

Corruption Index: 5.1 (2011)

Bahrain competes with Malaysia as a center of banking in the Muslim world. Oil profits continue to drive the economy despite the shrinking size of oil reserves, which are among the smallest in the region. Oil related activities account for 70% of government revenue and 11% of the GDP. High unemployment among native Bahrainis (15% in 2005) is a problem that has not been resolved. Industry accounts for 58% of the GDP and employs 79% of the workforce. Primary industries include oil extraction and refining and aluminum smelting. Services produce 42% of the GDP and employ 20% of the workforce. Limited agriculture produces fruit, vegetables, and poultry. Primary trade partners include Saudi Arabia, Japan, the United States, and China.

Corruption is lower than many Middle Eastern nations but has worsened in recent years due to Bahrain's role as an international financial center. Money laundering is a serious concern.²²⁷

Faiths

Muslim: 81.2%

Christian: 9%

Other: 9.8%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 140,000

Latter-day Saints 162 1

Religion

Ninety-nine percent (99%) of ethnic Bahrainis are Muslim. Shi'a Muslims constitute the majority but make up poorer classes. The Shiite majority dates to Persian control of Bahrain from 1603 to 1783, when the Sunni Al Khalifa family came to power. Friction between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims is pronounced due to economic and social differences. These groups have historically lived separate from each other but greater mingling now occurs. Half the foreign workers are Muslim whereas the remainder includes Christians, Hindus, Bahai's, Buddhists, and Sikhs.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 35th

The constitution does not limit individuals from choosing, practicing, or changing their religious affiliation.

²²⁷ Mahdi, Mazen. "Bahrain minister ousted over corruption charges," The National Newspaper, 22 March 2010. <http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100323/FOREIGN/703229820/1002>

Islam is the state religion, and Islamic holidays are national holidays. Government prohibits the persecution or discrimination of religious sects. Non-Muslims can practice their religions with little government interference. Some Christian congregations have failed to receive government recognition. Religious groups must receive a license from the government to assemble; however, unregistered congregations of some faiths meet without government interference. Bahraini authorities do not restrict Christians from distributing or selling of religious literature. Religious violence or conflict occurs primarily between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims.²²⁸

Largest Cities

Urban: 89%

Manama, **Muharraq**, **Riffa**, **Hamad Town**, **A'ali**, **Isa Town**, **Sitrah**, **Budaiya**, **Jidhafs**, **Al-Malikiyah**.

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

One of the ten largest cities has a congregation. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

Church members have lived in Bahrain since the 1970s. A group functioned prior to the creation of the Bahrain Branch in 1978. In 1976, there were eight adults and eight children in the Bahrain Group.²²⁹ Four members were received by the Emir of Bahrain in 1989 and cordially welcomed to Bahrain from other Middle Eastern nations for Church leadership meetings.²³⁰ The Church has been legally recognized since at least 2001.²³¹ Many stake activities for the Manama Bahrain Stake, which includes some congregations in surrounding nations, occurred in Bahrain prior to the stake relocating to Dubai, United Arab Emirates due to the level of religious freedom and its central location for members in other Gulf States. Currently the LDS Church in Bahrain plays a crucial role in the operation of the Church in Saudi Arabia.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 162 (2011)

In 1988, the Bahrain Branch grew to thirty-five members. In 2001, members came from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Philippines, and South Africa.²³² By 2007 there were seventy-six members, growing to 114 in 2009.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 Groups: 1 (2011)

In 2000, Bahrain became part of the Europe Central Area and in the late 2000s was assigned to the newly created Middle East/Africa North Area. The Bahrain Branch is the only independent congregation in Bahrain and pertained to the Manama Bahrain Stake, formerly known as the Arabian Peninsula Stake, prior to its relocation to Dubai, United Arab Emirates in 2011. In 2011, the Manama Bahrain District was formed and includes branches in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. A group operates to meet the needs of American military stationed in Bahrain.

²²⁸ "Bahrain," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127345.htm>

²²⁹ Platt Joseph B. "Our Oasis of Faith," *Ensign*, Apr 1988, 39.

²³⁰ "LDS greeted in Bahrain," *LDS Church News*, 23 December 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19451/LDS-greeted-in-Bahrain.html>

²³¹ Shurtliff, Diane. "Oasis of Faith," *New Era*, Aug 2001, 34.

²³² Shurtliff, Diane. "Oasis of Faith," *New Era*, Aug 2001, 34.

Activity and Retention

Very few converts have joined the Church in Bahrain, as most members have temporarily arrived for employment. Active membership is likely between 100 and 150, or 36%–53% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English, Farsi, Hindi, Telugu, Tagalog, Tamil, Urdu.

All LDS scriptures are available in Arabic and Tagalog. Book of Mormon translations have been completed for Hindi, Telugu, and Urdu; only Book of Mormon selections are available in Farsi. Most Church materials are available in Arabic and Tagalog, whereas Hindi, Telugu, Urdu, and Farsi have more limited Church materials. *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Farsi. The only Church materials in Malayalam are *Gospel Fundamentals* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*. The *Liahona* annually has twelve issues in Tagalog, four in Telugu, three issues in Urdu, and one issue in Hindi.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings for the Bahrain Branch likely occur in a rented space.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has not reported any humanitarian projects conducted in Bahrain. Some local members may have carried out service projects.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Unlike most Middle Eastern nations, Bahrain does not prohibit proselytism. However, open proselytism is not permitted due to cultural restrictions on proselytizing Muslims. There do not appear to be any major limitations on conducting missionary work or distributing religious literature among non-Muslims. Muslims have access to non-Islamic religious materials, although very few have become Christians. The level of religious freedom has made Bahrain the headquarters for Church activities in the region through the Manama Bahrain Stake.

Cultural Issues

Church meetings are held on Fridays, the Islamic day of worship. Bahrain's cosmopolitan atmosphere provides opportunity for the Church to reach individuals from a wide variety of nationalities and backgrounds. Muslims have greater potential opportunity to learn about the Church in Bahrain than in many other Gulf States, although active mission outreach among Muslims has not been pursued due to cultural restrictions. Converts who were formerly Muslim will likely experience less persecution and ostracism than many other Arab nations, but mission outreach among this religious group remains a sensitive issue. Those engaged in polygamous relationships must divorce polygamous spouses and be interviewed by a member of the area presidency in order to join the Church.

National Outreach

Bahrain's urbanized population reduces logistical challenges in reaching the entire population. Most reside within fifteen miles of Manama, reducing the number of needed congregations to administer such a small

geographic area. Membership size and activity have not yet required the creation of additional congregations for different sections of the Manama metropolitan area.

Christians are likely the most receptive religious group to the Church and number nearly 100,000. Little effort to reach other Christian groups appears to have occurred despite few restrictions. No full-time missionaries are assigned to Bahrain, leaving these responsibilities to local members, most of whom are transient expatriates with no knowledge of Arabic or other local languages. Many expatriates have only limited contact with native peoples and often tend to socialize primarily with other expatriates, resulting in few opportunities for sharing the gospel with native peoples. Local and area LDS leadership may have instituted restrictions regarding how, when and where members may speak and teach nonmembers about the Church to respect local cultural sensitivities.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Few converts appear to have joined the Church in Bahrain. Member activity and convert retention primarily reflect the strength, doctrinal understanding, and habits of church attendance of the nations from which members relocated.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The greatest ethnic tensions are between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. Most members come from North America, Europe, or the Philippines, making member-missionary work among these groups most favorable. Iranians, Kurds, and other predominately Muslim ethnic groups present challenging for outreach, as these groups have few or no Church members.

Language Issues

Church materials are available in most languages spoken by migrant workers and Bahrainis, although church services are conducted in English, and few members are proficient in Arabic or other local languages. Kurdish is the only language with a significant number of speakers without any Church materials.

Leadership

Although the Manama Bahrain District is headquartered in the country, insufficient active membership and limited leadership prevent the creation of more than one branch. Present branch and stake leaders are English-speaking expatriates; there appear to be few if any native Bahraini LDS leaders.

Temple

Bahrain pertains to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Temple trips occur rarely, as most members are transient expatriates with more convenient access to temples when returning to their native lands to visit or at the conclusion of their assignments. A future, closer temple may meet the needs of LDS members in Bahrain, perhaps in the United Arab Emirates, although such needs are presently limited by the small number of church members.

Comparative Growth

The size of LDS membership is comparable to many Middle Eastern nations, but growth has been slow despite an organized presence for many decades. Only Kuwait appears to have seen growth as slow as Bahrain; both these nations have had a branch and a military group for many years.

Other Christian groups meet the needs of their members who relocate to Bahrain with little effort to grow their congregations. Some Christian groups also use Bahrain as a headquarters for the region due to its tolerance towards religious minorities.

Future Prospects

Greater religious freedom in Bahrain than in many other Arab nations provides meaningful potential for future growth, although considerable vision and effort will be needed to harness this potential. Government efforts to reduce unemployment rates among Bahrainis by allowing fewer foreign workers into the country may slow future membership growth as fewer members relocate to Bahrain.

Although open proselytism in Bahrain is legal among both Muslims and non-Muslims, the assignment of full-time missionaries is unlikely at present due to cultural limitations and regional geopolitical concern, and so growth in coming years will depend primarily on member-missionary efforts. Member-missionary outreach is limited by primary reliance of LDS members on English, the lack of proficiency of most members in Arabic and other local languages, social circles of members that are largely confined to the expatriate community, and the transient nature of expatriate workers without long-term commitment to the region. The need and opportunity exist for organized LDS outreach among non-Muslims, including Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs, who together constitute nearly 20% of the population. Future growth and transition from a transient expatriate membership to indigenous membership with stable local leadership will depend on efforts to reach out to native Bahrainis.

CYPRUS

Geography

AREA: 9,251 square km. In the eastern Mediterranean Sea, Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily and Sardinia. The country remains politically divided between independent Cyprus and the de facto Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the latter of which has an area of 3,355 square km. The climate is temperate with dry, hot summers and cool winters. The largest mountains are in the south, and a small mountain chain stretches along the northern coast line. Plains occupy the island's center and many coastal areas. Earthquakes and droughts are natural hazards; lack of fresh water, pollution and urbanization are environmental issues. Cyprus is divided into six administrative districts, three of which are entirely or partially occupied by Northern Cyprus.

Peoples

Greek: 77%
Turkish: 18%
Other: 5%

Greeks primarily populate government-controlled Cyprus, whereas Northern Cyprus is primarily Turkish. Half the Turkish population is indigenous, and half have settled since the 1974 Turkish invasion. Most other ethnic groups have recently immigrated or are migrant workers from the United Kingdom, China, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Poland, Russia, Nigeria, and the Middle East.

Population: 1,138,071 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 1.571% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 1.45 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 75.21 male, 80.92 female (2012)

Languages: Greek (82%), Turkish (17%), other (1%). National or official languages include Greek and Turkish. English is also widely spoken. No languages have over one million speakers.

Literacy: 97.6% (2001)

History

People have settled Cyprus for millennia. Civilizations that ruled or settled Cyprus prior to the birth of Christ include the Hittites, Mycenaean Greeks, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. The early Christian Church had connections to Cyprus, which served as a crossroads for apostles on missionary journeys throughout the eastern Mediterranean. The Byzantine Empire ruled Cyprus and suffered centuries of raids and attacks from Arabs between 500 and 1000 AD. Between 1000 and 1500 AD, various European groups, primarily the Venetians, controlled the island and attempted to supplant native culture. The Ottoman Empire controlled Cyprus between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries until Cyprus came under British rule in the late nineteenth century. Growing nationalism fueled an independence movement in the twentieth century that became realized in 1960. Following Cypriot independence, the United Kingdom retained sovereignty of two military bases. Greece almost took control of Cyprus in 1974, but the Turkish invasion quickly

followed. Turkey annexed over a third of the island until a ceasefire was reached. At that time, 180,000 Greek Cypriots were forced from their homes in the north and fled to the south. Over 100,000 Turkish settlers came to Northern Cyprus prior to its declaration of independence in 1983. The sovereignty of Northern Cyprus is only recognized by Turkey. A “green zone” serves as a buffer between the two political entities. The border has become more porous over the years, but a political division between the de facto state and the rest of the country remains. In the last couple of decades, the economy has rapidly developed. Cyprus joined the EU in 2004. Part of the capital city of Nicosia, known locally as Lefkosia, is controlled by Northern Cyprus. Nicosia remains the world’s last divided capital.

Culture

Cyprus has a rich and ancient history. Art, folk music, literature, cuisine, and sports each have proud national histories. Tourism has also strongly affected culture. Cyprus has one of the highest alcohol consumption rates per capita in the world, likely influenced by tourism. Cigarette use per capita is about twice that of the United States and half that of Greece. Governments have facilitated travel between North Cyprus and the rest of Cyprus in the past decade, although all persons crossing the border must still show identification.²³³

Economy

GDP per capita: \$29,100 (2011) [60.5% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.840

Corruption Index: 6.3 (2011)

Cyprus has achieved marked economic growth during the past several decades largely due to tourism and good government policies. Services employ 71% of the workforce and produce 79% of the GDP. Industry accounts for 20.5% of the labor force and 19% of the GDP. Agricultural products include citrus, vegetables, barley, grapes, and olives. Primary industries include tourism, food processing, and cement and gypsum production. Greece, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Germany are the largest trade partners. Northern Cyprus had a GDP per capita of \$11,700 (2007). Northern Cyprus has an economy heavily reliant on Turkey for trade and financing. Northern Cyprus also has larger industry and agriculture workforces by percentage than Cyprus.

Corruption in Cyprus is lower than many nearby nations. Some drug trafficking of heroin and cocaine occurs as a transit point from Turkey and Lebanon to Europe. Susceptibility to money laundering remains a concern.

Faiths

Christian: 82%

Muslim: 18%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus 846,103

Catholic 10,000

Jehovah’s Witnesses 2,439 35

Latter-day Saints 430 4

Seventh Day Adventists 77 1

²³³ “Cyprus,” International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127305.htm>

Religion

Christians are the largest religious group and include Greeks and other ethnic groups except for Turkish Cypriots. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the population in government-controlled areas adheres to the Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus. In 2006, a poll found that only 19% of Greek Cypriots attended church weekly, and over half attended only on holidays or rarely attended church services.²³⁴ Christian holidays are national holidays. The majority of the population in Northern Cyprus is Muslim (98%) but is very secular, and only 10% attended religious services regularly. Only a few Christians are known to live in Northern Cyprus.

Religious Freedom

The constitution provides for religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Abuses of religious freedom do occur in society and are reprimanded by government officials. According to the 1960 constitution, only the Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus, Vakif (an organization for Muslim Turkish Cypriots), Maronite Catholics, Roman Catholics, and the Armenian Orthodox Churches are recognized and receive tax exemption. Religious groups not recognized may function in Cyprus but must register as a nonprofit organization in order to have financial engagements. Registered nonprofit organizations are tax exempted, and religious groups receive nonprofit approval quickly, but the application must be submitted through an attorney. Open proselytism in government control areas is permitted, and foreign missionaries must obtain residence permits. Public schools are mandated to teach students about the Greek Orthodox Church. Only students with non-Greek Cypriot parents can have this instruction waved. North Cyprus does not have laws barring proselytism, but missionary activity is rare and discouraged.²³⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 70%

Lefkosia (Nicosia), Lemesos, Larnaka, Lefkosa, **Gazimagusa***, Pafos, **Girne***, **Guzelyurt***, Aradippou, **Paralimni**.

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

Four of the ten largest cities have a congregation. Lefkosa and Aradippou are suburbs of Lefkosia and Larnaka, respectively, which have LDS congregations. Cities with an asterisk are in Northern Cyprus. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

In 1962, the Church organized the first group for LDS families serving in government. The Nicosia Branch was discontinued in 1969, reorganized in 1971, and discontinued in 1980. Following the dissolution of the International Mission in 1987, Cyprus fell under the jurisdiction of the Austria Vienna East Mission. At the time, there were no congregations or mission outreach.²³⁶ Cyprus was assigned to the Greece Athens Mission in 1990 and the Europe/Mediterranean Area in 1991.²³⁷ Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin dedicated Cyprus for missionary work in September 1993. A branch had been reorganized, and the Cyprus Branch president,

²³⁴ "Cyprus," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127305.htm>

²³⁵ "Cyprus," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127305.htm>

²³⁶ Lloyd, Scott R. "New Seventy plays key role in thrilling events of the Church," LDS Church News, 18 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20889/New-Seventy-played-key-role-in-thrilling-events-of-the-Church.html>

²³⁷ Cannon, Mike. "Diversity in land, people and climate," LDS Church News, 7 December 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21327/Diversity-in-land-people-and-climate.html>

branch members, and many Church leaders from the Europe/Mediterranean Area were in attendance. A fireside was held in Larnaca at the time of the dedication with fifty in attendance, including many interested investigators.²³⁸

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 430 (2012)

In late 1993, there were twenty-six members in the Cyprus Branch.²³⁹ Membership reached 110 at year-end 2000. Membership has tripled in the past decade, reaching 202 in 2003 and 303 in 2007. By 2008, there were 337 members. With the exception of 2003 and 2006, membership grew by over 10% annually.

In 2007, nonnative membership came from nations including the Philippines, China, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, the United Kingdom, Nepal, Bangladesh, and the United States.²⁴⁰ In 2010, missionaries reported that most members in Nicosia were from China and other Asian nations.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 4 (2012)

In 1993, the Cyprus Branch served the entire island. A second branch was created in the mid-1990s and a third in the late 1990s. By 2000, there were three branches in Nicosia, Lemesos, and Larkana. The Pafos Branch was created in 2005. In 2007, the first district was created, named the Nicosia Cyprus District. The district had four branches in Nicosia, Lemesos, Larkana, and Pafos.

Activity and Retention

Seventy members and missionaries gathered for the creation of the first district in 2007.²⁴¹ In 2007 there were fifty to sixty active members in Nicosia, twenty-five to thirty in Lemesos, and less than ten in both Larnaka and Pafos. Attending district conference in late 2011 were 150 members. Active membership likely numbers between 125 and 150, or 30%–35% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Greek, Turkish, English.

All LDS scriptures are available in Greek. Only the Book of Mormon has been translated into Turkish. Many unit, temple, priesthood, relief society, Sunday School, young women, primary, missionary, and family history materials are available in Greek and Turkish. The *Liabona* has one Greek issue a year. All scriptures and many church materials are also available in Chinese and some other Asian languages spoken by LDS members.

Meetinghouses

There are no Church-built meetinghouses in Cyprus. Meetings likely occur in rented spaces or renovated buildings.

²³⁸ "Elder Wirthlin dedicates the island of Cyprus for preaching of gospel," LDS Church News, 27 November 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23399/Elder-Wirthlin-dedicates-the-island-of-Cyprus-for-preaching-of-gospel.html>

²³⁹ "Elder Wirthlin dedicates the island of Cyprus for preaching of gospel," LDS Church News, 27 November 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23399/Elder-Wirthlin-dedicates-the-island-of-Cyprus-for-preaching-of-gospel.html>

²⁴⁰ "First district on island of Cyprus created," LDS Church News, 3 November 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51289/First-district-on-island-of-Cyprus-created.html>

²⁴¹ "First district on island of Cyprus created," LDS Church News, 3 November 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51289/First-district-on-island-of-Cyprus-created.html>

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has done some small local humanitarian and service projects.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

No laws limit the Church's missionary program. Missionaries proselyte freely. The Church does not appear to have any difficulty obtaining residence permits for missionaries. Religious freedom is more restricted in Northern Cyprus, which appears to have no Church members.

Cultural Issues

Greater tolerance of religious minorities exists in Cyprus compared to Greece, yet social barriers dissuade many Greek Cypriots from learning about or joining the Church. Greek Cypriots who join the Church often face ostracism from family and the community as they are no longer considered Greek due to their identification with a non-Orthodox religious group. Intolerance of proselytism among Muslim Turkish Cypriots and continued disputes over the legal status of the Turkish-controlled North have left the population of Northern Cyprus unreached by mission efforts. High alcohol and cigarette present barriers to living Church standards.

National Outreach

Cyprus' small geographic size, highly urbanized population, and developed transportation systems provide opportunities for missionary work with fewer outreach centers. The Church has congregations and missionaries in cities that account for 44% of the national population. Four of the six administrative districts have a congregation; the remaining two are Kyrenia, which is entirely in Northern Cyprus—and Famagusta, with only a small portion in government controlled areas. The Church's presence is limited to only the largest cities. Larnaka and Pafos have outreach and congregations, but fewer than ten active members each.

Extending outreach into small cities and villages will be difficult and is highly unlikely until greater receptivity is manifest among Greek Cypriots. These communities have few foreigners and therefore missionary work would occur primarily among the Greek Cypriots. There are 192 villages with between 100 and 1,000 inhabitants and eighty-three villages or small cities between 1,000 and 10,000 inhabitants without LDS congregations. The furthest urban locations from outreach centers in government-controlled territory are less than fifty miles away.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Most converts are non-Greek or Turkish Cypriots and are often living in Cyprus temporarily for employment. These members are more transient and challenge the Church's efforts to build self-sustaining local congregations when they return to their home countries or relocate elsewhere. Convert retention appears modest, as activity rates have declined over the past two decades.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Many converts from East Asia have joined the Church, particularly in Nicosia. Missionaries report success in working among the large body of students at the university. Very few Greek and Turkish Cypriots have joined the Church. In the early 1990s, there were only three known Greek Cypriot members.

Language Issues

Few members speak Greek or Turkish as a native language. English is often spoken in Church meetings in Nicosia. Many of the members speak Greek, Turkish, or English as a second language. The diversity in cultures and languages challenges local leadership in integrating members into the same congregations. Membership size is not large enough to justify the creation of language-specific congregations. Not all LDS scriptures are available in Turkish.

Leadership

Local priesthood leaders were called to serve as branch presidents at the creation of the Cyprus district in 2007. At the time, branch presidents of two of the four branches (Nicosia and Larnaca) were expatriates of Nepal and England, respectively. The remaining two branches appear to have had missionaries serving as branch presidents.²⁴² The Church has been successful in developing leadership among foreign converts, but it does not appear that Greek or Turkish Cypriots have held Church leadership positions.

Temple

Cyprus pertains to the London England Temple District. Assignment to the London England Temple district is likely influenced by historic ties to the United Kingdom, the widespread use of English among active Church members, and the small size of membership. The Rome Italy Temple will become the closest to Cyprus, once completed.

Comparative Growth

Cyprus is one of the most well-reached nations in the Eastern Mediterranean and is the closest nation with open proselytism to Israel and most of the Middle East. Membership growth has been among the fastest the Church has experienced among nations with fewer than 1,000 members in Europe. Membership growth has exceeded that of Greece in both numbers and percentages. Moldova has seen similar growth, membership size, and leadership development. Nonetheless, few native Greek Cypriots or Turks are found among membership in Cyprus, and church growth has occurred primarily among foreign students and expatriate workers.

Most Christian groups have seen little membership and congregational growth in Cyprus. Jehovah's Witnesses and Latter-day Saints appear to be the groups with the most consistent growth. As in Greece, Jehovah's Witnesses form the largest non-Orthodox or Catholic denomination in Cyprus and continue to see strong growth. Jehovah's Witnesses have developed a Cypriot member base actively involved in proselytism and now maintain thirty congregations with over 2,300 active members.

Future Prospects

Prospects for continued growth among the nonnative population are high. As long as foreign converts remain in Cyprus, more congregations will likely have local leaders and become less dependent on foreign missionaries. Prospects for growth among the native population remain low as Greek and Turkish Cypriots continue to demonstrate indifference to the gospel message.

²⁴² "First district on island of Cyprus created," LDS Church News, 3 November 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51289/First-district-on-island-of-Cyprus-created.html>

EGYPT

Geography

AREA: 1,001,450 square km. Located in Northern Africa, Egypt borders Sudan, Libya, the Gaza Strip, and Israel. Half of Egypt's borders consist of coastline along the Mediterranean and Red Seas. The Sinai Peninsula forms a land bridge linking Africa with Asia. The Suez Canal runs between Africa and the Sinai Peninsula. Desert plateau subject to hot, dry summers, and moderate winters covers most areas with the exception of the Nile River valley and delta. Some mountains occupy the southern Sinai Peninsula and along the Red Sea. Several oases are scattered throughout the desolate interior. Natural hazards include droughts, earthquakes, flash floods, landslides, and dust and sand storms. Erosion of productive soil on agricultural lands due to wind, decreasing soil quality, desertification, pollution, and rapid population growth along the Nile are environmental issues. Egypt is divided into twenty-nine administrative governorates.

Peoples

Egyptian: 99.6%

Other: 0.4%

Population: 83,688,164 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.922% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.94 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 70.33 male, 75.66 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic (96%), Domari (3%), other (1%). Arabic is the official language. Egyptian Arabic and Sa'idi Arabic are most frequently spoken dialects. Languages with over one million speakers include Arab dialects (77 million) and Domari (2.28 million). Languages with over 100,000 speakers also include Kenuzi-Dongola and Nobiin.

Literacy: 71.4% (2005)

History

Some of the most renowned and powerful ancient civilizations thrived along the Nile in present day Egypt. A unified kingdom arose as early as 3200 BC and maintained control of Egypt until conquered by the Persians in 341 BC. Other civilizations controlled Egypt for the next millennia, including the Greeks, Romans, and the Byzantine Empire. The Arabs introduced Islam and Arabic in the seventh century and ruled until the thirteenth century when a military group named the Mamluks took control. The Ottoman Empire conquered Egypt in the sixteenth century, but the Mamluks maintained control over local government thereafter. In 1869, the Suez Canal began trafficking ships from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, drastically reducing travel times from Europe to Asia and increasing trade and commerce. The British took control in 1882, and Egypt did not become completely independent until 1952. With assistance from the Soviet Union, the Aswan Dam was completed in 1971. The dam has prevented nutrient rich waters from inundating agricultural land along the Nile, resulting in declining soil quality. Egypt has struggled to meet the needs of its burgeoning population with adequate infrastructure and economic development. Between 1900 and 2010, the population grew from eight million to eighty million. Egypt has recently become one of the most militarily powerful

nations in the region. In early 2011, Arab Spring protests overthrew the government. Mohamed Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood until his election, was elected as president of Egypt in 2012.

Culture

European and Middle Eastern culture has been historically influenced by ancient Egypt. Today as the most populous nation in the Middle East and North Africa, Egypt and its largest cities serve as centers of learning and culture for much of the Arab world. Past colossal architectural achievements such as the Pyramids of Giza, the Sphinx, and the many temples found along the Nile continue to attract international interest and awe. Modern aspects of Egyptian culture that have attracted interest include many novelists, musicians, and athletes. Alcohol use rates are very low, whereas cigarette consumption rates are comparable to the United States or slightly higher than most nations. Polygamy is legal but not widely practiced.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$6,500 (2011) [13.5% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.644

Corruption Index: 2.9 (2011)

Most economic activity occurs along the densely populated Nile River valley. Major economic reforms in the past decade have brought increased foreign investment and strong economic growth. Egypt is also self-sufficient in its energy needs. Although only 20% of the population lives below the poverty line, most experience poor living conditions. Services employ half the workforce and produce half the GDP. Agriculture accounts for a third of the workforce and generates 13% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 17% of the workforce and produces 38% of the GDP. Agricultural products include cotton, grains, fruits, vegetables, and livestock. Textiles, food processing, tourism, and construction materials are major industries. The United States, Italy, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and China are primary trade partners.

Human trafficking and illegal drugs are major sources of corruption. The trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude from abroad and within Egypt remains an issue that has not been adequately addressed. Egypt serves as a transit point for drugs destined for Europe and North Africa. Vulnerability to money laundering due to poor enforcement of financial regulations is a concern.

Faiths

Muslim: 90%

Christian: 10%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Coptic 8,047,187

Catholic 804,719

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,000

Seventh Day Adventists 764 16

Latter-day Saints ~100 1

Religion

Islam has become the primary influence on Egyptian society, and its followers have grown increasingly intolerant of non-Muslims. Eighty percent (80%) or more of Christians belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Various Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant denominations operate with some churches having hundreds of thousands of followers. Christians may be found throughout Egypt but are concentrated in southern Egypt and in the largest cities, primarily Cairo and Alexandria. There are approximately 2,000 Baha'is.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 25th

The constitution allows for religious freedom, but government restricts these rights through legislation stemming from Shari'a law. Islam is the official religion. Those committing acts of violence and persecution directed toward non-Muslims are rarely prosecuted. However, most Christians and Baha'is do not report consistent persecution and generally worship without interference. Converts to Christianity from Islam tend to experience marked harassment from society and government. Christians generally are not permitted to build or repair their churches. Coptic Christians appear to receive the greatest amount of persecution from Muslim sectarian groups. Muslim-born citizens who convert to Christianity may be monitored by government officials. Many officials consider conversion from Islam for Muslim-born citizens illegal as it is prohibited in Shari'a law. Proselytism is not legally banned, but is restricted by police. Government registration for religious groups requires consent from the pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church or the sheikh of Al-Azhar as well as the president.²⁴³

Largest Cities

Urban: 43%

Cairo, **Alexandria**, **Al Ji-zah**, **Bu-r Sa'i-d**, **Suez**, **Al Mah,allah al Kubrá**, **Luxor**, **Asyu-t**, **Al, Mans,u-rah**, **T,ant,a-**, **Al Fayyu-m**, **Az Zaqa-zi-q**, **Ismailia**, **Kafr ad Dawwa-r**, **Aswa-**, **Qina-**, **H,ulwa-n**, **Damanhûr**, **Al Minya-**, **Su-ha-j**, **Bani- Suwayf**, **Banha-**, **Idfu**, **Talkha**, **Kafr ash Shaykh**, **Mallawi-**, **Dikirnis**, **Bilbays**, **Al 'Ari-sh**, **Jirja-**, **Al H,awa-midi-yah**, **Idku-**, **Bilqa-s Qism Awwal**, **Disu-q**, **Abu- Kabi-r**, **Qalyu-b**.

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

One of the thirty-six cities with over 100,000 inhabitants has a congregation. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the national population lives in the thirty-six largest cities.

LDS History

The Church organized its sole branch in Cairo in 1974 after LDS students and teachers began holding meetings. The branch began meeting in a leased villa starting in 1981 and grew as a result of expatriate families temporarily residing in the country for development aid or business.²⁴⁴ Students from Brigham Young University have taken part in archaeological digs and research in Egypt for several years.²⁴⁵ The first known Tanzanian convert joined the Church in Cairo in 1991.²⁴⁶ That same year, Egypt became part of the Europe/Mediterranean Area.²⁴⁷ Prior to becoming part of the Greece Athens Mission in the early 1990s,

²⁴³ "Egypt," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127346.htm>

²⁴⁴ Haroldsen, Edwin O. "Branch in land of pyramids is 'home away from home,'" LDS Church News, 12 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23629/Branch-in-land-of-pyramids-is-home-away-from-home.html>

²⁴⁵ Hill, Greg. "BYU archaeological team uncovers treasures in Egypt," LDS Church News, 17 June 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26016/BYU-archaeological-team-uncovers-treasures-in-Egypt.html>

²⁴⁶ "Gospel takes root in Tanzania," LDS Church News, 29 November 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44749/Gospel-takes-root-in-Tanzania.html>

²⁴⁷ Cannon, Mike. "Diversity in land, people and climate," LDS Church News, 7 December 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21327/Diversity-in-land-people-and-climate.html>

the International Mission and later the Austria Vienna East Mission administered Egypt.²⁴⁸ In 2008, Egypt became part of the Middle East Africa North Area.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: ~100 (2012)

In 1991, there were almost 150 expatriate members in Cairo.²⁴⁹ In 1993, membership in the branch declined to 115 and almost all members lived in Cairo with a few isolated members in Alexandria.²⁵⁰ In late 2008, there were approximately seventy members in the Cairo Branch.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 (2012)

In 2010, the Cairo Branch was the only branch to have been organized, and it belongs to the Amman Jordan District.

Activity and Retention

Many members attend Church weekly and actively live the gospel; however, most of the members are expatriates. Some native members report not attending or attending only irregularly due to intimidation, cultural pressures, and governmental surveillance.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English.

All LDS scriptures and many Church materials are available in Arabic.

Meetinghouses

The Cairo Branch meets in a two-story rented villa in Maadi, Cairo.

Health and Safety

Terrorist attacks and violence directed towards non-Muslims is a major concern for the Church and any potential missionary activity.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has completed at least twenty-four humanitarian and development projects since the 1980s. Most projects have provided emergency aid, medical equipment and care, needed appliances, and training.²⁵¹ In 2009, the Church donated wheelchairs and provided vision treatment.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ "Egypt," Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac, p.326–327.

²⁴⁹ Cannon, Mike. "Diversity in land, people and climate," LDS Church News, 7 December 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21327/Diversity-in-land-people-and-climate.html>

²⁵⁰ Haroldsen, Edwin O. "Branch in land of pyramids is 'home away from home,'" LDS Church News, 12 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23629/Branch-in-land-of-pyramids-is-home-away-from-home.html>

²⁵¹ "Projects—Egypt," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 18 June 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-255,00.html>

²⁵² "Wheelchairs," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 18 June 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6213-1-3215-1,00.html>

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Despite the LDS Church having a continual presence for over thirty years, the government has still not granted legal recognition. There has been no overt government interference, but some natives who joined the Church elsewhere and returned did not attend meetings for fear of harassment and complained of government surveillance.²⁵³

Cultural Issues

Egypt's central geographic position among Islamic nations and large population make it of key importance in missionary activity in the region. The growing influence of fundamentalist Islam and Shari'a law on daily living, society, and government continue to jeopardize any Church activity. Native members appear to have only joined the Church outside of Egypt and later return. Worship services are held on Fridays in accordance with the Muslim holy day of worship.

National Outreach

Cairo remains the only city with a Church presence as one congregation administers to 7.7 million people. The mission outreach center has potential to reach almost 10% of the national population if a missionary program were actively pursued. However local laws, customs, and violence directed towards non-Muslims has resulted in the Church taking a nonproselytism stance. Church activities appear limited to meeting the spiritual needs of existing members and conducting humanitarian work.

Coptic Christians appear the most likely source of converts and one of the few opportunities to expand national outreach if active missionary work is pursued. The Church has likely never conducted outreach among Coptic Christians and may experience challenges adapting gospel teaching to their needs and understanding.

The Internet has already been an effective tool in introducing the Church to some interested Egyptians. The Church provides contact information for its Middle East/Africa North Area desk at Church headquarters online on its meetinghouse locator website and is the only means to make contact with the local Church in Egypt unless through personal association with branch members.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Membership primarily consists of non-Egyptians from North America and Europe and consequently member activity and convert retention rates tend to reflect these regions. The few native members have joined the Church abroad and experience significant challenges once they return to Egypt. Some of these societal and governmental pressures to revert back to Islam can be a source of irregular church attendance.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Integrating the few native members with the mostly foreign membership appears the greatest ethnic integration challenge. Socio-economic differences as well as former religious affiliation for LDS converts may create potential member integration issues.

²⁵³ "Egypt," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127346.htm>

Language Issues

Church services are held in English. A wide selection of Church materials translated in Arabic provides ample literature for native members and interested individuals. Ninety-six percent (96%) of the population has Church materials translated into their native language, but low literacy rates—especially for women—create challenges in gospel understanding and self-reliance. Minority-spoken languages, such as Domari, will likely have no Church materials translated for several decades following the beginning of active missionary work in Egypt.

Missionary Service

No native members appear to have served missions. Some humanitarian senior missionary couples have been on assignment in Egypt monitoring development and aid projects.

Leadership

Foreign members appear to constitute the entire branch presidency. Egyptian converts prepare for future leadership by learning leadership and administration skills from foreign members.

Temple

Members travel to the Bern Switzerland or Frankfurt Germany Temples. Temple trips occur infrequently and exact significant sacrifices in time and money. Prospects for a closer temple appear unlikely, although Egypt may become part of the Rome Italy Temple district once the temple is completed.

Comparative Growth

No other nation in North Africa has as strong of a Church presence as Egypt. However, membership consists primarily of expatriate members rather than indigenous converts. Many nations in the Middle East, including the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, have more members and have experienced greater membership growth, as these nations have larger foreign worker populations whereas Egypt has very few foreign workers. Egypt has seen few native converts join the LDS Church, characteristic of North Africa and the Middle East.

Most Christian denominations have seen little growth. Seventh Day Adventists have experienced membership and congregation declines over the past decade.

Future Prospects

Continued poor relations between Muslims and Christians, together with the lack of native LDS converts, create an atmosphere unlikely to spur noticeable membership growth for many years. Humanitarian projects may one day help the Church gain legal status and stir interest in the Church among Egyptians, but recent events indicate that this is not within the foreseeable future. Despite having the largest population in the Middle East and North Africa, Egypt will likely remain almost totally unreached by missionary efforts for decades to come.

IRAN

Geography

AREA: 1,648,195 square km. Bridging Central Asia with the Middle East, Iran borders Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, the Caspian Sea, the Gulf of Oman, and the Persian Gulf. Desert and arid to semi-arid mountains dominate most areas. Notable deserts include the Kavir in north central Iran and the Lut in the east. The Alborz Mountains border the Caspian Sea, whereas the Zagros Mountains occupy south central areas. Temperate climate occurs in forested mountainous areas of the northwest and a narrow stretch of plains along the Caspian Sea. Located in the extreme northwest, Lake Urmia is one of the largest lakes in the Middle East. Water is sparse in many areas. The largest river is the Karun, which originates in the Zagros Mountains and empties into the Persian Gulf. Droughts, floods, dust storms, sandstorms, and earthquakes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include air, water, industrial, and soil pollution and desertification, deforestation, overgrazing, soil degradation, inadequate fresh water, and urbanization. Iran is divided in thirty-one administrative provinces.

Peoples

Persian: 51%

Azeri: 24%

Gilaki and Mazandarani: 8%

Kurd: 7%

Arab: 3%

Lur: 2%

Baloch: 2%

Turkmen: 2%

Other: 1%

Persians populate the interior, Persian Gulf regions, and much of the central north and northeast. Azeris reside in the interior northeast and constitute nearly one quarter of the national population; more Azeris live in Iran than in Azerbaijan. Kurds live along much of the Iraqi border. Gilaki, Mazandarani, and Turkmen are concentrated on the Caspian coast. Arabs populate several areas along the Persian Gulf. Lur reside in two large regions in the Zagros Mountains. Baloch form the majority in the southeast near Pakistan. In 2007, there were nearly one million Afghan refugees.

Population: 78,868,711 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.247% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.87 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 68.84 male, 71.93 female (2012)

Languages: Persian dialects (58%), Turkic dialects (26%), Kurdish (9%), Luri (2%), Balochi (1%), Arabic (1%), Turkish (1%), other (2%). Seventy-five indigenous languages are spoken in Iran. Languages with over one million speakers include Farsi (22 million), Azerbaijani (11.2 million), Kurdish dialects (6.6 million), Gilaki (3.27 million), Mazanderani (3.27 million), Lori (2.38 million), Turkmen (2 million), Kashkay (1.5 million), Arabic dialects (1.4 million), Domari (1.34 million), and Laki (1 million). Written education occurs

almost exclusively in Persian. Azeris and most other minority language speakers have no formal education in reading and writing their language, resulting in a non-standardized dialectical continuum that makes communication difficult with Azerbaijani and Turkic Azeris.

Literacy: 77% (2002)

History

Formerly known as Persia, some of the longest inhabited cities in the world, which date back several millennia BC, are found in Iran. The Medes and Persians unified into the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire by the sixth century BC, which at its height ruled from Egypt to Southeastern Europe on the east and to Afghanistan on the west. In the Bible, the Persians played an important role returning the Jewish people to their homeland to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Alexander the Great conquered the Achaemenid Empire in the fourth century BC, and Persian rule was reestablished the following century. The Parthian Empire emerged in the third century BC and ruled until the third century AD, holding off Roman advances in the region for several hundred years. The Sassanid Empire ruled until the seventh century when Islam overran Iran and displaced the previously dominant Zoroastrian religion. Despite the introduction of Islam by Arabs, Persians maintained their separate culture and identity. The Mongols and Seljuk Turks invaded after 1200 AD. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, a cultural revival occurred under the Safavid Dynasty, and Uzbeks and Ottomans were expelled. The Qajar dynasty began in 1725 and endured until 1925, followed by the Pahlavi dynasty from 1925 to 1979). European colonialism never occurred in Persia; however, wars were fought with Russia and the British. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi came to power in 1941 as Shah and economic reforms and stronger ties with the West led to economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1970s, disparate political groups opposed the Shah and instigated revolution. In 1979, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was pronounced “Supreme Leader” and took power through the establishment of a theocratic government as the Shah fled into exile.²⁵⁴ Ties with the United States were severely strained when American hostages were held in the American embassy for over a year. A long, bloody war with Iraq was fought from 1980 to 1988 and resulted with mass casualties to both sides. Iran has supported terrorist groups for several decades and has been labeled a country that sponsors terrorism by the United States. In 2009, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was reelected in what many Western observers considered a nonrepresentative election, leading to mass protests in Tehran. The West continues to view Iran with suspicion and concern in regards to its belligerent attitude toward Israel, interest in acquiring nuclear capabilities, and involvement with terrorist organizations. The United States has no formal diplomatic relations with Iran.

Culture

Persian culture greatly influenced Europe in ancient and Medieval times through technological advances in agriculture and science. Zoroastrianism, a monotheistic religion that stresses purification, free will, and resurrection of the dead, originated in Iran prior to the sixth century BC and was the dominant religion of Iran until the Islamic conquest. Zoroastrianism has few followers today, primary in Iran and the Middle East. Carpets, gardens, sports, and games from Iran have influenced many other nations for millennia. Today, Islam is one of the greatest cultural forces, influencing customs regarding all areas of life. Mothers play an active role in family life. Parents are extensively involved in arranging and coordinating the marriage of their children. In recent years, Iran has experienced a dramatic decrease in birth rates towards Western levels as women have become better educated. Polygamy is uncommon. Although adultery is a capital offense in Iran, moral conduct is less conservative than many in the West believe. Shi’a Islam allows temporary mut’ah “pleasure marriages” for specified periods,²⁵⁵ which are used by many young Shiites as theological license for sexual

²⁵⁴ “Background Note: Iran,” Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 23 July 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5314.htm>

²⁵⁵ “Nikah mut’ah,” Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikah_mut%E2%80%98ah, accessed 26 September 2010

relationships with multiple successive partners without lasting commitment.²⁵⁶ Cigarette consumption rates compare to the worldwide average, whereas alcohol consumption rates are very low.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$12,200 (2011) [25.4% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.707

Corruption Index: 2.7 (2011)

With abundant oil reserves, diverse natural resources, and a strategic geographic location, Iran suffers from an inefficient economy weighed down by UN sanctions and overreliance on oil export profits. The economy is highly sensitive to oil prices and demand. In 2009, the unemployment rate was 11.8%, with many more underemployed. Eighteen percent (18%) of Iranians live below the poverty line. Due to limited job prospects, many educated Iranians immigrate to other nations for employment. Natural resources include oil, natural gas, chromium, coal, copper, iron ore, and many other valuable metals. Services employ 45% of the workforce and generate 44% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 31% of the workforce and accounts for 45% of the GDP. Primary industries include oil, chemicals, fertilizers, textiles, cement, metals, and food processing. Wheat, rice, sugar beets, sugar cane, fruit, and nuts are major crops. Caviar is produced along the Caspian coast. A quarter of the workforce labors in agriculture, which generates 11% of the GDP. Primary trade partners include China, South Korea, and India.

Iran is perceived as one of the most corrupt nations worldwide. Human trafficking for forced servitude and sexual exploitation is well organized. Offenders are not regularly prosecuted, and the government does little to protect victims. Iran is a major trafficker for Southwest Asian heroin to the Middle East and Europe and has one of the highest rates of users worldwide despite government efforts to counter illicit drug use and activity. The government has repeatedly been charged with corruption regarding elections and offenses targeting some political groups.

Faiths

Muslim: 98%

Other: 2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Armenian Apostolic 200,000

Catholic 13,603

Seventh Day Adventists 29 1

Latter-day Saints less than 50 0

Religion

Nearly all Iranians are Muslim; 89% are Shi'a Muslims and 9% are Sunni Muslims. Baha'i is among the largest non-Muslim groups with an estimated 300,000 to 350,000 adherents. The Christian population is estimated at around 300,000 and consists primarily of Armenians. Protestant Christians number around 10,000, and the Assyrian Christian population is estimated between 10,000 and 20,000. Zoroastrians may number as

²⁵⁶ Sharma, Betwa, "Islam's Sex Licenses," <http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2009-04-29/islams-sex-licenses/>, accessed 26 September 2010.

many as 60,000. Religious minority groups report higher rates of emigration, but it is unclear whether this is economically or religiously motivated due to low levels of religious freedom and poor economic conditions.²⁵⁷

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 8th

The constitution declares Shi'a Islam as the state religion and states that other Muslim groups and pre-Islamic religious groups, including such as Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians, are protected or treated with full respect. However, the government has severely limited religious freedom. The constitution mandates that laws must be derived from Islam. In recent years, the government has taken an increasingly less tolerant attitude toward non-Shi'a Muslim groups. Religious groups that have received the greatest harassment, violence, and persecution include Baha'is, Evangelical Christians, Sufi Muslims, and Jews. There have been many recent reports of religious minorities being discriminated against, imprisoned, harassed, and intimidated by the government. Non-Muslims are forbidden to publicly disseminate religious material or to proselyte Muslims. The government has made an effort to have Evangelical Christian leaders to sign pledges to not allow Muslims to attend worship services or perform proselytism. Apostasy from Islam is a crime for Muslims and in the past has been punished by death, although no recent executions have occurred. Baha'is have faced the most extreme persecution from government authorities, many of whom deem the religious group as a political entity attempting to disunite Iran and Muslims. Ethnic minority groups must have their religious materials in their respective languages approved by government officials. Minority religious groups frequently report that they are under close government surveillance and have had religious materials confiscated.²⁵⁸

Largest Cities

Urban: 68%

Tehran, Meshed, Isfahan, Tabriz, Karaj, Shiraz, Ahvaz, Qom, Kermanshah, Orumiyeh, Zahedan, Rasht, Kerman, Hamadan, Arak, Yazd, Ardabil, Bandar-e Abbas, Eslamshahr, Qazvin, Zanjan, Khorramabad, Sanandaj, Gorgan, Sari, Kashan, Dezful, Golestan, Qods, Borujerd, Malard, Khomeynishahr, Abadan, Sabzevar, Varamin, Neyshabur, Najafabad, Babol, Amol, Shahriyar, Khvoy, Saveh, Bojnurd, Qaemshahr, Qarchak, Sirjan, Bushehr, Birjand, Ilam, Malayer, Bukan, Maragheh, Rafsanjan, Zabol, Nasimshahr, Mahabad, Saqqez, Shahrud, Shahr-e, Kord, Gonbad-e Qabus, Shahinshahr, Pakdasht, Semnan, Khuninshahr, Marv Dasht, Torbat-e Heydariyeh, Andimeshk, Marand, Miandoab, Bandar-e Mahshahr, Bandar-e Anzali, Qomsheh, Masjed-e Soleyman, Jahrom, Izeh, Quchan, Do Rud, Behbahan, Iranshahr, Yasuj.

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

None of the eighty cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Fifty-one percent (51%) of the national population resides in the eighty largest cities.

LDS History

The first LDS congregation was established in Tehran in the 1950s.²⁵⁹ American Latter-day Saints also meet in the privacy of their homes outside Tehran for Sunday services in the 1970s.²⁶⁰ By the end of 1974, there were 182 LDS members in Iran, including eighty in the Tehran Branch. Most members at this time were Americans

²⁵⁷ "Iran," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127347.htm>

²⁵⁸ "Iran," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127347.htm>

²⁵⁹ "Comment," Ensign, Dec 1974, 68.

²⁶⁰ Williams, Pamela S. "We Were the Church—in Iran," Ensign, Apr 1974, 10.

on government assignment but there were a few Iranian members.²⁶¹ In 1975, the Church organized the Iran Tehran Mission. Eighteen missionaries learned Farsi and participated in humanitarian and development work, such as teaching English and assisting Boy Scout programs, but did not openly proselyte. Missionaries received some referrals to teach investigators but had no LDS scriptures in Farsi at the time. Branches or groups operated in Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Ahwaz, and Charchesmeh. Approximately fifteen Iranians joined the Church prior to the discontinuance of the mission in early 1979 as a result of the Iranian Revolution. Several non-Iranian converts were also baptized during this period. The last sacrament meeting was held in May 1979.²⁶²

In 2000, Iran became part of the Europe Central Area.²⁶³ In 2008, Iran became part of the newly created Middle East/Africa North Area. In 2010, Iranian Latter-day Saints worshiped in many areas outside their home country, particularly in the United States, South America, Asia, and Europe.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

Any LDS members in Iran consist of Iranian converts baptized abroad who have returned to their home country or early Iranian Latter-day Saints who remained in the country following the revolution.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 (2012)

No LDS congregations functioned in Iran as of 2010.

Activity and Retention

Iranian converts tended to have strong intent on joining the Church due to intense opposition from family and the community. However, these issues can result in some not remaining active and returning to their former beliefs. Active Iranian LDS membership outside Iran is estimated between 100 and 200.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Farsi, Arabic, Armenian (East), Armenian (West), Turkish.

General Conference talks have been translated into Farsi at least since 2007, and audio translations are provided on the Church's website.²⁶⁴ All LDS scriptures are available in Arabic and Armenian (East). Book of Mormon selections, *Gospel Principles*, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, and a few additional proselytism materials are available in Farsi. Many church materials are available in Arabic. Armenian (East), typically spoken by Armenians from Armenia, has a several priesthood, unit, temple, Relief Society, Sunday School, teacher development, young women, primary, missionary, audio/visual, family history, church proclamations, hymns, and children's song materials available. *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, Book of Mormon selections, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are translated into the western dialect of Armenian, which is spoken by ethnic Armenians outside of Armenia. Only the Book of Mormon has been translated into Turkish. Many unit, temple, priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, young women, primary, missionary, and family history materials are available in Turkish. Pashto language materials include *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*.

²⁶¹ "Comment," Ensign, Dec 1974, 68.

²⁶² "Iran," Global Mormonism, retrieved 28 August 2010. http://globalmormonism.byu.edu/?page_id=82

²⁶³ Lloyd, Scott. "European continent realigned into three new areas," LDS Church News, 16 September 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38475/European-continent---realigned-into-three-new-areas.html>

²⁶⁴ "General Conference Reports—Farsi (Persian)," www.lds.org, retrieved 28 August 2010. <http://lds.org/conference/display/0,5234,89-128,00.html>

Meetinghouses

The Church owned an apartment building for church activities in Tehran. The building was confiscated by the Iranian government in late 1979.²⁶⁵

Health and Safety

Iranian Latter-day Saints face considerable persecution and harassment from government, family, and friends. There have been instances of Iranian LDS converts fleeing relatives who seek to physically harm them. Apostasy from Islam can be punished by death in Iran, although this is uncommon. Christian converts are typically harassed and sometimes arrested.

Any travel of American nationals to Iran at present is extremely unsafe. It is not possible for United States citizens to obtain a visa to enter Iran due to the lack of diplomatic relations. Americans who have traveled to Iran or who have wandered into Iranian territory have been detained for extended and indefinite periods, and Iranian-Americans with dual citizenship and family ties to Iran have sometimes been arrested on allegations of spying. Travelers from the United Kingdom and other Western European nations have generally been able to obtain tourist visas, although any religious proselytism is strictly forbidden. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and some other nations in the region have positive relations with Iran, and their citizens experience greater freedom of travel.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 1990, the Church sent 975 sleeping bags and 550 family tents to earthquake victims.²⁶⁶ In 2004, the Iranian ambassador to the United Nations thanked the LDS Church for a shipment of medicine to Bam following an earthquake that killed 28,000. The shipment was large enough to treat nearly 100,000.²⁶⁷

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The current intimidation of religious minority groups by government officials, the many restrictions in place on non-Muslims, and unfavorable relations between Iran and Western governments, particularly the United States, are the greatest obstacles preventing an official LDS presence in Iran. The Church will only have prospects of a future presence once the government has become more tolerant of religious minorities. In 2010, political and social conditions appeared unfavorable for church-sponsored humanitarian and development work although great need exists in many areas.

Cultural Issues

The strong influence of Islam on everyday life and the subjection of non-Muslims to Islamic laws and customs present major obstacles. The Church has not systematically conducted missionary work in recent years among nations with a homogenous Muslim population and has little experience with issues that may arise regarding the ostracism of formerly Muslim converts and discrimination directed towards Christian converts resulting sometimes in the loss of housing, employment, and education. Iran has many religious and ethnic minority

²⁶⁵ "Iran," Global Mormonism, retrieved 28 August 2010. http://globalmormonism.byu.edu/?page_id=82

²⁶⁶ "Sleeping bags, tents on way to quake victims," LDS Church News, 7 July 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19849/Sleeping-bags-tents-on-way-to-quake-victims.html>

²⁶⁷ "Relief sent to Iran," LDS Church News, 3 January 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44912/Relief-sent-to-Iran.html>

groups that the Church has never conducted mission outreach among, such as Zoroastrians, Iranian Baha'is, and Azeris. If LDS missionary activity were to occur in Iran one day, the Church will need to be culturally sensitive to local needs and to develop a suitable teaching approach. The Church has made some accommodations to Muslim culture regarding day of worship, as Church meetings were held on Fridays in accordance with the Muslim holy day of the week when there was an LDS presence in Iran in the 1970s.²⁶⁸

National Outreach

Iranians have lacked consistent LDS mission efforts over the past several decades due to the closure of the Iran Tehran Mission and changing policies regarding the baptism of former Muslims in different areas of the world. In the late 2000s, the California Anaheim Mission began a Farsi-language Sunday School and proselytism efforts targeting Farsi speakers in the Anaheim area. Returned missionaries report that efforts targeting Farsi-speakers were brought to a halt by regional Church leadership who deemed proselytism efforts among Iranians were too dangerous at the time. Returned missionaries further elaborated that currently mission president approval must be granted to distribute Farsi Latter-day Saint materials to Iranians in the California Anaheim Mission. However, these restrictions have not applied to ordinary members in the Church.

Farsi-speaking LDS members have created Internet-outreach websites containing Farsi LDS language materials, such as <http://www.farsimormon.com/>. In 2010, these sites appear to be the only written Farsi-language LDS materials available on the Internet.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Iranians who have joined the Church have overall demonstrated moderate to strong levels of activity due to pursuing church membership notwithstanding social consequences of ostracism and ridicule. Many Iranian converts have experienced long pre-baptismal preparation as they contemplated these issues. Some Iranian converts have not remained active due to social pressures or as a result of not developing a strong testimony.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Although considerably more ethnic diversity exists in Iran compared to other nations in the Middle East, little ethnic violence or conflict has occurred. Iranian Azeris regard themselves as full citizens of Iran, and many prominent Iranians, including both the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei and the head of the Iranian opposition, have been Azeris. This stability and relative interethnic harmony may result in greater ease in assimilation. Both Persians and Azeris are Shiites; minority groups from other ethnic backgrounds and religions experience less tolerance.

Language Issues

Although some LDS Church materials are translated into Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, and Armenian (East and West), tens of millions of Iranians have no church materials translated into their native languages. As many of these languages are only spoken in Iran, prospects for forthcoming materials in these languages appear doubtful until official church activity restarts and large numbers of converts who speak these languages join the Church.

Missionary Service

Several Iranians have served LDS missions despite the limited numbers of Iranian members. Returned

²⁶⁸ "FYI: For Your Information," *New Era*, May 1978, 43.

missionaries provide a valuable source of future leadership for when the Church conducts Iranian-directed proselytism outside Iran.

Leadership

Iranian membership remains too small to supply sufficient leadership for church growth. Farsi-speaking priesthood holders appear too few to merit the creation of Farsi-speaking congregations abroad.

Temple

Iran pertains to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district, although the Kyiv Ukraine temple is now considerably closer.

Comparative Growth

Iran has been the only homogenous Muslim nation in the past fifty years to have an LDS mission established, albeit for only a little over three years. Iranian Persians constitute a predominantly Muslim ethnic group that has one of the largest Latter-day Saint populations, although almost all Iranian Latter-day Saints today live outside their home country. Other Muslim countries that contain large LDS populations include Indonesia, Pakistan, and Jordan. In 2010, Iran was one of the only nations in the Middle East/Africa North Area without any LDS congregations. Christians have struggled to gain converts in Iran due to slow growth prior to the Iranian Revolution and the exodus of many Iranian Christians to Western countries.

Future Prospects

With the nineteenth largest population in the world, Iran is the most populous nation to severely restrict religious freedom. The political situation and the status of religious freedom for non-Muslims continue to deteriorate in Iran, making any potential Latter-day Saint presence unfeasible for the foreseeable future. However, meaningful opportunities exist to conduct outreach directed to Iranians living abroad, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States, in which the small Iranian Latter-day Saint community can participate. There have been no past LDS mission outreach targeting non-Persian Iranians, especially Azeris, and it is unclear how these ethnic groups will react to prospective missionary activity if political and religious freedom conditions improve and a formal LDS Church presence is established.

IRAQ

Geography

AREA: 438,317 square km. Located in the heart of the Middle East, Iraq borders Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, and the Persian Gulf. Entering Iraq from the northwest and running parallel to one another, the Tigris and Euphrates are major rivers that provide fresh water to the arid desert and generate favorable conditions for agriculture that have allowed civilizations to flourish for millennia in a region historically known as Mesopotamia. Desert plains occupy most the terrain; marshland is common in the southeast near the Iranian border, and mountains straddle the Turkish and northeast Iranian borders. Hot, dry weather occurs during the summer, whereas mild, dry weather occurs in the winter. Some mountainous areas experience greater precipitation, especially snow in the wintertime. Dust storms, sandstorms, and flooding are natural hazards. Environmental issues include the draining of marshlands, inadequate fresh water supplies, pollution, soil degradation, soil erosion, and desertification. Iraq is administratively divided into eighteen governorates and one region (Kurdistan).

Peoples

Arab: 75%–80%

Kurdish: 15%–20%

Other: 5%

Arabs comprise a strong majority and populate most areas. Non-Arabs are predominantly Kurds, who are concentrated in the north in Kurdistan. Other ethnic groups comprise 5% of the population and include Turkomans and Assyrians. As a result of war, there were an estimated 1.5 million Iraqi refugees outside Iraq in 2010, mainly in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt.²⁶⁹

Population: 31,129,225 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.345% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 3.58 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 69.41 male, 72.35 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic dialects (84%), Kurdish dialects (12%), Azerbaijani (2%), Farsi (1%), other (1%). The Iraqi (also known as the Mesopotamian) dialect of Arabic is the most commonly spoken Arabic dialect and is intelligible to speakers of some Arabic dialects. Arabic is the official language. Kurdish is an official language in Kurdish-speaking regions. Languages with over one million speakers include Arabic dialects (24.9 million) and Kurdish dialects (3.56 million).

Literacy: 74.1% (2000)

History

Various ancient civilizations flourished in the Mesopotamian Cradle of Civilization, including the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans. Cuneiform is the oldest known form of ancient writing; it

²⁶⁹ "Iraq," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148821.htm>

was etched on clay tablets in the region as early as four millennia before the birth of Christ. Many innovations of early civilization derive from this region. The region was subsequently conquered by foreigners, including Persians, Greeks under Alexander the Great, Parthians, and others. Islam spread to Iraq in the seventh century AD and Baghdad became the capital of the Abassid caliphate in the eighth century. The Ottoman Empire annexed Iraq in the sixteenth century, and Iraq remained under Ottoman control until after World War I, when it became part of the British mandate for the Middle East. Iraq achieved independence in 1932 with a constitutional monarchy government and joined the United Nations in 1945. Iraq was a founding member of the Arab League. In 1956, Iraq allied with the United Kingdom, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey under the Baghdad Pact. Iraq's membership in the alliance came to an end in 1959 as a result of a coup led by Abdul Karim Qasim that killed the king and prime minister in 1958. The Arab Socialist Renaissance Parth (Ba'ath Party) overtook the government in 1963, assassinated Qasim, and instated Abdul Salam Arif as president and Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr as prime minister. Arif ousted the Ba'ath government later that year but perished in a plane crash in 1966. Arif's brother assumed power but was overthrown by followers of the Ba'ath Party who instated Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr as president and chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) in 1968. Bakr resigned in 1979 and was followed by his cousin Saddam Hussein. Hussein led Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988, ultimately leading Iraq to victory after suffering extensive damage to the country's infrastructure and economy. Hussein suppressed a Kurdish rebellion in the north by releasing chemical and biological weapons on the civilian population, major atrocities that killed thousands.

In August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, and the following February the United States led a coalition that expelled Iraqi forces under United Nations resolutions. Following the liberation of Kuwait, no-fly zones were established in northern and southern Iraq, and a no-drive zone was established in southern Iraq by the United States, United Kingdom, and France in an effort to protect civilian populations that were rebelling against the brutal Hussein regime. The United Nations Security Council demanded the government deliver all weapons of mass destruction in the early 2000s. Sanctions were imposed following the refusal of the government to fully comply with United Nations inspections. The United States led a military coalition in 2003 that overthrew the regime and captured Hussein in late 2003, although weapons of mass destruction were never found. Prior to the establishment of the Iraqi Interim Government in 2004, the Coalition Provisional Authority governed Iraq and worked to restore order, security, and stability. A new Iraqi constitution came into effect in 2005, but violence escalated between the various ethnic and political factions vying for power. The United States increased the number of military personnel in 2006 as part of an operation dubbed "the surge," which facilitated the return of greater stability and peace thereafter. In 2009, the United States agreed to depart Iraq and withdrew from urban areas. In 2010, the United States announced the end of its major combat operations in Iraq. The United States military completed its withdrawal in December 2011. Political instability, infighting among and between various factions, ethnic and tribal divides, and severe endemic corruption at all levels, and the lack of a democratic tradition all remain major challenges.

Culture

Iraq boasts numerous archeological sites in ancient Mesopotamia, also known as the Cradle of Civilization. The ancient cities of Sumer, Babylonia, Assyria, and Chaldea, such as Babylon, Ninevah and Ur, were all located within present-day Iraq. The Minaret of Samarra is one of the largest mosques in the Arab world and was built in Samarra in 848 AD. Iraq is known throughout the Arab world for its many talented musicians, singers, and dance performers. Commonly eaten foods include chicken, lamb, vegetables, yogurt, olive oil, and spices. Tea is widely consumed daily.²⁷⁰ Cigarette consumption rates compare to the worldwide average rate of smoking, whereas alcohol consumption rates are very low, as most Muslims abstain from drinking. Polygamy is permitted in accordance with Shari'a law.

²⁷⁰ "Iraq," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 9 February 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq>

Economy

GDP per capita: \$3,900 (2011) [8.11% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.573

Corruption Index: 1.8 (2011)

Iraq's abundant oil and natural gas reserves remain underdeveloped due to past political instability, wars, and outdated oil transshipment infrastructure. Increasing stability and the declining United States military presence in recent years has increased foreign investment in tapping Iraq's oil fields. Oil profits account for 80% of foreign exchange earnings and 90% of total government revenues. Economic legislation has begun to establish means for channeling oil monies into other governmental and economic sectors over the long term. However, widespread corruption, high unemployment rates, inadequate infrastructure, and outdated business laws impede greater economic development. Phosphates and sulfur are additional natural resources. Services employ 60% of the labor force and generate 27% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 19% of the labor force and generates 63% of the GDP. Oil, chemicals, clothing, construction, food processing, fertilizer, and metal processing are major industries. Agriculture employs 21% of the GDP and generates 10% of the GDP. Common crops and agricultural goods include wheat, barley, rice, vegetables, cotton, dates, cattle, sheep, and poultry. The United States, Turkey, Syria, India, and Italy are the primary trade partners.

Transparency International has consistently ranked Iraq among the most corrupt nations worldwide for several years. Corruption occurs on all areas of society and has seriously inhibited economic growth and development. Terrorist attacks and insurgencies remain major challenges that have exacerbated corruption and instability since the fall of the Hussein regime in 2003.

Faiths

Muslim: 97%

Other: 3%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic (Chaldean) 300,000

Assyrian 100,000

Armenian Orthodox 15,000

Evangelical 6,000

Latter-day Saints less than 100 1

Seventh Day Adventists 172 3

Religion

The population is overwhelmingly Muslim. Shi'a Muslims comprise 60%–65%, whereas Sunni Muslims constitute the remainder of the Muslim population. Christians account for the largest non-Muslim religious group and in 2003 were estimated to number between 800,000 and 1.4 million. However, due to emigration, the number of Christians declined to between 400,000 and 600,000 in 2010. Associated with the Catholic Church, Chaldean Christians are the largest Christian denomination and account for two-thirds of the Christian population. Assyrian Christians (Church of the East) are the second largest denomination and constitute approximately 20% of Iraqi Christians. Half of the Christian population is estimated to reside in Baghdad, and 30%–40% are estimated to live in the north in Mosul, Irbil, Dahuk, Kirkuk, and in surrounding areas. Found in northern areas, Yezidis and Shabaks are syncretic religious groups that incorporate indigenous

religious beliefs or Christianity into Islam; each claim approximately half a million followers. There are a couple thousand Baha'is scattered throughout Iraq.²⁷¹

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 4th

The constitution protects religious freedom but recognizes Islam as the state religion. Religious freedom has been consistently upheld by the government since 2003, but its practice has been limited by extremists, terrorists, and gangs that target religious minority groups. Violent attacks on religious leaders and places of worship curtail the freedom of religious practice for many. The government has issued numerous statements and has followed policies that encourage religious tolerance. All citizens are regarded as equal according to the constitution regardless of religion, socioeconomic status, nationality, and ethnicity. Religious groups must register with the government to operate. To register, a religious group is required to have at least 500 followers in the country and receive approval from the Council of Iraqi Christian Church Leaders. Islamic religious instruction in public schools is required for all Muslim students. The government recognizes major Muslim holidays as national holidays and permits Christians to observe their religious customs for Easter. There are no government restrictions on conversion and proselytism. Societal abuse of religious freedom remains widespread in many areas, pressuring many religious minorities to conform to radical Islamist ideals.²⁷²

Largest Cities

Urban: 67%

Baghdad, Mosul, **Basra, Irbil, Kirkuk, An-Najaf, As-Sulaymaniyah, Karbala, An-Nasiriyah, Al-Hillah, Ad-Diwaniyah, Al-Amarah, Al-Kut, Ar-Ramadi, Dahuk, As-Samawah, Baqubah, Tikrit.**

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

Two of the eighteen cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Forty-nine percent (49%) of the national population resides in the eighteen largest cities.

LDS History

In 2000, Iraq was assigned to the Europe Central Area.²⁷³ The first LDS congregation was formed in April 2003 at Tallil Air Base to serve LDS American military personnel.²⁷⁴ In 2008, Iraq was assigned to the Middle East/African North Area. The organization of the Baghdad Iraq Military District in late 2009 permitted the organization of branches for LDS American military personnel.²⁷⁵

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: Less than 100 (2012)

There were approximately 1,300 Latter-day Saints in late 2009.²⁷⁶ With only a few exceptions, Latter-day

²⁷¹ "Iraq," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148821.htm>

²⁷² "Iraq," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148821.htm>

²⁷³ Lloyd, Scott. "European continent realigned into three new areas," LDS Church News, 16 September 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38475/European-continent--realigned-into-three-new-areas.html>

²⁷⁴ "LDS service group meeting in Iraq," LDS Church News, 24 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43789/LDS-service-group-meeting-in-Iraq.html>

²⁷⁵ Askar, Jamshid. "Military district in Iraq will be 'big difference,'" LDS Church News, 21 November 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58227/Military-district-in-Iraq-will-be-big-difference.html>

²⁷⁶ Askar, Jamshid. "Military district in Iraq will be 'big difference,'" LDS Church News, 21 November 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58227/Military-district-in-Iraq-will-be-big-difference.html>

Saints in Iraq are foreigners serving in the American military or are on government or business assignment. Several Christian Iraqi refugees joined the Church in the mid-2000s in Jordan and returned to Iraq in 2007. In 2009, one in 22,824 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 1 (2012)

Following the organization of the first group in April 2003, dozens of additional LDS military groups were formed throughout the country. When the Baghdad Iraq Military District was organized, there were three branches included in the new district (I Z, Taji, and Camp Victory). Three additional branches were organized in 2010 (Balad, Mosul, and Talil). In early 2011, there were six branches and over thirty service member groups.²⁷⁷ In late 2011, the Church closed the district and five of the six branches due to the withdrawal of most American military personnel.

Activity and Retention

Member activity rates are representative of the activity rates of American military personnel. No formal LDS missionary activity had occurred in Iraq as of early 2011. Few, if any, local Iraqis have joined the Church in Iraq since LDS meetings commenced among United States military personnel in 2003. As many as 50% of known Latter-day Saints residing in the country appear to attend church meetings regularly. Active membership is estimated at 650.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, Farsi, English.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are translated into Arabic. General Conference talks have been translated into Farsi at least since 2007 and audio translations are provided on the Church's website.²⁷⁸ Book of Mormon selections, *Gospel Principles*, *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, and a few additional proselytism materials are available in Farsi.

Meetinghouses

All LDS congregations appear to meet at military installations.

Health and Safety

Lawlessness and societal abuse of religious freedom have been extreme in many areas. Religious minorities, Sunnis in predominately Shi'a neighborhoods, and Shi'as in predominate Sunni neighborhoods have frequently reported receiving death threats that demanded their departure. Failure to comply with such threats often resulted in death. The frequency of these threats has reportedly declined in recent years as stability has been restored, but remains a serious problem. Recent acts of violence that were religiously motivated include beheadings, drive-by shootings, suicide bombings, kidnappings, and church and mosque bombings. Islamist extremists and al-Qaeda operatives are common perpetrators of the crimes²⁷⁹ but are rarely caught or brought

ldschurchnews.com/articles/58227/Military-district-in-Iraq-will-be-big-difference.html

²⁷⁷ "Church Organization in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Isolated Areas," Resources for Military Members, retrieved 9 February 2011. <http://lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,9138-1,00.html>

²⁷⁸ "General Conference Reports—Farsi (Persian)," www.lds.org, retrieved 28 August 2010. <http://lds.org/conference/display/0,5234,89-128,00.html>

²⁷⁹ "Iraq," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148821.htm>

to justice due to an inadequate and undertrained police force, widespread corruption, and endemic complicity of various ethnic and religious factions in obstructing investigation into members of their own groups.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 1991, the Church donated 13,000 blankets, clothing, and medical supplies to Kurdish and southern Iraqi refugees.²⁸⁰ In 2003, Latter-day Saints in Oxnard, California teamed up with other Christians in the community to donate school supplies to needy Iraqi school children.²⁸¹ A similar service project occurred in 2004 that provided school supplies including nearly 600 books to a school that accommodated children with Down syndrome.²⁸² Local members in Fort Worth, Texas sent clothing, blankets, pillows, and hygiene kits to Iraq in 2004.²⁸³ LDS American military medical professionals performed service to needy Iraqis by providing eye care that same year.²⁸⁴ Latter-day Saints in the Denver, Colorado area assembled over 3,000 school kits to donate to nine schools in Iraq in 2005.²⁸⁵ Additional humanitarian projects completed include donating wheelchairs for the disabled and emergency relief for war victims.²⁸⁶

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

In early 2011, it was unclear whether the LDS Church was officially registered with the Iraqi government. The law does not appear to discriminate between citizens and foreigners to reach the necessary threshold of 500 members to qualify for registration, and at present, the Church has enough members to apply for registration due to its strong presence among the American military and expatriates living in the country. However, the projected withdrawal of United States military forces from Iraq at the end of 2011 may result in an inability for the Church to maintain at least 500 members in the country if official registration is not obtained. It is uncertain whether any challenges will be presented by Council of Iraqi Christian Church Leaders granting the LDS Church a perpetual presence in Iraq over the medium term. Notwithstanding some legal challenges, Latter-day Saints benefit from governmental support of promoting religious freedom and a lack of governmental restrictions on proselytism and conversion, although cultural intolerance and physical violence towards Christians renders such freedoms largely nominal and moot. Societal abuse of religious freedom and violence directed towards Christians remains intense in many areas, which deter efforts to conduct coordinated missionary activity. Consequently, the LDS Church has requested local members to refrain from missionary activity among the indigenous population.

Cultural Issues

The strong ethno-religious ties of Arabs to Islam present a nearly insurmountable barrier for Latter-day Saints

²⁸⁰ "Church supplies aid Middle East refugees," LDS Church News, 20 April 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21374/Church-supplies-aid-Middle-East-refugees.html>

²⁸¹ Swensen, Jason. "School supplies reach Iraq," LDS Church News, 19 July 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44074/School-supplies-reach-Iraq.html>

²⁸² "Helping Iraqi children," LDS Church News, 4 September 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46094/Helping-Iraqi-children.html>

²⁸³ "Some 700 projects completed," LDS Church News, 30 October 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46413/Some-700-projects-completed.html>

²⁸⁴ Swensen, Jason. "Eye doc in Iraq treats eyes, wins hearts," LDS Church News, 20 November 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46502/Eye-doc-in-Iraq-treats-eyes-wins-hearts.html>

²⁸⁵ "School supplies donated for Iraq," LDS Church News, 12 February 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46874/School-supplies-donated-for-Iraq.html>

²⁸⁶ "Projects—Iraq," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 9 February 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-59,00.html>

at present due to a lack of Muslim-oriented missionary approaches, the absence of an Iraqi Latter-day Saint community, and societal intolerance of Christian missionary activity and conversion from Islam. Prospective missionary work targeting Kurds and Iraqi Christians may be the most productive for the Church, as these groups have demonstrated greater tolerance for missionary-minded Christians and make greater accommodations to the beliefs of non-Muslims. Iraqis engaged in polygamous relationships must end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the area presidency to be considered for baptism. Widespread tea drinking opposes LDS teachings.

National Outreach

The entire native population is unreached by LDS mission outreach due to church policy, unstable political conditions, the holding of church meetings in military installations, and violence directed toward religious minorities. In early 2011, LDS branches operated in or near cities populated by 25% of the national population. Long-term challenges extending LDS mission outreach to Iraq include distance from currently established mission outreach centers, the lack of Iraqi Latter-day Saints, ongoing violence directed toward Christians, and the lack of developed Muslim-specific LDS missionary approaches.

Baghdad, Mosul, Irbil, Dahuk, and Kirkuk offer the greatest opportunities to expand national outreach as most Iraqi Christians reside in these locations and these cities account for 30% of the national population. LDS military branches in Baghdad and Mosul may increase the prospects of future missionary activity among Christians in these locations. Preliminary LDS missionary activity in these locations may include development projects, distributing culturally appropriate church literature explaining LDS beliefs, and holding cottage meetings.

The Internet has been a successful tool for Arabic-speaking members to create websites detailing LDS beliefs and practices that can reach some Iraqis. Several Egyptian Latter-day Saint converts initially learned about the Church through websites created by Arabic-speaking LDS converts. There have been no official LDS websites in Arabic.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Moderate levels of member activity are currently exhibited by the foreign Latter-day Saint population stationed or assigned to Iraq at present. Cultural barriers to conversion and living LDS teachings for many Iraqis will require strong devotion to the Church prior to baptism and will likely ensure good convert retention and member activity rates in the long run. The few Latter-day Saint Iraqis that reside in the country do not appear to have consistent contact with the Church and are more prone to inactivity. A lack of Iraqi-focused mission outreach stemming from the LDS Church policy of avoiding proselytism at present further delays the development of an indigenous community of Latter-day Saints that can become self-sufficient.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Iraq experiences major ethnic integration challenges, requiring proper foresight and planning by LDS leaders to reduce potential conflicts at church. Language barriers between Kurds and Arabs may necessitate the organization of language-specific congregations when a sizeable body of active Latter-day Saints is developed, which would reduce ethnic integration challenges on a congregational level. Greater receptivity among a particular ethnic group may generate a demography for LDS congregations that is not representative of the Iraqi population, which could challenge the integration of other ethnic groups.

Language Issues

Widespread use of Arabic among the Arab majority simplifies prospective Latter-day Saint mission outreach approaches in most areas. Effective language outreach to Iraqis may require the translation of LDS materials into the Iraqi dialect of Arabic. The Church has no materials translated into Kurdish or Azerbaijani dialects, which are spoken by over four million Iraqis. Kurdish materials will likely be needed as Protestant groups have reported considerably greater receptivity among Kurds than among Iraqi Arabs, which combined with the greater stability in the Kurdish north, make outreach among Kurds a logical avenue if missionary work one day becomes possible. Literacy rates are modest as nearly one-quarter of Iraqis cannot proficiently read and write. Literacy programs sponsored by the LDS Church may improve literacy rates, strengthen positive relations with local and regional governments, and provide an opportunity for proselytism that is culturally appropriate.

Missionary Service

No Iraqi Latter-day Saints appeared to have served a full-time mission as of early 2011. No full-time missionaries or humanitarian senior missionary couples have been assigned to Iraq. Unstable political conditions and violence targeting foreigners and religious minorities render prospects of assigning full-time missionaries unfeasible for the foreseeable future.

Leadership

Military servicemen or nonnatives staff leadership for all LDS congregations nationwide. There appear to be no native church leaders.

Temple

Iraq is assigned to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Temple trips likely occur irregularly, as most members serve in the military. Prospects of a temple closer to Iraq may come to fruition over the medium term for a small temple in the United Arab Emirates to serve members in the Middle East.

Comparative Growth

With one of the largest bodies of Latter-day Saints in the Middle East attributed to the assignment of LDS military and government personnel, Iraq had twice as many Latter-day Saints than Afghanistan in late 2009 although the Kabul Afghanistan Military District was organized more than a year earlier than the Baghdad Iraq Military District. Iraq has no permanent community of native Latter-day Saints. Small LDS communities exist among the native population of Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan. Sizeable numbers of Latter-day Saints in the Gulf States such as the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have developed a perpetual presence capable of sustaining a stake whereas LDS populations in Iraq at present are highly itinerant.

Missionary-minded Christian groups report slow and inconsistent growth due to persecution of religious minorities and emigration of Christians abroad. Seventh Day Adventists reported no membership growth during the 2000s and few convert baptisms.

Future Prospects

The rapid development of an LDS Church infrastructure in Iraq is largely artificial to meet the needs of a transient military and foreign population with no meaningful long-term connections to the indigenous population. The LDS Church lost much of its previous presence with the departure of United States military

personnel in late 2011. Establishing church centers among communities with Iraqi Latter-day Saints and the inclusion of Iraqis among established LDS congregations will be crucial toward developing any medium-term presence in Iraq. However, such steps appear unlikely at present due to a tenuous security situation, ongoing violence directed toward Christians, and cultural intolerance of proselytism.

ISRAEL

Geography

AREA: 22,072 square km. Located in the Middle East, Israel borders Jordan, Egypt, the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. Part of a rift system that stretches from East Africa to Syria, the Jordan Rift Valley is the dominant geographic feature and holds the Jordan River, the fresh-water Sea of Galilee, and the salty Dead Sea. Highlands occupy central areas, whereas plains cover coastal areas. The Negev Desert comprises the southern portion of Israel where hot, dry climatic conditions occur; temperate climate prevails elsewhere. Sandstorms, droughts, and earthquakes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include water scarcity, lack of arable land, desertification, and pollution. Israel is divided into six administrative districts.

Peoples

Jewish: 76.4%

Non-Jewish: 23.6%

Jews born in Israel are 67.1% of the Jewish population, whereas 22.6% were born in Europe or the United States, 5.9% in Africa, and 4.2% in Asia. Arabs constitute the bulk of the non-Jewish population. In 2009, the government issued approximately 90,000 foreign work permits and estimated that there were 118,000 illegal foreign workers in Israel.²⁸⁷ Arabs are concentrated in northern Israel and in some West Bank border regions.

Population: 7,590,758 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.541% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.67 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 78.88 male, 83.36 female (2012)

Languages: Hebrew (81%), Arabic dialects (15%), other (4%). Hebrew is the official language and only language with over one million speakers (6.0 million). Commonly spoken languages among Jewish immigrants include Arabic dialects, Russian, Yiddish, Romanian, Polish, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), and English.

Literacy: 97.1% (2004)

History

Known as the “Promised Land” of the Jewish people, Israel numbers among the oldest inhabited nations in the known world. The Kingdom of Israel was established likely around the eleventh century before Christ and divided into two kingdoms (Judah and Israel). The Assyrians, and later, Babylonians, invaded the region, with the latter taking captive the remaining Jews to Mesopotamia until their return decades later. Israel was later ruled by the Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Christianity began in Israel in the first century AD, and the majority of Christ’s ministry occurred in present-day Israel. The Romans subdued Jewish revolts in the first century BC and ultimately relocated most of the Jewish population elsewhere in the Roman World, leading to the Diaspora of Jewish peoples throughout North Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia. The

²⁸⁷ “Israel and the Occupied Territories,” International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148825.htm>

Byzantines, and later, the Ottomans, controlled Israel. Efforts to establish a Jewish state in Palestine lasted for half a century before coming to fruition in 1948. In 1917, the Balfour Declaration secured British government assistance in the creation of Jewish state, and Jewish immigration accelerated despite increasing violence between Jewish and Arab communities. Surrounding Arab states invaded Israel immediately after independence was declared, but once armistice agreements were signed with Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, Israel gained 50% more territory in 1949. The Six Days War in 1967 was triggered by mounting tension between Israel and Egypt over the future status of the Sinai Peninsula and Israel's right to exist as a nation-state in the Arab Middle East. During the conflict, Israel gained control of the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Conflict persisted throughout much of the 1970s over cease-fire lines, and a formal peace treaty between Israel and Egypt was not reached until 1979. Border conflicts and skirmishes occurred along the Lebanese border during the 1970s and 1980s. Israel has retained occupation of the Palestinian-populated West Bank and Gaza Strip and granted greater self-rule and autocratic government rights in 1994. In the 2000s, the international community composed of the United States, European Union, the United Nations, and Russia have collaborated with Israeli and Palestinian forces for the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state that can peacefully coexist with Israel, but these efforts have met consistent frustration and delay due to ongoing hostilities, the terrorist activities of Hamas, Hezbollah, and other groups, and difficult negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government. Israel has constructed several walls and barriers to restrict the movement of Palestinians in an effort to increase security and protect the safety of Israeli citizens. Hezbollah terrorist activities culminated in war with Lebanon in 2006 that severely crippled Lebanon. The political destiny of Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip remains undetermined.

Culture

Both Jewish and non-Jewish cultures brought by Jews immigrating from around the world over the past century has resulted in a diverse and dynamic Israeli culture that thrives today. The indigenous Arab population that predated the modern arrival of Jewish settlers to the region has continued to influence architecture, society, music, and cuisine. Holy sites in the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish traditions dot the landscape such as the Western Wall, the Temple Mount, the Cave of the Patriarchs, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Dome of the Rock, Joseph's tomb, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The revival of the Hebrew language began in the nineteenth century and has been a success as there are now several million first language speakers of Hebrew, and most of the population speaks Hebrew fluently. As a result of superimposing the Hebrew language onto the traditional Arabic-speaking region, many place names were changed or have multiple names today. Most signs are written in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. Societal tensions between differing Jewish sects, Arab Muslims, and Christians remain high. Israel is known for its music, dance, theater, cinema, museums, and athletics. Cigarette consumption rates are higher than the worldwide average, whereas alcohol consumption rates are low.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$31,000 (2011) [64.4% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.888

Corruption Index: 5.8 (2011)

Israel possesses an advanced market economy that has diversified and developed over the past several decades despite limited natural resources and regional instability. Strong political and economic ties with the United States have facilitated growth. Exports account for 25% of the GDP. Timber, potash, copper, natural gas, phosphate, magnesium bromide, clay, and sand are natural resources. Services employ 82% of the population and generate 65% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 16% of the labor force and generates 33% of the GDP. High-technology products, wood products, mining and minerals, food processing, tobacco, cement, construction, metal products, diamond cutting, and textiles are the major industries. Agriculture accounts for

less than 3% of the work force and GDP. Common crops include fruits, vegetables, and cotton. Beef, poultry, and dairy products are agricultural goods. The United States is the primary trade partner.

Corruption is perceived as less prevalent than in most nations in the region, and the enforcement of local laws and government policies is generally consistent. Israel is a money-laundering center in the region, and illegal drugs are trafficked into the country from neighboring Lebanon and Syria. Domestic illicit drug use is a concern.

Faiths

Jewish: 75.5%
 Muslim: 16.8%
 Christian: 2.1%
 Druze: 1.7%
 Other: 3.9%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 100,000
 Messianic Jews 10,000
 Jehovah's Witnesses 1,342 21
 Seventh Day Adventists 859 13
 Latter-day Saints 260 4

Religion

Three-quarters of the Israeli population is Jewish, of which 44% is nonreligious or secular, 39% is traditionally religious, 10% is Orthodox, and 7% is ultra-Orthodox. Additional Jewish sects include Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Jews. Approximately 30% of the Jewish population was born abroad. Arab Sunni Muslims account for most of the non-Jewish population. Christians and Druze account for a tiny minority, together accounting for fewer than 5% of the population. There are approximately 10,000 Messianic Jews. There is a high degree of geographic segregation among religious communities.²⁸⁸

Religious Freedom

The Israeli Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty protects religious freedom, which is generally upheld by the government. However, the government discriminates against non-Orthodox Jewish sects and non-Jews. Orthodox Jews receive ample government funding, and many government practices and laws are aligned to the Orthodox tradition, resulting in discrimination and intolerance towards religious minorities. Religious groups recognized by the British prior to independence have been consistently referred to as religious communities by the Israeli government. Only three additional groups have been granted religious community status since 1948: the Druze, the Evangelical Episcopal Church, and the Baha'i Faith. Many large Protestant groups are not recognized by the government but have operated for many years, such as Baptists, the Assemblies of God, and Lutherans. Obtaining visas for religious representatives has been challenging for recognized and unrecognized religious groups alike. Any religious group may legally proselyte without restrictions among the entire population, but there have been counter-proselytism efforts by the government to discourage missionary activity. Major Jewish holidays are recognized by the government, and all workers have the right to determine

²⁸⁸ "Israel and the Occupied Territories," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148825.htm>

their respective weekend day of worship on which they may rest for thirty-six consecutive hours. Gender segregation on public buses and other places frequently occurs in areas with ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have periodically launched rocket and mortar attacks on Israelis from Palestinian-controlled areas. Interethnic and interreligious tensions between Muslim Arabs, differing Jewish sects, and Christians continue to be strained. Messianic Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Evangelical Christians report the greatest societal abuse of religious freedom, as they are frequently targeted by anti-missionary Jewish groups such as Yad L'Achim and Lev L'Achim.²⁸⁹

Largest Cities

Urban: 92%

Jerusalem, Tel Aviv-Jaffa, **Haifa**, **Rishon LeZiyyon**, **Petah Tiqwa**, **Ashdod**, **Beer Sheva**, **Holon**, **Netanya**, **Bene Beraq**, **Ramat Gan**, **Bat Yam**, **Rehovot**, **Ashqelon**.

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

Two of the fourteen cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Forty-four percent (44%) of the national population resides in the fourteen largest cities.

LDS History

LDS apostle Elder Orson Hyde traveled to Palestine and dedicated the Holy Land on October 24th, 1841 for the gathering of the Jews.²⁹⁰ Organized first to serve Armenians in the Near East, the Palestine/Syrian Mission operated from 1933–1939 and 1947–1951. One of the mission presidents in the 1930s was Armenian, but the mission closed, and the branches were discontinued during World War II. The Church in Israel was administered from Switzerland in the early 1970s.²⁹¹ Several senior missionary couples were called to serve as special representatives for the Church in the 1970s. At the time, branches operated in Galilee, Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv. In the early 1990s, the Galilee Branch nearly closed, as there were no more than three active members. Special representative missionaries were removed in 1985 due to conflict regarding the building of the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center in Jerusalem. The center is 120,000 square feet, is located on southern Mount Scopus, and can house 175 students.²⁹² A 1986 deal with the Knesset permitted the LDS Church to build its Jerusalem Center in exchange for the Church promising to refrain from any proselytism activity.²⁹³ In late 1992 and early 1993, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir performed in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa. Nearly 3,000 attended the performance in Tel Aviv, and the choir received favorable reviews.²⁹⁴ Senior missionary couples have been assigned to the Jerusalem Center and in the 2000s were also called to work in the Galilee area. The Church has a ninety-nine-year lease for the land on which the Jerusalem Center stands.²⁹⁵ Israel has been assigned to the Middle East/Africa North Area since 2008.

²⁸⁹ "Israel and the Occupied Territories," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148825.htm>

²⁹⁰ "Historical chronology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," 8 February 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58765/Historical-chronology-of-The-Church-of-Jesus-Christ-of-Latter-day-Saints.html>

²⁹¹ "The Church in Europe," Ensign, Aug. 1973, 16–35.

²⁹² Gaunt, LaRene. "One Voice," Ensign, Apr. 1993, 35.

²⁹³ "Israel and the Occupied Territories," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148825.htm>

²⁹⁴ Avant, Gerry. "Music of Tabernacle Choir 'opens the gates of Heaven,'" LDS Church News, 9 January 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23227/Music-of-Tabernacle-Choir-opens-the-gates-of-Heaven.html>

²⁹⁵ "Dedication of the Galilee Branch House," jerusalem.nielsonpi.com, retrieved 17 January 2011. <http://jerusalem.nielsonpi.com/galileebranch.pdf>

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 260 (2012)

Although there are some native Latter-day Saints, non-Israeli citizens appear to constitute the bulk of LDS membership in Israel. Some members are LDS converts from the former Soviet Union. In 2003, there were 156 Latter-day Saints. Membership increased to 185 in 2004, 219 in 2006, and reached a high of 246 in 2007. Membership slightly declined in the late 2000s to 234 in 2009.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 4 (2012)

The Jerusalem Branch was organized in the early 1970s, followed by the Galilee Branch in 1976. The Israel District was organized in 1980. In the early 2000s, there were two branches operating in Galilee and Jerusalem. The number of branches increased to three in 2006 and four in 2007 as a result of the creation of the Tel Aviv and Middle East/Africa North Area Branches, both of which pertain to the Israel District.

Activity and Retention

Forty-five attended the dedication of the Galilee Branch meetinghouse in Tiberias in 2007.²⁹⁶ The average number of members per congregation declined from seventy-eight in 2003 to fifty-nine in 2009. In 2007, approximately twenty-five of the sixty members in the Galilee Branch were active.²⁹⁷ In early 2011, the Jerusalem Branch had few active members. Nationwide active membership is estimated at seventy-five, or 30% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, Russian, Romanian, Polish, English.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are translated into Arabic, Russian, Romanian, and Polish. Hebrew translations of LDS materials are limited to the sacrament prayers.²⁹⁸ The *Liahona* magazine has twelve issues a year in Russian and four in Romanian and Polish.

Meetinghouses

In 2007, there were two LDS facilities in Israel, one being the BYU Jerusalem for Near Eastern Studies and the other being the Galilee Branch meetinghouse. The Galilee Branch meetinghouse is a renovated villa.²⁹⁹

Health and Safety

Christian missionary groups are often physically intimidated and harassed by some radical Jewish groups. Terrorist attacks pose a safety risk.

²⁹⁶ "Galilee Branch facility dedicated," LDS Church News, 31 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50331/Galilee-Branch-facility-dedicated.html>

²⁹⁷ "Dedication of the Galilee Branch House," [jerusalem.nielsonpi.com](http://jerusalem.nielsonpi.com/galileebranch.pdf), retrieved 17 January 2011. <http://jerusalem.nielsonpi.com/galileebranch.pdf>

²⁹⁸ "Dedication of the Galilee Branch House," [jerusalem.nielsonpi.com](http://jerusalem.nielsonpi.com/galileebranch.pdf), retrieved 17 January 2011. <http://jerusalem.nielsonpi.com/galileebranch.pdf>

²⁹⁹ "Galilee Branch facility dedicated," LDS Church News, 31 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50331/Galilee-Branch-facility-dedicated.html>

Humanitarian and Development Work

In recent years, the Church has donated x-ray equipment for dental workers, a computer system for the disabled, equipment for teaching employment skills, supplies for mothers and newborns, and blankets for the elderly. Additional development work has included providing health information to Palestinian women and providing educational materials for children.³⁰⁰

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints are permitted to assemble and worship but face many restrictions regarding proselytism, the baptism of converts and LDS children, and the translation and printing of Hebrew-language LDS materials. There are no full-time proselytizing LDS missionaries, and local members are not permitted to conduct missionary work. Many of these restrictions were imposed by the LDS Church itself to safeguard against misunderstandings from the Jewish community and Israeli government and to secure the construction and operation of the BYU Jerusalem Center. Overall, Latter-day Saints have positive relations with the government, as the Church has honored agreements. The Church has experienced some friction with Jewish communities internationally regarding the proxy baptism of deceased Jews in LDS temples, but in recent years, these tensions have been diffused by LDS leaders enforcing a policy that Latter-day Saints are to submit proxy temple ordinance work only for their ancestors. Those desiring baptism in the LDS Church in Israel must travel to a nation in which the Church permits baptisms to receive this ordinance. Foreign service missionaries appear to serve regularly.

Cultural Issues

Unstable societal conditions, wars, and intolerance for Christian proselytism have contributed to the lack of LDS missionary activity in Israel for decades. Recognizing the persisting societal and governmental challenges for prospective missionary work likely contributed to the decision of LDS leaders to promise to Israeli government officials that no proselytism would occur in the country if the building of the BYU Jerusalem Center was permitted. The reception of Christian missionaries (and LDS missionaries before the proselytism ban) has been low among Jews and Muslims, and threats of violence or persecution have been widespread to those accused of proselytism. Conflict in the region has intensified ethnic and religious ties among Jews and Muslims, making these groups unreceptive to missionary activity. Poor Christian-Jewish relations and the persecution of Jews for centuries have made Jews resistant and sensitive to perceived threats of Christian proselytism. Strong ethno-religious ties further challenge Jews and Muslims to investigate and join the LDS Church, as involvement in the Church may result in ostracism from family and the community. In accordance with the traditional Jewish Sabbath, LDS congregations worship on Saturday.

National Outreach

Proselytism bans among missionaries and members alike render the entire population unreached by the LDS Church. Sixteen percent (16%) of the national population resides in cities with established LDS congregations. Coastal areas in central Israel are the most densely populated. The current LDS Church presence is primary due to the immigration of Latter-day Saints from around the world to Israel and the special interest of LDS leaders in the historical religious significance of Israel.

Indigenous Christian communities may offer the greatest prospects for expanding national outreach in Israel

³⁰⁰ "Projects—Israel," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 17 January 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-253,00.html>

in the event that proselytism bans are lifted, due to similarities in doctrine and generally less opposition toward foreign missionary groups. The increasing number of foreign workers from traditionally Christian nations are culturally more reachable by the Church and may also improve prospects for widening national outreach.

Israelis do not appear to have any restrictions preventing access to LDS Internet websites. The Church's official websites at lds.org, mormon.org and a wide range language materials available online on both these sites offer opportunities for Israelis to learn about the Church online. The Church's online meetinghouse locator provides telephone contact information but no addresses or meetinghouse locations. There are no translations of Hebrew LDS materials online.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

As nearly the entire Latter-day Saint population joined the Church prior to their arrival in Israel, member activity and convert retention rates reflect the rates experienced in members' countries of origin. Member activity rates may be lowest for Russian and Spanish-speaking immigrants, as most countries in which these languages are spoken have relatively low LDS convert retention and member activity rates. North American members appear to have the highest member activity rates. Israeli Latter-day Saint member activity rates appear low to moderate. Distance from LDS meetinghouses, a small number of active members, and societal intolerance for nontraditional Christian groups have also likely contributed to low member activity rates. Emphasis from local leaders on institute and seminary attendance can help ameliorate some of these issues and strengthen doctrinal understanding and testimony building.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The LDS Church in Israel is unique regarding the diverse demographic composition of its tiny membership as congregations do not appear to have any ethnic majority. Members report that the Latter-day Saints in Israel consist of Americans, Spanish-speakers, Russians, ethnic Jews, Arabs, Brazilians, and others. There is a large number of immigrant or migrant worker Filipino Latter-day Saints in congregations in Jerusalem and Galilee.³⁰¹

Language Issues

In 2007, LDS services in the Galilee Branch were conducted and translated into English, Hebrew, Spanish, and Russian³⁰² and in English, Russian, and Spanish in Tel Aviv. There are no Hebrew translations of LDS scriptures or materials. The Church has not granted permission for the translation of LDS scriptures and materials into Hebrew. Hebrew-speaking Latter-day Saints must use other language materials.

Missionary Service

Very few, if any, local members have served full-time missions from Israel. Prospects may improve for the children of the few Israeli Latter-day Saint families to serve missions over the medium term.

Leadership

Expatriate and immigrant members appear to staff most, if not all, church leadership positions in Israel. There are only a few Israeli members qualified to lead congregations due to language barriers and the small size of

³⁰¹ "Galilee Branch facility dedicated," LDS Church News, 31 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50331/Galilee-Branch-facility-dedicated.html>

³⁰² "Galilee Branch facility dedicated," LDS Church News, 31 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50331/Galilee-Branch-facility-dedicated.html>

church membership. Leadership has demonstrated some sustainability as indicated by the continuous operation of the Israel District and two of its branches over the past three decades.

Temple

Israel is assigned to the Bern Switzerland Temple district. Organized temple trips likely occur as a district or in conjunction with the Amman Jordan District or Manama Bahrain Stake. Prospects for a closer small temple in the United Arab Emirates may materialize for the sparse, remote Latter-day Saint population in the region over the medium term.

Comparative Growth

The only Jewish-majority nation, Israel shares many similarities with Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon regarding the size and status of the LDS Church, as these are the only Middle Eastern nations that have had multiple Latter-day Saint native converts in recent years. However, only Jordan and Lebanon appear to have a well-established community of native members, whereas in Israel local members are few in number and primary consist of immigrants. Palestine has a few Arab LDS families in Bethlehem. Only Israel and Jordan have church institutions. Arab Gulf states like Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have larger LDS Church memberships due to the large expatriate presence.

Missionary-minded Christian groups share special interest in growing their denominations in Israel but success appears primarily limited to immigrant groups. Few Jews and Muslims have become Christians. Messianic Jews appear among the most successful largely due to their ability to culturally tailor a missionary approach to those of the Jewish faith and a permanent community of converts that is self-sustaining. Concerns over persecution and violence in the region have limited missionary outreach for most Christian groups.

Future Prospects

The unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict, poor diplomatic relations with neighboring Arab states, government agreements forbidding LDS proselytism, no missionary approaches specially tailored to Jews, and lack of Israeli Latter-day Saints create an unfavorable outlook for church growth for the foreseeable future. Maintaining current LDS congregations, immigration of LDS converts, and the growing foreign worker population may sustain the church infrastructure in Israel until conditions become more favorable for growth. The development of Jewish-directed LDS missionary approaches in areas with sizeable Jewish minorities and translation of LDS materials into Hebrew may improve the prospects of future missionary activity in Israel if permitted one day.

JORDAN

Geography

AREA: 89,342 square km. Landlocked in the Middle East, Jordan borders Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Palestine, Syria, the Dead Sea, and the Gulf of Aqaba. The Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea, the lowest land elevation location on Earth, and forms the northeastern border with the West Bank and Israel. Most of the terrain is desert and consists of plains and plateaus. Some highlands occupy western areas where a rainy season occurs. Droughts and earthquakes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include limited fresh water supplies, deforestation, desertification, overgrazing, and soil erosion. Jordan is divided into twelve administrative governorates.

Peoples

Arab: 98%

Circassian: 1%

Armenian: 1%

There are as many as half a million Iraqi refugees and 1.8 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan.

Population: 6,508,887 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: -0.965% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 3.36 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 78.82 male, 81.61 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic dialects (98.5%), Circassian dialects (1.5%). Arabic is the official language and only language with over one million speakers (6.2 million).

Literacy: 89.9% (2003)

History

The territory of Jordan was settled by Semitic Amorites around 2000 BC. According to the Book of Abraham, Abraham traveled through Jershon (Jerash or Gerasa) in the territory of modern Jordan on his way into Canaan. Akkadian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Israelite, Babylonian, and Persian kingdoms at times controlled portions of Jordan. Monumental architecture from the Kingdom of Petra, founded by the Nabataens, still stands. The Romans later took control of the region, followed by the Byzantines. After the advent of Islam, most the population became Muslim. Jordan was integrated into the Islamic Empire in the seventh century. Various Islamic empires governed Jordan until the region was absorbed by the Ottomans in the early sixteenth century. Following the demise of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the United Kingdom took control of much of the Middle East and created the semi-autonomous region of Transjordan in the 1920s. The region gained independence in 1946 and changed its name to Jordan in 1950. King Hussein ruled for five decades starting in the 1950s. Israel captured the West Bank in 1967 from Jordan and in 1988 gave up ambitions on retaking lost territory. Greater democratization occurred in the 1990s with the legalization of political parties and holding parliamentary elections. Jordan strengthened ties with the West in the 2000s, joining the European Free Trade Association in 2001 and supporting the coalition to oust Iraqi President Saddam Hussein

in 2003. As a result of the Iraq War, Jordan continues to house hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees. In 2009, King Abdallah dissolved parliament and the government and created a new government with powers vested in him by the constitution. In January 2013, Jordanians voted in parliamentary elections in which the king transferred considerable powers to the new legislature. In March 2013, a prime minister was elected by the parliament for the first time in Jordanian history rather than being appointed by the king.

Culture

One of the most progressive Arab states, Jordan has taken many social, governmental, and political reforms that have strengthened ties with the West. In 2007, 20% of positions in municipal councils were reserved for women. Islam strongly influences daily living and cultural customs and practices. Jordan shares many cultural similarities with neighboring Arab states, as Arabs constitute almost the entire population. Cuisine primarily consists of lamb, rice, yogurt, nuts, and vegetables. Mansaf is the national dish, made from lamb cooked in yogurt sauce. Polygamy is legal. Cigarette consumption rates are close to the worldwide average, whereas alcohol consumption rates are very low due to large Muslim population.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$5,900 (2011) [12.3% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.698

Corruption Index: 4.5 (2011)

With few natural resources, Jordan has one of the smallest economies in the Middle East, depends on international assistance to stabilize the economy, and faces challenges meeting energy needs. King Abdullah initiated economic reforms over the past decade to spur greater economic growth and attract foreign investment, such as cutting taxes, privatizing state-owned companies, and removing trade subsidies on oil. The global financial crisis reduced economic growth rates but did not lead to recession. Official rates for unemployment and living below the poverty level are below 15%. Services generate 67% of the GDP and employ 77% of the population, whereas industry generates 30% of the GDP and employs 20% of the population. Primary industries include clothing, fertilizers, refining, potash, mining, cement, manufacturing, and tourism. Some agricultural activity occurs, and common crops include citrus fruits, tomatoes, vegetables, olives, and strawberries. Primary trade partners include Saudi Arabia, the United States, Iraq, India, and China.

Corruption is perceived to be among the lowest in the Middle East and comparable to Bahrain. Allegations of corruption are directed towards low transparency by the government, tight government control over the media, and the petroleum refining industry. Recently, corruption has become a hot topic of conversation in Jordan.³⁰³

Faiths

Muslim: 92%

Christian: 6%

Other: 2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Melkite Catholic 120,000

Roman Catholic 25,000

³⁰³ Lynch, Marc. "Going after Jordan's Al Capone?," Foreign Policy, 10 March 2010. http://lynch.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/03/10/a_rare_crackdown_on_corruption_in_jordan

Armenian Catholic 15,000

Seventh Day Adventists 586 7 (includes Lebanon and Syria)

Latter-day Saints ~200 3

Religion

Sunni Muslims constitute 92% of the population. Most of the remainder of the population is Christian, primarily consisting of traditional Christian churches in the region, such as Greek Orthodox and Catholic denominations. The Christian population has fallen dramatically due to heavy emigration. There are small populations of Baha'is, Druze, and Shi'a Muslims.³⁰⁴

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 34th

The constitution acknowledges Jordan as an Islamic state but grants the population the right to practice individual religious beliefs as long as they are in harmony with native customs and in good moral standing. The constitution forbids religious persecution, but the implementation of Shari'a Law by the government limits the religious freedom of non-Muslims. Overall there is little conflict between Muslims and the Christian minority, although the latter can be heavily discriminated against and persecuted. The government has made an effort to improve religious tolerance in recent years. The proselytism of Muslims is not illegal but is strongly discouraged. The government has harassed those accused of proselytizing Muslims. Formerly Muslim Christian converts can lose their civil rights, and the government has, at times, attempted to reconvert them back to Islam, considering Christian converts to still be Muslims. Expatriate Evangelical Christians appear to have the poorest relationship with the government among Christians as they are among the most aggressive proselytizers, are more informal with managing their religious affairs with the government, and were accused of violating immigration laws. Officially recognized Christian groups include Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Maronite Catholic, Assyrian, Coptic, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Seventh Day Adventist, and Presbyterian churches. Religious groups registered with the government as societies that not received official recognition include Baptists, Free Evangelicals, Nazarenes, Assemblies of God, Christian and Missionary Alliance, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.³⁰⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 78%

Amman, **Az-Zarqa**, Irbid, **Ar-Rusayfah**, **Al-Quwaysimah**, **Wadi as-Sir**, **Tila al-Ali**, **Khuraybat as-Suq**, **Al-Aqabah**, **As-Salt**.

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

Two of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Forty percent (40%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

Latter-day Saints have lived in Jordan since approximately the 1950s. In 1989, the Church obtained permission from the government to register a visitor center in Jordan.³⁰⁶ The center is used for local branch functions

³⁰⁴ "Jordan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127350.htm>

³⁰⁵ "Jordan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127350.htm>

³⁰⁶ "Jordanian leaders approve LDS center," LDS Church News, 9 September 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/>

and for educating the public about Brigham Young University (BYU). In 1990, 180 BYU students and local members met with Jordan's Queen.³⁰⁷ Elder Neuenschwander visited the Amman Branch in July 2010. The LDS Church remains without official recognition from the government but is registered as a society.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: ~200 (2012)

LDS Membership in Amman is primarily comprised of American government employees and their families, whereas Jordanians constitute most of the members in Irbid. In Irbid, there are five or six Arab Latter-day Saint families who are related to each other and belonged to traditional Christian denominations prior to their conversion.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 3 (2012)

Congregations have functioned in Jordan for at least two decades. Three branches once operated in Jordan in Amman, Al-Husn, and Irbid. Sometime in the past decade, the Al-Husn and Irbid Branches were consolidated. In 2010, two branches functioned in in Amman and Irbid that pertained to the Amman Jordan District. In 2011, the Amman Branch was divided into two branches: one for English speakers and one for Arabic speakers.

Activity and Retention

Although the LDS Church does not proselyte in Jordan, several Jordanians have joined the Church, all of whom appear to have been formerly adherents of traditional Christian denominations. Missionary activity occurs through members and on a referral basis to Christians. Although many native members attend church regularly, many have also become less active. Some less active Jordanian members appear to have joined the Church in hopes of receiving financial aid and visas to the United States. Some have become less active due to personal conflicts with other members, especially in the mid-2000s. Member activity rates for non-Jordanians appear consistent with foreign Latter-day Saint populations in other Middle Eastern nations or in the United States. In 2010, several Arab Christian investigators attended church in Irbid and requested missionary lessons in their homes, and a few convert baptisms occurred. Active membership in Jordan appears to be less than one hundred, or no higher than 40%–50% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English.

All LDS scriptures and a wide selection of church materials are translated into Arabic.

Meetinghouses

In 2010, the Amman Branch chapel could hold up to seventy people.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The LDS Church has conducted significant humanitarian and development work, with as many as thirty-five projects completed since 1985. Projects have included donations of wheelchairs, livestock, clothing, appliances,

articles/19128/Jordanian-leaders-approve-LDS-center.html

³⁰⁷ "Jordan's queen greets 180 LDS visitors in palace reception," LDS Church News, 23 June 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19891/Jordans-queen-greets-180-LDS-visitors-in-palace-reception.html>

clothing, and bedding. Clean water and education projects have also occurred.³⁰⁸ In 1991, the Church donated a machine for eye surgery to Jordanian doctors.³⁰⁹ In 2004, over 500 wheelchairs were donated by the Church to the disabled.³¹⁰ In 2010, a humanitarian senior missionary couple was stationed in Irbid and also mentored local church members.³¹¹

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church is registered as a society but is not officially recognized by the government. It is unclear why the Jordanian government has not officially recognized the Church, as a few recognized Christian groups have approximately as many members as the Latter-day Saints. Humanitarian missionaries have served regularly in Jordan and report no difficulties entering the country. Overall, the Church appears to enjoy one of the most positive relationships among Middle Eastern governments with Jordan, which has come as a result of decades of humanitarian and development work, positive member example, and respect for local laws and customs regarding proselytism. There are no legal restrictions for members to teach, although the Church avoids teaching Muslims out of respect for local traditions and to ensure the safety of investigators and converts. Jordanian converts face some restrictions of civil liberties, such as being unable to serve in the military, as the LDS Church is not officially recognized.

Cultural Issues

The implementation of Shari'a law and the strong presence of Islam throughout the country is a major obstacle to growth, as over 90% of the population is unreached by the Church due to their religious affiliation. The Church has not pursued the teaching of Muslims, in accordance with local customs, and missionary activity is limited to foreigners and Christian Jordanians. In accordance with the Muslim holy day and day of rest for the week, Latter-day Saints hold church on Fridays. If proselytism occurs among the Muslim population one day, polygamy will be an issue for the Church to face. Those engaged in a polygamous marriage must end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency to be considered for baptism. Low alcohol consumption rates is a cultural characteristic that falls in line with LDS teachings.

National Outreach

Congregations are established in two cities, which constitute 21% of the national population. However, with the exception of family and personal contacts of LDS members, the entire population in Amman and Irbid are unreached. Informal member-missionary activity occurs through local members among Christians, especially in northern areas. Future member-missionary activity will likely be most productive among Jordanian Christians.

Internet outreach may be an effective means to provide opportunity for more of the population to become aware of the Church and its teachings. Humanitarian and development work has established a positive reputation among many. Maintaining a continual presence in Amman and Irbid will be paramount to future missionary activity, especially if the population becomes more receptive to the Church.

³⁰⁸ "Projects—Jordan," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 7 September 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-63,00.html>

³⁰⁹ "Gift to Jordan aids eye care," LDS Church News, 5 October 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21379/Gift-to-Jordan-aids-eye-care.html>

³¹⁰ "Jordan's Queen Noor joins in wheelchair ceremony," LDS Church News, 28 August 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46041/Jordans-Queen-Noor-joins-in-wheelchair-ceremony.html>

³¹¹ "Pure religion: A new vision," LDS Church News, 19 June 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59482/Pure-religion-A-new-vision.html>

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The Church has attempted to maintain a delicate balance in providing assistance to local converts in need without attracting converts who join the Church just to obtain financial assistance. Several have joined the Church for welfare purposes and are inactive today. Poor ethnic relations between native converts has also occurred in the past, resulting in some leaving the Church.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic integration issues have been a major challenge among the small native Latter-day Saint population despite relatively little ethnic diversity in Jordan. These issues occurred primarily in the mid-2000s in Irbid as a result of several Christian Iraqi refugees joining the Church. Some Jordanian members, who do not appear active today, so heavily persecuted these Iraqi converts that they returned to Iraq in 2007.

Language Issues

Both functioning branches face significant challenges accommodating Arabic and English speakers. Some members in the Amman Branch have reported that there have been challenges maintaining doctrinal purity among new members, which appears to be partially the result of language barriers. The creation of a second Arabic-speaking branch in Amman in 2011 offers favorable opportunities for carefully-implemented outreach among the indigenous population through member referral but presents administrative challenges with training branch leaders due to language barriers, as English speakers comprise most church leadership in the region.

Missionary Service

Despite few active local members, recently full-time missionaries have served from Jordan. In 2010, the Irbid Branch had two native missionaries serving as full-time missionaries, one of whom was the first Arab sister missionary to serve a full-time LDS mission at Temple Square in Salt Lake City. Prospects appear poor for increasing the numbers of Jordanian missionaries due to very few youth in the church. Performing youth-directed outreach among Christians may be an effective means of attracting more youth converts who can serve full-time missions.

Leadership

Although many natives have joined the Church, many leadership positions are primarily filled by foreigners. This has likely occurred as expatriate Latter-day Saints tend to have greater experience in leadership positions and are more knowledgeable about the gospel. English-speaking leadership also facilitates communication with the area presidency, which is entirely comprised of Westerners. However, the lack of local leaders will hurt church growth in the long run as local members will rely on foreigners for administrative tasks and responsibilities. Returned missionaries, albeit very few in number, will be instrumental in establishing long-term leadership as long as they remain in their home country. In early 2012, the Amman 1st and North Jordan Branches both had Arab branch presidents, possibly signaling improvement in local leadership sustainability.

Temple

Jordan pertains to the Bern Switzerland Temple district. In 2010, only one known Jordanian Latter-day Saint family had been sealed in the temple. Distance to the temple, travel expenses, and a lack of sufficient native members to coordinate temple trips is a major challenge that has severely limited temple attendance. Obtaining visas for European nations with temples may also be an issue in addition to a lack of Arabic-speaking members

in Europe who can assist in temple ordinances. Prospects for a closer temple appear unlikely for the foreseeable future.

Comparative Growth

Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon are the only Arab nations that have had multiple Latter-day Saint converts in recent years. However, only Jordan and Lebanon appear to have a well-established community of native members. Jordan has yet to be self-sustaining in staffing local church leadership, a feat accomplished only by Lebanon in the region. Jordan has had an unofficial Church presence for about as long as most Middle Eastern nations that have LDS congregations functioning today. Arab Gulf states like Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have larger LDS Church memberships due to the large expatriate presence.

Other nontraditional missionary-minded Christian groups report slow growth due to the small traditional Christian population and cultural restrictions proselytizing Muslims. Seventh Day Adventists have declined in membership over the past decade and opened no additional congregations. Christian groups have been successful in attracting small numbers of converts but are unable to experience greater growth due to heavy emigration of converts and adherence to traditional beliefs among Jordanian Christians.

Future Prospects

Jordan offers some of the most favorable medium-term prospects for LDS church growth in the Arab world due to an established local Latter-day Saint community, mission outreach centers in two of the three largest cities, positive relations with the government, several convert baptisms in 2010, and local missionaries serving missions in 2010. Ethnic integration issues among non-Westerners and language barriers at church present ongoing challenges. Jordan has yet become self-sufficient in local leadership. Indigenous membership faces challenges obtaining adequate teaching and training in Arabic.

KUWAIT

Geography

AREA: 17,818 square km. Kuwait consists of a small area of land on the far northwest of the Persian Gulf and borders Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Hot, dry weather occurs throughout much of the year and slightly abates during the mild winter. Desert plains cover the country. Natural hazards include cloudbursts and sandstorms. Limited access to fresh water forces Kuwait to desalinate ocean water. Pollution and desertification are also environmental issues. Kuwait is divided into six administrative governorates.

Peoples

Kuwaiti: 45%
Other Arab: 35%
South Asian: 9%
Iranian: 4%
Other: 7%

Of the 2.7 million people in Kuwait, nearly 1.3 million are foreigners.

Population: 2,646,314 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 1.883% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 2.6 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 76.09 male, 78.51 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic is widely spoken and the official language. English is also commonly used. Languages indigenous to South Asia and the Philippines are spoken by immigrant workers. Only Arabic has over one million speakers (2.16 million).

Literacy: 93.3% (2005)

History

The territory of present-day Kuwait was initially controlled by the Greeks and later the Parthian Empire. The Sassanid Empire ruled the region between the third and seventh centuries until the arrival of Islam. Permanent settlers did not arrive until the eighteenth century and were led by Sabah I Bin Jaber, who became the first Emir of Kuwait. The Ottomans ruled the region but allowed autonomy to Kuwait. Starting in 1899, Kuwait signed a treaty with the British that gave the British control of foreign relations and defense. Independence occurred in 1961. Iraq attacked and annexed Kuwait in 1990. The invasion was promptly repelled by allied forces in 1991, and power was restored to native Kuwaitis. During the Iraq army retreat, more than 700 oil wells were set ablaze. In the past several decades, Kuwait has grown increasingly wealthy due to the nation's abundant oil reserves.

Culture

Kuwait shares many cultural similarities with neighboring Arab nations. Hospitality and greeting are heavily

emphasized. Tea and coffee are widely consumed and offered to guests; refusal is seen as impolite. Wealth, occupation, and ethnicity determine socio-economic class. Polygamy is permitted. Calligraphy is a celebrated form of art. The rate of alcohol use is low, whereas cigarette use is high and comparable to Western Europe.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$40,700 [84.6% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.760

Corruption Index: 4.6 (2011)

Despite its small size and population, Kuwait holds the fifth largest oil reserves in the world, which have fueled strong economic growth and made it one of the wealthiest nations. Oil profits account for 80%–95% of government revenue. The unemployment rate is low, and 60% of the workforce is foreign. Industry and services each account for half the GDP. Trade partners include Japan, South Korea, United States, South Korea, and India.

Corruption appears to be increasing and among the highest for developed Arab nations. Bribery and corruption from government officials appear the greatest concerns.³¹²

Faiths

Muslim: 85%

Other (primarily Christian): 15%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 300,000

Coptic Orthodox 70,000

National Evangelical 40,000 70

Armenian Orthodox 4,000

Greek Orthodox 3,500

Greek Catholic 2,000

Seventh Day Adventists less than 300 less than 4

Latter-day Saints 223 1

Anglican 100

Religion

The majority of the population is Sunni Muslim. Other religious groups include Christians, Hindus, and Zoroastrian. Estimates place the Christian population around 450,000. There are approximately 150 to 200 Christian Kuwaiti citizens; the remainder of Christians is noncitizen expatriate workers.³¹³

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 33rd

The constitution grants freedom of religious belief and practice as long as it does not disturb public order or

³¹² Kazak, Sawsan. "Kuwait corruption levels on the rise," *Zawya*, 4 June 2009. <http://www.zawya.com/Story.cfm/sidZAWYA20090604042143/Kuwait%20Corruption%20Levels%20On%20The%20Rise>

³¹³ "Kuwait," *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127351.htm>

contradict public morality. The state religion is Islam. Non-Sunni Muslims face many restrictions, including a ban on proselytism of Muslims that is strictly enforced. Seven Christian churches have full government recognition: National Evangelical, Catholic, Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Anglican. Indian Orthodox, Mar Thoma, Latter-day Saints, and Seventh Day Adventists do not have legal recognition but have permission to assemble in rented villas, homes, or buildings of recognized denominations. Unrecognized denominations are barred from posting signs on the outside of their meeting location. Non-Muslim missionaries cannot work in the country. Recognized Christian churches are usually unable to acquire more land for chapels, resulting in severe overcrowding of functioning facilities. Those who criticize or oppose Islam face severe penalties including imprisonment.³¹⁴

Largest Cities

Urban: 98%

As-Salimiyah, **Jalib As-Suyuhì, As-Sabahìyyah, Hiitan-Al-janubiyah, Subbahìyyas-salim, Hawalli, Al-Qurayn, Al-Farwaniyah, As-Sulaybiyah, Al-Fuhìyyahìil.**

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

One of the ten largest cities has a congregation. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the national population lives in the Kuwait City metropolitan area.

LDS History

Church members have lived in Kuwait since the 1970s. At the time there were six members, including four from one expatriate family.³¹⁵

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 223 (2011)

In 2009, Westerns formed a third of the Kuwait branch's active membership. Other nationalities include Indians and Filipinos.³¹⁶ There were an estimated seventy active members in Kuwait in 2009.³¹⁷ In 2011, one in 16,000 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 1 Groups: 1 (2012)

The Kuwait Branch has functioned for several decades and belongs to the Manama Bahrain Stake. A military group serves the needs of American military stationed in Kuwait. In 2012, the Kuwait Branch became a ward.

Activity and Retention

In mid-2009, there were sixty active members in the Kuwait Branch. There are likely many unknown inactive members. Activity for known membership appears to be around 80% based on official membership figures.

³¹⁴ "Kuwait," International Religious Freedom Report 2009," 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127351.htm>

³¹⁵ Ballentine, Toby. "The World Is My Home," New Era, Oct 1976, 44.

³¹⁶ Bushman, Harriet Petherick. "A Mormon branch in Kuwait: Peaceful, once you get there," Mormon Times, 23 June 2009. http://mormontimes.com/people_news/people_church/?id=9349

³¹⁷ "Kuwait," International Religious Freedom Report 2009," 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127351.htm>

Overall activity is likely somewhat lower, as there may be an unknown number of inactive members who joined the LDS Church in the United States, the Philippines, or elsewhere but are not known to the Church.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English, Bengali, Farsi, Hindi, Telugu, Tagalog, Tamil, Urdu. All LDS scriptures are available in Arabic and Tagalog. Book of Mormon translations have been completed for Hindi, Telugu, and Urdu; only Book of Mormon selections are available in Bengali and Farsi. Most Church materials are available in Arabic and Tagalog whereas Hindi, Telugu, Urdu, and Farsi have more limited Church materials. *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Farsi and *Gospel Principles*, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, and the Articles of Faith are translated into Bengali. The only Church materials in Malayalam are *Gospel Fundamentals* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*. The *Liahona* annually has twelve issues in Tagalog, four in Telugu, three issues in Urdu, and one issue in Hindi.

Meetinghouses

The Kuwait Ward meets in a small detached villa in central Kuwait City.³¹⁸

Humanitarian and Development Work

No major humanitarian or development work has occurred due to the nation's prosperous circumstances. Small service projects are likely carried out by members.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church is prohibited from conducting missionary work among Muslims. Members are allowed to talk to non-Muslims about the Church. Church members have often struggled to find when and where worship services for the Kuwait Ward occur due to government restrictions on publishing this information. In 2009, the Church published the contact information for the branch president on its meetinghouse location website. Obtaining full government recognition will likely be challenging.

Cultural Issues

In accordance with the Muslim day of worship, LDS Church services are held on Fridays. The frequent offering of tea and coffee to guests presents a challenge for members to refuse without offending their Kuwaiti hosts. Legal and cultural restrictions place the entire Muslim population unreached by the Church's missionary program. Those engaged in polygamous relationships must divorce polygamous spouses and be interviewed by a member of the area presidency in order to join the Church.

National Outreach

Kuwait's small geographic size and urban population concentrated in Kuwait City require few outreach centers. However, most of the population is inaccessible due to legal and cultural restrictions. Non-Muslim immigrant groups can be reached by member-missionary efforts in accordance to local law.

Kuwait has a large Christian minority numbering nearly half a million, which provides opportunity for

³¹⁸ Bushman, Harriet Petherick. "A Mormon branch in Kuwait: Peaceful, once you get there," *Mormon Times*, 23 June 2009. http://mormontimes.com/people_news/people_church/?id=9349

member-missionary work and mission outreach at the congregational level. Unique opportunities exist for members to speak to Coptic Christians about the Church. This denomination has experienced little to no LDS mission outreach, as Coptic Christians primarily live in Muslim nations that ban or severely restrict proselytism and have very few LDS members. The small number of active LDS members in Kuwait, the preponderance of members from the United States and the Philippines who do not speak the languages of many local Christians, and limited member-missionary participation, all limit the extent and potential of member-missionary outreach.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Due to the sensitive nature of the Church in Kuwait, membership records are difficult to update and keep accurate, as finding less active or inactive members is very difficult or impossible. The Kuwait Ward has been described as tight-knit, which may make church participation difficult for members or investigators who do not feel that they fit in. Few converts have joined the Church in Kuwait and consist primarily of Westerners, Filipinos, and Indians.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Kuwait Ward must accommodate a wide range of cultures. The wide ethnic diversity in Kuwait has facilitated greater understanding between different ethnic and cultural traditions. However misunderstandings between these groups are possible due to differences in language, religion, and culture. The presence of Filipino and Indian members in the branch allow for greater understanding, outreach and fellowship among these ethnic groups.

Language Issues

Church meetings in Kuwait are primarily conducted in English. The wide range of languages spoken complicates efforts to strengthen members and expand outreach to non-Muslims. The Church does have Church materials in nearly all languages spoken by foreign workers. However, distribution of these materials is difficult and must occur according to Kuwaiti law. Many of the languages have few or no LDS speakers in Kuwait, lessening the likelihood of members forming associations or being able to reach out to speakers of these languages.

Leadership

Local leadership is adequate and well-trained, although total membership for Kuwait just barely large enough to meet the minimum criteria for a ward. The branch president in 2009 was an American expatriate. His counselors were American and Indian. A former branch president was Filipino.³¹⁹

Temple

Kuwait is assigned to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Temple trips are likely organized with the rest of the Manama Bahrain Stake and are challenging, as the temple is 3,000 miles away. Greater membership and congregational growth in other Middle Eastern nations may one day result in a temple being constructed in the region, perhaps in the United Arab Emirates.

Comparative Growth

Despite Kuwait's sizable Christian minority, the Church's presence remains smaller than in many Persian Gulf

³¹⁹ Bushman, Harriet Petherick. "A Mormon branch in Kuwait: Peaceful, once you get there," Mormon Times, 23 June 2009. http://mormontimes.com/people_news/people_church/?id=9349

states. The Church was established later in several other Arab nations and today has more members in these countries than in Kuwait. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have seen the most rapid growth, whereas Kuwait and Oman have seen the slowest growth.

Few efforts occur by other Christian groups to gain converts from other Christian denominations. The size of Christian denominations is primarily determined by the demographics of foreign workers and the religious makeup of their home countries.

Future Prospects

The outlook for growth in Kuwait among non-Muslims appears favorable due to the multi-cultural presence in the Kuwait Ward and permission by the government for church meetings to occur. Bans on open proselytism limit outreach to member-missionary efforts and challenge outreach to both Muslims and non-Muslims. Language-specific congregations may be organized once the meetinghouse becomes too small to accommodate active membership. Tagalog appears the most likely to have a language-specific congregation in the future.

LEBANON

Geography

AREA: 10,400 square km. Located in the Middle East, Lebanon borders Syria, Israel, and the Mediterranean Sea. Two mountain ranges run northeast to southwest, one along the Syrian border (Anti-Lebanon Mountains) and the other through the center of the country (Lebanon Mountains) with the Bekaa Valley resting between the two ranges. Mediterranean climate prevails in most locations with cool, wet winters and hot, dry summers. Heavy snow occurs in some mountainous locations. Unlike most Middle Eastern nations, Lebanon does not experience water deficits. Significant to agriculture and water supply, Lebanon's Nahr el Litani River is the only major river in the region that does not cross international boundaries. Dust and sandstorms are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, and pollution. Lebanon is divided into six administrative governorates.

Peoples

Arab: 95%

Armenian: 4%

Other: 1%. Nearly all Lebanese are Arabs. Some Christians have Arab ancestry, whereas others have Assyrian, Chaldean, or Phoenician roots.

Population: 4,140,289 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: -0.38% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.76 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 73.67 male, 76.88 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic (92.3%), Armenian (5.7%), Kurdish (2%). Arabic is the official language and only language with over one million speakers.

Literacy: 87.4% (2003)

History

Famed for the cedar tree growing in hilly and mountainous areas from which high quality woodcrafts and buildings were fashioned, Lebanon is mentioned frequently in the Old Testament and in many ancient texts and was the homeland of the ancient people who traded throughout the Mediterranean. They were known as Phoenicians to the Greeks and as Canaanites to the Israelites. For 2,500 years prior to 1918, Lebanon was governed in turn by the Persian, Greek, Roman, Arab, and Ottoman Empires. Following World War I, France gained control of Lebanon from the Ottoman Empire and separated it from Syria. In 1943, Lebanon gained independence and became a banking hub for the Middle East. Civil war lasted from 1975 to 1990, severely damaging the country's infrastructure and dissuading foreign investment. Boundary conflicts and military skirmishes with Israel have occurred over the past several decades, culminating in a month long conflict in 2006 instigated by Hizballah (Hezbollah) fighters in which Israel crippled Lebanon's infrastructure. Due to higher birth rates among Muslims and emigration of Christians, Islamic fundamentalist groups have gained a greater political hold in the past few decades. In the late 2000s, many of these groups had been disbanded with help of the Doha Agreement, and Lebanon achieved some of the highest economic growth rates worldwide.

Hizballah is designated as a known terrorist group by the United States. The U.S. State Department advises U.S. citizens against travel to Lebanon due to the strong influence of Islamic extremist groups and past violence directed against U.S. citizens and interests; large areas of the countryside remain beyond the jurisdiction of the central government.³²⁰

Culture

Rugged mountains traditionally separated many ethnic groups, resulting in a mosaic of cultures. Contemporary Lebanese culture possesses a mixture of ancient, Arab, and European cultural aspects. Music is well known for its rhythms and famous artists.³²¹ Cuisine shares many similarities with Turkey, Southeastern Europe, and the Middle East. Lamb, vegetables, soup, salads, and coffee are widely consumed. Diverse geography provides for a wide range of recreational activities. Lebanon has the highest cigarette consumption rates in the Middle East and low levels of alcohol consumption compared to the worldwide average. Unlike many Middle Eastern nations, polygamy is not socially accepted among many Muslims in Lebanon.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$15,600 (2011) [32.4% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.739

Corruption Index: 2.5 (2011)

With few government restrictions, ideal geographic location for trade, and a free market economy, Lebanon would be an ideal nation for foreign investment and economic activity. However, political turmoil, war, bureaucracy, and corruption have historically restricted development and investment. Since the Doha Agreement in 2008, greater investment, tourism, and banking activity have driven growth. Poverty remains a major issue; as of 1999, 28% of Lebanese lived below the poverty line. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the GDP is generated by services, 17% by industry, and 5% by agriculture. Banking, tourism, food processing, and wine are primary industries. Common crops include citrus, grapes, tomatoes, apples, and vegetables. Syria, the United Arab Emirates, France, and the United States are primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as present in all areas of government and society. Prevalent corrupt practices include bribery, embezzlement, favoritism, and vote-buying. Corruption is seen as widespread in part due to the lack of anti-corruption institutions, weak legislation, the after effects of the civil war, and the extrajudicial infrastructure of factions, especially Hizballah.³²²

Faiths

Muslim: 59.7%

Christian: 39%

Other: 1.3%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Maronite Catholic 886,928

Greek Orthodox 330,020

Greek Catholic 165,010

³²⁰ "Travel Warning for Lebanon," U.S. State Department, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_948.html

³²¹ "Culture of Lebanon," Wikipedia, retrieved 12 August 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Lebanon

³²² "Corruption in Lebanon," The Lebanese Transparency Association, retrieved 12 August 2010. http://www.transparency-lebanon.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22&Itemid=10&lang=en

Coptic 5,000
 Jehovah's Witnesses 3,619 65
 Seventh Day Adventists 586 7
 Latter-day Saints less than 200 1

Religion

Lebanon is one of the most religiously diverse nations in the Middle East and is the Middle Eastern nation with the highest percentage of Christians. The population is about 60% Muslim (half Sunni and half Shi'a) and 39% Christian. Many different traditional Christian groups operate in Lebanon, the largest being Maronite Catholics, followed by Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics. Many small, ancient Christian denominations, such as Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Copts, are established. Some estimates of Druze followers reach as high as 5% of Lebanese. The Druze religion is an Islamic offshoot that incorporates many philosophical elements with adherents in mountainous, rural areas. Due to greater religious tolerance of religious minorities, Lebanon has become a haven for many persecuted immigrant groups from nearby less-tolerant Islamic nations such as Iraq, Egypt, and Sudan.³²³

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom as long as the practice of religious beliefs does not interfere with public order. Individuals have their religious freedom protected regardless of religious affiliation. The government typically upholds religious freedom with some restrictions. Christians and Muslims must be equally represented in parliament. Officially recognized Christian groups account for two-thirds of the total recognized religious traditions. Registered religious groups may follow religious law as part of their faith, such as Shari'a law. To register with the government, religious groups must submit a written statement of their faith's beliefs and moral principles and have enough members to maintain a continuous future presence. Government authorities must determine if the faith's beliefs and practices fall in line with the constitution for approval. Individuals may change religions as long as the leader of the religious group consents and an individual wishes to join. Unrecognized religious groups may operate in the country, assemble, and own property but do not enjoy the privileges enjoyed by recognized groups, such as tax exemption status and freedom of adherents to run for public office. Some religious groups are organized under a more prevalent and already registered religious group, such as the Baha'i faith, which is registered under Shi'a Islam.

Proselytism is not illegal but socially discouraged. At times Maronite Christian leaders attempted to prevent proselytism by Evangelical Christians, and Druze leaders have opposed Druze-directed Maronite Christian missionary activity. Societal abuse of religious freedom has targeted Jews and nontraditional Christian groups, chiefly Evangelicals.³²⁴

Largest Cities

Urban: 87%

Beirut, **Ra's Bayrut**, **Tripoli**, **Sidon**, **Tyre**, **Habboûch**, **Jöünié**, **Zahlé**, **Baalbek**, **Jbail**.

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

One of the ten largest cities has an LDS congregation. Three-quarters of the national population resides in the Beirut metropolitan area.

³²³ "Lebanon," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127352.htm>

³²⁴ "Lebanon," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127352.htm>

LDS History

Orson Hyde visited Beirut en route to dedicating Palestine for the gathering of Israel in 1841. Lebanon became part of the Turkish Mission in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Armenian Mission in 1921, the Palestine-Syrian Mission in 1933, and Near East Mission in 1950, which was discontinued the following year.³²⁵ The first proselyting missionaries arrived in late 1965 from the Swiss Mission. Many were receptive to the Church, and membership growth accelerated. LDS missionaries faced many challenges due to increased political instability and primarily worked with Christian communities. Due to the civil war beginning in 1975, the Church withdrew its missionaries, and most of the members emigrated. In the late 1990s, humanitarian missionaries were reassigned to Beirut and assisted the small congregation.³²⁶ In 2006, humanitarian missionaries were trapped in Beirut during the month-long conflict with Israel; humanitarian activities resumed shortly thereafter. Formerly part of the Europe Central Area, Lebanon became part of the Middle East/Africa North Area in 2008. In October 2009, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland dedicated Lebanon for missionary work.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 200 (2012)

In 1965, there were fourteen LDS members. By 1967, there were over 350.³²⁷ By the late 1970s, many members immigrated to the United States or elsewhere, and many who remained in Lebanon lost contact with the Church.

In 2000, there were 142 members, decreasing to 139 in 2001. In 2009, membership was estimated at less than 200. Lebanese have joined the Church in many other nations, including Suriname, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Native Lebanese appeared to constitute the majority of membership in 2010.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 (2012)

The Beirut Branch appears to have functioned since the mid-1960s. The branch did not meet consistently during the civil war; regular branch activities resumed in the 1990s. There have been no additional branches created in recent years. The Beirut Branch is part of the Amman Jordan District.

Activity and Retention

In 2006, the Beirut Branch had approximately forty attending church weekly.³²⁸ In late 2009, converts continued to be baptized with a portable baptismal font. The large number of less active members has resulted in part from periodic conflict in the region and the transient nature of many Lebanese moving to and from their homeland. Many members on church records are likely unaccounted for. Active membership appears to be around fifty today, or 30%–35% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, Armenian (East), Armenian (West).

³²⁵ "Lebanon," Global Mormonism Project—Brigham Young University, retrieved 12 August 2010. http://globalmormonism.byu.edu/?page_id=85

³²⁶ Peggy, Fletcher Stack. "Despite wars, Mormons in Beirut persist," The Salt Lake Tribute, 22 July 2006. <http://www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?57506-Despite-wars-Mormons-in-Beirut-persist&p=57636>

³²⁷ Peggy, Fletcher Stack. "Despite wars, Mormons in Beirut persist," The Salt Lake Tribute, 22 July 2006. <http://www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?57506-Despite-wars-Mormons-in-Beirut-persist&p=57636>

³²⁸ Peggy, Fletcher Stack. "Despite wars, Mormons in Beirut persist," The Salt Lake Tribute, 22 July 2006. <http://www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?57506-Despite-wars-Mormons-in-Beirut-persist&p=57636>

All LDS scriptures are available in Arabic and Armenian (East). Many church materials are available in Arabic, Armenian (East), typically spoken by Armenians from Armenia, has a several priesthood, unit, temple, Relief Society, Sunday School, teacher development, young women, Primary, missionary, audio/visual, family history, church proclamations, hymns, and children's song materials available. *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, Book of Mormon selections, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are translated into the western dialect of Armenian, which is spoken by ethnic Armenians outside of Armenia.

Meetinghouses

In 2006, the Beirut Branch met in an apartment.³²⁹

Humanitarian and Development Work

Sporadic visits from mission leaders in the region occurred prior to 1965. The Church has completed at least twenty-six humanitarian projects since 1985 including teaching English and donating wheelchairs, food, school supplies, hygiene kits, furniture, and fixtures.³³⁰

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church is not an officially recognized religious group in Lebanon despite a presence for forty-five years. The Church is registered under the Greek Orthodox faith³³¹ as the LDS Association.³³² There are no legal obstacles or government policies that prohibit proselytism, but the Church refrains from such activity and conducts missionary work through member referrals. Open proselytism is frowned upon by society, which is striving to maintain a delicate balance between Christian and Muslim faiths.

Cultural Issues

A high degree of pluralism among the indigenous population provides an unmatched cultural opportunity in the Middle East for missionary activity. Although conversion from a traditional Christian denomination such as the Maronite Catholic Church or Islam to a nontraditional Christian church like the LDS Church is met with family and community opposition, prospective converts enjoy a greater degree of religious freedom and expression than in most Middle Eastern states. An established native Lebanese Latter-day Saint community provides some fellowship and strength in the mist of potential societal ostracism and suspicion. High cigarette consumption rates challenge missionary work, as many investigators and some recent converts struggle to fully overcome their smoking addictions.

National Outreach

Missionary activity is limited to personal contacts of local members or humanitarian service missionaries. Beirut is paramount to national outreach, as 75% of the national population resides in the Beirut area. With a

³²⁹ Peggy, Fletcher Stack. "Despite wars, Mormons in Beirut persist," The Salt Lake Tribute, 22 July 2006. <http://www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?57506-Despite-wars-Mormons-in-Beirut-persist&p=57636>

³³⁰ "Projects—Lebanon," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 11 August 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-61,00.html>

³³¹ "Lebanon," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127352.htm>

³³² Peggy, Fletcher Stack. "Despite wars, Mormons in Beirut persist," The Salt Lake Tribute, 22 July 2006. <http://www.armeniandiaspora.com/showthread.php?57506-Despite-wars-Mormons-in-Beirut-persist&p=57636>

large population in a small geographic area, fewer mission outreach centers are required to reach the majority of the population. With the recent dedication of Lebanon for missionary work, the Church may begin teaching investigators with full-time missionaries adopting a heavy emphasis on member-missionary work in order to honor societal standards regarding proselytism.

Once a larger local member presence is established, the Church may begin to organize small dependent branches or groups for members residing far from the rented space in which meetings are currently held. Adopting such a vision will be critical for expanding mission outreach in Beirut and may increase member activity rates.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

War, heavy emigration, and turbulent economic conditions have reduced member activity and convert retention. Past conflicts have resulted in many losing contact with the Church. Many Latter-day Saint converts face societal pressures to return to their previous religious communities. There are no Lebanese-specific congregations outside Lebanon, which is due to their limited numbers, ability to speak English, and itinerant lifestyles. The close-knit Latter-day Saint Lebanese community may become challenging for some members to identify with, resulting in sporadic church attendance. Recent converts appear well retained, as investigators typically develop regular church attendance and other gospel-centered habits prior to baptism.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Few ethnic integration issues can be expected by the Church in Lebanon due to the homogeneity of the Arab population. Some challenges may occur integrating Armenians and Arabs into the same congregation due to cultural and language differences. Previous religious affiliation may be the source of some tension at church between former Muslims and converts from traditional Christian groups.

Language Issues

Church materials are available in the first language of 98% of the population. Current and future mission outreach initiatives benefit from a wide selection of translated materials in Armenian dialects and Arabic. Arabic and English are most frequently used in Church meetings.

Missionary Service

A few Lebanese have served missions. New converts serving missions will greatly facilitate the progress of the Church in Lebanon by gaining experience and strengthening their testimonies. Due to the lack of mission-aged members, member-missionary work is critical in the finding of prospective mission-aged converts. The introduction of seminary and institute may facilitate greater activity and participation in addition to providing opportunities for member-missionary work.

Leadership

Lebanon has one of the largest and strongest local LDS Church leaderships in the Middle East established among native members. However, local leadership remains small compared to most nations with a Church presence. The Assouad family has provided the bulk of leadership over the years and has greatly assisted the development of additional leadership.³³³ Local leadership has been involved in regional church administrative duties. In 1993, Beirut Branch president Karim Assouad attended the dedication of Cyprus for missionary

³³³ Peggy, Fletcher Stack. "Despite wards, Mormons in Beirut persist," The Salt Lake Tribune, 22 July 2006. <http://www.armenianandiaspora.com/showthread.php?57506-Despite-wars-Mormons-in-Beirut-persist&p=57636>

work.³³⁴ It is unclear whether many recent converts become capable serving in leadership positions, as current leadership has been active in the church for over a decade.

Temple

Church members most likely travel to the Bern Switzerland Temple or Frankfurt Germany Temple to participate in temple ordinances. Due to distance, travel expenses, and only a few members, organized temple trips likely do not occur. Prospects for a closer temple appear unlikely for the foreseeable future.

Comparative Growth

Few nations in the Middle East have had an LDS Church presence for as long as Lebanon and have as many local members. All nations on the Arabian Peninsula have Latter-day Saint populations almost entirely consisting of expatriate Americans, Europeans, Filipinos, and South Asians. Only Egypt, Israel, and Jordan report many indigenous members participating in church branches.

Seventh Day Adventists gain only a few converts per year and have experienced membership decline over the past decade of about one hundred. Jehovah's Witnesses have one of the most established churches in Lebanon among newly arrived Christian faiths and experience slow but steady membership growth with over sixty congregations throughout the country.

Future Prospects

The dedication of Lebanon for missionary work in 2009 may indicate some interest in restarting full-time missionary activity. However, the introduction of Western proselyting missionaries into Lebanon appears unlikely in the medium term due to the security situation, with past violence directed against Americans as well as cultural restrictions on proselytism. The introduction of full-time proselyting missionaries to other nations with small Latter-day Saint populations concentrated in one city in the past has seen mixed results, such as in Kazakhstan, where membership growth rates did not increase, and convert retention and member activity have fallen over time. A focus on increased member-missionary work and humanitarian work is most likely. The establishment of competent local leadership highly dedicated to the Church provides for excellent infrastructure to accommodate a growing church. Future successes in church growth in Lebanon will largely depend on the involvement of members in missionary work and finding activities, increasing the number of LDS youth and missionaries serving from Lebanon, and continued humanitarian service and development work to assist the needy and establish a positive public image.

³³⁴ "Elder Wirthlin dedicates the island of Cyprus for preaching of gospel," LDS Church News, 27 November 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23399/Elder-Wirthlin-dedicates-the-island-of-Cyprus-for-preaching-of-gospel.html>

LIBYA

Geography

AREA: 1,759,540 square km. Located in North Africa, Libya borders Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Algeria, Tunisia, and the Mediterranean Sea. Libya possesses some of the driest and hottest areas of the Sahara Desert, which occupies the entire country with the exception of some coastal areas. Terrain primarily consists of barren flat plains with scattered depressions and plateaus. Coastal areas experience a Mediterranean climate, and in some coastal locations, there is arable land suited for agriculture. Frequent dust storms and sandstorms are natural hazards. Environmental issues include desertification and inadequate fresh water supplies. At present, Libya is constructing the world's largest water development project by extracting ancient aquifers deep under the Sahara and transporting the water to coastal areas. Libya is divided into twenty-two administrative states.

Peoples

Berber and Arab: 97%

Other: 3%

Most the population is mixed Berber-Arab. There are some Berber communities in the interior with few inhabitants. Foreigners primarily originate from other North African and Middle Eastern nations and are estimated to number between 1.5 and two million (23%–30% of the national population).

Population: 6,733,620 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.007% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.9 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 75.5 male, 80.27 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic dialects [primarily Libyan-spoken] (95%), Berber languages [primarily Nafusi] (3%), immigrant/migrant worker languages (2%). Standard Arabic is the official language. Italian and English are commonly spoken second languages. Only Arabic dialects have over one million speakers (6.14 million).

Literacy: 82.6% (2003)

History

Foreign civilizations, empires, and nations have ruled present-day Libya throughout much of its known history, beginning with the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Vandals, and Byzantines. Islam spread in the seventh century as a result of invading Arab forces and overtime led to the conversion of most native peoples and adoption of the Arabic language and cultural customs. The Ottoman Empire conquered Libya in the sixteenth century and meddled little with local affairs until Italy invaded in 1911 and made Libya a colony. Italy retained control of Libya until Italian forces were defeated by Allied powers in 1943 during World War II. Libya achieved independence in 1951 and was among the first African countries to become independent. A constitutional monarchy under King Idris governed until ousted by a coup in 1969, led by Mu'ammarr Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi and the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), which emphasized socialism and tribally-influenced Islam to create a "direct democracy." Foreign interests and military forces

stationed in Libya were promptly ordered to leave, and by the early 1970s, all foreign installations were closed. Qadhafi attempted to spread his unique political ideologies abroad by sponsoring terrorism targeting Western interests. Bombings sponsored by Libya in the 1980s included an attack on American military personnel at a discotheque in Berlin, Germany and the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. The United States responded militarily in 1986 by attacking targets inside Libya. Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, Libya was isolated from much of the worldwide community through United Nations sanctions.³³⁵ In the 2000s, Libya took responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing and began to comply with the international community's demands to end its development of weapons of mass destruction and terrorist sponsorship. Political relations with much of Western Europe and the United States were reestablished with Libya in the late 2000s. Sparked by the Arab Spring movement, civil war erupted in early 2011. By the end of 2011, rebel forces killed Qadhafi and overthrew his regime. In 2011, Libya became a parliamentary republic governed by the elected General National Congress under a temporary Constitutional Declaration.

Culture

Islam is the primary influence on Libyan culture. In recent times, Qaddafi has contributed to Libyan culture through propagating his Islamic-socialist philosophies. Mediterranean and Arab cuisine are commonly consumed. Asida, an Arab pudding dish, is the traditional dessert.³³⁶ Like many Muslim nations, alcohol is banned in accordance with Muslim teachings. Cigarette consumption rates compare to the worldwide average. Polygamy is permitted, but a man desiring to take a second wife must obtain the free consent of his first wife.³³⁷

Economy

GDP per capita: \$14,100 (2011) [29.3% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.760

Corruption Index: 2.0 (2011)

The economy is largely petroleum-based, as oil revenues constitute 95% of export earnings and 25% of the GDP. With the ninth largest proven oil reserves and some of the world's highest quality petroleum discovered, Libya's oil wealth has yet to improve living standards and economic conditions for common citizens. Other natural resources include natural gas and gypsum. Economic sanctions were removed in the 2000s and have contributed to economic growth and development as foreign investment has increased. Unemployment and low living standards continue to be major challenges toward improving economic development and growth. As a result of limited arable land, Libya relies on food imports to meet its needs. The Great Manmade River Project and seawater desalinization are methods with which the government has sought to address water scarcity issues and to potentially increase agricultural output. Services employ 59% of the work force and generate 26% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 23% of the work force and generates 71% of the GDP. Primary industries include oil, chemicals, mining, food processing, textiles, and cement. Agriculture employs 17% of the work force and generates 3% of the GDP. Grains, olives, dates, fruit, vegetables, and peanuts are major crops. Italy, Germany, and France are primary trade partners.

In 2010, Libya tied with Iran and Yemen as the second most corrupt nation in the Middle East and North Africa according to Transparency International.³³⁸ Government corruption has prevented greater improvements of living conditions. Libya is a destination and transshipment country for human trafficking for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Little has been done by the government to address human trafficking issues.

³³⁵ "Background Note: Libya," Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5425.htm>

³³⁶ "Culture of Libya," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 11 December 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Libya

³³⁷ "Polygamy in Libya," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 11 December 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polygamy_in_Libya

³³⁸ "Corruption Perceptions Index 2010," Transparency International, retrieved 11 December 2010. http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/in_detail#1

Faiths

Muslim: 97%

Other: 3%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Coptic Christians 50,000

Catholic 40,000

Greek Orthodox 80

Seventh Day Adventists 190 3 (includes Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Western Sahara)

Jehovah's Witnesses less than 100

Latter-day Saints less than 20

Religion

Sunni Muslims account for 97% of the population. Christians constitute the majority of the remaining population and consist almost entirely of nonnatives, namely sub-Saharan Africans, Egyptians, and Westerners. Copts and Catholics are the largest Christian denominations.³³⁹ Nearly the entire indigenous Jewish population has immigrated to Israel.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 17th

There is no constitution and no legal basis for religious freedom. The Great Green Charter on Human Rights from 1988 protects some religious freedom rights. The government tolerates religious activity among Muslims and non-Muslims alike with the exception of militant Islamist sects. Religious practices not in harmony with the government's interpretation of Shari'a law are prohibited, including the proselytism of Muslims by other religious groups. Religious activity is regulated and at times restricted. At present, there is no legislation prohibiting conversion, religious conversations, and the sharing of religious beliefs, but the government does prosecute those violating the proselytism ban. There have been no recent instances of societal abuse of religious freedom. Major Islamic holidays are recognized by the government. Religious education on Islam is required in public schools. The government limits each Christian denomination to one meeting location per city. Arabic-language non-Islamic materials are often confiscated by government authorities.³⁴⁰ It is unclear how the status of religious freedom will change if at all under the new government, in which Islamists hold considerable influence.

Largest Cities

Urban: 78%

Tripoli, Bangha-zi, Misra-tah, Tarhu-nah, Al Khums, Ha-rat az Za-wiyah, Zuwa-rah

Ajda-biya, Surt, Al Jadi-d, Tobruk, Sabra-tah.

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

³³⁹ "Libya," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148832.htm>

³⁴⁰ "Libya," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148832.htm>

None of the twelve largest cities has an LDS presence. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the national population resides in the twelve largest cities.

LDS History

Latter-day Saints among the United States military held meetings in Libya prior to the removal of all foreign military personnel in the early 1970s.³⁴¹ In 2000, Libya was assigned to the Europe West Area.³⁴² In 2008, the Middle East/Africa North Area began administering Libya.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 20 (2012)

There are no known indigenous Libyan Latter-day Saints. Any Latter-day Saints in Libya today are likely Westerners and Southeast Asians.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 (2012)

In late 2010, it was unclear whether a branch or group operated. Any LDS congregation likely meets as a dependent unit under the Middle East/Africa North Area Branch.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, Italian, English.

All LDS scriptures and many church materials are available in Arabic and Italian.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings for expatriates likely occur in members' homes if they occur at all.

Humanitarian and Development Work

As of late 2010, the LDS Church had not taken part in any humanitarian or development work in Libya.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The government provides greater religious freedom and tolerance for Christians than many other Maghreb states. Latter-day Saints benefit from the lack of legislation opposing the conversion of citizens from Islam and potential freedom to hold meetings for non-Muslims, pending government approval. Government restrictions regarding the importation of religious literature, bans on proselytism directed toward Muslims, the limitation of Christian groups to one meeting location per city, and lack of concrete legislation protecting religious freedom rights may present barriers for Latter-day Saints to overcome if mission outreach one day becomes possible. Prospects for a church establishment among nonnatives appear uncertain due to the recent governmental transition, although prospects for outreach to native Libyans remain distant.

³⁴¹ "The Church in Europe," *Ensign*, Aug. 1973, 16–35.

³⁴² Lloyd, Scott. "European continent realigned into three new areas," *LDS Church News*, 16 September 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38475/European-continent---realigned-into-three-new-areas.html>

Cultural Issues

Islam strongly influences daily life and local culture. Latter-day Saints as of yet have not found successful approaches toward performing mission outreach in nations that implement many elements of Shari'a law like Libya and consequently will likely experience little success with the Arab-Berber population if mission outreach occurs one day. Those engaged in a polygamous marriage must end relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of a mission or area presidency to be baptized. Increasing numbers of immigrants may generate a cosmopolitan atmosphere in the larger cities that is more suitable for Latter-day Saint mission outreach over the long-term.

National Outreach

The entire population remains unreached by the Church with the exception of those who have close personal contacts with foreign Latter-day Saints temporarily living or visiting the country. Proselytism bans render the entire Muslim population legally unreached by the Church. Eighteen percent (18%) of the national population would be reached by the Church if mission outreach centers were established in Tripoli. Restrictions on Arabic-language non-Muslim religious materials challenges efforts to establish the Church among natives.

European and Egyptian Christians appear to be the most realistic populations for mission outreach as proselytism bans do not apply to non-Muslims. Locating Christians may be challenging due to the somewhat private nature of their worship and limited numbers.

There are over one million North Africans in Italy. Concentrated outreach among North Africans may facilitate the development of an LDS community among Libyans abroad in countries where they can be legally reached. Many Libyans do not return to their home country, but the establishment of an LDS community may contribute to an eventual Church presence among Libyans in their home country.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

No convert baptisms appear to have occurred in Libya since the departure of American military personnel following the 1969 revolution. Member activity rates likely resemble those of nations from which foreign Latter-day Saints originate, namely the United States and Europe.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Immigration and migrant workers have diversified the demographics of the population, but most nonnatives originate from the Arab world and assimilate into Libyan culture with few challenges. A potential Latter-day Saint presence among non-Westerners will likely encounter few challenges integrating various ethnicities into the same congregations. Integrating non-Arab foreign Latter-day Saints with Libyan or Arab converts into the same congregation may initially create some challenges due to language and cultural barriers.

Language Issues

A wide selection of LDS Church materials is available in Arabic, but no materials have been translated into the Libyan dialect. Italian- and English-language church materials may be used in mission outreach, as these languages are frequently spoken second languages. Speakers of Berber languages indigenous to Libya will likely have no LDS materials translated for decades following any official church establishment due to the lack of Latter-day Saints speaking these languages and lack of mission outreach opportunities in nations where most Berbers live.

Missionary Service

No LDS missionaries are known to have served from Libya, and no full-time missionaries or humanitarian couples had been assigned to Libya as of early 2013.

Leadership

Any current church leadership positions in Libya are held by foreigners.

Temple

Libya pertains to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Organized temple trips do not appear to occur. Members attend the temple on an individual basis or with members in other nations in the Middle East/Africa North Area.

Comparative Growth

Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt are the only North African nations with branches or permanent groups that have been established for many years. Egypt appears to be the only nation in North Africa that has some native members attending congregations, whereas there are greater numbers of native Latter-day Saints in the Middle East in Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. Algeria and Libya appear to have only small groups of Latter-day Saints meeting on an inconsistent basis. No nations in North Africa have an official LDS presence. No Islamic nations in the Middle East or North Africa have proselytizing missionaries.

Missionary-oriented Christian denominations report no significant breakthroughs with the Arab-Berber population, and their membership almost entirely consist of foreigners. Proselytism bans have resulted in few or no indigenous converts over the past decade.

Future Prospects

Improving political relations with Western Europe and the United States, increasing foreign investment by Westerners, and greater tolerance for Christians to worship create an optimistic outlook for a permanent future LDS presence among nonnatives. However it is unclear whether the toppling of the Qadhafi regime will improve or deteriorate prospects for a permanent LDS establishment over the medium and long term among foreigners. Proselytism bans on missionary activity directed toward the Muslim population, restrictions on the possession and dissemination of Arabic-language Christian materials, and a lack of Libyan Latter-day Saints pose major challenges for performing mission outreach for the foreseeable future.

MAURITANIA

Geography

AREA: 1,030,700 square km. One of the largest nations in West Africa, Mauritania borders Western Sahara, Algeria, Mali, and Senegal. The Sahara Desert occupies most of the terrain, which consists of plains, low elevation plateaus, and some small hills. Extreme southern areas near the Senegal River receive greater moisture and are more vegetated. Most of the country is unproductive, barren land. Sandstorms, dust storms, and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include overgrazing, deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, lack of fresh water, and locust infestations. Mauritania is administratively divided into twelve regions and one capital district.

Peoples

Mixed Moor (black): 40%

Moor (white): 30%

Black African: 30%

Moors consist of numerous tribes and clans who have endured for centuries and dominate most aspects of politics and government today. Mixed Moors, or black Moors, intermarried with black Africans in the region and are politically less represented. Black Africans consist of Pulaar, Wolof and Soninke ethnicities and are underrepresented in some government sectors.³⁴³

Population: 3,359,185 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.323% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.37 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 59.3 male, 63.82 female (2012)

Languages: Hassaniya Arabic (92%), Pulaar (6%), Soninke (1%), other (1%). Arabic is the official language. National languages include Pulaar, Soninke, and Wolof—all of which are predominately spoken along the Senegal and Mali border. French is also spoken. Only Hassaniya Arabic has over one million speakers (2.95 million).

Literacy: 51.2% (2000)

History

Indigenous African tribes and Bafours populated the region prior to Berber and Arab invasions around 1000 AD. For the following centuries, Arabs attempted to subjugate the population with stiff resistance. France gained control of Mauritania by the late nineteenth century. In 1960, Mauritania gained independence from France. Following the collapse of Spanish Sahara, Mauritania occupied the southern third of the country until withdrawing in 1976. A military coup led by Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya overthrew the government in 1984 and maintained rule for two decades. In 2005, a coup overthrew Taya, and in 2007 the first fair democratic elections were held, bringing President Abdallahi to power. The following year, General Aziz overthrew

³⁴³ "Mauritania," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor," 8 March 2006. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61581.htm>

the government. Aziz held elections the following year and was elected president. Mauritania has struggled for many years with its ethnic relations between Moors and blacks and its identification as either an African Muslim or an Arab Muslim state.

Culture

Nearly all Mauritians lived nomadic lifestyles until the past century, and many today still live as nomads. Islam heavily influences daily life and Mauritanian culture under Shari'a law. Conflict between white Moors and black African groups is pervasive. Arabs, black West Africans, and Berbers have made significant contributions to culture, including language, education, and customs. Alcohol consumption rates are very low due to the high percentage of Muslims, whereas cigarette consumption rates are moderate and compare to the United Kingdom. Polygamy is legal and frequently practiced among the middle and lower classes.³⁴⁴ Women receive fewer rights than men regarding many social issues, such as divorce.³⁴⁵

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,200 (2011) [4.57% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.453

Corruption Index: 2.4 (2011)

Mauritania has experienced limited economic growth and development since independence, as half of the population relies on agriculture and their livestock to survive. Fish, iron ore, and precious metals are the most abundant natural resources. Recurrent drought, poor government management, and civil strife are obstacles for foreign investment and greater economic growth. In recent years, the government has sought to privatize the economy and improve public health, living conditions, and education. Agriculture produces 12.5% of the GDP, whereas services accounts for 40% of the GDP and workforce. Common crops include dates, millet, sorghum, rice, and corn. Industry generates 47% of the GDP and employs 10% of the population. Major industries include fish, oil, and mining. Primary trade partners include China, France, the Netherlands, and Italy.

Corruption is perceived by the population as widespread in most areas of society, especially in government and law enforcement. Government has supplied little information to its citizens regarding its affairs and lacks transparency to safeguard against corruption. Prostitution is a growing concern, especially among Black Moors and Afro-Mauritians. Human trafficking and slavery in isolated areas remain an international concern.³⁴⁶ Little has been done to address current human trafficking and slavery issues.

Faiths

Muslim: 100%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 4,500

Seventh Day Adventists less than 100

³⁴⁴ "West Africa," Islamic Family Law: Social/Cultural Information by Region, retrieved 18 August 2010. <http://www.law.emory.edu/ifl/region/westafrica.html>

³⁴⁵ "Mauritania," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor," 8 March 2006. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61581.htm>

³⁴⁶ "Mauritania," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor," 8 March 2006. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61581.htm>

Latter-day Saints less than 10

Religion

The population is almost entirely Sunni Muslim. Non-Muslims are primarily foreigners or immigrants. There are a few Roman Catholics and other Christians who reside in the largest cities. Although Christian proselytism is not permitted, foreign religious nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) perform humanitarian service and development work.³⁴⁷

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 23rd

The constitution declares Mauritania an Islamic republic. Printing or distributing non-Islamic religious materials and non-Islamic proselytism is forbidden. The possession of non-Islamic religious materials is permitted. Christians and non-Muslim religious groups may meet in private but must first obtain official authorization from government authorities. Some religious groups meet without official authorization. Religious groups do not register with the government, but religious NGOs must agree to refrain from engaging in missionary activities at any time. Islam classes in public and private schools are required courses for students. Some students have not attended these courses for personal reasons, yet their absence was not detrimental to their school career. Christians who have attempted to proselyte in the past have been detained or deported. The few Mauritanian Christians are ostracized by their family and friends.³⁴⁸

Largest Cities

Urban: 41%

Nouakchott, Nouâdhibou, Rosso, Bogue, Adel Bagrou, Kaédi, Zouérat, Kiffa, Boû Gâdoûm, Atâr.

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

None of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

Mauritania became part of the Africa West Area in 1998.³⁴⁹ There has never been an LDS presence in Mauritania.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 10 (2012)

Any LDS members in the country likely consist of nonnatives temporarily living in Nouakchott. There have been no reported Mauritanian LDS converts.

³⁴⁷ "Mauritania," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127244.htm>

³⁴⁸ "Mauritania," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127244.htm>

³⁴⁹ "5 new areas announced worldwide," LDS Church News, 4 July 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31389/5-new-areas-announced-worldwide.html>

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 (2012)

In 2010, the Church reported no organized congregations.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, French, English.

All LDS scriptures and many church materials are available in Arabic and French. Materials translated into Wolof and Pulaar (Fulani) include *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 1985, some of the funds donated by Church members for famine relief in Africa went to Mauritania.³⁵⁰ In recent years, the Church provided emergency relief for refugees in Nouakchott.³⁵¹

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The constitution, current government policies and Shari'a law severely limit any potential LDS Church presence in Mauritania. Latter-day Saint missionaries or members are not permitted to proselyte or distribute religious literature. Prospects for greater religious freedom appear doubtful for the foreseeable future. Conducting humanitarian service and establishing good rapport with the government appear possible courses of action.

Cultural Issues

Islam is highly intertwined with daily living and presents the greatest cultural obstacle to any prospective LDS mission outreach, as there is no room for non-Muslim religious groups to operate outside the humanitarian service and development work arena. The prevalence of polygamy and poor human rights in some areas create an unfavorable atmosphere for mission outreach to occur even if local laws and customs did not prohibit proselytism.

National Outreach

The entire population remains unreached by mission outreach efforts. Future mission outreach initiatives will most likely concentrate on small Christian communities in Nouakchott and other large cities.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

No Mauritians appear to have joined the Church abroad. The lack of any Mauritian members in Mauritania and abroad will continue to delay any progress establishing the Church.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Mauritania exhibits profound tension between white Moors and other ethnicities. Clan conflicts may manifest themselves at church if individuals from rival clans or ethnicities were to attend the same congregation.

³⁵⁰ "News of the Church," Ensign, Nov 1985, 99-112.

³⁵¹ "Projects—Mauritania," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 18 August 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-75,00.html>

Language Issues

Church materials are available in the native language of 98% of the population. LDS materials in Hassaniya Arabic may be warranted due to differences with Arabic dialects spoken in the Middle East. Only half the population is literate. Service opportunities exist for literacy programs.

Missionary Service

No reported members from Mauritania have served full-time missions. Missionaries have never been assigned to Mauritania.

Leadership

No Mauritian leadership has been developed. Initial church leadership will most likely rely upon non-Mauritian members.

Temple

Mauritania is assigned to the Accra Ghana temple district. There are no reports of temple trips occurring from Mauritania and prospective temple trips would exact a significant amount of time and money.

Comparative Growth

Mauritania has no LDS Church presence like most Islamic African nations. The only African nations with a clear Muslim majority and an LDS presence are Egypt, Djibouti, Sudan, and Sierra Leone. Most Christian groups have no presence in Mauritania, and denominations with a presence are limited to foreigners living in the country. Current laws and social pressures prohibit any proselytism.

Future Prospects

Mauritania may be among the last nations to have an official LDS presence due to current laws forbidding proselytism, ethnic conflicts, the many restrictions placed upon non-Muslim groups, the strong influence of Islam on society, lack of native Christians, and no known Mauritanian LDS converts. Establishing a humanitarian presence and engaging in clean water projects, literacy programs, and development projects in conjunction with other Christian groups or government agencies appears the most appropriate course of action for the future.

MOROCCO

Geography

AREA: 446,550 square km. Located in northeastern Africa, Morocco borders Algeria, Western Sahara, the two small Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla, the North Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean Sea. The Strait of Gibraltar separates Morocco from Spain by a narrow 20 kilometer passageway of ocean. Coastal plains occupy northern areas, whereas mountains and plateaus occupy much of the interior. The Atlas Mountains stretch through central Morocco, reaching altitudes over 4,000 meters. Northern plains and mountain valleys tend to be fertile and heavily cultivated whereas the south is arid desert. Earthquakes and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include desertification, soil erosion, overgrazing, sewage disposal, and oil pollution in the surrounding ocean. Morocco occupies and claims Western Sahara, an action not recognized by the international community. Morocco is divided into fifteen administrative regions.

Peoples

Arab-Berber: 98.7%

Other: 0.7%

Jewish: 0.2%

Traditionally, Arabs populated coastal and lowland areas and Berbers resided in highland areas in the center and south. Today many areas are mixed Arab-Berber, with the bulk of the Berber population today living in southern areas.

Population: 32,309,239 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.054% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.19 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 73.04 male, 79.32 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic dialects (74%), Tachelhit (10%), Tamazight (10%), Tarifit (5%), other (1%). Arabic is the official language whereas French is generally spoken in government and business. Berber languages are still spoken in many mountainous areas, and are sometimes written in a unique script of over fifty characters with Phoenician origins. Languages with over one million speakers include Arabic dialects [mainly Moroccan-spoken Arabic] (23.2 million), Tachelhit (3 million), Tamazight (3 million), and Tarifit (3 million).

Literacy: 52.3% (2004)

History

Various ancient civilizations traded and control regions of Morocco since antiquity, including the Phoenicians and Romans. Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, Visigoths, Vandals, and Byzantine Greeks ruled the region. Arabs conquered the region in the late seventh century and spread Islam. Moorish dynasties ruled Morocco after 788 AD. After the Middle Ages, Portugal and other European powers competed for control of North Africa and the Strait of Gibraltar for trade. The local Moroccan monarchy resisted such efforts. Spain controlled Morocco in the latter half of the nineteenth century. France had vested interest in Morocco in the nineteenth century, and successfully obtained sovereignty of the area by the early twentieth century. In 1912,

the Treaty of Fes made Morocco a French Protectorate and ceded territory south of Morocco along the coast to Spain. Following World War II, Morocco took greater interest in gaining independence, which occurred in 1956. Tangier and Ifni were reintegrated into Morocco in 1956 and 1969, respectively. The government has been a constitutional monarchy since the early 1970s. Morocco annexed Western Sahara in the late 1970s and continues to control the area, although this action is not recognized by the international community. The future status of Western Sahara continues to be debated. Since the 1990s, Morocco has taken significant steps towards greater liberalization of the economy and politics, resulting in greater economic growth and development.³⁵²

Culture

Islam strongly influences daily life, cultural practices, and customs. Morocco has been a center of Islamic learning and from antiquity a region integrated into Mediterranean trade routes that accelerated learning and commerce. Major influences on local culture have come from the Berbers, Arabs, Europeans, Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Cuisine consists of many foods and dishes found throughout the Mediterranean. Tea is widely consumed. There is a rich tradition of poetry, literature, art, and music. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are low compared to the worldwide average. Unlike most Arab states, polygamy is uncommon, and the government has tried to eradicate its practice.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$5,100 (2011) [10.6% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.582

Corruption Index: 3.4 (2011)

Considerable progress in developing and stabilizing the economy has occurred in the last decade notwithstanding the global financial crisis in the late 2000s that resulted in less demand and lower prices for phosphates and fewer tourists from Europe. Morocco continues to rely on phosphates and agriculture products to drive the economy, however. Unemployment, especially for youth, and low literacy rates are significant challenges for future economic growth. The government has worked to improve living standards in many areas and develop the country's infrastructure. Agriculture employs 45% of the work force and generates 19% of the GDP. Primary crops include barley, wheat, fruit, vegetables, and olives. Livestock and wine are also common agriculture products. Services employ 35% of the labor force and account for half of the GDP, whereas industry employs 20% of the labor force and generates 31% of the GDP. Industries include phosphate rock mining, food processing, textiles, construction, energy, and tourism. Spain, France, and Italy are primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as widespread but has been highly publicized, and some progress has been achieved in recent years in addressing petty corruption. Government transparency has increased, and legislation to prevent or discourage corruption appears to be in place. Prosecuting corruption charges on high-profile individuals remains a challenge.³⁵³ Drug trafficking is a concern, as Morocco is a major transshipment point for South American cocaine to Europe and is one of the world's largest producers of hashish.

Faiths

Muslim: 98.7%

Christian: 1.1%

³⁵² "Background Note: Morocco," Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 26 January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

³⁵³ "Snapshot of the Morocco Country Profile," Business Anti-Corruption Portal, retrieved 16 September 2010. <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/middle-east-north-africa/morocco/>

Jewish: 0.2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 20,000

Latter-day Saints less than 100 2

Seventh Day Adventists 159 3 (includes all Maghreb countries)

Religion

Most the population is Sunni Muslim. Shi'a Muslims number less than 10,000 and are primarily from Lebanon and Iraq. Most Christians are foreigners. The local Christian population is estimated around 4,000 and is composed primarily of Berbers in the south. Morocco is one of the few Arab nations that has been consistently tolerant of its native Jewish population. There are estimated to be between 3,000 and 4,000 Jews who primarily reside in the largest cities. Morocco is the only Arab state that has a Jewish museum.³⁵⁴

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 39th

The constitution allows for the practice of religion on an individual basis but declares Islam as the state religion. The King possesses the responsibility to defend Islam. The government has taken steps to prevent the spread of radical Islamic teachings and preserve its historical Islamic identity. Several Muslim holidays are recognized by the government. Non-Muslim foreigners may openly practice their beliefs, but local non-Muslims and non-Jews face threats of government surveillance, ostracism, and persecution for worshipping. Local Christian converts tend to meet in private homes to worship. There have been consistent efforts by the government to limit the spread and practice of Shi'a Islam. The government bans proselytism and the distribution of non-Islamic literature. Attempting to convert a Muslim to another religion is illegal. Foreign Christian missionaries do operate in Morocco and either work among non-Muslims or secretly among Muslims but can be expelled if their activities are made public. Christian groups registered with the government include the Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, French Protestant, English Protestant, and Anglican Churches. The small Jewish minority is respected and esteemed by most as a cultural heritage of Morocco due to the long Jewish history in the region.³⁵⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 56%

Casablanca, Rabat, **Fès, Marrakech, Agadir, Tangier, Meknès, Oujda, Tétouan, Kenitra, Safi, Nador, Mohammedia, Khenifra.**

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

Two of the fourteen cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have LDS congregations. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the national population resides in the fourteen largest cities.

³⁵⁴ "Morocco," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127354.htm>

³⁵⁵ "Morocco," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127354.htm>

LDS History

Small groups of foreign Latter-day Saints have met for church in Morocco since as early as the 1950s. Morocco belonged to the Europe Mediterranean Area in the 1990s.³⁵⁶ The Spain Seville Mission operated two small branches in Ceuta and Melilla in the 1990s.³⁵⁷ In 1994, the BYU Young Ambassadors performed in Casablanca and Rabat. The performances were recorded by national television and sold out.³⁵⁸ In 2000, Morocco was assigned to the Europe West Area.³⁵⁹ In 2008, Morocco was transferred to the new Middle East/Africa North Area, and the seminary program was introduced.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 100 (2012)

Membership appears to be largely, if not entirely, composed of foreign members from Europe and North America and Sub-Saharan Africa. During the 2008–2009 school year, two people were enrolled in seminary or institute. In late 2012, there were 24 members in the Rabat Branch.³⁶⁰

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 1 Groups: 1 (2012)

A branch once functioned in Rabat, Morocco up until the late 2000s. In 2010, small groups of expatriate members met in Rabat and Casablanca, likely under the jurisdiction of the Middle East/Africa North Area Branch. In 2011, a branch was reestablished in Rabat.³⁶¹

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, French, English.

All LDS scriptures and many church materials are available in Arabic and French.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings likely occur in members' homes or in reserved/rented spaces in hotels.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has conducted a few humanitarian projects in Morocco in recent years, including donating an ophthalmology microscope and providing neonatal resuscitation training.³⁶² In 2005, French members assembled fifty hygiene and fifty education kits to distribute to needy children in Laayoune, Western Sahara.³⁶³

³⁵⁶ "Europe Mediterranean Area: New Challenges and Growth," Tambuli, Aug 1993, 22.

³⁵⁷ Cannon, Mike. "Diversity in land, people, and climate," LDS Church News, 7 December 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21327/Diversity-in-land-people-and-climate.html>

³⁵⁸ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 27 August 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24522/From-around-the-world.html>

³⁵⁹ Lloyd, Scott. "European continent realigned into three new areas," LDS Church News, 16 September 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38475/European-continent--realigned-into-three-new-areas.html>

³⁶⁰ "Apostle visits tiny, remote branch," LDS Church News, 8 December 2012. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/63039/Apostle-visits-tiny-remote-branch.html>

³⁶¹ "Apostle visits tiny, remote branch," LDS Church News, 8 December 2012. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/63039/Apostle-visits-tiny-remote-branch.html>

³⁶² "Projects—Morocco," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 16 September 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-248,00.html>

³⁶³ "French members send aid," LDS Church News, 28 May 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47360/>

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Morocco provides foreigner non-Muslims greater religious freedom than many other Arab states. The LDS Church remains unregistered with the government, and meetings occur privately for expatriate members in harmony with governmental regulations. Government policies and attitudes towards locals converting from Islam is a major obstacle if missionary activity occurs among the population one day. The LDS Church performs no proselytism and has observed local laws and customs regarding its religious activities.

Cultural Issues

The central role Islam plays in everyday life is a major cultural issue that will challenge and restrict missionary activity even in the event that proselytism bans are one day relaxed. The amount of tolerance and respect directed towards the Jewish minority indicates that the Muslim majority can coexist with non-Muslim groups without friction. However, this trust and respect has come as a result of centuries of coexistence and the lack of Jewish proselytism among Muslims. Latter-day Saints may struggle to gain such a positive reputation. Prospective missionary outreach would need to address drug abuse issues prevalent among many Moroccans.

National Outreach

The entire population remains unreached by the Church with the exception of the close personal contacts of Latter-day Saints, but local laws prevent any organized mission outreach. If missionary work were permitted in Morocco, mission outreach centers are only established in the two largest cities, which account for 18% of the national population. Bans on the distribution of religious literature further challenge any efforts to establish a church presence among locals.

The small indigenous Christian community is a subset of the population, which has potential for outreach, but this discriminated and marginalized group is difficult to contact due to the private nature of their worship to avoid persecution.

The Church can perform legal mission outreach to hundreds of thousands of Moroccans in Europe. There do not appear to have been any concentrated efforts to proselyte Moroccans in Europe by Latter-day Saints. Limited numbers of full-time missionaries and outreach resources may render North African populations in nations with mission outreach centers unreached for the foreseeable future. Although many do not return to their home country, establishing the Church among the expatriate Moroccan population may one day facilitate church establishment among the indigenous population.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

No convert baptisms appear to have occurred in Morocco. Member activity rates likely resemble those of nations from which foreigner Latter-day Saints originate, namely the United States and Europe.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Due to the highly homogenous demographics of the population, few, if any, ethnic issues will manifest themselves at church if an official church presence is established one day. Non-Arab-Berber converts from other Middle Eastern nations may experience some challenges assimilating into Arab-Berber congregations, as these peoples tend to be marginalized.

Language Issues

A wide selection of LDS Church materials is available in Arabic, but no materials have been translated into the Moroccan dialect. French-language church materials may be used in mission outreach. The nearly ten million speakers of Berber languages may remain without church materials in their languages for several more decades due to the lack of Latter-day Saints among the speakers of these languages and lack of mission outreach opportunities in nations where most Berbers live.

Missionary Service

No missionaries appear to have served from Morocco. With the exception of Spain-controlled Ceuta and Melilla, no missionaries have been permanently assigned. Humanitarian senior couple missions have visited, but it does not appear that they were permanently assigned.

Leadership

Foreign members hold current church leadership positions. There are no foreseeable prospects for the development of indigenous church leadership.

Temple

Morocco is assigned to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Organized temple trips for expatriate members do not occur, and members appear to attend the temple on an individual basis. The Madrid Spain Temple is in close proximity compared to other nations in the Middle East/Africa North Area, and members may attend this temple more frequently.

Comparative Growth

Morocco appears to have the second largest Latter-day Saint population among countries in North Africa after Egypt. With the exception of Egypt, North African nations all appear to lack native Latter-day Saint converts.

Missionary-minded Christian groups report some of the greatest success in gaining converts in Morocco among Arab states. Many of these groups operate underground and hold house church meetings to avoid government surveillance and persecution.

Future Prospects

Morocco offers abundant opportunities for humanitarian and development work, such as literacy programs and employment workshops for youth, which have yet to be explored by the LDS Church. Prospects for increasing the number of service projects appear favorable in the coming years and may help create a positive relationship with the government and aid beneficiaries. However, there are no current possibilities for a church establishment beyond the expatriate population in the foreseeable future due to bans on proselytism and literature distribution, the lack of indigenous members in Morocco and abroad, and cultural restrictions on Muslims converting to Christianity.

OMAN

Geography

AREA: 309,500 square km. Occupying the southeast corner of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman borders Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. A small enclave in the United Arab Emirates at the tip of the Musandam Peninsula adjacent to the Strait of Hormuz also belongs to Oman. Arid, hot desert covers most of the country; coastal areas have high humidity. In extreme southern Oman, a monsoon occurs and results in tropical climate in the Salalah region. Plains are the dominant terrain feature, with mountains in the far northeast and extreme southwest. Sandstorms and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include increasing soil salinity, oil spills and little available fresh water. Oman is administratively divided into five regions and four governorates.

Peoples

Arab: 72%

Other: 28%

Arabs form the majority of the population. Nearly 600,000 foreigners reside in the country (17% of the total population). Most other ethnic groups come from South Asia and other Middle Eastern nations. There are also some Africans, Filipinos, Europeans, and Americans who temporarily work in Oman.

Population: 3,090,150 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.043% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.87 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 72.61 male, 76.43 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic dialects (60%), Indian languages (13%), Balochi (7%), Mehri (2%), other (18%). Arabic is the official language. Only Arabic dialects have over one million speakers (2.0 million).

Literacy: 81.4% (2003)

History

Oman has been populated for more than 5,000 years and has traded with many areas in the Indian Ocean and Asia. Persians controlled or influenced Oman for several centuries before and after Christ's birth. Islam arrived shortly after its founding and Oman assisted its spread in Asia. The Portuguese ruled for around 150 years starting in the early sixteenth century. Omani independence occurred in 1650. Oman began expanding its influence in East Africa for the following two centuries until the empire divided in the mid-nineteenth century. Friendship treaties were signed with the British in the late eighteenth century, resulting in Oman not coming under European rule. A rebellion occurred in the Dhofar Governorate in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1970, the son of the sultan overtook the government and has ruled since. Sultan Qaboos has modernized Oman and maintained close relations with the United Kingdom. Oman has acted more independently than much of the Arab world but has positive relations with all nations in the Middle East.

Culture

Oman has some inherited cultural characteristics but shares cultural similarities with neighboring Arab nations. Islam heavily influences everyday life. Oman is famous for the Khanjar, a curved knife worn on holidays. Men and women continue to wear traditional clothing. Cuisine includes spiced meat, rice, and breads. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are very low. Polygamy is practiced by some Muslims.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$26,200 (2011) [54.5% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.705

Corruption Index: 4.8 (2011)

Oman is one of the less wealthy nations on the Arabian Peninsula mainly due to limited oil reserves. The government has sought to diversify the economy and lessen dependence on oil for revenue. Services are the largest economic sector (62%), followed by industry (36%). Foreign workers account for approximately 60% of the workforce, and the unemployment rate is around 15%. Agriculture is limited due to the dry climate, but common crops include dates, fruit, and alfalfa. Oil is the largest industry and primary export. Trade partners include China, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, and Japan.

Faiths

Muslim: 95%

Other: 5%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 3,001

Seventh Day Adventists less than 300

Latter-day Saints ~100 1

Religion

Nearly all Arabs are Muslim. Most foreign workers from other Middle Eastern nations or South Asia are Muslim. Other religious groups include Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Bahai's. Christians are concentrated in the larger cities of Muscat, Sohar, and Salalah. There are some government efforts to regulate Islamic activity, such as mosque construction and location.³⁶⁴

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 22nd

The Basic Law allows for freedom to practice religion if it does not interfere with public order and recognizes Islam as the state religion. Shari'a law is in effect and connects Islamic practices with government policy. Islamic holidays are recognized as national holidays. Discrimination based on religious affiliation is forbidden. Unlike some Middle East nations, conversion from Islam to another religion is not regarded as a crime but does carry potential legal challenges for fathers retaining rights over their children. Land is donated by the Sultan to non-Muslims for religious assembly. Proselytism is not illegal but can be stopped if those offended report it to government. Government prohibits foreigners on tourist visas from preaching, teaching, and

³⁶⁴ "Oman," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127355.htm>

leading congregations. Islam is taught in public schools, and non-Muslims may be exempted. Private schools may provide non-Muslim religious instruction. All religious groups must be registered, which is done on a case-by-case basis. There have been no recent reports of societal abuses on religious freedom.³⁶⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 72%

Muscat, **As-Sib, Salalah, Bawsar, Suhar, Ibri, As-Suwayq, Ruwi, Saham, Nizwa.**

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

LDS History

In 1988, there was only one active member who would travel to the United Arab Emirates for Church meetings.³⁶⁶ The first congregation was likely created between 1990 and 2000.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: ~100 (2012)

In early 2010, membership in the Oman Branch appeared to number between fifty and one hundred. Most members reside in the Muscat metropolitan area. All members with a few possible exceptions are foreigners.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 Groups: 1 (2012)

In 2000, Oman was assigned to the Europe Central Area. In 2008, the country was transferred to the newly created Middle East/Africa North Area. In addition to the Oman Branch, which is assigned to the Manama Bahrain Stake, there is also a military group.

Activity and Retention

It is difficult to estimate member activity rates due to the unknown number of inactive foreign members. Member activity seems high among known membership. As much as 75% of LDS membership in Oman may be active.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English, Farsi, Hindi, Tagalog, Urdu.

All LDS scriptures are available in Arabic, English, and Tagalog. Book of Mormon translations have been completed for Hindi and Urdu; only Book of Mormon selections are available in Farsi. Most Church materials are available in Arabic and Tagalog, whereas Urdu and Farsi have more limited Church materials. *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Farsi. The *Liahona* has twelve issues annually in Tagalog, three issues in Urdu, and one issue in Hindi.

Meetinghouses

Meetings for the Oman Branch likely occur in a rented space. Meetings for the military group likely occur on base.

³⁶⁵ "Oman," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127355.htm>

³⁶⁶ Platt, Joseph B. "Our Oasis of Faith," *Ensign*, Apr 1988, 39.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Church members cleaned a section of beach outside Muscat in February 2010. Large-scale humanitarian efforts do not appear to have occurred.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Oman has one of the most tolerant atmospheres for non-Muslims in the Middle East. The Church can benefit from liberal laws that can accommodate the conversion of not just nonnatives but also Omani citizens if they approach the Church on their own initiative. Appointment of government land for a meetinghouse appears likely once membership requires a larger meeting location. Omani law may restrict visiting Church leaders from training and conducting ecclesiastical business. In 2009, the Church published the name of the Oman Branch on its meetinghouse locator website and provided contact information for the branch president. This is the only link for those without local LDS personal contacts to find the Church.

Cultural Issues

Church meetings are held in Friday, the Muslim day of worship. Tolerance towards non-Muslim religions is higher than most Arab nations, but Oman is heavily influenced by Islam and Arab culture. Conversion from Islam is greatly frowned upon, and in other Arab nations can result in capital punishment if discovered. Low rates of alcohol and tobacco lessen challenges overcoming these substances for prospective converts prior to baptism.

National Outreach

The highly urbanized population reduces the number of outreach centers needed to reach most inhabitants. Membership is most concentrated along the northeastern coast where Oman has the highest population densities. Sparsely populated areas outside the northeastern coast and the Salalah region challenge future outreach.

The national population remains unreached by the Church due to cultural restrictions on proselytism. Only individuals in personal contact with members have access to the meetinghouse location and contact with the Church in Oman. The meetinghouse location is not made public due to the Church's sensitive nature.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The tiny church membership in an Islamic nation with a sensitive Church presence has likely lessened member activity, as many have been unable to find the Church. The quality of teaching received by members and their church attendance habits will be most strongly influenced by the nations in which they joined the Church. Foreign members may experience increased church activity resulting at least in part from the desire for social interaction.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The greatest opportunities for member-missionary work are among Christian foreign workers. Cultural restrictions and the lack of Omani Arab membership frustrate greater outreach among Omani Arabs. The diversity among the non-Arab population challenges ethnic integration efforts. Most members in the Oman Branch appear to be Westerners who may have little contact with foreign workers from South Asia and the Philippines.

Language Issues

LDS scriptures and materials are available in most native languages spoken by the Omani population. The language with the most speakers without Church materials is Balochi, which appears unlikely to have forthcoming translations of Church materials. English will likely continued to be used until enough active members and leaders require the creation of language-specific congregations. Language-specific congregations for immigrant workers have previously been created in the Middle East, such as a ward in Doha, Qatar designated for members speaking Filipino languages.

Leadership

In early 2010, the president of the Oman Branch was a Westerner. Local leadership appears well trained and developed due to expatriates staffing callings in the branch. Limited leadership outside of Muscat and among non-English speakers may have contributed to only one branch functioning in Oman.

Temple

Oman is assigned to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Temple trips likely occur with the Manama Bahrain Stake due to the small size of membership. Due to long distances from temples, a temple may be constructed on the Arabian Peninsula to serve foreign members living in the Middle East, the majority of which have very active and reside in neighboring Arab nations.

Comparative Growth

The Church arrived later to Oman than to most other Arab nations. The United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain appear to all have more members. Much of this delayed and limited growth appears due to slower economic growth and fewer expatriate workers. There is still virtually no outreach among the Arab-speaking Omani population, notwithstanding a more favorable environment than in other nations. Christian groups only have established congregations among expatriates. Christian churches have few congregations and limited national outreach.

Future Prospects

Legislation more tolerant than most other Arab nations toward the religious freedom of non-Muslim groups and the sizable foreign worker population provides a positive outlook for future growth. Potential mission outreach opportunities among foreign works have yet to be realized and must be due without infringing on Omani law. Future sustainable growth may occur among the foreign population through member-missionary efforts, creative outreach strategies, social networking, and foreign workers remaining in Oman for extended periods of time.

PALESTINE (WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP)

Geography

AREA: 6,220 square km (West Bank: 5,860 square km, Gaza Strip: 360 square km). The Palestinian territories comprise the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The West Bank borders Jordan and Israel whereas the Gaza Strip borders Israel, Egypt, and the Mediterranean Sea. Rugged hills and highlands subject to temperate climate occupy most of the landlocked West Bank. The Jordan River marks the Jordanian border on the east, and the city of Jerusalem is divided between the West Bank and Israel. Sandy, flat coastal plains and sand dunes occupy the Gaza Strip. Droughts are a natural hazard. Environmental issues include fresh water scarcity, proper sewage disposal, desertification, salination of fresh water, and soil degradation. Israel occupies both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, portions of which are governed by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas.

Peoples

West Bank: Palestinian Arab/other (83%), Jewish (17%)

Gaza Strip: Palestinian Arab (100%)

Palestinian Arabs constitute the majority in the West Bank; most resided within the confines of the West Bank before the establishment of the state of Israel. Palestinian refugees and Jewish settlers constitute the primary minority groups. The population of Gaza Strip is homogenously Palestinian Arab, most of whom are the descendants of refugees from present-day Israel.

Population: West Bank: 2,514,845; Gaza Strip: 1,604,238

Annual Growth Rate: West Bank: 2.13%, Gaza Strip: 3.29%

Fertility Rate: West Bank: 3.12, Gaza Strip: 4.9

Life Expectancy: West Bank: 72.76 male, 76.92 female; Gaza Strip: 72.05 male, 75.4 female

Languages: Arabic [primarily Levantine dialect] (90%), Hebrew (9%), other (1%). Only Arabic has over one million speakers (3.7 million).

Literacy: 92.4% (2004)

History

Semitic-speaking peoples populated present-day Palestinian territories from antiquity. During Biblical times, the West Bank was populated by the Israelites and was governed by the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, whereas the Gaza Strip was ruled by Philistine city states. Various ancient civilizations successively ruled or invaded the region, including Egyptians, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, and Arabs. Various Christian crusader states were established in Palestine during the middle ages but were eventually overrun. Several Arab kingdoms occupied Palestine until the region was integrated into the Ottoman Empire. Jews began to immigrate to Palestine during the nineteenth century, and by 1917, the British took control under the British Mandate of Palestine. Palestinian Arabs began violently opposing Jewish immigration and settlement during this period and declared war against Israel immediately following Israel's declaration of independence. The West Bank came under Jordanian administration, and the Gaza strip came under Egyptian administration from 1948 until 1967 when both territories were annexed by Israel during the Six Days War. Beginning in 1993, Israel

began transferring greater autonomy and self-rule to the Palestinian Authority (PA) for some Palestinian-populated areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Progress establishing a sovereign, independent Palestinian state came to a halt in 2000 through a Palestinian uprising known as the Second Intifada, which lasted until 2005. Consisting of the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, and Russia, the Quartet proposed a plan granting the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state to peacefully coexist with Israel in 2003. Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat died in 2004, and Mahmud Abbas become president of the PA in 2005. Later that year, Israel agreed to withdraw its military and settlers from the Gaza strip and from four settlements in the northern West Bank. In 2006, Hamas took control of the Palestinian Legislative Council, which precipitated into a violent takeover of the Gaza Strip by the Hamas-backed National Unity Government in 2007. Abbas relocated the Palestinian Authority to the West Bank, which is led today by Salam Fayyad. At present, Hamas continues to control the Gaza Strip, whereas the PA governs the West Bank. Efforts by Egypt to reconcile differences between the two Palestinian governments have not come to fruition. During the first half of 2008, intense fighting between Hamas and the Israeli military in the Gaza Strip left over a thousand Palestinians dead and damaged housing and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. No progress toward the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state has occurred in recent years, as Palestinian leaders have refused to begin negotiations with Israel until Israeli settlement activity ceases in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Israel continues to control much of the airspace and sea access for the Gaza Strip, and reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip remain slow.

Culture

Palestine shares many cultural similarities with neighboring Levantine nations regarding religion, history, society, economics, and politics. Traditional Christian groups and the Muslim majority have peacefully coexisted for centuries. Hamas has enforced strict observance of a radical interpretation of Islam in the Gaza Strip. Poetry, folklore, and art are proud Palestinian traditions. Egyptian and Lebanese foods are commonly found among Palestinian cuisine, such as fish, olive oil, cheese, citrus, and taboon bread. Polygamy is permitted in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,900 (2008) [6.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: N/A

Corruption Index: N/A

Political instability and Israeli movement and access restrictions halted economic development in the West Bank during the 2000s, but economic growth occurred in 2010 as a result of a loosening of some restrictions, PA economic reforms, and the reception of international aid. The Gaza Strip remains isolated from the international community and is unable to regularly ship exports due to an Israeli blockade initiated after the takeover of the government in the Gaza Strip by Hamas. Natural resources include arable land and natural gas. Forty-six percent (46%) of the population lives below the poverty line in the West Bank, whereas 70% of the population lives below the poverty line in the Gaza Strip, and 40% of the work force was unemployed. Services generate 81% of the GDP, whereas industry generates 14% of the GDP. Major industries include textiles, food processing, manufacturing, and quarrying. Olives, fruit, and vegetables are common crops.

Corruption is perceived as severe and widespread. Black market economic activity occurs under the Egyptian border, including weapons trafficking. In 2010, President Abbas endorsed an anti-corruption law that addressed all forms of corruption found in Palestine, including criminalizing corruption, granting power for an anti-corruption task force to investigate corruption cases, and supporting the coordination of the

Commission for Combating Corruption with authorities to control, track, seize, and recover illegally obtained funds and proceeds.³⁶⁷ It remains to be seen to what extent this legislation will be implemented and enforced.

Faiths

Muslim: 90%

Jewish: 9%

Christian: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 80,000

Jehovah's Witnesses 64 2

Latter-day Saints less than 20 1?

Religion

Palestinians are approximately 98% Sunni Muslim. According to a 2008 study, there were 50,000 Christians in the West Bank and between 1,000 and 3,000 Christians in the Gaza Strip. Many West Bank Christians reside in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem. Most Christians are Greek Orthodox. The number of Christians in Palestine continues to decline due to emigration and low birth rates.³⁶⁸

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 36th

The Palestinian Authority uses the Palestinian Basic Law as a temporary constitution. Islam is the state religion, and legislation is derived from Shari'a law, but the Basic Law prohibits religious discrimination and protects religious freedom as long as religious practices do not interfere with morality and public order. The Palestinian Authority recognizes major Islamic holidays as well as Christmas. Christian churches attain one of three statuses of government recognition from the Palestinian Authority. Traditional Christian denominations that made special agreements with Ottoman authorities in addition to Episcopal and Evangelical Lutheran Churches are legally recognized and may hold ecclesiastical courts on personal and property matters. Protestant churches that were established between the late nineteenth century and 1967 have unwritten agreements with the Palestinian Authority, can perform some legal functions like issuing marriage certificates, and operate freely. The third status pertains to missionary-focused Christian groups that have no formal agreements with the government but generally operate without restrictions. The government requires religious teaching in public schools tailored to Muslim and Christian students. The Israeli government restricts the movement of people across borders with Israel, resulting in many being unable to visit holy sites or travel for religious purposes. Despite the strict interpretation of Islam enforced among Muslims by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Christian are generally allowed to practice without harassment. Societal tensions are highest between Jews and the non-Jewish population.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ "Palestine, 28 June 2010," Transparency International News Room, retrieved 19 January 2011. http://www.transparency.org/news_room/latest_news/press_releases_nc/2010/2010_06_28_palestine_law

³⁶⁸ "Israel and the Occupied Territories," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148825.htm>

³⁶⁹ "Israel and the Occupied Territories," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148825.htm>

Largest Cities

Urban: 72%

Gaza, Jerusalem (Al-Quds), Khan Yunus, Jabalyah, Al-Khalil, Rafah, Nabulus, An-Nusayrat, Bayt Lahiya, Tulkarm.

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

None of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Forty-five percent (45%) of the population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

LDS apostle Elder Orson Hyde traveled to Palestine and dedicated the Holy Land on October 24th, 1841 for the gathering of the Jews.³⁷⁰ Organized first to serve Armenians in the Near East, the Palestine/Syrian Mission operated from 1933–1939 and 1947–1951. One of the mission presidents in the 1930s was Armenian, but the mission closed, and the branches were discontinued during World War II. An LDS mission in Switzerland administered Palestine in the 1970s. There has been no formal LDS presence in the West Bank or Gaza Strip since the mid-twentieth century. Palestine has been assigned to the Middle East/Africa North Area since 2008. In recent years, the few Latter-day Saints in the West Bank have experienced significant challenges worshipping with members in Israel proper and have been isolated due to border regulations. There does not appear to have ever been an LDS presence in the Gaza Strip.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 20 (2012)

There were at least three Latter-day Saints in Bethlehem in late 2009. There may be additional members in some other locations. Most members are Arab Palestinians, and all appear to live in the West Bank.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 Groups: 1? (2012)

No LDS branches have continuously operated in Palestine. In 2009, a group was organized in Bethlehem but likely operates on an irregular basis due to few members.

Activity and Retention

As many as 50% of Latter-day Saints in the West Bank may be practicing despite their limited numbers.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are translated into standard Arabic.

Meetinghouses

Local members worship in small groups in their homes.

³⁷⁰ "Historical chronology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," 8 February 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58765/Historical-chronology-of-The-Church-of-Jesus-Christ-of-Latter-day-Saints.html>

Health and Safety

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to pose a safety threat due to terrorism and extremist groups targeting Christians that proselyte. Access to healthcare is extremely poor in the Gaza Strip.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The LDS Church has conducted numerous humanitarian and development work projects recently in Palestine in association with other nongovernment organizations. In both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Church has donated hygiene kits, dry milk, school kits, newborn kits, blankets, orphanage modules, and wheelchairs. The Church also provided neonatal resuscitation training in Gaza, Nablus, and Ramallah. Aid has also specifically been delivered to the needy in East Jerusalem.³⁷¹

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Palestinian Authority has demonstrated considerably greater tolerance toward missionary-oriented Christians than most Arab governments, permitting nonregistered Christian groups to proselyte without any impediments even though the majority of the population is Muslim. The LDS Church's agreement with the Israeli government to refrain from any proselytism may inhibit missionary activity in the West Bank, as Israel occupies the territory. However, there are no apparent restrictions regarding assembly in Palestine. The establishment of a sovereign, independent Palestine together with a reduction in Palestinian-Israeli tension may improve prospects for full-time missionary activity. Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip at present has not realistic prospects of an LDS presence due to violent extremism, poor living conditions, a lack of Latter-day Saints, and the strict adherence of the government to Islamic Sharia law.

Cultural Issues

Societal tolerance of Christians is a major opportunity for Latter-day Saints to establish a church presence and perform missionary activity on a member referral basis. Most the population has demonstrated low receptivity to Christian missionary groups, and prospective LDS converts face many societal challenges, which may include ostracism from family and the community and harassment. Those engaged in polygamy desiring baptism in the LDS Church must end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the area presidency for approval. Continued LDS humanitarian and development work may increase awareness of the Church and foster positive public opinions.

National Outreach

Palestine remains entirely unreached by LDS missionary efforts. Only those with close personal relations with the few Latter-day Saints residing in the West Bank have any opportunity to receive mission outreach. Government agreements between the LDS Church and the Israeli government prohibit any member-missionary activity in Israel, and these regulations are likely applied to Israeli-occupied West Bank. The sole LDS congregation in Bethlehem would reach less than 1% of the Palestinian population if LDS missionary activity occurred, due to the city's small population.

Concentrating missionary efforts and expanding national outreach among communities of Christian

³⁷¹ "Projects—Palestinian Territory, Occupied," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 18 January 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-261,00.html>

Palestinians may be more productive than among the general Muslim population, but low birth rates and high rates of emigration pose challenges developing self-sufficiency and permanent mission outreach centers.

The Internet has been a useful tool in introducing Arab Muslims in the Middle East to LDS beliefs, primarily through unofficial websites run by Arab LDS members. The Church publishes no meeting times or locations for Palestine. Individuals desiring to meet with church representatives or attend church meetings would most likely have to contact church leadership in Israel. Telephone contact information for branch presidents in Israel is available on the LDS meetinghouse locator website. LDS Arabic language materials online are limited to translations of General Conference addresses.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Many of the known Latter-day Saints residing in the West Bank are active. Moderate member activity rates appear linked to the high degree of devotion exemplified by converts to overcome societal challenges and the enduring personal desire to live church teachings. Isolation from membership in Israel through strict border regulations and limited contact with area church leadership pose challenges for members to attend church meetings and live gospel teachings. Diligent home teachers in the Jerusalem Branch visited Arab Palestinian LDS families in Bethlehem in 2009 to offer encouragement, teaching, and support, as they were unable to cross over the Israeli border to attend church meetings in Jerusalem.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnically Jewish LDS converts may face challenges integrating into Palestinian-majority congregations if a more widespread church presence is established one day and Jewish settlers remain in the West Bank.

Language Issues

Widespread use of Arabic reduces challenges for the Church to meet multiple language needs. Some accommodation for Hebrew-speakers may be necessary if a widespread presence is established in the West Bank or if Jewish settlers are more receptive than Arab Palestinians. Only the sacrament prayers and some hymns are translated into Hebrew.

Missionary Service

No known members from Palestine have served full-time missions, and no LDS missionary activity has occurred in Palestine since the mid-twentieth century.

Leadership

Potential church leadership may depend on non-Palestinians for many years due to the lack of native members. The small group of local members in Bethlehem appears to exhibit strong leadership skills as in late 2009 one Arab Palestinian LDS convert was the Relief Society president of the Jerusalem Branch and could travel across the border into Israel because she worked for the United Nations.

Temple

Palestine is likely assigned to the Bern Switzerland Temple district. No organized temple trips occur from Palestine. Border regulations, travel expenses, and long distances challenge local members from attending the temple. Prospects for a closer small temple in the United Arab Emirates may materialize for the sparse, remote Latter-day Saint population in the region over the medium term.

Comparative Growth

Palestine has achieved some progress developing a small, local community of Latter-day Saints, but their numbers remain insufficient to organize a branch. Only Jordan and Lebanon have well-established LDS communities that provide local leadership that can sustain branches. Palestine ranks among the few Middle Eastern nations that have had multiple LDS converts residing in their homelands in recent years; other nations include Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey.

Most missionary-minded Christian groups have a small presence in Palestine but gain few new converts. Unstable political conditions, risk of violence, and cultural obstacles surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have limited the outreach and activity of proselytizing Christians.

Future Prospects

The outlook for an official LDS Church establishment, membership growth, and organization of permanent congregations will depend on the political status of the nation state of Palestine, its relations with Israel, and the continued tolerant stance of the Palestinian Authority regarding Christian missionary groups. High rates of emigration threaten the long-term sustainability of the tiny LDS community in Bethlehem and may result in its disappearance before an official church presence can be established. Humanitarian and development projects carried out by the Church have alleviated suffering and may secure a positive relationship with the Palestinian Authority when LDS leaders determine to establish an official presence.

QATAR

Geography

AREA: 11,586 square km. Located on the Arabian Peninsula surrounded by the Persian Gulf, Qatar occupies the Qatar Peninsula. The arid climate experiences mild winters and hot summers. Terrain consists of flat desert with little to no vegetation. Haze and dust storms are common natural hazards. The greatest environmental issue is overreliance on desalinated sea water to meet fresh water demand. Qatar is divided into ten administrative municipalities.

Peoples

Arab: 40%
Indian: 18%
Pakistani: 18%
Iranian: 10%
Other: 14%

There are only 250,000 Qatari citizens.³⁷² More men than women reside in the country due to male immigrant workers being unable to obtain visas for their families or being unable to afford family travel.

Population: 1,951,591 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 4.93% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 1.93 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 76.11 male, 80.12 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic, English. Arabic is the official language. Predominant immigrant languages include Farsi, Filipino languages, Urdu, Malayalam, Tamil, Sinhalese, and Balochi. Most immigrant workers do not learn Arabic. No languages have over one million speakers.

Literacy: 89% (2004)

History

Ancient peoples inhabited the peninsula for millennia prior to the birth of Christ. Islam arrived in the seventh century AD, and exploring and trading occurred with peoples throughout the Indian Ocean during the Middle Ages. The British took control in the nineteenth century and made Qatar a protectorate in 1916. Influence from the British declined in the mid-twentieth century and independence occurred in 1971. The royal al-Thani family has ruled Qatar since the nineteenth century. Over the past four decades, the country has transformed from a poor nation into one of the wealthiest. Qatar has seen very few acts of terrorism and violence.

³⁷² "Qatar," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127356.htm>

Culture

Qatar shares many similarities in culture with neighboring Saudi Arabia. Sharia law provides the basis for governance, but Qatar has more liberal laws than many other Arab nations. Education is highly emphasized. Alcohol and pork are not served publicly. Coffee is widely consumed, and it is rude for a guest to refuse tea or coffee offered by a host. Cuisine includes Indian, Pakistani, and North African influences. Seafood is the primary native cuisine. Foreign worker salaries differ on country of origin. Qatari women prefer to stay in the home. Most marriages are arranged and require the consent of the bride. Polygamy continues with some Qataris but has declined in popularity in recent years. A woman may divorce her husband if he takes another wife.³⁷³

Economy

GDP per capita: \$102,700 (2011) [214% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.831

Corruption Index: 7.2 (2011)

Qatar has experienced rapid economic growth over the last several decades through oil and natural gas exploitation. Oil and gas produce half the GDP and 85% of export revenues. Natural gas reserves are the third largest in the world. Industry and services account for 66% and 34% of the GDP respectively. Unemployment ranks among the lowest in the world (0.5%), and the GDP per capita is contested as the highest or second highest. Primary trade partners include Japan, South Korea, the United States, and Singapore.

Corruption levels are among the lowest in the Middle East. Greater awareness of corruption in Qatar has risen in recent years, yet there remain no anti-corruption organizations. Allegations of corruption are most numerous towards higher ranking Qatari officials.

Faiths

Muslim: 77.5%

Christian: 8.5%

Other: 14%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Roman Catholics 100,000

Anglicans 15,000

Egyptian Copts 3,000

Latter-day Saints 480 4

Religion

Sunni Muslims are the majority, whereas Shi'a Muslims comprise less than 5% of the population. Hindus likely number over 100,000, and Buddhists may account for 150,000 to 200,000 people. Most Christians are Catholic. Notable Christian minorities include Anglicans, Egyptian Copts, and Greek and Eastern Orthodox. Only the Catholic Church has a chapel, which was recently constructed. Fewer than 500 Qatari citizens are Christian.³⁷⁴

³⁷³ "Qatar," Countries and their cultures, retrieved 4 March 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Qatar.html>

³⁷⁴ "Qatar," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127356.htm>

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 20th

Legislation and the constitution allow for individuals to associate, assemble, and worship as long as they preserve morality and public order. Islam is the official religion. Proselytism by non-Muslims is forbidden and can result in up to a ten-year jail sentence. Those in possession of materials supporting or promoting non-Muslim religions can be imprisoned for up to two years; however, there has never been a case where this law has been enforced since its passage. Law restricts places of worship. Conversion of Muslims to other religions is classified as apostasy and can result in the death penalty, although there has been no instance in which this has been enforced since independence. Islamic holidays are national holidays. Both Muslims and non-Muslims are subject to elements of both secular and Shari'a law. Violence directed towards religious minorities is rare.

Christian groups can receive government recognition if they have over 1,500 members living in Qatar. Only six groups are recognized: Catholic, Anglican, Greek Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, Coptic, and Indian Christian. Christian churches with smaller memberships may worship and receive government security if needed. The publication, importation, and distribution of religious books is controlled by the government, but individuals and religious groups were not restricted in trafficking religious materials for use at home or in congregations.³⁷⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 96%

Doha, **Ar-Rayyan**, **Al-Wakrah**, **Umm Salal**, **Musayêid**, **As-Sahî'Aniyah**, **Duhî an**, **Al-Hiawr**, **Al-Jumayliyah**, **Al-Wukayr**.

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

One of the ten largest cities has a congregation. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities. Eighty percent (80%) of the national population lives in Doha and its suburbs.

LDS History

As of mid-2008 the Church did not have legal recognition from the government. Members have likely been meeting since the 1990s.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 480 (2011)

Although the Church does not report official membership totals for Qatar, membership in the Arabian Peninsula Stake stood at 900 in 2004. By 2009, membership in the Arabian Peninsula Stake reached 1,950.³⁷⁶ In late 2009, many expatriate Western members continued to relocate to Qatar. Most of the expatriates came from Texas, consisting primarily of oil and gas industry employees and their families in addition to U.S. military personnel. In 2009, the Doha 1st Ward had around 170 attending sacrament meetings and fifty-five children in primary. Increases in membership growth come primarily from members moving to the area and from non-Muslim converts, mainly Filipinos.

³⁷⁵ "Qatar," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127356.htm>

³⁷⁶ Chatterly, Matt. "Growth, friendship serve as Middle East 'Miracles,'" LDS Church News, 7 March 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56735/Growth-friendship-serve-as-Middle-East-miracles.html>

Congregational Growth

Wards: 2 Branches: 1 Groups: 1 (early 2013)

In 2000, Qatar was assigned to the Europe Central Area and had one congregation. The Doha Branch likely became a ward in the mid-2000s and was later divided in the late 2000s to create the Doha 2nd Branch, which soon became a ward. By 2009, sixteen units functioned under the Manama Bahrain Stake; an increase of four units from the year before. The Doha 2nd Ward meets the needs of Filipino members, whereas the Doha 1st Ward serves other members. A group for members serving in the U.S. military also functions in Qatar. No missionaries serve in the country. In early 2013, Doha 3rd Branch was organized.

Activity and Retention

It is very difficult to determine activity rates, as the bulk of membership arrived in the past decade, and there are likely many inactive members not on Church records for Qatar. Activity rates are likely over 50%. Retention of new converts appears to be high.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Arabic, Farsi, Tagalog, Cebuano, Sinhalese, Tamil.

All LDS scriptures are available in Arabic, Cebuano and Tagalog. Only the Book of Mormon has been translated in Sinhalese and Tamil. Most Church materials are available in Arabic, Cebuano, and Tagalog. *Gospel Principles*, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* and Book of Mormon selections are available in Farsi. Church materials in Urdu include *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* and a couple of audiovisual materials. Several DVD movies such as *Finding Faith in Christ* and *The Restoration* are available in Tamil in addition to temple recommend instructions, limited priesthood and leadership resources, *Gospel Principles*, and some primary resources. Limited Church material translations for priesthood, relief society, Sunday School, young women, and primary are available in Sinhala.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings have been held in a rented villa. Meetings for members in the military likely occur on base.

Humanitarian and Development Work

No humanitarian or development work has been sponsored by the Church in Qatar. The government issued deportation orders to members of a Christian group for unauthorized charity work among workers in labor camps. These orders were never carried out, however.³⁷⁷

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church is not recognized by the government and therefore cannot publicly provide information concerning locations and times for worship services. Members who relocate to Qatar have had challenges locating the Church. In 2009, the Church made available the bishops' contact information on its meeting-house locator site, which allows interested individuals to inquire about meeting times and locations. Members report that the Church is viewed positively by many of their Qatari neighbors.

³⁷⁷ "Qatar," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127356.htm>

Cultural Issues

Islam and daily life are intimately intertwined and prevent active proselytism. Qataris who wish to join the Church face many cultural hurdles including family and friend disapproval and ostracism. Those who participate in a polygamous relationship must divorce additional spouses and be interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency prior to baptism. Coffee and tea's central role in Qatari cuisine creates barriers between active members and natives.

Cultural similarities between Qataris and Church members, such as strong emphasis on family, a love for children, and high moral values, have resulted in some friendships between the two groups. In accordance with the Muslim day of worship, Church meetings are held on Fridays.

National Outreach

The Church is banned from any proselytism, resulting in the entire population being unreached by missionaries. Only non-Muslims with close associations with members living in Qatar have any outreach to the Church. The high concentration of the population in Doha requires fewer meeting locations and the establishment of wards. Members living in areas distant to the current meetinghouse provide opportunity for the creation of additional congregations.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Converts who join the Church in Qatar are limited to non-Muslims and are mostly Filipinos. Member activity and convert retention in the country of origin most likely reflect member and convert activity in Qatar. Higher activity and convert retention may occur at least in part due to members and converts seeking social interaction in a foreign country.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The demographic complexity of Qatar creates challenges for members to assimilate into the same congregation with differences in language and culture. Hostilities between ethnic groups appear minimal. A rich demography in congregations provides for far-reaching outreach through members' efforts.

Language Issues

The division of the original Doha Ward was likely partially influenced by language differences between the large group of Filipinos and Western members primarily from the United States. Non-Muslim immigrant workers from South Asia are difficult to reach as the Church has few members in these countries, yet many of these individuals likely have some competency in English. Very few members speak Arabic fluently, limiting associations between members and native Qataris or other Arabs.

Leadership

Leadership is developed and well-trained, as indicated by the function of two wards. Native leadership is nonexistent, as most members joined or were raised in the Church in the United States or the Philippines. Western Church leaders help to maintain doctrinal integrity well but may have some difficulty relating with immigrant workers, the only group from eligible for converts to join the Church.

Temple

Qatar is assigned to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Trips to the temple are challenging due to long distance and time. Potential for a future temple in the United Arab Emirates or in the Middle East would eliminate many of the limitations members face to go to the temple.

Comparative Growth

Qatar has experienced accelerated membership growth comparable to the United Arab Emirates. Many nations in the Middle East experience slower growth and a stronger American military member presence. Oman and Kuwait have had a Church presence for likely as long as Qatar, but both nations experience much slower growth than Qatar despite their similarly sized large foreign populations. The degree of religious freedom for LDS members is comparable to Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates.

Some Christian denominations have obtained legal recognition by exceeding 1,500 members. However these denominations have had a presence much longer than the LDS Church. The most recently arrived groups experience few conversions in Qatar and are comparable in membership size to the LDS Church.

Future Prospects

The outlook for continued membership and congregational growth is favorable. The growing economy continues to bring more members to Qatar. However, relocating members continue to experience difficulty finding the Church. Additional congregations may be organized as the Doha 1st Ward may soon exceed the occupancy of its meeting location. Some recognition from the government may soon occur, allowing the Church to publish meeting times and locations locally.

SAUDI ARABIA

Geography

AREA: 2,149,690 square km. Saudi Arabia occupies the majority of the Arabian Peninsula and borders Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait. The climate is typically hot and dry and experiences temperature extremes as desert covers most of the country. Most areas are uninhabited, and fresh surface water is scarce. Mountains line the coastal areas along the Red Sea, whereas plains or hills occupy the rest of the terrain. Sand and dust storms are natural hazards. Environmental issues include desertification, reliance on ocean water desalination due to limited fresh water resources, and oil spills. Saudi Arabia is divided into thirteen administrative provinces.

Peoples

Arab: 90%

Afro-Asian: 10%

The majority of the population is Arab. Nonnationals numbered 5,576,076 in July 2009, constituting 19.5% of the total population. Some estimates suggest that the foreign population may exceed ten million due to undocumented workers. Foreign embassies estimate that there are 1.8 million Indians, 1.5 million Bangladeshis, 1.4 million Filipinos, 1.23 million Pakistanis, one million Egyptians, 600,000 Yemenis, 400,000 Syrians, 400,000 Sri Lankans, 350,000 Nepalese, 250,000 Palestinians, 150,000 Lebanese, 100,000 Eritreans, and 50,000 Americans.³⁷⁸

Population: 26,534,504 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.523% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 3.83 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 72.37 male, 76.42 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic dialects (75%), Tagalog (3%), Urdu (1.5%), Farsi (0.4%), Indian languages (0.4%), Rohingya (0.4%), Korean (0.25%), Chinese languages (0.2%), English (0.2%), Somali (0.15%), French (0.1%), Italian (0.1%), other (18.3%). Reliable recent data on languages spoken by speakers is not available and numbers provided are estimates. Languages with over one million speakers include Arabic dialects (20 million), Indian languages (1.8 million), and Filipino languages (1.4 million).

Literacy: 78.8% (2003)

History

Many ancient civilizations controlled and influenced modern-day Saudi Arabia prior to the advent of Islam in the early seventh century. The Prophet Mohammad first preached in Mecca and Medina, where he claims to have begun receiving revelations. Muslims today revere these cities, which contain some of Islam's holiest shrines. By the mid eight century, Islam quickly expanded from the Arabian Peninsula to as far as the Indus River in the east to Spain and Morocco in the west. Other Islamic nations dominated the region for much of

³⁷⁸ "Saudi Arabia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127357.htm>

the following centuries. Saudi states emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the present-day state of Saudi Arabia was not founded until 1932 following a unification of most the peninsula. Al Saud came to power of the new nation, and his descendants continue to rule today. Oil was discovered in the 1930s, and today Saudi Arabia has the largest proved oil reserves worldwide. Saudi Arabia greatly cooperated with the international community during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait by Allied forces by allowing troops to deploy from Saudi Arabia to liberate Kuwait and accepting Kuwaiti refugees. United States military forces withdrew in 2003 following pressure from the Saudi public. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has struggled to deal with Islamic extremists committing terrorist acts, its arid environment, and rapidly growing population.

Culture

Islam strongly influences everyday living. Cuisine includes cheese, goat, milk, bread, dates, and vegetables. Arabian coffee is the national beverage. Both coffee and tea are frequently and widely consumed. Alcohol and pork products are forbidden by Islam and are not found in Saudi cuisine. The large number of migrant workers has brought a large number of foreign foods and restaurants in recent years. Society is divided between citizens and foreign worker and segregated between men and women. Relations between men and women are supposed to only occur with relatives, and most marriages are arranged by families. Polygamy is legal but not widely practiced. Divorces rates have increased in recent years but are still much lower than Western nations. Smoking rates are lower than some Arab nations with large numbers of foreigners.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$24,000 (2011) [49.9% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.770

Corruption Index: 4.4 (2011)

Saudi Arabia continues to be dependent on foreign workers to continue economic growth and stability due to the limited training and education of many natives. Government has implemented greater training and education programs for youth in order to curb this problem. Oil drives the economy, as Saudi Arabia is the world's largest oil producer. Oil revenues produce 45% of the GDP and 90% of the export earnings. The government has a strong control of the economy. The decline in world oil prices in the late 2000s has slowed economic growth and development projects. As much as 80% of the workforce is foreign. Industry produces 60% of the GDP but employs 21% of the workforce, whereas services account for 36% of the GDP and employ 72% of the workforce. The unemployment rate was approximately 12% for men in 2009. The United States is the primary trade partner. Other important trade partners include China, Japan, and South Korea. Strict laws, a lack of transparency with government spending, and massive oil revenues have invited allegations of corruption. Many allege police corruption.

Faiths

Muslim: 95%

Other: 5%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 1,000,000

Latter-day Saints 800+ ~6

Religion

Although no official percentages are available for religious groups due to government refusal to recognize non-Sunni Muslim groups, 85%–90% of the population is Sunni Muslim. Shi'a Muslims constitute 10%–15%. Christians and other religious groups may make up approximately 5% of the population. Millions of Muslims travel to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimages, including the annual Hajj and Umrah, the latter of which can occur at any time during the year.³⁷⁹

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 2nd

The law does not protect or guarantee religious rights. Government often restricts the rights of citizens and foreigners to assemble and worship. Private worship is allowed for both citizens and foreigners who do not adhere to Sunni Islam. However, those who practice their religious beliefs can be subjected to government harassment. The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (CPVPV) acts as a religious police to ensure the adherence of the population to Islamic law. The CPVPV has confiscated religious materials from non-Muslims and conducted raids on both illegal non-Sunni Muslim religious meetings and private religious meetings. There has been some recent improvement in allowing non-Muslims to possess personal religious literature. The conversion of Muslims and proselytism can result in the death penalty, although there have been no recent instances where this punishment has been enforced.³⁸⁰

Largest Cities

Urban: 82%

Riyadh, Jiddah, Mecca, Medina, Sult,a-nah, Ad Damma-m, At, T,a-'if, Tabu-k, Buraydah, Khami-s Mushayt, Al Hufu-f, Al Mubarraz, Najra-n, Al Jubayl, Abha-, Yanbu' al Bah,r, Al Khubar, 'Ar'ar, Saka-ka-, Ji-za-n, Al Qurayya-t.

Cities in **bold** have no church presence.

All twenty-one cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have no congregation. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the national population lives in the twenty-one largest cities.

LDS History

Church members have lived in Saudi Arabia since as early as the 1960s and 1970s. The size of Church membership resulted in the creation of a stake for the Arabian Peninsula by Elder Boyd K. Packer in 1983.³⁸¹ At the time, all wards in the new stake likely met in Saudi Arabia. During the Persian Gulf War, more than one hundred groups served the needs of LDS military members throughout the Arabian Peninsula. These groups ranged from four to five to 175 attending worship services on Fridays or Sundays.³⁸² Saudi Arabia was assigned to the Europe/Mediterranean Area in 1991³⁸³ and later was transferred to the Europe Central Area in 2000. In the late 2000s, the Arabian Peninsula Stake was renamed the Manama Bahrain Stake.

³⁷⁹ "Saudi Arabia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127357.htm>

³⁸⁰ "Saudi Arabia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127357.htm>

³⁸¹ Chatterly, Matt. "Middle East stake: 10 cities in 10 days," LDS Church News, 7 March 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56729/Middle-East-stake-10-cities-in-10-days.html>

³⁸² Orden, Dell Van; Avant, Gerry; Lloyd, Scott R.; Sheffield, Sheridan R.; Dockstader, Julie A. "LDS groups serve members in Gulf region," LDS Church News, 26 January 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21558/LDS-groups-serve-members-in-Gulf-region.html>

³⁸³ Cannon, Mike. "Diversity in land, people and climate," LDS Church News, 7 December 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com>

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 800+ (2008 estimate)

The majority of Church membership in the Arabian Peninsula Stake resided in Saudi Arabia until recently. Membership in the Arabian Peninsula Stake stood at 900 in 2004. By early 2009, membership increased to 1,950.³⁸⁴ In the past two decades, foreign members have lived in most of the largest cities. Membership is primary from North America, Europe, and the Philippines.

Congregational Growth

Units: ~6 (2009 estimate)

By 2009, sixteen units functioned under the Manama Bahrain Stake: five in the United Arab Emirates, two in Qatar, and one in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman. There was an increase of four congregations in 2008. As many as six congregations may meet in Saudi Arabia in private, undisclosed locations. In 2011, units in Saudi Arabia were reassigned to the newly organized Manama Bahrain District.

Activity and Retention

The Church is likely aware of only a portion of inactive membership. Some members may live Church teachings but may be unaware of meeting locations or concerned about possible harassment from government officials. Activity rates appear to be around 75% for known nominal membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English, Bengali, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi, Korean, Telugu, Tagalog, Tamil, Urdu.

All LDS scriptures are available in Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Tagalog. Book of Mormon translations have been completed for Hindi, Telugu, and Urdu; only Book of Mormon selections are available in Bengali and Farsi. Most Church materials are available in Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Tagalog, whereas Hindi, Telugu, Urdu, and Farsi have more limited Church materials. *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Farsi and Somali. *Gospel Principles*, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, and the Articles of Faith are translated into Bengali. The only Church materials in Malayalam are *Gospel Fundamentals* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*. The *Liahona* annually has twelve issues in Tagalog, four in Telugu, three issues in Urdu, and one issue in Hindi.

Meetinghouses

Congregations meet in private locations, most of which likely in compounds for foreigners.

Health and Safety

Church members must be very cautious to respect the law and avoid any proselytizing activities.

Humanitarian and Development Work

No church-sponsored humanitarian or development work occurs in Saudi Arabia.

com/articles/21327/Diversity-in-land-people-and-climate.html

³⁸⁴ Chatterly, Matt. "Growth, friendship serve as Middle East 'Miracles,'" LDS Church News, 7 March 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56735/Growth-friendship-serve-as-Middle-East-miracles.html>

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church faces the challenge of both meeting the needs of its membership living in Saudi Arabia and at the same time keeping and sustaining the law. Strict laws and intolerance of non-Sunni Muslim religious meetings limit the Church's activities. The degree of religious freedom is so low that the Church does not publish information about the locations, names, and times of congregations. Since 2009, the Church has provided through the meetinghouse locator website a contact telephone number for members who relocate to Saudi Arabia from which local contact information can be obtained.

Cultural Issues

Private worship meetings are held in accordance with the day of worship for Muslims on Fridays. The national pride and wide consumption of Arabian coffee pose a challenge for Church members to not offend Saudis offering this beverage. The cosmopolitan atmosphere in larger cities may allow for greater receptivity among non-Muslim groups if bans barring any proselytism are removed. Outreach among the Arab majority would be very challenging even without nonproselytism laws due to the strong influence of Islam on everyday living.

National Outreach

The entire population remains unreached by Church mission efforts due to laws forbidding proselytism and intolerance towards minority religious groups.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Due to the Church's sensitive nature, very few, if any, converts have joined the Church. Any converts are likely expatriate foreign Christians rather than native Saudis. Activity rates most likely resemble areas from which members relocated.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The greatest issue the Church currently faces in integrating ethnic groups is with Westerners and Filipinos. These challenges are primarily socio-economic and language based. Members report positive relations between Latter-day Saints from these two groups.

Language Issues

The high diversity in language among the foreign population complicates meeting language needs for both members and investigators. However a large number of foreigners likely speak English proficiently as a second language and can be integrated into congregations where native English speakers are in the majority and also staff most of the leadership. Receiving scriptures and Church materials for members and sincere investigators is a major challenge, as proselytism is illegal.

Leadership

The amount of Church leadership and level of member activity is comparable to most areas in the United States. The strength and resilience of local membership is manifest by the continued functioning of stake for the Arabian Peninsula for nearly thirty years with most active members and leaders coming from Saudi Arabia.

Temple

Saudi Arabia is assigned to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Temple trips likely occur regularly through the Manama Bahrain Stake, but the 3,000 mile journey requires large sacrifice in time and money. A temple built in nearby United Arab Emirates would reduce challenges faced by members to attend the temple regularly.

Comparative Growth

Saudi Arabia ranks among nations with least degree of religious freedom for the Church. Other nations with comparable restrictions include Iran and Syria. Even China and Egypt offer considerably more freedom of worship and assembly and tolerate some member-missionary outreach. The size of Church membership and number of congregations in Saudi Arabia has surpassed all other Middle Eastern Nations for several decades. However, these growth indicators have seen little increases over the past decade, whereas growth in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar has seen large increases in these indicators. This appears to be due to foreign members relocating to these nations at a faster rate than to Saudi Arabia. Some Middle Eastern nations have had a Church presence for many decades but have not seen multiple congregations organized like Saudi Arabia, including Egypt, Kuwait, and Bahrain. There does not appear to be any native membership base in Saudi Arabia whereas Jordan and Israel have some congregations with native members outnumbering foreigners and leading congregations.

Christians view Saudi Arabia as the nation where religious freedom is most restricted. Christian groups do not report specifics concerning their activities, membership or congregations.

Future Prospects

Severely restricted religious freedom, the transient foreign population, and some cultural practices and customs produce challenging conditions for future growth. The presence of congregations for foreign expatriate LDS members does not appear to have any bearing on the development of native Saudi membership, which for the medium-term future appears unattainable. The Saudi government may limit foreign workers in order to reduce unemployment among natives, which could reduce the number of LDS members. Potential does exist for multiple congregations in the largest cities, particularly for Filipinos, due to challenges on holding private worship meetings and language issues.

SUDAN

Geography

AREA: 2,505,813 square km. Located in northeastern Africa, Sudan borders Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, Egypt, and the Red Sea. The Nile River and its tributaries enter the country from Ethiopia and South Sudan and flow north through Egypt. Most of the country is arid or semi-arid, with semi-tropical areas to the south and lower rainfall amounts the further one travels north. Plains cover most areas. A few mountains may be found in the south and by the Red Sea. Dust storms and drought are natural hazards. Environmental issues include desertification, drought, water scarcity, hunting, and soil erosion. Sudan is divided into fifteen administrative states. Southern Sudan retained autonomy as a result of the civil war and became a separate nation in July 2011 after voting for independence in early 2011. Abyei State is controlled by Sudan but claimed by South Sudan; a referendum is expected to be held to determine its future status.

Peoples

Black: 52%

Arab: 39%

Beja: 6%

Foreigners: 2%

Other: 1%

*above statistics reflect Sudanese demographics prior to the independence of South Sudan

Blacks populate southern areas, whereas Arabs reside in central and northern areas. Beja live in the east near Eritrea.

Population: 34,206,710 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.884% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.17 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 60.58 male, 64.67 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic (41%), Bedawiyet (3%), Fur (1%), Nobiin (1%), other or unknown (54%). Arabic and English are the two official languages of Sudan. As many as 50 languages may be spoken in Sudan. Languages with over half a million speakers include Arabic (15 million), Bedawiyet (951,000), and Fur (500,000).

Literacy: 61.1% (2003—includes South Sudan)

History

Civilizations have inhabited and flourished in present-day Sudan for millennia. Sudan was known as Nubia or Cush and served as the location of civilizations with close ties to the Egyptians. Isaiah the Prophet in the Old Testament referred to Cush as one of the locations in which scattered Israel would be gathered from. Christianity and later Islam spread to Sudan, with Islam eventually claiming most Sudanese's religion. Several kingdoms and principalities governed the area for centuries until Egypt conquered the area and unified

northern Sudan. The United Kingdom annexed Sudan in the late nineteenth century and maintained rule until 1956 when independence was granted.³⁸⁵

As independence was granted to Sudan, tensions between the north and south were exacerbated and resulted in civil war. The Sudanese government desired to institute an Islamic form of government and Shari'a law, which the south opposed. Civil war continued for much of the rest of the century and officially ended in 2005. South Sudan became independent in 2011. The Sudanese government has proven ineffective in controlling its peripheries, resulting in separatist movements that have spilled over into neighboring nations. Among the most severe problems with civil unrest are notably in the Darfur region, where violence and instability have spilled over into Chad and the Central African Republic. Serious human rights violations and accusations including genocide of non-Arab peoples in Darfur have severely hurt Sudan's reputation in the international community and led to economic sanctions. Estimates for the number of deaths resulting from the civil wars and current conflicts in the Darfur region number in the millions, with millions more displaced from Sudan or displaced to Sudan from neighboring African countries. The current Sudanese government has done little to address problems with slavery other human rights violations. Political instability continues in several border regions of Sudan today such as the Eastern Front along the Eritrean border, Darfur, Abyei, South Kurdufan, and the Blue Nile.

Culture

Islam is the primary influence on society as most the population is Muslim and the government draws from Shari'a law for its legislation. Tribalism occurs in some peripheral states, such as the Darfur and southern and eastern regions. Nearly constant warfare and insurrections in numerous administrative states have characterized daily life for the past half century. Archaeological sites from ancient empires abound along the Nile River. Cuisine shares many similarities with the Arab world and Ethiopia. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are among the lowest worldwide.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$3,000 (2011) [6.24% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.408

Corruption Index: 1.6 (2011)

Oil profits have driven economic growth over the past decade, as oil exports began in 1999. Although oil exploitation has proved important for economic growth, 80% of Sudanese are employed in agriculture. Sudan has one of the largest public debts as a percentage of annual GDP in the world. Recent reforms in currency and economy have occurred in order to attract greater foreign investment and spur greater, long term economic growth. Hydroelectric power generated from dams on the Nile River provides much of the needed electricity for the country. Additional natural resources include small reserves of valuable and industrial metals and minerals. Agriculture, industry, and services each roughly account for a third of the GDP. Oil, cotton, clothing, cement, cooking oils, sugar, soap, and shoes are major industries. Common crops include cotton, peanuts, grains, sugarcane, cassava, fruit, and sesame. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of exports and 22% of imports are trafficked with China. Other primary trade partners include Japan, India, and Indonesia.

Corruption is perceived at one of the highest rates worldwide and is pervasive and the primary obstacle to economic growth. There has been little done to address corruption issues.

³⁸⁵ "Background Note: Sudan," Bureau of African Affairs, 8 April 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5424.htm>

Faiths

Muslim: 60%

Islam or Christianity practiced with indigenous beliefs: 25%

Christian: 5%

Indigenous beliefs: 10%

*above statistics reflect Sudanese demographics prior to the independence of South Sudan

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 2,000,000

Seventh Day Adventists 932 17

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,695 38

Latter-day Saints less than 10

Religion

Religion is highly correlated with ethnicity, as nearly all Arabs are Sunni Muslims. Many ethnic groups in northern areas are traditionally Muslim, whereas ethnic groups in other regions of the country tend to follow a mixture of indigenous religions and Christianity or Islam. Christians are marginalized by the government and society and concentrated in the Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan and in Khartoum. Major Christian groups include the Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church. There are long-established communities of Coptic Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Christians in Khartoum and northern cities.³⁸⁶

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 12th

The government protects religious freedom, but Islam is the source for legislation and government policy. In practice, religious freedom is limited for non-Muslims. Conversion from Islam to another religion may be punishable by imprisonment or death, but there have been no instances of the government carrying out a death sentence for conversion from Islam. Muslims converting to a different religion have been intimidated by government authorities, persecuted, and pressured to recant their conversion and at times encouraged to leave the country. Defaming Islam and blasphemy are punishable crimes. The government regulates the operation of mosques and imams. Some laws favor Muslims over Christians, such as reduced working hours for Muslims during Ramadan but no similar legislation providing reduced working hours for Christians during Christian holidays. Religious groups are required to register with the government as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but this requirement was not enforced. Registration is required to receive tax-exempt status and receive duty-free imports of religious items and furniture for meetinghouses. To construct a meetinghouse, a religious group must obtain a permit from the local planning office, the state ministry of construction and planning, and the national Ministry of Guidance and Social Endowments. The government delays and restricts the number of visas for foreign religious workers and generally only grants visas to Christian clergy to support local congregations and not for Christian missionary activity. The government does not permit missionaries to proselyte in Sudan, but missionaries may perform humanitarian work and promote Christian-Muslim cooperation. All public and private schools must provide Islamic education from preschool to the

³⁸⁶ "Sudan," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148722.htm>

second year of university classes. Friday is designed as the day of prayer in accordance with the traditional Islamic workweek, and Christians generally worship on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sunday evening.³⁸⁷

Major Cities

Urban: 40%

Omdurman, Khartoum, Khartoum North, Nyala, Port Sudan, El Obeid, Kassala, Medani, Gedaref, El Fasher, Kosti, El Duein, Ad-Damazin, El Geneina, Rabak, Sennar, Atbarah.

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

None of the seventeen cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Twenty-four percent (4%) of the national population resides in the seventeen most populous cities.

LDS History

The first Sudanese Latter-day Saints joined the Church in Europe, the United States, and Australia. Nearly all LDS Sudanese converts have originated from South Sudan. A Canadian Latter-day Saint living in Khartoum introduced the Church to several Sudanese acquaintances who later moved to Juba, South Sudan and joined the Church in 2010. Sudan has been assigned to the Africa Southeast Area since 1998 and the Uganda Kampala Mission since late 2008 or early 2009. Although there is an LDS presence in South Sudan at present, there is no LDS presence in Sudan at present.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 10 (2012)

In 2010, the Church reported no membership totals for Sudan. There appear to be only a few Latter-day Saints in Sudan that either joined the Church abroad or are foreigners temporarily living in Khartoum.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 Groups: 0 (2012)

There are no known LDS congregations. Any congregations would operate under the Uganda Kampala Mission Branch.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English.

All LDS scriptures and most Church materials are available in Arabic.

Health and Safety

Political instability, war, and ethno-religious conflicts are major safety concerns. Millions have perished over the past few decades as a result of civil war and ethnic hostilities.

Humanitarian and Development Work

No LDS humanitarian or development work has occurred in northern Sudan as of early 2013.

³⁸⁷ "Sudan," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148722.htm>

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Government restrictions prohibit the LDS Church from sending full-time missionaries to proselyte. Any prospective missionary activity may only occur by local members among Christians and must be in harmony with local laws. Persecution of Christians by the Muslim majority creates an unfavorable environment for LDS missionary activity. Opportunities for LDS humanitarian and development work exist.

Cultural Issues

Friction between Muslims and Christians threatens the integrity of the country and will continue to delay any LDS Church establishment. Polygamy is widespread nationwide and encouraged. Those desiring to join the Church must divorce polygamous spouses before baptism. Islamic law restricts proselytism and Muslims who convert to Christianity are often harassed and discriminated against. The strong ethno-religious ties of Arabs and Islam presents a nearly insurmountable obstacle for LDS proselytism. There are no LDS missionary approaches tailored to teach those with a Muslim background. Literacy rates are low and pose challenges for establishing self-sufficient local leadership if an LDS Church presence is established one day. Overall non-Arab ethnic groups are receptive to Christian proselytism. Low smoking and drinking rates complement LDS teachings.

National Outreach

The entire population is completely unreached by the LDS Church. The lack of any LDS mission outreach in Sudan results from persistent civil war and political instability in peripheral states, government and societal restrictions on religious freedom, persecution of Christians, few LDS foreigners living in the country, and few LDS members currently residing in government-controlled areas.

South Sudanese converts will likely play a significant role in any prospective LDS outreach in Sudan as several converts previously lived in Khartoum and likely continue to maintain contact with any family or friends residing in the north. Initial LDS outreach will most likely commence near the South Sudanese border or in Khartoum if permitted one day.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Few, if any, Sudanese natives to the north have joined the LDS Church abroad. There have been no known LDS convert baptisms to have occurred in Sudan.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Integration issues or ethnic conflicts could arise from Arabs and blacks meeting in the same congregation. Christians are concentrated among blacks, which may lead to LDS congregations comprising almost entirely of blacks if an LDS presence were established, due to prohibitions on proselytizing Arabs.

Language Issues

Arabic and English are widely spoken first or second languages and reduce the need for the translation of LDS materials into local languages at present. There are no realistic prospects of local languages indigenous to Sudan to receive translations of LDS materials, as there are few or no Latter-day Saints who speak these

languages and no feasible method of reaching populations who speak these languages due to government restrictions on proselytizing.

Leadership

Potential church leadership may depend on South Sudanese and foreigners for many years due to a lack of members. Humanitarian missionaries may play an important mentoring and administrative role if assigned and LDS worship services are held.

Temple

Sudan is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district.

Comparative Growth

Sudan remains one of a few African nations with sizeable Christian minorities without an LDS Church presence; other such nations include Chad and Burkina Faso. Eritrea, Somalia, the Maghreb countries, and Sudan rank among the least tolerant of foreign religious groups and exhibit the poorest religious freedom records in Africa.

Most missionary-minded Christian groups operate in Sudan among non-Arabs and have reported strong growth in recent years. The number of Seventh Day Adventists in Sudan was slightly higher than the number of Adventists in South Sudan in 2010, notwithstanding government restrictions in the north. Adventists and other Christian groups conduct missionary activity through local members, allowing for growth to occur despite government restrictions, whereas Latter-day Saints rely on full-time missionaries and have no prospects of establishing an official presence for the foreseeable future.

Future Prospects

The outlook for an official LDS Church establishment in Sudan is poor due to severe government restrictions on religious freedom, few members in the country, persecution of Christians, and proselytism bans for foreign missionaries. South Sudanese Latter-day Saints offer meaningful prospects for future outreach if religious freedom conditions improve one day. Humanitarian work is greatly needed and may establish a positive relationship with the government. Limited LDS humanitarian and development resources for the region and security concerns will likely delay the commencement of any humanitarian work for many years to come.

SYRIA

Geography

AREA: 438,317 square km. Located in the Middle East, Syria borders Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Turkey, and the Mediterranean Sea. Desert plains occupy north and east areas, whereas hilly terrain and low mountains occupy central and western areas. A narrow coastal plain is adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea. Semi-arid conditions occur in most areas. The Euphrates River flows through the east, entering Syria from Turkey and exiting into Iraq. Dust storms and sandstorms are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, water pollution, and water scarcity. Israel annexed a portion of the Golan Heights in 1967 and maintained forty-one settlements in 2010, although sovereignty of the area is disputed. Syria is divided into fourteen administrative provinces.

Peoples

Arab: 90.3%

Other: 9.7%

The population is predominately Arab. Kurds and Armenians comprise the largest minority ethnic groups. There are approximately 1 to 1.5 million Iraqi refugees and half a million Palestinian refugees.

Population: 22,503,746 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: -0.797% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.85 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 72.53 male, 77.45 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic dialects (88%), Kurdish (7%), Armenian (2.5%), other (2.5%). Arabic is the official language. Languages spoken by over one million speakers include Arabic dialects (19.5 million) and Kurdish (1.6 million).

Literacy: 79.6% (2004)

History

Some of the oldest known civilizations thrived in present-day Syria and achieved advanced technological and developed cultural legacies that have been unearthed by modern archaeologists. The Akkadian Empire of Sargon the Great expanded into Syria around 2500 BC, and many large cities were founded. One of the most populous cities of the ancient world, Ebla, supported an estimated 260,000 inhabitants at this time. Syria's present-day capital Damascus was founded at about 2500 BC and is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities. Nearly a dozen ancient civilizations controlled Syria at one time or another between the second millennium BC and the seventh century AD, including Canaanites, Phoenicians, Arameans, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Nabateans, and Byzantines. Saul of Tarsus, who later became the apostle Paul, received his vision of Christ on the road to Damascus, as recorded the New Testament book of Acts of the Apostles. Islam spread to Syria in 636. The Omayyad Empire based its capital in Damascus and at its peak stretched from Spain to India from 661 to 750. The Mongols invaded in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and devastated Damascus. In 1517, the Ottomans captured Damascus and ruled Syria until 1920 when Syria

attained a brief independence lasting only a few months before French forces overran the country. Syria was placed under French mandate by the League of Nations the same year. The Vichy Government administered Syria following the fall of France to Nazi Germany in 1940. French forces evacuated in 1946, and a republican government formed during the mandate declared independence. Severe political instability persisted from 1946 to the late 1960s as successive military coups took control. In 1958, a joint Syria-Egypt state known as the United Arab Republic emerged, but Syria seceded from the union in 1961 following another military coup. In 1963, the Arab Socialist Resurrection Party (Ba'ath Party) engineered a comprehensive takeover of all executive and legislative government authority. A similar takeover carried out by army officers occurred in 1966 in an effort to rectify Ba'ath Party principles in the government. The socialist government was weakened by the frustration of plans to unify with Iraq and Egypt, as well as war with Israel, which culminated in another military coup in 1970 under Hafiz al-Assad. Assad enacted several legislative and political reforms that stabilized the country. The Islamist fundamentalist political party, the Muslim Brotherhood, attempted to seize control of the government in a failed uprising in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Assad annihilated rebel forces in 1982, leveling portions of the opposition stronghold of Hama with heavy artillery fire that killed and wounded thousands. Syria improved its relations with the West and other Arab states by participating in the United States-led military offensive against Iraq in 1990 and engaging in international conferences and peace talks. Assad died in 2000 and was succeeded by his son Bashar Al-Assad. Relations with the United States soured in the 2000s as Syria opposed the Iraq War and refused to comply with the United States' and United Nations' demands for Syria to cease its support of terrorist organizations, military interference in Lebanon, and alleged development of weapons of mass destruction. Consequently Syria was subject to economic sanctions that severely restricted trade with the United States. There has been some improvement and increased dialogue in recent years between Syria and the international community, but relations with most nations remain poor, and border disputes with Lebanon are ongoing.³⁸⁸ Since early 2011, the Arab Spring protests culminated in significant internal instability as rebel forces have called for the toppling of the Assad regime. An uprising war began in March 2011 and continues as of early 2013, with the rebels gaining control of large areas of the country. An estimated 60,000 people had been killed in the uprising as of March 2013, and approximately one million Syrian refugees have fled to neighboring countries.

Culture

Syria has historically been a major influence on the development of Arab culture and literature. Today, Islam, Arab culture, and the family are the primary influences on society. The coexistence of Muslim, Christians, and other religious groups has been largely peaceful for several centuries. Close physical contact is commonplace, and gender segregation occurs in most public areas. Film, literature, poetry, and art are proud Syrian traditions. A fusion of Mediterranean and Arab foods comprise local cuisine, which includes vegetables, hummus, bread, cheese, coffee, yogurt, lamb, and chicken. As a result of past French rule, European influence is visible in the largest cities.³⁸⁹ Cigarette consumption rates are comparable to the worldwide average smoking rate, whereas alcohol consumption rates are well below world averages. Polygamy is legal.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$5,100 (2011) [10.6% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.632

Corruption Index: 2.6 (2011)

The government heavily regulates the economy. Recent economic reforms have been enacted, including the establishment of the Damascus Stock Exchange, the opening of private banks, and the reduction of interest rates in the late 2000s. Barriers to economic growth include high unemployment, declining oil production,

³⁸⁸ "Background Note: Syria," Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 8 September 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3580.htm>

³⁸⁹ "Syria," Countries and Their Cultures," retrieved 28 February 2011. <http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Syria.html>

water scarcity, and a rapidly growing population. Natural resources include petroleum, phosphates, metallic minerals and ores, rock salt, marble, gypsum, and hydropower. Services employ two-thirds of the labor force and generate over half of the GDP, whereas industry employs 16% of the labor force and generates 27% of the GDP. Petroleum, clothing, food processing, mining, and cement are major industries. Agriculture employs 17% of the labor force and generates 18% of the GDP. Common crops include grains, cotton, lentils, olives, and sugar beets. Beef, mutton, eggs, milk, and poultry are additional agricultural products. Primary trade partners include Iraq, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia.

Corruption is perceived as widespread. Human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and domestic servitude is a major concern involving women and children from Iraq, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. There have been no reported law enforcement efforts to protect victims from these inhumane practices. Syria is a transshipment point for cocaine, hashish, and opiates destined for Europe and neighboring nations. Syria is vulnerable to money laundering as anti-money laundering legislation remains undeveloped.

Faiths

Muslim: 90%

Christian: 10%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Greek Orthodox 1,100,000

Syriac Orthodox 680,000

Catholic 368,000

Jehovah's Witnesses less than 500

Seventh Day Adventists 587 7 (includes Jordan and Lebanon)

Latter-day Saints less than 10 1?

Religion

Sunni Muslims account for 74% of the population, whereas other Muslim groups constitute 13% of the population. Approximately 10% of Syrians are Christians, although due to emigration the percentage of Christians may have fallen to 8%. The Greek Orthodox Church is the largest Christian denomination. Other prominent Christian churches include the Syriac Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, and Catholic Churches. Christians are concentrated in the largest cities and the Hasaka governorate. There are approximately 100,000 Yezidis and 100 Jews.³⁹⁰

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 11th

The constitution protects religious freedom, but local laws and government policies restrict this right. There is no state religion but the constitution mandates that the president must be a Muslim and that Islamic law is the source of legislation. All citizens must state their religious affiliation as Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, as such documentation was required for birth certificates, marriages, and religious pilgrimages. A few major Muslim and Christian holidays are recognized national holidays. The government monitors all religious groups and discourages proselytism out of fears that it could disrupt public order. Missionaries accused of proselytizing may be prosecuted for threatening relations between religious groups and receive prison sentences from five

³⁹⁰ "Syria," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148845.htm>

years to life, although most sentences are usually reduced to one to two years. The government has demonstrated favoritism to Shi'a Islam and has permitted Shi'a missionaries to proselyte and convert Sunni Muslims. Several Islamic sects are deemed illegal by the government, such as the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafist movement. Religious groups must register with the government and receive permits to hold meetings that are not worship services. The government permitted most groups to operate while they awaited registration approval, which can be a complicated and arduous process. Registered religious groups and clergy receive tax benefits and other economic benefits, such as free utilities. Civil law varies between Muslims and Christians on several issues regarding inheritance and marriage. There are no specific laws that prohibit proselytism or the distribution of religious literature. Christian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are permitted to operate without registering with the government as an appendage of the Catholic or Orthodox Churches. Religious instruction in public schools is required and provided on Christianity and Islam for Christian and Muslim students. Government abuses of religious freedom have been most severe with Muslims participating in or identifying with Muslim fundamentalist sects. The government outlaws Jehovah's Witnesses. Societal abuse of religious freedom is limited to minor tensions between religious groups that are primarily socio-economically motivated. Conversion is extremely unusual, technically illegal, and often forces converts to move away from their native communities.³⁹¹

Largest Cities

Urban: 54%

Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, Latakia, Hama, Ar-Rakka, Deir ez-Zor, Hasakeh, Al-Qa-mishli, Al-Yarmu-k, As-Si-dah Zaynab, Tartous, Jarama-nah, Duma.

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

One of the fourteen cities with over 100,000 inhabitants has an LDS congregation. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the national population resides in the fourteen most populous cities.

LDS History

LDS missionary efforts in the Middle East commenced in Syria in the late nineteenth century among Armenian Christian communities under the Turkish Mission. A branch established in Aleppo became one of the largest branches in the Turkish Mission, resulting in the relocation of mission headquarters to Aleppo from 1907 to 1909. The Turkish Mission was closed in 1909 due to political instability and reopened in 1921. When the mission reopened, missionaries alleviated the dire circumstances of the few remaining members that weathered the war. Many members died or left the country during this period. The mission president coordinated with French government officials to relocate Armenian members in Aintab, Turkey to Aleppo in 1921. The mission was renamed the Armenian Mission in 1924 and closed in 1929 following the death of the mission president. The mission reopened in 1933 as the Palestine-Syrian Mission, was closed in 1939, and reopened again in 1947. The mission was renamed the Near East Mission in 1950 and was permanently closed in 1951. Between the mid-twentieth century and 1997, expatriate members periodically held LDS services in Syria until a permanent branch was established.³⁹² Syria was assigned to the Europe Central Area until 2008 when it was assigned to the newly created Middle East/Africa North Area.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 10 (2012)

³⁹¹ "Syria," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148845.htm>

³⁹² "Syria," Global Mormonism Project—BYU, retrieved 25 February 2011. http://globalmormonism.byu.edu/?page_id=83

Most Latter-day Saints known to reside in Syria at present are expatriate members temporarily living in the country. There are a few native Syrian members.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 (2012)

The Damascus Branch was organized in 1997 for expatriates living in the country.³⁹³ The branch either pertained to the Amman Jordan District or reported directly to the area presidency prior to its closure at the onset of the Syrian Civil War in 2011.

Activity and Retention

Member reports indicate that there are likely fewer than ten active members. Syrian members are encouraged to not regularly attend church services due to security concerns.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, Armenian (East), Armenian (West), English.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Arabic and Armenian (East). The *Liahona* magazine has four issues in Armenian (East) a year. The *Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, Book of Mormon selections, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are translated in Armenian (West).

Meetinghouses

LDS meetings likely occur in a member's home or in a rented space.

Humanitarian and Development Work

LDS humanitarian and development work as occurred at Damascus University and has included neonatal resuscitation training, hygiene kits for cancer patients, medications, and a career workshop.³⁹⁴

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

It is unclear whether the LDS Church is officially registered with the government, but Latter-day Saints have performed humanitarian and development projects for several years and likely do so under the Catholic or Orthodox Churches as a Christian NGO. Association with Damascus University on all LDS service projects to date may indicate that LDS humanitarian and development work fully depends on the university rather than a traditional Christian church. Full-time senior missionary couples have served regularly in Syria as humanitarian workers. Strict proselytism bans prohibit any LDS missionary activity. LDS worship services occur in private for the benefit of expatriate foreigners living in Syria.

Cultural Issues

Conversion from one religion to another is extremely rare, especially for Muslims converting to Christianity. Syrian religious communities are tight-knit and unaccommodating of change. Prospective Latter-day Saint

³⁹³ "Syria," Global Mormonism Project—BYU, retrieved 25 February 2011. http://globalmormonism.byu.edu/?page_id=83

³⁹⁴ "Projects—Syria," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 25 February 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-252,00.html>

converts would most likely face intense persecution from family and their respective communities, which may require relocation to another area in the country or abroad. The importance of the family unit in society complements LDS teachings, but the strong connection of family and religion will likely pose major challenges for prospective LDS missionary activity. Widespread coffee consumption opposes LDS teachings.

National Outreach

With the exception of close associates of Latter-day Saints living in the country, the entire population is unreached by the LDS Church. LDS mission outreach performed in Damascus, the only city where an LDS congregation has recently operated, could reach up to 8% of the national population if proselytism is permitted one day. Political instability for much of the twentieth century, the emigration of Armenian Latter-day Saint converts following the closure of the Near East Mission, and government restrictions on religious freedom have prevented a strong LDS Church establishment today. Future mission outreach will most likely concentrate on Christians accessible in the largest cities. Maintaining a church presence in Damascus will be essential toward establishing any long-term presence among the indigenous population.

Internet outreach may be a useful means to provide opportunity for more of the population to become aware of the Church and its teachings. Arabic-language LDS websites created by church members have facilitated the conversion of Arab Muslims in other nations in the Middle East. Humanitarian and development work offer positive public relations building opportunities within the scope of the law.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Intense societal opposition to conversion and government restrictions on religious freedom require a high degree of dedication and faith from Syrians who desire to join the LDS Church. Consequently, prospective Latter-day Saint converts will likely exhibit strong devotion to the Church but may struggle coping with the societal backlash of their conversions and be unable to attend church regularly. Member activity rates among nonnatives are likely representative of their countries of origin or perhaps slightly lower due to counsel against regular church attendance.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Arab-Syrians, Palestinians, and Iraqis share many cultural and linguistic similarities, resulting in the few potential ethnic integration issues if Latter-day Saint members from each of these groups attended the same congregations. Integration of Kurds and Armenians into predominantly Arab congregations presents greater challenges due to differing cultural and religious backgrounds. The Church may experience greater success among Kurds and Armenians than among the Arab majority, as these groups have been more receptive to missionary-oriented Christian groups in recent years than Arabs. Latter-day Saint demographics are representative of national demographics as a result of higher receptivity among minority groups; this may create long-term challenges reaching the Arab majority.

Language Issues

Because expatriate members comprise the bulk of church membership, services are held in English. The Syrian dialect of Arabic features many similarities with standard Arabic, and so there is no need for the translation of LDS materials into Syrian Arabic. There are no LDS scriptures or materials translated into Kurdish. LDS materials available in both Armenian dialects provide opportunities for outreach among Armenian communities if proselytism is permitted one day.

Missionary Service

No Syrian Latter-day Saints are known to have served a full-time mission. With the exception of senior missionary couples on humanitarian assignment, no full-time missionaries have been assigned to Syria since the mid-twentieth century.

Leadership

Nonnative members have staffed all local church leadership. There are no known native members capable of serving in leadership positions.

Temple

Syria is likely assigned to the London England Temple district. Native members are generally unable to attend the temple due to time constraints, travel expenses, and visa issues.

Comparative Growth

The presence of the LDS Church in Syria is among the most limited in the Middle East despite the operation of the Damascus Branch for a decade and a half. Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon are the only Arab nations that have had multiple Latter-day Saint converts in recent years and only Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine (West Bank) have a small established community of native Latter-day Saints. The Arab Gulf states such as the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have larger LDS membership, notwithstanding their predominately Arab-Muslim populations, due to the large expatriate presence in the largest cities. More LDS humanitarian and development projects have been conducted in Syria than in most other Arab nations.

Mission-focused Christian groups report stagnant or declining membership and congregational growth as many Christians have emigrated and the government bans all forms of proselytism. Jehovah's Witnesses report government surveillance and persecution.

Future Prospects

The outlook for the future LDS Church growth in Syria is poor due to political instability, strong cultural-religious ties, government restrictions, and the lack of a Syrian Latter-day Saint community. Ongoing LDS humanitarian work and the continued operation of the Damascus Branch notwithstanding, small national membership are positive developments. Maintaining the current status of the Church in Syria is warranted to prepare for a time when conditions may become more favorable for LDS missionary outreach.

TUNISIA

Geography

AREA: 163,610 square km. Tunisia is the smallest country in North Africa and borders Libya, Algeria, and the Mediterranean Sea. Northern areas consist of mountains, whereas plains cover central and southern areas. Temperate climate subject to rainy, mild winters and hot, dry summers occurs in the north, whereas hot, arid conditions persist year round in the south. Environmental issues include proper hazardous waste disposal, limited fresh water, desertification, deforestation, soil erosion, and overgrazing. Tunisia is divided into twenty-four administrative governorates.

Peoples

Arab: 98%

European: 1%

Jewish/other: 1%

Population: 10,732,900 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.964% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.02 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 73.2 male, 77.42 female (2012)

Languages: Tunisian spoken Arabic (99%), other (1%). Standard Arabic is the official language and only language with over one million speakers (10.5 million). Shilha is the most commonly spoken minority language belonging to the Berber language family with 26,000 speakers.

Literacy: 74.3% (2004)

History

The Phoenicians founded Carthage in present-day Tunisia along with several other North African settlements in the eighth century BC. The Carthaginians and Romans vied for control of the Mediterranean until the defeat of Carthage in 146 BC. The Roman empire maintained control of Tunisia until the fifth century AD when European tribes invaded. Arabs conquered North Africa in the seventh century, significantly changed the ethnic composition of the population from immigrating Middle Eastern and Anatolian peoples, and introduced Islam. By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Spanish Jews and Muslims resettled in Tunisia to escape persecution in Spain during the Spanish Inquisition, and the Arabs established a center of culture and education in Tunis. Tunisia came under rule of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century and became a French protectorate between 1881 and 1956. Independence from France occurred in 1956, and today, Tunisia maintains strong cultural, political, and economic relations with France.³⁹⁵ In early 2011, the government was overthrown through mass protests calling for improved economic, political, and living conditions.

³⁹⁵ "Background Note: Tunisia," Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 13 October 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5439.htm>

Culture

Islam heavily influences daily life, social attitudes, and local culture. Various regional ancient, medieval, and contemporary civilizations have affected the evolution of Tunisian culture, including Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Arabs, Turks, Spanish, and French, all of whom have left their legacy behind in ruins and historical sites. Theater, art, cinema, education, festivals, and architecture are all proud national traditions. Mediterranean and Arab foods and dishes are common and are particularly noted for their use of olives, spices, couscous, and eggs.³⁹⁶ Tunisia is one of the most progressive Arab states and ranks among Muslim countries with the lowest fertility rates. Unlike many Arab nations, Tunisia has outlawed the practice of polygamy. Cigarette consumption rates are among the highest in the Muslim world, whereas alcohol consumption rates are extremely low.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$9,500 (2011) [19.8% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.698

Corruption Index: 3.8 (2011)

With one of the most developed economies in North Africa, Tunisia has a diversified economy controlled heavily by the government. Economic growth has declined in recent years due to declining demand for Tunisian goods abroad as a result of the global financial crisis. Progress made by the government in recent years includes simplifying the tax structure, increasing privatization, and reducing debt. Unemployment, underemployment, and privatizing industry are challenges for future economic growth. Services employ half the labor force and generate 54% of the GDP, whereas industry employs a third of the labor force and generates 35% of the GDP. Major industries include oil, mining, tourism, textiles, and food processing. Agriculture employs 18% of the labor force and generates 18% of the GDP. Common agricultural crops and goods include olives, olive oil, grain, fruit, sugar beets, dates, almonds, beef, and dairy products. France, Italy, and Germany are the primary trade partners.

Tunisia is perceived as the least corrupt North African nation, but corruption is still an issue, especially with petty corruption and brutality among law enforcement. Instances of corruption in government are difficult to prove and some reports indicate that corruption has worsened in recent years.³⁹⁷

Faiths

Muslim: 98%

Christian: 1%

Jewish/other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 22,000

Russian Orthodox 100

Seventh Day Adventists 50 1

Jehovah's Witnesses 50 1

Latter-day Saints less than 50 1

Greek Orthodox Church 30 3

³⁹⁶ "Culture of Tunisia," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 6 December 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Tunisia

³⁹⁷ "2008 Human Rights Practices: Tunisia," 2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 25 February 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/nea/119128.htm>

Religion

Muslims account for all but 1 to 2% of the national population, with the remainder of the population primarily following Christianity. Approximately 500 of the estimated 22,000 Roman Catholics regularly attend religious services. There are approximately 2,000 Protestants, which primarily includes the French Reform, Anglican, and Seventh Day Adventist Churches. There are one hundred Russian Orthodox Christians. Arab-Tunisian Christian converts number in the hundreds. Half of Jehovah's Witnesses in the country are native Tunisians. There are approximately 1,600 Jews, most of whom live on the island of Djerba and in the town of Zarzis. These Jewish communities have maintained a presence for 2,500 years.³⁹⁸

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 30th

The constitution protects religious freedom and grants the right for individuals to practice their respective religion if they maintain public order but declares that the state religion is Islam, the president must be a Muslim, and the country as a whole follows Islamic teachings. The government forbids proselytism directed toward Muslims, as it is regarded as disturbing public order, and restricts the wearing of some Islamic religious clothing. Muslims may convert to another religion but often face government harassment and manipulation and social ostracism. Christian churches may meet and worship, but only the Catholic Church is formally recognized. Most Christian denominations no longer attempt to apply for registration due to government policies denying registration for other Christian groups. Shari'a Law is implemented in some judicial settings or circumstances, such as determining inheritance. The government recognizes major Islamic holidays as national holidays. Restrictions on freedom of speech and the press are placed upon nonreligious and religious groups alike. The government permits only a small number of foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to operate to offer service and perform charitable activities.³⁹⁹

Largest Cities

Urban: 67%

Tu-nis, **Safa-qis**, **Su-sah**, **At-Tada-man**, **Al-Qayrawa-n**, **Qa-bis**, **Binzart**, **Arya-nah**, **Sukrah**, **Qafsah**. Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

One of the ten largest cities has an LDS congregation. Nineteen percent (19%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

LDS servicemen held worship services in Tunisia during World War II.⁴⁰⁰ No permanent Church presence was established, and by 1974, there was only one LDS family residing in Tunis.⁴⁰¹ The BYU Young Ambassadors performed in Tunisia in 1994.⁴⁰² Starting in 2000, Tunisia became part of the Europe West Area.⁴⁰³ In the

³⁹⁸ "Tunisia," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148847.htm>

³⁹⁹ "Tunisia," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148847.htm>

⁴⁰⁰ Hart, John L. "Faith overcomes evil of World War II, leads to growth worldwide, 19 August 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/25854/Faith-overcomes-evil-of-World-War-II-leads-to-growth-worldwide.html>

⁴⁰¹ "Comment," Ensign, June 1974, 47.

⁴⁰² "From around the world," LDS Church News, 27 August 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24522/From-around-the-world.html>

⁴⁰³ Lloyd, Scott. "European continent realigned into three new areas," LDS Church News, 16 September 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38475/European-continent---realigned-into-three-new-areas.html>

early and mid-2000s, the Greece Athens Mission administered the Tunis Branch, which appears to have been created in the 1980s or 1990s. In the late 2000s, the Middle East/Africa North Area began administering Tunisia.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

LDS membership appears to entirely consist of nonnatives from Europe and the United States temporarily living in the country for vocational purposes.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 1? (2012)

In late 2010, it was unclear whether the Tunis Branch continued to operate. The branch may have become a group under the Middle East/Africa North Area Branch.

Activity and Retention

Active membership is comprised of those who attend private church meetings held at an undisclosed location. Over half of known membership may be active due to higher activity rates in Middle Eastern and Northern African nations among Westerners, often influenced by increased desire for social interaction.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, French, English.

All LDS scriptures and many church materials are available in Arabic and French.

Meetinghouses

Church services are likely held in a rented space or a member's home.

Humanitarian and Development Work

As of late 2010, there had been no known LDS humanitarian or development work in Tunisia.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints do not appear to have any formal recognition or agreements with the government and hold Sunday meetings in a private, undisclosed location. There are no realistic opportunities for the Church to gain an official presence in the foreseeable future due to the lack of religious freedom granted to Christian groups overall and few Latter-day Saints. Bans on proselytism directed toward Muslims prevent the LDS Church from conducting missionary activity among all but 1% of the population. Unlike some Muslim countries, there is no legislation that restricts the right of Muslims to convert to another religion. Government restrictions on NGOs prevent the Church from performing humanitarian and development projects.

Cultural Issues

The homogenous Muslim society of Tunisia creates significant cultural challenges for Latter-day Saints to

perform missionary activity in the event that government bans on proselytizing Muslims were lifted. The lack of religious diversity and pluralism fosters negative stereotypes and persecution of non-Muslim religious groups that are often perpetuated by the media and the government. Potential Latter-day Saint Tunisian converts from the Muslim majority would face significant societal disapproval for leaving their traditional faith and would be ostracized from their communities. Missionary activity targeting foreigners and the small community of Tunisian Christian converts may offer greater breakthroughs in establishing a greater church presence, but their numbers remain few and often difficult to locate due to local Christians keeping a low profile to avoid harassment. High rates of cigarette use among many Tunisians create challenges for prospective missionary activity.

National Outreach

The entire population is unreached by the Church with the possible exception of personal contacts of expatriate Latter-day Saints. If missionary activity occurred in Tunis where the sole LDS congregation operates, only 7% of the national population would be reached. Reasons for why Tunisia has not had a greater LDS presence include its homogenous Muslim population, strict government restrictions on Christian group and religion in general, regulated NGO service projects, and lack of indigenous LDS converts.

France has a large Tunisian community that LDS missionaries can reach, but little has been done to proselyte North Africans in Europe. Few Tunisians have joined or investigated the LDS Church abroad, and many of these individuals do not return back to Tunisia due to lower standards of living, economic challenges, and societal challenges for Christian converts to function in a Muslim society. LDS Internet outreach may be able to reach some Tunisians who cannot be reached by traditional methods, but the number of Internet users in Tunisia remains low (approximately 15% of the population in 2006).⁴⁰⁴

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity rates appear moderate to high among expatriate Latter-day Saints residing in Tunis. Foreign members residing outside the capital and local Tunisian members appear the most susceptible to lower activity rates due to travel distances to congregation meeting locations and societal pressures to conform to the Sunni Muslim majority.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Arabs and Arab-Berbers constitute the entire population, excluding foreigners. The lack of ethnic diversity creates few ethnic integration problems at church if LDS mission outreach occurred. The lack of ethnic diversity has contributed to little tolerance for religious minorities.

Language Issues

LDS scriptures and church materials are available in the native language of 99% of the population. Tunisian Arabic varies in many linguistic aspects with standard Arabic and shares many similarities with Maltese, but most the population is proficient in standard Arabic,⁴⁰⁵ reducing the need for Tunisian Arabic LDS materials over the medium term. Low literacy rates create challenges for future proselytism initiatives with church literature if permitted one day.

⁴⁰⁴ "Internet Usage Worldwide by Country, 2007," Infoplease.com, retrieved 4 December 2010. <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0933606.html>

⁴⁰⁵ "Tunisian Arabic," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 6 December 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunisian_Arabic

Missionary Service

No known members from Tunisia have served full-time missions and no LDS missionary activity has occurred.

Leadership

Potential church leadership may depend on non-Tunisians for many years due to the lack of native members.

Temple

Tunisia pertains to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Temple trips are costly and time consuming. Organized temple trips from the sole LDS congregation likely do not occur due to a lack of members. Temple excursions likely occur on an individual basis or with a stake or district in the Middle East/Africa North Area. With the exception of the Rome Italy Temple, no temples appear likely to be built closer to Algeria in the near future.

Comparative Growth

Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt are the only North African nations with branches or permanent groups that have operated for many years. Egypt appears to be the only nation in North Africa that has some native members attending congregations, whereas there are greater numbers of native Latter-day Saints in the Middle East in Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. Algeria and Libya appear to have only small groups of Latter-day Saints meeting on an inconsistent basis. No nations in North Africa have an official LDS presence. No Islamic nations in the Middle East or North Africa have proselytizing missionaries.

Some missionary-oriented Christian denominations have gained indigenous converts among former Muslims, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and some Evangelical groups. These groups have only succeeded in creating a small Tunisian Christian community and face challenges with member activity due to government and societal pressures. Latter-day Saints have no realistic opportunities to perform missionary work among Muslims due to respect for proselytism bans in Tunisia and a lack of coordinated mission outreach to Tunisians and other North Africans in Europe.

Future Prospects

Government restrictions on the Christian proselytism of Muslims, cultural barriers to conversion, limited numbers of NGOs permitted by the government to perform humanitarian service, few Latter-day Saints, and distance from the nearest LDS mission outreach centers create an unfavorable outlook for an official Church establishment in the coming years. Prospects for future LDS mission outreach among the general population will depend on greater numbers of Tunisians abroad joining the Church and returning to their homeland combined with improving religious freedom conditions for Christian groups.

TURKEY

Geography

AREA: 783,562 square km. Occupying Asia Minor or Anatolia, Turkey links the Middle East with Europe and borders Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Greece, and Bulgaria. Turkey is surrounded by the Black Sea to the north, Aegean Sea to the west, and Mediterranean to the southwest. Turkey controls the Turkish Straits (the Bosphorus, the Dardanelles, and Sea of Marmara), which connect the Black Sea with the Mediterranean Sea. The Euphrates and Tigris Rivers originate in eastern Turkey and flow to the southeast into Syria and Iraq. Lake Van is the largest lake and is located in eastern Turkey. Western Turkey consists of plains, hills and valleys, whereas Central Turkey is a large plateau. Mountain ranges cover most of eastern Turkey, and Mount Ararat stands along the eastern border with Iran, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Climate varies by location, but overall, Turkey experiences a temperate climate with dry, hot summers and mild, wet winters that are more severe in the interior and east. Earthquakes are the primary natural hazard. Environmental issues include pollution, deforestation, and concerns over oil spills in the Turkish Straits. Turkey is divided into eighty-one administrative provinces.

Peoples

Turkish: 70%–75%

Kurdish: 18%

Other: 7%–12%

Population: 79,749,461 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.197% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.13 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 70.86 male, 74.78 female (2012)

Languages: Turkish (84%), Kurdish (7%), Dimli (2%), Kabardian (2%), other (5%). Turkish is the official language. There are no reliable recent estimates for a current breakdown by language; prior data is twenty to thirty years old. In the 1980s, languages with over one million speakers included Turkish (46.3 million), Kurdish (3.95 million), Dimli (1.0 million), and Kabardian (1.0 million). Other languages spoken with less than one million speakers include Arabic, Azerbaijani, and Bulgarian.

Literacy: 87.4% (2004)

History

Anatolia is one of the earliest inhabited regions of the world. The Hittites were the first known large empire and ruled the region from 1700 BC to 1200 BC. The Assyrians and Phrygians ruled portions of Anatolia prior to Greek settlement. The Persians conquered the region until Alexander the Great retook the territory. The Romans controlled Anatolia until the Byzantine Empire came to power and made Byzantium, or Constantinople, the capital. Following the Mongol invasions, the Ottoman Empire began taking shape and ruled for several centuries. At its height in the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire stretched from coastal areas of Northern Africa and the Red Sea to Hungary and Romanian in the north and Iran to the east. Following the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the nation of Turkey was formed in 1923 and included

Anatolia. Mustafa Kemal—known as Ataturk, meaning “Father Turk”—established the modern Turkish state and ruled until his death in the late 1930s. Ataturk successfully turned Turkey into an industrialized nation in a short period through one-party rule despite the recent defeat of the Ottoman Empire. Ataturk was a staunch secularist and limited Islamic influence on government. Democratic elections occurred in 1950 resulting in the Democratic Party coming to power. Turkey joined NATO in 1952. Four coups between 1960 and 2000 overthrew the ruling party, but civilian rule was quickly restored each time. Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974 due to the threat of Greek annexation and captured over a third of the island before a cease-fire was reached. Turkish-controlled areas of the island became a de facto state named Northern Cyprus that today only Turkey recognizes. For the past several years, Turkey has sought to enter the European Union and continues to petition for membership.

Culture

Turkish culture constitutes an agglomeration of internal and external influences. Music, literature, architecture, and cuisine draw from Anatolian, Middle Eastern, Greek, Balkan, and other cultures. Today there is a strong sense of separation between religion and government due to Ataturk's legacy despite their close intertwinement during prior Turkish history. Sports are popular, particularly soccer. Turkey has a low alcohol consumption rate but one of the highest cigarette consumption rates among Muslim nations.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$14,600 (2011) [30.4% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.699

Corruption Index: 4.2 (2011)

The economy has developed rapidly over the past several decades with intermittent periods of slow growth. Services employ 46% of the labor force and produce 65% of the GDP. Agriculture remains an important sector, with 30% of the labor force working in farming. Primary agriculture products include tobacco, cotton, grain, and olives. Industry accounts for 25% of the labor force and 26% of the GDP. Textiles, food processing, car manufacturing, electronics, and mining are important industries. The unemployment rate jumped to 14.5% in 2009 due to the global financial crisis. Seventeen percent (17%) of the population lives below the poverty line. Turkey's geographical location and large population provides ample opportunity for trade, foreign investment, and natural resource extraction. The Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan Pipeline runs through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey and began transporting oil from the Caspian Sea to the eastern Mediterranean in 2006. Primary trade partners include Germany, Russia, France, China, and Italy.

Corruption continues to prevent more widespread and stable economic growth and jeopardizes potential EU membership. Audits may reveal corrupt practices of government and individuals but inspectors choose whether to prosecute illegal activity. It is unclear to what extent corruption occurs due to inspectors failing to report. Bribery has been found to be detected less frequently than other nations. Corruption appears to have decreased somewhat in recent years.⁴⁰⁶

Faiths

Muslim: 99.8%

Other: 0.2%

⁴⁰⁶ Yavuz, Ercan. “Turkey struggles to fight corruption,” Today's Zaman, 31 August 2008. <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=151717>

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Armenian Orthodox 65,000
 Catholic 35,000
 Syrian Orthodox 15,000
 Greek Orthodox 3,000
 Protestants 3,000
 Jehovah's Witnesses 2,143 29
 Latter-day Saints 313 4
 Seventh Day Adventists 94 2

Religion

Notwithstanding nominal religious freedom, nearly the entire population is Muslim. Christians and minority religious groups typically reside in Istanbul and the largest cities. Many of these groups are also ethnic minorities. Secularism is higher in Turkey than many Muslim nations in the Middle East, yet Christian missionaries have experienced little success. Muslims hold conflicting views regarding what the relationship should be between religion and government. A moderate Islamic party was elected in 2003 with an absolute majority. Ataturk banned headscarves for university students and women working in the public sector as they were viewed as backwards-looking Islamic symbols hampering progress. The ban was lifted in 2008 by a constitutional amendment, which was then annulled by Turkey's highest court. Nonetheless, the election of an Islamic party in 2007 on the platform of repealing the headscarf ban demonstrates broad-based Islamicist sentiment.

Religious Freedom

The constitution guarantees religious freedom and forbids discrimination and persecution. Government usually respects religious freedom but places restrictions in religious minorities, especially radical Islamists. Registration of religious groups usually occurs under the category of an association to gain certain rights to limit potential harassment. Proselytism is not illegal but socially unacceptable and sometimes dangerous. Christians and other religious groups are allowed to teach and talk to others about their faith. Non-Muslims faced pressure and threats from the Muslim majority resulting in diminished religious freedom for these groups. Religious education in public schools is required.⁴⁰⁷

Largest Cities

Urban: 69%

Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, **Bursa**, Adana, **Gaziantep**, **Konya**, **Antalya**, **Diyarbakir**, **Mersin**, **Kayseri**, **Eskisehir**, **Urfa**, **Malatya**, **Samsun**, **Erzurum**, **Kahramanmaras**, **Van**, **Adapazari**, **Denizli**, **Elazig**, **Gebze**, **Sivas**, **Batman**, **Tarsus**, **Balikesir**, **Trabzon**, **Manisa**, **Kirikkale**, **Izmit**, **Sultanbeyli**, **Adiyaman**, **Osmaniye**, **Kutahya**, **Corum**, **Iskenderun**, **Isparta**, **Antakya**, **Aydin**, **Usak**, **Corlu**, **Aksaray**, **Afyonkarahisar**, **Viransehir**, **Siverek**, **Edirne**, **Inegol**, **Kiziltepe**, **Tokat**, **Ordu**, **Erzincan**, **Tekirdag**, **Nazilli**, **Karaman**, **Karabuk**, **Siirt**, **Bandirma**, **Ceyhan**, **Zonguldak**, **Turhal**, **Derince**, **Turgutlu**.

Cities in **bold** have no church presence.

Four of the sixty-two cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have a congregation. Forty-three percent (43%) of the national population lives in the sixty-two largest cities.

⁴⁰⁷ "Turkey," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/130299.htm>

LDS History

The first LDS missionaries preached in Turkey in 1850, and four years later, the first congregation was organized for British soldiers fighting in the Crimean War. The Turkish Mission was organized in 1884 and the first Arabian converts joined the Church in Aintab in 1889. The mission was discontinued in 1909, reorganized in 1921, and relocated to Palestine and Syria in 1933. Initial success occurred with Armenians. A branch was organized in Ankara in late 1979.⁴⁰⁸ Some of the first native Turks to join the Church in the past several decades were baptized in the late 1980s in Germany. Turkey became part of the newly created Europe/Mediterranean Area in 1991.⁴⁰⁹ In 2000, Turkey became part of the Europe East Area. In 2011, member reports indicated that the Church became legally recognized by the government. In February 2012, the first young full-time missionaries were assigned to Istanbul from the Bulgaria Sofia Mission.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 313 (2012)

In 2003, there were 151 members. Membership growth has slowly increased to 186 in 2006 and 221 in 2008. The bulk of Turkish membership resides outside of Turkey. Most members are not Turks but rather foreigners or are from other ethnic groups.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 4 (2012)

In 1991 there were four branches.⁴¹⁰ In early 2010, the number of congregations remained unchanged from two decades earlier. Branches met in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Adana. The Adana Military Branch serves the needs of members in the United States military at Incirlik Air Base. In 2009, three humanitarian senior missionary couples were stationed in Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir.

Activity and Retention

Very few Turks have joined the Church in Turkey. The first Turk to join the Church in Ankara was in 2006. In early 2009, there were ten active members in the Ankara Branch. National active membership is likely around eighty to one hundred, or 40% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Turkish, Arabic, Bulgarian, English.

All LDS scriptures are available in Arabic and Bulgarian. Only the Book of Mormon has been translated into Turkish. Many unit, temple, priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, young women, primary, missionary, and family history materials are available in Turkish, Arabic, and Bulgarian. Several CES manuals are available in Bulgarian. The *Liahona* has four Bulgarian issues a year.

Meetinghouses

Three of the four branches met in rented spaces. The Adana Military Branch meets in the Incirlik Air Base chapel.

⁴⁰⁸ "Turkey," Country Profiles, retrieved 20 March 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/turkey>

⁴⁰⁹ Cannon, Mike. "Diversity in land, people and climate," LDS Church News, 7 December 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21327/Diversity-in-land-people-and-climate.html>

⁴¹⁰ Cannon, Mike. "Diversity in land, people and climate," LDS Church News, 7 December 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21327/Diversity-in-land-people-and-climate.html>

Humanitarian and Development Work

Tens of thousands of articles of clothing and blankets were sent to Kurdish refugees in 1991.⁴¹¹ The Church donated \$50,000 to earthquake relief in 1999.⁴¹² In 2009, LDS Charities donated tables, chairs, and toys to a needy school in a village outside of Ankara and school supplies in other areas. The Church donated emergency supplies and hygiene kits to victims of a flash flood near Istanbul valued in the tens of thousands of U.S. dollars in the late 2000s.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Prior to the assignment of young missionaries in 2012, senior missionaries who served in Turkey reported that they could not preach about the Church but only answer questions without instigating a conversation about non-Muslim religion. The assignment of young full-time missionaries has occurred within the confines of the law, and the Church must be sensitive to not violate any laws or societal norms on Christian proselytism. Full-time missionaries appear to work only through member referral due to government regulations and societal expectations. Local members have to be cautious not to violate any laws. Care in following these guidelines will be required to build a positive relationship with the government and minimize safety risks to young missionaries. In 2012, there were some challenges with visa renewal, resulting in the temporarily removal of proselytizing elders for several months.

Cultural Issues

Native converts who join the Church in Turkey face some isolation and harassment but do not appear to face as severe persecution as in some nearby nations. Forming a cohesive community of Turkish converts will be essential to prospects for indigenous growth. Low alcohol consumption rates provide opportunity, but high rates of tobacco use present challenges. The Church benefits from a more secular and tolerant society compared to many other Middle Eastern nations, although proselytism is limited, and growth remains low.

National Outreach

With the exception of Istanbul, Turkey remains unreached by the Church's missionary program. Outreach centers only function in four of Turkey's eighty-one administrative provinces (5%). Provinces with an LDS congregation account for 29% of the national population, although very few have been reached because no active proselytism occurs. Christians are primarily concentrated in the largest cities, and the Church appears to have access to some of these Christian communities. It does not appear that the Church has taken any action in conducting passive missionary work or service projects with these groups.

Internet sites maintained by Turkish members living inside and outside Turkey have been instrumental in bringing some Turks into the Church. The Church has no official country website for Turkey, but some Turkish materials are available on the Church's official website.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Convert retention appears high due to the high level of devotion of investigators in consistently attending

⁴¹¹ "Turkey," Country Profiles, retrieved 20 March 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/turkey>

⁴¹² "Church donates cash assistance to Turkey, China," LDS Church News, 4 September 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/36314/Church-donates-cash-assistance—to-Turkey-China.html>

Church meetings and the more laborious process to get baptized than in other nations. Local members supplied large numbers of teaching referrals to full-time missionaries upon their arrival to Istanbul in early 2012. The personal connection of prospective converts to establishment members may result in good convert retention, although the possible introduction of quick-baptism tactics by nonnative missionaries is a potential concern. Member activity likely depends on the level of doctrinal understanding and regularity of church attendance in foreign member's native countries.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The homogeneity of the population lessens potential ethnic integration challenges. However, minority groups will likely be most receptive to the Church as many Christians belong to these groups. Greater receptivity among minority groups may result in ethnic integration problems for converts from the Turkish majority. Conflicts between the Turks and Kurds may challenge future missionary efforts among these two rival ethnic groups, although there is presently no outreach in Kurdish areas.

Language Issues

A large body of Turkish-language materials provides great opportunities to reach the majority of the population. Church services are only partially conducted in Turkish. In Ankara, half of the branch members spoke or understood Turkish, but most used English in Church meetings to communicate. However both languages were used to conduct meetings. This practice is convenient for senior couple missionaries and expatriate members but underscores the Church's foreignness to prospective converts. Turkish translations of the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price appear forthcoming due to availability of Turkish-speaking members in multiple countries who are proficient in English. Future prospects for Church materials in Kurdish, Dimli, Kabardian, and Azerbaijani are low, as there are no congregations nearby provinces in which these languages are spoken. Full-time missionaries study Turkish at a local university in Istanbul to obtain proficiency in teaching the gospel, as the Church has no Turkish language instruction at MTCs due to their recent assignment.

Leadership

Some local Turkish Church members have served in leadership positions. The branch president of the Istanbul Branch is Turkish. A former branch president of the Ankara Branch president was also Turkish. Leadership and active membership appear too small in numbers and spread over too large a geographic area to justify the creation of a district for the four branches at present. Although foreign missionaries allow for greater local leadership training and mentoring, overreliance on foreign missionaries for administration and routine congregational functions can hamper the development of local self-sufficiency.

Temple

Turkey pertains to the Bern Switzerland Temple district. Temple trips occur infrequently. The only branches that may have appreciable numbers of endowed members are Istanbul and Adana. The Kyiv Ukraine Temple may be more accessible to Turkish members in the near future.

Comparative Growth

The Church has experienced growth in Turkey comparable to other neighboring Middle Eastern nations. The Church has organized congregations and has some native members in Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon, each of which has fewer than 300 members. Most Church members in these nations are also nonnatives. Activity rates appear similar or higher than for most of Southeastern Europe or the Middle East outside the Saudi

Peninsula. Native leadership appears more developed than in Greece or Cyprus. The recent assignment of full-time missionaries to Turkey is unprecedented due to the sensitive nature of LDS missionary activity among Muslims. The only other homogeneously Muslim country where the Church assigned young full-time missionaries in the past half century was Iran for a brief period in the 1970s. Today, Turkey is the country with the highest percentage of Muslims (99.8%) with LDS missionaries assigned.

Missionary-minded Christian groups view Turkey as one of the greatest frontiers for Christian outreach. Many of the provinces in Turkey appear to not have any Christian congregations. Christian groups have attempted to plant some congregations in these regions, but these efforts are challenged by the absence of any Christian organizations and customs that discourage proselytism. Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses have seen slow membership growth, although the Witnesses have expanded to twenty-seven congregations.

Future Prospects

The introduction of full-time missionaries to Istanbul indicates improvement in the Church's vision to expand outreach into non-Christian countries notwithstanding restrictions on religious freedom. Based on the past trends of opening countries in Eastern Europe to missionary work in the 1990s and 2000s, it is likely that the Church can expect a short period of frequent convert baptisms in Istanbul followed by little growth thereafter, especially if missionary work is headed by full-time missionaries instead of local leaders. The Church may introduce missionaries to additional cities with LDS congregations in the near future, such as Ankara. Prospects for Turkey's entry into the EU may increase tolerance towards religious minorities and reduce restrictions on missionary work, although there has been little response to the gospel notwithstanding relatively lax religious laws. Part of the Church's future in Turkey hinges on the current active native members and leaders and the example they set, and part will depend upon receptivity in a very homogeneous nation with resurgent Islamic identity.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Geography

AREA: 83,600 square km. Situated on the Arabian Peninsula, the United Arab Emirates borders Oman, Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and the Gulf of Oman. Oman claims an enclave in eastern United Arab Emirates and the northern tip of the eastern Arabian Peninsula. Desert and plains cover the entire country with a small section of mountains in the extreme east by the ocean. Most of the territory is unproductive desert wasteland. The few oases provide water for limited agriculture. The country occupies a strategic location on the Strait of Hormuz where crude oil from the Persian Gulf exits into the Indian Ocean for worldwide distribution. Sand and dust storms are frequent natural hazards. Environmental issues include lacking natural fresh water resources and desertification. Much of the fresh water comes from distilling ocean water. The United Arab Emirates is divided into seven emirates.

Peoples

South Asian: 50%

Non-Emirati Arab and Iranian: 23%

Emirati: 19%

Expatriates: 8%

Citizens account for less than 20% of the population. The remainder of the population includes South Asians, other Arabs, Iranians, and expatriates from Western countries. The United Arab Emirates has the highest population growth rate worldwide due to immigration.

Population: 5,314,317 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.055% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.38 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 74.12 male, 79.42 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic, Farsi, English, Indian languages (Hindi, Bengali, Malayalam, etc.), Urdu, Balochi. There are no reliable estimates of the number of speakers for each language. Arabic is the official and most spoken language. Arabic dialects are the only language that appear to have over one million native speakers.

Literacy: 77.9% (2003)

History

The eastern Arabian Peninsula was inhabited for millennia prior to the birth of Christ. Roman and, later, Arab trade occurred in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese controlled the peninsula for 150 years during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; British and Ottoman rule followed. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the region was economically viable for the pearling industry. The present day United Arab Emirates were formally known as the Trucial States and received military protection by the British under condition that the Trucial States were not to allow other foreign nations to make territory claims. Oil exploitation began in the 1960s and independence from the United Kingdom occurred in 1971 for six emirates and

the seventh in 1972. Economic growth accelerated through the rest of the twentieth century, bringing the GDP per capita up to Western European levels.

Culture

Emirati culture consists of a cosmopolitan blend of Arab, South Asian, Iranian, and Western influences. Architecture, cuisine, and art are heavily influenced by Arab culture. Indigenous Emirati Arabs constitute less than 20% of the population and consequently have allowed greater religious and cultural tolerance than perhaps any other Middle Eastern nation. Some ethnic tensions occur primarily between differing immigrant groups. The selling and distribution of alcohol and pork is limited. Football and cricket are popular sports. Polygamy is practiced by some Muslims. Islamic dress code is not mandatory. Men outnumber women due to the high numbers of immigrant workers who are single or unable to bring their families from native countries.

Economy

GDP per capita: 48,500 (2011) [101% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.846

Corruption Index: 6.8 (2011)

The government has worked over the past several decades to diversify the economy from oil and natural gas production. Free Trade Zones exempt foreign investors from taxes and allow full ownership of businesses. Due to the global financial crisis in the late 2000s and lower oil prices, the GDP dropped by around 4% in 2009. The large number of transient noncitizen foreign workers who account for 85% of the workforce present challenges for integration and communication. Unlike the situation in the United States and many European nations, legal foreign workers have no path to citizenship, as Emiratis have become minorities in their own land and desire to retain control over government and economy. The nation depends heavily on oil revenues for economic growth. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the workforce labors in services and 15% in industry. GDP is nearly evenly divided between industry and services, while agriculture accounts for only 1.1% of the GDP. Crude oil accounts for 45% of exports, many of which are destined to Japan, South Korea and India. Other trade partners include China, India, and the United States.

The United Arab Emirates has lower corruption levels than most Middle Eastern nations. Due to the nation's wealth and location, past financial ties to terrorists have been discovered. Government has been cooperative in addressing this issue.

Faiths

Muslim: 76%

Christian: 9%

Other: 15%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 250,000

Latter-day Saints 965 6

Seventh Day Adventists 900 12 (also includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen)

Religion

Most living in the United Arab Emirates are Muslim; the Shia sect accounts for 16% of the population.

Christianity and Hinduism are the most practiced minority religions. Some reports indicate that as much as 15% of the population follows Hinduism, and 5% adhere to Buddhism.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 26th

The constitution allows for freedom of religion within the bounds of Emirati customs. The government has typically upheld the religious freedom of the population and imposes some restrictions, including defining all citizens as Muslims. Islam is the official religion, and government controls Sunni mosques. The government has interfered very little with the religious activities of non-Muslims but bans proselytism and distributing non-Islamic literature. In contrast, Emirati missionaries have been active in spreading Islam and funding mosque construction in Central Asian nations like Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. More than thirty Christian denominations have received government recognition in the UAE, allowing for the construction of chapels. Some non-Muslims received trials according to Shari'a law. The entire population is forbidden from eating, drinking, and smoking in public during daylight hours of fasting during the month of Ramadan. Muslims who convert to a different religion face societal pressures to return to Islam. The United Arab Emirates is considered perhaps the most tolerant Islamic nation in the Middle East toward non-Muslims.⁴¹³

Largest Cities

Urban: 78%

Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Al Ain, **Ajman**, **Ras Al Khaimah**, **Fujairah**, **Um Al Quwain**, **Khor Fakkan**, **Dibba**.

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

Four of the ten largest cities have a congregation. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The first meeting of LDS members in Dubai occurred in 1982. Sacrament meetings were held in a member's home with one expatriate family, one woman from the United States, and two Filipino men. A branch was formed shortly thereafter, with membership increasing to twenty-four in 1983 and thirty-six by 1985. Meetings were later held in a rented space in an American school.⁴¹⁴ In 2013, the Church completed its first church-built meetinghouse in the Arabian Peninsula in Abu Dhabi - a stake center to house the Abu Dhabi Stake.⁴¹⁵

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 965 (2011)

Membership in the Arabian Peninsula Stake stood at 900 in 2004. By 2009, membership increased to 1,950.⁴¹⁶ In 2008, membership stood at 300 in Abu Dhabi and 250 in both Dubai and Sharjah, indicating that at least 750 members resided in the country. The Al Ain Branch has the smallest membership, likely less than fifty.

⁴¹³ "United Arab Emirates," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127360.htm>

⁴¹⁴ Platt, Joseph B. "Our Oasis of Faith," Liahona, Oct 1988, 27.

⁴¹⁵ Avant, Gerry. "Stake center in Abu Dhabi: Elder Holland dedicates chapel in Middle East," LDS Church News, 2 March 2013. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/63295/Stake-center-in-Abu-Dhabi-Elder-Holland-dedicates-chapel-in-Middle-East.html>

⁴¹⁶ Chatterly, Matt. "Growth, friendship serve as Middle East 'Miracles,'" LDS Church News, 7 March 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56735/Growth-friendship-serve-as-Middle-East-miracles.html>

Increases in membership growth come primarily from members moving to the area and non-Muslim converts, mainly Filipinos.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 4 Branches: 2 (2011)

Elder Boyd K. Packer became the first apostle to travel to the United Arab Emirates in 1983. At the time, he organized the Arabian Peninsula Stake for expatriate members primarily from Western countries. In 2000, the United Arab Emirates belonged to the Europe Central Area. In 2008, the country came under jurisdiction of the newly created Middle East/Africa North Area.

In the early 2000s, two congregations met in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Both were wards by the mid-2000s. In 2008 and 2009, several new congregations were organized. New congregations included the Sharjah and Abu Dhabi 2nd Wards and the Dubai 2nd and Al Ain Branches. By 2009, sixteen units functioned under the Manama Bahrain Stake; an increase of four units from the year before.

Elder M. Russell Ballard became the second apostle to visit in 2007 when he visited members in Dubai.⁴¹⁷ Elder Holland visited in 2009 to conduct stake conference.⁴¹⁸ In 2011, the Church relocated the headquarters of the Manama Bahrain Stake to Abu Dhabi, renamed the stake the Abu Dhabi Stake, and congregations in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia were reassigned to the newly created Manama Bahrain District. No missionaries serve in the country.

Activity and Retention

In 2008, the Dubai session of stake conference had a record 450 in attendance. The following year, attendance increased to 636.⁴¹⁹ Activity rates appear very high, but this is also likely due to the many inactive members who reside in the country—primarily expatriate workers from the United States, the Philippines, or other Southeast Asian nations—who are unknown to the Church. Activity rates may be as high as 65%.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English, Bengali, Farsi, Hindi, Tagalog, Urdu

All LDS scriptures are available in Arabic and Tagalog. Book of Mormon translations have been completed for Hindi and Urdu; only Book of Mormon selections are available in Bengali and Farsi. Most Church materials are available in Arabic and Tagalog whereas Urdu and Farsi have more limited Church materials. *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Farsi and *Gospel Principles*, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, and the Articles of Faith are translated into Bengali. The *Liahona* annually has twelve issues in Tagalog, three issues in Urdu, and one issue in Hindi.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings have been held in rented spaces. Members reported in 2009 that approval was pending for the Church to begin construction of the first Church-built meetinghouse in Musaffah to house the Abu Dhabi

⁴¹⁷ Swensen, Jason. "Message-laden tour," LDS Church News, 10 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50227/Message-laden-tour.html>

⁴¹⁸ Chatterly, Matt. "Middle East stake: 10 cities in 10 days," LDS Church News, 7 March 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56729/Middle-East-stake-10-cities-in-10-days.html>

⁴¹⁹ Chatterly, Matt. "Growth, friendship serve as Middle East 'Miracles,'" LDS Church News, 7 March 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56735/Growth-friendship-serve-as-Middle-East-miracles.html>

Ward. The meetinghouse in Abu Dhabi was completed in 2013. Additional Church-built meetinghouses are being considered for Dubai and Sharjah.

Humanitarian and Development Work

No large humanitarian or development work projects have occurred in the United Arab Emirates; the UAE has a well-off, rapidly developing economy compared to most other states in the region.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church has periodically published information about the Church in the United Arab Emirates for those relocating to the country. Since 2009, the Church has made available the contact telephone number for local Church leaders for four of the congregations. Government legislation forbids proselytism and limits outreach among non-Muslims. However outreach among non-Muslims, particularly Christians, can occur through individual Church members, who must respect laws prohibiting the distribution of non-Islamic literature. There has been sufficient religious freedom for the Church to construct meetinghouses in recent years.

Cultural Issues

In accordance with the Muslim day of worship, Church meetings are held on Fridays. The Church is banned from teaching Muslims. Muslims who desire to convert to Christianity face ostracism and often move out of the country. The cosmopolitan atmosphere of the larger cities allows for greater religious tolerance of Christian denominations. Opportunities are high for developing local priesthood leadership among the immigrant population as men outnumber women. However, this also results in fewer member families from these nations.

National Outreach

Congregations are established in cities, which account for 47% of the national population. Emirates without reported congregations include Ajman, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, and Um Al Quwain, which account for 15% of the national population. Areas that have the highest population density without congregations are northeast of Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah.

No foreign missionaries serve in the country, and efforts to reach out to non-Muslims are limited due to bans on proselytism.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The sensitive nature of the Church in an Islamic country has challenged member activity. Over the years, many members have had trouble learning when and where Church meetings are held, as the Church did not publish this information for many years. In 2009, the Church made available congregation names and contact information for Church leaders in the United Arab Emirates on its meetinghouse locator site. This has provided opportunity for more members to find the Church and participate in meetings.

Convert baptisms occur regularly and appear concentrated among the non-Muslim Filipino and South Asian immigrant population. Retention also appears good from the growth in congregations and increases at stake conference.

Trends in membership growth and convert retention may be influenced by the economic situation of the United Arab Emirates with the influx of many foreign workers from Southeast Asia. Economic hardship may result in slower growth or a decrease in membership from Western expatriates returning to their home countries.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Church faces the challenge of a limited membership and high ethnic diversity. In Qatar, the Church has created a congregation specifically for Filipinos in order to better meet language needs. It is unclear whether a similar course may be pursued in the United Arab Emirates. The Muslim majority combined with most temporarily living in the country has facilitated member fellowshipping despite differences in ethnicity and culture among members. Emiratis and Muslims remain legally and culturally unreached by the Church.

Language Issues

Church services held in English meet the needs of most members. Churches in the United Arab Emirates report that most Christians speak English, Tagalog, Mandarin, Korean, Arabic, or Hindi. Those investigating the Church may experience language difficulties if unfamiliar with English. The Church has language materials in most of the immigrant languages that have Christian speakers, but likely only a significant outreach occurs among Tagalog speakers. There are no language materials in Balochi, which has a couple hundred thousand speakers, but this group remains unreachable as there are very few reported Christians. Non-Muslim immigrant workers from South Asia are difficult to reach by the Church, as the Church has few members in these countries, yet many of these individuals likely have some competency in English. Very few members likely speak Arabic fluently, limiting associations between members and Arabs.

Leadership

Member leadership in the United Arab Emirates matches the quality and availability seen in the United States on a smaller scale. This is due to most members coming from the United States or Western Europe for business. Experienced leadership has facilitated the independence and organization of the Church in the Manama Bahrain Stake. However, life-long members in leadership positions may lack the vision needed for mission outreach among immigrant Christian groups.

Temple

The United Arab Emirates pertains to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district. Temple trips are arduous due to a 3,000 mile trip to Frankfurt. The United Arab Emirates appears the most likely country in the Middle East for a temple to be built as it has the greatest tolerance towards non-Muslims, an active, rapidly growing LDS membership, and the potential for construction of religious buildings.

Comparative Growth

The United Arab Emirates has one of the strongest Church presences in the Middle East and may experience the most rapid membership and congregational growth. Together with Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar, the United Arab Emirates is among the most accommodating nations to LDS members in the Middle East. Members living in many other Arab countries face greater restrictions on religious freedom.

Many Christian denominations have a larger presence than the LDS Church, as these groups have a stronger presence among South Asians. The Catholic Church claims the largest membership mainly consisting of Filipinos, Indians, and Americans. Christian groups tend to have good relations with the government.

Future Prospects

Conditions for future growth appear favorable but limited due to a ban on proselytism. Social networking and a more visible Church presence allows for greater outreach among members not knowing the location and times of Church meetings. A small temple may be constructed one day if permitted by government authorities and warranted by the size and strength of the LDS community in the Gulf States.

WESTERN SAHARA

Geography

AREA: 266,000 square km. Located in Northern Africa and occupied by Morocco, Western Sahara borders Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, and the North Atlantic Ocean. Terrain consists of sandy and rocky low-lying, flat desert that gradually rises in elevation inland to some small mountains and plateaus. Precipitation is uncommon, and hot, dry climate prevails year round. Fog and heavy dew generated by cool offshore currents offer some relief from hot, dry weather conditions. Blowing dust and sand known as the sirocco wind and frequent Harmattan haze are natural hazards. Environmental issues include dismal fresh water supplies and arable land.

Peoples

Arab/Berber: 100%

Population: 522,928 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.027% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.22 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 59.3 male, 63.82 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic [Hassaniyya and Moroccan-spoken dialects] (100%). Hassaniyya Arabic is not mutually intelligible with other Arabic dialects, whereas Moroccan-spoken Arabic is mutually intelligible with standard Arabic, although there are many linguistic differences with other dialects.

Literacy: N/A (Morocco—51.2% in 2000)

History

The Bafour were Western Sahara's first known inhabitants who predated the arrival of Islam to the region. Berber-speaking tribes later replaced and intermingled with the Bafour and occupied the region by the time Islam arrived in the eighth century. Invading Maqil Arab tribes originating from Yemen mixed with Berber populations in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, contributing to the development of local culture known today as Sahrawi. Population and demographic shifts also affected neighboring Mauritania and Morocco. Spain claimed Western Sahara in the 1880s following the Berlin Conference and established a colony that came under administration of Spanish Morocco in 1939. Western Sahara remained under Spanish control following the independence of Morocco in 1956.⁴²⁰ Independence prospects began to materialize for Western Sahara in the mid-1970s when Mauritania and Morocco instigated campaigns to annex the territory following Spanish withdrawal, citing historical Sahrawi allegiance to their respective civic authorities. Independence-seeking Sahrawi Polisario forces backed by Algeria attempted to repel Moroccan, Mauritanian, and Spanish occupational interests. In an event known as the "Green March," 350,000 unarmed Moroccan citizens crossed over the border into Western Sahara in November 1975. During that time Morocco strengthened its territorial claims and eventually occupied the upper two-thirds of the country. Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania shared administration over Western Sahara beginning in late 1975, but Spain quickly fell out of the picture, and

⁴²⁰ "Western Sahara," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 7 January 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Sahara

Mauritania ultimately relinquished its territorial claims and administration of the southern regions by 1979.⁴²¹ Morocco did not gain control of the southernmost regions until the late 1980s. Polisario forces continue to maintain a separate government in exile and control the barren interior regions along the Mauritanian border. The status of Western Sahara sovereignty, independence, and integration into North Africa remains undetermined at present as both Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic continue to claim the entire territory. A foreign community working with the United Nations Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) continues to operate in the country.⁴²²

Culture

Traditionally living nomadic lifestyles relying on livestock for survival, Sahrawis share many cultural similarities with neighboring Hassaniyya Arabic-speaking Moors in Mauritania, albeit Sahrawis inherited a Spanish colonial past rather than a French legacy. Tribalism dominated society until Moroccan occupation began, and many families were fractured, and many moved to the Sahrawi refugee camp on the Algerian border. Islam is the primary social influence and traditionally differed in practice in Western Sahara from other Muslim nations in that there is a lack of mosques. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates appear low compared to the worldwide average. Polygamy is uncommon, and the Moroccan government has tried to eradicate its practice.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,500 (2007) [5.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: N/A

Corruption Index: N/A

The Moroccan government controls trade and all economic affairs, but both the Moroccan and Polisario governments have awarded oil exploration approval to foreign enterprises on condition of the future sovereign status of Western Sahara. Living standards are substantially lower than Morocco. Nomadic herding, fishing, and phosphate mining generate revenue and economically sustain the population. Most food is imported, as rainfall is insufficient to grow crops. Phosphates and iron ore are natural resources. Agriculture employs 50% of the work force, whereas industry and services employ the remaining 50%.

Corruption is perceived as widespread but has been highly publicized in Morocco, and some progress has been achieved in recent years in addressing petty corruption. Government transparency has increased, and legislation to prevent or discourage corruption appears to be in place. Prosecuting corruption charges on high-profile individuals remains a challenge.⁴²³ Drug trafficking is a concern, as Morocco is a major transshipment point for South American cocaine to Europe and is one of the world's largest producers of hashish.

Faiths

Muslim: 99%

Other: 1%

⁴²¹ "Background Note: Morocco," Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 26 January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>

⁴²² "Western Sahara," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148852.htm>

⁴²³ "Snapshot of the Morocco Country Profile," Business Anti-Corruption Portal, retrieved 16 September 2010. <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/middle-east-north-africa/morocco/>

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 100

Seventh Day Adventists less than 10 0

Latter-day Saints less than 5 0

Jehovah's Witnesses less than 10 0

Religion

Sahrawis and Moroccans are Sunni Muslim. A lack of mosques and the veneration of religious figures and their alleged tombs (maraboutism) are unique characteristics in the practice of Islam in Western Sahara. There is a tiny Catholic minority that practices openly and many foreigners residing in the country are non-Muslims.⁴²⁴

Religious Freedom

Laws and policies regarding the practice of religion in Western Sahara are the same as in neighboring Morocco due to Moroccan occupation of the country.⁴²⁵ The constitution allows for the practice of religion on an individual basis but declares Islam as the state religion. The King possesses the responsibility to defend Islam. The government has taken steps to prevent the spread of radical Islamic teachings and preserve its historical Islamic identity. Several Muslim holidays are recognized by the government. Non-Muslim foreigners may openly practice their beliefs, but local non-Muslims and non-Jews face threats of government surveillance, ostracism, and persecution for worshipping. Local Christian converts tend to meet in private homes to worship. There have been consistent efforts by the government to limit the spread and practice of Shi'a Islam. The government bans proselytism and the distribution of non-Islamic literature. Attempting to convert a Muslim to another religion is illegal. Foreign Protestant missionaries do operate in Morocco and either work among non-Muslims or secretly among Muslims but can be expelled if their activities are made public. Christian groups registered with the government include the Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, French Protestant, English Protestant, and Anglican Churches.⁴²⁶ Beyond the heavy legal restrictions, there have been no societal abuses of religious freedom reported in Western Sahara.⁴²⁷

Largest Cities

Urban: 81%

Laâyoune , Dakhla , Es Semara, Boujdour, El Marsa.

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

None of the five largest cities have an LDS presence. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the population resides in the five largest cities.

⁴²⁴ "Western Sahara," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148852.htm>

⁴²⁵ "Western Sahara," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148852.htm>

⁴²⁶ "Morocco," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127354.htm>

⁴²⁷ "Western Sahara," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148852.htm>

LDS History

There has never been an LDS presence in Western Sahara, which was assigned to the Africa West Area in 1998.⁴²⁸

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 5 (2012)

There are no known Latter-day Saints living in the country and no known Sahrawi Latter-day Saints.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 (2012)

In 2010, the Church reported no organized congregations.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, Spanish.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Arabic and Spanish. The LDS Church recently completed a Spanish translation of the LDS edition of the Bible complete with full LDS footnotes, Bible dictionary, and topical guide.

Health and Safety

Access to healthcare is limited. Living conditions in many areas are harsh and dangerous due to hot, dusty weather conditions and political instability.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 2005, LDS institute attendees and instructors in Lyon, France purchased and assembled hygiene and education kits to send to orphans in Laayoune, Western Sahara and in the Sahrawi refugee camp on the Algerian border. French members have donated food and hygiene and newborn kits to Sahrawi refugees for several years.⁴²⁹

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Moroccan government grants greater religious freedom to non-Muslim foreigners than many other Arab states, and the local Sahrawi population has been tolerant of the small Catholic minority, which may indicate some tolerance for a potential LDS presence. The LDS Church is unregistered with the Moroccan government, and local laws and government policy ban any prospective missionary activity for Latter-day Saints at present. Sahrawi government officials do not appear any less restrictive regarding the rights and privileges of religious minority groups. Political instability and an undeveloped economy have prevented any foreign Latter-day

⁴²⁸ "5 new areas announced worldwide," LDS Church News, 4 July 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31389/5-new-areas-announced-worldwide.html>

⁴²⁹ "French members send aid," LDS Church News, 28 May 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47360/French-members-send-aid.html>

Saints from residing in the country and establishing an expatriate presence. In 2005, LDS public affairs missionaries did visit Western Sahara in person to deliver humanitarian aid donated by French members.⁴³⁰

Cultural Issues

Poor living conditions, nomadic lifestyles, and the strong ethno-religious ties of Sahrawis and Moroccans to Islam present challenging conditions for LDS mission outreach in the event that government restrictions were relaxed to permit proselytism. A lack of Christian missionary activity in Western Sahara among Sahrawis generate an unclear picture of whether LDS mission outreach would be more or less effective than in other Islamic nations in the region as Western Sahara demonstrates unique characteristics regarding the practice of Islam. Tribalism remains a dominant social force that would likely leave prospective LDS converts ostracized from their communities and may put their personal safety in jeopardy.

National Outreach

The entire population remains unreached by the LDS Church. If missionary activity were to commence with government approval and the lifting of proselytism bans, a mission outreach center in Laâyoune would reach 38% of the national population. However, at present, there appear to be no realistic prospects for the amendment of restrictive religious laws, which also prohibit the dissemination of non-Muslim religious literature. The small Catholic community may provide some mission outreach prospects, but its tiny presence offers little sustainable opportunity. There are few Sahrawi citizens abroad in nations with LDS missions, which further delays any potential LDS witness.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

No convert baptisms have occurred in Western Sahara. The lack of Sahrawi Latter-day Saints challenges any future efforts to establish the Church among the indigenous population.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Tensions between Sahrawis and Moroccan settlers may become manifest at church if Latter-day Saint converts from both ethnicities assemble in the same congregations. Language barriers may segregate these groups and reduce potential ethnic integration issues.

Language Issues

LDS materials are only available in standard Arabic. Moroccans and Sahrawis suffer from low literacy rates, creating opportunities for future development projects teaching literacy but also posing leadership and gospel learning obstacles. Hassaniyya Arabic translations of LDS materials will be needed if mission outreach occurs. Language-specific congregations for Moroccan-speaking and Hassaniyya Arabic speakers may be organized, dependent on local receptivity.

Missionary Service

No Sahrawis have served full-time missions. Missionaries have never been assigned to Western Sahara, but public affairs missionaries have visited in the past on humanitarian assignment.

⁴³⁰ "French members send aid," LDS Church News, 28 May 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47360/French-members-send-aid.html>

Leadership

No Sahrawi leadership has been developed. Initial church leadership will most likely rely upon foreign members.

Temple

Western Sahara is assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple district.

Comparative Growth

Western Sahara has no LDS Church presence like most Islamic African nations, and appears to be the only nation among Maghreb countries without any past gatherings or meetings of Latter-day Saints. The only African nations with a clear Muslim majority and an LDS presence are Egypt, Djibouti, Sudan, and Sierra Leone. Most Christian groups have no presence in Western Sahara, and denominations with a presence are limited to foreigners living in the country.

Future Prospects

Ongoing political uncertainty, government and cultural restrictions on the religious practice of non-Muslims, poor living conditions, an undeveloped economy, and isolation from currently established LDS mission outreach centers render no realistic prospects for an LDS Church establishment for the foreseeable future and may make Western Sahara among the last nations to ever have an LDS presence. Latter-day Saints assigned to the MINURSO convoy may facilitate the establishment of a temporary presence, but prospects for an enduring, long-term presence among foreigners or among native Sahrawis are nearly nonexistent at present. The translation of some LDS materials into Hassaniyya Arabic over the medium-term may help prepare for potential mission outreach one day, especially if Sahrawis venture to nations with LDS mission outreach.

YEMEN

Geography

AREA: 527,968 square km. Located on the southern Arabian Peninsula, Yemen borders Saudi Arabia, Oman, the Arabian Sea, and the Red Sea. Several small islands also belong to Yemen, notably the Socotra archipelago and islands in the Red Sea. The climate is hot year round with the exception of mountains in the west that receive seasonal monsoons. Coastal areas are humid, whereas the interior and eastern areas are dry. A narrow plain runs along most coastal areas. Most the interior consists of hills and plateaus. There are mountains in the western interior. Sand and dust storms are natural hazards. Environmental issues include a lack of fresh water, soil erosion, and desertification. Yemen is divided into twenty-one administrative governorates.

Peoples

Arab: 95%
Somali: 3%
Other: 2%

Population: 24,771,809 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.575% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.45 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 62.05 male, 66.27 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic dialects (95%), Somali (3%), Hindi (1%), other (1%). Arabic is the official language and the only language with over one million speakers. Soqotri is the native language of the Socotra archipelago.

Literacy: 50.2% (2003)

History

Access to fresh water and fertile soil has allowed a longer legacy of civilization in Yemen compared to other nations on the Arabian Peninsula. Several civilizations and empires were based in Yemen between 2000 BC and the seventh century when the Islamic Empire quickly integrated the region into its control. Prior to assimilation in the Ottoman Empire, several dynasties from other Near East nations controlled Yemen. The British East India Company took control of South Yemen in the nineteenth century to curb pirate attacks on trade ships. In 1918, North Yemen became independent from the Ottoman Empire, whereas South Yemen gained independence from the British in 1967. In 1970, a Marxist government came to power in South Yemen and resulted in hundreds of thousands of Yemenis fleeing from the south to the north. Friction between the two Yemeni states occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. Unification of North and South Yemen occurred in 1990, but hostilities between the north and south have flared periodically until present. The fragility of the Yemeni state is indicated by insurgencies that broke out in South Yemen and the Sada Governorate in the last decade. Many Yemenis continue to identify according to their tribe rather than their nationality, giving rise to internal conflict and insurrection. As in several other Arab nations in 2011, Yemen experienced major protests and sustained civil disorder as a result of allegations of corruption in government, low living standards, and poor economic conditions. Clashes with anti-government rebels and loyalist armed forces intensified during the year and ultimately resulted in president Salih leaving office.

Culture

Yemen's rich ancient history continues to strongly influence modern culture. Several World Heritage sites are in Yemen, most of which are ancient walled cities. The Socotra archipelago boasts a large number of indigenous species and has developed its own unique culture separate from mainland Yemen. Qat is an evergreen shrub that Yemeni commonly cultivate and chew that some nations classify as an illegal drug. Yemeni Jews have a rich cultural tradition that began from King Solomon seeking out the finest materials in present-day Yemen to build the temple in Jerusalem. Islam strongly influences daily life and is the source for Yemeni law. Yemen has low rates of alcohol and cigarette use. Polygamy is legal and practiced by a minority.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,500 (2011) [5.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.462

Corruption Index: 2.1 (2011)

Yemen has one of the least developed economies in the Middle East and is strongly dependent on oil revenues for economic growth. Recent fluctuations in oil prices have cut government earnings and slowed economic development. Government has attempted to diversify the economy in order to reduce its vulnerability to the demand and price of oil. Poverty is a major concern, as 45% of Yemenis lived below the poverty line, and 35% were unemployed in 2003. Most work in agriculture and animal husbandry, whereas all other sectors of the economy employ less than 25% of the workforce. Services and industry produce 51% and 39% of the GDP, respectively. Agricultural products include grain, fruits, vegetables, and qat. Oil production and refining is the primary industry. Major trade partners include China, Thailand, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates.

Legislation combating corruption was passed in recent years, but limited natural resources, a rapidly growing population, and political instability have contributed to widespread corruption. Allegations of corruption have been directed toward nearly all major government institutions, such as elections, customs, taxation, and the judicial system.

Faiths

Muslim: 99%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 4,000

Latter-day Saints less than 50 1?

Religion

The entire population is Muslim with the exception of fewer than 5,000 individuals. Most of the Christians are foreigners temporarily living in Yemen for employment. Services for Catholics, Protestants, and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are held in several cities.⁴³¹

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 9th

⁴³¹ "Yemen," LDS Church News, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127361.htm>

The constitution does not proclaim or protect religious freedom. Islam is the state religion, and legislation is based on Islamic Shari'a law. The proselytism and conversion of Muslims is forbidden. Apostasy from Islam can result in the death penalty, and the government has detained several Christian converts who left Islam in recent years. Government permits individuals to practice their religious beliefs and allows assembly with no government interference with some restrictions. In the late 2000s, Jews, Christians, and Bahai's received marked persecution from some Muslim groups, with many foreigners facing deportation or voluntarily making plans to leave the country. Government does not usually pursue prosecution of those committing violence against religious minorities and has done little to ensure their safety. However, most Muslim groups live harmoniously with the few non-Muslims. Religious minorities have been able to get visas for ministers to serve their communities. Rebel or terrorist organizations have targeted foreigners who are accused of performing missionary activity, several of whom remain missing.⁴³²

Largest Cities

Urban: 31%

Sana'a, Taizz, Al Hudaydah, Aden, Ibb, Dhamar, Al-Mukalla, Chanffar, Sayyan, Asch-Schir.

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

One of the ten largest cities may have a congregation. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the population lives in the five largest cities.

LDS History

Church members have lived in Yemen since the 1970s.⁴³³

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2011)

Any LDS members are likely Western expatriates living temporarily in Yemen for employment purposes.

Congregational Growth

Branches or groups: 1? (2011)

A group or branch may meet in Yemen. Any Church activity would fall under the jurisdiction of the Middle East/Africa North Area. Yemen may fall under the boundaries of the Manama Bahrain Stake.

Activity and Retention

There likely have been few or no convert baptisms in Yemen. Activity rates for members likely represent members' home nations. Inactive members are likely unknown to the Church, as the Church does not have an official presence. Many members who actively follow Church teachings may not participate in worship services, as they are unaware where meetings are held. Active membership likely consists of fewer than twenty members.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English, Hindi

⁴³² "Yemen," LDS Church News, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127361.htm>

⁴³³ "Comment," Ensign, Dec 1979, 66.

All LDS scriptures and many Church materials are available in Arabic. A Hindi translation of the Book of Mormon is available as well as a wide, although limited, selection of Church materials. Somali language Church materials are limited to *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*.

Meetinghouses

Any Church meetings are likely held in the privacy of members' homes.

Health and Safety

Conditions for foreign missionaries in Yemen are very precarious and are currently unfavorable even for humanitarian assistance. Several missionaries were kidnapped by Islamic extremists and remain missing.

Humanitarian and Development Work

As of April 2010, no humanitarian or development work has been performed by the Church in Yemen.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The government does permit meetings for non-Muslim religious groups, which likely indicates that any LDS gatherings would likely not be met with government interference. However, non-Muslims have been the focus of increased violence and persecution in recent years. Meetings would likely have to be done in private in order to avoid any potential threats. The Church is barred from the proselytism of Muslims, rendering all but a few thousand inhabitants legally unreachable by potential missionary efforts. Separatist movements and insurgencies threaten the stability of the government, further challenging the Church's efforts to obtaining any recognition. Rebel-controlled regions experience less religious freedom and will be likely unsuitable for any LDS activity among foreigners until government control is restored.

Cultural Issues

The strong influence of Islam on daily living and legislation creates the greatest cultural obstacle restricting the Church's activities. The chewing of qat is a cultural habit that stands against LDS church teachings. Those practicing polygamy who desire to be baptized must end polygamous marriages in divorce and get interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency; however this issue is largely moot as no proselytism is permitted among Muslims.

National Outreach

The entire population is unreached by the Church. Future mission outreach possibilities will likely first concentrate on the non-Muslim foreign workers, many of whom are Christians.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The sensitive nature of the Church in Yemen restricts the Church from publishing meeting times and locations for foreign members. Some members living in Yemen are likely unaware of a Church presence. Those inquiring about meetings for Church services may contact the Church's Middle East Desk at Church headquarters for additional information. A telephone number and e-mail address for the Middle East Desk are available on the Church's meetinghouse locator website.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Potential outreach among the native population will likely face challenges assimilating Yemenis from conflicting tribes.

Language Issues

Church meetings are likely conducted in English. The widespread use of Arabic dialects simplifies any future outreach. Many immigrant workers have some Church materials in their native language.

Leadership

Leadership is likely very limited and only able to support a small branch or group.

Temple

Together with the rest of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen is likely assigned to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district.

Comparative Growth

Only a few Middle Eastern nations have no reported Church congregations or membership but may have a small number of active members privately holding worship services. These nations may include Iran, Libya, and Algeria. Most nations in the Arabian Peninsula have at least two congregations (one for the military and one for other members). With the exception of Catholics, no Christians report any statistics on membership in Yemen.

Future Prospects

Yemen's fragile political situation makes any greater Church establishment in the near future unlikely. Outreach among Yemenis living in nations with mission outreach may provide the first steps needed toward a greater Church presence in Yemen. The arrival of additional LDS foreign workers and improved protection of the rights of religious minorities are needed before any greater progress can be achieved.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Reunion, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

REGIONAL PROFILE

Geography

AREA: 22,410,150 square km. Consisting of the African continent with the exception of North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa also includes the island of Madagascar and several small island groups in the nearby Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Tropical equatorial climate occurs in Central Africa, as rainforest occupies most of the terrain and is subject to hot, humid conditions. Tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons occurs in coastal areas of West Africa and portions of southern Africa. Climate gradually transitions from tropical to semi-arid and arid conditions in the Sahel, a belt of savannah between tropical areas of Central and West Africa and the Sahara Desert. The Sahara Desert comprises significant portions of territory in West and Central Africa with little or no access to fresh water. Temperate climate occurs in many areas of South Africa and highland areas in Angola, Ethiopia, and Cameroon. Much terrain in Africa is flat and featureless, as vast plains are occupied by rainforest, forest, scrubland, savannah, rock, or sand. Mountainous areas are primarily limited to interior Guinea, the Tibesti Mountains in northern Chad, highland areas of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Cameroon, Rwanda, Burundi, Lesotho, and southern interior South Africa. Many countries have large plateaus in inland areas. Major rivers include the Congo, Niger, Zambezi, Volta, Orange, Gambia, Senegal, Ubangi, Chari, Kasai, Benue, upper Nile tributaries, Rufiji, and Limpopo. Hot harmattan winds carrying dust and sand, fresh water scarcity, drought, flooding, heavy rainfall, earthquakes, and volcanoes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include desertification, pollution, soil degradation and erosion, biodiversity loss, overgrazing, poaching, and detrimental mining practices.

Population: 833,705,964 (July 2011)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.322% (2011)

Fertility Rate: 4.57 children born per woman (2011)

Life Expectancy: 55.53 male, 58.5 female (2011)

Peoples

African: 98%

Non-African: 2%

African ethnic groups include Bantu in Central Africa, Semitic-Hamitic in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, Guinean in coastal West Africa, Hausa in northern Nigeria and southern Niger, Western Bantoid in West Africa, Nilotic in East Africa, Central Bantoid in central interior West Africa, Mande in West Africa, and Central and Eastern Sudanese in north Central Africa. Smaller indigenous African ethnic groups include Eastern Bantoid, Malay-Polynesian, Kanuri, Songhai, and Khoisan. Europeans and South Asians comprise the majority of non-Africans.

Languages: African languages spoken by over one million speakers (49%), languages spoken by less than one million speakers or unknown (51%). Bilingualism is widespread in most African nations as many are fluent in their tribal or village language and in a lingua franca. Commonly spoken second languages for interethnic communication include French, English, Swahili, Amharic, Portuguese, and Arabic. Languages with over one million speakers include Nigerian Pidgin English (30 million), Hausa (24.8 million), Malagasy (21.7 million), Yoruba (19.4 million), Igbo (18 million), Fulani (17.4 million), Amharic (17.1 million),

Oromo (17.1 million), Somali (12.7 million), Shona (10.7 million), Kikongo (10 million), Zulu (10 million), Xhosa (7.8 million), Gikuyu (7.2 million), Chichewa (7 million), Lingala (7 million), Tsihiluba (6.3 million), Southern Sotho (6 million), Tigrigna (5.7 million), Sukuma (5.4 million), Kituba (5.36 million), Afrikaans (5.04 million), Moore (5 million), Tswana (4.48 million), Dholuo (4.27 million), Luganda (4.13 million), Northern Sotho (4.09 million), English (4.07 million), Ewe (4.03 million), Senoufo (4 million), Umbundu (4 million), Arabic (3.97 million), Kamba (3.96 million), Wolof (3.96 million), Asante (3.5 million), Bemba (3.3 million), Kanuri (3.2 million), Mandinka (3.05 million), Kimbundu (3 million), Sidamo (2.9 million), Bambara (2.7 million), Fante (2.36 million), Zarma (2.35 million), Nyankore (2.33 million), Sebat Bet Gurage (2.32 million), Tiv (2.21 million), Ekegusii (2.12 million), Baoule (2.1 million), Soga (2.06 million), Swati (2.01 million), Beti (2 million), Tsonga (1.94 million), Maay (1.86 million), Kimiiru (1.75 million), Chiga (1.58 million), Teso (1.57 million), Ndebele (1.55 million), Luba-Katanga (1.51 million), Gbe (1.5 million), Mende (1.5 million), Portuguese (1.5 million), Lango (1.49 million), Gogo (1.44 million), Anaang (1.4 million), Indian Ocean French Creoles (1.4 million), Fon (1.4 million), Dinka (1.35 million), Haya (1.3 million), Gamo-Gafo-Dawro (1.24 million), Themne (1.23 million), Wolaytta (1.23 million), Acholi (1.17 million), Serer-Sine (1.13 million), Masaaba (1.12 million), Afar (1.1 million), Boron (1.1 million), Dagombe (1.02 million), Dangme (1.02 million), Ngbaka (1.01 million), Ebira (1 million), Edo (1 million), Fang (1 million), Ha (1 million), Izon (1 million), Jula (1 million), Makonde (1 million), Nyamwezi (1 million), Silt'e (1 million), Songe (1 million), Tonga (1 million), Tumbuka (1 million), and Yao (1 million).

Literacy: 62.7%

History

Sub-Saharan African peoples are believed to have populated most areas of Africa for millennia prior to recorded history. As home to one of the world's oldest civilizations, Ethiopia has been populated since antiquity. Various Old Testament prophets alluded to Ethiopia, and the conversion of an Ethiopian eunuch by the Apostle Philip is recorded in the Book of Acts. Ethiopia became the second nation after Armenia to adopt Christianity as a state religion in the fourth century AD. Islam spread to coastal East Africa, Comoros, northern Madagascar, the Sahara, and the Sahel around or before the first millennia AD. Hausa kingdoms and the Bornu Empire flourished in northern Nigeria beginning in the eleventh century and were significant trading centers between North Africa and West and Central Africa. Other major empires in West Africa prior to European colonization included the Ghana, Mali, and Songhai Empires. In the fifteenth century, the Yoruba founded the kingdom of Oyo in southwestern Nigeria, and the kingdom of Benin was founded in south central Nigeria. A Tutsi monarchy rose to power in the fifteenth century in Rwanda and in the eighteenth century in Burundi. Both monarchies maintained a close relationship with the Hutus under a system of rule and society similar to serfdom. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to explore coastal areas of Sub-Saharan Africa and established trade routes with Southeast Asia. The Dutch founded Cape Town in 1652 as a stopping point for travel between Europe and Asia and was the first permanent European settlement in South Africa. Zimbabwe was the site of several ancient kingdoms between the birth of Christ and the arrival of Europeans in the late nineteenth century. The Mossi Kingdom ruled present-day Burkina Faso prior to its overthrow by the British and the French in the nineteenth century. Ethiopia and Liberia are the only two Sub-Saharan African nations that were never formally colonized by Europeans with the exception of the brief Italian occupation of Ethiopia from 1936 to 1941. Founded in 1820 by freed American slaves, Liberia means "the land of the free" and became Africa's first independent nation in 1847 aside from Ethiopia. In the mid-1880s, major European powers convened in the Berlin Conference to determine territorial claims for Africa in what was later dubbed the "Scramble for Africa." The British and French obtained the largest landholdings during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Christian missionaries began greater proselytism efforts in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in most colonies, resulting in Christians accounting for over half of the regional population today. Cape Town fell to British rule in the early nineteenth century and conflict continued with Dutch settlers, known as the Boers, many of whom fled north to escape British rule. The Boer Wars were fought from 1880–1881 and 1899–1902. Germany established colonies in Togoland [Togo], Kamerun [Cameroon],

German South West Africa [Namibia], Tanganyika [Tanzania], and Ruanda-Urundi [Rwanda and Burundi] between the 1880s and 1919 until they were stripped from Germany in the Treaty of Versailles and handed over to the United Kingdom (Cameroons, Namibia, and Tanzania), France (French Cameroun and Togo), and Belgium (Burundi and Rwanda). By the 1920s, the British dominated East and Southern Africa, France dominated West and Central Africa, Portugal operated five colonies scattered throughout Africa, Belgium administered three colonies in Central Africa, and Spain administered Spanish Guinea (Equatorial Guinea).

During the twentieth century, seventeen African nations gained independence from the United Kingdom, including South Africa (1910), Ghana (1957), Somalia (1960), Nigeria (1960), Sierra Leone (1961), Uganda (1962), Kenya (1963), Tanzania (1964), Malawi (1964), Zambia (1964), Gambia (1965), Botswana (1966), Lesotho (1966), Mauritius (1968), Swaziland (1968), Seychelles (1976), and Zimbabwe (1980). Sixteen nations achieved independence from France between 1958 and 1977, including Guinea (1958), Cameroon (1960), Senegal (1960), Togo (1960), Madagascar (1960), Benin (1960), Niger (1960), Burkina Faso (1960), Cote d'Ivoire (1960), Chad (1960), the Central African Republic (1960), the Republic of the Congo (1960), Gabon (1960), Mali (1960), Comoros (1975), and Djibouti (1977). In the early 1960s, three nations were granted independence from Belgium, including Belgium Zaire [Democratic Republic of the Congo] (1960), Burundi (1962), and Rwanda (1962). In the 1970s, five nations obtained independence from Portugal, including Guinea Bissau (1974), Mozambique (1975), Cape Verde (1975), Sao Tome and Principe (1975), and Angola (1975). Additional countries in the region that obtained independence from other European colonizing powers or from an African nation include Equatorial Guinea from Spain in 1968, Namibia from South Africa in 1990, Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1993, and South Sudan from Sudan in 2011.

Nearly all Sub-Saharan African nations experienced significant political instability and conflict following independence until the late 1980s and early 1990s. In South Africa, the National Party came into power in 1948 and segregated whites and blacks under a policy called apartheid that lasted until 1994 when multi-racial elections were held. Predominantly Christian areas of the southern third of British Cameroon voted to join the Republic of Cameroon in 1961 after Muslim areas in the remainder of British Cameroon voted to join Nigeria. Instability persisted in Nigeria as the predominantly Christian southeast attempted to succeed as the Republic of Biafra, resulting in the Nigerian Civil War between 1967 and 1970. Due to foreign investment and political stability, significant economic growth occurred during the 1960s and 1970s in Cote d'Ivoire. Civil war enveloped Angola between 1975 and 2002. In the mid-1980s, a severe drought and famine occurred in Ethiopia due to low rainfall, political instability, and poor government management.

Several nations have experienced major conflicts since 1990. In 1990, exiled Tutsis launched an invasion of Rwanda from Uganda under the name of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). War persisted until a ceasefire was reached in 1992. Between April 6 and the beginning of July 1994, approximately 800,000 were killed in a massive genocide targeting Tutsis and moderate Hutus; meanwhile the RFT waged a civil war against the Rwandan military until overrunning the country by the summer. As a result of the Rwandan Genocide and concurrent civil war, one million were killed, one million were displaced within Rwanda, and two million fled to other countries. The genocide ignited a civil war in neighboring Burundi from the mid-1990s until 2006. Two civil wars occurred in Liberia between 1989 and 1996 and in 2003. The United Nations conducted a humanitarian mission from 1993 to 1995 in Somalia to relieve suffering from famine and the lawlessness that overtook the country following the collapse of the central government. Increasing anarchy has occurred over the past two decades as Somalia has divided into several smaller autonomous and semi-autonomous states that remain unrecognized by the international community. Pirate attacks on cargo ships, oil tankers, and passenger vessels off the Somali coast occur frequently and are a subject of increasing international concern. Two wars gripped the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the late 1990s and early 2000s, resulting in the deaths of millions and spreading conflict and instability to surrounding nations in Central Africa. Areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remain under control of rebel groups today. A border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea occurred between 1998 and 2000, and tensions are ongoing. Political instability culminated in

the outbreak of the Ivorian Civil War in 2002, and Cote d'Ivoire experienced marked instability throughout the remainder of the 2000s and in the early 2010s. Civil war plagued Sudan for decades, culminating in a cease-fire in the mid-2000s and the independence of South Sudan in mid-2011. In Chad, conflict between the government and rebel groups occurs frequently. In the mid-2000s, rebel groups in Sudan began attacks on Chad's eastern border, and civil conflict escalated. In recent years, the capital N'djamena has come under threat from rebel forces. In Nigeria, instability continues in the oil-rich Niger River Delta between ethnic groups. Violence has periodically targeted non-Nigerians in the area. Christian and Muslim tensions are among the most severe in the world. Hyperinflation occurred in Zimbabwe in the late 2000s, resulting in severe damage to the economy. In the late 2000s, political instability in Guinea resulted in the formation of a transitional government in 2010.

Culture

Tribalism, European cultures, Christianity, Islam, and indigenous religious beliefs are the primary influences on local culture in most Sub-Saharan African nations. Many nations have hundreds of ethnic groups, each speaking their own respective languages and holding their own tribal customs and practices. Commonly eaten foods include yams, potatoes, vegetables, fish, fruit, rice, and meat. Nigerians have numbered among the most influential African peoples and have significantly contributed to international literature and African music and art. Several prominent West African ethnic groups have large populations in Nigeria or are indigenous to Nigeria, including the Hausa, Fulani, and Yoruba. Shari'a courts dictate legal matters for Muslims in twelve northern Nigerian states where polygamy is permitted. In South Africa, apartheid prevented interaction between ethnic groups. Since the end of apartheid, greater integration has occurred between ethnic groups, although neighborhoods are still segregated due to differences in socioeconomic class, language, religion, and culture. Many elements of Portuguese culture are visible in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Cape Verde due to past colonial rule. Islam strongly influences society in Somalia, Chad, Niger, Mali, Senegal, Guinea, and northern areas of coastal West African nations. Somali music possesses many unique characteristics, such as being based on a five-pitch music system instead of the common seven-pitch system. Dowries are commonly required for marriage in the region and exact significant sums of money that are often unattainable. Polygamy is widely practiced. Female genital mutilation is a serious problem in Central Africa and interior West Africa with as many as 50% of women in some of these nations having been victims of the practice. The treatment of women varies significantly from ethnic group to ethnic group. Soccer is the most popular sport. Many East Africans are world-renowned runners and athletes. Overall alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are lower than world averages. Qat, an evergreen shrub grown in some areas of East Africa and the Middle East that has mild narcotic properties, is legal and commonly consumed in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,600 national median (2010) [3.38% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.430

Corruption Index: 3.0

Most nations in Sub-Saharan Africa have agriculturally-driven economies that are underdeveloped, fragile, and receive little foreign investment. Many governments have adopted inconsistent or poor economic policies that have stunted and delayed growth. Political instability, civil wars, ethnic violence, inadequate and outdated infrastructure, corruption, low literacy rates, low living standards, and small skilled labor forces have limited economic growth over the past half century. Major economic powers in the region include South Africa and Nigeria. The largest stock exchange in Africa is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Cocoa, peanuts, rice, tapioca, yams, palm oil, cattle, sheep, rubber, cotton, fish, fruit, sugar, coffee, sorghum, rice, and tea are common agricultural products. Major industries include petroleum, coal, tin, rubber, wood products, hides and skins, textiles, construction, food processing, printing, steel, food production, cement, mining, fertilizer,

bus and truck assembly, and shipbuilding. Most trade partners with Sub-Saharan Africa are concentrated in Western Europe; additional prominent partners include China, the United States, and the Arabian Peninsula.

Corruption is perceived as pervasive and widespread in nearly all nations in Sub-Saharan Africa. Transparency International rates all nations in the region as less than 4.0 on the Corruption Perceptions Index for 2010 with the exception of Botswana, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Namibia, Cape Verde, Ghana, and Rwanda. Many of these perceived less-corrupt countries face ongoing challenges fighting corruption. Some countries have experienced improvement in reducing corruption in recent years. A lack of government transparency, unaccounted public monies “lost” at the hands of government officials, human trafficking for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation, illicit drug transshipment, and money laundering are common challenges. In Chad, recent oil exploration and extraction has exacerbated corruption and inequality in wealth. In Ethiopia, corrupt practices resulting from the privatization process have occurred, such as preferential treatment of state-owned businesses to credit and land leases. Poor law enforcement in many regions has led to human rights violations. Ethiopia is a major transshipment point for illicit drugs. In South Africa, money laundering and illicit drug production, cultivation, and trafficking are major issues. Nigeria is a haven for drug traffickers and a significant transshipment point for heroin and cocaine between Europe, East Asia, and North America. Criminal activity is a serious problem, and organized crime has exacerbated corruption nationwide. Money laundering has been an ongoing issue but has been receiving increasing awareness and action from the government.

Faiths

Christian: 53.2%

Muslim: 30.7%

Indigenous beliefs: 11.7%

Other/none/unknown: 4.4%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 169,851,706

Seventh Day Adventists 6,076,263 22,784

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,305,278 24,819

Latter-day Saints 391,000 1,176

Religion

Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs are the primary religions of Sub-Saharan Africa. Christians account for roughly half of the regional population and constitute 75% or more of the population in Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Rwanda, Seychelles, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Namibia, Reunion, Uganda, Swaziland, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. Christians comprise between 50% and 74% of the population in Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Burundi, Gabon, Zambia, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan. Syncretism between Christianity and indigenous beliefs is common throughout the region and especially prevalent in Central and Southern Africa. Protestant denominations account for half of the Christian population in the region and are rapidly growing, especially Pentecostal, evangelicals, traditionally African denominations, and other missionary-minded groups. Catholics account for approximately 40% of Christians in the region and account for over 50% of the population in Equatorial Guinea (90%), Sao Tome and Principe (83%), Seychelles (82%), Reunion (80%), Cape Verde (71%), Lesotho (70%), Cameroon (69%), Burundi (60%), and Rwanda (52%). Orthodox Christians account for approximately 10% of Christians in the region.

and are primarily Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox. Muslims account for 75% or more of the population in Comoros, Djibouti, Somalia, Mayotte, Niger, Senegal, The Gambia, Mali, and Guinea and between 50% and 74% in Sierra Leone, Chad, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, and Nigeria. Indigenous beliefs are followed by 50% or more of the population in Madagascar and South Sudan and between 30% and 49% of the population in the Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Zambia, the Central African Republic, Tanzania, Gabon, Togo, Benin, and Sierra Leone. Some ethnic groups exhibit strong ethno-religious ties to Islam like the Fulani, Hausa, and Somalis, and many of these groups reside in the Sahara, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel. Small numbers of Hindus are concentrated in Mauritius, Reunion, and South Africa among Indian and colored immigrants.

Religious Freedom

The constitution in nearly all nations in the region protects religious freedom, which is upheld by most governments. Many countries require nonindigenous religious groups to register with the government primarily to receive tax-exempt status and for foreign religious workers to receive visas. Government registration can be lengthy, but few governments deny registration. Legislation in many nations prohibits the practice of witchcraft. Most nations report no major incidents of societal abuse of religious freedom.

Muslims in some Christian-majority nations like Liberia and Mozambique have complained of little representation in government and discrimination. In Zimbabwe, religious leaders critical of government officials have suffered harassment.⁴³⁴ Similar reports have occurred in Madagascar among certain religious groups.⁴³⁵ Among countries with moderate to high levels of religious freedom, reports of religious violence between Christians and Muslims are most prevalent in Ethiopia and Liberia. In Mauritius, tensions exist between Muslims, Hindus, and Christians, but each group is allowed to worship freely.⁴³⁶

Religious freedom is generally the weakest in homogenous Muslim nations with cultural and traditional ties to Islam. Nations that experience the lowest levels of religious freedom in Sub-Saharan Africa include Eritrea, Comoros, Somalia, Nigeria, Chad, Guinea, and Tanzania. In Eritrea, human rights and religious freedom conditions remain poor due to government refusal to recognize additional religious groups, harassment of practitioners of unregistered faiths, and the incarceration of many religious prisoners under harsh and inhumane conditions. As many as 3,000 Christians from unregistered groups are held as religious prisoners. Religious groups must register with the government, but no additional religious groups have been recognized since 2002. Only the Eritrean Orthodox Church, the Evangelical Church of Eritrea (Lutheran), the Roman Catholic Church, and Islam are registered. Several other religious groups, such as Presbyterians, Seventh Day Adventists, and Baha'is, have met all the qualifications for registration, but the government refuses official recognition, as their applications require the president's signature. The government must approve the distribution or printing of religious literature or documents, the assembly of religious groups, and the construction of religious buildings. Most of the population exhibits religious tolerance, with the exception of widespread persecution of Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses.⁴³⁷ In Comoros, Islam is the state religion, and Islamic holidays are nationally recognized. Christians are prohibited from proselytizing, and foreigners found engaging in missionary activity are deported. Conversion from Islam to another religion can be legally prosecuted, although there are very few instances of this occurring. Non-Muslims may peacefully assemble, build meetinghouses, and train clergy, but most worship in private for fear of persecution. Non-Muslim

⁴³⁴ "Zimbabwe," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148729.htm>

⁴³⁵ "Madagascar," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148699.htm>

⁴³⁶ "Mauritius," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148707.htm>

⁴³⁷ "Eritrea," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127231.htm>

foreigners tend to experience little social opposition in practicing their faith, whereas non-Muslim Comorian citizens are subject to ridicule and social pressure, leading most to worship in private.⁴³⁸ In Somalia, lawlessness and the de facto rule of Islamist governments who actively persecute Christians and forbid the spread of any form of Christianity severely restrict religious freedom for non-Muslims. In Nigeria, the national government has facilitated religious tolerance between Christians and Muslims, but local leaders have at times instigated religious violence or have let religious hate crimes go unpunished. Significant conflict between Muslims and Christians has at times resulted in mass killings in central areas of Nigeria. In Chad, the government favors Islam. There are connections between local religious leaders and the oil industry and oil revenues. Foreign missionaries may serve in Chad but since July 2007 have been banned from open proselytism.⁴³⁹ In Guinea, there are some instances of societal persecution of individuals who convert from Islam to Christianity.⁴⁴⁰ In Tanzania, some limitations on worship and Christian activities exist in predominantly Muslim Zanzibar. Tensions exist between Christians and Muslims in areas where Muslims desire to incorporate Islamic law into life and government. Religious tensions have also occurred in Kenya.

Largest Cities

Urban: low (11%—Burundi); high (95%—Reunion)

Lagos, Kinshasa, Johannesburg, Abidjan, Cape Town, Durban, Accra, Nairobi, **Kano**, Ibadan, Dar es Salaam, Luanda, Addis Ababa, Harare, **Dakar**, Pretoria, Douala, Yaoundé, Kampala, Lusaka, **Bamako**, Maputo, Antananarivo, **Ouagadougou**, **Conakry**, Kaduna, Kumasi, Lubumbashi, Brazzaville, Mbuji-Mayi, Lomé, **Mogadishu**, **Niamey**, Benin City, Port Harcourt, Freetown, Cotonou, Monrovia, **Maiduguri**, **Ndjamena**, Port Elizabeth, Bulawayo, **Zaria**.

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

Thirty-three of the forty-three cities with over one million inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Fourteen percent (14%) of the regional population resides in the forty-three most populous cities.

LDS History

The first LDS missionaries arrived in April 1853 in Cape Town, and South Africa was dedicated for missionary work the following month. The first congregation was organized in August 1853. Between 1865 and 1903, missionaries did not serve in South Africa due to government restrictions and missionaries being unable to learn to speak Afrikaans.⁴⁴¹ Missionaries were prohibited from entering the country between 1919 and 1921. LDS missionary work began in Zimbabwe as early as 1930 and was followed by sporadic visits until 1950 when eight missionaries were assigned to work in Salisbury [Harare] and Bulawayo. The first member joined the Church in Zimbabwe in 1951,⁴⁴² and the first African member joined in 1965. President David O. McKay visited South Africa in 1954 and directed the mission president to bestow the priesthood upon members at his discretion.⁴⁴³ Foreign missionaries were not allowed to enter in 1955 due to civil unrest, but the Church was able to send missionaries from Canada and other British Commonwealth nations.⁴⁴⁴ This restriction was

⁴³⁸ "Comoros," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127225.htm>

⁴³⁹ Chad," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127224.htm>

⁴⁴⁰ "Guinea," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127236.htm>

⁴⁴¹ "South Africa," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/south-africa>

⁴⁴² "Zimbabwe," Country Profile, retrieved 11 May 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/zimbabwe>

⁴⁴³ Johnson, R. Val. "South Africa: Land of Good Hope." Ensign February 1993, 33. <http://lds.org/ensign/1993/02/south-africa-land-of-good-hope?lang=eng>

⁴⁴⁴ Cummins, Lawrence. "The Saints in South Africa," Ensign, March 1973. <http://lds.org/ensign/1973/03/the-saints-in-south-africa?lang=eng>

lifted shortly thereafter. The first South African missionaries began serving outside their homeland in 1966. The Church had a missionary presence in the Copperbelt Province of northern Zambia in the 1960s, but this presence was discontinued later in the decade.⁴⁴⁵

Nigerians and Ghanaians began requesting LDS literature in the 1940s and 1950s by letters to Church Headquarters. Nigerians acquired church literature, began holding meetings in the LDS Church's name, and registered with the government although the Church was not officially present in Nigeria. In the early 1960s, the Church conducted at least two fact-finding missions about the Church in Nigeria and West Africa. In the 1960s, there were approximately 16,000 self-identified Nigerian Latter-day Saints meeting in over 60 congregations, whereas in Ghana several unofficial congregations of prospective Latter-day Saints were established. Progress with missionary work in both nations was delayed due to visa problems.⁴⁴⁶ The first official LDS congregation in West Africa was organized in Nigeria in 1978. Just one year after the first branch was organized there were 1,700 converts baptized in Ghana and Nigeria and thirty-five branches operated in West Africa.⁴⁴⁷ In 1978, the first missionaries were assigned to Namibia.⁴⁴⁸ President Kimball rededicated South Africa for missionary work in 1979. That same year, the first locals joined the LDS Church in Kenya after several years of an LDS presence limited to nonnative members. The LDS Church established a presence in Mauritius and Reunion in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The Church established a branch in Somalia in the early 1980s for foreign members, but the branch was discontinued after members returned to their home countries. The first LDS branch was organized in Swaziland in 1986, and government recognition and the first convert baptisms occurred in 1987. The Church received government recognition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1986 and dedicated the country for missionary work in 1987. In Liberia, missionary activity began, and the country was dedicated for missionary work in 1987. The LDS Church was first established in Sierra Leone in 1988. The first LDS group was organized in Lesotho in 1988, and legal recognition was obtained, and the first missionaries were assigned in 1989. An LDS presence was established, and the first convert baptisms in Cote d'Ivoire occurred in the late 1980s, but official recognition was not obtained until 1991.

In 1990, the Africa Area was organized with headquarters in Johannesburg, South Africa. Lesotho and Swaziland were dedicated for missionary work in February 1990.⁴⁴⁹ The Church was established in Uganda in 1990, and the first missionaries were assigned. That same year, the first LDS congregation was organized in Madagascar, and the first LDS missionaries were assigned the following year. Zimbabwe was dedicated for missionary work in October 1991.⁴⁵⁰ The Church received governmental recognition in the Republic of the Congo in December of 1991 and dedicated the country for missionary work the following year. In 1991, official government recognition for the LDS Church was obtained in Botswana. Government recognition was obtained for the Church in the Republic of the Congo in 1991, and the following year, the country was dedicated for missionary work. Missionary activity restarted in Zambia in 1992 in Lusaka. Botswana and Namibia were dedicated for missionary work in 1992. Missionaries were first assigned, the first congregation was organized, and the Church obtained legal recognition in Tanzania in 1992. The first official LDS meeting in

⁴⁴⁵ "Branches organized in Zambia," LDS Church News, 4 January 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43043/Branches-organized-in-Zambia.html>

⁴⁴⁶ "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>

⁴⁴⁷ "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>

⁴⁴⁸ "Namibia," Country Profile, retrieved 31 December 2010. <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/namibia>

⁴⁴⁹ "Six lands are dedicated: 'New day dawning' in 2 small African mountain kingdoms," LDS Church News, 10 March 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19958/Six-lands-are-dedicated—New-day-dawning-in-2-small-African-mountain-kingdoms.html>

⁴⁵⁰ "Three nations dedicated in Africa," LDS Church News, 23 November 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21541/Three-nations-dedicated-in-Africa.html>

Ethiopia occurred in 1992, and missionaries were first assigned and government registration occurred in 1993. The LDS Church was first established in the Central African Republic in 1992. LDS Church services were first held in Cameroon in the 1980s, but legal status from the government was not obtained until 1993.⁴⁵¹ The LDS Church received official recognition in Angola in 1993.⁴⁵² The first LDS branch was organized, and the first LDS missionaries were assigned to Burundi in 1993, but missionaries were withdrawn shortly thereafter, and the branch was discontinued several years later. The Church was officially registered with the Malawian government in 1995. The first branches in Mozambique and Angola were organized in 1996, and the Church obtained legal recognition in Mozambique the same year. In 1998, most countries in West and Central Africa were reassigned to the newly organized Africa West Area, whereas most of the remaining countries in Sub-Saharan Africa were retained in the renamed Africa Southeast Area. The first full-time missionaries were assigned to Malawi and Mozambique in 1999. That same year, the first senior missionary couple was assigned, and the first branch was organized in Togo. Most countries in Central Africa were reassigned to the Africa Southeast Area in 2003. The first LDS missionaries were assigned to Benin in 1998, and legal status was obtained in 2003.

Foreign missionaries were withdrawn from Madagascar between 2002 and 2003 due to political instability. An LDS branch operated in Mayotte between 2005 and 2009. Benin and Togo were dedicated for missionary work in 2007. The first full-time missionaries were assigned to Angola in 2008. In 2008, thousands of self-affiliated Latter-day Saints met in unofficial congregations, waiting for official LDS Church establishment in South Sudan. In 2008, the first LDS branch in Rwanda was organized, and the following year the country was dedicated for missionary work. Political instability nearly prompted mission leadership to evacuate nonnative missionaries from Madagascar in 2009. That same year, the first LDS branch was organized in South Sudan in Juba. In 2010, the first LDS branch was organized in Djibouti to service foreign military personnel. In 2010, hundreds of self-affiliated Latter-day Saints in Burundi were awaiting official church establishment. That same year, the first LDS missionaries were reassigned to Burundi, and a branch was reorganized in Bujumbura. In 2011, an administrative area branch was organized in Gabon. In late 2012, the first official branch in Gabon was organized in Libreville and the first proselytizing missionaries were assigned to Rwanda. In early 2013, there was no official LDS presence and no known independent LDS branches in Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mayotte, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, the Seychelles, and Somalia.

Missions

The South African Mission was among the first twenty missions organized by the LDS Church, being formed in 1853 but closed in 1865. The mission reopened in 1903 and was later renamed the South Africa Johannesburg Mission. In 1972, most African nations came under the jurisdiction of the International Mission that was organized to administer nations that did not pertain to an ordinary mission. In 1980, the Africa West Mission [later renamed Nigeria Lagos] began administering West Africa, namely Nigeria and Ghana. Additional missions organized have included the South Africa Cape Town (1984), Ghana Accra (1985), Zaire Kinshasa [later renamed Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa] (1987), Zimbabwe Harare (1987), Liberia Monrovia [discontinued in 1991] (1988), the Mascarene Islands [relocated to South Africa Durban in 1991] (1988), Nigeria Aba [relocated to Port Harcourt in 1995] (1988), Kenya Nairobi (1991), Cameroon Yaounde [relocated to Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan in 1993] (1992), Nigeria Ilorin [relocated to Ibadan in 1993 and discontinued in 1995] (1992), Nigeria Jos [relocated to Enugu in 1993] (1992), Madagascar Antananarivo (1998), Cape Verde Praia (2002), Nigeria Ibadan [renamed Nigeria Lagos East in 2007 and discontinued in 2009] (2002), Nigeria Uyo [relocated to Calabar in 2008] (2002), Mozambique Maputo (2005), Uganda Kampala (2005), Ghana Cape Coast (2007), Sierra Leone Freetown (2007), Democratic Republic of Congo

⁴⁵¹ "From the world," LDS Church News, 22 January 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24203/From-the-world.html>

⁴⁵² "Angola," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/angola>

Lubumbashi (2010), Benin Conotou (2011), Zambia Lusaka (2011), Ghana Kumasi (2012), Angola Luanda (2013), Botswana Gaborone (2013), Ghana Accra West (2013), Liberia Monrovia (2013), and Nigeria Benin City (2013) Missions. The number of LDS missions in Sub-Saharan Africa increased from one in 1970 to two in 1980, nine in 1990, twelve in 2000, twenty-two in 2012, and twenty-seven in 2013.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 391,000 (2012)

There were 6,142 Latter-day Saints in Africa in 1973,⁴⁵³ 95% of whom resided in South Africa. Regional church membership increased to 12,810 in 1983, 29,375 in 1987, 79,350 in 1993, 112,100 in 1997, 153,451 in 2000, 237,124 in 2005, and 332,914 in 2010. Among countries with at least one hundred Latter-day Saints in 2000, membership grew most rapidly in Togo (965%), Mozambique (921%), and Cameroon (547%) and grew most slowly in Reunion (17%), Mauritius (38%), and Swaziland (58%). LDS membership in the region increased by 117% between 2000 and 2010. The percentage of Latter-day Saint in the general population varies widely by country, as Cape Verde (one Latter-day Saint per 69 inhabitants), Ghana (one in 550), and Sierra Leone (one in 602) have the highest percentages of Latter-day Saints, whereas Burundi (one in 200,000), Ethiopia (one in 80,800), and South Sudan (one in 80,000) have the smallest percentages of Latter-day Saints among countries with an independent LDS congregation operating in mid-2011. LDS membership was greater than 50,000 in only two nations in 2010: Nigeria (98,359) and South Africa (54,996). In 2010, one in 2,500 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 451 Branches: 607 Groups: 100+ (2011)

There were 175 LDS congregations in 1987. The number of congregations increased to 408 in 1993, 456 in 1997, 564 in 2000, 747 in 2005, and 1,016 in mid-2011. Accelerated congregational growth occurred in the 2000s. The increase in the number of congregations between 2000 and mid-2011 was greatest in Nigeria (116), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (66), Ghana (61), and South Africa (49).

The first stake organized in Sub-Saharan Africa was the Transvaal Stake [later renamed the Johannesburg South Africa Stake] in 1970. Other countries that have stakes at present provided with the year the first stake was organized include Nigeria (1988), Ghana (1991), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1996), Cote d'Ivoire (1997), Zimbabwe (1999), Madagascar (2000), Kenya (2001), the Republic of the Congo (2003), Uganda (2010), Cape Verde (2012), Botswana (2012), and Sierra Leone (2012). The number of stakes in Sub-Saharan Africa increased from one in 1970 to two in 1980, five in 1987, ten in 1993, twenty-one in 1997, thirty-three in 2000, forty-two in 2005, and fifty-eight in mid-2011. Between 2000 and mid-2011, new stakes were organized in Nigeria (6), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5), Ghana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe (3), Cote d'Ivoire and Madagascar (2), and Kenya, the Republic of the Congo, and Uganda (1). As of mid-2011, two stakes had been discontinued in Nigeria (the Umuahia Nigeria Stake in 2005) and Liberia (the Monrovia Liberia Stake in 2007). The number of districts in Sub-Saharan Africa numbered twenty-one in 1987, fifty-four in 1993, thirty-eight in 1997, thirty-three in 2000, thirty-six in 2005, and fifty-nine in mid-2011.

Activity and Retention

The number of active members in most Sub-Saharan African congregations generally varies from fifty to 200. In 2010, the average LDS congregation had 328 members. Member activity and convert retention rates vary widely by subregion as Central African nations generally exhibits the highest member activity rates (50–85%),

⁴⁵³ "Membership Distribution of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1973," *Deseret News* 1974 Church Almanac, 117.

whereas small island nations in the Indian Ocean and Cape Verde appear to experience the lowest member activity rates (25–40%). Member activity rates tend to be lower in southern Africa and in nations that have no active missionary program and a small church presence, such as the Central African Republic. Countries in the region that appear to experience the highest member activity rates include Burundi (85%), Rwanda (80%), Djibouti (75%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan (67%), and Madagascar (62%), whereas Uganda (23%), Reunion (25%), and Liberia, the Central African Republic, and Cape Verde (25%) appear to experience the lowest member activity rates. Active LDS membership in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated at 145,000 or 43% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, French, Swahili, Amharic, Portuguese, Arabic, Malagasy, Yoruba, Igbo, Shona, Zulu, Xhosa, Lingala, Afrikaans, Tswana, Arabic, Twi, Fante, Efik, Spanish.

All LDS scriptures are available in English, French, Swahili, Portuguese, Arabic, Malagasy, Igbo, Shona, Arabic, Twi, and Fante. Most church materials are translated into French, Portuguese, Arabic, Malagasy, Shona, and Arabic, whereas few church materials are translated into Swahili, Igbo, Twi, and Fante. Only the Book of Mormon is available in Amharic, Yoruba, Zulu, Xhosa, Lingala, Afrikaans, Tswana, and Efik and most of these languages have few translations of LDS materials. A few LDS materials often limited to the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, the Articles of Faith, and *Gospel Principles* are available in Hausa, Fulani, Somali, Kikongo, Chichewa, Tsihiluba, Sotho, Moore, Sepedi [Northern Sotho], Ewe, Wolof, Bemba, Mandinka, Bambara, Baoule, Ndebele, Mende, Mauritian Creole, Fon, Afar, and Fang.

Meetinghouses

In mid-2011, there were approximately 575 LDS meetinghouses in Sub-Saharan Africa. Most LDS congregations meet in remodeled buildings or rented spaces. LDS meetinghouses have been constructed in most nations with an official LDS presence and are most prevalent in nations with a more established LDS communities such as in South Africa. Some newly organized or small branches and groups meet in members' homes or outdoors.

Health and Safety

Endemic tropical diseases, HIV/AIDS, low living standards, and poor access to clean water are serious health challenges in most nations in Sub-Saharan Africa. HIV/AIDS infects 10% of the adult population or more in Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique, and Malawi. Many Africans live below the poverty line. There have been some safety concerns for members and missionaries presented by lawlessness, wars, insurgencies, dangerous driving conditions, and ethnic violence. President George T. Brooks of the Zimbabwe Harare Mission was killed in a car accident and his wife was critically injured in 1990.⁴⁵⁴ President Ralph L. Duke of the Uganda Kampala Mission was killed in a car accident in Uganda in 2007.⁴⁵⁵ Violent crime poses major obstacles for church growth in South Africa, which suffers from the one of the world's highest rates of violent crime and rape. The sexual assault and robbery of a pair of sister missionaries serving in the South Africa Durban Mission in 2006 resulted in the withdrawal of all sister missionaries from South Africa that year.⁴⁵⁶ Full-time missionaries limit proselytism on the basis of areas and time of day for safety reasons. Driving also poses safety hazards, evidence by the death of a missionary in the

⁴⁵⁴ "Mission president in Zimbabwe killed, wife injured in car accident," LDS Church News, 4 August 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20363/Mission-president-in-Zimbabwe-killed-wife-injured-in-car-accident.html>

⁴⁵⁵ "Accident claims mission president," LDS Church News, 19 May 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50590/Accident-claims-mission-president.html>

⁴⁵⁶ "South Attack puts safety on Utahns' minds," LDS Church News, 6 July 2006. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,640192620,00.html>

Johannesburg mission in 2008.⁴⁵⁷ Two missionaries have been murdered while serving in Africa in the past ten years, both in Cote d'Ivoire. In 1999, a full-time North American missionary died from being stabbed in the chest in a random attack.⁴⁵⁸ In 2002, a senior missionary sister serving with her husband in Yamoussoukro was murdered in her apartment in a robbery attempt.⁴⁵⁹ Safety is a major concern that has led the Church to move very cautiously into South Sudan. One of the members in the Akobo Group was killed in a nighttime attack in late 2009 but did not appear to be targeted because of religion. Those meeting in the Church's name in the Nyamlel area take care of hundreds of freed child slaves from the Darfur region. Religiously-motivated hate crimes and acts of violence in central and northern Nigeria targeting Christians pose major safety concerns for members and missionaries.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The LDS Church has conducted extensive humanitarian and development assistance in many Sub-Saharan Africa nations such as Ghana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. Activities have primarily consisted of donations of food, emergency relief, wheelchairs, clothing, and medical equipment, neonatal resuscitation training, clean water projects, measles vaccinations, the construction of pit latrines, remodeling and outfitting hospital and nonprofit facilities, and vision care. In recent years, the Perpetual Education Fund has been introduced among returned LDS missionaries to provide low-interest loans for obtaining higher education. There has been no significant development work meeting educational needs with the exception of literacy classes that are headed by local members and leaders in some nations like Nigeria.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church benefits from most nations in the region experiencing high levels of religious freedom, as few societal abuses of religious freedom are reported and local and national governments protect the right of individuals and groups to practice their religious beliefs. Nearly all countries with an official LDS presence experience widespread religious freedom, yet LDS outreach is often limited to a few of the largest cities or only a couple of administrative divisions.

Sub-Saharan Africa has the most nations of any world region with widespread religious freedom yet no official LDS Church presence. There are no legal restrictions preventing an official LDS Church establishment and the assignment of full-time missionaries in Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mayotte, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, the Seychelles, and South Sudan. Few individuals from these nations joining the LDS Church abroad and returning to their homelands, a lack of vision expanding outreach into additional nations, low living standards, no nearby LDS mission outreach centers, limited missionary resources dedicated to Sub-Saharan Africa, health and safety concerns, limited accessibility, and perceived low receptivity due to many of these nations having comparatively small populations or predominantly Muslim populations appear significant contributors to the lack of an LDS presence in these nations today. Violence, civil wars, and political instability have also delayed the establishment or maintenance of an LDS presence in several Sub-Saharan African nations, including Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, and Somalia. With the plateauing of the worldwide LDS missionary force in the 2000s and greater concentration

⁴⁵⁷ "Missionary dies in South Africa," LDS Church News, 18 January 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51552/Missionary-dies-in-South-Africa.html>

⁴⁵⁸ "Slain missionary stood tall spiritually and physically," LDS Church News, 1 May 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/35703/Slain-missionary-stood-tall-spiritually-and-physically.html>

⁴⁵⁹ "Missionary death," LDS Church News, 10 August 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42260/Missionary-death.html>

opening unreached areas of countries with an LDS presence, prospects for a future LDS Church establishment in these nations appear mediocre to poor in the medium term.

Countries that experience low levels of religious freedom offer little realistic opportunity for the LDS Church to establish or expand an official church presence. Most of these nations are homogenously Muslim with ethnic groups that exhibit cultural and traditional ties to Islam. Nations that experience the lowest levels of religious freedom in Sub-Saharan Africa include Eritrea, Comoros, Somalia, northern Nigeria, Chad, Guinea, and Zanzibar, and Tanzania. The refusal of the government to recognize additional religious groups, the imprisonment of Christians from nonregistered religious groups, and strict legislation mandating government approval for disseminating literature, constructing meetinghouses, and assembly for religious groups are major barriers for the establishment of any LDS presence in Eritrea. Some societal persecution targets Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses that may indicate potential discrimination and persecution directed toward Latter-day Saints in Eritrea if an official church presence were established. In Comoros, laws prohibiting Christian proselytism, the designation of Islam as the state religion, and the societal ostracism and discrimination of non-Muslim Comorians pose significant challenges for establishing a church presence among the native population. Lawlessness, persecution of non-Muslims by society and de facto governments, and ongoing violence will prevent an LDS Church establishment in Somalia until the country is stabilized, laws protecting religious freedom are established and observed, and society becomes more tolerant of non-Muslim religious groups. Only a couple of LDS congregations operate in the twelve northern Nigerian states under Shari'a law where Christians are permitted to worship and proselyte, but some local religious leaders have instigated religious violence between Muslims and Christians. Political and societal instability have prevented a greater LDS establishment in these Nigerian states. In Chad, religious groups may worship freely and foreign missionaries may serve, but missionaries have been prohibited from proselytism since mid-2007, which would seriously impede the functioning of LDS missionaries in Chad, if assigned. Societal abuse of religious freedom discriminating against and persecuting Muslim converts to Christianity has occurred in Guinea, which may reduce the receptivity of Guineans to the LDS Church. Christians face some limitations on worship in Muslim Zanzibar in Tanzania, dissuading any prospective LDS outreach in Zanzibar and Pemba.

Cultural Issues

The LDS Church has experienced moderate to high rates of receptivity in nearly all nations where an official LDS presence has been established in Sub-Saharan Africa, as most ethnic groups have demonstrated consistent interest and curiosity about Christianity. Many nations like Nigeria have a high percentage of churchgoers in the general population, favoring efforts by the LDS Church to instill patterns of regular church attendance in investigators and converts. Enthusiasm for prayer and scripture reading is common, but low literacy rates and poverty are challenges that limited local member self-sufficiency. Low standards of living create difficulties for generating local leadership and economic self-reliance but also provide opportunities for LDS humanitarian and development projects that can meet these needs in the general population, raise public awareness of the Church, provide finding opportunities for full-time missionaries, and offer opportunities for local members to introduce friends and family in need to services provided by the Church. Lower receptivity occurs among nonblack African ethnic groups in South Africa and in Reunion and Mauritius. Teaching approaches tailored toward those with a nonreligious background will be needed for achieving greater progress in these nations or among these populations. Indigenous beliefs are widespread in some nations like South Sudan and Burkina Faso. LDS teaching and proselytism approaches will need to adapt to the understanding and religious background of non-Christian animists and syncretic Christian-animists. The integration of some religious practices such as dancing and beating drums has posed minor cultural challenges in some nations like Nigeria. Homogenous Muslim populations in some nations like Somalia present a nearly insurmountable cultural barrier for the LDS Church, as misunderstandings about Christianity and Christians are widespread and converts to Christianity are often shunned and ostracized by their families and communities. The LDS Church lacks a presence in these nations, further challenging any prospective efforts to extend outreach, as

there is no support group of former Muslim Latter-day Saints who can fellowship and nurture new converts in these nations. The prominence of the Catholic Church in some nations like Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe pose potential barriers to outreach if an LDS presence is established one day.

The traditional custom of paying a dowry for a bride to get married is a burden on young adults and results in fewer members marrying in many nations. Syncretism blending Christianity with indigenous beliefs and superstition also presents challenges. Casual sexual relations are common in some nations and present a cultural challenge for missionaries and local leaders to address. The high percentage of the population infected with HIV/AIDS in many Southern African nations is a major concern that threatens to destabilize society and challenges the establishment of a long-term LDS presence with full-member families.

Polygamy has presented challenges for outreach, as few polygamists end their marriages in divorce to be baptized. Those engaged in a polygamous relationship must end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency in order to be considered for baptism in the LDS Church. The Church cannot baptize those who have committed serious sins such as murder without an interview from the mission president, and in some cases baptism must be approved by the First Presidency. Issues of war crimes and past violence have generated issues for other faiths.

National Outreach

Sub-Saharan Africa receives low levels of LDS mission outreach, as approximately 15% of the regional population appears to reside in a city or location with an LDS congregation. Provided with the percentage of the population inhabiting cities with LDS congregations, countries and territories that appear to receive the greatest national outreach include Cape Verde (76%), the Republic of the Congo (45%), South Africa (39%), and Reunion (36%), whereas countries with an official LDS presence and active missionary program that appear to receive the least national outreach include Ethiopia (4%), Burundi (6%), and Uganda (8%). Fifteen of the forty-nine countries in the region have no official LDS congregations and are completely unreached by Latter-day Saints, including Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mayotte, Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, the Seychelles, and Somalia. The combined population of these sixteen unreached nations is over one hundred million and accounts for 12.5% of the regional population. Over half of the population in unreached Sub-Saharan countries resides in Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, and Senegal. In 2011, the Africa West Area Branch was organized to administer small groups of members operating unofficially in Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, and Senegal, but no formal proselytism occurred in any of these nations. Little progress occurred in opening additional Sub-Saharan African countries between the mid-1990s and the late 2000s as in 1994, the LDS Church was authorized to performing missionary work in twenty-six of the forty-four countries in the Africa Area.⁴⁶⁰

The percentage of the population in Sub-Saharan African countries reached by LDS mission outreach varies principally by the percentage of the population residing in urban areas rather than by population size or duration of LDS mission outreach. Nigeria is home to 19% of the regional population, yet only approximately 23% of the national population resides in cities or locations that receive LDS outreach, although the LDS Church in Nigeria operates some of the longest, most consistent mission outreaches in all of Sub-Saharan Africa. The four countries with the highest percentage of the population residing in cities or locations with LDS congregations are among the top ten countries with the most urbanized populations. Establishing congregations in rural areas has been a recurrent challenge for the LDS Church worldwide that will need to be mastered in order for greater progress to occur in expanding national outreach. The LDS Church has only achieved notable progress in expanding national outreach into rural communities and small towns in southeastern Nigeria, southern

⁴⁶⁰ "The Church in Africa: The dawning of a brighter day," LDS Church News, 8 October 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24089/The-Church-in-Africa-The-dawning-of-a-brighter-day.html>

Ghana, and in some areas of Kenya at present, but oftentimes rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate the highest receptivity and some of the greatest opportunities of growth. Factors contributing to minimal rural outreach in the region include warfare and insurgencies, political instability, isolated location, transportation challenges, the lack of LDS materials in local languages, low standards of living, and the unfeasibility of assigning full-time missionaries to a single village due to limited LDS missionary manpower worldwide. Local members have proven extremely resourceful in expanding outreach into rural communities and have been the primary driver behind the establishment of nearly all LDS congregations functioning in rural communities at present. Wise utilization of local leadership and member-missionary resources with careful coordination from mission and area presidencies can ensure that effective outreach is extended with the fewest resources possible while simultaneously training and preparing new converts to fill local leadership and staff member-missionary roles. Reliance on senior missionary couples to open additional cities to missionary work and lay the foundation of prospective congregations has limited the scope and vision of expanding outreach in many Sub-Saharan African nations due to the limited number of senior missionary couples but nonetheless provides valuable leadership training and experience to local members who have often facilitated long-term self-sustainability.

The greatest opportunity for expanding LDS outreach in Sub-Saharan Africa is in nations that already have an LDS presence, notwithstanding significant unrealized opportunities for growth in currently unreached nations. Seventy percent (72%) of the regional population resides in countries and territories that have an LDS presence but in cities and locations that receive no mission outreach and that have no LDS congregations. Opportunities appear most favorable for expanding national outreach in Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Christian-majority areas of Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Kenya, as these nations have the largest populations, and local populations exhibit high receptivity to the LDS Church. Missionary forces in most of these nations are nearly self-sufficient or are totally self-sufficient, increasing the opportunities for national outreach expansion with minimal impact on worldwide LDS missionary resources. Meaningful opportunities with receptive populations and generally widespread religious freedom are found in nearly all nations in the region at present.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The LDS Church in Sub-Saharan Africa overall experiences moderately high rates of member activity and convert retention. Dependence on North American missionaries to staff local missionary forces is one of the greatest indicators of member activity and convert retention in Sub-Saharan Africa as nations that rely most heavily on non-African missionaries generally experience the lowest member activity and convert retention rates. Non-African missionaries appear to comprise the largest percentages of local missionary forces in island nations and in southern and eastern Sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, many of these nations have member activity rates between 23% and 40%. Nations that are the most self-sufficient in staffing their local missionary needs or are totally self-reliant in supplying missionaries generally exhibit member activity rates over 50%. Reasons for the variation of member activity rates and prevalence of non-African missionaries include a lack of returned missionaries to supply local leadership manpower, non-African missionaries offer no long-term support to the region, and non-African missionaries are often more susceptible to quick-baptize tactics that deemphasize the importance of developing habitual church attendance prior to baptism. Additional challenges include distance to church meetinghouses, the extremely limited LDS presence in most nations resulting in members moving to cities with no established congregations, and counter-proselytism and competition from other missionary-focused Christian groups.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Most nations in Sub-Saharan Africa exhibit extreme ethnic diversity, as tribalism is a major cultural force. The lack of an ethnic majority in some nations fosters a cosmopolitan atmosphere tolerant of differing

ethnic groups that generally live together harmoniously in society, such as in Tanzania and Gabon. Ethnically homogenous populations are found in few Sub-Saharan African nations including Lesotho (99.7% Sotho) and Comoros (99% Comorian), whereas a single ethnic group comprises a strong majority in a few nations such as Burundi (85% Hutu), Somalia (85% Somali), Rwanda (84% Hutu), Swaziland (84% Swazi), and Botswana (79% Tswana). Ethnic violence has often been most extreme in nations that have an ethnic majority and a discriminated-against, ostracized sizeable ethnic minority. Overall, the LDS Church has encountered few ethnic integration issues in Sub-Saharan Africa due to few Latter-day Saints in the region, very low levels of national outreach in most nations, and a tiny or nonexistent LDS presence in nations or areas that have experienced considerable ethnic violence. The LDS Church appears to have experienced the greatest ethnic integration challenges in South Africa and Kenya. In South Africa, wealthier white South Africans generally live in secure compounds, whereas blacks and coloreds reside in poor townships or in rural areas. Geographical separation has reduced ethnic integration challenges, which have in the past been the greatest challenge for whites integrating into black congregations. Ethnic integration challenges for the LDS Church in an area of Kenya in the late 2000s required the appointment of senior missionaries as branch presidents, as ethnic hostilities ignited among branch members. LDS missionaries report that most ethnic integration issues for the Church in Sub-Saharan Africa are language-based rather than ethnically-based.

Language Issues

Thirty-six of the ninety-two languages with over one million native speakers have translations of LDS materials accounting for 61% of native speakers who speak a language with over one million speakers. Second language speakers of these languages may increase the percentage of the population with access to LDS materials to as high as 85%. All LDS scriptures are only available in eleven languages, however, and the Book of Mormon is translated in only twenty languages. There is a pressing need for additional LDS materials and scriptures translated into the most commonly spoken languages, let alone a need for translations of lesser-spoken languages with sizeable numbers of LDS speakers, such as in some areas of Nigeria. Provided with where the language is predominantly spoken and the number of speakers, indigenous African languages with the most native speakers without translations of LDS materials or scripture include Oromo [Ethiopia] (17.1 million), Gikuyu [Kenya] (7.18 million), Tigrigna [Eritrea and Ethiopia] (5.72 million), Sukuma [Tanzania] (5.43 million), Kituba [Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo] (5.36 million), Dholuo [Kenya] (4.27 million), Luganda [Uganda] (4.13 million), Senoufo [Cote d'Ivoire and Mali] (4 million), Umbundu [Angola] (4 million), Kamba [Kenya] (3.96 million), Asante [Ghana] (3.5 million), Kanuri [Nigeria] (3.2 million), Kimbundu [Angola] (3 million), Sidamo [Ethiopia] (2.9 million), Zarma [Niger] (2.35 million), Nyankore [Uganda] (2.33 million), Sebat Bet Gurage [Ethiopia] (2.32 million), Tiv [Nigeria] (2.21 million), Ekegusii [Kenya] (2.12 million), Soga [Uganda] (2.06 million), Beti [Cameroon] (2 million), Tsonga [South Africa] (1.94 million), Maay [Somalia] (1.86 million), Kimiiru [Kenya] (1.75 million), Chiga [Uganda] (1.58 million), Teso [Uganda] (1.57 million), Luba-Katanga [Democratic Republic of the Congo] (1.51 million), Gbe [Benin and Togo] (1.5 million), Lango [Uganda] (1.49 million), Gogo [Tanzania] (1.44 million), Anaang [Nigeria] (1.4 million), Dinka [South Sudan] (1.35 million), Haya [Tanzania] (1.3 million), Gamo-Gafo-Dawro [Ethiopia] (1.24 million), Themne [Sierra Leone] (1.23 million), Wolaytta [Ethiopia] (1.23 million), Acholi [1.17 million] (1.17 million), Serer-Sine [Senegal] (1.13 million), Masaaba [Uganda] (1.12 million), Boron [Ghana] (1.1 million), Dagombe [Ghana] (1.02 million), Dangme [Ghana] (1.02 million), Ngbaka [Democratic Republic of the Congo] (1.01 million), Ebira [Nigeria] (1 million), Edo [Nigeria] (1 million), Ha [Tanzania] (1 million), Izon [Nigeria] (1 million), Julia [Burkina Faso] (1 million), Makonde [Tanzania] (1 million), Nyamwezi [Tanzania] (1 million), Silt'e [Ethiopia] (1 million), Songe [Democratic Republic of the Congo] (1 million), Tonga [Zambia] (1 million), Tumbuka [Malawi] (1 million), and Yao [Malawi] (1 million). Prospects for translating basic proselytism material may be forthcoming for languages spoken in areas of countries that receive LDS outreach, but significant delays translating and publishing materials and scriptures in additional languages has occurred due to the lengthy recommendation and review process.

Missionary Service

Sub-Saharan African Latter-day Saints have demonstrated moderate to high levels of full-time missionary service. Two missionary training centers operate in Tema, Ghana and Johannesburg, South Africa, both of which were established in the early 2000s. The LDS Church in Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe appears to be self-sufficient or almost self-sufficient in staffing their full-time missionary forces with local members, whereas local members serving missions appear to comprise approximately half of the number of full-time missionaries assigned to Angola, Ethiopia, Liberia, Madagascar, the Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Common obstacles that reduce rates of missionary service for members in the region include poverty, reliance on all family members to provide economic sustenance, age limitations on missionary service, saving money to pay dowries for marriage, and a lack of missionary preparation classes or programs in some areas. Returned missionaries are resourceful and valuable in the encouragement and training of prospective full-time missionaries. Greater coordination of mission and local leaders and Church Education System teachers and personnel may improve prospects for increasing the number of members serving missions.

Leadership

As a whole, LDS leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa shows signs of a high degree of self-sustainability as evidenced by few missionaries holding leadership positions, commensurate congregational and membership growth rates, and the frequent organization of new stakes and districts. Poverty, underemployment and unemployment, and low literacy skills appear major barriers toward increasing the number of qualified LDS leaders in the region. Long distances from mission headquarters for many congregations has resulted in the irregular training and mentoring of local leaders by mission and area leadership. However, many local members who lead congregations make the most of their limited resources available and offer invaluable service and enthusiasm that has magnified mission outreach efforts and has expanded national outreach for decades. Local leaders in many countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo have readily undertaken administrative responsibilities and have helped train additional leadership. The often strong degree of self-sustainability of full-time missionary forces in the region has also contributed to the robust body of LDS leadership, as many returned missionaries remain in their home countries and staff leadership positions. The availability and size of active priesthood manpower in nations with 1,000 or fewer nominal members or in recently organized districts is often very limited and has delayed the organization of additional congregations. The primary reason for why many districts in Sub-Saharan Africa have not become stakes yet is due to insufficient numbers of total members and a lack of trained priesthood leadership rather than a lack of total active priesthood holders.

Temple

The first LDS temple in Sub-Saharan Africa was completed by the Church in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1985. Two additional temples have been constructed in Accra Ghana (2004) and Aba Nigeria (2005). In 2011, the Church announced two new temples in Durban, South Africa and Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, but as of April 2012, both temples were still in the planning stages. The three temples in the region appear moderately utilized by local members. In 2011, the Johannesburg South Africa Temple scheduled four endowment sessions Tuesdays through Thursdays and nine and thirteen sessions on Fridays and Saturdays, respectively. The Accra Ghana Temple scheduled six endowment sessions daily Tuesdays through Fridays and three sessions on Saturdays, whereas endowment sessions were made on an appointment basis for the Aba Nigeria Temple. Temple attendance in most of Sub-Saharan Africa is challenging as many Latter-day Saints are unable to attend the temple due to financial and travel constraints, but many members live worthy of a temple recommend. Low living standards, political instability, dependence on the international church for financing temples, and a lack of endowed members are major obstacles preventing the construction of additional temples. Prospects appear favorable for the construction of additional temples within the next

decade due to increasing active membership and the consistent organization of additional stakes. Cities that may have LDS temples constructed one day include Harare, Zimbabwe; Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire; Lubumbashi Democratic Republic of the Congo; Lagos, Nigeria; Benin City, Nigeria; Nairobi, Kenya; and Antananarivo, Madagascar.

Comparative Growth

The size of LDS membership in Sub-Saharan Africa ranks average among world regions, although the percentage of the regional population receiving LDS outreach is among the lowest in the world among regions in which the majority of countries and territories have an official LDS presence. Sub-Saharan Africa experiences one of the highest membership and congregational growth rates worldwide. The sustainability of the local missionary force is among the highest worldwide. Sub-Saharan Africa presents some of the most favorable church growth conditions for Latter-day Saints, yet the amount of mission resources dedicated to the region is comparatively small, resulting in the LDS Church growing at rates far below potential.

Other outreach-oriented Christians have experienced some of the most impressive and sustained rapid membership and congregational growth in Sub-Saharan Africa. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of Seventh Day Adventists worldwide reside in Sub-Saharan Africa where Adventists number over six million and meet in approximately 22,800 congregations, only 5,000 fewer congregations than the LDS Church operates worldwide. Jehovah's Witnesses maintain 24,800 congregations and report 1.4 million active members. Both Adventists and Witnesses have a presence in all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with only a couple exceptions, whereas the LDS Church does not have a presence in sixteen nations in the region. There are more active Seventh Day Adventists in all countries in the region than nominal Latter-day Saints with the exception of Cape Verde and the Republic of the Congo, whereas there are more active Jehovah's Witnesses in all countries in the region than nominal Latter-day Saints with the exception of Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. Since 2005, LDS annual membership growth rates have exceeded Seventh Day Adventists in Sub-Saharan Africa, whereas congregational growth rates appear comparable for both religious groups.

Future Prospects

The outlook for future LDS Church growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is highly favorable due to widespread interest in religion, high receptivity, strong self-sufficiency in local leadership and administration, local member enthusiasm for missionary work, good member activity and convert retention rates, and accelerated expansion of mission outreach in many nations in recent years. The organization of additional LDS missions is desperately needed in order to capitalize on current conditions as receptivity, religious freedom, and self-sufficiency in local leadership can be time sensitive. Medium-term prospects appear poor for the opening of additional unreached nations to missionary work, notwithstanding that many of these countries enjoy widespread religious freedom, but the outlook for expanding national outreach in nations with an established LDS presence is excellent. The scope and emphasis on humanitarian and development work will likely increase in the region for the LDS Church as greater resources are dedicated to Sub-Saharan Africa. Additional missions will likely be organized on a regular basis in the coming years. Potential future missions may be organized over the short and medium terms in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo; Bujumbura, Burundi; Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania; Lilongwe, Malawi; Mbuji-Mayi, Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Yaounde, Cameroon. Additional temples may be constructed in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire; Benin City, Nigeria; Lagos, Nigeria; and Nairobi, Kenya over the short and medium terms. Additional missionary training centers may be established in Aba, Nigeria and Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY PROFILES

ANGOLA

Geography

AREA: 1,246,700 square km. Angola occupies a large portion of the Atlantic Coast and western interior of southern Africa and borders the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, and Namibia. The small enclave of Cabinda to the north is also part of Angola, bordering the Atlantic Ocean, the Republic of Congo, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Climate is semi-arid in the south and semi-tropical in the north. In the north, dry, cool weather occurs in the winter, and rainy and hot weather occurs in the summer. Most of the interior consists of plateaus, whereas a narrow plain borders the coast. Heavy rainfall and flooding are natural hazards. Environmental issues include soil degradation and erosion, desertification, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and fresh water scarcity. Angola is divided into eighteen administrative provinces.

Peoples

Ovimbundu: 37%

Kimbundu: 25%

Bakongo: 13%

Mestico (mixed European and African): 2%

European: 1%

Other (Chokwe, Ganguela, Haneca-Humbe, Herero, Khoisan, Xindonga): 22%

Each ethnic group speaks their own language and many settled in Angola at different times. Ovimbundis form the largest ethnic group and historically were one of the most powerful. They are concentrated in the center of Angola along the coast and in the nearby interior. Kimbundus are found in the Luanda area and in the southeast interior. Northern Angola and Cabinda are predominantly Bakongo. Chokwe are found in the center and northeast parts of Angola, Ganguela in the southeast, Haneca-Humbe in the south, Herero in the southwest, Khoisan in the south, and Xindonga in the southeast. All of the ethnic groups are Bantu except Khoisan.

Population: 18,056,072 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.784% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 5.54 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 53.49 male, 55.73 female (2012)

Languages: Umbundu (30%), Kimbundu (22.5%), Kikongo (7.5%), Cokwe (3.5%), Luvale (3.5%), Oshiwambo (3%), other or unknown (30%). Portuguese is the official language, and Bantu languages are widely spoken. Forty-one native languages are spoken in Angola. Indigenous languages with over one million speakers include Umbundu (4 million), Kimbundu (3 million), and Kikongo (1 million).

Literacy: 67.4% (2001)

History

Various Bantu groups inhabited Angola before the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Portuguese colonized coastal areas between this period and independence in the twentieth century. Many native Africans in Angola were taken as slaves and transported to Brazil to work in plantations. Independence from Portugal occurred in 1975, at which time civil war erupted and continued until 2002. Two groups, the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), fought for control over the country. The United States and several other nations supported the UNITA, whereas the Soviet Union supported the MPLA, resulting in a proxy war. Over one million were killed and millions more displaced. The political and social systems have stabilized in the 2000s, although separatist movements continue in Cabinda.

Culture

Due to centuries of Portuguese rule, Angolans share many cultural similarities with Portugal such as the prominence the Catholic Church in society and use of the Portuguese language. Many native African customs with food and drink have been lost due to past Portuguese colonialism. With no ethnic majority, Angola exhibits a pluralistic society that was once dominated by tribalism. Most Angolans speak tribal languages. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are low. Although illegal, polygamy is common and socially accepted.⁴⁶¹

Economy

GDP per capita: \$5,900 (2011) [12.3% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.486

Corruption Index: 2.0 (2011)

The Angolan economy is heavily dependent on oil revenues and exports. Since 2006, Angola has been a member of OPEC, which limits the amount of oil the country can produce. Although industry accounts for 65% of the country's GDP, 85% of the workforce is employed in agriculture. As a result, oil and industrial wealth are unevenly distributed, with most Angolans remaining very poor. Despite abundant natural resources including petroleum, diamonds, iron ore, uranium, gold, bauxite, copper, phosphates, and feldspar, 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. In the mid-2000s, Angola received loans from China to help rebuild the country's infrastructure that had been damaged due to the long civil war. This has resulted with an increased sphere of Chinese influence in Africa. China is the largest export partner, accounting for 36% of all exports. The United States is the second largest export and third largest import partner, with Portugal being the largest import partner.

Angola ranks among the world's most corrupt countries largely due to political instability and much of its wealth in control of a small business and government elite. Separatist movements in the oil-rich Cabinda region have also increased vulnerability to corruption. Angola is a transshipment point for cocaine.

Faiths

Christian: 93%

Indigenous beliefs, other, and unknown: 7%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 7,336,198

⁴⁶¹ "Angola," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 16 June 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/angola>

African Christian 3,334,635
 Protestant 1,333,854
 Seventh Day Adventists 395,570 1,037
 Jehovah's Witnesses 83,649 1,137
 Latter-day Saints 1,257 7

Religion

Christians constitute a strong majority, but accurate statistics on religious affiliation are unavailable. Angolans widely observe indigenous beliefs, but some statistics claim that Christians constitute over 93% of the population and downplay the influence of indigenous religion.⁴⁶² Estimates for the percentage of the population that is Catholic range from 55%–70%. Several Protestant denominations entered the country in the twentieth century and have experienced rapid growth. African Christian denominations appear to account for 25% of the population whereas traditional Protestant churches appear to constitute 10% of the population. There are an estimated 100,000 Muslims, many of whom are immigrants.⁴⁶³

Religious Freedom

Angola struggled with religious freedom after independence, and the government did not permit foreign missionaries to enter the country until the early 1990s. At present, religious freedom is protected by the constitution of Angola and recognized by the government. To register with the government, a religious group must have over 100,000 members and a presence in at least two-thirds of the administrative provinces. Registration is not required for a religious group to operate.⁴⁶⁴

Major Cities

Urban: 57%

Luanda, Huambo, **Lobito**, **Benguela**, **Namibe**, **Kuito**, Lubango, **Malanje**, **M'banza-Kongo**, **Uige**.

Cities listed in **bold** do not have congregations.

Three of the ten most populous cities have an LDS presence. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the national population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

LDS Church members have lived in Angola since 1985. Although the Church did not have an official presence, a group of members met in the capital of Luanda for many years prior to a branch being organized. Many members were baptized in France and Portugal and later returned to Angola. Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy visited Angola in 1992 and held a sacrament meeting with fifty in attendance. The Church was officially recognized in 1993.⁴⁶⁵ When the Africa Area was divided in 1998, Angola was assigned to the Africa Southeast Area. In early 2005, Angola was assigned to the Mozambique Maputo Mission. Seminary and institute commenced in 2006. Young full-time missionaries were first assigned to Angola in late 2008. In the fall of 2009, four missionaries were serving in Angola but were withdrawn briefly that fall due to visa difficulties.

⁴⁶² "Angola," Association of Religious Data Archives, retrieved 16 June 2011. http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_7_2.asp

⁴⁶³ "Angola," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148660.htm>

⁴⁶⁴ "Angola," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148660.htm>

⁴⁶⁵ "Angola," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/angola>

Visa problems appeared to have been resolved before the end of the year. In the fall, the Mozambique Maputo Mission appointed a mission counselor to administer the Church in Angola. President Artur Miranda, a native Angolan who returned after living in Portugal, was given authority to direct the affairs of the Church in Angola, including the organization of additional groups for isolated members throughout the country, under the direction of the Mozambique Maputo Mission. In 2011, the mission president of the former Portugal Porto Mission was released and reassigned to serve in Angola as a missionary couple with his wife, possibly in preparation for a separate mission for Angola. In 2013, the first mission in Angola was created with headquarters in Luanda.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,257 (2012)

By 1996 there was a total of 400 members living in Angola who were baptized in Europe between 1985 and 1996.⁴⁶⁶ Eighty-six people attended when the first branch was organized in 1996.⁴⁶⁷ Membership reached 500 in 1997 and 510 in 2000. Slow membership growth occurred during the 2000s as membership totaled 563 in 2002, 621 in 2004, 703 in 2006, 647 in 2008, and 932 in 2010. In 2008, membership dropped by over one hundred, likely as a result of membership updates. Annual membership growth rates have generally ranged between 2% and 12% over the past decade. Angolans living in Portugal regularly join the Church. In 2010, one in 14,300 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 7 Groups: 2 (April 2013)

A group functioned in Angola prior to the organization of the first branch in 1996. A second congregation was created in Luanda in late 2008, named the Cassequel Branch, and a third branch was organized in 2010 in Luanda, named the Luanda 2nd Branch. In spring 2011, the Luanda Angola District was formed and included three branches in Luanda. In mid-2011, a fourth branch was organized in the city of Lubango, and additional groups appeared to be operating in the cities or regions of Huambo and Moxico. Located on the outskirts of Luanda, Viana had its first LDS group organized in 2011, which became a branch before the end of the year. In early 2013, a fifth branch was created in Luanda.

Activity and Retention

In 2005, there were 200 attending Sunday meetings in the Luanda Branch.⁴⁶⁸ Some Angolan members live too far from locations where LDS meetings occur resulting in reduced member activity rates. Four hundred thirty-five attended the conference for organizing the Luanda Angola District in April 2011. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 500, or 50% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Portuguese.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Portuguese. Both *Gospel Principles* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* are available in Kikongo. The *Liabona* magazine has monthly issues in Portuguese.

⁴⁶⁶ "Angola," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/angola>

⁴⁶⁷ Coller, C.I. Rex. "First branch formed in Angola after years of strife," LDS Church News, 7 September 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/28209/First-branch-formed-in-Angola-after-years-of-strife.html>

⁴⁶⁸ "Church Continues to Grow in Africa," News from the Church, 20 October 2005. http://lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=7cecc8fe9c88d010VgnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD&locale=0&sourceId=237e9150dfcad010VgnVCM1000004d82620a_____

Meetinghouses

Locating buildings to rent or renovating housing for LDS congregations has been a persistent challenge due to high costs and low availability. The Luanda Branch was reportedly meeting in a renovated bakery in 2005.⁴⁶⁹ The Cassequel Branch was meeting in a different, likely rented, building in Luanda. Other congregations appear to meet in rented spaces or members' homes.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has donated wheelchairs in Angola since 2004.⁴⁷⁰ In 2005, LDS volunteers taught medical professionals neonatal resuscitation techniques.⁴⁷¹ Refugees were also assisted by the Church the same year.⁴⁷² Contributions were made to fighting measles 2006.⁴⁷³

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Angola has seen a great improvement in religious freedom, which together with widespread receptivity, has allowed Christian churches to gain many new members. The LDS Church has yet to make full use of the opportunities for proselytizing in Angola and expand national outreach.

Cultural Issues

Receptivity to Christianity is high and provides a favorable cultural advantage for LDS proselytism and outreach. Low substance abuse rates also reduce challenges for many to join the Church. Poverty and low standards of living present challenges for members to be economically self-sufficient and meet their basic needs. High prices for real estate in Luanda create challenges for the Church to open additional meetinghouses. Different ethnic groups in Angola share varying amounts of Portuguese influence, but possess different cultural traits. Following independence, many Angolans sought to return to their African traditions and culture. Polygamy is illegal but widely practiced and accepted; those involved in polygamous relationships cannot join the LDS Church without being divorced from all but one spouse.

National Outreach

Approximately 20% of the national population resides in cities with an LDS congregation. Independent branches extend outreach only in the cities of Luanda and Lubango and in only two of Angola's eighteen administrative provinces. Only a single LDS branch provided outreach in Luanda until late 2008, and at present, there are only three branches and one group in the city. Overall, Luanda remains underserved, and relatively few people have heard of the LDS Church.

⁴⁶⁹ "Church Continues to Grow in Africa," News from the Church, 20 October 2005. <http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=7cecc8fe9c88d010VgnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD&locale=0&sourceId=237e9150dfcad010VgnVCM1000004d82620a>

⁴⁷⁰ Assis, Fernanco. "Helping in Brazil by giving mobility," LDS Church News, 24 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50277/Helping-in-Brazil-by-giving-mobility.html>

⁴⁷¹ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Saving babies' lives," LDS Church News, 12 November 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48131/Saving-babies-lives.html>

⁴⁷² Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Unprecedented year," LDS Church News, 14 January 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48384/Unprecedented-year.html>

⁴⁷³ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Measles initiative continues to fight disease in Africa," LDS Church News, 30 September 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49498/Measles-initiative-continues-to-fight-disease-in-Africa.html>

Past civil war, low living standards, distance from established church centers, the lack of Portuguese-language resources in Africa, past government restrictions on foreign full-time missionaries, few missionaries assigned to Africa, and ongoing visa challenges have contributed to the extremely limited LDS presence in Angola today. Angola appeared to not be assigned to a mission and likely reported to the Area Presidency until becoming part of the Mozambique Maputo Mission in 2005. Today, Angola receives regular visits from the mission president in Mozambique, but distance and isolation reduce the frequency and duration of these visits and have limited the possibility of additional areas opening for missionary work and the training of local leadership. With the calling of a counselor in the mission presidency in the Mozambique Maputo Mission in Angola, additional cities have had groups formed for Church services outside of Luanda and will likely have independent branches organized in the near future. Angola is one of the most urbanized African nations, allowing for the Church to make greater progress in reaching the population with fewer outreach centers. Careful allocation of limited mission resources with greater emphasis on member-missionary efforts may facilitate greater national outreach, particularly among the many ethnic groups native to Angola. Due to the Church's limited presence in Luanda, few of the ethnic groups in Angola have likely had exposure to the Church's teachings and representatives, and it is unclear how they will respond to initial LDS proselytism.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Until the late 2000s, member activity rates in Angola appeared lower than most African nations because of returning members baptized overseas being dispersed throughout the country, the organization of the branch in Luanda only in 1996, and limited church infrastructure for pastoring members. In 2005 there were over 200 people in attendance for Church meetings in the sole Luanda Branch, yet at the time membership stood at 669. In recent years, the establishment of additional congregations has likely resulted in increased awareness of the Church among lost members and reduced convert retention challenges. The maintenance of moderately high rates of member activity rates experience today hinges on following consistent convert baptismal standards that focus on developing long-term gospel living habits such as weekly church attendance instead of arbitrary baptismal quotas. The involvement of new converts in seminary and institute may improve long-term member activity results.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Tensions between ethnic groups have resurfaced following independence, with political conflict mirroring ethnic divisions. It does not appear that ethnic issues present problems to the functionality of the Church presently, but challenges may arise once the Church adds more members from unreached interior ethnic groups.

Language Issues

Portuguese is widely spoken throughout Angola due to the centuries of colonialism from Portugal, and so church meetings and missionary work are conducted in Portuguese. Due to the growth of the Church in Mozambique, considerably greater Portuguese-language African resources are available but remain insufficient in providing outreach to both Mozambique and Angola.

The Church faces many challenges in teaching Angolans in their first languages. No effort has been made to translate Church materials or scriptures into native languages spoken in the country besides Kikongo, which is spoken by some church members in neighboring Republic of the Congo and Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kimbundu and Umbundu appear to be likely candidates for the translation of church materials, as they are the most commonly spoken. To encourage unity and facilitate communication among converts of various ethnic groups, church meetings and materials will likely be conducted and translated into Portuguese until greater membership growth occurs.

Missionary Service

Few local members have served full-time missions. Only three full-time missionaries were serving from Angola in late 2009, two of which were women. Angolan LDS missionaries began receiving training at the Brazil Missionary Training Center in the mid-2000s.⁴⁷⁴ In 2011, nearly all missionaries assigned to Angola appeared to be local members and Mozambicans. Visa challenges have prevented the utilization of North American missionaries to date. Increasing the number of local members serving missions would greatly accelerate church growth in Angola if native missionaries serve in their home country and return home from their missions and staff local leadership.

Leadership

Although Angolan members of the Church were able to sustain the Luanda Branch for over a decade prior to the beginning of formal missionary work in the country, little growth in leadership and membership was experienced during this period. The Angolan civil war has caused many Angolans to move away from their homeland and live in other nations. One of the first leaders of the Church in Mozambique fled his home country of Angola as a child.⁴⁷⁵ Few Angolan Church leaders have emerged despite Angolan membership numbers. The establishment of a separate mission for Angola may improve mentoring and training support for the fledgling Angolan LDS leadership. The organization of the first district in 2011 indicates greater maturation and increase in local leadership in recent years. A lack of qualified priesthood holders prevents the organization of additional branches.

Temple

Angola is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District. No reports are available on whether branches in the country have organized temple trips for members in Angola. A potential temple in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo would greatly reduce the distance and expenses for Angolan members to participate in temple ordinances. There are few Portuguese-language resources in Africa available for Angolan members when they attend the temple.

Comparative Growth

LDS membership growth in Angola numbered among the slowest for the LDS Church in Africa in the 2000s. Slow growth has resulted from isolation from Church leadership due to the civil war and few church resources dedicated to the country since an LDS presence was established. Congregational growth since 2008 has outpaced most African nations that also had only one congregation in 2008. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in Angola is among the lowest in southern Africa.

Other missionary-focused Christians have experienced tremendous success in Angola despite the past civil war and other challenges. Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists have experienced some of the strongest growth in Africa in Angola, and both denominations operated over 1,000 congregations each in 2010. These and other Christian denominations likely developed local leadership and mechanisms of member-missionary outreach that were able to perpetuate their churches' organization and development during the civil war years. The LDS Church heavily depends on foreign missionaries for outreach, who were unavailable to serve during the civil war due to proselytizing restrictions.

⁴⁷⁴ Soli, Ana Claudia. "'Happiest place' is Brazil's MTC," LDS Church News, 7 January 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48352/Happiest-place-is-Brazils-MTC.html>

⁴⁷⁵ Orton, Elder Ferron; Orton, Sister Peggy. "Spreading the gospel in Africa," LDS Church News, 17 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43773/Spreading-the-gospel-in-Africa.html>

Future Prospects

Prospects for future growth are favorable. The LDS Church is still working to develop a foundation to facilitate greater membership and congregational growth in Angola, particularly in Luanda. The organization of additional branches and groups outside of Luanda appears favorable in the near future as greater missionary resources are dedicated to the country and convert retention rates remain good. Church planting approaches appear highly effective in the current situation. Preparations appear underway for the organization of a separate mission to administer Angola in the near future that would provide for greater resources and vision in expanding national outreach, while conditions are favorable for proselytism. The translation of LDS materials into some local languages may occur within the next decade pending needs presented by membership.

BENIN

Geography

AREA: 112,622 square km. Located in West Africa and occupying a strip of land between Nigeria and Togo, Benin runs from the Atlantic Ocean in the south to Burkina Faso and Niger in the north. Tropical climate occurs in southern and central areas, with northern areas pertaining to the semi-arid Sahel region. Terrain principally consists of plains, with some hills and small mountains in a few locations. Sandbanks are common along coastal areas, and there are no natural islands, harbors, or river mouths. Hazardous weather generated by harmattan winds is a natural hazard in northern areas. Environmental issues include deforestation, desertification, fresh water scarcity, and wildlife poaching. Benin is divided into twelve administrative departments.

Peoples

Fon: 39.2%
Adja: 15.2%
Yoruba: 12.3%
Bariba: 9.2%
Peulh: 7%
Ottamari: 6.1%
Yoa-Lokpa: 4%
Dendi: 2.5%
Other: 1.6%
Unspecified: 2.9%

Ethnic groups native to southern Benin pertain to the Guinean ethnic family, whereas ethnic groups native to northern areas generally pertain to the Central Bantoid ethnic family. The Fon, Adja, and Yoruba live in the southern departments of Benin, which are the most densely populated in the country. The Bariba reside in northern areas. Population density decreases as one moves north toward the Sahel.

Population: 9,598,787 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.877% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 5.22 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 59 male, 61.59 female (2012)

Languages: Fon (16%), Gbe dialects (11%), Hausa (9%), Ede dialects (6%), Yoruba (5%), Baatonum (5%), Aja (4%), Gun (4%), Fulani (4%), Gen (1%), Ditammari (1%), other or unspecified (31%). French is the official language. Fon is the only language with over one million native speakers (1.4 million).

Literacy: 34.7% (2002)

History

The Kingdom of Dahomey occupied southern portions of present-day Benin from the seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. Trading posts were established by the Portuguese, French, and Dutch

for the slave trade during this period. The French and the kings of Abomey signed treaties establishing French protectorates in major cities and ports during the late nineteenth century. France established Benin as a French colony by 1900. Additional territory was annexed in the north during the early twentieth century, and in 1958, the colony was granted republic status within the French community as the Republic of Dahomey. Independence occurred in 1960, and the country was renamed Benin in 1975. Several military coups occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s that culminated in government changes, the establishment of a dictatorship, and the implementation of communist and socialist policies. These reforms ultimately failed and resulted in a change to a democratic government in 1991 under pressure from other democratic nations. In 1991, Benin became the first African nation to have a peaceful transfer of power to a democratically elected president. Democratic elections have occurred in recent years, although accusations of electoral fraud persist.⁴⁷⁶

Culture

Tribalism and religion are the primary influences on Beninese culture. Indigenous religions are commonly practiced, such as Vodoun (Voodoo). French colonial influence introduced French as a language for government and interethnic communication; indigenous languages are widely spoken. Music and literature are cultural achievements. Corn, fish, fruit, rice, vegetables, and chicken are the most common foods. Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are low. The government has outlawed polygamous marriages since 2004 but continues to recognize polygamous marriages performed before the ban.⁴⁷⁷

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,500 (2011) [3.12% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.472

Corruption Index: 3.0 (2011)

As Benin is among the poorest countries in the world, over a third of the population lives below the poverty line. The economy is agriculturally driven, with cotton being the chief crop exported. During the past several years the government has made efforts to privatize the economy and government-controlled infrastructure to attract foreign investment. Benin continues to struggle to meet basic utility needs to expand the economy and improve living conditions. The literacy rate is very low and challenges efforts to develop a greater body of skilled workers. Services generate 52% of the GDP, whereas agriculture and industry generate 33% and 15% of the GDP, respectively. Clothing, food processing, construction, and cement are major industries. Common agricultural products include cotton, corn, cassava, yams, vegetables, palm oil, nuts, and livestock. China, India, the United States, and France are the primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as widespread. Benin is vulnerable to money laundering due to poor enforcement of financial regulations. Illicit drugs destined for Western Europe are frequently trafficked through Benin.

Faiths

Christian: 42.8%

Muslim: 24.4%

Vodoun (Voodoo): 17.3%

Other: 15.5%

⁴⁷⁶ "Background Note: Benin," Bureau of African Affairs, 22 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6761.htm>

⁴⁷⁷ "Benin," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 14 April 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/benin>

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 1,500,000

Celestial Church of Christ 466,252

Methodist 326,376

Jehovah's Witnesses 10,936 166

Seventh Day Adventists 5,323 16

Latter-day Saints 1,081 6

Religion

Christianity is the largest religion in Benin, accounting for 42.8% of the population. Many of the Fon and Yoruba follow Christianity. Over half of Christians adhere to the Catholic Church; the rest identify with various Protestant and African Christian churches such as the Celestial Church of Christ. Islam is the second largest religion in Benin, claiming 24.4% of the total population. Vodoun is practiced by 17.3%. Christianity is most prevalent in the south, whereas Islam is most prevalent in the north and often ethnically based.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. The practice of religious belief is determined by the constitutional court, which protects the right of free speech regarding religious affairs. Major Christian and Muslim holidays are recognized national holidays. Religious groups must register with the Ministry of the Interior and receive tax-exempt status. There have been no reports of the government denying registration for any religious groups in recent years. Religious instruction is not permitted in public schools, but several religious groups operate private schools.⁴⁷⁸

Largest Cities

Urban: 42%

Cotonou, **Porto-Novo**, **Godomey**, **Parakou**, **Bohicon**, **Djougou**, **Abomey-Calavi**, **Abomey**, **Nikki**, **Natitingou**.

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

One of the ten largest cities has an LDS congregation. Twenty-three percent (23%) of the national population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

When civil war erupted in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1998, an LDS senior missionary couple was transferred from the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission to Benin and Togo in hopes of legalizing the Church in both countries. Elder and Sister Langevin baptized the first convert to the Church in Benin later that year. The Church obtained legal status in Benin in 2003. At the time, one group operated in Cotonou.⁴⁷⁹ Benin was initially assigned to the Ivory Coast Abidjan Mission and was reassigned to the Ghana

⁴⁷⁸ "Benin," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148662.htm>

⁴⁷⁹ "Sunday School group in Benin Prepares way for legal status," LDS Church News, 31 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurch-news.com/articles/43820/Sunday-School-group-in-Benin-prepares-way-for-legal-status.html>

Cape Coast Mission in 2005,⁴⁸⁰ the Ghana Accra Mission in 2007,⁴⁸¹ and the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan Mission in 2008. Elder David A. Bednar dedicated Benin for missionary work in 2007. Seminary and institute were both functioning by 2008. In 2011, the Benin Cotonou Mission was organized to administer Benin and Togo.⁴⁸² In late 2010, non-African missionaries serving in Cote d'Ivoire were evacuated to Benin and Togo.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,081 (2012)

At the end of 2004, the LDS Church reported eleven members in the entire country. Membership in Benin increased from ninety-five at the end of 2005 to 253 by the end of 2008. LDS membership officially reported by the Church for 2009 and 2010 may be incorrect as the Church reported 201 and 229 members, respectively, and only one congregation, whereas full-time missionaries reported approximately 300 active members and three branches by year-end 2010. Membership totals for Benin's two other LDS branches likely accounted for an additional 400 members in 2010. In addition to Beninese members, the Church in Benin also includes Togolese and Nigerian members who reside in Cotonou. In 2010, one in 15,542 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 6 (2012)

In 2003, the first LDS branch was organized in Cotonou. At the end of 2008, the Cotonou Branch was divided to create two new branches. In early 2011, there were three branches operating in Benin (Akpakpa, Gbedjromede, and Menontin), which reported directly to the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan Mission. The Church created its first district in 2012 and organized three additional branches.

Activity and Retention

Ninety-two were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2009–2010 school year. Convert retention has been moderate to high. Full-time missionaries in late 2010 reported that nationwide active membership was approximately 300, or 50% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French, Yoruba, English.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in French. The Book of Mormon, two church proclamations, and several primary, Relief Society, missionary, and priesthood materials are available in Yoruba. The *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* is available in Ewe, Fon, Fulani, and Hausa. *Gospel Principles* is available in Ewe, Fulani, and Hausa.

Meetinghouses

LDS branches meet in renovated buildings or rented spaces.

⁴⁸⁰ Stahle, Shaun. "Missions created on opposite sides of Africa," LDS Church News, 11 June 2005. <http://www.ldschurch-news.com/articles/47427/Missions-created-on-opposite-sides-of-Africa.html>

⁴⁸¹ "New missions bring total to 347 New missions," LDS Church News, 10 February 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50112/New-missions-bring-total-to-347-New-missions.html>

⁴⁸² "New boundaries announced for several missions," LDS Church News, 19 February 2011. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/60512/New-boundaries-announced-for-several-missions.html>

Health and Safety

The risk for infectious diseases is very high. Common diseases include typhoid fever, hepatitis A, bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, malaria, yellow fever, meningococcal meningitis, and rabies. HIV/AIDS infects 3.2% of the population.

Humanitarian and Development Work

LDS humanitarian and development work has been limited to a single measles vaccination initiative project.⁴⁸³ Full-time missionaries fulfill weekly service hours in their areas.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints benefit from full religious freedom from the government and no reported instances of societal abuses of religious freedom. Foreign missionaries regularly serve, and missionaries and members alike may freely proselyte, assemble, and worship.

Cultural Issues

Low literacy rates and poverty are challenges that limit local member self-sufficiency in leadership and economic self-reliance but also provide opportunities for LDS humanitarian and development projects that can meet these needs in the general population and also raise public awareness of the Church, provide finding opportunities for full-time missionaries, and offer opportunities for local members to introduce friends and family in need to services provided by the Church. Clean water projects, wheelchair donations, education assistance, employment workshops, and medical care are potential development and humanitarian activities that have yet to be explored by the LDS Church in Benin. Those participating in a polygamous marriage must end relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency to be considered for baptism. Ethno-religious ties among some traditionally Muslim ethnic groups such as the Peulh (Fulani) present barriers for LDS mission outreach.

National Outreach

LDS mission outreach occurred only in Cotonou as of early 2011, reaching no more than 12% of the national population. Cotonou remains poorly reached at present as multiple LDS congregations were not established until late 2008 and many communities remain far from mission outreach centers, especially on the south and west of the city. LDS missionaries at times visit and proselyte in lesser-reached communities of Cotonou, but outreach remains severely limited.

With widespread religious freedom and a highly receptive population to LDS mission efforts, Benin presents excellent opportunities for expanding national outreach in currently unreached locations. Delays in opening Benin to formal missionary work until 2003 appear largely due to limited missionary resources dedicated to the region and complications receiving government recognition. Delays in expanding national outreach is primarily attributed to limited LDS mission resources dedicated to the region, the plateauing of LDS missionary manpower worldwide in the 2000s, and the several mission boundary changes since 2000 involving Togo and Benin. Past missions that administered Benin have included three or more nations within their boundaries, and most mission resources were dedicated to the nation in which the mission was based. Benin's

⁴⁸³ "Projects—Benin," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 7 April 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-120,00.html>

geographic separation from missions it has pertained to over the years has likely resulted in inadequate training and emphasis placed on the retention of converts. Furthermore, when Benin was under the jurisdiction of missions in Ghana, missionaries would have to learn French and local African languages if transferred to the country. This would complicate matters for mission presidency members traveling to Benin and providing training and assistance if they did not know French or African languages spoken in the Cotonou area.

The amount of mission resources allocated to Benin in the late 2000s was comparable to Togo, notwithstanding the LDS Church in Togo reporting twice as many members, two additional congregations, and a functioning district in early 2011. New proselytizing areas opened regularly in Cotonou in the late 2000s and early 2010s. The organization of the Benin Cotonou Mission in 2011 will facilitate the opening of additional congregations in the Cotonou area, the establishment of mission outreach centers in currently unreached cities, and provide mentoring and support for the fledging body of local priesthood leaders.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The LDS Church in Benin provides an excellent example of how rapid membership growth does not always correlate with low convert retention and member activity rates, as the Church blossomed from a single congregation of eleven total members in 2004 to approximately 300 active members out of 600 meeting in three congregations in late 2010. Successes in achieving moderately high rates of convert retention appear linked to avoiding the overstaffing of LDS congregations with full-time missionaries and the opening of additional congregations in late 2008. Successes in convert retention are also manifested by the number of members enrolled in seminary and institute increasing from sixty-five during the 2007–2008 school year to ninety-two during the 2009–2010 school year. Local members appear enthusiastic about member-missionary work that has contributed to growth and convert retention. Distance from church meetinghouses may have contributed to convert attrition in Benin and warrant the establishment of additional congregations.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic violence and conflict has been less apparent than most African nations notwithstanding the high degree of ethnic diversity. At present, LDS missionaries have not reported ethnic integration challenges at church. Potential for ethnic integration challenges exists and deserves careful observation by church leaders and emphasis by local and mission leaders to play down ethnic differences at church through sharing common beliefs and values.

Language Issues

Low literacy rates create serious challenges for developing self-sustaining local leadership but provide the opportunity of extending LDS literacy classes designed to meet literacy needs among members and nonmembers. Literacy programs can be an effective finding and retention approach. The Church is currently unprepared to meet the needs required by the high degree of linguistic diversity, as most local languages have no LDS materials available, and the few languages with translations of materials have only one or two LDS resources. Low literacy rates reduce the urgency of translating additional materials in local languages if most are unable to read proficiently. Missionaries report that church meetings are supposed to be conducted in French, but oftentimes members speak in Fon, Fongbe and English at church. Language-specific congregations may be organized if the number of active members speaking differing languages warrants it and if qualified leadership is available. Languages in the greatest need of LDS scriptures and a wide selection of basic proselytism materials include Fon and Gbe.

Missionary Service

As of 2009, ten full-time elders were serving as missionaries in the country in addition to a senior couple who also administers to Togo. In the late 2000s, the first Beninese members began serving full-time missions. Stressing weekly church attendance, personal religious habits like scripture reading and daily prayer, and participation in seminary and institute may increase the number of local members serving missions, reduce reliance on foreign missionaries to staff Benin's missionary needs, and generate a larger body of potential church leaders over the medium term.

Leadership

All three branches were led by local members in early 2011. The number of active and qualified priesthood holders remained too limited to merit the organization of a district as of early 2011, but a district will likely be organized in the near future. The organization of the Benin Cotonou Mission may create challenges fostering self-reliance among local leaders due to close proximity to mission headquarters. Increasing the number of missionaries assigned to Benin commensurate to increases in congregations may provide a greater safeguard reducing the likelihood of potential member overreliance on full-time missionaries. Limited numbers of returned missionaries have reduced the available body of priesthood holders with church administrative experience, which may delay the organization of additional congregations.

Temple

Benin is assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple district. Crossing two international boundaries to reach the temple is a challenge for many, although members in Benin benefit from closer proximity to a temple than most in Africa. Temple trips appear to be held irregularly and in small groups or on an individual basis. There are no realistic prospects for a temple closer to Benin for the foreseeable future.

Comparative Growth

With only eleven reported Latter-day Saints in 2004 and likely around 600 in 2010, Benin has experienced the most rapid membership growth among African nations that had no independent branches organized prior to 2003. The strength, dedication, and training of local Beninese leadership has outperformed most African nations with fewer than 1,000 members today. Unlike many African nations that had no additional congregations organized until church membership ranged between 500 and 1,000, three LDS congregations operated in Benin notwithstanding membership totaling less than 500 in 2008. No other African country with as few members as Benin had an LDS mission organized since the organization of the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission in 1998.

Most outreach-oriented Christians have maintained a presence in Benin for decades but have experienced limited growth compared to other African nations. The Seventh Day Adventist Church experienced steady membership growth during the 2000s, but the number of churches only increased from eleven to fourteen, notwithstanding Adventist membership more than doubling. Over the past decade, Adventists generally baptized between 200 and 400 new converts annually.⁴⁸⁴ Jehovah's Witnesses claimed 10,687 members, operated 162 congregations, and baptized over 500 new converts in 2010.⁴⁸⁵

Both Adventists and Witnesses have experienced limited growth compared to other nations with comparable

⁴⁸⁴ "Benin Mission (1989-Present)," [www.adventiststatistics.org](http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=1554692), retrieved 12 April 2011.

⁴⁸⁵ "Statistics: 2010 Report of Jehovah's Witnesses Worldwide," [www.watchtower.org](http://www.watchtower.org/e/statistics/worldwide_report.htm), retrieved 12 April 2011.

populations. The Benin-based Celestial Church of Christ bears many similarities in teachings and doctrines with missionary-minded denominations and continues to grow despite the death of its founder in the 1980s and controversy concerning leadership succession.

Future Prospects

Prospects for future growth appear highly favorable in Benin, as demonstrated by rapid membership growth and sustained local leadership development since 2004, the establishment of an LDS mission in 2011 to service Benin and Togo, increasing numbers of local members serving missions and preparing to serve missions, greater political stability than most African nations, a highly-receptive population to the LDS Church, and high likelihood of additional cities opening to missionary work nearby Cotonou due to close proximity and their large populations. Additional congregations may be organized in Cotonou and nearby cities.

BOTSWANA

Geography

AREA: 581,730 square km. Botswana is landlocked in Southern Africa and borders Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia. The Kalahari Desert covers most of the country. The climate is semi-arid, and the geography consists of flat plains. Grasslands and savannahs are also found and support a large amount of wildlife. Several rivers flow through or on the border of Botswana. Desertification and overgrazing are great environmental concerns. Administratively, the country is divided into nine districts and five town councils.

Peoples

Tswana: 79%

Kalanga: 11%

Basarwa: 3%

Other: 7%

Population density is highest in eastern Botswana, where the Tswana are found. Tswana form the majority, yet most Tswana live in South Africa. Kalanga are found in northern and northeastern Botswana along the border with Zimbabwe. The Basarwa, or Bushmen, live in the rural, arid areas that occupy most of the country. Other ethnicities include small tribes that live in the Kalahari Desert or Europeans.

Population: 2,098,018 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.477% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.46 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 56.93 male, 54.51 female (2012)

Languages: Twenty-nine languages are spoken in Botswana. The national language is Setswana, or Tswana, (78.2%), and the official language is English (2.1%). Other widely spoken languages include Kalanga (7.9%) and Sekgalagadi (2.8%). Other and unspecified languages make up 8.6% and 0.4% of the population. The only language with over one million speakers is Tswana (1.62 million).

Literacy: 81.2% (2003)

History

Conflict between the Tswana and the Ndebele helped facilitate the protection of the territory for the Tswana by the British in the late nineteenth century. Named Bechuanaland, the British protectorate originally included additional territory in Southern Africa. Independence was achieved in 1966 and was followed by decades of economic development. By the 1980s Botswana had one of the highest life expectancies in Africa. The spread of the HIV/AIDS has decreased life expectancy in recent years. Economic growth and little ethnic violence have turned Botswana into one of the most successful African nations despite its landlocked location and small population.

Culture

Much of the traditional African culture has been preserved in Botswana despite British colonialism. Basket making, pottery, literature, and music are rich in local culture. Unlike many African countries, polygamy is not widespread. Alcohol consumption rates are comparable to world averages.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$16,300 (2011) [33.9% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.633

Corruption Index: 6.1

Economic growth in Botswana has been among the most rapid experienced worldwide since the 1960s. Since independence, the country has transformed itself from one of the poorest to a middle income economy. Growth rates in GDP have been over 5% until the late 2000s. Success in the economy has resulted from low levels of corruption and good government management of the economy. Botswana may have the lowest rates of corruption in Africa. The economy is diversified to exploit natural resources, such as diamonds, and expand its services through tourism in its national parks. Unlike most African countries, agriculture only constitutes 1.6% of the GDP. Industry accounts for 52.6% of the GDP, most of which is from mining, and services accounts for 45.8% of the GDP. Diamonds are the largest export, but the export of copper, nickel and other minerals also occurs. High HIV/AIDS rates may hurt future economic growth. Botswana experiences the lowest levels of perceived corruption in Africa.

Faiths

Christian: 71.6%

Badimo: 6%

Other: 1.4%

Unspecified: 0.4%

None: 20.6%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 80,000

Seventh Day Adventists 31,781 96

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,992 44

Latter-day Saints 2,157 11

Religion

Wide diversity in religion exists in Botswana, which includes Christianity, indigenous religions such as Badimo, Islam, Hinduism, and other religious movements. Most are Christian and are Anglicans, Methodists or belong to the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa. The 2001 census found that around 20% of Botswana do not have a religion.⁴⁸⁶ The comparatively large percentage of the population that does not affiliate with a religious group may be due to increasing secularism resulting from economic prosperity.

⁴⁸⁶ "Botswana," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 17 June 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botswana>

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Open proselytism is permitted. There are no reports of societal or governmental abuse of religious freedom.⁴⁸⁷

Major Cities

Urban: 60%

Gaborone, Francistown, Molepolole, **Selibe phikwe**, **Maun**, **Serowe**, Kanye, **Mahalapye**, Mochudi, **Mogoditshane**.

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

Five of the ten most populous cities have an LDS congregation. Thirty-six percent (36%) of the population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The first known members in Botswana arrived in 1983 after joining the Church in the United States. In 1990 the only members in the country were two Peace Corps workers, a missionary couple and two Batswana families. Both families joined the Church in the United States and later returned.⁴⁸⁸ Official government recognition was granted in August 1991. Botswana was dedicated for the preaching of the gospel in 1992 by Elder Richard G. Scott. Seminary was started the same year.⁴⁸⁹ Members traveled in 1996 to Johannesburg, South Africa for a regional conference.⁴⁹⁰ Botswana was included in the Africa Southeast Area when the Africa Area was divided in 1998. In 2013, the first mission in Botswana was organized in Gaborone.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 2,152 (2012)

In 1992, there were 160 Latter-day Saints in Botswana.⁴⁹¹ Membership grew to 365 in early 1997.⁴⁹² At the end of 2000 membership reached 800. LDS membership increased to 1,001 in 2002, 1,194 in 2004, 1,293 in 2006, 1,305 in 2008, and 1,331 in 2010 according to official statistical numbers. Membership dropped dramatically in 2009 by over 300, likely due to the LDS membership of some congregations in Botswana reported under South Africa. In 2010, church membership numbers reported by the Church appeared inaccurate for Botswana and were estimated to number around 2,000. In 2010, one in 1,033 appeared to be LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 6 Branches: 2 Groups: 3+ (April 2013)

The first group created in Botswana was in Gaborone in June 1990. The group was created with the arrival

⁴⁸⁷ "Botswana," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148664.htm>

⁴⁸⁸ Cook, Elder Darwin; Cook, Sister Maurine. "Missionary work begins in Botswana," LDS Church News, 15 September 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20267/Missionary-work-begins-in-Botswana.html>

⁴⁸⁹ Dockstader, Julie A. "Seminary lays strong gospel foundation," LDS Church News, 25 April 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22523/Seminary-lays-strong-gospel-foundation.html>

⁴⁹⁰ "5,000 attend conference in South Africa; example of growth of the Church," LDS Church News, 2 March 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27515/5000-attend-conference-in-South-Africa-example-of-growth-of-the-Church.html>

⁴⁹¹ Mostert, Mary. "Prayers of dedication offered on 4 nations in central, southern Africa," LDS Church News, 26 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22452/Prayers-of-dedication-offered-on-4-nations-in-central-southern-Africa.html>

⁴⁹² McDonald, Hiram. "Open houses in Africa show rapid growth," LDS Church News, 15 February 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29601/Open-houses-in-Africa-show-rapid-growth.html>

of the first missionaries, a senior couple from the South Africa Johannesburg Mission.⁴⁹³ The group became a branch in August 1991. A second branch was created in March 1992. The first district was created at the same time, which included both branches.⁴⁹⁴ A third unit was added shortly thereafter in Lobatse.⁴⁹⁵ In 1995 when the Roodepoort South Africa Stake was created, the Gaborone Botswana District was discontinued and assimilated into the new stake. None of the branches became wards at the time. The branches included the Gaborone 1st, Gaborone 2nd, and Lobatse Branches.

By the end of 2000, both of the branches in Gaborone became wards and were renamed the Gaborone West and Gaborone Broadhurst Wards. Two branches were created in 2003, one of which was in Francistown, but both were discontinued in 2004. A branch was recreated in Francistown in 2005 that reported to the mission in Johannesburg. A group began functioning in Molepolole in 2008 and later became a branch in 2009 that reported to the mission in Johannesburg. The branch was later included in the Roodepoort South Africa Stake. A third ward was created in the fall of 2009 in Gaborone. The new ward was designated as a young single adults (YSA) Ward, named the Gaborone West 2nd (YSA) Ward. The new ward became the first YSA ward ever created in Africa and the second YSA congregation created on the continent. In the late 2000s and in 2010 additional groups were opened and full-time missionaries were assigned to Mochudi and Kanye. Full-time missionaries were placed in Francistown for the first time in late 2009.

By year-end 2011, there were five branches (Kanye, Lobatse, Molepolole, Mochudi, and Francistown) and one group (Kasane). In early 2012, two groups appeared to operate in the Francistown area (Gerald and Monarch).

In 2012, the first stake in Botswana was organized with six wards and two branches.

Activity and Retention

Activity and member retention appear average to high in Botswana. The average number of members per congregation increased from 297 to 326 between 2000 and 2008. However, the creation of the Molepolole Branch and Gaborone West 2nd (YSA) Ward in 2009 indicate that activity and retention have stayed constant or improved. Sacrament attendance reached seventy people both in the Francistown Branch in September 2009 and the Molepolole Branch in July 2009. The three wards in Botswana likely have over one hundred attending weekly. The Kanye Group had approximately one hundred attending meetings in 2010. Active membership in Botswana may be as high as 800, indicating activity rates are around 40%.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Setswana.

The Book of Mormon, many hymns and a limited number of Church materials for priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, and missionary work have been translated into Setswana. No other LDS scriptures are translated into Setswana. No Church materials have been translated into Kalanga or other native languages in Botswana.

Meetinghouses

The first Church-built meetinghouse was completed in 1997 in Gaborone. The meetinghouse was planned

⁴⁹³ Cook, Elder Darwin; Cook, Sister Maurine. "Missionary work begins in Botswana," LDS Church News, 15 September 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20267/Missionary-work-begins-in-Botswana.html>

⁴⁹⁴ Mostert, Mary. "Prayers of dedication offered on 4 nations in central, southern Africa," LDS Church News, 26 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22452/Prayers-of-dedication-offered-on-4-nations-in-central-southern-Africa.html>

⁴⁹⁵ "Botswana," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/botswana>

only to build the first phase, but because of strong membership growth, the second phase was also completed.⁴⁹⁶ Four or five other meetinghouses are used, most of which are rented buildings or spaces.

Public Health

Despite economic prosperity, Botswana faces major health problems due to HIV/AIDS, with 23.9% of the population infected. Only Swaziland has a higher rate of those infected with HIV/AIDS. The virus is commonly spread through illicit sexual relations or drug use, both of which are against Church teachings. Sexual promiscuity among many Batswana is a major obstacle for the growth of the Church. Contaminated needles and HIV-positive mothers also contribute to the proliferation of HIV/AIDS. Converts who have the HIV/AIDS are less able to strengthen the Church in the long term due to the disease significantly shorting their lifespan. A population with a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS poses a health threat to missionaries.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Church members from the United States visited and educated health care professionals on neonatal resuscitation techniques in 2006 in Gaborone. Those in attendance for the training included fifty-five doctors, midwives, and nurses throughout the country. Refugee aid and 500 wheelchairs were also donated in 2006, the latter accepted by the first lady of Botswana.⁴⁹⁷ Helping Hands projects have been held in the country, which emphasize local members and friends of the Church providing service to their communities.⁴⁹⁸

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Open proselytism and freedom of religion allow the Church to function in the country unrestrained by local laws.

Cultural Issues

Immorality and the spread of HIV/AIDS is a serious issue for the Church to address. Those engaged in extra-marital sexual relations are unable to join the Church unless relations are stopped and repented of or potential converts marry.

National Outreach

Twenty-three percent (23%) of the population resides in cities with LDS congregations. The centralized, urban population in the eastern portions of Botswana allows the Church to more easily reach the majority of the inhabitants. The Church's outreach in Botswana saw two periods of rapid growth, first when the Church was first established in the country and then in the late 2000s. By the end of 2010 there was a Church presence in Francistown, Gaborone, Kanye, Lobatse, Mochudi, and Molepolole. Outreach in areas where the Church is established is limited to urban centers, particularly outside of Gaborone. The Church only has a presence in one of the smaller towns (Lobatse), which was established in the early 1990s. Rural areas sparsely populated outside of eastern Botswana present a daunting challenge for missionary work, which has been very

⁴⁹⁶ McDonald, Hiram. "Open houses in Africa show rapid growth," LDS Church News, 15 February 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29601/Open-houses-in-Africa-show-rapid-growth.html>

⁴⁹⁷ "Neonatal training given in Botswana," LDS Church News, 15 July 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49191/Neonatal-training-given-in-Botswana.html>

⁴⁹⁸ Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Helping Hands goes coast to coast," LDS Church News, 24 November 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51353/Helping-Hands-goes-coast-to-coast.html>

limited among Christian denominations. Unless local members and mission leadership focus on introducing the Church to rural areas populated by the Basarwa, this ethnic group may not have access to the Church for decades.

Distance from mission headquarters in Johannesburg appears to have left Botswana with fewer resources and attention than other areas of the South Africa Johannesburg Mission. The border between the two nations has been easy for missionaries to cross, but this likely has resulted with missionaries transferring to and from Botswana too rapidly to more effectively learn local customs and language. Since 2008, the country has experienced greater attention and mission resources, evidenced by the opening of new proselyting areas and branches. The long period of no expansion to additional cities and towns may have resulted from the mission focusing on building up established congregations before venturing into unreached areas.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Activity and retention in Botswana are reflected primarily with the condition of the Church in Gaborone, where the bulk of the membership resides. Convert retention in Gaborone appears modest due to no increase in congregations between 1992 and 2009. Greater member activity and retention with young single adults contributed to the establishment of the first YSA ward ever created in Africa. The organization of an YSA congregation indicates the strength and activity of the local membership is high enough to fill the callings of both the regular wards in Gaborone and the new YSA congregation. Retention and inactivity may be poorest in Lobatse since there were only around seventy active members even though the congregation has been functioning in the city since 1992.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic issues in the Church have likely not occurred in Botswana due to ethnic groups separated by geography, little ethnic violence, and the small membership of the Church. Great opportunity exists for growth to occur without the challenges of inter-ethnic violence.

Language Issues

The opportunity is present for the Church to conduct missionary with less linguistic diversity than other African nations. Missionaries are usually unable to learn Setswana proficiently because they are transferred to and from other areas in the South Africa Johannesburg Mission. Most missionaries assigned to Botswana in 2008 stayed for six months or less. The deficient language abilities of many of the missionaries serving in Botswana may have lessened the growth of the Church due to problems in understanding between missionaries, members, and those learning about the Church. English is widely spoken and likely used by missionaries and members to facilitate communication.

Botswana has a capable, active local membership able to translate additional Church materials and scriptures into Setswana. Setswana is also widely spoken throughout the Northwest Province in South Africa, which indicates the demand for additional Church materials and scriptures to be translated.

Kalanga translations of basic Church materials will likely come forth as more Kalanga-speaking members join the Church in the Francistown area. Currently, the Francistown Branch is the only congregation in Botswana that speaks Kalanga. Small numbers of immigrants from neighboring African nations may need to speak English in order to communicate with native membership.

Missionary Service

LDS mission leaders have significantly expanded the full-time missionary presence in Botswana in recent years. Missionaries serving in Botswana were organized into one zone in 2009 and three zones in mid-2011 (Botswana East, Botswana West, and Francistown). Eight sister missionaries were also serving in Botswana in late 2009. Most missionaries serving in Botswana are North Americans, as few local members serve full-time missions. Missionaries have not served from Botswana in more appreciable numbers until more recently. Overstaffing congregations with several missionary companionships may create sustainability challenges if members rely on missionaries for finding and administrative support.

Leadership

Botswana has a legacy of active, qualified leadership. When the first group was created in 1990, both men in the two native families held the Melchizedek Priesthood that they received when they joined the Church in the United States.⁴⁹⁹ A former bishop of the Gaborone West Ward helped the Church with government relations and remarked that the Church is well respected in Botswana.⁵⁰⁰

Temple

Members living in Botswana belong to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Botswana members have utilized the temple well despite constraints of finances, time, and distance. In 2001, twenty-eight youth from the Gaborone West Ward attended the temple to do baptisms for the dead.⁵⁰¹ Temple excursions likely occur regularly from the wards in Gaborone.

Comparative Growth

Botswana has seen slower growth than most African nations that had the Church first established in the early 1990s. At the end of 2008, Zambia had 2,237 members in eleven branches whereas the Republic of Congo had about 4,200 members, a stake, and fourteen congregations. Yet Botswana has seen more rapid growth than Tanzania, which had 915 members in five congregations in late 2008. Stronger LDS Church growth has likely not occurred in Botswana due to the Church focusing on building up strong congregations in Gaborone or from limited mission resources dedicated to the region in the past.

Compared to other Southern African nations, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists have experienced slower growth. Lower membership totals for these and other Christian denominations are partially due to the smaller population of Botswana combined with the large number of denominations presence in the country. Other Christian groups depend less on foreign missionaries to expand outreach.

Future Prospects

The opening of new branches proselyting areas presents new opportunities for greater membership growth. Slow and steady growth in Gaborone will likely continue, but more rapid growth in membership will likely occur in Molepolole, Mochudi, and Francistown. Rapid growth had begun to occur in Francistown in late 2009, which, if continued, could lead to additional congregations created in the city and Church materials

⁴⁹⁹ Cook, Elder Darwin; Cook, Sister Maurine. "Missionary work begins in Botswana," LDS Church News, 15 September 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20267/Missionary-work-begins-in-Botswana.html>

⁵⁰⁰ Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Botswana leader," LDS Church News, 2 December 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49839/Botswana-leader.html>

⁵⁰¹ "Journey ends with baptisms for the dead," LDS Church News, 11 August 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40333/Journey-ends-with-baptisms-for-the-dead.html>

translated into Kalanga. More towns will likely open for missionary work, considering several have opened recently, and many more cities and towns between 30,000 and 60,000 people are unreached by the Church. Unreached urban areas nearby Gaborone and Francistown seem most likely to have a future Church presence, such as Selibe Phikwe and Mogoditshane.

BURKINA FASO

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.

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.

Population: 17,275,115 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.073% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 6.07 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 52.09 male, 56.1 female (2012)

Languages: Moore (30%), Jula (6%), other or unknown (64%). French is the official language. Ninety percent (90%) of languages spoken in Burkina Faso belong to the Sudanic family. Sixty-eight 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: \$1,500 (2011) [3.12% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.331

Corruption Index: 3.0 (2011)

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. Ninety percent (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 3,770 11

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,520 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

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and generally upheld by the government. No restrictions exist on proselytism.⁵⁰²

Major Cities

Urban: 20%

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

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

⁵⁰² "Burkina Faso," International Religious Freedom Report 2007. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90084.htm>

None of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Eleven percent (11%) of the national population lives in the ten 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 (2012 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, as some Church materials have been translated into Mossi.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 (2012)

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 member activity and understanding depends on the quality of the teaching they received, whether they continue to study church teachings, and how long they lived in an area with a LDS presence.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French.

Most Church materials are available in French. *Gospel Principles* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* have been translated into Fulani, Mandinka, and Moore.

Meetinghouses

Meetings likely occur in members' homes if church meetings occur at all.

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. 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.⁵⁰³ The Church donated quilts to Burkina Faso in 2007.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰³ Miller, Larayne Sargent. "Ready, Set, Serve!," New Era, November 1993. <http://lds.org/new-era/1993/11/ready-set-serve?lang=eng>

⁵⁰⁴ "Quilt Projects Assist Worldwide Service Efforts," News from the Church, 7 May 2008. <http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index>.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Government protects and upholds religious freedom. The Church will not have missionary restrictions once established in Burkina Faso. As in 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 for reaching Burkinabe.

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 who maintain contact with their native country. Outreach among the Burkinabe in Cote d'Ivoire provides 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 may be the most likely people to join the Church as 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 from differing ethnic groups would meet in the same congregations.

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 that 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 face the challenge of high syncretism between indigenous religions and Christianity among Burkinabe.

Future Prospects

LDS mission outreach will not occur until a group is formed from 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 to low growth in most Christian denominations. However, an LDS establishment at present will provide the needed infrastructure for missionary activity if populations one day become more receptive to Christianity.

BURUNDI

Geography

AREA: 27,830 square km. Burundi is a small, landlocked country in Central Africa surrounded by Rwanda, Tanzania, and Democratic Republic of Congo. Hilly, mountainous terrain covers most of the country, along with several lakes, including Lake Tanganyika to the west. Abundant fertile land suits widespread agriculture. Tropical, wet climate is modified by altitude in many areas. Little forest remains due to deforestation and soil erosion. Burundi is administratively divided into seventeen provinces.

Peoples

Hutu: 85%

Tutsi: 14%

Twa: 1%

Both Hutus and Tutsis are Bantu peoples. Twa are a Pygmy people and account for 1% of the population.

Population: 10,557,259 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.104% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 6.08 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 57.52 male, 61.02 female (2012)

Languages: Kirundi (90%), other or unknown (10%). Kirundi and French are both official languages. Swahili is most used along the coastal areas of Lake Tanganyika and Bujumbura as a second language. Only Kirundi has more than one million speakers (9.2 million).

Literacy: 90.7% (2003)

History

A Tutsi monarchy rose to power in the eighteenth century and maintained a close relationship with the Hutus under a system of rule and society similar to serfdom, as the Hutus pledged their allegiance to their Tutsi overlords and appealed for protection in return for the use of pastures, arable land, and loans of livestock. In 1899, Burundi came under the administration of German East Africa. In 1916, Belgian forces occupied the area. Rwanda and Burundi were united as the territory of Ruanda-Urundi after World War I under a mandate from the League of Nations delegated to Belgium. Independence from Belgium was achieved in 1962. Civil conflict and ethnic tensions characterized much of the remainder of the twentieth century, as several coups and rebellions occurred between Hutus and Tutsis. In 1987 an estimated 150,000 were killed due to ethnic violence between the Tutsi-dominated military and the Hutu majority. Political instability worsened in 1993 as Burundi's first Hutu president was assassinated and civil war enveloped the country. Political instability spilled over into neighboring Rwanda during this period, precipitation in the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. Hundreds of thousands fled Burundi to neighboring countries to flee the civil war, which officially ended in

2006. The last rebel group disarmed and demobilized in 2009. The government is currently rebuilding the country's infrastructure and focusing on improving its foreign relations.⁵⁰⁵

Culture

Christianity and agriculture are the primary influences on society and local culture. The long-lasting struggles between Hutus and Tutsis have created a culture plagued with hate and insecurity. Burundi is well known for its drums and drummers. Poverty is widespread, as approximately two-thirds of the population lives below the poverty level. Common foods include corn, sweet potatoes, and peas. Meat is rarely eaten. Alcohol consumption rates are comparable to the world average. Polygamy was made illegal in 1993 and is practiced by few.⁵⁰⁶

Economy

GDP per capita: \$400 (2011) [0.83% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.316

Corruption Index: 1.9 (2011)

Agriculture drives the small, undeveloped Burundian economy. Nearly 94% of the workforce labors in agriculture, which generates a third of the GDP. Services account for almost half of the GDP. The economy is significantly influenced by world prices of the most important exported crops, including coffee, cotton, sugar, and tea. Having few natural resources limits future economic growth, together with a poor country infrastructure. There are some unexploited mineral resources. The end of widespread political instability and violence has allowed some economic growth, but there is still strong dependence on foreign aid. Primary trade partners include Germany, Saudi Arabia, and Switzerland. Corruption in government is a major problem, especially as the economy begins to recover after the many years of war. Anti-corruption leaders have been the targets of violence.

Faiths

Christian: 75%

Indigenous beliefs: 20%

Muslim: 5%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 6,129,714

Seventh Day Adventists 125,141 270

Jehovah's Witnesses 9,840 186

Latter-day Saints 171 2

Religion

Burundians are predominantly Christian. Sixty percent (60%) of the population is Catholic and 15% is Protestant. The size and influence of the Catholic Church over many decades has prevented some syncretism between Christianity and indigenous religions. Muslims account for 5% or less of the population and are concentrated in urban areas.⁵⁰⁷ Leaders of many Christian groups condemned past ethnic violence.

⁵⁰⁵ "Background Note: Burundi," Bureau of African Affairs, 10 February 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2821.htm>

⁵⁰⁶ "Burundi," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 17 May 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/burundi>

⁵⁰⁷ "Background Note: Burundi," Bureau of African Affairs, 10 February 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2821.htm>

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Religious discrimination is prohibited. Several major Christian and Muslim holidays are recognized national holidays. Religious groups are required to register with the government and maintain a headquarters in the country. To register, religious groups must provide information regarding its administrative structure and legal representatives, the address of the religious group's national and international headquarters, a copy of the religious group's basic beliefs, and state its religious affiliation. Those continuing to violate these conditions face penalties including imprisonment. There are no restrictions on foreign missionaries serving in the country, and there have been no reported instances of societal abuse of religious freedom in recent years.⁵⁰⁸

Major Cities

Urban: 11%

Bujumbura, **Gitega**, **Muyinga**, **Ngozi**, **Ruyigi**, **Kayanza**, **Bururi**, **Rutana**, **Muramvya**, **Makamba**.

Cities listed in **bold** do not have congregations.

One of the ten largest cities has an LDS congregation. Seven percent (7%) of the national population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

The first Burundian members joined the Church in Europe in the 1980s. Several of these converts later returned to their home country and prepared the way for the Church's arrival in the early 1990s. Elder Earl C. Tingey visited Burundi to register the Church with the government in the early 1990s. He reported how he narrowly received permission for the Church to enter the country through his giving of a *For Strength of Youth* pamphlet to a government official, which impressed him about the Church's standards for its youth.⁵⁰⁹ Burundi became part of the Ivory Coast Abidjan Mission, and four African missionaries were sent to serve in the Bujumbura Branch in 1993.⁵¹⁰ The missionaries were withdrawn shortly thereafter due to political instability and violence. Burundi was included in the Democratic Republic of Congo Mission later in the 1990s, and the Bujumbura Branch was discontinued around the year 2000. Burundi became part of the Africa West Area in 1998 and later the Africa Southeast Area in 2003.

President Headlee of the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission visited in December 2009 on a fact-finding trip to assess conditions and prepare for the Church's formal reestablishment. There were hundreds of prospective members meeting in nearly a dozen congregations in late 2009 desiring to learn more about the Church in Bujumbura and Cibitoke Province. Potential members were told that the Church would first be established in Bujumbura shortly thereafter but would not arrive in rural areas like Cibitoke for a couple more years. Literature and scriptures were distributed in French to these congregations. At this time, many Burundian members had returned, and several members from Kenya lived in Bujumbura, awaiting the organization of the Church. In July 2010, Burundi was assigned to the newly organized Democratic Republic of Congo Lubumbashi Mission. In September 2010, the Church assigned six full-time missionaries and two senior couple missionaries to Bujumbura to reestablish an official presence and hold LDS worship services. The following month, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland dedicated Burundi for missionary work on a hilltop outside of

⁵⁰⁸ "Burundi," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148667.htm>

⁵⁰⁹ "Tingey, Elder Earl C. "Establishing eternal patterns," LDS Church News, 5 May 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41814/Establishing-eternal-patterns.html>

⁵¹⁰ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 21 August 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22942/From-around-the-world.html>

Bujumbura. The first independent branch was organized in early 2011 in Bujumbura. The Church was likely officially recognized by the government sometime in 2010.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 171 (2011)

In mid-1993 there were thirty-six members.⁵¹¹ By 2000, there were twenty-five members. In September 2010, there were eight known Latter-day Saints in Bujumbura. As a result of convert baptisms occurring nearly on a weekly basis during late 2010, church membership reached fifty by early 2011. In late 2009, Burundians desiring to join the Church in unofficial congregations numbered over 500 in late 2009. Senior missionaries reported that there were 194 members by September 2011. In 2010, one in approximately 200,000 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 2 (2012)

The first branch in Burundi was organized in late 1992 and discontinued around 2000. The first Swahili-speaking branch outside of East or Central Africa was created in the Salt Lake City area in early 2009. Some of the members in the new branch emigrated from Burundi. A group began operating in September 2010 when missionaries were assigned. In early 2011, the Bujumbura Branch was organized, and six months later, the Bujumbura 2nd Branch was created. Both missions report directly to the Democratic Republic of Congo Lubumbashi Mission.

Activity and Retention

At the first meeting of the Bujumbura Branch in the early 1990s there were thirty-nine in attendance. The first LDS sacrament meeting held in late September 2010 had seventy in attendance, including many prospective members and isolated members residing in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo from the cities of Uvira, Baraka, and Fizi. By early 2010, there were approximately one hundred attending church services weekly, including many investigators and members from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Estimated active membership is fifty, or over 80–90% of known Latter-day Saints in Burundi.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French, Swahili.

All LDS scriptures are available in French and Swahili. Most Church materials are available in French, whereas a limited number of LDS materials are available in Swahili. LDS materials available in Kirundi include *Gospel Principles*, the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, and the Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles.

Meetinghouses

LDS meetings occur in a renovated, remodeled building in Bujumbura. The meetinghouse was expanded within a few months of use to accommodate the large number of members and investigators in attendance but does not appear capable of feasibly seating more than 120 at a time. Unofficial meetings in the name of the Church have occurred in the past at homes or small chapels of pastors waiting to join the Church.

⁵¹¹ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 21 August 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22942/From-around-the-world.html>

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has provided emergency relief for refugees in the past.⁵¹²

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints benefit from full religious freedom and no reported societal abuse of religious freedom. Member freely proselyte, assemble, and worship.

Cultural Issues

Poverty is the primary cultural obstacle for LDS outreach, as most live below the poverty line, and Burundi ranks among the world's poorest nations. Expanding humanitarian and development outreach will meet local needs and increase the awareness of Burundians of the Church and provide a segue for missionary activity. Overall receptivity to missionary-oriented Christian groups is high. Violence and past conflict between Hutus and Tutsis is an ongoing cultural concern for LDS mission outreach. Any Burundians who took part in the ethnic violence in the 1990s and desire to join the Church will likely not only need to be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency, but may need permission from the First Presidency to be baptized. The prevalence of polygamy may deter Church growth. Those who join the Church must first divorce polygamous spouses and be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency.

National Outreach

6% of the national population resides in Bujumbura, the only city with an LDS congregation. Nearly the entire population of Bujumbura is unaware of an LDS presence, as the Church has only assigned full-time missionaries to the city during a brief period in the early 1990s and beginning in September 2010 and most of the original members that joined the Church in the early 1990s emigrated or lost contact with the Church over the years.

The opening of Burundi to missionary work in 2010 has thus far been a major success for the LDS Church, largely attributed to the allocation of a sizeable full-time missionary force comprised of two senior missionary couples and four young, full-time missionary companionships, a few local members who are capable of staffing leadership positions for two branches, and a highly receptive population to LDS outreach. War, political instability, ethnic conflict, isolation from LDS outreach centers, and few mission resources dedicated to the region were the primary reasons for the lack of an LDS presence until 2010. At present, the Church possesses significant opportunities to expand outreach in Bujumbura by organizing additional congregations closer to the homes of some members who reside far from the LDS meetinghouse. Organizing dependent branches and home groups may accelerate growth while simultaneously providing leadership experience and mentoring for prospective future LDS leaders among recently baptized converts. Expanding outreach outside of Bujumbura will most likely occur as investigators from these areas demonstrate a consistent desire to attend meetings when possible in Bujumbura and follow church teachings. Efficient member-missionary programs will be required to properly expand outreach to the 89% of the population residing in rural areas due to logistical and transportation challenges for full-time missionaries.

⁵¹² "Projects—Burundi," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 17 May 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-143,00.html>

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The Church prepared for reentering Burundi for over a year prior to assigning full-time missionaries in 2010 allowing for many members and investigators living in the country to learn about the Church's reestablishment by word of mouth. Today Burundi experiences one of the highest member activity rates in the world as missionaries have stressed the need for developing weekly church attendance and personal testimonies in new converts. Reliance on full-time missionaries over the medium term may reduce member activity and convert retention rates as this has occurred in nearly all countries following an initial LDS establishment.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Assimilating Hutus, Tutsis, and nonnative members in the same congregations presents challenges due to past ethnic violence and ongoing ethnic tensions. As of early 2011, missionaries have not reported any instances of ethnic integration issues manifesting at church.

Language Issues

The homogenous Kirundi-speaking population simplifies mission outreach by requiring only the translation of LDS materials in Kirundi to reach nearly the entire population. As few Burundians have joined the Church previously, the body of LDS materials in Kirundi is insufficient for holding church services as there are no church manuals and no LDS scriptures available. Prospects for the translation of additional materials into Kirundi appear high due to rapid membership growth and high retention. French LDS materials will continue to be utilized until more materials are translated into Kirundi.

Missionary Service

The missionary force remains entirely reliant on foreign missionaries principally from French-speaking African nations. There were eight young, full-time missionaries and two senior missionary couples assigned to exclusively work in Bujumbura by the end of 2010. Very few, if any, native Burundians have served full-time missions. Prospects appear high for the first Burundian natives to serve full-time missions within the coming couple of years.

Leadership

In mid-1993 there were four Melchizedek Priesthood holders, with several priests awaiting ordination.⁵¹³ The branch president left Burundi following the civil strife that arose in 1993. Few priesthood holders remained among members, which challenged the Church's reestablishment. In early 2011, the entire branch presidency consisted of local members and local leadership appeared largely self-sufficient despite the recent organization of the branch. Senior missionary couples provide mentoring and leadership support when needed.

Temple

Burundi is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District. No known temple trips have occurred from Burundi as of early 2011. The temple is largely inaccessible for members due to distance and transportation costs. A prospective future temple in Nairobi, Kenya or in the Democratic Republic of the Congo would reduce travel costs and simplify visa documentation challenges.

⁵¹³ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 21 August 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22942/From-around-the-world.html>

Health and Safety

Ethnic tensions between Hutus and Tutsis have erupted violently in the past and may reoccur. Peace and living conditions in late 2009 were better than most countries in the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission. The risk for infectious disease is very high, especially for hepatitis, typhoid fever, malaria, schistosomiasis, rabies, and bacterial and protozoal diarrhea. HIV/AIDS infects 3.3% of the adult population.

Comparative Growth

Burundi and Somalia were the only two African countries in the 2000s that once had an LDS presence but no longer had a presence. Burundi is one of the most recently-entered nations for the LDS Church in Africa. As of May 2011, other nations that had an LDS presence recently established, reestablished, or pending included Rwanda (2008), South Sudan (2009), Djibouti (2010), and Gabon. In 2010, Burundi had one of the smallest church memberships in Africa.

Other missionary-minded Christian denominations experience moderate to rapid growth. Seventh Day Adventists number over 100,000 due to a long-term presence, self-sufficient local leadership, and a church-planting approach to missionary activity and growth in urban and rural areas. Unlike the LDS Church, most Christian denominations were able to endure the violence and instability in the 1990s and 2000s. The LDS Church was unable to maintain a presence because it entered the country too late to develop a large enough number of Burundian members who could lead congregations and continue to conduct missionary work with no regular visits from outside church leadership.

Future Prospects

The outlook for future LDS Church growth appears excellent due to the allocation of sizeable mission resources, high convert retention and member activity, and strong receptivity to Christianity among the general population. In the coming years, additional congregations will likely be organized in Bujumbura and become incorporated into a district. Other areas of the country will likely have their first congregations established within the next decade. Unofficial congregations of Burundians waiting for the Church's establishment could provide for rapid, sustained membership and congregational growth if properly approached. Burundi and Rwanda could become its own mission one day due to the high administrative demands on the Uganda Kampala and Democratic Republic of Congo Lubumbashi Missions and expanding opportunities for LDS outreach in the region.

CAMEROON

Geography

AREA: square km. Located in West Africa, Cameroon borders Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Bight of Biafra. A wide range of terrains and climates are found throughout the country, with southern areas consisting of flat terrain occupied by tropical rainforest, northwest highland areas comprised of mountains subject to tropical climate, and northern areas dominated by semi-arid plains and plateaus. Rivers in northern Cameroon drain into Lake Chad, which forms the northern boundary. Active volcanoes and the release of poisonous gases from lakes near active volcanoes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, overgrazing, desertification, poaching, overfishing, and waterborne diseases. Cameroon is divided into ten administrative regions.

Peoples

Cameroon highlanders: 38%
Coastal tropical forest peoples: 12%
Southern tropical forest peoples: 18%
Predominantly Islamic peoples: 14%
Kirdi: 18%

There are an estimated 250 ethnic groups that pertain to five regional-cultural groups. Including ethnic groups such as the Bamileke and Bamoun, Cameroon highlanders consist of the most populous regional-cultural group, reside in southwestern Cameroon near the Nigerian border, are usually Christian, and speak English as a second language. Coastal and southern tropical forest peoples populate coastal and southern areas, speak French as a second language, are generally Christian, and consist of ethnic groups such as the Baka, Fang, Bulu, and Ewondo. Predominantly Muslim peoples principally consist of the Fulani (Peulh) and reside in the central highlands and semi-arid north. Kirdi ethnic groups that reside in northern and central Cameroon and often recently converted to Islam or have resisted outside efforts to convert to Islam for centuries.⁵¹⁴

Population: 20,129,878 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 2.082% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 4.09 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 53.82 male, 55.63 female (2012)

Languages: Beti (10%), Bulu (4%), Fulani (3%), Yemba (1.5%), other indigenous languages or unknown (81.5%). Approximately 270 indigenous languages are spoken. English and French are the official languages and commonly spoken as second languages. Beti (2.0 million) is the only indigenous language with over one million speakers.

Literacy: 67.9%

⁵¹⁴ "Background Note: Cameroon," Bureau of African Affairs, 28 December 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26431.htm>

History

Bantu African tribes have populated Cameroon for millennia. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to pass by coastal areas and named the territory Cameroon from the Portuguese word *Camarões* due to the large amount of shrimp in the area. The Portuguese and other Europeans later traded in these areas, but disease prevented European exploration of the interior until the late nineteenth century. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Muslim Fulani conquered northern regions of Cameroon and displaced the indigenous, non-Muslim population. The slave trade prospered during the nineteenth century by the exploitation of the indigenous population from both the Muslim north and European-controlled coast. Christian missionaries arrived in the late nineteenth century. Germany established Cameroon (Kamerun) as a colonial possession in 1884. Following World War I, the League of Nations partitioned Cameroon equally between France and the United Kingdom by population with France administering most of present-day Cameroon and the United Kingdom controlling densely-populated territory along the Nigerian border. French Cameroon became independent as the Republic of Cameroon from France in 1960 following several years of armed conflict. Predominantly Christian areas of the southern third of British Cameroon voted to join the Republic of Cameroon in 1961 after Muslim areas in the remainder of British Cameroon voted to join Nigeria. Former British-held and French-held areas retained a high degree of autonomy after unification. The first president was a French-educated Fulani named Ahmadou Ahidjo who prohibited multi-party politics in 1966. In 1982, Ahidjo resigned and was replaced by a Bulu-Beti named Paul Miya who previously served as prime minister. Miya has remained in power despite a coup attempt in 1984 and flawed multi-party presidential elections in the 1990s and 2000s.⁵¹⁵ There has been little economic development since independence despite government efforts to reform the economy.

Culture

With over 200 ethnic groups pertaining to five regional-cultural groups, Cameroon exhibits a high degree of cultural and ethnic diversity. British influence is most apparent in the western highlands, whereas French influence is most visible in southern areas. Fulani culture and Islam are predominant influences on society in the north. Christianity is the primary influence on culture in the south, especially in the western highlands. Meat, fish, vegetables, fruit, cassava, yam, and potato are commonly eaten foods.⁵¹⁶ Alcohol consumption rates are moderate compared to the world average whereas cigarette consumption rates are low. Polygamy is widespread; over 50% of men are estimated to have more than one wife.⁵¹⁷

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,300 (2011) [4.78% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.482

Corruption Index: 2.5 (2011)

Cameroon benefits from abundant natural resources, a sizeable population, and strategic location in Central Africa for trade. Fertile soils in the country yield productive harvests. Exports include fruit, coffee, lumber, cocoa, and rubber. Oil reserves have been exploited for decades. The wide range of climate in Cameroon has provided the opportunity for the country to capitalize on diversifying its economy in agriculture. However, the economy is very sensitive to the worldwide demand and prices for oil and agricultural products. Potential for regional and international trade is not fully realized, and corruption and poverty have limited economic growth for decades. Half of the population lives below the poverty line, and the distribution of wealth is highly uneven. Government economic reforms have been largely unsuccessful. Agriculture employs 70% of

⁵¹⁵ "Background Note: Cameroon," Bureau of African Affairs, 28 December 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26431.htm>

⁵¹⁶ "Cameroonian cuisine," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 16 April 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuisine_of_Cameroon

⁵¹⁷ "Cameroon," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 16 April 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/cameroon>

the workforce, whereas industry and services employ 13% and 17% of the workforce, respectively. Services generate approximately half of the GDP, whereas industry and agriculture generate 31% and 20% of the GDP, respectively. Common crops include coffee, cocoa, cotton, rubber, bananas, oilseed, and grains. Livestock and lumber are additional agricultural products. Oil extraction and refining, aluminum production, food processing, textiles, and ship repair are major industries. Primary trade partners include France, China, Belgium, Nigeria, and the United States.

Corruption in Cameroon is perceived at the highest levels among nations in Sub-Saharan Africa and is present in all areas of society. Human trafficking is a major concern, as the government has failed to address trafficking issues regarding the forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation of women and children. Cameroon is a transshipment point for trafficking children between Gabon and Nigeria and Nigeria to Saudi Arabia.

Faiths

Christian: 69.2%

Muslim: 20.9%

Traditional religions: 5.6%

Nonreligious: 3.3%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 13,640,213

Seventh Day Adventists 108,202 846

Orthodox 98,556

Jehovah's Witnesses 36,424 331

Latter-day Saints 1,277 6

Religion

Christians account for the majority of the population, reside in all regions of Cameroon, and are most heavily concentrated in the south and west. Catholics comprise half the Christian population, whereas Protestants constitute over a third of the population. Western English-speaking regions tend to be Protestant, whereas southern and western French-speaking regions tend to be Catholic. Orthodox Christians and other Christian groups account for 7% of the Christian population. One-fifth of the population is Muslim. Several ethnic groups are traditionally Muslim, such as the Fulani in the north and the Bamoun in the west. There are sizeable Christian and Muslim populations in all major cities. Indigenous religious beliefs are generally only practiced in rural areas.⁵¹⁸

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Several Christian holidays are recognized national holidays. Religious groups must be approved and registered through the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINATD) to operate, but there are no specific penalties for unregistered groups that function in the country. To register, a religious group must submit a list of the names of the group's officials and their roles, a charter summarizing the group's activities, and a request for authorization. The president ultimately approves registration pending recommendation from MINATD. Registration

⁵¹⁸ "Cameroon," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148669.htm>

grants some privileges to religious groups, such as receiving real estate as tax-free gifts. Indigenous religions are not mandated to register. Practicing witchcraft is a criminal offense. There have been no reported instances of societal abuse of religious freedom.⁵¹⁹

Largest Cities

Urban: 58%

Douala, Yaoundé, **Bamenda**, **Bafoussam**, **Garoua**, **Maroua**, **Ngaoundéré**, **Kumba**, **Nkongsamba**, **Buéa**. Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

Two of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Thirty percent (30%) of the national population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

The first Latter-day Saints to live in Cameroon arrived in the 1980s and earlier on temporary assignment from various health organizations.⁵²⁰ The Cameroon Yaounde Mission was organized in 1992 and originally included Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, but the mission was relocated to Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire in 1993. The Church obtained legal status from the government in 1993.⁵²¹ Seminary and institute were both functioning by 1995. In 1998, Cameroon was assigned to the Africa West Area.⁵²² Cameroon was reassigned from the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan Mission to the newly created Ghana Cape Coast Mission in 2005.⁵²³ Sometime between 2005 and 2008, Cameroon was reassigned to the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission. LDS apostle Elder Jeffrey R. Holland dedicated Cameroon for missionary work in 2009.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,277 (2012)

There were fewer than one hundred Latter-day Saints in 1993. Membership increased to 200 in 1997 and totaled 155 by year-end 2000. Slow membership growth occurred during the first half of the 2000s as membership numbered 181 in 2002 and 278 in 2004. Rapid membership growth occurred during the remainder of the 2000s as membership reached 492 in 2006, 727 in 2008, and 1,003 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates during the 2000s ranged from a high of 35% in 2005 to a low of -2% in 2001 but were generally between 14% and 30%. In 2010, one in 19,652 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 6 (2012)

The first branch was organized in Yaounde in the early 1990s. A group began meeting in Douala in the mid-1990s and became a branch in 2004. Three additional branches were organized in Yaounde in 2006 (Bastos 2nd), 2009 (Ekounou 1st), and 2010 (Ekounou 2nd). In 2011, the Bonaberri Group in the Douala area became a branch. In 2012, the first district was organized in Yaounde.

⁵¹⁹ "Cameroon," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148669.htm>

⁵²⁰ "Cameroon," Country Profile, 10 June 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/cameroon>

⁵²¹ "From the world," LDS Church News, 22 January 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24203/From-the-world.html>

⁵²² "5 new areas announced worldwide," LDS Church News, 4 July 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31389/5-new-areas-announced-worldwide.html>

⁵²³ Stahle, Shaun D. "Missions created on opposite sides of Africa," LDS Church News, 11 June 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47427/Missions-created-on-opposite-sides-of-Africa.html>

Activity and Retention

In early 1994, there were approximately one hundred attending church meetings a week; more than half of whom were not members.⁵²⁴ In 2009, approximately 400 members attended a special meeting with Elder Holland in Yaounde. The average number of members per congregation increased from 155 in 2000 to 211 in 2009. One hundred ninety-two were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. Most branches appear to have approximately one hundred active members. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 500, or 50% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French, English.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in French. The *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and *Gospel Principles* are translated into Fulani. Only the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* is translated into Fang.

Meetinghouses

LDS meetinghouses consist of rented spaces and renovated buildings. In 2009, church leaders reported that land was secured in Yaounde for the construction of the first church-built meetinghouse in Cameroon.

Health and Safety

The risk of infectious disease is very high for hepatitis, typhoid fever, bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, malaria, yellow fever, meningococcal meningitis, rabies, and schistosomiasis. Civil unrest has occurred periodically.

Humanitarian and Development Work

As of early 2011, LDS humanitarian and development work has been limited to a clean water project in Ngambe and Pong.⁵²⁵ Prospects for additional clean water projects appear high.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church and its members benefit from full religious freedom in Cameroon to proselyte, assemble, and worship. Foreign full-time missionaries from Africa and North America regularly serve in Cameroon with no reported challenges obtaining needed visas or documentation.

Cultural Issues

High levels of interest in Christianity have contributed to strong receptivity to the LDS Church in recent years. Poverty and modest literacy rates create economic challenges for the Church to develop self-sustaining leadership and for local members to provide for themselves financially. The common practice of polygamy is a major cultural barrier to LDS mission outreach, as those engaged in polygamous relationships must end these

⁵²⁴ "From the world," LDS Church News, 22 January 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24203/From-the-world.html>

⁵²⁵ "Projects—Cameroon," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 7 April 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-105,00.html>

relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency to be considered for baptism. Higher rates of alcohol consumption in the general population may create challenges for some to completely end their alcohol use before and after baptism in accordance with LDS teachings. LDS missionaries serving in Yaounde and Douala in early 2011 did not report that polygamy and alcohol use were regular challenges that impacted church growth and member activity.

Cameroon is one of the most politically and socially stable Central African nations but does experience periodic states of unrest. President and Sister Livingston of the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission reported in March of 2008 of a four day civil disturbance that left areas of the largest cities of Douala and Yaounde ransacked. Similar civil unrest in the future could create challenges for stationing larger numbers of foreign full-time missionaries.

National Outreach

Twenty-four percent (24%) of the national population is reached by LDS mission outreach in the most populous cities of Douala (2.4 million) and Yaounde (2.3 million). The remainder of the population is totally unreached by the Church. Vast areas of Douala and Yaounde are lesser-reached or unreached by LDS missionaries at present, as only two congregations operate in Douala, and four congregations operate in Yaounde. Notwithstanding an LDS presence since the early 1990s, a second branch was not organized in Yaounde until 2006. Overall, LDS outreach in Cameroon has been extremely limited, as proselytizing full-time missionaries were not permanently assigned until the 2000s, current outreach is restricted to several congregations, and most the general population has no awareness of an LDS presence in Douala and Yaounde at present.

LDS missionary activity and outreach expansion has been delayed in Cameroon, notwithstanding widespread religious freedom and a highly receptive population to LDS mission efforts, largely due to other African nations taking greater priority for limited mission resources dedicated to the region, the lack of French-speaking senior missionary couples, low standards of living, distance from other established mission outreach centers, and several mission boundary realignments over the past two decades. Past missions that have administered Cameroon have included three or more nations within their boundaries, and most mission resources were dedicated to the nation in which the mission was based. It is likely that information about local membership and leadership in Cameroon has not been properly passed on to succeeding or newly transferred missionaries, mission presidents, and regional leaders. It is not entirely clear why the Church relocated the Cameroon Yaounde Mission to Cote d'Ivoire in 1993, but higher receptivity and closer proximity to LDS Church centers in Ghana likely influenced the decision. Cameroon's geographic separation from missions it has pertained to over the years has likely resulted in inadequate training and lower emphasis placed on the retention of converts. Furthermore, when Cameroon was under the jurisdiction of the Ghana Cape Coast Mission, missionaries would have to learn French if transferred to the country. This would complicate mission presidency members traveling to Cameroon and providing training and assistance if they did not know French. Greater numbers of full-time missionaries and mission resources have been dedicated to Cameroon since reassignment to the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission, which has contributed in the increase in LDS congregations from one in early 2006 to six by 2010.

Cameroon is highly likely to become its own LDS mission in the immediate future and a center of strength in Central Africa due to its large population, high receptivity to the LDS Church in recent years, moderately high rates of convert retention, high rates of member activity, increasing numbers of local members serving full-time missions, distance from the highly productive, self-sufficient Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission headquarters, and widespread religious freedom. A prospective LDS mission in Cameroon could potentially administer other Central African nations that remain poorly reached or unreached by the Church, such as the Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. Widespread use of French in the region will greatly simplify language issues when initially establishing the Church in additional nations in the region.

The establishment of additional LDS congregations in currently unreached cities will most likely depend on local member-missionary work among relatives and friends outside of Douala and Yaounde and the organization of an LDS mission. At present, no additional cities appear likely to open for missionary work.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity and convert retention rates in Cameroon are among the highest in the world for the LDS Church. Commensurate increases in the number of full-time missionaries and congregations have been a major contributor to high member activity rates. Adequate pre-baptismal preparation has been another contributor to high convert retention rates. Cultural emphasis on church attendance and personal religious practice have also likely influenced high rates of church attendance for many Cameroonian Latter-day Saints. LDS missionaries serving in Yaounde report that some sectors of the city experience member activity challenges, and if more members were active, additional congregations would likely be organized. Member activity problems may have also prevented the organization of additional branches in Douala. Active members have demonstrated a strong conviction to the Church and living its teachings, nonetheless. A group of local members traveled to the Aba Nigeria Temple to perform temple ordinances shortly after the dedication of the temple in the mid-2000s. The journey was long and difficult on poorly maintained roads by bus but provided an important testimony-building experience for those participating. Increasing numbers of youth and young adults enrolling in seminary and institute, commensurate membership and congregational growth, and high rates of attendance for church meetings indicate continued high rates of member activity and convert retention.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

LDS missionaries have reported no major ethnic integration issues at church, notwithstanding extreme ethnic diversity in Cameroon. The relatively peaceful coexistence of differing ethnicities in the same regions has likely contributed to the lack of ethnic tensions manifested in the LDS Church. The Church may experience ethnic integration challenges if it expands its presence into currently unreached regions of the country.

Language Issues

Full-time missionaries speak English and French, and church services are generally conducted in French. One branch in Yaounde translated sacrament talks and held segregated Sunday school and elder's quorum and Relief Society in French and English in 2010. The mission president requested that translation no longer take place due to logistical challenges and church services lasting longer than allocated times. There are more indigenous languages spoken in Cameroon than languages into which the Church translates materials into; utilizing English and French will likely be most beneficial for church growth prospects in order to unify differing ethnic groups and provide training and gospel teaching in languages spoken by missionaries. Only Beti appears to have any realistic prospects of future LDS translations of materials and scriptures, as it is the only language with over one million speakers and is spoken in southern areas near LDS mission outreach centers.

Missionary Service

Two senior missionary couples were assigned to Cameroon in the early 1990s, but the Church struggled to replace couples completing their missions due to a lack of French-speaking senior missionary couples.⁵²⁶ In March of 2008 there were ten full-time missionaries assigned to Cameroon with four in Douala and six in Yaounde. Two senior missionary couples were also serving in Cameroon, with one in each city. At the beginning of 2009, a senior missionary couple was assigned to Cameroon and authorized to give Patriarchal blessings to local members. A number of Church members in Cameroon had served missions, some of whom

⁵²⁶ "From the world," LDS Church News, 22 January 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24203/From-the-world.html>

had served in their home country. In early 2011, only Cameroon and the Republic of Congo had non-African missionaries serving among nations in the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission.

Leadership

Local members served as branch presidents for all five branches in early 2011. Notwithstanding a thousand members and six congregations in 2010, there was no LDS district operating at the time, which may indicate local leadership challenges and inadequate numbers of active priesthood holders capable of holding administrative positions. Increasing the number of local members serving missions and returning to Cameroon after their missions will provide a major source of local leadership for years to come.

Temple

Cameroon is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Following the completion of the Aba Nigeria Temple, Cameroon was assigned to the temple district.⁵²⁷ Travel to the temple is difficult, time-consuming, and costly, which has reduced the number of local members who have attended the temple before. There are no realistic prospects for a future LDS temple to be built closer to Cameroon for the foreseeable future.

Comparative Growth

LDS membership growth rates in Cameroon have been among the highest in the world since the mid-2000s. No other country had fewer than 300 members in 2004 and in 2010 had over 1,000 members. Congregational growth rates in Cameroon have been among the most rapid for countries with two or fewer branches in 2004, as there were five branches and one group in 2010. Convert retention rates have been among the highest in the world. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in the general population is among the lowest in Africa among nations that have had an LDS presence since 2000 or earlier. The percentage of members enrolled in seminary and institute is among the highest in the world (19%).

Most missionary-minded Christian groups have operated in Cameroon for decades longer than the LDS Church, have a presence in most areas of the country, and report tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of adherence. The Seventh Day Adventist Church reported 105,656 members meeting in 825 churches in 2008. About half of these members were in northern Cameroon where there is no LDS presence. Jehovah's Witnesses claimed 33,287 members organized in 546 congregations in 2008. Most Christian denominations place greater emphasis and greater application of member missionary work programs than the LDS Church, as evidenced by flat LDS membership and congregational growth during most of the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s.

Future Prospects

With a highly receptive population to the LDS Church, strong member activity, a population of nearly twenty million, and increasing numbers of active members and congregations, the outlook for future LDS Church growth in Cameroon is favorable but will likely be confined to Douala and Yaounde for many years to come. Opportunities to expand outreach in both cities are abundant, and each city is in need of dozens of mission outreach centers. A second district may be organized in the near future in Douala pending the organization of additional branches. The creation of a separate mission for Cameroon is highly likely in the near future, and a future mission may administer surrounding Central African nations.

⁵²⁷ "Aba Temple facts," LDS Church News, 13 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47690/Aba-Temple-facts.html>

CAPE VERDE

Geography

AREA: 4,033 square km. Comprising a volcanic archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Senegal in West Africa, Cape Verde has nine inhabited islands: Boa Vista, Brava, Fogo, Maio, Sal, Santiago, Santo Antão, São Nicolau, and São Vicente. The terrain is generally mountainous and rocky. There is one active volcano on Fogo. Salt flats may be found on some of the islands. Temperate climate marked by irregular rainfall periods and semi-arid conditions occurs due to Cape Verde's latitudinal position and surrounding ocean, which moderates temperatures. Drought, dust from the Sahara brought by the seasonal harmattan wind, earthquakes, and volcanoes are natural hazards. Environment issues include erosion, deforestation, water scarcity, desertification, beach sand extraction, and overfishing. Cape Verde is divided into twenty-two municipalities.

Peoples

Creole (mulatto): 71%

African: 28%

European: 1%

Most Cape Verdeans are Creoles, which claim mixed African and Portuguese ancestry. Due to hardships experienced from drought in the latter half of the twentieth century, many Cape Verdeans immigrated to other countries, resulting in the expatriate population exceeding Cape Verde's current population. The United States claims the largest body of Cape Verdeans outside of their home country. Portugal and other Portuguese-speaking African nations also have Cape Verdean communities.

Population: 523,568 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.428% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.44 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 68.78 male, 73.27 female (2012)

Languages: Crioulo (96%), Portuguese (4%). Most Cape Verdeans speak Portuguese and Crioulo, a Portuguese-based creole language with nearly one million speakers worldwide.

Literacy: 76.6% (2003)

History

Uninhabited until the arrival of Portuguese settlers in 1462, Cape Verde became a major hub for the transatlantic slave trade in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. African slaves worked Portuguese plantations for several centuries and were followed by European entrepreneurs and religious refugees. Cape Verde has been an important refueling and transit point for shipping and air travel for several centuries due to its ideal location. A growing independence movement in the mid-twentieth century led to a partnership between Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau to oppose Portugal's efforts to quell increasing nationalism in its West African colonies. Cape Verde won independence in 1975 but did not allow multi-party elections until 1990. Plans to unify Cape

Verde and Guinea-Bissau into one nation were abandoned in the early 1980s. In recent years Cape Verde has been praised as one of the most stable democratic nations in Africa.⁵²⁸

Culture

Cape Verdean culture draws primarily from Portuguese and African influences. The Catholic Church has occupied a prominent role in society for centuries. African influence on local culture has been strongest on the island of Santiago. European immigrants escaping religious persecution in Europe have also contributed to the evolution of local culture. Local music draws upon Caribbean, Portuguese, African, and Brazilian elements. Cape Verde is perhaps most renowned for its rich legacy of poetry and literature. Cuisine consists of fish, rice, corn, vegetables, and fruit.⁵²⁹ Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are slightly below world averages.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$4,000 (2011) [8.32% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.568

Corruption Index: 5.5 (2011)

The economy of Cape Verde is strained due to a lack of resources. Fresh water may become scarce during long periods without rain and resulted in many hardships in the late twentieth century. Due to a lack in water resources, agricultural production on land is limited. Fishing provides an important portion of the economy. The majority of the country's GDP emerges from services (74.4%). Economic growth resulted in the GDP per capita rising from \$3,400 to \$3,800 between 2006 and 2008. Some mining also occurs for salt and limestone. The country focuses on developing tourism. The economy in Cape Verde is vulnerable, with the majority of food in the country imported from other nations. Cape Verde exports primarily to Japan, Portugal and Spain. Imports into the country mainly come from Portugal.

Cape Verde experiences lower levels of corruption than most African nations but is a transshipment point for illicit drugs from Latin America destined for Europe. The government has taken steps to reduce the incidence of money laundering.

Faiths

Christian: 99%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 365,053

Latter-day Saints 9,326 23

Seventh Day Adventists 6,677 32

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,903 35

Religion

Informal surveys indicate that approximately 85% of the population is Catholic. The Church of the Nazarene is the largest Protestant denominations. Several other Christian groups operate on the islands, including

⁵²⁸ "Background Note: Cape Verde," Bureau of African Affairs, 1 December 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2835.htm>

⁵²⁹ "Cape Verde," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 8 January 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_verde

Seventh Day Adventists, Latter-day Saints, Assemblies of God, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, and many Pentecostal and evangelical churches. There are few Baha'i and Muslims.⁵³⁰

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. The law protects religious freedom and prohibits persecution and discrimination. Individuals enjoy the right to change and choose their religious status. There is no state religion, as the constitution mandates separation of church and state. Many Christian holidays are recognized by the government. The Catholic Church receives favoritism from the government due to most of the population adhering to Catholicism. Religious groups are required to register with the government. There have been no reports of abuse of religious freedom.⁵³¹

Largest Cities

Urban: 60%

Praia, Mindelo, Santa Maria, Assomada, **Pedra Badejo**, Porto Novo, São Filipe, Tarrafal, **Ribeira Grande**, **Ribeira Brava**.

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

Seven of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the population lives in the ten largest cities, and 55% of the national population resides on Santiago, where the capital of Praia is located.

LDS History

Cape Verde opened to LDS missionary work in late 1988 and early 1989 from the Spain Canary Islands Missions. Two elders were sent and the Praia/Lajes Branch was created. When the Europe Mediterranean Area was created in 1991, Cape Verde was included within its jurisdiction. Seminary and institute began in the early 1990s. Cape Verde was dedicated for missionary work by Elder Dallin H. Oaks on September 14, 1994. In 2002, the Church created the Cape Verde Praia Mission from the Portugal Lisbon South Mission. The two missions based in Lisbon were consolidated at the same time to form the Portugal Lisbon Mission.

While returning home from dedicating the Ghana Accra Temple in 2004, President Hinckley stopped again in Cape Verde and visited forty members of the Sal Branch. During the meeting, President Hinckley counseled members to pray daily, read the scriptures, participate in member-missionary work, and pay tithing. He also admonished them to help the Church to grow and to strengthen the branch.⁵³²

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 9,326 (2012)

In the early 1990s, LDS membership increased from 200 to 2,000 in two years. In 1994, there were 2,500 members.⁵³³ Membership reached 3,000 in 1995 and 4,167 by year-end 2000.

Rapid membership growth occurred in the early 2000s that slowed dramatically by the end of 2002.

⁵³⁰ "Cape Verde," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127222.htm>

⁵³¹ "Cape Verde," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127222.htm>

⁵³² "Pres. Hinckley emphasizes "home" at island meetings," LDS Church News, 24 January 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44981/Pres-Hinckley-emphasizes-home-at-island-meetings.html>

⁵³³ "Republic of Cape Verde dedicated by apostle," LDS Church News, 24 September 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/25230/Republic-of-Cape-Verde-dedicated-by-apostle.html>

Membership stood at 5,759 in 2002, 6,202 in 2004, 6,501 in 2006, and 6,905 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates exceeded 15% in 2001 and 2002, but ranged from 1.8% to 3.8% from 2003 to 2009.

Latter-day Saints are found among some expatriate Cape Verdean communities in the United States. In 2001, some forty members of the Church from Cape Verde resided in the Boston area and were the recipients of needed church clothing provided by members in the Hingham Massachusetts Stake.⁵³⁴ Many Cape Verdean members have lived in Portugal as well. In 2009, one in sixty was nominally LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 8 Branches: 18 Groups: 1+ (April 2013)

Branches were first organized in the late 1980s. The first district, the Praia Cape Verde District, was organized in November 1992. Two additional districts, the Fogo Cape Verde and Mindelo Cape Verde Districts, were created in 1993.

In 1995, there were seventeen branches, and by year-end 2000, there were eighteen branches. The Vila de Ribeira Brava Branch operated on the island of São Nicolau but was discontinued in the early 2000s. In 2008, the Fogo Cape Verde District had six branches (five on Fogo, one on Brava), the Mindelo Cape Verde District had six branches (four on São Vicente, one on Sal, and one on São Antão), and the Praia Cape Verde District had six branches on Santiago. The number of branches remained unchanged until 2009 when a nineteenth branch was created, the Cape Verde Praia Mission Branch, to administer small groups of members in remote locations. In 2010, the two branches in São Felipe were consolidated into one branch and the Achada Grande Branch was renamed the Praia 4th Branch. Missionaries reported that a group met in the town of Patim on Fogo in 2009.

In 2012, the Church created its first stake in Praia.

Activity and Retention

Cape Verde experiences low member activity rates. President Hinckley visited in 1998 and addressed 780 members.⁵³⁵ 458 were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2008–2009 school year. The average number of members per congregation increased from 276 in 2000 to 376 in 2009. Most branches appear to have between fifty and one hundred active members. Active membership is estimated at no more than 2,000, or 25% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture:

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are translated into Portuguese. Only *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* is translated into Crioulo.

Meetinghouses

Latter-day Saints have constructed several meetinghouses in Cape Verde. In 2010, there were at least twelve meetinghouses. Groups and small branches often meet in rented spaces or renovated buildings.

⁵³⁴ "Service projects in Boston area," LDS Church News, 10 March 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39454/Service-projects-in-Boston-area.html>

⁵³⁵ Hart, John L. "Nations will 'never be same' after lengthy African trip," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30680/Nations-will-never-be-same-after-lengthy-Africa-trip.html>

Health and Safety

Access to healthcare on most islands is limited.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has conducted several humanitarian projects, including employment training, medical assistance, nursing education, vision treatment, and donating school supplies, newborn kits, and clothing.⁵³⁶

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church experiences full religious freedom, and full-time missionaries and local members may proselyte, worship, and assemble freely. Foreign full-time missionaries report no major challenges obtaining needed documentation to serve in Cape Verde.

Cultural Issues

The strong Christian influence on Cape Verdean society and religious plurality are cultural conditions that have favored receptivity to the LDS Church. Ethno-religious ties among Catholics appear weaker than in many other Catholic-majority nations. Casual church attendance and low levels of daily religious observance appear to have contributed to low member activity rates in the LDS Church. Poverty in Cape Verde is not as severe as in many African nations but is still a factor that challenges mission outreach and the self-sustainability of local membership. Economic hardships and drought have encouraged emigration and continue to threaten the establishment of resilient LDS communities but have likely improved receptivity in many areas.

National Outreach

Cape Verde experiences a high level of mission outreach, as 76% of the national population resides in an administrative municipality with an LDS mission outreach center. Most municipalities have a small geographic area, reducing the need for multiple mission outreach centers in some areas of the islands. Ten of the twenty-two municipalities appear unreached by the Church, and three of the nine inhabited islands have no reported LDS congregations. Most unreached municipalities are within fifteen to twenty kilometers of an LDS congregation. The combined population of islands without mission outreach amounts to approximately 27,000 (6% of the national population).

Prospects appear highest for expanding national outreach in the most populous municipalities without an LDS congregation or in lesser-reached towns and villages. It is likely that there are many less active members in these locations. The establishment of dependent branches and groups may spur greater member activity in conjunction with reactivation efforts headed by local leaders and full-time missionaries. Missionary work is challenging on the sparsely populated unreached islands, as they likely lack active membership to provide leadership for congregations and offer low potential for growth due to their small populations.

Cape Verde provides a suitable base for expanding missionary work in unreached nations in West Africa. Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau all had no official church presence in early 2011. Guinea-Bissau appears to be the most likely country to come under the administration of the Cape Verde Praia Mission due to cultural, linguistic, and historical similarities, and a small Cape Verdean community in the capital of

⁵³⁶ "Projects—Cape Verde," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 8 January 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-94,00.html>

Bissau. Mission outreach in Portugal and the United States offers opportunities to facilitate the establishment of LDS communities among Cape Verdeans abroad. In early 2011, the Church conducted no Cape Verde-directed Internet outreach, although abundant Portuguese-language resources are available on LDS websites.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Low member activity and poor convert retention have persisted since the establishment of the Church in the late 1980s largely due to inconsistent mission policies that encouraged the rushed baptism of converts with minimal pre-baptismal preparation. Missionaries in the 2000s reported that most branches had large numbers of inactive members, many of whom appeared to have joined the Church as youth during the 1990s and early 2000s. The baptism of converts who typically lacked regular church attendance habits before baptism, inadequate and poorly trained local leadership, little pre-baptismal preparation being offered by full-time missionaries, and the lack of systematic convert retention programs were characteristics of Portuguese LDS missions between the late 1980s and early 2000s that affected missionary work in Cape Verde. Distance from mission headquarters in Lisbon and infrequent visits by mission leaders further worsened the lack of emphasis and accountability regarding convert retention in Cape Verde. Between 1995 and 2004, LDS membership doubled, yet only one new congregation was added, as few converts became active members. Rapid membership growth came to an abrupt halt in 2002 following the creation of the Cape Verde Praia Mission, as mission focus changed to emphasize on reactivation and higher baptismal standards.

Low member activity rates continue to delay the creation of additional congregations. The number of congregations reported by the Church did not increase between 1997 and 2010. A few dependent branches or groups may have been organized during this period, however. Stable, slightly increasing numbers of members enrolled in seminary and institute indicate that there has been some improvement augmenting member activity rates among youth. The number of Cape Verdean Latter-day Saints serving full-time missions also appears to have increased since the creation of the mission. Emigration continues to threaten member activity and self-sufficiency. Missionaries report that many active members are diligent and stalwart in their callings and responsibilities.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The highly eclectic culture and society of Cape Verde has fostered the acceptance of differing ethnic groups into the same communities with little conflict. No major ethnic integration issues have been reported by LDS missionaries.

Language Issues

Most speak both Portuguese and Crioulo fluently, as Portuguese is the language of government and education, whereas Crioulo is used in more informal settings of daily life. Fluency in Portuguese reduces the need for Crioulo-language materials. Church services at times use both languages.

Missionary Service

Local members began serve as full-time missionaries early in the Church's history. Elder Oaks reported when he visited the islands in 1994 that forty-eight Cape Verdeans were serving missions, mostly in Portugal.⁵³⁷ At the time there were only two returned missionaries in Cape Verde. In the 2000s, Cape Verdean missionaries have regularly served in the Mozambique Maputo Mission where Portuguese is also spoken. Cape Verde has demonstrated a greater self-sufficiency in staffing its full-time missionary force than many other nations with

⁵³⁷ "Republic of Cape Verde dedicated by apostle," LDS Church News, 24 September 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/25230/Republic-of-Cape-Verde-dedicated-by-apostle.html>

fewer than 10,000 members. Continued emphasis on missionary preparation and seminary and institute attendance will be needed to sustain and increase the Cape Verdean missionary force and stabilize the number of active priesthood holders.

Leadership

Most, if not all, branches have local members serving as branch presidents. Local leadership remains limited, as many branches do not appear to have all administration positions fully staffed, and some branches rely on full-time missionaries to operate. Cape Verde has demonstrated some success developing greater self-sustainability with the calling of Joselito Medina Costa Neves as the first native Cape Verdean mission president of the Cape Verde Praia Mission in 2008. He previously served as a district president and in other various leadership positions in the Church in Cape Verde.⁵³⁸ In 2006, missionaries serving from Cape Verde received missionary training in the Brazil Missionary Training Center along with missionaries from other Portuguese-speaking African countries.⁵³⁹ One of the factors that prevented the establishment of a stake until 2012 is that membership is scattered throughout the archipelago. Missionaries in 2012 were optimistic that a second stake may be organized in the coming years.

Temple

Cape Verde is assigned to the Madrid Spain Temple District and will most likely pertain to the Lisbon Portugal Temple district when the temple is completed. Temple trips appear to regularly occur, but long distance and transportation costs limit temple attendance. Once multiple stakes are organized, a temple may be announced for Cape Verde due to its geographically isolated location. The Church has tended to announce temples for island nations even if they have small LDS populations. Temples were announced for Fiji, Taiwan, and Tahiti when each of these nations had fewer than 12,000 members and only a few stakes.

Comparative Growth

Cape Verde is the country with the highest percentage of Latter-day Saints among countries in Africa, mainland Asia, and Europe but has one of the lowest member activity rates in Africa. The percentage of members enrolled in seminary and institute is higher than many European nations but lower than most African nations. In 2010, Cape Verde was the country with the fifth most members without a stake.

Some missionary-oriented Christian churches report comparatively sized church membership and national outreach. Jehovah's Witnesses claimed 1,774 members in thirty-four congregations in 2008, whereas Seventh Day Adventists reported 6,060 members in thirty-two churches in 2008. These and other Christian groups report higher member activity rates than Latter-day Saints and more self-sustaining member-missionary programs due to higher standards and longer periods of preparation before baptism as well as a primary focus on outreach through local members rather than itinerant missionaries.

Future Prospects

Moderate levels of receptivity, the development of local leadership, increasing self-sufficiency, and improving youth activity rates over the past decade generate a positive outlook for future LDS growth in Cape Verde. Low member activity rates resulting from poor pre-baptismal teaching and low standards for baptism prior to the establishment of the Cape Verde Praia Mission continue to hamper reactivation progress. Additional

⁵³⁸ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 24 May 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/52020/New-mission-presidents.html>

⁵³⁹ Soli, Ana Claudia. "'Happiest place' is Brazil's MTC," LDS Church News, 7 January 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48352/Happiest-place-is-Brazils-MTC.html>

congregations may be organized on the most populous islands over the medium-term. Additional stakes will only be organized once local membership reaches the threshold of at least 120 active, tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders. The Mindelo Cape Verde District appears to be the closest to becoming a stake in the coming years.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Geography

AREA: 622,984 square km. Landlocked in Central Africa, The Central African Republic borders Chad, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, and Cameroon. Large rivers exist on the borders of the Central African Republic. The Ubangi River forms the southern border, and the Sangha River runs through the western part of the country. Much of the landscape is flat, with plateaus and hills in areas of the country. The climate is tropical to sub-tropical. Most of the country is covered by forest. Desertification is a concern in northern areas. The population of the Central African Republic is small in comparison to its size, and little human development has occurred. Dust storms and floods are common natural hazards. Desertification, deforestation, poaching, and lack of clean water are environmental issues. The Central African Republic is divided into fourteen administrative prefectures and two economic prefectures.

Peoples

Baya: 33%
Banda: 27%
Mandjia: 13%
Sara: 10%
Mboum: 7%
M'Baka: 4%
Yakoma: 4%
Other: 2%

Almost all ethnic groups are Sudanese. The Baya reside in the west. The Banda and Mandjia populate the central areas. The Sara live in northern areas. Many ethnic groups in the Central African Republic also have large populations in northern Democratic Republic of Congo or southern Chad.

Population: 5,057,208 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.142% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.57 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 49.23 male, 51.76 female (2012)

Languages: French is the official language, and Sangho (with less than half a million native speakers) is the national language. Seventy-one native languages are spoken. Banda and Baya dialects have the most native speakers with over 650,000 speakers each. No languages have over one million native speakers.

Literacy: 48.6% (2003)

History

African tribes that lived in present-day Central African Republic were some of the most isolated ethnic groups in all of Africa. Little contact with the outside world was made before 1800. Muslim traders first arrived to the Central African Republic. The French claimed the area in the late nineteenth century and named it Ubangi-Shari after two rivers in the area. Ubangi-Shari changed its name to the Central African Republic in 1958

and gained independence from France in 1960. The government was mainly controlled by various military officials for the first thirty years of independence, during which time little progress was made toward development. An election was held in 1993 and ushered in a democratically elected president (President Patasse) who controlled the country for a decade. Unrest and instability continued throughout his presidency. A military coup overthrew Patasse in 2003, and elections were held in 2005. The military general (General Bozize) who overthrew Patasse won the presidency in the election. The Central African Republic is easily influenced by bordering nations due to the country's landlocked position, weak central government, and small population compared to neighboring African nations. Violence and unrest from Sudan, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo has affected the Central African Republic from time to time.

Culture

The lack of economic development and government instability has adversely affected the culture. Education is not emphasized, and many do not complete formal education. The physical integrity of women is often threatened, especially in marriages. Polygamy is legal, and its practice affected 28% of women in 1995.⁵⁴⁰ Alcohol and tobacco use appear less prevalent than in most nations.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$800 (2011) [1.66% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.343

Corruption Index: 2.2 (2011)

Due to political instability and its landlocked position, the Central African Republic has experienced little economic development since independence. The majority of Central Africans support themselves on subsistence agriculture. Timber and diamonds provide the primary exports, whereas food, manufactured goods, and electronics make up the bulk of imports. The Central African Republic's largest export partner is Japan, and the majority of imports come from Europe, the United States, or nearby African nations. Corruption is widespread. Bribery is a common problem, especially in rural areas along roads.

Faiths

Christian: 80%

Muslim: 15%

Indigenous beliefs: 5%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 900,000

Seventh Day Adventists 10,363 51

Jehovah's Witnesses 2,559 53

Latter-day Saints 194 1

Religion

Most Central Africans are Christian. Protestants constitute 51% of the population whereas Catholics account for 29% of Central Africans. Islam claims the remaining 15% of Central Africans. Muslims generally experience

⁵⁴⁰ "Central African Republic," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 20 March 2010. <http://genderindex.org/country/central-african-republic>

consistent societal discrimination often attributed to socioeconomic differences. Syncretism between indigenous beliefs and Christianity and Islam are common.⁵⁴¹

Religious Freedom

The constitution grants religious freedom, which is usually upheld by the government. Foreign religious groups must register with the government, which allows for some financial benefits. To register, groups must have over 1,000 members and leadership that government deems as qualified to lead congregations through education at a religious school. However, these regulations were not always followed for registration. Unregistered groups have been allowed to assemble but are monitored by government. Witchcraft is illegal, and its practice can result in the death penalty⁵⁴².

Largest Cities

Urban: 39%

Bangui, **Bimbo**, **Berbérati**, **Carnot**, **Bambari**, **Bouar**, **Bossangoa**, **Bria**, **Bangassou**, **Nola**.

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

One of the ten largest cities has a congregation. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The first known member in the Central African Republic was Carol Forrest of the United States Peace Corps. She arrived in June of 1991 and lived in Bangui. During her stay, she began sharing the gospel with associates, resulting in a group of investigators interested in learning about the Church. She began by inviting a couple friends and acquaintances to take part in her own personal Sunday gospel study. In the fall of that year, Forrest was set apart as a district missionary for the country. The mission president in the Zaire Kinshasa Mission visited the investigators and Forrest in June the following year to assess how they were progressing. In August 1992, the responsibility for the Central African Republic was transferred from the Zaire Kinshasa Mission to the Cameroon Yaounde Mission. The president of the Cameroon Yaounde Mission visited the country in September 1992. During his visit, twenty investigators were baptized, and two branches were organized in Bangui the day following the baptisms.⁵⁴³ A French couple began serving as missionaries in January 1993. The senior couple served in the country until they were removed due to worsening civil unrest. The seminary program started in 1995.

The responsibility for the Central African Republic shifted from the Ivory Coast Abidjan Mission to the newly created Ghana Cape Coast Mission in 2005, and was again transferred to the Democratic Republic of Congo Mission shortly thereafter. Since the first senior missionaries left the Central African Republic in the early 1990s, there have been no missionaries assigned to the country. President and Sister Livingstone from the Democratic Republic of Congo Mission visited the Central African Republic in early 2009 to conduct an annual branch audit. In 2012, LDS apostle Elder Jeffrey R. Holland dedicated the Central African Republic for missionary work, and mission leaders assessed conditions for assigning proselytizing elders.

⁵⁴¹ "Central African Republic," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148671.htm>

⁵⁴² "Central African Republic," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148671.htm>

⁵⁴³ Mostert, Mary. "Medical officer ministers to souls," LDS Church News, 5 December 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21796/Medical-officer-ministers-to-souls.html>

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 194 (2012)

There were approximately one hundred members by 1996, increasing to 126 in 2000. In 2005, membership nearly doubled to 218 and reached 393 in 2008.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 (2012)

In 1992, two branches were organized instead of one due to the locations where most members and investigators lived.⁵⁴⁴ The two branches in Bangui were subsequently consolidated into one.

Activity and Retention

During the 2007–2008 school year, there was a total of thirty-two people enrolled in either seminary or institute courses. The number of active members in the country appears to be around one hundred, or 25% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French, English.

All LDS scriptures are available in French. Fulani is the only native language that has any Church materials translated. Fulani translations are limited to *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*.

Meetinghouses

The chapel housing the Bangui Branch had space sufficient to hold about sixty to seventy for sacrament meeting in 2009. The building lacked classroom space, leading the branch to hold classes like primary outside under a tree. The branch was reported to lack much of the equipment most congregations have access to, such as televisions to show audiovisual presentations and electronic keyboards for playing hymns during sacrament meeting.

Health and Safety

HIV/AIDS infects 6.3% of the population. Poor sanitation, no access to clean water in most the country, and poor health care availability and infrastructure have likely delayed the reintroduction of LDS missionaries.

Humanitarian and Development Work

No organized LDS humanitarian work efforts are known to have occurred in the Central African Republic.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

It is unclear whether the LDS Church is officially registered with the government. The Church has less than half of the required number of members for registration. Because LDS leaders do not receive formal education

⁵⁴⁴ Mostert, Mary. "Medical officer ministers to souls," LDS Church News, 5 December 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21796/Medical-officer-ministers-to-souls.html>

from a religious school, the government may also hesitate to grant registration. These issues may have delayed a more active Church presence and outreach in the Central African Republic.

Cultural Issues

Like many African nations, war and poverty appear to be the biggest limiting factors for the growth of the Church in the Central African Republic. The Church had a bright beginning in the country when the first two branches were organized but encountered problems once civil unrest worsened, forcing the senior missionary couple to leave the country. Instability has persisted in recent years due to conflicts in neighboring nations spilling over into the Central African Republic. Poverty ranks among the most severe in the world, partly due to the country's landlocked position. The practice of polygamy creates challenges for church growth and mission outreach. Those participating in a polygamous relationship must end marriages in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency to be baptized.

National Outreach

The Church's presence in the Central African Republic is very limited. Only the capital city of Bangui where 16% of the population resides has an LDS congregation. Very few Central Africans, whether inside or outside of Bangui, have heard of the Church due to the Church's very limited presence.

Few visits had been made by regional church leaders due to instability and war. The remote location of the Central African Republic and its limited transportation and health infrastructure makes it difficult to reopen the country to foreign LDS missionaries. Bangui is about 650 miles away from the headquarters of the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission and 500 miles away from the nearest LDS congregation in Yaounde, Cameroon.

Missions that have administered the Central African Republic have experienced a tremendous response to missionary efforts. Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and the Democratic Republic of Congo each have seen rapid growth and require large amounts of mission resources to maintain and expand outreach. The Central African Republic has been less of a priority due to the strong growth in these other nations. Continued rapid membership and congregational growth in surrounding nations and limited mission resources may continue to place the reintroduction of missionaries to the Central African Republic on hold.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Many years of war and unrest have complicated efforts to locate and keep active the nearly 400 LDS members. The increase of 300 members between 2000 and 2008 resulted from a combination of local missionary efforts and the return of converts baptized outside of the Central African Republic.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

No major ethnic integration issues appear to have yet been arisen in church due to the limited size and distribution of membership. Future challenges may occur in regions with several ethnic groups with histories of conflict.

Language Issues

Fulani is the only native language in the Central African Republic with any translated church materials. Sangho may be the most likely to have future translations because it is the national language. The high linguistic diversity in the country challenges future mission outreach, considering that Fulani has only around

100,000 speakers and has just two ecclesiastical materials translated. French will likely be used until greater local membership growth and activity occurs.

Missionary Service

In 2009, President Livingstone of the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission interviewed a young man who was sending his mission papers to serve as a full-time missionary, the first in many years from the country. A missionary from the Central African Republic was serving in Pennsylvania in 2009. The elder joined the Church three years earlier in the United States. As of early 2013, no full-time missionaries were assigned to the country.

Leadership

In 2009, Roger Langue, an advisor to the president of the Central African Republic who was baptized with his family when he studied in France in the 1980s, provided great strength to the country's sole branch. Developing additional priesthood leadership has been challenging.

Temple

The Central African Republic is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Organized temple trips appear to have never occurred due to limited active membership, long distance, travel expenses, and difficulties acquiring the needed documentation and permissions to travel to South Africa. The placement of a senior missionary couple would greatly increase the likelihood of future temple participation of Central African members.

Comparative Growth

It is promising to note that the Church has continually functioned in the country despite many years of little contact from Church leaders. Some African nations, including Burundi and Somalia, previously had a Church presence but no longer have any organized congregations due to war or civil unrest.

Christian groups report modest growth. Both Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists have usually seen slow membership growth and have had a longer presence in the Central African Republic than the LDS Church. Christian participation in Sunday meetings appears lower than in many African nations. Seventh Day Adventists have doubled membership from 5,000 to 10,000 in little over a decade, yet the number of congregations has only increased by 11%

Future Prospects

The assignment of proselytizing elders appears highly likely within the near future. However, the Church will only grow in the meantime as LDS members share the gospel with their families, friends, and neighbors. As more members are brought into the Church through their efforts and remain active, the likelihood that missionaries will again be assigned to the country will increase. Prospects seem favorable the establishment of a potential LDS mission in Cameroon that could also administer the Central African Republic.

CHAD

Geography

AREA: 1,259,000 square km. Landlocked in Central Africa, Chad borders Sudan, the Central Africa Republic, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, and Libya. The Sahara Desert occupies the north, whereas the semi-arid Sahel occupies central Chad. The southernmost areas are tropical. Most of the terrain consists of low-lying plains, although there are some mountains in the northwest. Lake Chad forms the boundary with Cameroon and is rapidly shrinking due to desertification and diversion of tributary rivers for agriculture. Natural hazards include harmattan winds bringing hot, dusty air from the Sahara, and occasional droughts. Limited fresh water, pollution, and desertification are environmental issues. Chad is divided into eighteen administrative regions.

Peoples

Sara: 27.7%
Arab: 12.3%
Mayo-Kebbi: 11.5%
Kanem-Bornou: 9%
Ouaddai: 8.7%
Hadjarai: 6.7%
Tandjile: 6.5%
Gorane: 6.3%
Fitri-Batha: 4.7%
Other: 6.4%
Unknown: 0.3%

High ethnic diversity exists, as the largest ethnic group constitutes less than one-third of the population. Central and southern Chad are the most populated regions, whereas northern arid areas have few inhabitants. Sara are a Sudanese ethnic group and reside in extreme southern Chad. Arabs mainly populate central and southeastern areas of the country. Other ethnic groups primarily live in central or southern Chad and are of Sudanese, Semitic or Hausa origin.

Population: 10,975,648 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.009% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 5.05 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 47.28 male, 49.43 female (2012)

Languages: Arabic (9%), Ngambay (9%), Kanembu (4%), Dazaga (3%), Maba (3%), Naba (3%), Mundang (2%), Musey (2%), other (65%). French and Arabic are official languages and widely spoken as second languages. One hundred thirty-one native languages are spoken. No languages have over one million native speakers.

Literacy: 25.7%

History

Modern-day Chad has been inhabited for thousands of years. Islam arrived in northern Chad before 1000 AD, and southern expansion did not occur. The French began their colonial presence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and gave greater autonomy to Chad following World War II. Independence from France was achieved in 1960. For the following thirty years, Chad endured civil war and war with neighboring Libya. Democratic elections held in the 1990s were deemed flawed by international observers. Conflict between the government and rebel groups in northern Chad occurs frequently. In the mid-2000s, rebel groups in Sudan began attacks on Chad's eastern border, and civil conflict escalated. In recent years, the capital N'djamena has come under threat from rebel forces.

Culture

Chad is divided north to south between Muslim and Christian/Animist peoples. A third of Chadian women are influenced by polygamy. Female genital mutilation is a serious problem; an estimated half of women have been victims of the practice. Government banned the practice in 2002, although it continues in many areas. The treatment of women and cultural restrictions vary based on location.⁵⁴⁵ The most widely eaten food is millet. Soccer is the most popular sport. Alcohol consumption rates are lower than most countries.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,900 (2011) [3.95% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.328

Corruption Index: 2.0 (2011)

Agriculture drives the economy. Chad's landlocked position and high governmental corruption hamper greater economic development and diversification. Eighty percent (80%) of the population lives below the poverty line and sustains itself on subsistence farming and herding. Primary agriculture products include cotton, sorghum, and millet. The primary industry is oil production. American and Chinese oil companies arrived in the 2000s and began extracting the oil reserves. Ninety percent (90)% of exports are destined to the United States, although China has increased considerably as a trade partner in recent years. Other major trade partners include France and Cameroon.

Chad is ranked as one of the most corrupt nations worldwide, and corruption can be found in all levels on government. Recent oil exploration and extraction has exacerbated corruption and inequality in wealth.

Faiths

Muslim: 53.1%

Christian: 34.3%

Animist: 7.3%

Other: 0.5%

Unknown: 1.7%

Atheist: 3.1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 900,000

Seventh Day Adventists 3,910 43

⁵⁴⁵ "Chad," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 12 March 2010. <http://genderindex.org/country/chad>

Jehovah's Witnesses 633 17
 Latter-day Saints less than 50

Religion

Muslims constitute over half the population and live primarily in northern Chad and urban areas. Tensions exist between moderate and fundamental Muslims and between Muslims and Christians. Christians populate southern and urban areas and account for a third of the population. Catholics are the most visible Christian denomination. Chadians following indigenous beliefs primarily reside in the south.⁵⁴⁶

Religious Freedom

The constitution allows for religious freedom, which is generally respected by the government. Chad has no official religion but shows favoritism towards Islam. Some radical Muslim groups are banned. There are connections between local religious leaders and the oil industry and oil revenues. Religious groups must register with the government and maintain peaceful coexistence with other faiths. Foreign missionaries may serve in Chad but since July 2007 have been banned from open proselytism. Religious instruction is not allowed in public schools.⁵⁴⁷

Largest Cities

Urban: 27%

N'Djamena, Moundou, Sarh, Abeche, Kelo, Koumra, Pala, Am Timan, Bongor, Mongo.
 None of the 10 largest cities have a congregation. Twelve percent (12%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

In 1998, Chad was included in the Africa West Area. One of the first Chadian members, Toupta Boguena, was baptized in Arizona in 1997 and returned to Chad in 2003. At the time, she was the only member in N'djamena, and the closest member was an American working in southern Chad in Doba.⁵⁴⁸

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

In 2003, only two members likely lived in the country.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 (2012)

Members worship in the privacy of their own homes and are too few and spread apart to justify Sunday meetings. The responsibility for Church affairs in Chad falls under the Africa West Area presidency.

⁵⁴⁶ "Chad," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127224.htm>

⁵⁴⁷ "Chad," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127224.htm>

⁵⁴⁸ Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Fulfilling a promise to her father," LDS Church News, 4 March 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48594/Fulfilling-a-promise-to-her-father.html>

Activity and Retention

No converts appear to have been baptized in Chad.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, French.

The Church has all LDS scriptures and most Church materials available in Arabic and French. *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Fulani.

Meetinghouses

No Church meetings occur.

Health and Safety

HIV/AIDS infects 3.5% of the population. Common methods of infection include illicit sexual relations, drug use, contaminated needs, and HIV-positive mothers. However, HIV is not spread by casual contact and is not likely to prevent the Church's establishment.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Since 2003, Toupta Boguena, a Chadian scholar and BYU graduate, has organized relief and development projects under "The Chad Project." Most of the members of the organization reside in Utah and ship farming equipment, seeds, water pumps, wheelchairs, medical equipment, and school kits to distribute in villages. Toupta Boguena also teaches at the University of N'djamena.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church's absence is likely not due to the Church's failure to obtain recognition, as registration has likely not been pursued because so few members live in the country. Bans on open proselytism would limit the Church's traditional missionary program if introduced to Chad.

Cultural Issues

Widespread poverty, insurgencies, and ethnic conflicts have likely discouraged the Church from more actively pursuing missionary work in Chad. Those wishing to join the Church engaged in a polygamous marriage must end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency.

National Outreach

Chad's remote location challenges mission outreach. Chad has never fallen under the jurisdiction of a mission. Rebel forces in northern and eastern Chad would keep many regions unreached by the Church once established in N'djamena. Outreach in the larger cities and in southern Chad appears most favorable for future missionary opportunities due to larger Christian populations and greater stability.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity and doctrinal understanding of members in Chad likely depend on the quality of teaching received in the country they joined the Church in and gospel habits developed prior to relocating to Chad.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Church will likely experience ethnic integration issues early in its establishment in Chad due to the high ethnic diversity. Ethnic groups in the same congregation that have traditional ties to differing religious and cultural practices will likely cause the most friction. These issues may impact member activity and convert retention rates if early conflicts are not promptly addressed.

Language Issues

Chad's language diversity challenges future Church outreach, as most Chadians only have Church materials in their second language. Arabic-speaking Chadians will likely be less receptive to the Church, as most adhere to Islam. French will likely be used in meetings and for teaching investigators.

Leadership

No native leadership likely resides in Chad. The establishment of congregations and long-term Church growth will hinge on the conversion of Chadian men and their consistency in attending meetings and following Church teachings.

Temple

Chad either pertains to the Aba Nigeria or Accra Ghana Temple district. No temple trips are organized.

Comparative Growth

The African nation with a Church presence that shares the most similarities with Chad is the Central African Republic. The Central African Republic has seen very little progress since the first congregations were organized almost two decades ago. This may indicate that future outreach in Chad may yield some initial results but face little growth and expansion due to geographic isolation and the many complex government, social, and religious issues. Most nations in the region have no Church presence and few to no LDS members. Mali appears to be the only nearby African nation without a formal Church presence that has a few local members.

Other Christian denominations have seen growth in Chad in recent years. These efforts have primarily occurred in larger cities and in the south. Many of these denominations have had a presence in Chad for over a decade.

Future Prospects

The Church in Central Africa has seen increasing outreach and expansion into neighboring nations, but prospects for future Church establishment in Chad appeared unfavorable in early 2010. Insurgencies and widespread poverty challenge missionary efforts. Once greater stability is established, Chad appears a likely candidate for Church-sponsored humanitarian and development work starting in the southern regions. Such efforts can aim at improving quality of life of Chadians, establishing good terms with the government, and preparing the way for a future Church presence.

COMOROS

Geography

AREA: 2,235 square km. Located in the Mozambique Channel between Madagascar and Mozambique, Comoros consists of three primary islands. The volcanic islands are subject to a tropical maritime climate with a rainy season from November to May. The terrain of the islands' interior varies from hills to rugged mountains. Cyclones and volcanoes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation and declining soil quality and erosion due to ineffective agricultural practices. Comoros is administratively divided into three islands and four municipalities.

Peoples

Comorian: 99%
Other: 1%

Population: 737,287 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.063% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.09 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 60.54 male, 65.01 female (2012)

Languages: Comorian dialects (99%), other (1%). Arabic and French are official languages. Three Comorian dialects are spoken, one for each island. The Comorian language is a compound of Malayo-Polynesian, Arabic, and Swahili languages and is written in both the Latin and Arabic scripts. Arabic is taught in public schools for Quran reading.

Literacy: 56.5% (2003)

History

Austronesian and Bantu settlers first populated the islands during the first millennium AD. Arab traders and merchants traveled from the Horn of Africa and established a trading and transit center on the islands to traffic goods from the African interior. Arabs introduced Islam to the indigenous inhabitants and intermarried. The name Comoros derives from *qamar*, the Arabic word for moon. In the nineteenth century, the French gained control and established colonies on the islands. Since independence from France in 1975, Comoros has suffered extreme political instability. Two of the three islands—Anjouan and Moheli—declared independence in 1997. In 2000, an agreement between the three islands was reached in which the presidency of the federal government rotates between the islands, and each island elects its own president. Anjouan was the last island to come under control of the federal government in 2008. Comoros claims nearby French-controlled Mayotte.

Culture

Islam is a major cultural influence on Comorian culture as it has contributed to the islands' history and nearly the entire population is Muslim. Arabs have heavily influenced culture, but the islands each retain their own cultural practices, customs, and some indigenous beliefs. There is little tolerance for non-Muslim groups.

Rice, fish, coconuts, and roots are staple foods. Alcohol consumption rates are among the lowest worldwide and compare with many Muslim nations that forbid alcohol use.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,200 (2011) [2.49% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.433

Corruption Index: 2.4 (2011)

Comoros remains one of the poorest nations worldwide, as the islands lack natural resources and infrastructure. The rapidly growing population strains limited resources. Comoros depends on foreign assistance to stabilize the economy and provide skilled labor. Political turmoil since independence has delayed economic growth and development. The government struggles to attract foreign investment and to address its current social and economic issues. Sixty percent (60%) of the population lives below the poverty line. Agriculture employs 80% of the workforce and produces 40% of the GDP, whereas services employ less than 20% of the workforce and account for 56% of the GDP. Primary agricultural products include vanilla, cloves, and ylang-ylang—a tree from which a perfume is extracted to treat a variety of ailments. Industries include fishing, tourism, and perfume distillation. Primary trade partners include France, Turkey, Singapore, China, and India.

Corruption is perceived as widespread. Although there are penalties for government officials committing corrupt acts, such laws have not been enforced.⁵⁴⁹ The centralized government has prevented greater transparency due to tight control of economic affairs.

Faiths

Muslim: 99%

Other (primarily Catholic): 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 4,300

Latter-day Saints less than 20

Religion

Sunni Muslims constitute 99% of the population. Catholics are the largest religious minority. Other religious groups function for foreigners. Foreign religious humanitarian aid groups operate in Comoros but in accordance with government policy do not engage in proselytism.⁵⁵⁰

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 41st

The constitution protects religious freedom, but the law prohibits the preaching of non-Islamic religions. Islam is the state religion, and Islamic holidays are nationally recognized. Christians are prohibited from proselytizing, and foreigners found engaging in missionary activity are deported. Conversion from Islam to another religion can be legally prosecuted, although there are very few instances of this occurring. Non-Muslims may

⁵⁴⁹ "Comoros," 2010 Index of Economic Freedom, retrieved 26 August 2010. <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/comoros>

⁵⁵⁰ "Comoros," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127225.htm>

peacefully assemble, build meetinghouses, and train clergy, but most worship in private for fear of persecution. Non-Muslim foreigners tend to experience little social opposition in practicing their faith, whereas non-Muslim Comorian citizens are subject to ridicule and social pressure, leading most to worship in private.⁵⁵¹

Largest Cities

Urban: 28%

Moroni, Moutsamoudou, Fomboni, Domoni, Sima, Ouani, Mirontsi, Koni-Djodjo, Moya, Mbéni.

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

None of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Nineteen percent (19%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

Comoros has pertained to the Africa Southeast Area since 1998. The Madagascar Antananarivo Mission currently administers the islands. There has been neither an official nor unofficial LDS presence in Comoros.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 20 (2012)

Any Church members residing in Comoros are foreigners or natives who joined the Church abroad.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 (2012)

There are no organized congregations.

Activity and Retention

There have been no convert baptisms in Comoros. Any native members likely keep their faith private to avoid persecution.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, French, Malagasy.

All LDS scriptures are translated into Arabic, French, and Malagasy. Most church materials are available in Arabic and French whereas several unit, temple, priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, young women, primary, missionary, and family history materials are translated into Malagasy. *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* and *Gospel Principles* are translated in Comorian.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 2010, the Church had not conducted any past development or humanitarian work in Comoros.

⁵⁵¹ "Comoros," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127225.htm>

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Current government policy and law regarding the proselytism of non-Islamic religions creates a major barrier to establishing the Church among the indigenous population. Comoros does grant greater freedom regarding the religious observance of noncitizens as well as the private worship of Comorian Christians than most Muslim nations. Any Church establishment would occur in private among members who most likely joined the Church outside the country.

Cultural Issues

The strong influence of Islam on daily life, social standards, and government policy are the greatest obstacles for establishing an official Church presence. Even if anti-proselytism legislation was relaxed and Christians were permitted to preach, the deep Islamic heritage of the islands would prove challenging, along with the need to develop a culturally-tailored missionary approach. Low literacy rates and rampant poverty are challenges encountered by LDS mission planners throughout much of Africa, but in combination with the high Islamic activity present a major obstacle for future mission outreach.

National Outreach

Comoros remains completely unreached by the Church despite being assigned to the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission. Distance from established mission outreach centers in the region presents logistical challenges for potential future outreach. The mission in Madagascar has experienced rapid membership growth and also administers Reunion and Mauritius, leaving few available resources for less-receptive or restricted areas like Comoros. High population density on the three islands will require few mission outreach centers and resources if proselytism is one day permitted.

Outreach is conducted in nations with Comorian communities where proselytism is permitted. Hundreds of thousands of Comorians live in France, where there are no proselytism restrictions. Many Comorians also live in Madagascar. Comorian converts abroad may share their faith with family and friends and return to their homeland, which may one day lay the foundation for the Church. However, few return permanently due to poor living standards. It is difficult to reach Christian Comorians due to their limited numbers and the private nature of their faith as a result of government and societal restrictions on non-Muslims. There are several hundred Malagasy Christians, who may be among the most receptive to the Church if missionary activity commenced.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Any Church members appear to meet in private. Member activity will largely depend on the degree of teaching and learning church principles prior to relocating to Comoros and persistence in studying and implementing gospel principles in daily living.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Limited ethnic diversity minimizes risk of ethnic conflicts, although the spectrum of Comorian dialects and low literacy rates will present challenges for teaching and understanding. If established throughout the country, the Church may face challenges integrating Comorians from different islands into the same congregation.

Language Issues

The Church has translated two basic proselytism materials into Comorian using the Latin script despite the lack of official presence in the islands. Due to widespread Arabic instruction for Quran reading in public school, Arabic language materials may be of use to mission efforts. Literacy rates remain low, which may make the distribution of church literature less effective yet provides opportunity for literacy programs as humanitarian service.

Missionary Service

No missionaries appear to have served from Comoros. Local members serving as missionaries at home or abroad will be central toward developing future self-sustaining leadership.

Leadership

No Comorian leadership has been developed.

Temple

Comoros pertains to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. No organized temple trips occur. Travel to the temple is time consuming and infeasible for most Comorians.

Comparative Growth

Only a few Muslim African nations have an LDS presence. A branch was established on Mayotte in the 2000s but was discontinued in 2009, and a United States servicemen branch was organized in Djibouti in 2010. Like most of Muslim-majority Africa, Comoros remains unreached by mission outreach efforts.

Christian groups have a severely limited presence in the Comoros and experience slow growth due to anti-proselytism legislation, societal pressures to not convert from Islam, and the lack of native Christians. Missionary-oriented denominations have a small presence primarily limited to the few foreigners in the country.

Future Prospects

Past political instability, government policies and law banning Christian proselytism, and a lack of native members have prevented national outreach by Latter-day Saints. Proselytism prospects are unfavorable for the foreseeable future. Outreach directed toward Comorians living in nations that permit LDS proselytism and humanitarian and development work in Comoros appear the most favorable courses of action in establishing a permanent presence on the islands. However, at a time when mission and humanitarian resources are stretched in many areas, it is unlikely that LDS mission or humanitarian outreach will be established in Comoros for years to come.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Geography

AREA: 2,344,858 square km. Geographically one of the largest countries in Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo borders the Central African Republic, Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Angola, and the Republic of the Congo. Several large lakes straddle the border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with nations to the east such as Lake Tanganyika, Lake Kivu, Lake Edward, and Lake Albert. The Congo River is the largest river in the country and forms a portion of the international border with the Republic of Congo. A small finger of land extends to the Atlantic Ocean on the west side of the country. Most of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is tropical due to its location on the equator. Tropical rainforest and jungle cover most of the country. Some mountainous areas exist in the east where many large lakes form the boundaries with Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. The southern portion of the country is drier with grasslands and forest. Active volcanoes have threatened populated areas in the east. Seasonal flooding occurs on the Congo River, and frequent droughts visit the south. Environmental issues include poaching wildlife, pollution, deforestation, soil erosion, and detrimental mining practices. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is divided into ten administrative provinces and one city. Plans have been approved to subdivide the country into twenty-six new administrative provinces, but this has yet to be carried out.

Peoples

Mongo, Luba, Congo, and Mangbetu-Azande: 45%

Other: 55%

Population density is highest near the largest cities, in the southwest and in the east. There are approximately 250 ethnic groups living in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, most of which make up just a small fraction of the population.⁵⁵² The four largest tribes are the Mongo, Luba, Congo, and Mangbetu-Azande and are classified as Bantu or Hamitic.

Population: 73,599,190 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.579% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 5.09 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 54.28 male, 57.23 female (2012)

Languages: 215 languages are spoken in the country. French is the official language. National languages include Kikongo, Lingala, Luba-Katanga, and Shaba Swahili. Most spoken languages include Kikongo (11.6%), Lingala (10.2%), Tshihiluba (9.2%), Kituba (6.1%), Luba-Katanga (2.2%), Ngbaka (1.5%), and Songe (1.5%). Other languages are spoken by 42.3% of the population. Lingala is widely spoken in the western Democratic Republic of the Congo. Shaba Swahili, a widely spoken second language with few native speakers, is spoken in the south and east of the country, Kikongo in the far west, and Tshihiluba in the center. These four native languages are recognized as national languages. Native languages with over one million

⁵⁵² "Background Note: Democratic Republic of the Congo," Bureau of African Affairs, 13 April 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

speakers in the country include Kikongo (8.0 million), Lingala (7.0 million), Tshiluba (6.3 million), Kituba (4.2 million), Luba-Katanga (1.51 million), Ngbaka (1.01 million), and Songe (1.0 million).

Literacy: 67.2% (2001)

History

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is believed to have been inhabited for millennia. Bantu peoples migrated into the region from Nigeria in the seventh and eighth centuries AD. European exploration and exploitation of the Congo's resources began in the late nineteenth century. The region became known as the Congo Free State in 1884, although in fact it was controlled by the king of Belgium. The Congo was annexed to Belgium in 1908 as the Belgium Congo. During years of colonization, Congolese suffered untold brutality from colonists, inspiring novels such as *The Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad.

Independence from Belgium was achieved in 1960 and was followed by civil unrest and political instability. The country was established as the Republic of the Congo; the name was changed to Zaire following a coup led by Lieutenant Mobutu in 1965. Mobutu retained power through fraudulent elections and military force for the following three decades and ultimately was overthrown in 1997 in the First Congo War. Support from neighboring Uganda and Rwanda aided in the overthrow of Mobutu. Many of the refugees from the 1994 Rwanda genocide fled to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Zaire changed its name to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1997.

The Second Congo War began in 1998 and killed millions, spread to several nearby nations, and involved many armed militant groups. Laurent Kabila became president until his assassination in 2001. Kabila's son led the country shortly thereafter, officially becoming president in 2006 after the first multiparty elections since independence. Instability has continued in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in the east and north where many rebel groups have controlled large amounts of territory, such as in the Ituri and Kivu areas. Currently Congolese government forces are trying to eliminate rebel groups in this area of the country.

Culture

A wide range of cultures are practiced by the hundreds of ethnic groups with little influence from Europeans. The use of alcohol in celebrations is common, but overall alcohol consumption rates are low compared to the world average. Cigarette consumption rates are among the lowest worldwide. Polygamy is common, but polygamous unions are not legally recognized.⁵⁵³ Occupation and wealth define social class in Kinshasa. Some men in the larger cities highly regard the wearing of expensive European clothing for social acceptance.⁵⁵⁴ Music and woodcrafts are well recognized aspects of culture.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$300 (2011) [0.62% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.286

Corruption Index: 2.0

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is richly endowed with abundant natural resources yet has an undeveloped economy. The wide open spaces of the country could feed most of Africa's people if cultivated. Due to war and political instability, no economic progress occurred throughout the country until the mid-2000s. Recently, mining began for precious minerals and metals, especially cobalt, gold and diamonds. Instability in

⁵⁵³ "Congo, Dem. Rep.," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 16 May 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/congo-dem-rep>

⁵⁵⁴ "Democratic Republic of the Congo," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 16 May 2011. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html>

the eastern portion of the country threatens economic growth, which slowed in 2008 and 2009 due to the global economic crisis. Rapid urbanization in Kinshasa and other large cities challenge government's ability to develop infrastructure. Half of the country's GDP comes from agriculture, whereas services account for a third of the GDP, and industry makes up the remainder. Foreign investment has not come to fruition in the past couple of decades due to war, instability, and corruption. Most of the populace lives in poverty. The Democratic Republic of the Congo's largest export partner is China, accounting for 44.7% of all exports. Other export and import partners are predominantly from Europe and nearby African countries.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and among the most severe among African nations. Financial institutes are vulnerable to money laundering due to a lack of supervision of the banking system. Human trafficking for prostitution and forced labor is a major concern and is often linked to rebel groups. The government's overall inability to maintain order throughout the countryside has facilitated corruption and political instability.

Faiths

Christian: 80%

Muslim: 10%

Other: 10%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 34,346,271

Protestants 13,738,508

Kimbanguist 6,869,254

Seventh Day Adventists 539,228 1,691

Jehovah's Witnesses 173,416 3,181

Latter-day Saints 34,547 116

Religion

Most Congolese are Christian, with 50% belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. Protestants make up the second largest religious group (20%). Kimbanguists (a Christian group with similarities with Baptists), Muslims, and other religious groups each make up 10% of the population. Syncretism between Christian and indigenous beliefs is common. Weekly attendance at church or other religious meetings is widespread, as up to 90% of the population attends a religious service on a weekly basis.⁵⁵⁵

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Government allows those in the country to practice their religion as long as it does not disturb social norms and order. Religious groups are requested to register with the government, but this mandate has not been enforced. Violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo does not appear to discriminate on religious grounds. There have been some acts of violence targeting those accused of practicing witchcraft.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁵ "Congo, Democratic Republic of the," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148677.htm>

⁵⁵⁶ "Congo, Democratic Republic of the," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148677.htm>

Major Cities

Urban: 34%

Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Mbuji-Mayi, Kananga, **Kisangani**, **Bukavu**, Kolwezi, Likasi, **Tshikapa**, **Kikwit**, **Mbandaka**, **Goma**, Matadi, **Uvira**, **Bunia**, **Boma**, Mwene-Ditu, **Butembo**, **Isiro**, **Kindu**, **Kabinda**, Gandajika, **Bandundu**, **Kamina**, **Gemena**.

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

Nine of the twenty-five cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Twenty-two percent (22)% of the national population resides in the twenty-five most populous cities.

LDS History

The first efforts to establish the Church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were directed under the International Mission, which operated between 1972 and 1987. Legal status was granted to the Church on February 12, 1986 when only a few members lived in the country.⁵⁵⁷ Elder Marvin J. Ashton dedicated the country for missionary work in 1987. The Zaire Kinshasa Mission was organized that same year from the International Mission. The first young woman's conference also occurred the same year in Lubumbashi.⁵⁵⁸ In 1991, seminary and institute commenced. In 2010, a second mission was organized in Lubumbashi. In early 2011, the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission administered western and northern areas of the country, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo, and semi-officially included Gabon, whereas the Democratic Republic of Congo Lubumbashi Mission included southern and eastern areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 34,547 (2012)

There were 400 Latter-day Saints in 1987. By the end of 1989 there were 1,000 Latter-day Saints in Kinshasa and 500 in Lubumbashi. Membership reached 4,600 in 1993, 6,400 in 1997, and 8,827 in 2000. During the 2000, moderate to rapid membership growth occurred as membership increased to 13,637 in 2002, 15,960 in 2004, 18,276 in 2006, 20,883 in 2008, and 27,058 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates ranged from a high of 24.5% in 2001 to a low of 5.7% in 2007 but generally ranged from 5% to 10% during the mid-2000s and from 13% to 15% in the late 2000s. The annual increase in membership varied from one thousand to four thousand during the 2000s. In 2010, one in 2,650 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 84 Branches: 34 (April 2013)

In 1987, there were three branches and one district in Kinshasa. LDS outreach quickly spread outside of Kinshasa to Lubumbashi where a district was organized in November 1988 for the Lubumbashi and Nyashi Branches. By 1991, there were eight branches in Kinshasa and two branches in Lubumbashi. A third district was organized in Kolwezi in 1991. By 1993, there were twenty-two branches and six districts nationwide.

The first stake was organized in Kinshasa in 1996 and included eight wards and one branch: The Bangu, Binza, Kasa-Vubu, Kinsuka 1st and 2nd, Limete, Ngaba and Ngaliema Wards, and the Mont Amba Branch. The new stake was created from the Kinshasa Zaire and Kinshasa Zaire Ngaliema Districts. The following

⁵⁵⁷ Avant, Gerry. "LDS leave nations as missionaries not emigrants," LDS Church News, 27 February 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17782/LDS-leave-nations-as-missionaries-not-emigrants.html>

⁵⁵⁸ "First YW conference provides 'vision of worth,'" LDS Church News, 16 December 1986. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19170/First-YW-conference-provides-vision-of-worth.html>

year, a second stake was created in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Lubumbashi with six wards. By 1997, there were twenty-six congregations, including fifteen wards.

A second stake was created in Kinshasa in 1999 from the original Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Stake and the Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Masina District with five wards and four branches. By 2000, there were thirty-seven congregations, including twenty-three wards. Rapid congregational growth occurred in the 2000s as the number of congregations increased to fifty-six in 2002, sixty-two in 2004, sixty-four in 2006, seventy in 2008, and ninety-five in 2010. By mid-May 2011, there were 103 congregations. The number of wards rapidly increased in the 2000s from thirty-one in 2002 to thirty-seven in 2004, thirty-nine in 2006, forty-five in 2008, and sixty-one in mid-May 2011.

During the 2000s, three new districts and four new stakes were organized. New stakes were organized in Kinshasa Ngaliema (2003), Kinshasa Mont Ngafula (2008), Katuba [in the Lubumbashi metropolitan area] (2009), and Kinshasa Kimbanseke (2009), whereas new districts were organized in Likasi (2002), Kananga (2003), and Luputa (2006). In late 2010, a new district was organized in Mbuji-Mayi. By early 2011, there were seven stakes and five districts. Additional stakes have been organized in Kananga (2011), Luputa (2011), Kinshasa Binza (2012), and Kinshasa Mokali (2012).

With the exception of the district based in Kolwezi, rapid congregational growth occurred throughout the LDS Church's districts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the late 2000s. In early 2008, districts based in Likasi, Luputa, and Kananga each had four branches. By May 2011, the Kananga District had eight branches, the Likasi District had nine branches, and the Luputa District had ten branches. There was only one LDS branch meeting in Mbuji-Mayi until 2008 when a second branch was organized. By 2010, there were four branches in Mbuji-Mayi. There were eight branches in Mbuji-Mayi by year-end 2012.

Congregational growth in the 2000s and in 2010 occurred almost exclusively within cities that already had LDS congregations. Cities that had their first independent LDS congregations established after 2005 included Mwene-Ditu and Ngandajika (2008), Kipushi (2009), Matadi (2010), and Uvira (2011). In 2011, the Kakanda Branch was organized nearby a large mine near the city of Kasangulu and was assigned to the district in Likasi, and the Kasumbalesa Branch was organized and assigned to the stake in Katuba. Many new groups were organized in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2008 and 2009 for groups of members residing far from LDS meetinghouses, fueling congregational growth. In 2012, semi-official LDS groups appeared to be meeting in Kikondja and Lusambo.

Activity and Retention

The LDS Church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has historically seen some of the highest member activity rates in the world for the Church. Upon completion of the first LDS meetinghouse in September 1986, there were 208 in attendance,⁵⁵⁹ approximately the entire number of known members in the country at the time. Large conferences have been well attended. In the fall of 2009, 2,162 attended a conference of the Kananga district, significantly more than the 1,300 active members in the seven district branches at the time. All of this growth had occurred without the assignment of missionaries to any of the branches in the district, indicating that members in the district were effective in sharing the gospel, and locals were interested in learning about the Church. When the Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Kimbanseke Stake was organized, a total of 2,700 attended and fifty-six men were sustained to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.⁵⁶⁰ Seminary and institute enrollment increased from 3,298 in 2008 to 3,880 in 2010. The average number of members per congregation increased from 239 in 2000 to 285 in 2010 largely due to the large increase in

⁵⁵⁹ "Democratic Republic of Congo," *Deseret News* 2003 Church Almanac, p. 321.

⁵⁶⁰ "Dedication blesses two African nations," *LDS Church News*, 5 September 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57850/Dedication-blesses-two-African-nations.html>.

wards and some minor member activity challenges. The number of active members per congregation is difficult to estimate due to the large number of nonmembers attending church meetings in many units. Active membership per congregation may be as high as 150–200. Smaller, newly organized branches have fewer than one hundred active members and appear to have the greatest struggles with convert retention and member activity issues. Full-time missionaries reported some member activity challenges in the Kipushi Branch in early 2011. Nationwide active membership is estimated to number as many as 18,000, or 65%–70% of total LDS membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French, Lingala.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in French. In 1989, selections of the Book of Mormon became available in Lingala. The Book of Mormon was translated in its entirety into Lingala in the mid-2000s. General Conference was translated into Lingala for the first time in 2006. The Book of Mormon, *Gospel Principles*, The Articles of Faith, and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* are available in Lingala. The dialect of Swahili spoken in the eastern and southern portions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has *Gospel Principles Simplified* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* translated. Both *Gospel Principles* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* are available in Kikongo and Tsihiluba.

Meetinghouses

The Church has adapted to the needs of Congolese for establishing places for worship by frequently remodeling existing buildings into meetinghouses. Church-built meetinghouses have also been constructed in recent years in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. Meetinghouses are very well used, with as many as four wards assigned to a single building. Meetinghouses in many locations are often inadequate in size and function in meeting the needs of large numbers of local members and investigators.

Public Health

Despite widespread poverty, the average life expectancy is significantly higher than many other, wealthier populations in the south at over fifty years. Tropical diseases are endemic and sanitation and health care infrastructure and accessibility are poor. HIV/AIDS has infected 4.2% of the adult population with the highest infection rates among young adults. Eighty-three percent (83%) of those infected received the disease through sexual relations.⁵⁶¹ Education on HIV/AIDS prevention has helped slow the spread of the disease, which reached its peak in the 1990s.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has participated in many humanitarian projects in the country, the most significant being a massive water project in Luputa. The water project consisted of three stages, the first of which was completed in the fall of 2009. The project consisted of constructing a pipeline carrying water from a source nineteen miles outside of Luputa to the city as well as providing access to water to villages along the way. Once completed, the project will provide fresh water to 166,000 people.⁵⁶² Additional projects pursued by the Church have included wheelchair donations, measles initiatives, additional clean water projects, literacy programs, vision care, prenatal care, hygiene training, emergency relief for flood victims, and providing equipment for hospitals.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶¹ “Democratic Republic of Congo,” USAID, retrieved 16 May 2011. http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/aids/Countries/africa/congo_profile.pdf

⁵⁶² “Church Helps Bring Water to African Community,” News Release, 17 April 2009. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/news-releases-stories/church-helps-bring-water-to-african-community>

⁵⁶³ “Projects—Congo, The Democratic Republic of the,” Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 16 May 2011. <http://>

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

There are no government policies or laws that impede LDS missionary activity. Political instability and rebel-controlled regions remain unreached by the Church due to safety concerns and remote location. Good cooperation between the Church and the government has yet to be fully utilized for fulltime and member-missionary efforts.

Cultural Issues

High receptivity to missionary-minded Christianity is a major benefit for LDS outreach in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and has fueled growth since the Church's initial establishment. Poverty appears to be the largest obstacle for the Church's progress in the country. The Fund for Peace (www.fundforpeace.org) estimated 70% of those living in the Democratic Republic of the Congo live in poverty. Although many are employed, most are underemployed. Most Congolese cannot afford transportation and must walk to church meetings. This has provided the need and opportunity to bring church services to a larger number of neighborhoods in the larger cities and make the gospel more accessible. Hunger and health problems interfere with everyday living, and many are unable to obtain a higher education and find employment that can support themselves and their families.

The Church has a large number of male members due to the Congolese cultural practice of the husband or father first investigating something and then teaching and inviting the rest of his family. Many women become interested in learning about and joining the Church once they see the change in their husbands as they attend church and become members. Some missionary couples serving in the country report that some men have not brought the rest of their families. A large number of the men joining the Church are single men in their early twenties.

As in many African nations, polygamy is a common practice. In order for one to join the Church, former polygamous marriages must end in divorce. Individuals associated with polygamy must be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency before baptism can be authorized. As of yet, missionaries serving in the country have not reported that polygamy has presented major obstacles to Church growth.

National Outreach

Seventeen percent (17%) of the national population resides in a city with an LDS congregation. LDS outreach is almost entirely restricted to Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Mbuji-Mayi, Kananga, Kolwezi, Likasi, and Luputa. Full-time LDS missionaries were never permanently assigned outside of Kinshasa and Lubumbashi until the late 2000s and early 2010s, and missionary work occurred exclusively by branch missionaries. Of cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, only Kipushi, Luputa, Kasambalesa, and Kakanda had officially operating LDS congregations in May 2011.

The sheer size of the Democratic Republic of the Congo combined with the fourth largest population in Africa present logistical challenges for preaching the gospel throughout the country. Transportation issues caused by poor roads and obtaining fuel, political instability, poverty, and language barriers have also prevented greater LDS mission outreach. Both missions continue to administer additional countries, reducing the available of mission leadership and resources in the region, as additional missions have not been organized. Although the Church has made excellent progress in expanding outreach in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi, there is no reported church presence in any of the cities or rural areas between Kananga and Kinshasa, areas west of Kinshasa to the

Atlantic Ocean with the exception of the city of Matadi, cities between Luputa and Kolwezi, or in the entire northern and eastern portions of the country. Several areas in the east and north have no church presence due to war. As stability returns to many areas following the end of the Second Congo War, congregations may be opened in additional cities between Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. Missionaries appear to be assigned to an area only after a strong membership base has been established. In 2009, no missionaries were serving in cities in the center of the country due to their remoteness.

There are abundant opportunities for the LDS Church to expand national outreach due to a strong member-missionary program and past self-reliance of districts in the interior with supplying branch missionaries and full-time missionaries to serve elsewhere. Groups of unofficially organized prospective Latter-day Saints are found in several areas, and some have waited for years for an official LDS Church establishment in their cities and villages. In 2011, the mission based in Lubumbashi received special First Presidency approval for the calling of a third counselor in the mission presidency to supervise church activities in Mbuji-Mayi, providing significant potential for expanding outreach in the least reached, most populous city in the nation. Concerns regarding the maintenance of doctrinal integrity in newly established, remote congregations have contributed to delays in expanding outreach in addition to limited missionary resources dedicated to the region. Reports for senior missionary couples assigned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo indicate that prospects appear favorable for the opening of additional cities and smaller towns within close proximity of cities with established LDS congregations and in large cities with small groups of baptized members and self-affiliated individuals, such as Uvira. National expansion of LDS outreach in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has almost entirely depended on capable, active members moving to unreached cities and petitioning the Church, sometimes for years, for authority to organize groups and later branches.

Although the Church has become established in many of the largest cities, the Church did not have a known presence in the sixth largest city of Kisangani in the north as of early 2011. Despite the social and political problems in northern Democratic Republic of the Congo, a formal church presence may be established in the medium-term future as a result of converts from this region joining the Church elsewhere and returning to Kisangani and sharing the gospel. There have as yet been no reports of any groups or unofficial congregations in the northern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity and convert retention rates appear higher than in most African nations and rank among the highest in the world. The country has developed a much larger and stronger leadership and membership base than in many other African nations. The Church has focused on retaining converts and developing leadership to meet member needs and facilitate future growth. The Church strives to maintain a balance between developing strong local membership and leadership by adding new converts without overburdening the existing church infrastructure. High involvement of local members in missionary activity has benefited convert retention and member activity rates and reduces demands of the limited number of full-time missionaries assigned to the country. Much of the missionary work that occurs in Kinshasa and throughout the country is performed by local members sharing the gospel with family, friends, and acquaintances. Increases in the number of stakes and congregations and several districts close to become stakes are additional indicators of high member activity and convert retention.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The large ethnic diversity presents challenges but appears not to negatively affect growth. This is likely due to no particular ethnic group dominating in the country. Integrating ethnic groups may become an issue when the Church becomes established in the east and north where ethnic tensions are higher.

Language Issues

One of the great challenges the Church faces is translating scriptures and ecclesiastical materials into local languages. The Book of Mormon has not been translated in any languages spoken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo besides Lingala and French. Book of Mormon translations into Kikongo, Shaba Swahili and Tsihiluba appear likely to be forthcoming in future years, as these languages are the most widely spoken by Congolese and by local members. French is widely used due to its importance in uniting the hundreds of different ethnic groups.

Missionary Service

In the fall of 2008, ninety missionaries were serving in the Democratic Republic of the Congo mission, including fourteen sister missionaries. By the fall of 2009, thirty missionaries were serving in the southern part of the country in Likasi and Lubumbashi, up from sixteen in late 2008. The first full-time young elders were assigned to serve in Likasi in late 2008. In late 2009, there were two senior couples in the south, one of which functioned as the acting mission president for the southern portion of the country. The other couple was based in Likasi and was the first Congolese senior couple to ever serve a mission. Many male members serve missions in their early to mid-twenties, returning afterwards to become an asset to local church leadership. There is a large body of returned missionaries and currently serving missionaries from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, many of whom have held leadership positions before or after their missions. These missionaries make great sacrifices in saving up to serve missions. The Church often assists financially in making up the difference to fund missionary expenses. Congolese missionaries have served from all of the major areas with an established church presence. Full-time missionaries serve in the greatest numbers in Kinshasa, with most coming from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. No young, North American missionaries are assigned due to safety concerns. Congolese members regularly serve missions throughout Africa.

Leadership

The Church has an ample supply of priesthood holders due to the large number of male converts and relatively high convert retention. Leadership is strongest in Kinshasa and has the greatest opportunity to grow due to mission headquarters centered in the city and a legacy of leadership in stakes in the city since 1996. The strength in local leadership is demonstrated by the increase one to five stakes in Kinshasa during a thirteen-year period. Challenges exist in training and developing leadership in cities outside of Kinshasa and Lubumbashi due to remoteness and distance from mission headquarters. Mission leadership visits are infrequent due to difficulties traveling to these areas. Doctrinal integrity appears high despite limited training and leadership development. Limited training for local leadership in Lubumbashi may be a reason for why a second stake was not established until 2009, although fifteen wards had been present in the city for several years. In recent years, the assignment of mission counselors to remote cities with districts is a positive development that may spur greater maturation and growth among local leadership.

Temple

In 2011, the Church announced a temple for Kinshasa that was still in the planning stages in early 2013. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is currently assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District. As the Johannesburg South Africa Temple is located nearly 2,000 miles away from Kinshasa, very few Congolese have attended the temple. The Church has developed a fund to assist members strongly desiring to attend the temple. Due to monetary constraints and distance, most Congolese members will likely be unable to attend the temple until a temple is completed in their country. The first known temple work for Congolese was done

in 1989 for ancestors of members living in Lubumbashi.⁵⁶⁴ The first Congolese member attended the temple in 1993.

Comparative Growth

In Africa, only Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana had more Latter-day Saints than the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2010. In 2010, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was the country with the third largest church membership without a temple announced, under construction, or operating after Nicaragua and France. No other African country with only one mission had as large of a membership until a second mission was organized in 2010.

Outreach-oriented Christian groups report some of the most rapid church growth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with some denominations organizing hundreds of new congregations a year. In 2008, Jehovah's Witnesses reported 150,705 active members in 2,997 congregations, whereas the Seventh Day Adventist Church reported to 515,000 members in 1,550 congregations. Many other missionary-minded Christian groups have had a longer presence than the LDS Church and have actively planted new congregations and ambitiously expanded national outreach, whereas Latter-day Saints have taken a more passive approach. Growth of other Christian churches demonstrates strong interest in religion by Congolese and suggests favorable potential for ongoing church growth.

Future Prospects

The Democratic Republic of the Congo presents tremendous opportunities for LDS Church growth. Prospects appear high for rapid membership and congregational growth in all areas of the country with an LDS presence. Once growth in Lubumbashi continues and matures, a temple may be announced to serve members in the southern portion of the country along with neighboring African nations. Prospects appear favorable for a third mission to be organized in Mbuji-Mayi, Kananga, or Luputa to service central, interior areas.

In May 2011, nearly all stakes within the country appeared likely to divide to organize additional stakes within the next few years, as many are close to the needed number of congregations to divide, and congregational growth has been consistent. Additional districts will likely be organized in additional cities such as Mwene-Ditu once additional congregations are organized and local leadership becomes more self-sustaining. Initial congregations appear most likely to be organized in some currently unreached cities and large town near Kinshasa, Kananga, Luputa, and Lubumbashi, especially Kabinda and Tshikapa. Cities that may have their first LDS congregations organized within the next decade include Kikondja, Kamina, Fizi, Lusambo, Tshikapa, Kikwit, Boma, Mbandaka, and Kisangani. As the number of local members serving missions continues to increase, prospects for an LDS missionary training center in Kinshasa appear favorable in the coming years.

⁵⁶⁴ Patton, Robert. "You did the baptism for her grandmother," LDS Church News, 19 August 1989. <http://www.ldschurch-news.com/articles/18937/You-did-the-baptism-for-her-grandmother.html>

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Geography

AREA: 342,000 square km. The Republic of the Congo is located in Central Africa and borders the Atlantic Ocean, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and the Angolan exclave Cabinda. Tropical rainforest dominates the landscape with low-lying plains. Seventy percent (70%) of the population lives in the capital city of Brazzaville, the coastal city of Pointe Noire, or in the region between. The Congo River flows between the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The capital of Brazzaville is located immediately across the river from Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire, with which it forms the world's most populous trans-border metropolitan area. Seasonal flooding is a natural hazard. Environmental issues include pollution, lack of potable water, and deforestation. The Republic of the Congo is administratively divided into ten regions and one commune.

Peoples

Kongo: 48%

Sangha: 20%

Teke: 17%

M'Bochi: 12%

Europeans and others: 3%

The Kongo comprise nearly half the population and populate southern areas between Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. The Sangha live in northern areas; Teke and M'Bochi reside in the middle and northern areas.

Population: 4,366,266 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.849% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 5.59 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 53.95 male, 56.62 female (2012)

Languages: Kituba (29%), Kongo (25%), Teke dialects (19%), Yombe (9%), other (18%). French is the official language. Sixty-two indigenous languages are spoken. Lingala is also spoken widely in the southern Republic of the Congo as a second language. Languages with over one million speakers include Kituba (1.16 million) and Kongo (1 million).

Literacy: 83.8% (2003)

History

The first known inhabitants were Pygmies. Bantu tribes settled the region from surrounding areas, and several Bantu kingdoms were established along the Congo River. Europeans first entered the region in the late fifteenth century and traded slaves from interior regions with coastal Bantu kingdoms. Named Middle Congo by the French, the territory of present-day Republic of the Congo came under French sovereignty in the 1880s, and Brazzaville became the federal capital of French Equatorial Africa that also included Gabon, Chad, and Oubangui-Chari (Central African Republic). During the first fifty years of French colonial rule, natural resource extraction fueled economic growth, and a railway was established linking Pointe-Noire and

Brazzaville. Independence from France occurred in 1960 following increased autonomy and sharp ethnic rivalries. Political instability ensued during the following decade, resulting in the rise of a Marxist government that remained in power from the late 1960s to 1992 when multi-party elections occurred. A civil war in 1997 returned former Marxist ruler Denis Sassou-Nguesso to power. The war lasted until the end of 1999 and resulted in widespread destruction in Brazzaville. Since this time, the country has maintained a fragile peace that is marked by periodic, questionable elections consistently won by President Denis Sassou-Nguesso.⁵⁶⁵

Culture

The Republic of the Congo enjoys one of the higher literacy rates and has one of the most urbanized populations in Central Africa. Meat is rarely eaten, and most subsist on vegetables, fruit, and grains. Plum wine and beer are consumed during religious festivals, although alcohol consumption is lower than most nations. Adultery is only illegal for women, and men often pay a bride price to get married. Clean dress is important in culture.⁵⁶⁶

Economy

GDP per capita: \$4,600 (2011) [9.56% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.533

Corruption Index: 2.2 (2011)

Lumber was originally the largest industry and backbone of the Congolese economy until recent years. Oil has grown in importance in the past few decades and provides much of the country's GDP and exports. The greater extraction of petroleum resources enabled greater economic and social progress from higher government revenues. Natural resources also include a rich supply of precious metals. The Congo Civil War damaged infrastructure and set back earlier achieved economic progress. Profits from oil earnings continue, but the economy struggles to diversify itself in order to maintain greater social and economic stability. Industry generates 64% of the GDP, whereas services generate 32% of the GDP. Much of the current economic problems resulted in poor economic management and civil unrest. More than two thirds of exports go to the United States and China. Imports primarily come from France, China, and South Korea. Subsistence agriculture forms an important part of the economy as well, despite accounting for less than 6% of the country's GDP.

The Republic of the Congo is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Mob violence, security force beatings, mistreatment of captured persons, human trafficking, discrimination against the pygmies, and child labor are major corruption and human rights issues. Irregularities in elections have occurred.⁵⁶⁷

Faiths

Christian: 50%

Indigenous beliefs: 48%

Muslim: 2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

⁵⁶⁵ "Background Note: Republic of the Congo," LDS Church News, 14 December 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2825.htm>

⁵⁶⁶ "Republic of the Congo," Countries and their Cultures, retrieved 20 March 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Republic-of-Congo.html>

⁵⁶⁷ "Republic of the Congo," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 8 March 2006. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61564.htm>

Catholic: 2,000,000

Jehovah's Witnesses 5,555 74

Latter-day Saints 5,750 17

Seventh Day Adventists 692 15

Religion

Half of the population is Christian, and 48% of the population practice indigenous religions. Most Christians identify as Catholic. 2% of Congolese practice Islam.

Religious Freedom

The constitution allows for religious freedom, which is upheld by government. Religious persecution or discrimination is forbidden. Religious groups must register with the government, and recognition is usually granted, although the process can be slow. Christian and many Catholic holidays are national holidays. Open proselytism is permitted.⁵⁶⁸

Largest Cities

Urban: 61%

Brazzaville, Pointe Noire, **Loubomo, Nkayi, Mossendjo, Owando, Ouessou, Kinkala, Loandjili, Sibiti.**

Cities listed in **bold** do not have congregations.

Two of the ten largest cities have a congregation. About 45% of the population lives in Brazzaville, and Pointe-Noire and 53% of the population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The Church was formally recognized in the Republic of the Congo in December of 1991. The following year on August 24, the country was dedicated for missionary work by Elder Richard G. Scott. A fireside was held with sixty-five local members and leaders in attendance.⁵⁶⁹ Missionaries were assigned from the neighboring Zaire Kinshasa Mission and temporarily withdrawn in 1992 due to political instability. When the new Africa West Area was organized in August 1998, the Republic of the Congo was included in the new area. In 2003, the Republic of the Congo was transferred to the Africa Southeast Area along with five other nations in Central Africa. The Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission continues to administer the Republic of the Congo.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 5,750 (2012)

There were 800 Latter-day Saints in 1993, 1,400 in 1997, and 1,919 in 2000. Rapid membership growth occurred during the early 2000s as annual membership growth rates were over 20% in 2001 and 2002. During the remainder of the 2000s, annual membership growth rates generally ranged from 4% to 6%. There were 2,958 members in 2002, 3,404 in 2004, 3,824 in 2006, and 4,194 in 2008. Membership has typically increased by around 200 a year since the beginning of 2002. Missionaries in Pointe-Noire reported at least

⁵⁶⁸ "Republic of the Congo," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127227.htm>

⁵⁶⁹ Mostert, Mary. "Prayers of dedication offered on 4 nations in central, southern Africa," LDS Church News, 26 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22452/Prayers-of-dedication-offered-on-4-nations-in-central-southern-Africa.html>

fifty baptisms for the first nine months of 2009 and that convert baptisms were occurring more frequently in early 2010. In 2009, one in 951 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 9 Branches: 8 Groups: 1? (April 2013)

There were three branches in 1991⁵⁷⁰ and five branches in 1993, seven branches in 1997, and six in 1999. There were eight branches in 2000, seven of which were part of the Brazzaville Republic of Congo District, and one functioned in the coastal city of Pointe-Noire. Four new branches were created in 2001 bringing the total of branches in the country to twelve.

In 2003, the Brazzaville Republic of Congo Stake was organized with six wards and two branches and included the BaCongo, Diata, Kinsoundi, Makelekele, Mfilou and Mikalou Wards and the Guynemer and Massa Branches. By the end of 2005 the number of wards increased to eight. Of the six remaining branches, four were in Brazzaville and pertained to the stake, and two were in Pointe-Noire and not part of a stake or district. In early 2011, a ninth ward was organized in the Brazzaville Republic of the Congo Stake (Nkombo Ward).

Activity and Retention

In 2003, an astounding 3,090 people attending the conference in which the new stake was organized, including some government officials. Activity rates appear some of the highest the Church has seen considering by the end of 2003 there were 3,262 members meeting in fourteen congregations. At this time, activity rates may be as high as 90% for the membership in the country if those members who attended the conference were also regularly attending church meetings and followed church teachings.⁵⁷¹ Missionaries serving in Pointe-Noire in the fall of 2009 reported convert retention rates of 95% in that city during the year. The number of students enrolled in seminary or institute increased between the 2007–2008 and the 2009–2010 school years from 501 to 720. The average number of members per congregation in the Republic of the Congo increased from 202 in 2000 to 300 in 2008. Active church membership is likely around 2,500, or half of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French, Lingala.

All LDS scriptures and a wide selection of Church materials are available in French. The Church has only two Church materials translated into Kongo: *Gospel Principles* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. The Church has translated the Book of Mormon along with several church materials such as the Articles of Faith and the book *Our Heritage* into Lingala. General Conference addresses are translated into Lingala.

Meetinghouses

Most congregations meet in renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Health and Safety

Tropical diseases including malaria and schistosomiasis are endemic; travelers are advised to take anti-malarial drugs and to avoid contact with fresh water where schistosome larvae live. Tuberculosis is an increasing concern.

⁵⁷⁰ Mostert, Mary. "Prayers of dedication offered on 4 nations in central, southern Africa," LDS Church News, 26 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22452/Prayers-of-dedication-offered-on-4-nations-in-central-southern-Africa.html>

⁵⁷¹ Orton, Ferrin and Peggy. "First stake organized in Republic of the Congo," LDS Church News, 6 December 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44757/First-stake-organized-in-Republic-of-Congo.html>

An outbreak of poliomyelitis began in October 2010 with 30% of global cases reported in the Republic of the Congo. HIV/AIDS infects 3.5% of the population. HIV/AIDS infection rates are lower than most Central African countries. Health infrastructure is limited, and sanitation is often poor.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has done many humanitarian and development projects in Pointe-Noire, including measles vaccinations and neonatal resuscitation training.⁵⁷² In early 2010, the Church began drilling wells in the Pointe-Noire area for those without access to clean water. Senior missionaries have also taught locals about hygiene.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Like many African nations, the Republic of the Congo has experienced political instability that has challenged the Church's efforts to conduct missionary work. However, no legal or social restrictions limit proselytism or other Church activities.

Cultural Issues

Fifty percent (50%) of the population identifies as Christian, providing abundant opportunities for Latter-day Saints to teach and proselyte those who already have a Christian background. Interest in religion, the lack of ethno-religious ties, the support of traditional family values, and higher literacy rates than most Central African nations have fueled LDS Church growth and encourage self-sufficiency in leadership and full-time missionary service. There are no culturally-adapted LDS outreach approaches for those following indigenous religions, and it is unclear whether many who adhere to traditional religions have joined the LDS Church. Poverty is a major concern, as many members struggle to be financially self-reliant.

National Outreach

Forty-five percent (45%) of the national population resides in the two cities with an LDS congregation. The LDS Church operates over a dozen congregations in Brazzaville and two in Pointe-Noire, providing penetrating outreach to both cities. The Church has the potential to reach a larger portion of the population in the Republic of the Congo than in many other African nations due to its small geographic size and constrained geography of the population. The Republic of the Congo has the highest percentage of Church members in Central Africa due to rapid membership growth among the country's small population. In 2011, the Republic of the Congo was the African nation with the smallest Church membership with its own stake.

Although the headquarters for the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission is located just across the Congo River from Brazzaville, the Republic of the Congo is isolated due to the international boundary and the Congo River. The demands of the rapidly growing membership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo strain mission resources available, resulting in the Republic of the Congo receiving limited training and missionaries. Reduced interaction with mission leadership and limited resources has likely contributed to self-sufficiency and effective utilization of mission resources by local leaders. Notwithstanding the organization of a second mission for the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2010, mission resources continue to be limited throughout the region and unable to meet local needs and receptivity.

⁵⁷² "Projects—Congo," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 14 March 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-144,00.html>

Lesser-reached communities of Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville and unreached cities between Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville appear most favorable for expanding national outreach in the foreseeable future. Cities that may open for missionary work in the coming decade include Loubomo and Nkayi due to their large populations. Prospects appear poor for expanding national outreach in central and northern areas as these locations are sparsely populated, remote, and populated by ethnic groups with no LDS materials available in their native languages.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

High member activity and convert retention rates appear strongly linked to successful member-missionary activity over the past two decades. Activity rates continue to number among the highest in the world for the Church, notwithstanding a dramatic slowdown in congregational growth during the mid- and late-2000s. It is unclear as to why membership growth rates declined sharply in the 2000s. Possibilities for why such a slowdown in growth occurred may include membership lessening their involvement in missionary activity, growing disinterest in the Church by the population, or greater mission emphasis on training members and reaching out to those who are less active at the expense of proselytism.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Few problems appear to have occurred integrating differing ethnic groups into the same congregations, notwithstanding acute ethnic tensions in the country's past. The widespread use of French as a language of interethnic communication and the Church's limited presence to just two cities have likely reduced potential ethnic integration challenges at church.

Language Issues

Departments without a Church presence will present challenges, including the need to translate church materials and scriptures into languages presently without church materials. Additional language materials will likely be translated into Congolese due to the language being one of the most widely spoken in the country and already spoken by many members. The Church will likely not translate materials or scriptures into additional languages until either the Church becomes established in currently unreached areas of the country where these languages are spoken or if many converts join the Church in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire that do not proficiently speak Congolese, French, or Lingala.

Missionary Service

Missionaries have regularly served from the Republic of the Congo; most serve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Mission or other African missions. Greater numbers of missionaries have been assigned to the Republic of the Congo in recent years. In 2007, there were five missionary companionships serving in Brazzaville. There were seven companionships at the beginning of 2009. North American missionaries began serving in Pointe-Noire in the late 2000s. Pointe-Noire had four young elders and a senior couple serving as full-time missionaries as of the beginning of 2009. At present, only African missionaries serve in Brazzaville.

Leadership

The Church has had to correct some false notions by members of the Church in the Republic of the Congo that resulted from misunderstandings of doctrine or Church policy. For example, senior missionaries reported that they had to correct many members' belief that only men sustained those receiving callings in their branches. Overall, Congolese members have carried out their Church duties and responsibilities very well, especially considering that nearly all members are the first in their families to have joined the Church and have received

only limited training from mission leaders. Inadequate numbers of priesthood leaders in some areas prevent the organization of additional congregations.

Temple

The Republic of the Congo is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District. Very few members have attended the temple, as travel costs are unaffordable for most. The Johannesburg South Africa Temple is 2,000 miles away and requires significant preparation in planning temple trips and preparing needed documentation. Senior missionaries in Pointe-Noire prepared and organized a temple trip for members in 2009. The Church has organized and partially financed temple trips for members in countries like Madagascar and Armenia, but it is unclear whether any trips to the temple are conducted regularly from the Brazzaville Republic of the Congo Stake. Prospects of a future temple in neighboring Kinshasa to service French-speaking Central Africa is highly likely in the coming years, as six stakes comprise the Kinshasa-Brazzaville metropolitan area, and growth among priesthood leadership has been impressive. No plans have been officially announced by the Church for a temple in Kinshasa, but past mission presidents and missionaries have alluded to the likelihood of a temple announced for the city in the near future.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church in the Republic of the Congo experienced membership and congregational growth rates lower than most of Sub-Saharan Africa during the 2000s but exhibits one of the most self-reliant and active LDS populations in the world, as evidenced by the operation of an LDS stake in an impoverished country of fewer than 5,000 members that has had an official church presence for only two decades. Slow congregational and membership growth rates in the 2000s appear due to hesitant area and mission leadership to expand national outreach and conduct church-planting approaches to missionary work. The Republic of the Congo has one of the highest percentages of Latter-day Saints in the general population and is among the most-reached countries in Africa by the LDS Church.

Other missionary-minded Christians have small churches that are representative of other Central African nations. Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses report extremely slow membership and congregational growth. It is unclear why these denominations have seen slower membership growth in the Republic of the Congo than in many other African nations, but it may in part be due to the civil war in the late 1990s and the Marxist-controlled government ruling for over two decades.

Future Prospects

A population highly receptive to LDS teachings, high convert retention rates, close proximity to mission headquarters in Kinshasa, and a centralized population in only a few major cities generates a favorable outlook for future LDS Church growth in the Republic of the Congo. With nine wards and four branches, the Brazzaville Republic of Congo Stake will likely divide to create a second stake in the near future upon the organization of additional congregations and the maturation of branches into wards. Missionaries report that additional branches will likely be organized in Pointe-Noire in the near future to form a district. Greater growth in the Republic of the Congo in the future will be dependent on how well local members follow the teachings of the Church and fulfill their member missionary responsibilities, as well as on achieving adequate missionary allotment to allow new areas to be opened. A separate LDS mission based in Brazzaville may be forthcoming in the next decade if missionary resources dedicated to the Africa Southeast Area are increased and the number of local members serving full-time missions increases.

COTE D'IVOIRE

Geography

AREA: 322,463 square km. Located in West Africa, Cote d'Ivoire borders Ghana, Liberia, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Atlantic Ocean. Terrain primarily consists of plains with the exception of some mountains near the Guinean border. Coastal areas experience tropical climate, whereas the northern interior is semi-arid. Most areas are forested. The Bandama, Komoe, and Sassandra are the three major rivers, each of which flow southward and empty into the Atlantic Ocean. Heavy surf in coastal areas and flooding are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation and water pollution. Cote d'Ivoire is divided into nineteen administrative regions. The government insists on the international usage of Cote d'Ivoire instead of Ivory Coast.

Peoples

Akan: 42.1%

Voltaiques/Gur: 17.6%

Northern Mandes: 16.5%

Krous: 11%

Southern Mandes: 10%

Other: 2.8%

Comprising the largest ethnic group, the Akan are divided into several sub-ethnic groups that speak different languages and live from the central regions to the southeast towards Ghana. The largest Akan group is the Baoules. Voltaiques (Gur) live in northeastern Cote d'Ivoire, whereas Northern Mandes and Southern Mandes live in the west and northwest. Krous live in southwestern Cote d'Ivoire. There are approximately five million non-Ivoirian Africans, approximately one-third to one-half of who are from Burkina Faso, whereas the remainder come from other West African nations. There may be as many as 60,000 Lebanese and 10,000 French.⁵⁷³

Population: 21,952,093 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.044% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 3.82 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 56.21 male, 58.33 female (2012)

Languages: Senoufo (13%), Baoule (10%), Anyin dialects (4%) Dan (4%), We dialects (2%), Bete (2%), Attie (2%), Guro (1.5%), other (61.5%). French is the official language and widely spoken as a second language. Dioula is the most commonly spoken African language although native Ivorian speakers account for less than 1% of the population. Dioula is commonly spoken among Burkinabe immigrants. Languages spoken as a first language by over one million speakers include Senoufo dialects (2.7 million) and Baoule (2.1 million).

Literacy: 48.7% (2000)

⁵⁷³ "Background Note: Cote d'Ivoire," Bureau of African Affairs, 16 July 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2846.htm>

History

Various West African empires occupied portions of present-day Cote d'Ivoire before European colonization. The French began occupying and colonizing Cote d'Ivoire during the 1500s and officially established a colony in 1893. France began granting greater autonomy to Cote d'Ivoire in the mid-twentieth century. Cote d'Ivoire has maintained close ties with France after independence was achieved in 1960. Due to foreign investment and political stability, significant economic growth occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. Much of the economic success, which drew migrant workers from poorer, more unstable nations, was due to cocoa production. Economic growth slowed as the global economy fell into recession in the 1980s. In 1983, the government moved the capital city from Abidjan to Yamoussoukro.

President Félix Houphouët-Boigny served as the first president for thirty years. Following his death in the mid-1990s, lawlessness increased and culminated in the country's first coup in late 1999. An election was held the following year and declared the coup leader as the winner. Many suspected election fraud and Laurent Gbagbo became president in 2000 backed by popular demand. Instability continued to intensify in the north, plunging Cote d'Ivoire into the Ivorian Civil War in 2002. Both Gbagbo and the rebels in the north, called the New Forces, came to an agreement to integrate both parties into one government in 2007. The rebel leader, Guillaume Soro, became Prime Minister under the agreement. The country still remains divided, with a United Nations presence monitoring the agreement made between Gbagbo and Soro. From late 2010 through early 2011, political instability worsened as the results of the 2010 presidential election were hotly contested. Gbagbo, who lost the election, refused to relinquish power, leading to armed conflict between supporters of the two candidates. Tensions between the rebels in the north and the south are also linked to ethnicity.

Culture

The highly eclectic culture of Cote d'Ivoire is reflected in its complex ethnic composition, which comprises of as many as sixty different people groups. Immigration of non-Ivorian Africans has further enriched local culture. Tribalism and indigenous beliefs are often intertwined with French culture. Islam dictates many societal practices and customs in the north. Traditional cuisine consists of grains, cassava, chicken, fruit, and palm wine. Music occupies an important social role for most ethnic groups. Polygamy is illegal. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are low compared to world averages.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,600 (2011) [3.33% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.400

Corruption Index: 2.2 (2011)

Cote d'Ivoire was seen as the economic powerhouse of West Africa during the 1960s and 1970s, drawing millions of non-Ivorian Africans for employment and better living conditions. Economic success during the first two decades following independence was primarily attributed to the production and exportation of cocoa. Cote d'Ivoire is the world's largest producer and exporter of cocoa today, but the economy's reliance on cocoa export earnings to function has rendered it vulnerable to fluctuations in worldwide demand and prices. Recently, the government has attempted to diversify the economy by trying to attract more foreign investment and develop the country's offshore oil resources. The Ivorian Civil War significantly damaged the economy by dissuading foreign investment and destroying much of the country's infrastructure. Forty-two percent (42%) of the population lives below the poverty line and as much as half of the workforce may be unemployed. Economic growth has slowed dramatically, and GDP per capita has fallen from levels attained in the late 1990s. Oil, natural gas, diamonds, precious metals, industrial metals, minerals, silica sand, clay, and hydropower are natural resources. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the labor force works in agriculture. Services generate half of the GDP, whereas industry and agriculture generate 21% and 28% of the GDP, respectively.

Food products, wood products, oil refining, bus and truck assembly, clothing, fertilizing, construction, electricity, and shipbuilding are major industries. Common crops include coffee, cocoa, fruit, palm kernels, corn, rice, tapioca, sweet potatoes, sugarcane, and cotton. Primary trade partners include Nigeria, France, and the Netherlands.

Corruption is present in all areas of society and has been exacerbated by current political instability and the Ivorian Civil War. Human trafficking is a major concern, as Cote d'Ivoire is a source, transit, and destination country for the trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Cannabis is a major illicit drug crop primarily used for domestic consumption.

Faiths

Muslim: 38.6%

Christian: 32.8%

Indigenous beliefs: 11.9%

None: 16.7%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 2,800,000

Evangelicals 2,256,431

Seventh Day Adventists 12,522 60

Latter-day Saints 18,602 53

Jehovah's Witnesses 9,146 199

Religion

Just over a third of the population is Muslim, and a third is Christian. The south has been traditionally Christian and the north traditionally Muslim, but both religious groups operate throughout the country. Approximately half the Christian population is Catholic. Other prominent Christian groups include Seventh Day Adventists, Methodists, Assemblies of God, Southern Baptisms, Copts, Latter-day Saints, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Those who follow indigenous beliefs make up 11.9% of the population, whereas the remaining 16.7% do not identify with a religious group. Many nominal Christians and Muslims integrate aspects of indigenous religions into their system of beliefs and religious practice.⁵⁷⁴

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is generally upheld by the government. There is no state religion, but the government has tended to favor Christianity and Catholicism, as the first two Ivorian presidents were both Catholic. Muslims have been underrepresented in government positions. Several Christian and Muslim holidays are recognized as national holidays by the government. Religious groups are required to register with the government. To register, a religious group must submit an application detailing the group's bylaws, a list of the group's founding and board members, the date the group was founded, and meeting minutes. Societal instances of abuse of religious freedom have primarily targeted Muslims and the followers of indigenous religions. Evangelicals have complained of instances of religious discrimination by government

⁵⁷⁴ "Cote d'Ivoire," International Religious Freedom Report 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148681.htm>

officials. Ongoing political instability has not resulted from religious intolerance or conflict but rather from ethnic and political differences.⁵⁷⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 49%

Abidjan, **Bouake**, **Daloa**, Yamoussoukro, **Korhogo**, Divo, San-Pedro, Anyama, **Man**, Gagnoa, **Abengourou**. Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

Five of the eleven cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Twenty-eight percent (28)% of the population lives in cities with over 100,000 inhabitants.

LDS History

The first LDS members to live in Cote d'Ivoire were expatriates from Europe and North America in the 1970s. The first Ivoirians joined the Church abroad in the early 1980s and returned to Cote d'Ivoire, holding the first sacrament meetings in the village of Ahoutuoe. Elder Marvin J Ashton dedicated Cote d'Ivoire for missionary work 1987.⁵⁷⁶ The Church established a presence in Bouake in 1988, the same year missionaries began serving in Cote d'Ivoire from the Ghana Accra Mission. One of the first missionary couples was instrumental in the baptism of around one hundred converts.⁵⁷⁷

The Church did not receive official recognition from the government until 1991. Seminary and institute commenced the same year. Before legal recognition was granted to the Church, couple missionaries were not allowed to openly proselyte, and growth occurred through member referrals.⁵⁷⁸ In 1993, the Cameroon Yaounde Mission was relocated to Abidjan and renamed the Ivory Coast Abidjan Mission. For a short period during the 1990s, distant French-speaking African countries were included in the mission boundaries, such as Burundi. In 1998, Cote d'Ivoire was assigned to the Africa West Area. Non-African missionaries were evacuated due to instability from the civil war in 2004, returned in 2008, and withdrawn again in late 2010 due to political instability.

Prior to 2005, the Abidjan Ivory Coast Mission also administered Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, and Togo. These nations were assigned to the Ghana Cape Coast Mission in 2005.⁵⁷⁹ In 2008, Benin and Togo were transferred back to the Ivory Coast Abidjan Mission. LDS apostle Jeffrey R. Holland visited members in 2010.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 18,602 (2012)

The LDS Church has consistently experienced rapid membership growth in Cote d'Ivoire. There were 16

⁵⁷⁵ "Cote d'Ivoire," International Religious Freedom Report 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148681.htm>

⁵⁷⁶ "Gospel spreads forth," LDS Church News, 30 December 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19190/Gospel-spreads-forth.html>

⁵⁷⁷ Arnold, Chirley Roundy. "Legal recognition granted in Church in Ivory Coast," LDS Church News, 25 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21269/Legal-recognition-granted-to-Church-in-Ivory-Coast.html>

⁵⁷⁸ Arnold, Chirley Roundy. "Legal recognition granted to Church in Ivory Coast," LDS Church News, 25 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21269/Legal-recognition-granted-to-Church-in-Ivory-Coast.html>

⁵⁷⁹ Stahle, Shaun D. "Missions created on opposite sides of Africa," LDS Church News, 11 June 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47427/Missions-created-on-opposite-sides-of-Africa.html>

Latter-day Saints living in Cote d'Ivoire in 1987.⁵⁸⁰ By May of 1991, there were 600 members.⁵⁸¹ Membership reached 2,500 in 1996 and 6,178 by year-end 2000. There were 7,840 members in 2002, 9,345 in 2004, 11,341 in 2006, and 13,245 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates during the 2000s ranged from a low of 6.3% in 2008 to a high of 13.7% in 2002 but averaged around 10%. In 2009, one in 1,461 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 36 Branches: 18 (April 2013)

The first two LDS branches were organized in Abidjan and Bouake in 1988 and 1989, respectively. The first district was organized in the fall of 1989. The number of branches increased from four in 1990 to twelve in 1993. In 1996, there were fourteen branches and two districts based in Abidjan and Abobo. LDS branches met in Abidjan, Bouake, and Yamoussoukro by 1997, and additional cities had groups operating.⁵⁸² The first stake was created later that year from the Abidjan and Abobo Ivory Coast Districts and included eleven wards, one of the largest number of wards ever included in a new stake. The wards in the new stake were the Abobo, Agoueta, Anonkoua, Codody, Dokui, Foncier, Koumassi, Niangon, Quatre Etages, Sagbe, and Sogefiha Wards.⁵⁸³

By year-end 2000 there were seventeen congregations, including thirteen wards. The number of congregations increased to eighteen in 2001, twenty-four in 2002, twenty-six in 2003, and twenty-seven in 2004. In 2005, the number of congregations declined to twenty-four as branches in the Bouake area were discontinued or became groups or dependent branches under the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan Mission Branch. Consistent congregational growth occurred for the remainder of the 2000s as the number of congregations reached twenty-eight in 2006, twenty-nine in 2007, thirty-two in 2008, thirty-eight in 2009, and forty-one in 2010. The number of wards steadily increased during the 2000s to sixteen in 2002, twenty in 2005, and twenty-three in 2007. Additional stakes have been organized in the Abidjan area in Abobo (2000), Cocody (2006), Abidjan Niangon (2010), and Port-Bouët (2012). In 2009, a district was formed in Yamoussoukro with four branches.

During the 2000s, branches were established in additional cities. The first branches in Divo and San-Pedro were opened in the mid-2000s. In 2009, a second branch was organized in San-Pedro (the Seweke Branch), and branches were organized in two towns near Abidjan (Ahoutuoe and Bingerville). A second branch was created in Grand-Bassam in 2010. Groups or dependent branches may continue to meet in Bouake. In early 2011, there were seven wards in the Abidjan Niangon Stake, six wards in the Abidjan Toit Rouge Stake, eight wards in the Abobo Stake, and nine wards and two branches in the Cocody Stake. In 2012, the Church organized three branches in Bouaflé. In early 2013, there were three branches in San-Pedro and the first branch was organized in Meagui.

Activity and Retention

The average number of members per congregation increased from 363 in 2000 to 379 in 2009. Member activity rates have been consistently high, as in 1990, 200 attended a nationwide district conference at which time there were approximately 350 members.⁵⁸⁴ 300 youth attended a youth conference in 1994.⁵⁸⁵ Nearly

⁵⁸⁰ Mercer, Robert L. "Pioneers in Ivory Coast," *Ensign*, Sept. 1997, 25.

⁵⁸¹ Arnold, Chirley Roundy. "Legal recognition granted to Church in Ivory Coast," *LDS Church News*, 25 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21269/Legal-recognition-granted-to-Church-in-Ivory-Coast.html>

⁵⁸² Mercer, Robert L. "Pioneers in Ivory Coast," *Ensign*, Sept. 1997, 25.

⁵⁸³ "New stake presidencies," *LDS Church News*, 27 September 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29786/New-stake-presidencies.html>

⁵⁸⁴ "First conference held: United Kingdom—Ireland—Africa area," *LDS Church News*, 28 April 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20298/First-conference-held—United-Kingdom—Ireland—Africa-area.html>

⁵⁸⁵ "From around the world," *LDS Church News*, 12 March 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24401/>

500 youth from Abidjan attended youth conference in 1996.⁵⁸⁶ Many of the wards in the Abidjan area are well attended, and some have over 200 active members. In late 2009, the Cocody Cote d'Ivoire Stake with seven wards and two branches had a stake conference attendance of 1,200. Missionaries report that convert retention is high in most areas, especially in Abidjan, and appears lowest in Yamoussoukro. Three thousand, two hundred, and twenty-three were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2008–2009 school year. Active membership in branches generally ranges between fifty and one hundred. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 7,000, or 50% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in French. Only *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* is available in Baoule.

Meetinghouses

The Church began construction on its first meetinghouse in Cote d'Ivoire in 1996 in Yopougon, Abidjan.⁵⁸⁷ There were at least sixteen LDS meetinghouses in early 2011, most of which served several congregations.

Health and Safety

Violence and political instability have posed persistent barriers to expanding national outreach and ensuring the safety of foreign missionaries. The United States Department of State frequently issues travel warnings for Cote d'Ivoire.⁵⁸⁸ Two missionaries have been murdered while serving in Africa in the past ten years, both in Cote d'Ivoire. In 1999, a full-time North American missionary died from being stabbed in the chest in a random attack.⁵⁸⁹ In 2002, a senior missionary sister serving with her husband in Yamoussoukro was murdered in her apartment in a robbery attempt.⁵⁹⁰ The Church has taken increased precautions with non-African missionaries over the past decade. Access to healthcare outside major cities is limited, and tropical diseases are endemic. HIV/AIDS infects 3.9% of the adult population.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 1991, the Church donated technical auditory equipment used to teach deaf children to speak.⁵⁹¹ Most LDS congregations in the Abidjan area held literacy classes in the mid-1990s.⁵⁹² The Church offered free

From-around-the-world.html

⁵⁸⁶ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 21 December 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/28099/From-around-the-world.html>

⁵⁸⁷ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 24 February 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27219/From-around-the-world.html>

⁵⁸⁸ "Cote d'Ivoire," Travel Warning U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs, 19 December 2010. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_915.html

⁵⁸⁹ "Slain missionary stood tall spiritually and physically," LDS Church News, 1 May 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/35703/Slain-missionary-stood-tall-spiritually-and-physically.html>

⁵⁹⁰ "Missionary death," LDS Church News, 10 August 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42260/Missionary-death.html>

⁵⁹¹ "Equipment for teaching speech to deaf given to African school," LDS Church News, 25 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21203/Equipment-for-teaching-speech-to-deaf-given-to-African-school.html>

⁵⁹² Horman, Hermine B. "Gospel literacy: 'Coming out of darkness into marvelous light,'" LDS Church News, 30 December 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26947/Gospel-literacy-Coming-out-of-darkness-into-marvelous-light.html>

vaccinations in a clinic held in Bouake in 2002.⁵⁹³ Latter-day Saints in North Carolina donated nearly sixty white dress shirts to needy missionaries and prospective missionaries in Cote d'Ivoire in 2004.⁵⁹⁴

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints openly worship, assemble, and proselyte. Foreign missionaries have served regularly with no noticeable government interference. The Church has no official presence in rebel-controlled areas. Political instability and civil disorder continue to prevent a church establishment in many unreached areas and delay potential humanitarian and development work.

Cultural Issues

Widespread, sincere interest in Christianity has fueled growth in most areas with a church presence and has contributed to the high degree of self-sustainability of local leadership and active membership today. The Ivorian Civil War began in 2002 and still has not officially ended. The war has led the country into greater poverty and erased much of the earlier economic progress made in previous decades. High unemployment resulted from the war, leaving many Ivorians unable to provide for themselves. Despite worsening economic conditions, many remain receptive to the gospel message and have helped to build up the church. Strong ethno-religious ties to Islam in the north pose cultural challenges for future proselytism efforts in these areas. Missionary activity may occur only with African missionaries working on member referrals in these regions if a church presence is established one day. The government ban on polygamy reduces societal challenges found in many other African nations for LDS mission outreach.

National Outreach

Approximately 26% of the national population resides in cities with an LDS congregation, and 41% of the population resides in administrative regions with an LDS congregation. Including the city of Abidjan, the Lagunes Region is the only administrative region in which the majority of the population has access to LDS mission outreach and consequently is home to an estimated 90% of Latter-day Saints in Cote d'Ivoire. The Church in Cote d'Ivoire yet has to establish itself in most of the largest cities. Only a few major cities around the capital of Abidjan have a Church presence, such as Bingerville and Grand-Bassam. With the exception of Yamoussoukro and Divo, there is no church presence in the interior. Political instability and the ongoing conflict between the central government in Abidjan and rebel forces in the north have deterred any prospects of opening additional cities outside the Abidjan area. Employing a "centers of strength" strategy to church growth in Cote d'Ivoire resulted in the failure to open additional cities in the interior when political conditions were more stable in the 1990s. Distance from mission headquarters and limited mission manpower and resources have also dissuaded mission and area leaders from opening additional cities.

Expansion in national outreach will most likely occur in the near term in lesser-reached communities near Abidjan, such as Dabou and Attinguie, as these cities likely have small numbers of Latter-day Saint move-ins from Abidjan, are within close proximity to Abidjan, and are within the realm of control of the central government. Approximately half the national population resides in rural areas and will likely remain unreached for many years to come.

⁵⁹³ Hatch, Elder Howard; Hatch, Sister Diane. "Missionaries go door to door inviting villagers to clinic," LDS Church News, 30 March 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41525/Missionaries-go-door-to-door-inviting-villagers-to-clinic.html>

⁵⁹⁴ "White shirts and ties donated," LDS Church News, 16 October 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46360/White-shirts-and-ties-donated.html>

Literacy programs, clean water projects, and employment training workshops are development projects that can meet local humanitarian needs, provide finding opportunities for members and missionaries, and facilitate expansion in national outreach. Only literacy programs appear to have been consistently utilized by the Church in recent years.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Political instability resulting in reliance on local African full-time missionaries, cultural conditions that have produced high levels of receptivity, the maintenance of consistently high baptismal standards for new converts, and the concentration of members in small geographic areas have each contributed to the high member activity and convert retention levels experienced by the Church in Cote d'Ivoire. Developed local leadership facilitated by a large number of returned full-time missionaries has led to sustainable membership and congregational growth and perpetuated high member activity. Emphasis on seminary and institute attendance has also improved retention and activity rates. The greatest challenge for maintaining high rates of member activity and convert retention are outside Abidjan in congregations with few members and local leaders.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Significant ethnic conflicts among Ivorian ethnic groups and between Ivorians and other West African immigrants have been a primary cause of political turmoil since independence. Full-time missionaries report that many of these issues have not manifested themselves at church. The large non-Ivorian African immigrant community generates many opportunities for the Church to introduce the gospel to peoples who are unreached in their native countries. Most non-Ivorian Africans in Cote d'Ivoire are Muslim (70%), speak French, and originate from Burkina Faso. Although common usage of French may facilitate integration with Ivorian LDS congregations, ethnic tensions and cultural differences may make non-Ivorians more vulnerable to lower convert retention rates. Proselytism approaches will need to be tailored to those with a Muslim background and separate congregations for non-Ivorians may be needed to reduce ethnic integration challenges.

Language Issues

The Church has only one pamphlet translated into a single indigenous language of Cote d'Ivoire. Otherwise there are no Church materials available in any of the other of the most widely spoken native languages. Low literacy rates reduce the need for translating written materials into additional languages at present. Widespread use of French has contributed to the lack of translations into additional languages. Expansion in national outreach may necessitate the translation of additional materials over time.

Missionary Service

Young North American missionaries began serving in Cote d'Ivoire during the 1990s. There were nearly one hundred full-time missionaries in the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan Mission in 1999.⁵⁹⁵ Ivorian full-time missionaries have received missionary training at the Ghana Missionary Training Center since the center opened in 2002.⁵⁹⁶ Non-African missionaries were evacuated in 2004 due to escalating violence and instability resulting from the Ivorian Civil War. The war resulted in a major setback in missionary work in the interior as missionaries were withdrawn from Bouake and Yamoussoukro. Most evacuated missionaries were transferred to the neighboring Ghana Accra Mission. The full-time missionary force was reduced from sixty-four to twenty-two missionaries. In 2008, North American missionaries returned to the Ivory Coast Abidjan Mission as a result

⁵⁹⁵ "Slain missionary stood tall spiritually and physically," LDS Church News, 1 May 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/35703/Slain-missionary-stood-tall-spiritually-and-physically.html>

⁵⁹⁶ Stahle, Shaun D. "First 54 missionaries enter first training center in Africa," LDS Church News, 25 May 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41860/First-54-missionaries-enter-first-training-center-in-Africa.html>

of the reassignment of Benin and Togo to the mission, each of which previously had non-African missionaries. North American missionaries also began serving in Cote d'Ivoire that same year. In 2009, there were four zones in Abidjan and a district in Yamoussoukro. Two additional zones were also functioning in the Ivory Coast Abidjan Mission in 2009 in Benin and Togo. Non-African full-time missionaries were again removed in late 2010 and reassigned to Benin and Togo.

The number of full-time Ivorian missionaries has exceeded the number of missionaries serving in Cote d'Ivoire for several years. The Cocody Cote d'Ivoire Stake alone had thirty members serving full-time missions in 2007.⁵⁹⁷ Ivorian missionaries frequently serve in many African nations.

Leadership

Strong, abundant local leadership in Abidjan supported four stakes in early 2011 and has its roots in the first years of the Church in Cote d'Ivoire. In 1990, there were thirty-five Melchizedek Priesthood holders nationwide at a time when total church membership totaled 350.⁵⁹⁸ Cote d'Ivoire is one of the few African nations with fewer than 20,000 members that has had local members serve in a regional leadership position. In 2005, Norbert Kalogo Ounleu from Abidjan was called to preside over the Ivory Coast Abidjan Mission.⁵⁹⁹ Distance from mission headquarters in Abidjan challenges mission efforts to spur greater leadership development elsewhere in congregation with few qualified leaders. The assignment of Latter-day Saint Ivorian couples or families from Abidjan to live and work in smaller congregations with leadership challenges create mentoring opportunities that may lead to greater leadership sustainability outside of Abidjan.

Temple

Cote d'Ivoire is assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple district. Ivorian members generally travel to the temple by bus, which can take up to eighteen hours one way. In 2004, over 200 members from the Abobo Cote d'Ivoire Stake traveled to the temple and performed over 4,000 temple ordinances over a four day period.⁶⁰⁰ In 2007, 150 youth from the Cocody Cote d'Ivoire Stake traveled to the temple on a special temple trip. To qualify, the youth had to regularly attend seminary, participate in weekly young men/young women activities, and achieve personal goals.⁶⁰¹ Prospects for a future temple in Abidjan are uncertain in 2011 due to ongoing political instability, but local membership appears capable of adequately staffing and utilizing a temple at present, as evidenced by good member activity rates, regular temple trips to the Accra Ghana Temple, and ongoing membership growth largely fueled by the efforts of native African full-time missionary and local member-missionary efforts.

Comparative Growth

Cote d'Ivoire has experienced one of the most rapid membership growth rates for the LDS Church between 1990 and 2010 and may be the country that experienced the most rapid growth and highest member activity and convert retention rates among countries that had an LDS presence established later than 1985. Member activity and convert retention rates are higher than most nations. The extent of national outreach is comparable

⁵⁹⁷ Bingham, Sister Jo. "Ivory Coast youth work for temple trip," LDS Church News, 8 September 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51017/Ivory-Coast-youth-work-for-temple-trip.html>

⁵⁹⁸ "First conference held: United Kingdom—Ireland—Africa area," LDS Church News, 28 April 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20298/First-conference-held—United-Kingdom—Ireland—Africa-area.html>

⁵⁹⁹ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 25 June 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47475/New-mission-presidents.html>

⁶⁰⁰ Whisenant, Elder Vern. "Ivory Coast LDS travel to temple," LDS Church News, 28 August 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46062/Ivory-Coast-LDS-travel-to-temple.html>

⁶⁰¹ Bingham, Sister Jo. "Ivory Coast youth work for temple trip," LDS Church News, 8 September 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51017/Ivory-Coast-youth-work-for-temple-trip.html>

to most West African nations with an LDS presence, such as Sierra Leone and Liberia. Cote d'Ivoire possesses one of the highest percentages of members enrolled in seminary or institute among countries with over 10,000 members (22%).

Other Christian churches that have active missionary programs have experienced limited success in Cote d'Ivoire compared to other African nations. Jehovah's Witnesses had nearly 8,000 active members organized in 180 congregations in 2008 and had nearly 500 convert baptisms. Seventh Day Adventists had 11,345 members in forty-eight churches in 2008. Both of these churches are about the same size as the LDS Church in Cote d'Ivoire, but the LDS Church has seen more rapid growth in recent years. Adventists generally baptize between 300 and 700 new converts annually.⁶⁰² Evangelical groups experienced strong growth between independence and the outbreak of the Ivorian Civil War, but today report slower membership growth.

Future Prospects

One of the greatest successes for the LDS Church in Africa in the 1990s and 2000s, Cote d'Ivoire has demonstrated sustained membership and congregational growth rates that have been maintained regardless of fluctuating political instability, poverty, and low literacy rates. Aspects of real church growth that are most impressive in Cote d'Ivoire include high rates of seminary and institute participation, well-attended, regularly organized temple trips, the development of a self-sufficient native full-time missionary force that services Cote d'Ivoire and many African nations, abundant, well-trained local leadership in Abidjan that has led to the organization of four stakes within a thirteen-year period, and sustained rapid membership growth that has maintained good levels of member activity and convert retention. Prospects for the organization of additional stakes in the Abidjan area are favorable in the near future. Additional districts may be organized in San-Pedro and Bouafle in the coming years once additional congregations are organized and greater numbers of self-sustaining leadership are developed. However, outreach is much needed to other regions of the country, as the vast majority of LDS membership is concentrated in the Abidjan area, and most other large cities remain unreached. A temple may be constructed in Abidjan one day if political conditions improve. Cote d'Ivoire will likely become a significant contributor to the growth and expansion missionary outreach of the LDS Church throughout Francophone West Africa for years to come.

⁶⁰² "Cote d'Ivoire Conference (2002-present)," www.adventiststatistics.org, retrieved 19 January 2011. http://www.adventist-statistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=1494163

DJIBOUTI

Geography

AREA: 23,200 square km. Located in East Africa, Djibouti is a small country on the coast of the Gulf of Aden that borders Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. Plains occupy most of the terrain with hills and mountains in central areas near the coast. The climate consists of hot, dry desert with inadequate fresh water supplies to sustain human activity. Other environmental issues include little arable land, desertification, and human threats to endangered species. Earthquakes, droughts, and flash flooding are natural hazards. Djibouti is divided into six administrative districts.

Peoples

Somali: 60%
Afar: 35%
Other: 5%

Afars were among the first to settle Djibouti and at one time controlled more than two-thirds of the nation. Afars today reside in the north, whereas Somalis populate the south. Issa-Somalis are the largest Somali clan. Conflict between Issa-Somalis and Afars has continued for many years. Somalis continue to immigrate as refugees from neighboring Somalia. There has also been conflict between recent immigrant groups and native Djiboutians.⁶⁰³

Population: 774,389 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.285% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.63 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 59.15 male, 64.07 female (2012)

Languages: Somali (40%), Afar (13.5%), Arabic dialects (10%), French (1.5%), other (35%). French and Arabic are official languages, but Somali and Afar are most widely spoken as first and second languages.

Literacy: 67.9% (2003)

History

Djibouti's maritime position and location bridging Africa and the Arabian Peninsula have significantly shaped its history. Trade routes between Africa and Asia often traveled through Djibouti. Islam spread to the region shortly after its advent in the seventh century. The French took interest in the geopolitical importance of the area and established French Somaliland. Prior to independence in 1977, Djibouti was known as the French Territory of the Afars and the Issas. The first president, Hassan Gouled Aptidon, ruled for more than two decades under an authoritarian one-party government. Civil war between Issa-Somali-led government and the Afars occurred in the 1990s and ended in 2001. Democratic elections first occurred in 1999 and again in 2005. The United States and France maintain strong political ties.

⁶⁰³ "Djibouti," Countries and their Cultures, retrieved 5 June 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Djibouti.html>

Culture

Traditional cuisine is based on animal products originating from herds maintained by nomadic pastoralists. Grains are widely consumed and in cities European foods are available. Many men cultivate and chew *qat*—an evergreen shrub found in some areas of East Africa and the Middle East that has mild narcotic properties. Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are low. Polygamy is legal and still practiced.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,600 (2011) [5.41% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.430

Corruption Index: 3.0 (2011)

The economy depends on its geostrategic location, services provided to trade and travel, and international aid from France. Many trade goods transit through Djibouti. Seventy percent (70%) of port activity consists of imports and exports bound for Ethiopia. Djibouti adopted a free-trade zone status and is a center of trade for the Horn of Africa. Djibouti controls some shipping lanes in the Red Sea. The only United States military base in Sub-Saharan Africa is located in Djibouti and is vital to counterterrorism operations. Natural resources are scarce, and unemployment is high (60% in urban areas and 83% in rural areas). Services and industry produce 82% and 15% of the GDP, respectively. Most people residing outside the capital city are pastoralists and live nomadic lives with their livestock. Agricultural products include fruit, vegetables, and animal products. Nearly 80% of exports are destined for Somalia, especially the de facto state of Somaliland in northern Somalia. Other primary trade partners include Saudi Arabia, India, China, and the United States. Djibouti suffers from major corruption issues, particularly human trafficking linked to the sex trade and domestic servants for the region.

Faiths

Muslim: 99%

Christian: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 7,000

Latter-day Saints less than 100 1

Religion

The population is almost entirely Muslim. Citizens are automatically assumed to adhere to Islam unless they specifically state otherwise.⁶⁰⁴ There is a strong sense of community among Christians.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 43rd

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is usually upheld by the government. Islam is the state religion. The government does not impose penalties or restrictions on Muslims not active in their faith or on non-Muslims. Only non-Muslim foreigners may be civilly married, whereas others must be married in a Muslim religious ceremony. Foreign missionaries may perform humanitarian work and sell religious literature. Although there are no laws banning proselytism, it is strongly discouraged, and most non-Muslim groups do

⁶⁰⁴ "Djibouti," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127229.htm>

not engage in open missionary work. There are reports of minor religious intolerance toward non-Muslims, but overall, Muslims and other religious groups tend to live harmoniously. Conversion from Islam to other religions is discouraged.⁶⁰⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 87%

Djibouti, **'Ali Sabieh, Tadjoura, Obock, Dikhil, 'Arta, Holhol, Dorra, Gâlâfi, Loyada.**

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

One of the ten largest cities has a congregation. Over 80% of the national population lives in the ten largest cities. The city of Djibouti accounts for 64% of the population.

LDS History

The Africa Area and later the Africa Southeast Area administered Djibouti. The Kenya Nairobi Mission included Djibouti until it was reassigned to the Uganda Kampala Mission in 2009. A group for members in United States military has operated for at least a couple of decades. Another small group functioned in the late 2000s for an American family and a returned missionary.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 100 (2012)

Members in the United States military account for a large portion of Church membership. Only a few, if any, native or African members reside in the country.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 (2012)

In 2010, the Church organized its first independent branch named the Djibouti Military Branch.

Activity and Retention

Most members are likely active in the Church.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English, French.

All LDS scriptures are available in Arabic and French. A wide range of ecclesiastic materials are available in Arabic and French. Church materials in Somali consist of *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*. Translations of the sacrament prayers, *Gospel Fundamentals*, and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Afar.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings for the military branch are likely held in a servicemen chapel on Camp Lemonnier. Small groups may meet in the privacy of members' homes.

⁶⁰⁵ "Djibouti," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127229.htm>

Health and Safety

Life expectancy is sixty years for both males and females. HIV/AIDS infected 3.1% of the adult population in 2007. Methods of infection include illicit sexual relations, drug use, HIV-positive mothers, and contaminated needles.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Members in North Carolina participated in a U.S. military led humanitarian effort in 2007. Members assembled one hundred hygiene kits and donated clothes and schools and medical supplies.⁶⁰⁶

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Unlike most of its neighbors, Djibouti demonstrates considerably more tolerance towards non-Muslims and enjoys many aspects of freedom of religion. Open proselytism is socially discouraged, indicating that future LDS missionaries assigned to serve in Djibouti would most likely work through member referrals and contacts gained through humanitarian work.

Cultural Issues

The chewing of *qat* is a cultural habit that stands against LDS church teachings. Those practicing polygamy who desire to be baptized must end polygamous marriages in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency.

National Outreach

The concentration of the majority of the population in the capital requires fewer mission outreach centers once formal missionary work begins. Initial mission efforts will most likely be limited to the capital for many years. The Church will likely face major challenges reaching those living as nomads or residing in small villages due to cultural restrictions, limited mission resources for a country with less than one million inhabitants, and possible safety issues in conflict zones. Distance from mission headquarters in Kampala, Uganda reduces the frequency of visits by the mission president and church leaders.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity and convert retention rates are similar to that of other locations with a high concentration of LDS United States military personnel.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Future proselytism prospects are complicated by ongoing conflict between the Afars and Issa-Somalis. Non-Africans constitute the majority of Church membership, leading to significant challenges fellowshiping and introducing the Church to natives.

⁶⁰⁶ "Helping needy in Djibouti," LDS Church News, 17 February 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50154/Helping-needy-in-Djibouti.html>

Language Issues

At least 65% of the population has some Church materials translated into their native language. Low literacy rates are a major problem.

Leadership

Church leadership appears to be almost entirely comprised of U.S. military personnel. The Church may struggle to develop local leadership among Somalis and Afars due to low receptivity, the small number of native members, and infrequent mission leadership visits from the Uganda Kampala Mission.

Temple

Djibouti is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. As most members are in the U.S. military, many likely attended the Frankfurt Germany Temple like their counterparts in the Middle East. Inordinate distances and traveling costs limit temple attendance.

Comparative Growth

In 2010, Djibouti and Sudan were the only predominately Muslim Sub-Saharan African countries with an independent congregation. Furthermore, both of these nations had their first independent branches organized within six months of each other. Djibouti shares more commonalities with the Middle East than Africa in terms of Church membership, as most members are on temporary assignment with the United States military.

Many Christian groups do not report membership numbers and church statistics for Djibouti due to strong Islamic influences and the small number of Christian followers. Christian groups appear most successful attracting converts among Ethiopian Christians and other immigrant groups.

Future Prospects

Opportunities for mission outreach in Djibouti appear favorable due to relative tolerance of non-Muslims and foreign missionaries working on humanitarian assignment but may be limited by low receptivity and cultural pressures against conversion. However, the largely homogenous Muslim population may become less accommodating toward Christian groups in the future in view of the heavy restrictions that Christians face in large, influential nations such as Yemen and Somalia. The lack of native Djiboutian Latter-day Saints to assist in mission efforts in a culture where open proselytism is frowned upon will likely continue to delay any organized mission outreach efforts in the medium term.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Geography

AREA: 28,051 square km. Located in Central Africa by the equator, Equatorial Guinea comprises a tiny portion of Continental Africa named Rio Muni and five inhabited islands. Bioko, the largest island, is off the coast of Cameroon. Tropical climate stays consistent throughout the year, resulting in tropical rainforest in the interior and mangroves along the coast. The islands are volcanic in origin, and the mainland has plains and hill toward the interior. Equatorial Guinea is divided into seven provinces.

Peoples

Fang: 85.7%
Bubi: 6.5%
Mdowe: 3.6%
Annobon: 1.6%
Bujeba: 1.1%
Other: 1.4%

Tribal peoples all share Bantu ties. Half the population lives in Rio Muni, native to the Fang. Bubi are indigenous to Bioko Island and the Annobon to Annobon Island.

Population: 685,991 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.607% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.83 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 61.75 male, 63.78 female (2012)

Languages: Spanish (67.6%), other (32.4%). Spanish and French are both official languages. Fourteen languages are spoken. The most spoken native languages are Fang and Bubi.

Literacy: 87% (2000)

History

Portuguese explorers first arrived in the late fifteenth century. The Spanish ruled Equatorial Guinea for 190 years under the name of Spanish Guinea. Independence occurred in 1968. President Teodoro Obiang has ruled since coming to power in a coup in 1979. Elections are held periodically, but international observers have expressed concern at irregularities. Since independence, the economy has grown dramatically through oil revenues, although most Equatorial Guineans have seen little improvement in their living conditions.

Culture

The culture of Equatorial Guinea includes Portuguese, Spanish and native influences. The Catholic Church dominates many areas of social life. Polygamy is legal and widely practiced.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$19,300 (2011) [40.1% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.537

Corruption Index: 1.9 (2011)

Oil extraction and export has significantly increased economic growth over the past couple of decades. In 2007, the GDP grew by an estimated 22.5%. The economy is poorly diversified, as industry accounts for 93.7% of the GDP. The economy is sensitive to fluctuations in the price of and demand for oil. Wealth is very unequally distributed, and unemployment is high (30%). An estimated three-quarters of the population lives below the poverty line. Agriculture remains an important part of the economy, primarily producing coffee, cocoa and rice. Fishing and lumber are important small industries. Primary import/export partners include the United States, Spain, and China.

Corruption ranks among the worst worldwide. Government has taken most of the nation's wealth for its leaders. Despite a GDP per capita in Equatorial Guinea similar to that of Western European nations, most live in poverty. Little has been done internationally to reduce corruption.

Faiths

Christian: 93%

Indigenous beliefs: 5%

Muslim and other: 2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic: 600,000

Seventh Day Adventists 2,525 19

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,506 12

Latter-day Saints less than 50 0

Religion

Catholics are the largest religious group. Government is sensitive to criticism from Catholic officials. Indigenous beliefs are often followed together with Christianity. Protestants are a small but growing minority. The number of Muslims is increasing as immigrants from nearby nations continue to arrive.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is generally upheld by the government in practice. Religious groups are required to register with the government and face fines and penalties for not doing so. Although government typically does not deny registration for different Christian denominations, the process can take months to years to complete. No restrictions prohibit proselytism.⁶⁰⁷

Largest Cities

Urban: 39%

Malabo, Bata, Ebebiyin, Mbini, Luba, Evinayong, Moca, Mongomo, Aconibe, Acurenam.

⁶⁰⁷ <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127230.htm>

No cities have an official LDS congregation. Thirty percent (38%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

In 1998, a parade celebrating the arrival of the Mormon pioneers featured a float consisting of members from Equatorial Guinea who joined the Church in 1995.⁶⁰⁸ At least one member from Equatorial Guinea attended LDS Business College in 2001.⁶⁰⁹

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 Groups: 1? (2012)

Equatorial Guinea was assigned to the Cameroon Yaounde Mission in 1992. A year later, mission headquarters were transferred to Cote d'Ivoire, but jurisdiction remained with the mission. In 1998, the Africa West Area was created and included Equatorial Guinea until 2003 when the country was transferred to the Africa Southeast Area and was not associated with a mission. In the late 2000s, the Democratic Republic of Congo administered Equatorial Guinea. In the late 2009s, a small group of members that included expatriates likely met in Malabo.

Activity and Retention

Few LDS members live in the country. Activity rates are unknown, and there are no reports of convert baptisms.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Spanish, French.

All LDS scriptures and curriculum materials are translated into French and Spanish. *Gospel Principles Simplified* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are both available in Fang.

Meetinghouses

No meetinghouses operate in Equatorial Guinea. The first meetings will likely be held in members' homes or rented spaces.

Health and Safety

HIV/AIDS infects 3.4% of the population. Tropical diseases are endemic, road networks are underdeveloped, and accidents are common. Life expectancy is relatively short (60 for men and 62 for women), and access to care is uneven with many living below the poverty line.

Humanitarian and Development Work

No humanitarian or development projects sponsored by the Church had occurred in Equatorial Guinea as of early 2010.

⁶⁰⁸ <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31500/Creativity-dazzle-highlight-annual-Days-of-47-parade.html>

⁶⁰⁹ <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39767/LDS-Business-College.html>

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Opportunities to hold meetings without government restrictions and conduct missionary activities freely have not been utilized by the Church. The Church may have attempted to apply for recognition in the past, but approval may have been delayed due to the slow application process.

Cultural Issues

The strength of the Catholic Church may challenge LDS Church efforts to establish an official presence. The strong Christian background of most people will likely contribute to growth once an official Church presence is established.

National Outreach

Despite its small geographic size and population, Church outreach will be challenging in Equatorial Guinea due to the separation of the country between the five inhabited islands and the mainland. Malabo will likely have the first official Church presence, as it is the capital and where most of the expatriate members likely reside. Congregations and missionaries in Malabo will likely facilitate the establishment of the Church in Rio Muni, as many have arrived from this region and live on Bioko.

The greatest opportunity for outreach is in Rio Muni, where over half the population lives. Many live in rural areas that will challenge outreach with a limited number of mission centers.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

A fraction of the total membership is likely active due to the long interval without a Church presence since the first members arrived in the country. Locating members will likely be challenging once outreach begins.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Fang constitute the majority of the population. Outreach to minority ethnic groups may be challenging, as they have small populations and often speak languages in which there are no church materials.

Language Issues

Spanish will likely serve as the language for conducting Church meetings, as it is an official language and widely spoken among different ethnic groups. Additional language materials in Fang may be translated because it is the native language with the most speakers. Church meetings and missionary work may use Fang instead of Spanish in Rio Muni.

Leadership

Very few, if any, members native to Equatorial Guinea have served missions. A lack of leadership may have prevented a formal Church establishment.

Temple

Equatorial Guinea pertains to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District.

Comparative Growth

The status of the Church in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon appear very similar. Both nations have had Church members living in them for decades, yet neither has an official Church presence. This has likely been due to their small populations and remote locations.

Other Christian denominations have seen modest growth. Over the past decade, the Seventh Day Adventist Church has quadrupled the number of members and congregations. Many other denominations have recently become established or have registration pending.

Future Prospects

Definite opportunities exist for the establishment of congregations and mission outreach in Equatorial Guinea, and some LDS members who joined the Church in other nations are known to live in the country. Other denominations have taken advantage of the opportunities for religious freedom and proselytism and have experienced rapid growth, whereas the LDS Church has not yet utilized these opportunities. Too long a delay may result in missing a window of religious freedom, or entering under circumstances of decreased receptivity due to increasing materialism or an environment in which religious interest has waned and most religious seekers have already been discipled into other denominations. Nonetheless, there appear to be no specific plans for the LDS Church to enter Equatorial Guinea at present. Mission outreach will likely not occur unless additional missions are created in Central Africa or large groups of interested individuals request missionaries. Equatorial Guinea may be included in a future mission based in Cameroon due to geographic proximity and similarities in native languages.

ERITREA

Geography

AREA: 117,600 square km. Consisting of a strip of coastline in Eastern Africa, Eritrea borders Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan, and the Red Sea. The Ethiopian highlands stretch into west central Eritrea, whereas hills, plateaus, and plains occupy other regions. Hot, dry desert climate occurs along the coast, whereas cooler, more temperate conditions occur in the highlands. Semi-arid conditions are experienced in interior, nonmountainous areas. Natural hazards include droughts and locust swarms. Deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, and ongoing warfare are environmental concerns. Eritrea is divided into six administrative regions.

Peoples

Tigrinya: 50%
Tigre: 31.4%
Saho: 5%
Afar: 5%
Beja: 2.5%
Bilen: 2.1%
Kunama: 2%
Nara: 1.5%
Rashaida: 0.5%
Other: 0.3%

Most ethnic groups are nomadic, and most of the population resides in the Asmara area. Tigrinya and Saho populate areas in central Eritrea, Tigre reside in the west, and Afar live in eastern coastal areas between Asmara and Djibouti. Other ethnic groups reside in the west.

Population: 6,086,495 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.418% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.37 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 60.73 male, 65.06 female (2012)

Languages: Tigrigna (45%), Tigre (19%), Arabic (4%), Saho (3%), Kunama (3%), Bedawiyet (3%), Bilen (2%), Nara (1%), other or unknown (20%). Tigrinya and Arabic are most commonly used languages for commerce and inter-ethnic communication. English is widely spoken in urban areas.⁶¹⁰ Only Tigrigna has over one million native speakers (2.5 million).

Literacy: 58.6% (2003)

History

Local or international powers in the Red Sea region controlled Eritrea throughout much of history until Italy colonized the area in the late nineteenth century. The United Kingdom administered Eritrea following Italy's

⁶¹⁰ "Background Note: Eritrea," Bureau of African Affairs, 14 June 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2854.htm>

surrender in World War II. The United Nations passed a resolution for Ethiopia to annex Eritrea but stipulated that Eritreans would be entitled to some autonomy and enjoy democratic freedoms. From the 1960s until independence in the 1990s, Eritrea fought to gain independence from Ethiopia. Following independence in 1993, the government has become an authoritarian one-party state that severely limits civil liberties. A border war with Ethiopia occurred from 1998 to 2000, and neither country has come to agreement on where the disputed international border should fall.⁶¹¹

Culture

Islam and Orthodox Christianity heavily influence daily life, cultural customs, and social attitudes. Religious feasts and holidays are widely celebrated. Cuisine shares many similarities with Ethiopia and countries in the Horn of Africa, such as widespread consumption of injera bread. Italian cuisine is prevalent in urban areas. Ethnic conflict has traditionally occurred between the Christian highland and the Muslim lowland ethnic groups.⁶¹² Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are low. The federal government does not allow the practice of polygamy with the exception of Muslims in administrative regions that follow Shari'a law.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$700 (2011) [1.46% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.349

Corruption Index: 2.7 (2011)

War with Ethiopia, high illiteracy, poor education, and the reliance of 80% of the workforce on agriculture create significant obstacles for the Eritrean economy to overcome to experience greater economic growth and development. Half of the population lives below the poverty line, and in recent years, low food production caused by war and the troop mobilization of farmers has not satisfied the population's food consumption needs. The government has been unable to increase the standard of living and attract greater foreign investment. Natural resources include gold, potash, zinc, copper, salt, and fish. Mineral resources have yet to be exploited. Primary crops include sorghum, lentils, vegetables, cotton, tobacco, and corn. Livestock and fish are also important to agricultural activity. Primary trade partners include India, Italy, China, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and especially prevalent in the government. Democratic reforms have not been carried out, and human rights violations have been widespread. There is little government transparency, and few crimes violating human rights are punished. Reporters without Borders ranked Eritrea as the last among 175 countries in the 2009 Press Freedom Index, signifying that freedom of the press is virtually nonexistent. Human trafficking is a major concern, as many Eritrean migrant workers are exploited for forced labor and sexual exploitation in the Middle East. Illegal immigration frequently occurs into Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya.

Faiths

Muslim: 50%

Christian: 48%

Indigenous beliefs: 2%

⁶¹¹ "Background Note: Eritrea," Bureau of African Affairs, 14 June 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2854.htm>

⁶¹² "Eritrea," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 2 October 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Eritrea.html>

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 150,000

Seventh Day Adventists 526 3

Jehovah's Witnesses less than 500

Latter-day Saints less than 10 0

Religion

Sunni Muslims constitute half the population. Orthodox Christians account for 30% of Eritreans, whereas Catholics account for 13%. Christians primarily reside in interior highland areas, whereas Muslims populate coastal areas. All ethnic groups are active in their religious traditions.⁶¹³

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 10th

The government ratified a constitution that guarantees religious freedom in 1997, but the constitution remains unimplemented. Human rights and religious freedom conditions remain poor due to government refusal to recognize additional religious groups, harassment of practitioners of unregistered faiths, and the incarceration of many religious prisoners under harsh and inhumane conditions.

As many as 3,000 Christians from unregistered groups are held as religious prisoners. Religious groups must register with the government, but no additional religious groups have been recognized since 2002. Only the Eritrean Orthodox Church, the Evangelical Church of Eritrea (Lutheran), the Roman Catholic Church, and Islam are registered. Several other religious groups, such as Presbyterians, Seventh Day Adventists, and Baha'is, have met all the qualifications for registration, but the government refuses official recognition, as their applications require the president's signature. The government must approve the distribution or printing of religious literature or documents, the assembly of religious groups, and the construction of religious buildings. Most of the population exhibits religious tolerance, with the exception of widespread persecution of Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses.⁶¹⁴ Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced the most severe treatment, largely due to their noncompliance with mandatory military service, which is regarded as disloyalty to the country. In 1994, Witnesses were stripped of basic citizenship rights. In June 2009, twenty-three Witnesses were arrested while holding a worship service in a private home. Several of those were mothers with young children who were still incarcerated as of April 2010.⁶¹⁵ By January 2012, the number of imprisoned Witnesses in Ethiopia stood at forty-eight.⁶¹⁶

Largest Cities

Urban: 21%

Asmara, Keren, Assab, Afabet, Massawa, Agordat, Dekemhare, Mendefera, Adi Qayeh, Ghinda.

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

⁶¹³ "Eritrea," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127231.htm>

⁶¹⁴ "Eritrea," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127231.htm>

⁶¹⁵ "Minority faiths in Eritrea have few choices," Jehovah's Witnesses Official Media Web Site, 19 April 2010. "Forty Eight Jehovah's Witnesses Imprisoned in Eritrea," Jehovah's Witnesses Official Media Web Site, 31 January 2012, <http://www.jw-media.org/eri/20100419.htm>

⁶¹⁶ <http://www.jw-media.org/eri/20120131rpt.htm>

None of the ten largest cities have LDS congregations. Eleven percent (11%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

There has been no reported LDS presence in Eritrea. In 1998, Eritrea was assigned to the Africa Southeast Area.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 10 (2012)

Several Eritreans have joined the Church abroad, primarily in Europe and the United States. Eritrean converts have visited their home country to visit relatives and to examine prospects for humanitarian work.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 (2012)

There are no LDS congregations.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, Amharic, English, Italian.

All LDS scriptures and many church materials are translated into Arabic and Italian. Only the Book of Mormon is available in Amharic. Some of the LDS Church materials translated into Amharic include *Gospel Fundamentals*, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society materials, and various Church proclamations such as *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*. The Church has translated *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* and *Gospel Fundamentals* into Afar.

Health and Safety

The government restricts the travel of all foreigners and in 2010 arrested several Eritreans who have dual citizenship in the United States and Eritrea. Military skirmishes along the Ethiopian border have killed many in recent years. The United States Department of State issued travel warnings for Eritrea in 2010, exhorting U.S. citizens to avoid entering the country.⁶¹⁷

Humanitarian and Development Work

Known humanitarian and development work carried out by Latter-day Saints is limited to a shipment of over 4,000 tons of wheat to Eritrea and Ethiopia to feed drought victims in 2000.⁶¹⁸

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Current government policies and restrictions severely restrict the practice of unregistered religious faiths. There have been no reports of imprisoned Latter-day Saints in Eritrea. Loyalty to one's government and

⁶¹⁷ "Eritrea," Travel Warning U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs, 24 September 2010. http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_2939.html

⁶¹⁸ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Church sends wheat to Africa for famine relief," LDS Church News, 17 June 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37980/Church-sends-wheat-to-Africa-for-famine-relief.html>

compliance with mandatory military service are teachings of the LDS Church that may help Latter-day Saints gain a positive reputation and respect from government authorities. Past humanitarian assistance may also improve government relations in the future.

Cultural Issues

High levels of religious participation among Orthodox Christians and Muslims create cultural barriers that may be challenging for missionaries to overcome. The religious tolerance exhibited by most citizens may allow the LDS Church to operate in the event that the government amends policies that severely limit the practice of nonrecognized religious groups and begins to regularly recognize religious groups that meet registration standards.

National Outreach

The entire population is completely unreached by the LDS Church. The lack of any LDS mission outreach in Eritrea results from persistent military conflict with Ethiopia, distance from established mission outreach centers in Ethiopia, lack of church materials in local languages, poverty and poor living conditions, and little religious freedom.

Eritrean converts may assist in initial proselytizing efforts by introducing the church to relatives. If political conditions improve, Eritrea may one day be assigned to the Uganda Kampala Mission due to similarities in language and culture with Ethiopia, which is also part of the Uganda Kampala Mission.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Although no convert baptisms have occurred in Eritrea, a few native members have joined the Church abroad. Most Eritrean Latter-day Saints have not permanently returned to their home country due to poor living and social conditions. Activity among Eritrean converts appears to be moderate, as many known Eritrean converts have actively participated in church and doctrinal study.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic tensions between highland and lowland ethnic groups may manifest themselves at church if LDS converts consist of both former Muslims and former Orthodox Christians. However, as in other nations with large Muslim populations, it is likely that most baptisms would be among Christians, and there are likely to be few converts from Islam if proselytism of Muslims is permitted at all. Multiple ethnic groups attending the same congregation may necessitate the use of a second language to conduct church meetings, such as English or Arabic, until a sufficiently large numbers of members require the creation of local language-specific congregations.

Language Issues

Several languages spoken by large numbers of Eritreans have many church materials translated, namely Arabic and English. Some individuals may be more proficient in Amharic or Italian and utilize these language materials. Afar church materials provide outreach potential to Afar speakers who appear to constitute less than 10% of the population. No LDS Church materials are translated into Tigrinya or Tigre, which will be needed to achieve greater outreach potential if the Church is established in Eritrea one day. Converts living abroad may be capable of translating materials into these and other indigenous languages. Low literacy rates challenge efforts for members to accurately learn about Church doctrine and to develop local, self-sustaining leadership but also create an opportunity for teaching literacy skills as humanitarian service.

Missionary Service

Few, if any, Eritreans have served full-time missions. No missionary activity has occurred in Eritrea as of 2010. Eritrean converts living abroad may one day assist in conducting missionary activity in their home country if permitted by the government.

Leadership

Eritrean converts have served in church leadership positions outside of their native country. Eritrean-born Michael Isaac joined the church in 1991 in Poland and has since served in branch, district, and mission presidencies.⁶¹⁹

Temple

Eritrea is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district.

Comparative Growth

Eritrea remains one of a few African nations with sizeable Christian minorities without an LDS Church presence; other such nations include Chad and Burkina Faso. Eritrea, Somalia, the Maghreb countries, and Sudan (with the exception of Southern Sudan) rank among the least tolerant of foreign religious groups and exhibit the poorest religious freedom records in Africa.

Missionary-oriented Christians have gained thousands of converts despite local citizens and missionaries jeopardizing their safety and experiencing severe government persecution and social stigmatization. Yet in comparison to other East African countries, these denominations gain dramatically fewer converts. Seventh Day Adventists baptized ten or fewer converts per year after 2003, and no increase in congregations has occurred.

Future Prospects

Latter-day Saints appear to have no realistic hope of gaining an official presence in Eritrea in the foreseeable future due to severe government restrictions on religious freedom. Several Eritreans who have joined the Church offer meaningful prospects for future outreach if religious freedom conditions improve one day. Humanitarian work is greatly needed and may establish a positive relationship with the government, but as of 2010, international humanitarian groups were restricted in their activities.

⁶¹⁹ Scott, Taylor. "LDS Church in Poland has had long, hard journey," Deseret News, 13 September 2010, p. 3. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700064997/LDS-Church-in-Poland-has-had-long-hard-journey.html?pg=3>

ETHIOPIA

Geography

AREA: 1,104,300 square km. Landlocked in East Africa, Ethiopia borders Kenya, Sudan, Eritrea, and Somalia. Ethiopian constitutes a portion of the Horn of Africa, and terrain primarily consists of the Ethiopian Highlands, which includes some mountains as tall as 4,500 meters. The Great Rift Valley runs through the center of the country, and several large lakes occupy highland areas. A tributary to the Nile River, the Blue Nile, originates in the Ethiopia Highlands. Climate varies from cool temperate conditions on high plateaus and mountains to hot tropical to semi-arid conditions in lower elevation areas. Temperate climate occurs in most areas, creating ideal agricultural conditions. Flora includes woodlands, forests, savannahs, and steppes. Plains in far western Ethiopia bordering Sudan are covered with jungle and tropical rainforest. Earthquakes, volcanoes, and drought are natural hazards. Environmental concerns include overgrazing, deforestation, soil erosion, and desertification. Ethiopia is administratively divided into nine states and two self-governing administrations.

Peoples

Oromo: 32.1%
Amara: 30.1%
Tigraway: 6.2%
Somalie: 5.9%
Guragie: 4.3%
Sidama: 3.5%
Welaita: 2.4%
Other: 15.4%

Ethiopia's population consists of a rich diversity of ethnic groups. The Oromo and Amhara live in the central areas of the country and constitute the largest percentages of the population at 32.1% and 30.1%, respectively. Other notable ethnic groups include the Tigraway (6.2%), Somalie (5.9%), Guragie (4.3%), Sidama (3.5%), and Welaita (2.4%). Other ethnicities constitute the remaining 15.4% of the population.

Population: 93,815,992 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 3.179% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 5.97 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 53.99 male, 59.21 female (2012)

Languages: Amharic (32.7%), Oromo (31.6%), Tigrigna (6.1%), Somaligna (6%), Guaragigna (3.5%), Sidamigna (3.5%), Hadiyigna (1.7%), other (14.8%). Amharic, English, and Tigrigna are national or official languages. Eighty-five different languages are spoken. Languages with over one million speakers include Amharic (17.1 million), Oromo (17.1 million), Somali (3.96 million), Tigrigna (3.22 million), Sidamo (2.9 million), Sebat Bet Gurage (2.32 million), Gamo-Gofa-Dawro (1.24 million), Wolaytta (1.23 million), and Silt'e (1 million). Languages with between 500,000 and one million speakers include Afar, Hadiyya, Kafa, Gedeo, Kambaata, and Awnigi.

Literacy: 42.7% (2003)

History

One of the world's oldest civilizations, Ethiopia has been populated for millennia. Various Old Testament prophets alluded to Ethiopia, and the conversion of an Ethiopian eunuch by the Apostle Philip is recorded in the Book of Acts. Ethiopia became the second nation after Armenia to adopt Christianity as a state religion in the fourth century AD. Islam spread to the region shortly after its founding in the seventh century. Ethiopia maintained its autonomy and sovereignty until the 1936 Italian invasion. Italy withdrew by 1941 due to Ethiopian resistance groups and British intervention. A communist one-party state overthrew the emperor of Ethiopia in the mid-1970s and maintained rule for fifteen years. During this time, Ethiopia temporarily lost the Ogaden region to Somali forces. In the mid-1980s, a severe drought and famine due to low rainfall, political instability, and poor government management severely affected millions. Eritrea gained independence in 1993, and a border war with Ethiopia occurred between 1998 and 2000. Ethiopia has experienced rapid population growth over the past several decades and remains one of the poorest nations in the world. Civil strife and border conflicts with Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan continue to destabilize the region.

Culture

Agriculture, Islam, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church heavily influence daily life and customs. Common cuisine consists of *injera*—a spongy, flat bread—eaten with vegetables and meat. Pork is not eaten, as it is forbidden by the largest religious groups. A wide array of music from Ethiopia's many ethnic groups abounds. Ethiopia is also known internationally for athletes, particularly in running and soccer. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are among the lowest worldwide. *Qat*, an evergreen shrub grown in some areas of East Africa and the Middle East that has mild narcotic properties, is legal and commonly consumed. Unlike other countries in the Horn of Africa, polygamy is illegal.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,100 (2011) [2.29% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.363

Corruption Index: 2.7 (2011)

Widespread poverty and low literacy present obstacles to efforts to increase economic growth. With the majority living in rural areas, 80% of the population engages in agriculture. Past government mismanagement and poor agricultural techniques have resulted in low crop yields and high impact on the land. Due to the loss of Eritrea and direct ocean access, Ethiopia faces limited trade and relies on the port in Djibouti and the de facto state of Somaliland for international trade. The border war in the late 1990s with Eritrea drained much of Ethiopia's available wealth. Despite a recent history plagued by war, severe droughts, and famines, Ethiopia has maintained high levels of economic growth for the past several years, with annual GDP growth rates increasing by over 8% since 2006. Primary industries include food production, metal processing, and cement. Saudi Arabia, China, the United States, and Germany are primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as widespread, particularly due to the highly centralized government. Corrupt practices resulting from the privatization process have occurred, such as preferential treatment of state-owned businesses to credit and land leases. Poor law enforcement in many regions has led to human rights violations.⁶²⁰ Violence and instability from neighboring countries frequently spill over into Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a transshipment point for qat, heroin, and cocaine.

⁶²⁰ Mariam, Alemayehu G. "Ethiopia: The Voodoo Economics of Meles Zenawi," AllAfrica.com, 22 April 2010. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201004221050.html?page=2>

Faiths

Christian: 60.8%

Muslim: 32.8%

Traditional religions: 4.6%

Other: 1.8%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Ethiopian Orthodox 38,725,936

Evangelical/Pentecostal 16,722,563

Catholic 800,000

Seventh Day Adventists 186,174 863

Jehovah's Witnesses 9,212 191

Latter-day Saints 1,678 5

Religion

Forty-four (44%) follow the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and 34% are Sunni Muslim. Adherents of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches constitute 19% of the population and have grown significantly over the past half century. Christians form the majority, 83% of whom are Ethiopian Orthodox. The Oromo are about half Muslim and half Christian, with half of the Oromo Christians adhering to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The majority of Amhara adhere to Christianity, particularly the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Smaller ethnic groups tend to either belong to various Christian denominations or Islam. Ethiopia's once substantial Jewish population has almost entirely immigrated to Israel.⁶²¹

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 15th

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is usually upheld by law and government policies. Abuse of religious freedom is not tolerated, and it is a crime to provoke religious groups against each other. Christian and Muslim holidays are both observed. Religious groups must register with the government to have legal standing and open a bank account. Religious groups must reregister every three years. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) face many restrictions, including a limit on foreign funding. Religious groups that wish to perform development work must register these activities under an NGO. Government land is granted to religious groups without cost but can be seized at any time. Orthodox Christians and Muslims generally respect each other's beliefs and practices and coexist peacefully, although there have been some reports of religious violence between Christians and Muslims.⁶²²

Largest Cities

Urban: 17%

Addis Ababa, **Nazret**, **Dire Dawa**, **Mekele**, **Gonder**, **Bahir Dar**, Awasa, **Jima**, **Dese**, **Jijiga**, Shashemene, Debre Zeit.

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

⁶²¹ "Ethiopia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127232.htm>

⁶²² "Ethiopia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127232.htm>

Four of the twelve cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have LDS congregation. Six percent (6%) of the national population lives in the twelve largest cities.

LDS History

The first LDS members to live in Ethiopia were foreigners working in the embassies in Addis Ababa. The Church conducted numerous small- and large-scale humanitarian projects in Ethiopia before and after a formal Church presence was established. During the mid-1980s, Ethiopia suffered from severe drought and famine. The First Presidency requested members of the Church in Canada and the United States to hold a special fast for those suffering in Ethiopia, Africa and around the world. Eleven million dollars was donated for those affected by the drought.⁶²³

Ethiopia was included in the Kenya Nairobi Mission in 1991. The first official church meeting in Ethiopia was held in August 1992. The first missionaries arrived in February of 1993. The Church was legally registered with the government in September of that year. Seminary began in 1995. In 1998, Ethiopia was assigned to the Africa Southeast Area. The Book of Mormon was translated into Amharic in 2000. Ethiopia was dedicated for missionary work in November 2004 by Elder Russell M. Nelson.⁶²⁴

Ethiopia was assigned to the newly-created Uganda Kampala Mission in 2005. Ethiopia and Uganda were included in the newly formed mission, whereas the Kenya Nairobi Mission retained responsibility for Kenya and Tanzania. The new mission was created so that more attention could be focused on the four nations originally covered by the Kenya Nairobi Mission, which had a combined population of around 165 million people. The new mission also reduced travel demands for mission leaders.⁶²⁵

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,678 (2012)

There were 197 members in 1997. By year end 2000, there were 344 members. During the 2000s, membership steadily grew to 507 in 2002, 612 in 2005, and 874 in 2007. Most years over the past decade have experienced membership growth rates over 10%. In 2010, one in 80,800 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 6 Groups: 5+ (March 2013)

The Addis Ababa Branch—the first in the country—was organized in January 1994. Two additional branches were organized in 2001 and 2002 in Addis Ababa and Debre Zeit. In the spring of 2008, a fourth branch was organized in Awasa. In late 2009, the Addis Ababa Ethiopia District was organized and included all four branches. In 2010, the Gurji Group was formed for Sudanese members in Addis Ababa and in early 2011, a group was formed in Shashemene, and full-time missionaries were assigned to the city. By early 2013, there were two branches (Awasa and Wendo Genet) and three groups in southern Ethiopia.

⁶²³ Orden, Dell Van. "Am I my brother's keeper?," LDS Church News, 29 November 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29937/Am-I-my-brothers-keeper.html>

⁶²⁴ Stahle, Shaun D. "Growing strength among members in Africa," LDS Church News, 4 December 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46547/Growing-strength-among-members-in-Africa.html>

⁶²⁵ Stahle, Shaun D. "Missions created on opposite sides of Africa," LDS Church News, 11 June 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47427/Missions-created-on-opposite-sides-of-Africa.html>

Activity and Retention

Two hundred seventy-five attended the dedication of the first church meetinghouse in 2003.⁶²⁶ 200 attended the 2004 fireside with Elder Nelson.⁶²⁷ Elder Jeffrey R. Holland visited Ethiopia in August 2009, held a fireside, and met with 350–400 members and missionaries. One hundred seven were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year.

The Bekulobet Branch had over fifty active members in 2010. The Megenagna and Debre Zeit Branches each had over one hundred active members at this time. The Awasa Branch consisted of a couple dozen Church attendees. In May 2011, ninety attended the Awasa Branch, ninety attended the Bekulobet Branch, seventy-three attended the Gurji Group, and approximately one hundred each attended the Debre Zeit and Megenanga Branches. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 450, or 40% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Amharic.

Only the Book of Mormon is available in Amharic. Some of the LDS Church materials translated into Amharic include *Gospel Fundamentals*, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society materials, and various Church proclamations such as *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*. The Church has translated the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and *Gospel Fundamentals* into Afar and has translated the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and *Gospel Principles* into Somali.

Meetinghouses

In 2003, the first Church built meetinghouse was dedicated in Addis Ababa. Housing the Megenagna Branch, the meetinghouse was dedicated by Elder Steven E. Snow of the Seventy, the president of the Africa Southeast Area at the time.⁶²⁸ A second church-built meetinghouse in Debre Zeit began construction in July 2009.

Health and Safety

Endemic tropical diseases, poor sanitation conditions, and limited health care infrastructure in many areas present health challenges. In 2007, the estimated HIV/AIDS infection rate for the adult population was 2.1%.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Latter-day Saints have carried out many humanitarian and development work projects in Ethiopia since 1985. The Church has consistently provided food and education on more efficient agricultural techniques. Food donations of 4,000 tons of wheat were delivered in 2000 for Ethiopia and neighboring Eritrea.⁶²⁹ Utah members embarked on a short humanitarian mission to improve drinking water sanitation and deliver eye glasses.⁶³⁰ Another shipment of food donations were provided in 2003 in the form of Atmit, a nutrient that

⁶²⁶ "First meetinghouse in east Africa nation," LDS Church News, 20 December 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44839/First-meetinghouse-in-east-African-nation.html>

⁶²⁷ Stahle, Shaun D. "Growing strength among members in Africa," LDS Church News, 4 December 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46547/Growing-strength-among-members-in-Africa.html>

⁶²⁸ "First meetinghouse in east Africa nation," LDS Church News, 20 December 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44839/First-meetinghouse-in-east-African-nation.html>

⁶²⁹ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Church sends wheat to Africa for famine relief," LDS Church News, 17 June 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37980/Church-sends-wheat-to-Africa-for-famine-relief.html>

⁶³⁰ "Humanitarian expedition," LDS Church News, 4 August 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40299/Humanitarian-expedition.html>

is nutritious and easily digested for those suffering from starvation.⁶³¹ Between March and November 2003, the Church provided more than 5,700 tons of Atmit to Ethiopia,⁶³² and much of the relief provided was done in conjunction with the Catholic Church.⁶³³ Another shipment of Atmit was sent to Ethiopia due to worsening drought in 2008.⁶³⁴ The Church has also provided millions in Ethiopia with measles vaccinations.⁶³⁵ Relations between the Ethiopian government and the Church are strong due to past humanitarian relief.⁶³⁶ Local Ethiopian members have also engaged in service projects as a part of the Mormon Helping Hands program. Clean water projects, neonatal resuscitation education, and wheel chair donations have also occurred regularly.⁶³⁷

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints assemble and proselyte freely in Ethiopia. The Church has experienced some challenges regarding visas and discrimination of missionaries from certain African countries. Humanitarian and development work occur in many areas without government restrictions. Attending the dedication of the first LDS meetinghouse in 2003, President Raymond Botterell of the Kenya Nairobi Mission offered thanks to the Ethiopian government for allowing missionaries to proselyte in the country, likely as a result of good relationships maintained due to the Church's humanitarian projects.⁶³⁸ The Church operates independent congregations in only three urban areas. Some religious freedom restrictions may occur in currently unreached areas for missionary activity, primarily in border regions and in the north.

Cultural Issues

Famine, drought, and poverty have severely affected large numbers of Ethiopians. The Church hesitates to conduct missionary work in areas where basic needs are not met, which has limited the growth of the Church in Ethiopia. These conditions have necessitated humanitarian and development projects, which have strengthened ties with the government and in the long term can facilitate national outreach expansion. The influence of Islam and Orthodox Christianity on society presents challenges for missionaries but can be addressed if teaching and mission outreach programs are adjusted to meet these conditions. Low substance abuse rates for alcohol and cigarettes are in harmony with LDS teachings. The Church may face challenges with the widespread use of qat.

⁶³¹ "Emergency food sent to Ethiopia," LDS Church News, 15 March 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43355/Emergency-food-sent-to-Ethiopia.html>

⁶³² Weaver, Sarah Jane. "'Life saving dust' to help drought-stricken Ethiopia," LDS Church News, 1 November 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44622/Life-saving-dust-to-help-drought-stricken-Ethiopia.html>

⁶³³ Lloyd, Scott R. "With 'Catholic friends': Reaching out to the distressed," LDS Church News, 16 October 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46344/With-Catholic-friends-Reaching-out-to-the-distressed.html>

⁶³⁴ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Church sending Atmit to aid famine-stricken children in Ethiopia," LDS Church News, 14 September 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/54033/Church-sending-Atmit-to-aid-famine-stricken-children-in-Ethiopia.html>

⁶³⁵ Lloyd, R. Scott. "Sacred trust to heal physically, spiritually," LDS Church News, 17 April 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57165/Sacred-trust-to-heal-physically-spiritually.html>

⁶³⁶ Johnson, Page. "Black heritage commemorated," LDS Church News, 14 February 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45083/Black-heritage-commemorated.html>

⁶³⁷ "Projects—Ethiopia," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 30 September 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-97,00.html>

⁶³⁸ "First meetinghouse in east Africa nation," LDS Church News, 20 December 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44839/First-meetinghouse-in-east-African-nation.html>

National Outreach

Mission outreach centers operate in four cities, all of which have over 100,000 inhabitants. Fewer than 44% of Ethiopians reside in areas with access to LDS congregations and missionaries, and most of the population in areas with mission outreach centers have generally never heard of the LDS Church and are unaware of its teachings. Additional areas may open to missionary work as Latter-day Saints move to cities without a current Church presence and share the gospel with family and friends living in currently unreached areas.

Ethiopia's rural population accounts for 83% of the national population and is almost totally unreached by Latter-day Saints. There are meaningful short-term opportunities for Latter-day Saints to expand national outreach in several of these areas where there are unofficial groups of prospective members awaiting baptizing. A group of Sudanese refugees has been functioning in the small, far western Ethiopian city of Gambela since 2007. The group had two baptized members and between fifty to seventy people attending Church meetings in 2009. In 2009, missionaries reported that a group of investigators traveled to Debre Zeit from a small village called Leebengadula located a couple of hours away. Due to the remote location of Leebengadula, missionaries taught the investigators in Debre Zeit and did not baptize members from the group until its members developed regular habits of Church attendance and gospel living. Few local LDS leaders and missionaries have prevented the establishment of formal mission outreach centers in these locations thus far.

Distance from mission headquarters in Kampala, Uganda is a major challenge for mission leadership that has limited outreach to a few locations and discourages travel to remote areas of the country. In the late 2000s, the Uganda Kampala Mission added Rwanda and Southern Sudan to its jurisdiction. In late 2010, neither country had proselytizing missionaries assigned, but the assignment of additional countries to the mission requires mission leadership to delegate time and resources to a larger population and mission field. Ethiopia currently has the second largest membership within the boundaries of the Uganda Kampala Mission and will likely not experience much less attention and resources in the near future compared to prior the addition of Rwanda and Sudan but may receive fewer young missionary, senior missionary couples, and mission president visits in the future that in turn could delay expansion of national outreach.

The Church has made some progress in expanding national outreach in the late 2000s. Located over one hundred miles south of Addis Ababa, the remote Awasa Branch created in 2008 included only a couple dozen members and investigators in 2010. A member family had met in their home for Church meetings for five years previously as a group. A year after the branch was organized, missionaries reported on teaching the branch president how to call counselors and provided training to other members. Missionaries temporarily labored in the city for a week or two, holding a fireside before departing with thirty-three in attendance in 2009. A similar process was unfolding in Shashemene in 2011, as a group was organized and full-time missionaries were assigned. There is a high potential for additional cities to have mission outreach centers established in a similar manner, especially in the Awasa and Addis Ababa areas.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity rates of less than 50% point to convert retention problems despite manageable membership growth and strong member-missionary efforts since the country's first branch was organized. Missionaries serving in the country report that nearly all converts who join the Church were referred by Church members and that local members regularly accompany missionaries to teaching appointments, largely to assist with translation. Language barriers and miscommunication may be sources of misunderstanding and lower member activity.

The Church has taken great concern in improving member activity and convert retention rates in recent years by focusing on teaching and strengthening youth. In 2006, Ethiopian young women gathered for a young

women's conference in Addis Ababa. A total of eighteen women attended from the country's three branches. The young women were taught about the Light of Christ and spent time fellowshiping one another.⁶³⁹ In 2007, a conference was held to prepare for young men to serve missions. A total of sixteen young men attended the conference and learned about the importance of proper hygiene, diet, and teaching the gospel.⁶⁴⁰ In July 2009, a conference in Ethiopia was held for youth and young adults to strengthen their testimonies and interact with members throughout the country. About half of the 160 attendees were not Latter-day Saints. Seminary and institute enrollment more than doubled in the late 2000s, indicating progress in augmenting the number of active members.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Missionaries reported no ethnic integration issues as of 2010. Potential for future conflict at church is high for some areas if rival ethnic groups meet in the same congregations. However, the Church's outreach is too limited currently to experience greater challenges with ethnic integration, as there are no Latter-day Saints among most ethnic groups.

Language Issues

The large number of indigenous languages spoken in Ethiopia challenges efforts to opening additional areas for missionary work. Amharic is the only language in Ethiopia that has multiple Church materials and the Book of Mormon translated. Ethiopians without any Church literature translated into their native language make up 74% of the population, indicating that the Church has much to accomplish in translating Church materials and scriptures into native languages in the country. The Oromo language may be the most likely language to have some Church materials translated due to the large number of speakers of Oromo who reside in or near areas where the Church is currently established. Low literacy rates in many areas challenge efforts for members to be self-sufficient in learning about the teachings of the church and actively contributing to church administration.

Missionaries struggle to learn and teach about the church in the Amharic language. This has come as a result of no formal Amharic teaching to missionaries before they arrive in the mission field and missionaries transferring to and from Uganda where missionaries teach in English. Missionaries in Ethiopia usually teach investigators with a Church member who translates from English to Amharic. Teaching with a member present involves local membership in member-missionary work. A lack of language proficiency from missionaries limits teaching to only when members are available to translate and also reduces the scope and efficacy of full-time missionaries' responsibilities to teach in their own words. Missionaries unable to speak Amharic results in communication problems with local members who do not speak English. In 2009, missionaries made some improvement in their language abilities, but there is still a major need for greater competency in Amharic by full-time missionaries.

Missionary Service

By mid-2009, fourteen young full-time elders were serving in the country in addition to at least two senior missionary couples. Ethiopia has increased the number of local members serving full-time missions but remains dependent on foreign missionaries to staff its full-time missionary force. In 2009, a zone of missionaries worked in Ethiopia, most of who were in Addis Ababa. A second zone of only two missionary companionships was organized in Awasa in 2011. Recent missionary preparation classes for youth and young adults and

⁶³⁹ "Young women meet in Ethiopia," LDS Church News, 4 March 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48589/Young-women-meet-in-Ethiopia.html>

⁶⁴⁰ "Preparing for missions," LDS Church News, 22 September 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51067/Preparing-for-missions.html>

increasing seminary and institute attendance may increase the number of Ethiopians serving missions, which in the long-term can assist in expanding national outreach and developing local leadership.

Leadership

All four branches appear to be led by local members. The creation of the first district in 2009 indicates that local church members serving in leadership positions have increased in number and in independence. Low economic self-reliance and few career opportunities in many areas challenge the Church to develop leadership with the resources and skills to lead their congregations proficiently.

Temple

Ethiopia is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Few members have been to the temple. Temple trips have begun to occur more frequently but typically members visit the Accra Ghana Temple. Travel to the temple requires significant sacrifice of time and money, resulting in few members who have attended the temple. Additional temples may be constructed closer to Ethiopia, but travel time and expenses would only slightly be reduced.

Comparative Growth

The Church's presence in Ethiopia is very small. For every 93,000 people there is one Church member—the second lowest percentage out of African countries in which the Church publishes its presence, the lowest being Rwanda. Membership growth rates over the past decade have been average for African nations with fewer than 1,000 members, yet most African nations that had their initial LDS Church establishment in the early 1990s today have significantly larger church memberships, like Uganda and Kenya, where there is a stake, a full-time mission, and over 8,000 members. If the ratio of missions to the national population were consistent with most Latin American countries, Latter-day Saints would operate between fifteen and twenty full-time LDS missions in Ethiopia. Member activity rates appear average for the region.

Other missionary-oriented Christian denominations operate in Ethiopia, experience rapid growth, and have had a longer presence than Latter-day Saints. There over 8,000 active Jehovah's Witnesses in 159 congregations and over 165,000 Seventh Day Adventists in 801 churches. Other denominations tend to place greater emphasis on opening congregations and teaching their doctrines in areas where there are few to no members of their churches, whereas the LDS Church tends to wait to open additional areas to missionary work until many members reside in a particular area. Much of the reason for the why the LDS Church has been less successful at rapidly opening new areas and congregations stems from few missionary resources devoted to the country.

Future Prospects

President Hinckley visited members of the Church from Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda in Nairobi, Kenya in February 1998 and predicted that the Church would grow in Kenya and surrounding countries. He stated, "Here there are now hundreds, there will be thousands, there will be tens of thousands. This gospel is true; it will spread over the earth."⁶⁴¹

In 2010, this prediction had yet to be fully realized. The small size of the LDS Church in Ethiopia today comes as the result of the large, rapidly growing population of Ethiopia that has been highly underserved as a result of few LDS missions assigned to the country, the short time in which the Church operated in the country, and modest membership and congregational growth. Ethiopia is in tremendous need of its own LDS mission

⁶⁴¹ Hart, John L. "This work will grow and grow in this land," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurch-news.com/articles/30434/This-work-will-grow-and-grow-in-this-land.html>

due to its large population, burgeoning LDS membership, high potential for self-sustaining church growth, long distance from current mission headquarters, and few mission resources currently devoted to the country. Additional branches will likely be organized in the short term in Addis Ababa, Debre Zeit, and remote areas where members and investigators currently meet in groups or travel long distances for Church meetings. The Gurji and Shashamene Groups may become branches in the near future.

GABON

Geography

AREA: 267,667 square km. Located in Central Africa on the equator, Gabon borders Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, and the Atlantic Ocean. Tropical and humid climate continue year round. Flat terrain covers most of Gabon, with some hills in the southern interior. Mangroves dominate coastal areas and most of the interior is tropical rainforest or savannah. High biodiversity and protected natural resources attract tourism. Gabon is divided into nine administrative provinces.

Peoples

Fang: 40%

Punu: 8%

Njebi: 8%

Other native tribes: 34%

Other Africans and Europeans: 10%

The Fang is the largest tribe, followed by small tribes, most notably the Punu and Njebi. Other Africans arrived for employment from neighboring nations. Europeans remained from colonial times or arrived more recently with many working in the oil industry.

Population: 1,608,321 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.977% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.56 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 51.65 male, 52.93 female (2012)

Languages: Fang (37%), Punu (8%), Njebi (8%), other and unknown (47%). French is the official language and widely spoken as a second language. Forty-two native languages are spoken. The most widely spoken languages are Fang (588,000), Punu (123,000), and Njebi (120,000). No native languages are spoken by over one million speakers.

Literacy: 63.2% (1995)

History

Native peoples populated Gabon for centuries prior to European exploration in the fifteenth century. The Portuguese first arrived and named the area from the Portuguese word for cloak, Gabão. Libreville was founded by liberated slaves in the mid-nineteenth century and later became the capital. The French arrived in the late nineteenth century and established Franceville in the interior and Port-Gentil along the coast. Between 1910 and 1959 Gabon belonged to French Equatorial Africa. Independence from France occurred in 1960. President Bongo ruled Gabon for forty years and died in June 2009. During his presidency, political conditions were sometimes unstable, and following his death, his son took power. Gabon has transformed itself into one of the most stable and developed nations in Central Africa with high inequality of wealth.

Culture

The Fang and several other ethnic groups are known for performing traditional ceremonies with wood carved or metal masks. Music and oral tradition for folk stories is also important. Women's rights are limited. Widows cannot own land, and a married man may practice polygamy without the consent of his first wife.⁶⁴² Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are low compared to world averages.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$16,000 (2011) [33.3% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.674

Corruption Index: 3.0 (2011)

Gabon enjoys a GDP per capita among the highest in Africa, yet wealth is very unequally distributed, as the majority of government earnings come from oil exploitation. Industry accounts for 58% of the GDP and employs 15% of the population. Most work is in agriculture, and a fifth of the population is unemployed. Primary agricultural products include cocoa, coffee, and sugar. Oil is the largest industry (70% of exports), followed by other mineral extraction (manganese and gold) and chemicals. Timber is also exported. Primary import/export partners are the United States, China, and France. Debt payment issues continue to impede economic growth. Recently created national parks hope to draw additional revenue through ecotourism. Corruption is prevalent in the economy. Oil extraction contracts with China ignore local peoples' property rights and do not benefit most Gabonese financially.

Faiths

Christian: 55–75%

Indigenous beliefs: 24–44%

Muslim: less than 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic: 600,000

Seventh Day Adventists 3,603 14

Jehovah's Witnesses 3,732 31

Latter-day Saints less than 50 1

Religion

The majority of Christians are Catholic. Protestant groups have arrived more recently and experience slow growth. Indigenous beliefs are followed by many and influence Christianity. Muslims are a small yet growing minority.

Religious Freedom

The constitution allows religious freedom, which is honored by the government. Religious groups are allowed to assemble, teach, and proselyte without restrictions.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴² "Gabon," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 17 June 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/gabon>

⁶⁴³ <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127233.htm>

Largest Cities

Urban: 85%

Libreville, **Port-Gentil**, **Masuku**, **Moanda**, **Oyem**, **Makokou**, **Mouila**, **Lambarene**, **Tchibanga**, **Koulamoutou**.

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

One of the ten most populous cities has an LDS congregation. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The first members in Gabon arrived in 1980 and consisted of Gabonese baptized abroad and returning to their homeland, mainly from Europe. The first counselor of the Embassy in Gabon visited Salt Lake City and met with Church officials in 1990.⁶⁴⁴ When the Cameroon Yaounde Mission was created in 1992, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea were included in the new mission. Members have relied on Church magazines in French for instruction and await formal Church establishment. Permission for the Church to enter Gabon came in 1992.⁶⁴⁵ In 1998, the Africa Area split, resulting in the formation of the Africa West Area, which included Gabon. Gabon and several neighboring nations were transferred to the Africa Southeast Area in 2003. In 2011, an administrative area branch was organized as Gabon did not pertain to a mission at the time. In 2012, Gabon was assigned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo Kinshasa Mission and the Church received official government recognition. Mission leaders reported plans to assign proselytizing missionaries sometime in 2013.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

Membership growth among Fang speakers has been large enough to merit translations of some Church materials. In 2010, there appeared to be fewer than fifty members in Gabon. Some recently arrived members are originally from Cote d'Ivoire.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 (2012)

Prior to late 2012, a small group of members met in Libreville as an appendage of the administrative branch. In 2012, the administrative branch was discontinued and the Libreville Branch was formed.

Activity and Retention

Some members over the years have kept contact with the Church by receiving Church magazines. Few members appear to be active, as there was no official congregation until 2011, and there is no official church presence. Approximately twelve Latter-day Saints met for church services in Libreville in late 2010.⁶⁴⁶ Nationwide active membership is estimated at fifteen, or 30%–40% of total church membership.

⁶⁴⁴ <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19616/African-dignitary-visits-Church-headquarters.html>

⁶⁴⁵ "Gabon," Deseret News 2010 Church Almanac, p.487–488.

⁶⁴⁶ "Episode 44," Into All the World—the Mormon Channel, retrieved 20 November 2010. <http://radio.lds.org/eng/programs/into-all-the-world-episode-44>

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French.

All LDS scriptures are translated in French. *Gospel Principles Simplified* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* are both available in Fang.

Meetinghouses

There are no LDS meetinghouses in Gabon. Church meetings for the group in Libreville appear to occur in members' houses or rented spaces.

Health and Safety

HIV/AIDS infects 5.9% of the population. Sanitation is poor, and tropical diseases are endemic. Medical infrastructure is limited, and access is uneven.

Humanitarian and Development Work

No humanitarian or development projects sponsored by the Church had occurred in Gabon as of early 2010.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church has not taken advantage of opportunities to proselyte in a nation where religious freedom is upheld, proselytism is permitted, little violence and instability occur, and most adhere to Christianity. No legislation appears to have deterred the Church from entering Gabon aside from the need to register for governmental recognition.

Cultural Issues

The high adherence of Gabonese to indigenous religion may pose challenges to church growth. Other Christian denominations have experienced limited growth, possibly due to the high syncretism with native religions. Polygamy presents challenges for church growth, as those with polygamous spouses must end relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency to be baptized.

National Outreach

Great opportunity exists for the LDS Church once mission outreach is established in Gabon. At present, small numbers of members live in several locations. Since 85% of the population is urban and two thirds of the national population live in the ten largest cities, missionary work can be effectively conducted with limited resources and outreach centers. A few LDS members live in Libreville, which will become an important city for national outreach, as it is the capital and largest city. Nearly half of the Gabonese population would receive LDS outreach if missionary activity occurred in Libreville. Franceville (Masuku) will be an important city for outreach in the interior, as it is the largest city not along the coast. If some members do reside in several of the larger cities, this will provide later opportunity for outreach to these locations.

Gabon has not had a Church presence until recently as the result of its small population, remote location, few active members, limited mission resources, and the tremendous membership growth experienced in other Central African nations. The Democratic Republic of Congo and Cote d'Ivoire quickly drew away limited

mission resources in Africa during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In more recent years, these nations have experienced continued expansion of the Church into unreached areas. Neighboring Cameroon has received increased mission outreach since 2005 and will likely continue to draw away mission resources from Gabon and other French-speaking Central African nations without a Church presence.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Poor member activity among the few members in Gabon may have contributed to the lack of an official Church presence in Gabon. Reactivation efforts may be challenging when the Church is formally established due to long periods of member inactivity and difficulty locating members. Few, if any, converts appear to have been baptized in Gabon.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Despite a small population, Gabon has large ethnic diversity that challenges Church resources in meeting the needs of differing ethnic groups. These ethnic groups will likely be included in the same congregations, as membership will be too small for the creation of native language specific units. The limited number of speakers of indigenous languages in Gabon challenges Church translation resources and will likely result in only Fang having Church materials translated for many years.

Language Issues

Gabon benefits from a population that speaks French as a second language. French will serve as a language to unify members from differing ethnic groups. A limited number of Church materials in Fang will facilitate formal Church establishment, as it is the most commonly spoken native language. Church material translations in Punu and Njebi appear challenging and unlikely until a strong membership presence is established.

Missionary Service

Missionaries have been called from Gabon who joined the Church in other nations. A Gabonese-American missionary was serving in the Idaho Boise Mission in 2009. No full-time missionaries had been assigned to Gabon as of early 2013.

Leadership

Very few local members appear capable of staffing and holding leadership, as most have only experienced short periods of activity in nations where they were baptized. Recently arrived Ivorian members may provide the bulk of leadership manpower until greater numbers of Gabonese join the Church.

Temple

Gabon pertains to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Members who may attend the temple likely have their temple recommends issued by the area presidency and to go the temple individually or as families.

Comparative Growth

The status of the Church in Gabon and Equatorial Guinea appeared quite similar until 2012. Both nations have had Church members living in them for decades, yet neither has had an official Church presence. This has likely been due to their small populations, remote locations, and limited mission resource availability.

Other Christian denominations have seen modest to rapid growth. Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses experience modest growth, whereas Pentecostals and evangelicals experience strong growth. Growth in most denominations had not occurred until the 1990s and outreach has been limited compared to other African nations. Islam is seen as a threat to Christian denominations' growth and outreach.

Future Prospects

The organization of the first official branch in 2012 indicates progress towards establishing a missionay presence in Gabon. Prospects appear highly favorable for the assignment of missionaries within the near future. The organization of a prospective mission in neighboring Cameroon may accelerate outreach expansion but it appears unlikely that any cities outside of Libreville will receive an LDS gospel witness for many years to come.

THE GAMBIA

Geography

AREA: 11,295 square km. Located in West Africa and the smallest country in continental Africa, The Gambia is almost completely surrounded by Senegal. The country occupies a 50-kilometer wide corridor along the Gambia River from the Atlantic Ocean stretching over 300 kilometers inland. Tropical climate prevails year round with rainy and dry seasons and some fluctuation in temperature. Terrain consists of the Gambia River flood plain and some small hills along its peripheries. Drought is a natural hazard, as rainfall has decreased over the past few decades. Environmental issues include deforestation, desertification, and water-borne illnesses. The Gambia is administratively divided into five divisions and one city.

Peoples

Mandinka: 42%

Fula: 18%

Wolof: 16%

Jola: 10%

Serahuli [Soninke]: 9%

Other African: 4%

Non-African: 1%

Mandinka are a Mande ethnic group and populate most areas, especially the interior. Fula and Wolof are Western Bantoid ethnic groups who appear to reside in most areas, especially along the coast. Jola populate coastal areas near the Casamance Region in Senegal. Serahuli are a Mande ethnic group and reside in several different areas.

Population: 1,840,454 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.344% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.1 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 61.52 male, 66.18 female (2012)

Languages: Mandinka (42%), Fula [Fulani or Pulaar] (17%), Wolof (10%), Soninke (9%), Jola-Fonyi (4%), Bainouk-Gunyaamolo (2%), Balanta-Kentohe (2%), Mandjak (2%), Serer-Sine (2%), other (10%). English is the official language. No languages have over one million speakers.

Literacy: 40.1% (2003)

History

Various West African Empires ruled Gambia prior to European colonialism, including the Ghana and Songhai Empires and Mali Kingdom. The Portuguese took control of the Gambia River from the Kingdom of Mali in the fourteenth century and a century later sold exclusive trade rights to the British. During the 1600s and 1700s, Britain and France vied for control of the Senegal and Gambia Rivers and exploited the human population for slavery until the early 1800s. Modern-day boundaries for Gambia were established in 1889. Greater autonomy and self-government were explored following World War II. In 1965, Gambia achieved

independence from the United Kingdom. Between 1982 and 1989, Gambia and Senegal formed the federation of Senegambia, which was unsuccessful. Both nations signed a friendship and cooperation treaty in 1991. In the past two decades, tensions between the two nations have occasionally occurred. A military coup overthrew the government in 1994 under Yahya Jammeh. In 1996, a new constitution was implemented, and presidential elections were held. Jammeh has been consistently reelected president ever since coming to power in the mid-1990s.⁶⁴⁷

Culture

Nicknamed the “Smiling Coast,” Senegalese culture shares many similarities with The Gambia due to close proximity and the presence of most Senegalese ethnic groups in The Gambia. Daily life and society are strongly influenced by Islam, yet there is mutual respect between the Christian minority and Muslim majority. Most ethnic groups are traditionally Muslim. Polygamy, arranged marriages, and female genital mutilation are common. Cuisine consists of rice, vegetables, chicken, beef, fish, and *fu-fu*.⁶⁴⁸ Both alcohol and cigarette consumption rates appear low.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,100 (2011) [4.37% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.420

Corruption Index: 3.5 (2011)

The Gambia has a poorly developed economy as a result of a lack of natural resources, limited agricultural activity, and little foreign investment. Tourism from Europe and an emerging banking sector are areas that have contributed to recent economic growth and may lead to greater development in the future. Agriculture employs 75% of the workforce and generates 31% of the GDP. Major crops include rice, millet, sorghum, peanuts, corn, sesame, and cassava. Services employ 6% of the workforce and produce 55% of the GDP whereas industry employs 19% of the workforce and generates 14% of the GDP. Industries include food processing, tourism, woodworking, metalworking, and clothing. India, China, France, and Senegal are primary trade partners.

The government has stepped up its efforts to fight corruption with some success, although corruption is still widespread. The president was successful in the past decade in the prosecution of government officials and businessmen who misused their power or positions to illegally gain wealth. Corruption in The Gambia is not viewed as a major deterrent to economic growth and foreign investment, as local laws regarding economic activity are generally respected.⁶⁴⁹

Faiths

Muslim: 90%

Christian: 9%

Indigenous beliefs: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 30,000

⁶⁴⁷ “Background Note: The Gambia,” Bureau of African Affairs, 17 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5459.htm>

⁶⁴⁸ “Gambia,” Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 14 September 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Gambia.html>

⁶⁴⁹ “2009 Investment Climate Statement—The Gambia,” 2009 Investment Climate Statement, February 2009. <http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/rls/othr/ics/2009/117188.htm>

Seventh Day Adventists 1,194 5
 Jehovah's Witnesses 206 4
 Latter-day Saints less than 20 0

Religion

Ninety percent (90%) of the population is Sunni Muslim. Christians constitute 9% of the population, are mostly Catholic, and tend to reside in southern and western areas. Other Christian groups include Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Evangelicals. Muslims and Christians frequently intermarry. The syncretism of indigenous beliefs with Islam and Christianity occurs in some areas.⁶⁵⁰ The percentage of Christians in the population is comparable to several Muslim-majority nations in West Africa, namely Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by established laws and government policies. There have been no reports of recent societal abuses of religious freedom, and the law protects individuals against the abuse of religious freedom. Two *qadi* courts are established for questions regarding marriage, divorce, and inheritance for Muslims and follow traditional Islamic law. Major Christian and Muslim holidays are recognized by the government. Religious groups do not have to register with the government, and faith-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are subject to the same requirements for registration and licensing as nonfaith based NGOs. Religious instruction is allowed in public schools and occurs for both Muslims and Christians but is not mandatory. The government has cautioned its Muslim citizens regarding extremist Islamic groups and has maintained positive relations with both Muslims and Christians.⁶⁵¹

Largest Cities

Urban: 57%

Brikama, Bakau, Banjul, Farafenni, Lamin, Sukuta, Basse Santa Su, Gunjur, Soma, Sabi.

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

All ten of the largest cities have no LDS congregations. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

In 1998, The Gambia became part of the Africa West Area. Gambia has never been assigned to a mission and remains without any known LDS Church presence.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 20 (2012)

Few, if any, Latter-day Saints reside in The Gambia. Membership consists of Gambians baptized abroad who returned to their home country or foreigners temporarily staying in the country. Gambian converts are primarily found in Europe. In August 2010, the Belgium/Netherlands Mission baptized a Gambian convert in Antwerpen, Belgium.

⁶⁵⁰ "Gambia, The," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127234.htm>

⁶⁵¹ "Gambia, The," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127234.htm>

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 (2012)

In 2010, the Church reported no organized congregations.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English.

No indigenous languages have LDS scriptures. Church materials translated into Wolof, Fulani, and Mandinka include *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*.

Humanitarian and Development Work

As of 2010, there has been no known humanitarian or development work carried out by the Church in The Gambia.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Few Muslim-majority nations allow religious freedom to the degree experienced in The Gambia, yet the Church has not taken an active initiative to establish an official presence. No legal obstacles appear to prevent an official Church establishment. Christian groups report no instances of harassment or discrimination from the Muslim majority. There appears to be no restrictions regarding proselytism or changing one's religious status, albeit Muslims may face ostracism and ridicule from their families and the community.

Cultural Issues

The dominance of Islam in everyday life is one of the greatest cultural barriers for missionary work, yet greater tolerance of Christians and missionary work provide positive cultural advantages to the LDS Church compared to other Muslim-majority African nations. Conversion from Islam can lead to ostracism from family and the community, but these consequences do not appear to be as severe as in most Muslim nations. Those participating in a polygamous relationship must first end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidencies in order to be baptized. The Church may face challenges with converts abandoning the practice of female genital mutilation on their young women and girls due to its widespread occurrence among most ethnic groups.

National Outreach

The entire population remains unreached by the Church. The lack of mission outreach centers in Senegal and nearby nations has likely contributed to the lack of an official Church presence. The mission closest to The Gambia is the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission, which one day may administer Gambia as English is the official language of both countries. Missionary activity will most likely concentrate on Christians due to fewer cultural barriers and similarities in beliefs. Banjul appears the most practical location to begin missionary activity, as over 350,000 reside in the metropolitan area (20% of the national population), there is a well-established Christian community, and other large cities are more difficult to access and have fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. Most ethnic groups have a visible presence in Banjul, which, over time, may allow for missionary activity to expand outside the capital.

Full-time missionaries have baptized and taught many Gambians living in Europe, especially in Belgium, the

United Kingdom, and Italy. These converts provide a vital asset in establishing a future Church presence with indigenous members and leaders if they return to their home country. However, most Gambians living abroad likely do not return due to poor living standards.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

No convert baptisms have occurred in The Gambia. Member activity rates likely reflect those of the nations in which converts joined the Church.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Gambia has little ethnic conflict despite its diverse mix of West African peoples, allowing for greater ease assimilating differing ethnic groups into the same LDS congregations.

Language Issues

Church materials are available in indigenous languages spoken by 69% of the population. Those who speak English as a second language can also benefit from English-language materials. Illiteracy is a major issue, as most of the population cannot read, warranting humanitarian and development projects geared toward improving literacy. Such projects would also likely assist in finding receptive investigators. Due to the diversity of languages spoken, large numbers of converts from differing ethnic groups may one day mandate the creation of language-specific congregations.

Missionary Service and Leadership

Few, if any, Gambians have served full-time missions. As of 2010, no missionary activity had occurred in The Gambia. Following an initial Church establishment, leadership may rely upon full-time missionaries until capable male converts are baptized, retained, and trained.

Temple

The Gambia is assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple district.

Comparative Growth

The Gambia is one of many West African nations that remain without an official LDS Church presence. Other nations in West Africa that have no reported congregations and few, if any, members include Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The only Muslim-majority nation in West Africa with an official LDS Church presence is Sierra Leone, which has experienced rapid church growth over the past two decades.

Most missionary-minded denominations have a presence in The Gambia and experienced slow to modest growth. Seventh Day Adventist have achieved steady growth, as Adventists have doubled in Gambia over the past decade. Jehovah's Witnesses experience slow growth.

Future Prospects

The Gambia is one of the most tolerant Muslim-majority nations in West Africa and offers significant opportunity for LDS Church growth due to freedom of religion despite slow to modest growth of most Christian denominations over the past decade. However, other nearby nations with larger populations without an

official Church presence may take precedence over The Gambia due to the lack of any increase in the world-wide missionary force over the past decade and the cautious manner in which the Church has expanded its presence in Africa. Humanitarian and development needs are excellent opportunities for the Church to serve and establish a presence. Delaying an official Church establishment may result in missed opportunities if the population becomes more receptive to Christianity one day and join missionary-oriented Christian faiths that maintained a long-term presence. The placement of even one senior missionary couple in Banjul could offer significant contributions to laying the foundation for consistent humanitarian activity and the initial establishment of the Church.

GHANA

Geography

AREA: 238,533 square km. Ghana is located in West Africa and borders the Atlantic Ocean, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Togo. Climate transitions from tropical and humid along the coast to semi-arid and dry to the north. Plains and forests with few hills cover the landscape. Lake Volta in the east is the largest artificial lake in the world and stretches north to south. Drought and harmattan winds carrying dry and dusty air from the Sahara and Sahel are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, pollution, and fresh water scarcity. Ghana is divided into ten administrative regions.

Peoples

Akan: 45.3%
Mole-Dagbon: 15.2%
Ewe: 11.7%
Ga-Dangme: 7.3%
Guan: 4%
Gurma: 3.6%
Grusi: 2.6%
Mande-Busanga: 1%
Other tribes: 1.4%
Other: 7.8%

Population: 25,241,998 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 1.787% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 3.39 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 60.22 male, 62.73 female (2012)

Languages: Asante (14.8%), Ewe (12.7%), Fante (9.9%), Boron (4.6%), Dagomba (4.3%), Dangme (4.3%), Dagarte (3.7%), Akyem (3.4%), Ga (3.4%), Akuapem (2.9%), other (36.1%). English is the official language and widely spoken in urban areas. Seventy-nine languages are spoken in Ghana. Languages with over one million speakers include Asante (3.5 million), Ewe (3.03 million), Fante (2.36 million), Boron (1.10 million), Dagombe (1.02 million), and Dangme (1.02 million).

Literacy: 57.9% (2000)

History

Various African tribes resided in Ghana for thousands of years. Akan peoples settled Ghana in the thirteenth century and ruled the region when the first Europeans explored the area. The Portuguese and Dutch established small coastal towns and forts to exploit gold resources. The British later arrived, naming western Ghana the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast was a British colony from the late nineteenth century until independence in 1957. Eastern Ghana was first colonized by the Germans and later administered by the British as a separate colony named British Togoland following the division of the former German colony between the British and the French during World War I. Greater independence movements began in the mid-1950s. Although a series

of coups occurred following independence in the 1960s and 1970s, economic growth and stability returned during the presidency of Jerry Rawlings. Unlike most African nations, Ghana experienced little ethnic tension and a slow transition to a democratic government during President Rawlings rule. Ghana returned to democracy with democratic elections in the 1990s. Ghana has been praised as one of the greatest successes in political stability and democratization in West Africa.

Culture

The population exhibits considerable ethnic diversity, with each ethnic group possessing some unique cultural characteristics. Christianity is the primary influence on society in southern and coastal areas, whereas Islam is the dominant influence on society in the north. Sports are popular, especially soccer. Music, textiles, and dance occupy an important role in culture. Polygamy is illegal, yet practiced among some according to local custom and Sharia law.⁶⁵² Cocaine and marihuana use appears higher than most nations.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$3,100 (2011) [6.44% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.541

Corruption Index: 3.9 (2011)

The economy is one of the more developed and diversified in the region. Political stability, abundant natural resources, and foreign investment fuels economic growth, with GDP growth rates over 4.5% since 2006. Ocean access provides for greater growth in trade and commerce, and a sizeable population supports needed manpower for economic development and growth. Agriculture and services each account for 37% of the GDP, whereas industry makes up 25% of the GDP. Half of the labor force works in agriculture. Cocoa, gold, and timber provide the three largest exports and generate the most wealth. Some petroleum extraction, which, combined with hydroelectric power from Lake Volta, makes Ghana energy independent. A developed mining sector provides greater growth in industry. The largest export partners include the Netherlands, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom; the largest import partners are China, Nigeria, and India. Although the economy experiences greater success than most West African countries, 28.5% of the population lives below the poverty line, and living standards are poor. Ghana demonstrates some of the lowest corruption levels in West Africa, but corruption is a major obstacle that limits economic development and a more equal distribution of wealth. Cannabis cultivation, heroin and cocaine transshipment, money laundering, and general crime are ongoing challenges.

Faiths

Christian: 68.8%

Muslim: 15.9%

Traditional religions: 8.5%

Other: 0.7%

None: 6.1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Pentecostal/Charismatic 5,743,631

Protestant 4,432,944

Catholic 3,598,707

⁶⁵² "Ghana," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 18 June 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/ghana>

Seventh Day Adventist 374,642 1,168

Jehovah's Witnesses 109,772 1,537

Latter-day Saints 52,387 148

Religion

Christians comprise the majority in the south and central areas of Ghana whereas Muslims constitute the majority in the north. Little conflict occurs between Christians and Muslims, partially due to geographic separation and government tolerance for denominations of both groups. Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are experiencing the greatest growth currently. Followers of indigenous religious generally reside in rural areas. There are some Christian groups that incorporate indigenous beliefs and practices into their faith.⁶⁵³ Some conflict occurs between the followers of traditional religions and Christians. Shamanism and indigenous faiths are most widely practiced in the north.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by government. No restrictions prohibit proselytism and government respects religious minority groups. Major Christian and Muslim holidays are recognized national holidays. Religious groups are required to register, and there have been no recent instances of the government refusing to register a religious group. The government has taken steps to foster harmony and tolerance between differing religious groups. Societal abuse of religious freedom occurs at times and targets practitioners of indigenous faiths and Muslims.⁶⁵⁴

Major Cities

Urban: 50%

Accra, Kumasi, Tamale, Tema, Obuasi, Teshie, **Bolgatanga**, Koforidua, Takoradi, Sekondi.

Cities listed in **bold** do not have a LDS congregation.

Nine of the ten most populous cities have an LDS congregation. Fifteen percent (15%) of the population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

LDS literature and scriptures made their way to Ghana in the 1950s and ignited interest among Ghanaians. Some Ghanaians living abroad came into contact with the Church and later returned to Ghana. Church leaders attempted to visit the country in the 1960s under the direction of President David O. McKay but were unable due to visa issues. Before the Church came to Ghana, some prospective members organized unofficial congregations of the Church for interested individuals and prospective members. The Church established an official presence in 1978, the same year that priesthood and temple blessings became available to all, regardless of race or ethnicity. The first convert baptisms in Ghana occurred in late 1978. Eighty members were baptized on December 12th of that year. The West African Mission began administering Ghana in 1980, and the first mission in Ghana was established in Accra in 1985. In June 1989, the government of Ghana expelled LDS missionaries based on misunderstandings of LDS teachings regarding government and race. At this time there were seventy-two young missionaries serving in Ghana, all of whom were Ghanaian citizens. An additional six

⁶⁵³ "Ghana," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148693.htm>

⁶⁵⁴ "Ghana," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148693.htm>

foreign missionary couples were also serving at this time.⁶⁵⁵ LDS Church activities were permitted to resume in late 1990 following the government deeming that the Church promotes racial harmony and the national flag.⁶⁵⁶ In 2004, Ghana became the first country in West Africa to have an LDS temple completed. A second mission in Ghana was organized in Cape Coast in 2005 and initially administered Benin, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and Togo. Missionaries serving in Ghana at the time reported that one of the likely reasons the new mission was created to not only assist in the expansion of LDS missionary activity in other nations but to facilitate several mission districts in the interior of the country to become stakes. Other nations under the Ghana Cape Coast Mission were transferred to the Ghana Accra Mission when the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission was organized in 2007. In the late 2000s, two full-time African missionaries were accused of sexually assaulting a teenage girl and were found guilty in a trial and sentenced to five to ten years in prison. The missionaries were released and acquitted of the charges in 2011. In 2012, the two Ghana missions were realigned to create a third mission based in Kumasi. That year, all three Ghana missions administered only Ghana and Ghana pertained to the Africa West Area. In 2013, the Church assigned missionaries to northern Ghana for the first time (Tamale) and created a fourth mission in Accra West.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 52,387 (2012)

Membership totaled over 400 in 1979 and 826 in 1983. Rapid membership growth began in the mid-1980s as membership increased to over 2,000 by mid-1986 and 5,500 in 1987. Membership reached 12,000 in 1993, 16,000 in 1997, and 18,630 in 2000. In the early 2000s, around 3,000 new converts were baptized a year in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.⁶⁵⁷ During the 2000s, rapid membership growth occurred during the latter portion of the decade. There were 22,164 members in 2002, 26,222 in 2004, 32,965 in 2006, 38,224 in 2008, and 45,094 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates ranged between 5.5% and 11.8% during the 2000s. In 2010, one in 550 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 82 Branches: 72 Groups: 3+ (April 2013)

By 1981, there were seven LDS branches. In 1987, there were fifty branches. LDS congregations totaled forty-six in 1993, fifty-seven in 1997, and sixty-two in 2000. Rapid congregational growth occurred in the late 2000s and the number of congregations increased to sixty-seven in 2002, seventy-four in 2004, eighty-four in 2006, ninety-nine in 2008, and 121 in 2010. Many of the new congregations organized between 2008 and 2010 were in the greater Accra area in an effort to make the Church more accessible to members and the general population.⁶⁵⁸ By late 2011, there were 129 wards and branches. The number of wards increased from thirteen in 1993 to thirty-three in 2000, forty-one in 2005, and seventy in mid-2011.

The first LDS stakes in Ghana were created in 1991 in Accra and Cape Coast. Additional stakes were organized in Takoradi (1997), Accra Christiansborg (1997), Kumasi (1998), Tema (2006), Accra McCarthy Hill (2007), Assin Foso (2011), Accra Kaneshie (2012), and Accra Tesano (2012). The number of stakes increased from two in 1991 to five in 2000, seven in 2010, and ten in April 2012. In mid-2012, there were seven districts in Ghana operating in Asamankese (1987), Swedru (1989), Koforidua (1995), Abomusu (2007),

⁶⁵⁵ "Ghana expels missionaries, bans Church," LDS Church News, 24 June 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18998/Ghana-expels-missionaries-bans-Church.html>

⁶⁵⁶ "Church resumes activities in Ghana," LDS Church News, 8 December 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20333/Church-resumes-activities-in-Ghana.html>

⁶⁵⁷ Bingham, Sister Jo. "Missionaries reunite in West Africa," LDS Church News, 10 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50223/Missionaries-reunite-in-West-Africa.html>

⁶⁵⁸ "Latter Day Saints Declares War On Indiscipline Among Youth," AllAfrica.com, 29 May 2009. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200905290840.html>

Konongo (2009), Kpong (2012), and Sunyani (2012). The number of districts totaled eight in 1987, four in 1993, five in 1997, four in 2000, and five in mid-2011.

Ghana has a large number of mission branches that do not pertain to a stake or district. These branches are located in Abakrampa, Agona-Asamang, Agona Nkwanta, Axim, Daboasi, Kissi, Mampong, Mankessim, Nkroful, and Obuasi. Numerous groups belonging to stakes or districts also function in Ghana. Senior missionaries in 2009 reported that two groups were meeting in Maase and Osiem, small cities located north-west of Koforidua. Some districts have district branches for multiple groups within the geographic boundaries of districts. Additional dependent branches or groups likely operate under mission branches but are not published by the Church. A group operates in Tamale.

Activity and Retention

Convert retention and member activity rates in the LDS Church in Ghana appear among the highest for countries with over 30,000 members. Convert retention rates appeared to decrease between 2000 and 2006 as the average number of members per congregation increased from 300 in 2000 to 392 in 2006, indicating some decrease in convert retention rates or the effect of cumulative inactivity from prior years. In 2007 and 2008, the ratio of members per congregation fell, indicating that congregational growth rates caught up and surpassed membership growth rates, but in 2010, the average number of members per congregation increased by thirty-two, as few new independent units were organized. Current convert retention may be over 50% due to higher congregation growth rates. When President Hinckley visited Ghana in 1998, there were 6,700 in attendance. Five thousand three hundred members attended the dedication of the Accra Ghana Temple in early 2004.⁶⁵⁹ Before the dedication of the temple, there were 415 endowed members living in Ghana.⁶⁶⁰ Approximating active membership is challenging as there is an unknown number of dependent branches and groups functioning throughout the country. There are many members of the Church who, due to distance to the closest meetinghouse, do not attend Church meetings regularly yet actively follow the Church's teachings. In 2000, Elder Glenn L. Pace noted that sacrament attendance was over 50% in the Africa West Area.⁶⁶¹ Most wards and branches appear to have between seventy-five and 200 active members. Nationwide active membership today is estimated at 16,000, or approximately 35–40% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Fante, Twi.

In 1988, the Church published the Book of Mormon in the Fante dialect of Akan. The Book of Mormon translation in Twi, the most widely spoken native language in the country, was published in 2005. Only the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and a few basic support materials are translated into Twi. Ewe only has the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* translated. The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are translated into Fante along with many materials for Sunday School, priesthood, primary, and Relief Society.

Meetinghouses

Most large congregations meet in their own building, oftentimes a church-built meetinghouse or a renovated

⁶⁵⁹ Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Joyful culmination found in completion of temple," LDS Church News, 17 January 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44957/Joyful-culmination-found-in-completion-of-temple.html>

⁶⁶⁰ Avant, Gerry. "'Best day of my life'—members exult over temple," LDS Church News, 17 January 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44964/Best-day-of-my-life—members-exult-over-temple.html>

⁶⁶¹ Pace, Elder Glenn L. Pace. "Elder Pace: A Temple for West Africa," LDS Church News, 1 April 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37545/Elder-Pace-A-Temple-for-West-Africa.html>

building. The helping hands service program improved relations with government for the acquisition of new buildings for meetinghouses.⁶⁶²

Health and Safety

Ghana enjoys one of the most stable political atmospheres in West Africa. This peace and stability has not turned Ghanaians away from interest in religion. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS has increased, infecting almost 2% of the population. Sanitation problems and endemic tropical diseases pose a health risk for missionaries serving in Ghana.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The LDS Church has performed extensive humanitarian and development work in Ghana. Between 1986 and 2001 the Church sponsored 142 projects valued at 7.5 million U.S. dollars.⁶⁶³ Senior missionary couples greatly contribute to humanitarian and development work, including working in orphanages, drilling wells, building schools, and distributing wheelchairs.⁶⁶⁴ In the early 2000s, more than one hundred bore holes were drilled.⁶⁶⁵ Members in two Accra wards supplied thousands of books to public schools in 2003.⁶⁶⁶ Books were donated to Kumasi in 2005.⁶⁶⁷ Clean water projects were undertaken between Koforidua and Kumasi in 2006.⁶⁶⁸ In 2007, the Church donated food and clothing to northern Ghana⁶⁶⁹ and distributed fifteen computers to a rural health clinic built by students in the LDS Business College.⁶⁷⁰ 400 local members cleaned and painted streets, buildings and fences in Accra in 2007.⁶⁷¹ Mormon Helping Hands projects occur regularly and consist of local LDS members serving in their communities. The Church teaches self-sufficiency to families through the Benson Institute.⁶⁷²

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The government and the Church maintain positive relations despite past misunderstandings.⁶⁷³ In recent

⁶⁶² Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Helping Hands goes coast to coast," LDS Church news, 24 November 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51353/Helping-Hands-goes-coast-to-coast.html>

⁶⁶³ "Ground broken for first temple in West Africa," LDS Church News, 24 November 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40926/Ground-broken-for-first-temple-in-West-Africa.html>

⁶⁶⁴ Hales, Thane; Hales, Joan M. "Senior couples in West Africa," LDS Church News, 13 January 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50027/Senior-couples-in-West-Africa.html>

⁶⁶⁵ Avant, Gerry. "Gift of water blesses African lives," LDS Church News, 24 January 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44986/Gift-of-water-blesses-African-lives.html>

⁶⁶⁶ "Accra stake donates books, equipment," LDS Church News, 5 April 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43471/Accra-stake-donates-books-equipment.html>

⁶⁶⁷ "Church donates books in Ghana," LDS Church News, 29 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46780/Church-donates-books-in-Ghana.html>

⁶⁶⁸ "Helping in Ghana," LDS Church News, 20 May 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48969/Helping-in-Ghana.html>

⁶⁶⁹ "Relief to Ghana," LDS Church News, 6 October 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51142/Relief-to-Ghana.html>

⁶⁷⁰ "Computers built for Ghana clinic," LDS Church News, 14 April 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50465/Computers-built-for-Ghana-clinic.html>

⁶⁷¹ Bingham, John and Jo. "Members join celebration," LDS Church News, 24 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50274/Members-join-celebration.html>

⁶⁷² Collett, Howard M. "Self-sufficiency in the Andes: Benson Institute builds stability in Ecuador," LDS Church News, 10 January 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56415/Self-sufficiency-in-the-Andes-Benson-Institute-builds-stability-in-Ecuador.html>

⁶⁷³ "Meeting Ghana president," LDS Church News, 1 December 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40977/>

years, the Church has utilized the opportunity of widespread religious freedom in Ghana with the creation of a second mission in 2005. Unique opportunities to conduct missionary work with the Muslim populations in central and northern Ghana that are protected by law have yet to be realized.

Cultural Issues

Ghana benefits from lower alcohol consumption, lower prevalence of polygamy, and fewer adherents of traditional beliefs in Ghana than many other African nations. Cultural practices and beliefs in greater harmony with the Church doctrine have likely contributed to more rapid growth in Ghana than in other African nations. Interest in religion among Ghanaians remains high and presents excellent opportunity for greater Church growth. Cultural barriers and lower receptivity among Muslims have contributed to the lack of an LDS presence in northern Ghana. Like most African nations, poverty and low living standards prevent greater self-sustainability and economic stability among local members.

National Outreach

Approximately 30% of the national population resides in cities, towns, or villages with an LDS congregation. In 2001, the ratio of members to the population was one in 966, and in 2010 the ratio was one in 550, indicating that membership growth greatly outpaced population growth in Ghana during the intervening years. Despite a much higher percentage of members among the population than other African nations, roughly one-third of Ghanaians live in regions that do not have a Church presence, one-third live in regions with a Church presence limited to only a few the largest cities, and one-third live in regions where the Church has a presence in all large cities and most small cities and towns. Several million Ghanaians live in regions of the country that do not have a single organized, independent LDS congregation. These regions include the Brong Ahafo, Upper East, and Upper West Regions. The majority of the population of the Ashanti, Northern, Volta, and Western regions reside in cities or rural areas where the Church is not established. These three regions have a combined population of nearly 10 million inhabitants. The majority of the remaining 5.7 million Ghanaians living in regions around the capital Accra in areas that have established congregations. These regions include the Central, Eastern, and Greater Accra regions. The LDS Church benefits from excellent mission outreach opportunities in Ghana due to a large LDS missionary force, strong local leadership, a receptive population, and widespread religious freedom, notwithstanding less than a third of the population resides in locations that receive current LDS outreach.

In 2009, the Church organized many new branches in Ghana to make congregations more accessible to members and the general population. New branches were organized in the Greater Accra Area as well as in rural areas, especially in the Ghana Cape Coast Mission. Several congregations meet in rural areas between Kumasi and Accra in towns or villages so small they are not found on most maps of the area, particularly in the Abomusu Ghana District. The recent establishment of many district branches, which accommodate members living in areas without branches in a district, for districts in the triangle between Cape Coast, Kumasi and Accra, indicates the recent extension and multiplication of dependent branches and groups for members who live in regions with too few members to be organized into their own independent unit. The Church has grown in these regions largely due to member missionary work and not from the placement of full-time missionaries to open new cities and congregations in areas where there are no members.⁶⁷⁴ Past successes in member-missionary work abound in Ghana. Church membership in Ghana was reported to be around 6,000 in the middle of 1989 when the government banned Church activities.⁶⁷⁵ Even though missionary activities

Meeting-Ghana-president.html

⁶⁷⁴ "Family finds truth in Book of Mormon," LDS Church News, 5 January 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51509/Family-finds-truth-in-Book-of-Mormon.html>

⁶⁷⁵ "Ghana expels missionaries, bans Church," LDS Church News, 24 June 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18998/Ghana-expels-missionaries-bans-Church.html>

were prohibited and Church meetings were confined to members' homes, membership in Ghana increased to over 9,000 by the end of 1990.⁶⁷⁶

Kumasi was reported by missionaries in the Ghana Cape Coast Mission to have around thirty missionaries serving in the city in mid-2009, indicating an increased effort to better establish the Church in the second largest Ghanaian city, which is also the most northern location the Church has reached. Prospects appear favorable for the organization of a third mission in Kumasi in the near future.

Following a nontraditional paradigm for expanding LDS outreach, the Church opened Sunyani to missionary work in 2010 despite few or no known Latter-day Saints prior to the arrival of missionaries. Four groups were established in different areas of the city in an effort to maximize outreach and spur local leadership development with a single LDS missionary companionship assigned to each group. Church meetings occurred in large missionary apartments initially. The approach was effective in rapidly extending far-reaching missionary outreach to a medium-sized city, and in 2011, some of the groups were preparing to become branches, as recent converts were trained and shepherded into learning administrative and member duties. Oftentimes, it takes many years or even a decade from the organization of the first branch to the establishment of a district in many African countries. Success in the church-planting approach in Sunyani prompted mission leaders to apply the same approach to the large city of Kumasi in late 2010 and in 2011 by opening an additional fourteen meetinghouses and organizing over a dozen new groups in lesser-reached areas of the city, thereby more than doubling the number of LDS congregations in Ghana's second largest city. Consistently applying this approach of fostering local member self-sufficiency and church planting throughout Ghana and other nations may lead to accelerated church growth internationally.

The northern regions appear the most difficult for the Church to reach due to their distance from cities that headquartered missions, the lack of languages with translated Church materials, and predominantly Muslim populations. Northern regions have also experienced some ethnic violence in the past couple of decades. The greatest opportunities may be with the Christians in these areas, who account for 10%–20% of the population.

Refugees driven from Liberia have experienced LDS outreach. The Liberian Buduburam Refugee Camp has had an LDS congregation for many years because of many members from Liberia fleeing to Ghana. A meetinghouse has not been built due to the temporary nature of the camp. Fulltime missionaries serve in the camp.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Unlike most African nations in which the Church has a presence, Ghana has a strong membership and leadership base that has been built over the past thirty years. This membership base endured periods where intense opposition from government occurred and has enjoyed the blessings of a temple in Ghana since the beginning of 2004. Some of the greatest growth occurred during the period when the church was banned by the government as membership grew by the thousands in 1990, indicating local membership was heavily involved in missionary work. Ghana was the third African nation to have a stake. The presence of the temple in Accra has strengthened the overall membership of the Church in Ghana and has assisted in the retention and integration of the nearly 15,000 new converts since its dedication. Member activity and convert retention appear to be the lowest in interior rural areas as, evidenced by ongoing delays for districts to become stakes despite having enough congregations and likely enough total members to become a stake for almost a decade. The assignment of large numbers of North American missionaries in the late 2010s and early 2010s has likely reduced member activity rates in some areas, as local members have relied on full-time missionaries to teach, baptize, and retain new converts, and quick-baptize tactics have been applied in some locations, resulting in modest to mediocre retention rates.

⁶⁷⁶ "Church resumes activities in Ghana," LDS Church News, 8 December 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20333/Church-resumes-activities-in-Ghana.html>

The Church has focused on improving retention, activity, and leadership development through concentrating on single adults. More than 800 young single adults met with Elder Bednar in 2007 in Accra,⁶⁷⁷ and 450 young single adults from Accra area stakes attended a fireside with Elder Anderson in late 2009.⁶⁷⁸ Single adult members provide excellent opportunities for the Church to increase local fulltime missionary forces and build families in the Church when marriages occur.

Lack of member activity and leadership development may have contributed to none of the districts becoming stakes in the interior between Accra, Cape Coast and Kumasi. Six hundred members traveled from the Assin Foso Ghana District to the temple open house in late 2003.⁶⁷⁹ Although the Church continues to create additional branches in districts, it does not as yet appear that they have enough active members or priesthood holders to mature into stakes.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Since few ethnic tensions are present in Ghana, the Church has not appeared to have experienced problems with integrating differing ethnic groups into the same congregations, districts, or stakes. Differing languages among members living in a common area present the greatest challenges. Some ethnic tensions in the north may present challenges for future growth.

Language Issues

Only 37% of the population are native speakers of languages with translations of Church materials. The Church benefits from the wide usage of English in large urban areas of Ghana, which has been one reason why more materials have not been translated into indigenous languages. However, English is less widely spoken in northern and rural unreached areas. Much work is yet to be accomplished in translating LDS materials and scriptures into native languages spoken by members, not including additional languages that have no LDS speakers. A large number of the seventy-nine languages spoken in Ghana are indigenous to northern areas near Burkina Faso. Many languages have over 100,000 speakers, demonstrating the need for additional Church material translations to facilitate the teaching of unreached ethnic groups, some of which may be easily reached from established Church centers. Additional language materials would also facilitate the opening of additional rural areas to missionary work.

Missionary Service

Ghana has been largely self-sufficient in providing its own missionary manpower as well as missionaries to serve in other nations due to the willingness of youth and young adults to serve full-time missions and the interest of local leaders in providing missionary preparation. The majority of full-time missionaries come from Ghana or other nations in West Africa. Ghana has experienced increased emphasis and allocation of mission resources in the past decade with the organization of a second mission in the country. North American elders have begun serving in Ghana in greater numbers recently. In 2009, the number of missionaries serving in the country began to be increased as more missionaries began to be called to serve in the two Ghana missions. The significant increase in the number of missionaries assigned to Ghana challenges the local Church to be self-sufficient in staffing the enlarged missionary complement. Missionaries serving in the Ghana Accra Mission

⁶⁷⁷ "Apostle addresses members in Ghana," LDS Church News, 30 June 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50774/Apostle-addresses-members-in-Ghana.html>

⁶⁷⁸ Holman, Marianne. "Africa visit leads to great experiences with Latter-day Saints," LDS Church News, 21 November 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58226/Africa-visit-leads-to-great-experiences-with-Latter-day-Saints.html>

⁶⁷⁹ Avant, Gerry. "'Best day of my life'—members exult over temple," LDS Church News, 17 January 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44964/Best-day-of-my-life—members-exult-over-temple.html>

typically numbered around 110 in the early 2000s⁶⁸⁰ but in 2011 likely numbered between 250 and 300. The Ghana Missionary Training Center opened in Tema in 2002 to serve missionaries from the Africa West Area and was the first missionary training center for the LDS Church in Africa. The facility could accommodate 104 missionaries and had fifty-four missionaries enter the day it opened.⁶⁸¹

Leadership

With the highest percentage of LDS Church members in Africa, Ghana has one of the strongest LDS membership and leadership bases. The construction of West Africa's first temple in Ghana came as a result of a large, active membership base and strong local membership.

Unlike many areas of the world where few congregations have been created over the past decade, the Church has engaged in a more proactive "church planting" approach in Ghana with considerable success. For example, the McCarthy Hill Ghana Stake was originally created with four wards and three branches with the bare minimum for priesthood leadership, as some of the bishoprics only had one counselor and no ward secretary, yet the number of congregations grew to seven wards and a branch by late 2009 and eight wards and a branch by 2011. Membership increased enough in activity, maturity, and size to begin the filling of all vacant priesthood leadership positions in the congregations in the stake. There were 3,000 members in the stake at the time, and the stake was also declared to have moved from basic to full strength. Senior missionary couples have been instrumental in the creation of additional congregations, particularly in rural areas with deficient local leadership and by finalizing unit boundaries for approval by international church leadership.

Several Ghanaian members have been called to serve as Area Seventies, including Emmanuel A. Kissi from Accra in 2002, Richard K Ahadjie from Accra in 2007,⁶⁸² and Freebody A. Mensah from Takoradi in 2009.⁶⁸³ Ghanaian leadership has assisted in building of the Church in other African nations, and Ghana will likely continue to be a center of priesthood strength for West Africa in the years to come.

Temple

Ghana is assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple district. President Hinckley noted that during his visit in 1993 that the Church attempted to locate land in Accra for the building of a temple but was unsuccessful. During the construction of the Accra Ghana Temple, membership growth began to occur more rapidly. Many government and tribal leaders were invited to the temple open house.⁶⁸⁴ By the beginning of 2006, there were 160 local temple workers in the Accra Ghana Temple.⁶⁸⁵ In Ghana, heads of families typically memorize their genealogy back to seven to fourteen generations, greatly facilitating temple work.⁶⁸⁶ Church anniversaries have been celebrated by increased temple work.⁶⁸⁷ In 2011, six endowment sessions occurred from Tuesday through

⁶⁸⁰ Bingham, Sister Jo. "Missionaries reunite in West Africa," LDS Church News, 10 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50223/Missionaries-reunite-in-West-Africa.html>

⁶⁸¹ Stahle, Shaun D. "First 54 Missionaries enter first training center in Africa," LDS Church News, 25 May 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41860/First-54-missionaries-enter-first-training-center-in-Africa.html>

⁶⁸² "New Area Seventies called," LDS Church News, 21 April 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50490/New-Area-Seventies-called.html>

⁶⁸³ "New Area Seventies," LDS Church News, 11 April 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57123/New-Area-Seventies.html>

⁶⁸⁴ "Kirkpatrick, Elder Michael; Kirkpatrick, Sister Marged. "Ghana temple opens," LDS Church News, 6 December 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44793/Ghana-temple-opens.html>

⁶⁸⁵ "Ghanians celebrate," LDS Church News, 21 January 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48410/Ghanians-celebrate.html>

⁶⁸⁶ Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Overwhelming for LDS Ghanaian," LDS Church News, 23 April 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47198/Overwhelming-for-LDS-Ghanian.html>

⁶⁸⁷ "Priesthood restoration observed," LDS Church News, 29 May 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45630/Priesthood-restoration-observed.html>

Friday with three on Saturdays. Some Ghanaian members have grown more casual in temple attendance due to close proximity; otherwise, the temple is well utilized, even by members in neighboring nations.

Comparative Growth

Many similarities exist between the history of the Church in Nigeria and in Ghana. Both these nations had unofficial congregations of self-proclaimed members and were the first African nations without a strong white minority to have the Church established immediately following the 1978 revelation extending the priesthood and temple blessings to all worthy members. Although conditions in Nigeria mirrored those in Ghana, these groups of prospective Church members in both countries acted independently of one another and were unaware of each other's presence. Ghana and Nigeria are the African nations with the most widespread rural LDS outreach. In mid-2011, Ghana had the fourth largest number of stakes and was one of only four African nations with two or more LDS missions.

Although Ghana enjoys the highest percentage of LDS members in continental Africa, much progress remains to be achieved, and the percentage of members is much smaller than in Latin America. The Church has functioned in the Dominican Republic for the same amount of time as in Ghana, yet one in eighty-six Dominicans is a Church member. Other nations with similar membership sizes have more stakes and fewer districts, such as Germany. The Church has appeared more cautious about placing more foreign missionaries in Ghana in the past due to health and safety risks and to foster local self-sufficiency. The Church in Ghana and Nigeria has far outperformed Latin America in the realm of convert retention and member activity rates, which have consistently been among the highest in the world and appear to be the best for any nation where most active members are converts, and in full-time missionary service and member-missionary work, as missions in Ghana and Nigeria have provided the great majority of their missionary manpower from their inception.

Christian churches have experienced an explosion of membership in Ghana. Most denominations have memberships in the hundreds of thousands. Although the steady and strong LDS Church growth in Ghana has outpaced most of its neighboring nations, it is only a fraction of what Pentecostal and other Protestant churches have accomplished. Most Christians have gained many members through utilizing local members as missionaries and using few outside resources to enter new areas and begin congregations. The creation of twenty-one new LDS congregations in 2009 indicates that opportunities for proselytism and greater outreach are materializing.

Future Prospects

Due to rapid growth in congregations and membership, many new stakes will likely be organized in Ghana. The Takoradi Ghana Stake will also likely divide soon, which grew from five wards and two branches in 2001 to ten wards in 2009. The Kumasi Ghana Stake will likely divide into two stakes once additional groups and branches turn into wards.

Additional districts may be organized from the large number of mission branches and isolated branches in stakes and districts. Since these mission branches report directed to the mission president, they require greater attention and resources from the local missions than districts or stakes. Axim and Daboasi both had at least three mission branches clustered around the cities and will likely become the centers of future districts. Districts in Asamankese, Assin Foso, and Koforidua will either mature into stakes or divide to create additional districts. The Ho Branch, the only congregation in the Volta Region, may divide to create a second congregation in the near future. Ho may also become its own district once a third branch is organized. A district may be organized in Axim once leadership become self-sufficient and the number of active priesthood holders can staff both unit and district leadership.

In late 2009, missionaries began serving in Ghana in greater numbers, especially in the Ghana Cape Coast Mission. Additional cities may open for missionary work as groups are established from members moving to these locations or learning about the Church and desiring to join. The areas that may see the greatest increases in congregations and outreach are in southern Ghana. Cities likely to be soon reached by the Church in southern Ghana include Dunkwa, Tarkwa, and Saltpond. Other larger cities will likely have congregations in the near future in the central and northern areas, such as Hohoe and Techiman.

The northern Muslim areas are the most unreached and will require greater effort than other unreached areas for the establishment of the Church. Senior missionary couples may be crucial in the establishment of branches in this area of the country. Those from northern regions who move to areas with a congregation and join the Church will also be vital for outreach in the north.

GUINEA

Geography

AREA: 245,857 square km. Guinea is located in West Africa and borders Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal. Plains and hills cover most areas, with some mountains and highlands in the central and southeast interior. Hot, humid weather conditions typically occur year round with a rainy season from June to September and a dry season from December to May. The Niger River and several small rivers have their headwaters in mountainous areas. Dust and haze from Harmattan is a natural hazard that at times reduces visibility and air quality. Environmental issues include deforestation, lack of fresh water, desertification, soil erosion, and overfishing. Guinea is administratively divided into thirty-three prefectures and one special zone.

Peoples

Fulani: 40%
Malinke: 30%
Soussou: 20%
Other: 10%

The Fulani, also known as Fula or Peuhl, are a Western Bantoid ethnic group and primarily populate central and northern areas, whereas the Malinke are a Mande ethnic group and reside in eastern and southeastern areas. Coastal areas are home to the Soussou, also a Mande ethnic group. Other ethnic groups include the Kissi in the Guinea Highlands and non-Guinean residents primarily concentrated in Conakry.

Population: 10,884,958 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 2.641% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 5.04 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 57.12 male, 60.15 female (2012)

Languages: Pular (25%), Maninkakan (21%), Susu (9%), Kissi (3%), Kpelle (3%), Toma (1%), other or unknown (40%). French is the official language and there are eight recognized regional languages. Thirty-four native languages are spoken. Indigenous languages with over one million native speakers include Pular (2.55 million) and Maninka dialects (2.09 million).
Literacy: 29.5% (2003)

History

Neighboring powerful African kingdoms occupied portions of Guinea since 1000 AD, including the Ghana, Mali, and Songhai Empires. The Fulani settled central Guinea in the eighteenth century and created an Islamic kingdom. Primarily the French colonized Guinea prior to formal integration into French West Africa around 1900. Guinea won independence from France in 1958. The military overthrew the government in 1984, establishing the beginning of General Lansana Conte's rule. Democratic elections were first held in 1993, and subsequent elections have continued, although many have questioned the results. Following Conte's death in 2008, Camara—a military leader—seized control of the government and suspended the constitution. More

than 150 died when presidential guards opened fire on protesters opposing these changes in 2009. Camara fled the country in December 2009 following a failed assassination attempt that left him wounded. A transitional government currently manages the country.

Culture

Guinea possesses a strong musical heritage. Islam highly influences daily living for the Fulani. Women have low literacy rates. Polygamy is widely practiced, especially in rural areas. Skilled workers tend to form the highest social class.⁶⁸⁸ Alcohol and tobacco consumption rates are low.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,100 (2011) [2.29% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.344

Corruption Index: 2.1 (2011)

Abundant natural resources, including bauxite, gold, and diamonds, have been little extracted due to political instability and an underdeveloped infrastructure. Foreign investment has waned due to the recent coup and corruption. Inadequate electricity supply has also limited economic growth. In 2006, 47% of Guineans lived below the poverty line. Industry and services employ 24% of the workforce. Agriculture employs 76% of the workforce and accounts for 24% of the GDP. Primary agricultural products include rice, coffee, fruit, and potatoes. Mining is the largest industry and specifically extracts rich bauxite, gold, diamond, and alumina depositions. Primary trade partners include India, China, Spain, and France. Guinea ranks among the most corrupt nations in the world. Corruption is present in all aspects of society and continues to stunt economic growth and development. Little has been done to address these issues.

Faiths

Muslim: 85%

Christian: 8%

Indigenous beliefs: 7%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 250,000

Seventh Day Adventists 1,468 2

Jehovah's Witnesses 709 18

Latter-day Saints less than 50

Religion

The majority of Guineans are Muslim. Christians consist of Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and some Evangelicals. Christians primarily populate Conakry, other large cities, and southern and eastern areas but remain a minority. Islam is strongly connected to everyday life in the Fouta Djalon region as Islam is highly integrated into Puehl (Fulani) culture. Some foreigners adhere to other religions but are small in number. Syncretism of traditional beliefs into Christianity and Islam is common.

⁶⁸⁸ "Guinea," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 17 May 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Guinea.html>

Refugees from some neighboring nations have greater numbers of Christians and followers of indigenous religions.⁶⁸⁹

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is typically upheld by the government. In 2008, the constitution was suspended and has not been reinstated. The government has taken steps to ensure cooperation between religious groups. Christian and Muslim religious holidays are national holidays. Unregistered religious groups may operate but do not receive tax exempt status and can face expulsion, but no cases have been recently reported. All religious groups that applied for government recognition were granted this status. There are some instances of social persecution of individuals who convert from Islam to Christianity.⁶⁹⁰

Largest Cities

Urban: 34%

Camayenne, Conakry, Nzérékoré, Kindia, Kankan, Kissidougou, Labé, Siguiri, Macenta, Mamou.

Cities listed in **bold** do not have congregations.

None of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Forty-two percent (42%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

There has never been a reported Church presence in Guinea. Guinea has been assigned to the Africa West Area for over a decade but has never been assigned to a mission.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

Some members who may live in Guinea joined the Church elsewhere and returned home. Some foreign members may live temporarily in Guinea for business or employment.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 (2012)

There are no reported LDS congregations.

Activity and Retention

Member activity is limited to any converts who returned to Guinea and continue to follow Church principles.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French.

All LDS scripture and most church materials are available in French. *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are translated in Pular, Maninka, and Kpelle.

⁶⁸⁹ "Guinea," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127236.htm>

⁶⁹⁰ "Guinea," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127236.htm>

Meetinghouses

There are no LDS meetinghouses. Any church activity is limited to members' homes.

Health and Safety

HIV/AIDS infects 1.6% of the adult population. Poor sanitation conditions and endemic tropical diseases pose health concerns.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 2010, the Church had not conducted humanitarian or development work in Guinea.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church does not face any legal obstacles to obtaining government recognition. The lack of Church members living in Guinea and limited mission outreach resources in West Africa have likely prevented the establishment of the Church. Political instability and the high percentage of Muslims may be additional factors that have contributed to the lack of a Church presence.

Cultural Issues

Literacy rates of less than 30% create many challenges to establishing the Church. Only 18% of women are literate. Polygamy is widely practiced in rural areas. Those participating in a polygamous marriage must end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency in order to be baptized. Low substance abuse rates are a positive cultural characteristic that may facilitate greater church growth in the future. The Fulani appear the most challenging group to reach due to strong cultural connections to Islam.

National Outreach

No official missionary work occurs in Guinea. Outreach will most likely begin in Conakry due to its large population, easy accessibility from outside the country, greater use of French, and potential non-Guinean members who may reside in the country for employment that can help in leadership and church administration. Initial mission outreach in the Conakry metropolitan area may reach up to 20% of the national population.

Outreach elsewhere in Guinea will likely take many years following a formal Church establishment. Peoples who have been most receptive to Christianity reside along coastal areas and in the southeastern interior. Many of the ethnic groups present in the interior may also be found in interior Sierra Leone and Liberia, but have not received LDS mission outreach in these nations.

Missionary work will likely be under the direction of a nearby mission in West Africa, which will have to share limited mission resources with other nations within the mission's jurisdiction. This may result in a slower growth in mission outreach in Guinea, particularly if the amount of resources allocated to the mission is not increased.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity remains limited to any members who joined the Church elsewhere and returned to Guinea or who are temporarily living in the country for employment. Active members appear too small in numbers to justify the creation of a congregation without the placement or regular visits of full-time missionaries to provide mentoring. Formal introduction of the Church will hinge on gathering any active members and the establishment of a congregation.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Church will likely face ethnic issues and integration challenges early in its operation in Guinea due to the ethnic diversity in Conakry. The large array of ethnic groups from around the country provides opportunities for proselytism among many of Guinea's most prominent ethnic groups. Ethnic tensions are not as severe as in other African nations, and challenges the Church may face will likely be based on cultural, religious, and linguistic differences.

Language Issues

Unlike many African nations without a Church presence, some Church materials are translated in indigenous languages that are spoken by nearly half the population. These materials provide a valuable resource for future mission outreach. The Church has very few materials translated in some of the most widely spoken indigenous languages.

Leadership

Any Guineans baptized abroad who return to their home country will be crucial for filling leadership positions. Development of leadership among prospective converts in Guinea will likely take time and training.

Temple

Any members in Guinea likely attend the Accra Ghana Temple. There are no organized temple trips.

Comparative Growth

There are no nations with an official Church presence in continental West Africa west of Sierra Leone. Neighboring Sierra Leone possesses some similarities with Guinea, such as a predominantly Muslim population. Sierra Leone has seen strong membership growth but poor to modest convert retention over the past two decades.

Christians report little growth compared to many other African nations. Growth among Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses has been slow and steady.

Future Prospects

Continued political instability, few members, a Muslim-majority population, and limited mission resources have all played a role in the lack of a Church presence in Guinea. Close proximity to Sierra Leone and a visible Christian community in Conakry increase the likelihood of future mission outreach. More members relocating to Guinea, interest among Guineans in the Church, and an improved political situation will make a Church presence more likely.

GUINEA-BISSAU

Geography

AREA: 36,125 square km. One of the smallest continental African countries, Guinea-Bissau borders the North Atlantic Ocean, Senegal, and Guinea. Many small islands off the mainland coast form the Archipelago Dos Bijagos. Terrain consists of flatlands and swampy coastal plains dominated by mangroves. Tropical climates occurs year round with a rainy season from June to November and a dry season characterized by harmattan wind, a dry, dusty West African trade wind originating in the southern Sahara, from December to May. Brush fires and harmattan haze and dust resulting in poor visibility are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, oil erosion, overgrazing, and overfishing. Guinea-Bissau is divided into nine administrative regions.

Peoples

Balanta: 30%
Fula: 20%
Manjaca: 14%
Mandinka: 13%
Papel: 7%
European/European mixed: 1%
Other African: 15%

Balanta, Fula, and most ethnic groups belong to the Western Bantoid family. Balanta reside in coastal areas, whereas Fula live in the southeastern interior. Fula are found in many nations throughout West Africa. Mandinka belong to the Mande family group and populate eastern areas.

Population: 1,628,603 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.004% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.44 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 47.16 male, 51.11 female (2012)

Languages: Balanta (26%), Fula [Pulaar or Fulani] (17%), Guinea-Bissau Portuguese Creole (13%), Manjaca (12%), Mandinka (11%), Papel (9%), Biafada (3%), Mankanya (3%), Bidyogo (2%), Jola-Felupe (1.5%), Mansoanka (1%), other (1.5%). Portuguese is the official language. Portuguese and Portuguese-based Creoles are commonly spoken second languages. No languages have over one million native speakers.

Literacy: 42.4% (2003)

History

African tribes have inhabited Guinea-Bissau for millennia and gave rise to the Kingdom of Gabu, which was part of the Mali Empire prior to Portuguese colonization. The Portuguese began exploring the coastal region in the late fifteenth century, which became part of Portugal's West African Slave Coast. Cuba and neighboring Portuguese colonies seeking independence assisted Guinea-Bissau in its independence movement, which culminated in independence from Portugal in 1974. Almost continuous political turmoil and instability has

occurred since independence. A military coup in 1980 established Joao Bernardo Vieira as president until 1999, when the military removed him from office. During this nineteen-year period, Vieira attempted to establish a free market system and held elections in 1994 but heavily controlled political affairs. Kumba Yala was appointed president by the transitional government in 2000 until removed by the military in 2003 and replaced by Henrique Rosa. Vieira was reelected in 2003 but was assassinated in 2009. Malam Bacai Sanha was elected president in a 2009 emergency election.

Culture

With no ethnic majority, Guinea-Bissau is an agglomeration of many West African cultures with a Portuguese colonial past. Portuguese creoles have facilitated communication and cooperation between many ethnic groups. Most ethnic groups practice a patriarchal society, although some groups, such as in the Bijagos Archipelago, are matriarchal. Polygamy in most areas is socially accepted.⁶⁹¹ Alcohol consumption rates are low.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,100 (2011) [2.29% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.353

Corruption Index: 2.2 (2011)

Guinea-Bissau has a poorly developed economy and ranks among the poorest nations in the world. In 1998, the infrastructure was severely damaged by fighting between government troops and rebel militias. Some rebuilding has occurred in the past decade, with economic growth in the late 2000s. Inequality of wealth is extreme. Most the population relies on subsistence agriculture. In recent years, Guinea-Bissau has become the fifth largest cashew producer. Agriculture employs 82% of the workforce and generates 62% of the GDP. Primary crops include rice, corn, beans, cassava, and nuts. Industrial activity is limited to food processing. Commercially viable mineral deposits have yet to be exploited. Primary trade partners include India, Nigeria, Portugal, and Senegal.

Corruption levels rank among the highest worldwide. Corruption is perceived as widespread and in all areas of government. Rebel forces in neighboring Senegal traffic arms into the country. The Archipelago Dos Bijagos has become increasingly involved in trafficking cocaine and other illicit drugs from South America to Europe due to its geographic location and separation from the mainland. Human trafficking remains a concern.

Faiths

Muslim: 50%

Indigenous beliefs: 40%

Christian: 10%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 125,000

Seventh Day Adventists 2,325 2

Jehovah's Witnesses 129 2

Latter-day Saints less than 10 0

⁶⁹¹ "Guinea-Bissau," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 20 August 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Guinea-Bissau.html>

Religion

Indigenous religions and Islam are the most widely followed religious orientations. Those practicing indigenous religious are widely found throughout the country except in northern areas. Indigenous beliefs stress communication with spirits of the dead and the building of shrines to provide food and drink offerings.⁶⁹² Muslims are concentrated among the Fula and Mandinka and generally reside in the north and northeast. Christians are primarily Catholic, although there are many active Protestant groups. Christians are typically found in Bissau and in cities or large towns.⁶⁹³

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. There have been no reported instances of government personnel or individuals discriminating or persecuting others on religious grounds. Religious groups must be licensed by the government to operate in Guinea-Bissau. There have been no reported instances of the government refusing to license a religious group.⁶⁹⁴

Largest Cities

Urban: 30%

Bissau, Bafatá, Gabú, Bissorã, Bolama, Cacheu, Bubaque, Catió, Mansôa, Buba.

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

None of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities. A quarter of Bissau-Guineans reside in Bissau.

LDS History

There has been no reported LDS presence in Guinea-Bissau. In 1998, Guinea-Bissau became part of the Africa West Area.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 10 (2012)

Very few Bissau-Guineans have joined the Church abroad. In spring 2010, missionaries serving in Aranjuez, Spain baptized an enthusiastic male Bissau-Guinean convert who was married to a Spaniard. Several native members may reside in the country after joining the Church abroad, most likely in Portuguese-speaking African nations, Portugal, or Spain.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 (2012)

There are no reported LDS congregations.

⁶⁹² "Guinea-Bissau," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 20 August 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Guinea-Bissau.html>

⁶⁹³ "Guinea-Bissau," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127237.htm>

⁶⁹⁴ "Guinea-Bissau," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127237.htm>

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Portuguese.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Portuguese. Materials translated into Fulani and Mandinka include *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*.

Health and Safety

Due to poor living conditions and tropical climate, Guinea-Bissau has a very high risk for the spread of infectious disease. HIV/AIDS infects 1.8% of the population.

Humanitarian and Development Work

As of 2010, the LDS Church is not known to have provided humanitarian service or development work in Guinea-Bissau.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

No legal or cultural obstacles prevent an official LDS Church establishment. Other Christian faiths proselyte freely and have not reported instances of societal abuse of religious freedom. Many opportunities for humanitarian and development work have yet to be pursued, which may lead to a future LDS presence.

Cultural Issues

With one of the highest percentages of followers of indigenous religions in Africa, the Church may face challenges adjusting teaching methods to meeting the needs of prospective investigators and members in Guinea-Bissau. Indigenous beliefs share some similarities with Latter-day Saint beliefs, such as interest in the welfare of our departed ancestors. The frequent and widespread practice of indigenous religion may result in a tendency for some members to retain these cultural beliefs after baptism. Christians concentrated in Bissau and the larger cities will likely facilitate the Church's initial establishment by proselytizing a population with a religious background to whom the Church has tailored past proselytism approaches. Furthermore, larger cities allow for fewer mission outreach centers, increasing efficiency.

National Outreach

Deep poverty, political instability, a small population, distance from currently established mission outreach centers, and the relatively recent commencement of LDS missionary activity in Portuguese-speaking Africa have contributed to a lack of an LDS presence in Guinea Bissau. The entire population remains unreached by current LDS mission outreach efforts. No nations bordering Guinea-Bissau have an official LDS presence.

Due to language issues, Guinea Bissau may one day be assigned to the Cape Verde Praia Mission. Current opportunities to teach Bissau-Guineans in other nations may help the Church established an official presence. However, many of these individuals do not return to their home country.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Although no convert baptisms have occurred in Guinea-Bissau, native members have joined the Church abroad. However, it is undetermined whether natives who join the Church abroad ever return to their home

country due to poor living standards and chronic political instability. Bissau-Guineas appear receptive to the Church in other nations.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Guinea-Bissau exhibits a diversity of ethnic groups, none of which constitute over 30% of the population. African nations with such large diversity tend to be politically unstable and have historic ethnic conflicts manifest themselves in all areas of society. Such conflict may carry over into the church if members from one ethnic group in a congregation do not support the leadership of their congregation led by a rival ethnic group. Although fluent in Portuguese and sharing a Portuguese colonial past, Cape Verdean Latter-day Saints may face challenges serving missions in Guinea-Bissau due to animosity directed toward wealthy Cape Verdeans who have in the past dominated governmental affairs.⁶⁹⁵

Language Issues

Portuguese LDS church materials along with limited proselytism materials in Fulani and Mandinka allow for outreach to occur among most of the literate population. High illiteracy creates challenges for members to accurately learn about Church doctrine and develop capable, self-sufficient leadership and also provides opportunity for the Church to provide service teaching literacy skills.

Missionary Service

Few, if any, Bissau-Guineans have served full-time missionaries. No missionary work had occurred in Guinea-Bissau in 2010. Once an official Church presence is established, the development of a local full-time missionary force will be crucial toward insuring long-term growth and self-sufficiency.

Temple

Guinea-Bissau pertains to the Accra Ghana Temple district.

Comparative Growth

Guinea-Bissau is one of the few non-Islamic African nations without an official LDS Church presence. Other nations that have a Muslim minority without an official LDS Church presence in continental Africa include Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon.

Other missionary-oriented Christian churches report slow to modest growth. These denominations have struggled to develop local leadership due to poor living conditions, political instability, and isolation from larger Christian populations. Jehovah's Witnesses gain only a few converts from year to year. However, many of these groups have small self-sufficient communities in Bissau and larger cities.

Future Prospects

Several Church members who have petitioned the Church to begin missionary activity in unreached nations in Africa have been told that the current needs in African nations with an official Church presence combined with a lack of mission outreach resources worldwide have delayed the opening of nations like Guinea-Bissau. The absence of a United States embassy in Guinea-Bissau,⁶⁹⁶ limited infrastructure and health care, and ongoing

⁶⁹⁵ "Guinea-Bissau," *Countries and Their Cultures*, retrieved 20 August 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Guinea-Bissau.html>

⁶⁹⁶ "Guinea-Bissau," *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/>

political instability may lead the Church to hesitate commencing formal missionary activity due to the reliance on American senior missionaries to begin establishing the LDS Church in unreached nations. Security issues also pose potential concerns, although LDS missions have long operated in Latin American nations with similar issues. Due to the maturation of the Church in many more established African nations like Ghana and Nigeria, African senior missionary couples may be assigned to the country to assist in establishing a presence. The growth of the Church in nearby Cape Verde may result in Portuguese-speaking African missionaries being assigned in small numbers to Guinea-Bissau once regional and international Church leaders decide to begin proselytism.

KENYA

Geography

AREA: 580,367 square km. Located in Eastern Africa, Kenya shares a border with Tanzania to the south, Uganda to the west, Sudan to the northwest, Ethiopia to the north, and Somalia to the east. In addition to coastline on the Indian Ocean, Kenya possesses coastline along Lake Victoria to the west. One of the world's largest salt water lakes, Lake Turkana, sits in northern Kenya. Climate in Kenya becomes drier the further one goes from the ocean, where tropical conditions exist. Much of the country is classified as savannah, with more tropical vegetation along the Indian Ocean and in western Kenya. Northern Kenya is the most arid where desert occupies most of the area. The Great Rift Valley runs through the center of the country. Low plains exist to the east, and highlands rest on both sides of the Great Rift Valley. Large mountains, including Mount Kenya, stand in the center of the country as high as 5,000 meters. Plateaus make up the dominant land feature in western Kenya, which are highly suitable for agriculture. Kenya is divided into eight administrative provinces.

Peoples

Kikuyu: 22%
Luhya: 14%
Luo: 13%
Kalenjin: 12%
Kamba: 11%
Kiisi: 6%
Meru: 6%
Other Africans: 15%
Non-Africans: 1%

Extreme ethnic diversity exists in Kenya with the largest ethnic group only accounting for 22% of the population. The Kikuyu are found in the center of the country around Nairobi, and the Luhya, Luo, Kalenjin, and Kiisi are found in the west near the border with Uganda. Kamba live to the southeast of Nairobi, and Meru live to the northeast of Nairobi. Somalis live in the northern and eastern portions of Kenya.

Population: 43,013,341 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 2.444% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 3.98 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 61.62 male, 64.55 female (2012)

Languages: Gikuyu (20%), Dholuo (12%), Kamba (11%), Ekegusii (6%), Kimiiru (5%), other or unspecified (46%). Swahili (Kiswahili) and English are the official languages and spoken by many as a second language. Kenya's linguistic diversity is as extreme as its ethnic diversity, with 69 spoken languages in the country. Many indigenous languages have over 100,000 speakers. Native languages with more than one million speakers include Gikuyu (7.18 million), Dholuo (4.27 million), Kamba (3.96 million), Ekegusii (2.12 million), and Kimiiru (1.74 million).
Literacy: 85.1% (2003)

History

Kenya played an important role in trade in East Africa and the Middle East centuries before European colonization. Arab traders came and traded slaves and goods in the area and introduced Islam to the coastal areas. Colonization from Omani Arabs also occurred prior to European rule. The Portuguese were the first to explore the area among Europeans, but the British were the main European nation to colonize and control Kenya. Independence from the United Kingdom occurred in 1963. President Kenyatta controlled Kenya from independence to his death in the late 1970s. Elections and presidencies in the 1980s and 1990s were marked with violence and fraud, with ethnic tensions intensifying. Due to a close, questionable election in late 2007, violence erupted between ethnic groups, resulting in the death of as many as 1,500 people. Violence ended shortly thereafter due to a power sharing deal negotiated between disputing parties.

Culture

Due to the large number of ethnic groups in Kenya, there is not one culture that defines Kenyans as a whole. Different ethnic groups maintain much of their culture in the areas in which they reside. Much of the country has a strong influence from pastoral communities, especially in the north, west and east of Kenya, whereas Swahili culture is most apparent in the south and along coastal areas. Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are low compared to the world average. Polygamy is practiced under customary law and its potential status as a civil union remains uncertain.⁶⁹⁷

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,700 (2011) [3.53% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.509

Corruption Index: 2.2 (2011)

Notwithstanding its status as the regional economic power, the Kenyan economy suffers from corruption and widespread poverty. Half of all Kenyans live below the poverty line, and 40% are unemployed. Little economic growth occurred in the early part of the 2000s, with growth later accelerating until 2008 when the GDP grew by only 2.2%. Most Kenyans are employed in agriculture, which accounts for about a quarter of the total GDP. Services contribute the most wealth into the economy. The tourism industry makes up an important portion of the economy due to tourists visiting wildlife parks and beachside resorts. Primary goods produced in Kenya include coffee, tea, meat, corn, wheat, fruit, and vegetables. Exports consist of food items, and imports consist of machinery, oil, metals, and plastics. Kenya's import and export partners are concentrated in Africa, Europe and Asia.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and a major deterrent for greater economic growth. Marijuana is commonly cultivated, and Kenya serves as a transshipment point for South Asian drugs to Europe, North America, and South Africa. Vulnerability is high for money laundering.

Faiths

Christian: 78%

Muslims: 10%

Indigenous Beliefs: 10%

Other: 2%

⁶⁹⁷ "Polygamy in Kenya," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 31 March 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polygamy_in_Kenya

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Protestant 17,551,247

Catholic 12,870,915

Seventh Day Adventists 695,153 4,451 (includes Somalia)

Jehovah's Witnesses 24,926 540

Latter-day Saints 11,869 41

Religion

The largest religion in Kenya is Christianity, claiming 78% of the population. Protestants and Catholics account for 45% and 33% of the population, respectively. Muslims and those who follow indigenous beliefs each make up 10% of Kenyans. The remaining 2% of the population follows other religions.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 40th

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Muslims appear to have the greatest threats towards religious freedom due to several terrorist attacks in the past decade. Religious expression is integrated into everyday living in schools and other places in society. Islamic law and civil courts operate for Muslim Kenyans. Major Christian and some Muslim holidays are recognized national holidays. Indigenous beliefs are not socially accepted by most Kenyans. Some preferential treatment based on religion appears to occur in the Muslim and Christian areas of the country.⁶⁹⁸

Major Cities

Urban: 22%

Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Kisumu, Eldoret, **Thika**, **Ruiru**, Kitale, **Kakamega**, **Malindi**

The ten largest cities are listed in descending order by population.

Cities listed in **bold** do not have a LDS congregation.

The Church has a presence in six of the ten largest cities. The population of the ten largest cities amount to 11.5% of Kenya's population.

LDS History

The first Church members to live in Kenya were American USAID employees and their families in the 1970s. Church meetings were held in their own homes under the jurisdiction of the Switzerland Mission. The first local members to join the Church occurred in 1979. A senior couple began serving in Kenya in 1980. The Church was registered with the Kenyan government in February 1991. The Kenya Nairobi Mission was created the following July and administered to Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania. Elder James E. Faust visited Kenya on October 24, 1991, and dedicated the country for missionary work.⁶⁹⁹ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, interested Kenyans who were not members of the Church living in Chyulu began holding unofficial church meetings several years before the first branch was organized in the area. These individuals were requested by the Church not to hold such meetings until they were baptized and the men held the priest-

⁶⁹⁸ "Kenya," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148696.htm>

⁶⁹⁹ "Three nations dedicated in Africa," LDS Church News, 23 November 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21541/Three-nations-dedicated-in-Africa.html>

hood. In 1998, President Hinckley visited Kenya, and the Africa Area was divided and Kenya was assigned to the Africa Southeast Area. In 2005 the Kenya Nairobi Mission was divided to create the Uganda Kampala Mission. As a result of the division, the Kenya Nairobi Mission only included Kenya and Tanzania. The mission realignment resulted in the mission president in Kenya devoting more time and attention to serving the Kenyan and Tanzanian people while reducing costs and time for transportation.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 11,869 (2012)

There were 104 members at the end of 1971.⁷⁰⁰ In 1991, there were 258 members in Kenya.⁷⁰¹ Membership reached 1,400 in 1993, 2,800 in 1997, and 4,911 in 2000. The Nairobi Kenya District for the end of 2000 reported 1,760 members, accounting for 36% of Church membership in Kenya.⁷⁰²

Moderate rates of membership growth occurred in the 2000s as membership totaled 5,680 in 2002, 6,832 in 2004, 7,782 in 2006, 8,416 in 2008, and 10,270 in 2010. In 2002, membership in the Chyulu region reportedly increased to 1,600 since the first convert from the area was baptized in 1986.

By the end of 2005, there were 7,340 members. Membership growth has steadily declined in Kenya since the mid-2000s. The membership growth rate was usually over 10% a year before 2003 but was a mere 3.6% in 2008. Annual membership growth rates increased in 2009 and 2010 to 11.3% and 9.6%, respectively. In 2010, one in 4,000 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 9 Branches: 32 Groups: 3+ (April 2013)

In 1982, two branches were established in Nairobi and Kiboko, the latter being a dependent branch, and the Kenya District was organized. There was one independent branch in 1987 and eleven branches in 1993. A second district was organized in Chyulu, a rural area 150 miles southeast of Nairobi, in late 1992. In 1994, there were four districts organized in Kenya, which were later reduced to two,⁷⁰³ one in Nairobi and one in Chyulu. The number of branches increased to thirteen in 1997 and nineteen in 2000.

The first stake in Kenya was organized in September 2001 from the Nairobi Kenya District. The new stake included the following five wards and two branches: the Nairobi 1st, Nairobi 2nd, Upper-Hill, Kasarani and Riruta Wards and the Westlands and Langata Branches. By the end of 2001, four mission branches existed in western Kenya in Eldoret, Kitale, and Kiminini. Additional mission branches functioned in Athi River, Kikulu, and Kilili. The Chyulu Kenya District consisted of four branches in 2002. The following year the number of branches in the district increased to eight. The number of congregations increased in the 2000s to twenty-one in 2001, twenty-five in 2003, twenty-seven in 2004, thirty-one in 2006, thirty-two in 2008, thirty-five in 2009, and thirty-six in 2010. By early 2011, there were thirty-eight congregations, including seven wards. A district was organized in Eldoret in 2011.

In May 2011, there were seven wards and two branches in the Nairobi Kenya Stake, ten branches in the Chyulu Kenya District, and eight branches in the Eldoret Kenya District. Mission branches not assigned to a

⁷⁰⁰ "The Saints in South Africa," *Ensign*, Mar. 1973.

⁷⁰¹ "Six new missions to be created missions are added in Europe, Africa, Caribbean and U.S.," *LDS Church News*, 23 March 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20711/Six-new-missions-to-be-created-missions-are-added-in-Europe-Africa-Caribbean-and-US.html>

⁷⁰² Jensen, Elder Gerald W.; Jensen, Sister Carolyn. "First stake in Kenya created," *LDS Church News*, 29 September 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40567/First-stake-in-Kenya-created.html>

⁷⁰³ "Kenya," *Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac*, p. 360-360.

stake or district operated in the Kilunga Hills (4), Mombasa (3), Kisumu, and Busia at this time and official or semi-official groups met in Sondu, Matuma, and Nyambondo.

Activity and Retention

The retention of new converts appears very high. There was a total of one hundred members in attendance at the dedication of Kenya form missionary work in 1991.⁷⁰⁴ In 1992, the first Kenya District Conference was held, with over 200 in attendance. Nine hundred members from Kenya and neighboring countries met with President Hinckley 1998.⁷⁰⁵ 750 attended the conference for the organization of the first stake in Nairobi in 2001. President Hinckley visited Kenya again in 2005, meeting with 800 members from East Africa in Nairobi.⁷⁰⁶ Senior missionaries reported that around 700 attended stake conference in Nairobi in early 2008. The number of members per congregation increased from 258 in 2000 to 285 in 2010. The number of members enrolled in seminary and institute increased from 664 during the 2007–2008 school year to 1,295 during the 2009–2010 school year (95%), the fifth greatest percentage increase in seminary and institute enrollment worldwide during this period. Many wards and branches may have as many as 200 attending church meetings, but the average number of active members per congregation is likely around 100–150. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 5,000, or 50% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Swahili, Kisii.

All LDS scriptures and a few selected LDS materials are available in Swahili. Select passages of the Book of Mormon, a family guidebook, the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, and *Gospel Principles* are available in Kisii. Senior missionaries reported that an informal translation of the sacrament prayers was made in 2009 into Kamba. This translation was to aid in the understanding of members who spoke Kamba and did not understand English well. This translation was not used to bless the sacrament at the time.

Meetinghouses

In 2002, the Chyulu Kenya District had several meetinghouse dedications. The meetinghouse dedications were reportedly the result of strong Church growth in the region between Nairobi and the port city of Mombasa. Local government leaders were invited and remarked that they were convinced that the Church was a Christ-centered religion.⁷⁰⁷ Additional LDS meetinghouses have been constructed in Nairobi and Kitale. Most congregations meet in renovated buildings and rented spaces.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The LDS Church has participated in extensive humanitarian and development work in Kenya notwithstanding the small size of LDS membership in the country. At least forty-two projects have been completed in recent years, many of which have included clean water projects, emergency relief, wheelchair donations, and pit latrines.⁷⁰⁸ In the late 1980s and early 1990s the Church provided assistance to Kenyan farmers living in

⁷⁰⁴ "Three nations dedicated in Africa," LDS Church News, 23 November 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21541/Three-nations-dedicated-in-Africa.html>

⁷⁰⁵ Hart, John L. "This work will grow and grow in this land," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30434/This-work-will-grow-and-grow-in-this-land.html>

⁷⁰⁶ "Visit far corners," LDS Church News, 13 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47679/Visiting-far-corners.html>

⁷⁰⁷ "New meetinghouses foster goodwill," LDS Church News, 7 December 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42917/New-meetinghouses-foster-goodwill.html>

⁷⁰⁸ "Projects—Kenya," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 27 May 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-137,00.html>

fifteen villages. Using funds donated by members of the Church in 1988 totaling \$300,000, fresh water was made available to people living one hundred miles north of Nairobi through the Ngorkia water project. No members of the Church were reporting to be meeting in any areas outside of the Nairobi area at the time. The project reduced the amount of manual labor required by the people to transport water from water sources to their homes and farms.⁷⁰⁹ Additional humanitarian assistance mainly through food donations was given by the Church in 1992 due to severe drought in eastern Kenya.⁷¹⁰ In 1997, the first wells were drilled by the Church for the Chyulu region. Assistance was given to school children in Kenya by members of the Church in Utah through assembling and sending school supplies.⁷¹¹ The Church began a widespread measles vaccination campaign in Africa in the 2000s, which included Kenya.⁷¹² The Helping Hands service program was also introduced and implemented among congregations of Church members in Kenya during this time period.

Kenya's economic challenges provide opportunities for the Church to conduct service projects and humanitarian assistance. The Perpetual Education Fund (PEF) was introduced to Kenya as of the late 2000s and was providing loans to members of the Church who wished to improve their education and employment. One of the senior missionaries serving in 2009 was asked by DALC University to speak to an audience of 1,200 about the PEF and Church's voluntary, without-pay missionary program. The event proved to be a positive public relations event, which was attended by local media. Senior missionaries have assisted in the Church's effort to improve water quality and living standards in rural areas by drilling wells. The Church donated neonatal resuscitation supplies and taught infant resuscitation to nurses who would teach others in Thika in 2009. Senior missionaries reported that many of the humanitarian projects involve members of the Church in the United States donating supplies and funds for the needy in Kenya. Such projects included sending textbooks and building schools. LDS charities were also involved in humanitarian projects, which included donating 155 wheelchairs every month. These humanitarian projects have helped establish a good name for the Church and sometimes introduce those served to the gospel.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Great opportunity exists for the Church to take advantage of religious freedom upheld by the government. Freedom of religion will facilitate the growth of the Church into unreached areas of the country, especially where the majority of the inhabitants are already Christian. Predominantly Muslim areas of Kenya may experience greater difficulty due to the strong influences of Islam on society and culture. These areas would include the coastal, northern, and eastern areas of the country.

Cultural Issues

Poverty is a large problem that the Church faces in Kenya. Nairobi is home to one of the largest slums, named Kibera, in the world where as many as one million people live in extreme poverty. Kibera and other slums in Nairobi are notorious for their poor living conditions and violence. The inhabitants of these slums move to the city from rural areas in search of better living conditions. Government programs in 2009 began relocating people from the slums into housing in other areas of the city in a program expected to take several years. The

⁷⁰⁹ Avant, Gerry. "Hope for better life flows in Kenya: Money from fast of members helps bring new water system," LDS Church News, 18 March 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19025/Hope-for-better-life-flows-in-Kenya-Money-from-fast-of-members-helps-bring-new-water-system.html>

⁷¹⁰ "Deadly drought," LDS Church News, 26 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22762/Deadly-drought.html>

⁷¹¹ Sheffield, Sheridan. "Delivering hope with humanitarian aid," LDS Church News, 21 October 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38759/Delivering-hope-with-humanitarian-aid.html>

⁷¹² Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Measles initiative continues to fight disease in Africa," LDS Church News, 30 September 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49498/Measles-initiative-continues-to-fight-disease-in-Africa.html>

dangerousness and poor living conditions of the slums of Nairobi and many other areas of Kenya have not prevented the gospel from reaching Kibera. Missionaries in 2009 reported that the slum had many church members who belonged to the Upper Hill Ward. If the Church continues to develop a presence in Kibera and other slum areas, it will be a challenge to meet the needs of the people and develop leadership in an atmosphere of violence, extreme poverty, and lawlessness. Most Kenyans are literate, which provides greater opportunities for teaching members and investigators than in many other African countries with lower literacy.

Some cultural practices in Kenya interfere with church teachings. Polygamous marriages are legal and recognized by law. Those who wish to join the Church must end polygamous relationships and be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency for approval for baptism. Predominantly Muslim areas in the north, east, and coastal areas of Kenya may be more difficult for the Church to establish a presence in due to the infusion of Islam with local culture and customs. Some congregations in Kenya have many more men than women in attendance, as many Kenyan men first investigate the Church or cannot afford transportation costs for their families to attend church. This can result in few full-member families in LDS congregations.

National Outreach

Approximately 14% of the national population resides in cities with an LDS congregation. Six of the eight administrative provinces have an LDS congregation, but most the populations in these provinces are unreached. With over five million inhabitants, the Eastern Province only has an LDS presence in Athi River, the Kilunga Hills, and the Chyulu area. Other provinces have a Church presence limited to a couple of the largest cities.

Distance and transportation is a large obstacle for expanding national outreach for the LDS Church in Kenya. Even in Nairobi where a stake and more than half a dozen congregations function in a city of over three million, many members travel long distances to attend church meetings, and little expansion of outreach has occurred over the past decade. Although many of the mission branches are grouped together in clusters of three or four, they are geographically isolated from mission headquarters and likely rarely receive visits from mission leadership due to their remote locations and administrative demands shared with Tanzania.

Unlike many other African nations, the Church in Kenya has already begun to establish itself in rural areas in small villages that do not appear on most detailed maps of Kenya. This is a significant development that has produced excellent church growth results, as receptivity has been high in these areas. Nearly all of the branches in the Kilunga Hills and Chyulu are in rural areas, and several of the branches in the Eldoret district are in small villages and towns. Senior couples have served in these remote locations, greatly assisting in the growth of the Church, monitoring and training local leadership. Senior couples have also prepared young men from these branches to serve missions and have successfully sent out many on missions. A senior couple serving in the Kilunga Hills in the late 2000s reported assisting in sending eleven local missionaries on their missions and preparing an additional four. This same senior couple reported their role in the creation of a new branch in the area, bringing 163 converts into the Church, and organizing four trips to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple for fifty-eight people. By the time the senior couple completed their mission, all four of the branches in the Kilunga Hills had sacrament attendance overflowing the meetinghouses, with the newest branch having 185 in attendance. The continued smart placement of senior missionary couples has enormous potential to expand national outreach and foster local member and leadership independence, but the potential for outreach remains largely unrealized.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Kenya enjoys some of the most healthy, manageable LDS Church growth in Africa. With the largest membership in East Africa, the Church in Kenya has served as a regional base and has assisted in the opening in several nearby nations for the preaching of the gospel over the past two decades. Local membership and

leadership existed in great enough activity for a stake to be organized in 2001, notwithstanding fewer than 6,000 members nationwide. Missionaries serving in the country report that most investigators develop a habit of attending church every Sunday prior to baptism, even in remote mission branches. Although membership growth was slower than most African nations during the 2000s, Kenya is currently laying a solid foundation for future, more rapid growth that has recently begun to unfold.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic tensions were apparent in the violence in late 2007 following a presidential election. Ethnic tensions and prejudices may arise from members of different ethnic groups meeting in the same congregations, particularly from those who may have continued to propagate beliefs about other cultures that are not in harmony with the teachings of the Church. Senior missionary couples in some locations have had to assume leadership for congregations in which ethnic conflicts were made manifest at church. Monitoring dialogue and leadership reports on ethnic tensions will be required in some areas to safeguard against ethnic conflict potentially affecting activity and retention rates. Refugees from neighboring nations provide opportunities for proselytism, such as Somalia. Several Somali refugees joined the Church in Kenya in the 1990s.⁷¹³

Language Issues

The Church faces a major obstacle with local languages spoken in Kenya. Converts cannot join the Church in Kenya unless they speak English well enough to pass a baptismal interview. The limitation on who can join the Church based on language has appeared to have increased the standards converts must meet in order to become a member of the Church, resulting in higher retention rates. This has resulted in strong, long-term growth due to the dedication of converts to learn English well enough to pass their baptismal interviews. In 2009, missionaries reported that the Church became more flexible for some who have attended Church meetings for many months or years but have been unable to be baptized because they were unable to learn English well enough to pass a baptismal interview. The main purpose for the Church's strong standards in requiring English use in Church meetings is because the Church is currently unable to translate Church materials into all the local languages spoken by Church members and train local leadership in indigenous languages. Using English as a common language in Church has also helped unite members of different ethnic and language backgrounds in the same congregation through its use as a second language.

As the Church grows larger in Kenya, additional language translations of church materials will likely become available, and some church meetings may eventually be held in local languages. No church materials in languages indigenous to Kenya appeared to be forthcoming in the near future, but Kamba appears to be a likely possibility.

Missionary Service

The LDS Church in Kenya appears self-sufficient in meeting its local missionary needs due to the large number of members who serve missions and the relatively small size of the LDS missionary force in the country at present. The first Kenyan to serve a mission for the LDS Church was in 1983 by Benson Kasue in California.⁷¹⁴ In 1992, there were thirty missionaries assigned to Kenya comprised of young elders from Africa and North American senior couples.⁷¹⁵ In 1994, the number of senior couples serving in Kenya grew to nine, with some young, North American elders also serving in the country. North American missionaries

⁷¹³ McDonald, Hiram. "Church is growing in east Africa," LDS Church News, 6 September 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29126/Church-is-growing-in-east-Africa.html>

⁷¹⁴ "Kenya," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/kenya>

⁷¹⁵ Mostert, Mary. "Meeting reflects Church growth in East African land," LDS Church News, 25 April 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22068/Meeting-reflects-Church-growth-in-East-African-land.html>

did not serve in greater numbers in the 1990s due to limitations on visas and in recent years due to reluctance from area leadership to increase the allotment of missionaries for Kenya, as worldwide missionary manpower has plateaued, and living conditions in many areas are poor. The number of missionaries serving in the Kenya Nairobi Mission in mid-2007 was sixty-three, with the majority consisting of native Africans. Many members serve missions abroad. Increasing the number of Kenyan members serving missions in their home country appears an effective means of expanding outreach and self-sufficiency.

Leadership

The large number of mission branches in Kenya indicates that church membership is established in many areas of the country but either in insufficient numbers or lacking leadership to be organized into districts. Difficulties traveling between branches may also be a reason for why no additional districts were organized in Kenya between the mid-1990s and 2011. Most current mission branches did not exist before 2005, indicating that the Church is steadily expanding into areas in which it has not existed before and consequently lacks experienced local leadership to hold administrative positions. Distance and few visits and training from mission leadership have also likely contributed to limited development of additional leadership. In the late 2000s, members in the Chyulu Kenya District were taught what they needed to do in order for the district to mature into a stake, but as of May 2011 a stake had not been formed.

Some Kenyan members have become leaders and contributors to the worldwide Church. In 2009, Elder Joseph W. Sitati became not only the first General Authority from Kenya but also the first black African General Authority. Elder Sitati joined the Church in 1985 and was president of the Kenya District when the country was dedicated for missionary work. He traveled to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple with his wife and five children to be sealed together in 1992, becoming the first Kenyan to be endowed. Elder Sitati became the first stake president of the Nairobi Kenya Stake in 2001 and was later called as an Area Seventy. While serving as mission president of the Nigeria Calabar Mission, he received the call to serve in the First Quorum of the Seventy. Elder Hesbon O. Usi received the call to serve as an Area Seventy in 2009. One of the members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Brother Amram Musungu, joined the Church in his native Kenya in the 1990s. Brother Musungu later became president of the first Swahili-speaking branch organized in the United States in Salt Lake City in 2009.⁷¹⁶

Temple

Kenya is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Elder Faust included in his dedicatory prayer for Kenya a plea that the Kenyan membership may find access to a holy temple.⁷¹⁷ To date, temple attendance for Kenyan Latter-day Saints has been extremely limited due to travel costs, distance, and visa issues. Many endowed members are returned missionaries. President Hinckley gave a conditional promise to members living in East Africa that one day a temple would be built in the area if they remained faithful and patient,⁷¹⁸ but as of 2011, the size and maturity of the LDS Church in Kenya remains insufficient to merit the construction of a temple for likely another decade until additional stakes are organized in Nairobi and greater growth occurs in other East African nations.

⁷¹⁶ "Parleys Creek (Swahili) Branch created," LDS Church News, 7 January 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56400/Parleys-Creek-Swahili-Branch-created.html>

⁷¹⁷ "Three nations dedicated in Africa," LDS Church News, 23 November 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21541/Three-nations-dedicated-in-Africa.html>

⁷¹⁸ Hart, John L. "This work will grow and grow in this land," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30434/This-work-will-grow-and-grow-in-this-land.html>

Comparative Growth

The Church has had a longer presence in Kenya than in any other East African nation and has the seventh highest church membership in Africa. Membership and congregation growth in Kenya ranked among the most rapid for the Church in East Africa in the 2000s but was far outpaced by many African nations in West Africa and southern Africa. Member activity rates are slightly higher than most East African nations.

Other missionary-minded Christian groups experience rapid growth in Kenya. Jehovah's Witnesses claimed 21,811 active members in 505 congregations in 2008. The Seventh Day Adventist Church totaled 609,863 members in 3,828 churches. Adventists established between seventy and 200 new congregations a year in Kenya alone during the 2000s. The large SDA Church presence in Kenya is partially due to the church existing in the country since the 1940s. The growth of these churches demonstrates that Kenyans are receptive to nontraditional Christian groups. As the LDS Church continues to grow, it can expect to see growth like other Christian denominations due to the receptiveness of the population. However other Christian denominations appear to have strong member missionary programs, which the LDS Church appears to lack in comparison. Strong member-missionary and church planting programs resulted in other Christian denominations establishing a more widespread presence than the LDS Church, although this is partially due to the Church's delayed official establishment in the early 1990s.

Future Prospects

President Hinckley predicted that where there were hundreds of members, there would be tens of thousands as the Church continued to grow in East Africa.⁷¹⁹ This prediction has come to be fulfilled in Kenya, although potential for growth and outreach remains underdeveloped. Prospects for future growth appear favorable due to relatively high convert retention and member activity rates, increasing enrollment in seminary and institute, steady congregational growth, and large swathes of the country totally unreached by the Church but populated by many receptive Kenyans. Areas that seem most likely to open to missionary work are larger cities near Nairobi and villages of self-identified members or small groups of members awaiting an official church establishment. Many of these cities appear most likely to open due to their close proximity to LDS centers. The Church has progressively opened new branches in locations that have not had a congregation before, such as in Busia and Kisumu in 2009. This likely indicates that new branches will continue to be organized in additional areas, especially larger cities. Although no official announcements have been made, cities that appear most likely to gain an official Church presence include Nakuru, Thika, and Ruiru. Most of the branches in rural areas do not have young, full-time missionaries assigned, indicating that missionary work is carried out by local members and senior couples. Additional cities, especially smaller cities and villages, appear most likely to gain a Church presence as a result of active members moving to these locations and sharing the Gospel with those around them.

Opportunity exists in Kenya for preaching the gospel to immigrants and refugees. These refugees numbered almost 200,000 just from Somalia in 2007. The Church has published a few missionary materials in Somali, and a couple of Somalis have joined the Church in Kenya. Although the present political atmosphere appears very unfavorable for the Church, the opportunity exists for the gospel to be preached to a group that is predominately not Christian and who could take the gospel to their home country once conditions improve. Muslims in Kenya appear to have not been targeted by missionary efforts, but converts from Islam may comprise a portion of members in Mombasa.

Additional districts in Kenya will likely be organized in the coming months and years from the many mission branches in the country. New districts could be created in the Kilunga Hills, Mombasa, and Naitiri. Branches

⁷¹⁹ Hart, John L. "This work will grow and grow in this land," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurch-news.com/articles/30434/This-work-will-grow-and-grow-in-this-land.html>

in these locations will likely be organized into districts once more missionaries serving from these areas return from their missions and can fill leadership positions. Presidents Hinckley and Faust referenced the potential of a temple in Nairobi to serve East Africa. Currently, membership and leadership appear unable to support a temple. Once multiple stakes exist in Nairobi, the likelihood of a temple announcement for Nairobi will increase. Few Kenyan members have attended the temple before due to distance and travel expenses. Yet the Church actively holds temple preparation classes and assists in bringing Kenyans to the temple in Johannesburg, especially with the help of senior missionary couples.

LESOTHO

Geography

AREA: 30,355 square km. Lesotho is nestled in the mountains completely surrounded by South Africa. Due to a lack of low altitude areas, it is the highest country in the world. The climate is temperate, with hot, wet summers and cool, dry winters. Grassland and forest cover much of the country. Higher mountains can experience year-round snowfall. Soil erosion is a major environmental problem that has degraded once agriculturally productive lands. There are ten administrative districts.

Peoples

Sotho: 99.7%

Other (mainly European and Asian): 0.3%

Lesotho is one of the most ethnically homogenous countries in the world.

Population: 1,930,493 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.332% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.89 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 51.77 male, 51.95 female (2012)

Languages: English and Sesotho are national or official languages, but Sesotho is spoken by over 80% of the population. Five languages are spoken in Lesotho. Zulu is the most spoken minority language (12.5%), with speakers concentrated in the north. Sesotho is the only language with over one million speakers (1.77 million).

Literacy: 74.5% (2003)

History

Hunter-gatherer tribes lived in the area before the arrival of the Sotho people around 1,000 years ago. Fighting occurred between the Sotho and Europeans during the 1800s, resulting in Lesotho becoming a protectorate to the British and named Basutoland. During the first half of the twentieth century, much of the country's autonomy was retained. Independence was granted from the United Kingdom in 1966, and the name was changed to Lesotho. Political instability arose between the Basotho National Party to the Basotho Congress Party in elections in 1970. Tensions between the two groups continued, and a military coup overthrew the government in 1986. Poor relations with South Africa were experienced during this time period. Democratic rule was reestablished in 1993 following elections. South African and Batswana military forces intervened in 1998 when lawlessness after elections overtook the country. Since then, greater stability has returned.

Culture

Health and economic problems have plagued the population. In 1999, 49% of the people lived below the poverty line. There is great inequality in the distribution of wealth. Lesotho has the third highest percentage of people with HIV/AIDS, accounting for 23.2% of the population. Local laws and customs have endured

British rule. Polygamy is legal but not widely practiced. Women are always considered dependents of their fathers, husbands, or brothers.⁷²⁰

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,400 (2011) [2.91% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.450

Corruption Index: 3.5 (2011)

Lesotho suffers from a small amount of territory landlocked in South Africa. Most of the labor force works in agriculture (86%), but around 35% of men work across the border in South Africa. Most of the country's GDP comes from industry (46%) and services (38.5%). Hydroelectric power generates most of the country's electricity. Dams also supply water to South Africa, adding additional revenue to the government and improving relations with South Africa. Unemployment is high (45%). Nearly all of exports go to the United States or Belgium and primarily consist of clothing, wool, and livestock. Major import partners include China and South Korea. Economic growth is steady, but tax system problems and high dependence on customs duties lessen growth. Although corruption levels are less than many other poor African nations, the greatest corruption occurs with Lesotho's water projects that provide water and electricity to South Africa.

Faiths

Christian: 80%

Indigenous beliefs: 20%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 1,342,415

Seventh Day Adventists 7,105 37

Jehovah's Witnesses 3,817 78

Latter-day Saints 880 3

Religion

Most Basotho identify as Christians and retain many of their cultural traditions with music and medicine. Christian denominations have been tolerant of integrating local culture with Christian worship. Ancestor worship is prevalent among indigenous beliefs and some Christians.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. There are no reports of any persecution of any religious groups.⁷²¹

Major Cities

Urban: 25%

Maseru, Mafeteng, Maputsoa, Teyateyaneng, Hlotse, Mohale's hoek, Quthing, Butha buthe, Qacha's nek, Mokhotlong

⁷²⁰ "Lesotho," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 7 December 2010. <http://genderindex.org/country/lesotho>

⁷²¹ "Lesotho," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127239.htm>

Cities listed in **bold** do not have congregations.

Two of the ten largest cities have an LDS presence. The ten largest cities account for 15% of the national population.

LDS History

Few families from the United States began living in Lesotho in the 1980s. There were fifteen in attendance when the first group was organized in 1988. Legal recognition was granted in July 1989, the same year the first baptisms occurred.⁷²² The country was dedicated for missionary work by Elder Neal A. Maxwell in February 1990.⁷²³ Missionaries were first sent in 1989, and the first missionary to serve from Lesotho was called to the South Africa Durban Mission in 1993.⁷²⁴ The seminary program began in the early 1990s. In 1996, an area conference was held with 5,000 members in attendance from Botswana, South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland.⁷²⁵ In 2009 the Church celebrated twenty years in Lesotho with an open house that was attended by more than 350 people. Lesotho was part of the South Africa Johannesburg Mission until 2010 when it was transferred to the South Africa Durban Mission.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 880 (2012)

There were one hundred members in the early 1990s and 300 by the mid-1990s. By the end of 2000 there were 413 members. Slow, steady growth in membership continued, with membership reaching 525 by 2004 and 606 by 2008. Between 2002 and 2008, membership growth rates have fluctuated between 2% and 5.5%. In 2009, membership grew by over 11%, the highest percentage increase since 2001.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 3 (April 2013)

The first group was created in Maseru in July 1988 and became an independent branch in the early 1990s. A second branch was created outside of Maseru in Mazenod in 1993 but was soon discontinued because a meetinghouse was unavailable.⁷²⁶

Another branch was created in Lesotho in 2009, named the Masianokeng Branch. The new branch was created in the same vicinity as the Mazenod Branch in 1993. When the Bloemfontein South Africa District was created in June 2009, both the Maseru and Masianokeng Branches were included in the new district. In early 2010, full-time missionaries opened were assigned to Leribe (nearby Hlotse) and organized a group.

Activity and Retention

Lesotho has one of the lowest activity rates in Africa, as there was only one branch until 2009. In 2008, the sole Maseru Branch had nominal membership of over 600. Many of the membership records are outdated;

⁷²² "Missionaries serving in tiny African kingdom," LDS Church News, 2 December 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19328/Missionaries-serving-in-tiny-African-kingdom.html>

⁷²³ "Six lands are dedicated: 'New day dawning' in 2 small African mountain kingdoms," LDS Church News, 10 March 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19958/Six-lands-are-dedicated-New-day-dawning-in-2-small-African-mountain-kingdoms.html>

⁷²⁴ "Lesotho," Country Profile, retrieved 7 December 2010. <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/lesotho>

⁷²⁵ <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27515/5000-attend-conference-in-South-Africa-example-of-growth-of-the-Church.html>

⁷²⁶ "Lesotho," Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac, p. 364.

many members cannot be located, and some have even started their own churches. Problems in member activity increased shortly after the creation of the Masianokeng Branch, posing risk that the branches would need to be recombined. These issues have since improved, and the Masianokeng Branch has experienced greater member activity. Renewed interest in member missionary work came as result of preparing for the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Church in Lesotho in 2009. Thirty-nine were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2008–2009 school year. In mid-2010, the Leribe Group had fewer than ten active members and over a dozen investigators attending church. Active membership in Lesotho is around 150–200, indicating activity rates of 25–30%.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Zulu.

Church materials translated into Sesotho are limited to *Gospel Principles*, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, and the sacrament prayers. Church meetings are conducted in English and Sesotho. The Book of Mormon has been translated into Zulu along with basic missionary, priesthood, and Relief Society materials.

Meetinghouses

When Church members first arrived in the country, the first Church meetings were held in members' homes. A house in Maseru was purchased in the early 1990s, which was remodeled and used as a chapel.⁷²⁷

Public Health

Living conditions are poor and result in inadequate health care. Widespread promiscuity in particular has contributed to Lesotho having the third highest percentage in the world for those infected with HIV/AIDS. The disease has also spread through contaminated needles, drug use, and birth to HIV-positive mothers. Sanitation is often poor, health infrastructure is limited, and access to care is uneven.

Humanitarian and Development Work

A workshop on neonatal resuscitation techniques was held for local doctors in the 2000s.⁷²⁸ Thousands of boxes of food items were provided for drought relief in 2004.⁷²⁹ A large Mormon Helping Hands service project was completed in Lesotho in 2009 in which 125 members from both branches cleaned and repaired a local hospital. Missionaries in 2009 taught English and personal ethics to children at schools.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

No obstacles prevent proselytism or Church activities. The LDS Church has yet to make full use of the opportunities for proselytizing in Lesotho. Senior missionaries have maintained positive relationships with the king and queen, inviting them to Church events and open houses.

⁷²⁷ "Lesotho," Country Profile, retrieved 7 December 2010. <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/lesotho>

⁷²⁸ "Projects—Lesotho," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 7 December 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-180,00.html>

⁷²⁹ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Nature's blows softened by aid in Africa, Peru," LDS Church News, 31 June 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45903/Natures-blows-softened-by-aid-in-Africa-Peru.html>

Cultural Issues

The Church benefits from the absence of some African cultural traditions, like polygamy, which are contrary to Church teachings. Immorality is a major obstacle. The status of women may negatively affect Church growth, as women who have joined the Church are sometimes unable to attend regularly because of a husband who opposes Church participation. Indigenous beliefs involving ancestor worship may pose misinterpretations of Church doctrine related to proxy ordinance work.

National Outreach

The majority of the population in Lesotho remains unreached by the Church. Only two congregations meet in Maseru, which accounts for less than 8% of the national population. Missionaries stationed in Leribe likely reach less than 1% of the population. Most of the inhabitants in Maseru have likely had little exposure to the Church due to its presence for only twenty years and small active LDS membership. Greater effort to reach more of the population appears forthcoming due to the creation of the Lesotho Zone in the South Africa Johannesburg mission and the division of the Maseru Branch in 2009.

One of the obstacles that has limited outreach into towns outside Maseru and rural areas is the country's remoteness and dispersed population. Mountainous areas that are densely populated will continue to present challenges for Church outreach and the establishment of an enduring presence due to separation from local Church leadership in Maseru and South Africa. Until mid-2010, the South Africa Johannesburg Mission had to allocate missionaries, mission president visits, and other mission resources over a large area of South Africa and Botswana, both of which have more pressing needs and experience stronger retention and membership growth. The South Africa Durban Mission also had challenges administering Lesotho due to distance and administration needs in Swaziland and southeast South Africa. Rural areas in Lesotho also have few competent English speakers, which challenges the Church's limited Sesotho language resources. The Church typically expands into smaller towns or rural areas as local members move to these locations. It is likely unknown whether any members live outside of Maseru in unreached areas due to outdated records.

The Church has a great opportunity to conduct missionary work among the Zulu. The Butha-Buthe District and nearby districts in northern Lesotho have hundreds of thousands of Zulu. Missionary success among Zulu has occurred in the South Africa Durban Mission. Zulu leadership in South Africa could assist in introducing the Church into the northern areas of Lesotho. More Church materials are available in Zulu than Sesotho, which would further assist in the establishment of the Church among the Basotho Zulu.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The low LDS convert retention and member activity in Lesotho has resulted from two decades of little mission involvement due to political instability and the country's remoteness. Other possible reasons for low activity and retention include the lack of Sesotho language Church materials, low literacy and lack of strong habits of church attendance among the local population, mission practices that have historically emphasized quick baptism of investigators who have often not developed firm gospel habits, and limited involvement of local membership in missionary work. The Masianokeng area experienced stagnant growth for years, and many members had complacent attitudes towards missionary work that were not reversed until recently. Overall activity is difficult to assess due to outdated membership records. In 2009, missionaries began an increased effort to teach and baptize families with a father present during lessons.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Church has likely not experienced any ethnic integration issues due to the country's lack of ethnic

diversity. Potential integration issues could occur in the north due to the mixture of Zulu and Sotho peoples once the Church is established there.

Language Issues

Few Church materials and no LDS scriptures have been translated into Sesotho. This has likely resulted from few Sotho joining the Church, remaining active, and possessing language abilities capable of producing scripture translations. Low rates of functional literacy also present challenges. Limited language materials have slowed growth, as English is not spoken in rural areas. Limited Sesotho language Church materials are not well utilized. Most Basotho members did not know that any translations of Church materials were available in their language in 2009.

Membership and congregation growth among the Sotho in South Africa that is concentrated in the Free State Province has also been limited but appears to have increased in the 2000s. This is evidenced by additional branches created and the organization of the district in Bloemfontein. Additional translations of Church materials and scriptures will become more likely due to the growth among Sotho speakers in South Africa, which would greatly benefit Basotho member Gospel understanding and member missionary activities.

Missionary Service

In mid-2009 there were six young missionaries serving in the country. Missionaries have had problems getting legal residency and sometimes have had to live across the border in the South African town of Ladybrand. These problems were resolved in 2009. Additional missionaries and attention came with the creation of the Lesotho Zone for missionaries in the South Africa Durban Mission. A senior missionary couple has been assigned since late 2008. In late 2010, the Lesotho Zone consisted of missionaries assigned to Bethlehem (South Africa), Leribe, Maseru, Masianokeng, and Phuthaditjhaba (South Africa).

Leadership

Local leadership appears limited, with only two branches functioning in the country. Few have served missions or attended the temple. Low activity and retention have resulted in few men in the Church who can lead congregations or hold callings. Lack of leadership may have contributed to the small amount of materials in Sesotho.

Temple

Lesotho is part of the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District. Close proximity to Johannesburg and lack of border crossing complications provide the opportunity for the small Church membership to participate in temple ordinances that are usually only available to members living in countries with larger memberships. Temple trips occur regularly for both branches, and members sacrifice much of their money and time to attend.

Comparative Growth

Lesotho has experienced some of the slowest membership and congregational growth in Africa. Only a few other African nations have had a continuing Church presence first established in the early 1990s with as many or fewer members than Lesotho. The Church was first established in Botswana around the same time, yet has twice as many members and three times the number of congregations.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists have seen limited, yet far stronger growth than the LDS

Church. Both denominations have memberships in the thousands that meet in dozens of congregations. These and other Christian denominations have been able to develop self-sustaining leadership and a strong membership base that has spread their beliefs in Sesotho to other areas of the country even during times of political instability.

Future Prospects

National outreach appears likely to increase in the coming years due to the creation of the Lesotho Zone in the South Africa Johannesburg Mission. Missionary work continues to be driven by full-time missionaries and not local leadership. Future membership and congregational growth will likely continue to be limited to Maseru and its surroundings until these areas become more self-sustaining. Isolated members living in rural areas may be found and utilized to spread the Church to unreached areas.

The Bloemfontein South Africa District will likely become a stake in the early 2010s, considering the district had over 2,000 members, 600 of who attended the first district conference at the district's creation in June 2009. The Maseru Branch may become a ward once the district becomes a stake. Lesotho could also become its own district once additional branches are organized in the country. A third branch appears likely to be organized in Maseru due to a member mapping project by senior couple missionaries in late 2009 and 2010.

LIBERIA

Geography

AREA: 111,369 square km. Located in West Africa, Liberia borders Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and the North Atlantic Ocean. Coastal areas consist of mangroves and swamps, whereas the interior is comprised of plateaus and hills concentrated along the Guinean border. Many areas are forested; Liberia comprises 40% of West Africa's rainforest.⁷³⁰ Tropical, hot weather occurs year round with heavy rainfall during the summer months. Dry harmattan winds bring dust inland from the Sahara Desert during the winter months, which is the primary natural hazard. Environmental issues include deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution, and biodiversity loss. Liberia is divided into fifteen administrative counties.

Peoples

Kpelle: 20.3%
Bassa: 13.4%
Grebo: 10%
Gio: 8%
Mano: 7.9%
Kru: 6%
Lorma: 5.1%
Kissi: 4.8%
Gola: 4.4%
Other: 20.1%

Most Liberians (95%) belong to approximately sixteen different ethnic groups, with each having its own tribal language. The Kpelle are the largest and are native to central and western areas, whereas the Bassa are concentrated in central areas, and the Grebo are located in the south. Other ethnic groups are generally found in southern and interior areas. The remaining 5% of Liberia's population are nonindigenous and consist of the descendants of freed slaves from the United States and the Caribbean.⁷³¹

Population: 3,887,886 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.609% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 5.02 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 55.82 male, 59.04 female (2012)

Languages: Kpelle (14%), Bassa (12%), Grebo dialects (8%), Kru (6%), Dan (5%), Loma (5%), Mano (5%), Gola (3%), Kissi (3%), Krahn (3%), Vai (3%), English (2%), other or unknown (31%). English is the official language; as many as 20% of the population speaks English as a first or second language. Most English speakers are concentrated around Monrovia. Many ethnic languages are unwritten.

Literacy: 57.5% (2003)

⁷³⁰ "Background Note: Liberia," Bureau of African Affairs, 8 March 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm>

⁷³¹ "Background Note: Liberia," Bureau of African Affairs, 8 March 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm>

History

West African tribes have populated present-day Liberia for millennia. Nicknamed the Grain Coast by Portuguese explorers in the fifteenth century due to plentiful Malegueta pepper seeds, Liberia was never colonized by a European power. The British established trading posts in the seventeenth century, but these were promptly destroyed by the Dutch. Denoting “the land of the free,” Liberia became Africa’s first independent nation; it began as a colony for freed slaves. The colony was founded in 1820 by freed American slaves who increased in numbers until independence occurred in 1847. Tensions arose between the freed slave colonists and the indigenous inhabitants during the nineteenth century; indigenous Africans were not granted citizenship until 1904. Controlled by a small elite of freed slaves and the descendants of freed slaves, the True Whig Party dictated all political matters from 1847 to 1980 and restricted the rights of the indigenous population. During the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the British and French occupied vast areas of Liberia’s interior. In 1980, a coup overthrew the government under indigenous Liberian Samuel K. Doe from the Krahn ethnic group. Ethnic conflict escalated during Doe’s rule as he promoted members of his own ethnicity. The First Liberian Civil War began in 1989 when Liberian rebels led under Charles Taylor invaded Liberia from Cote d’Ivoire. The war lasted until 1996 and resulted in over 200,000 deaths and the displacement of one million Liberians into surrounding countries. Taylor emerged as president of Liberia following special elections after the war and supported a revolutionary movement in neighboring Sierra Leone. A second civil war occurred in 2003 that resulted in Taylor’s resignation and the arrival of United Nations troops to provide national security. In 2005, the most free and fair elections in the country’s history occurred and resulted in Liberia electing Africa’s first female president. Since 2005, political and ethnic conflict have stabilized, and a UN peacekeeping force remains visible throughout the country.⁷³²

Culture

Americo-Liberians introduced many skills and traditions learned from their lives as slaves into contemporary Liberian culture, such as quilting. Indigenous Liberian ethnic groups exhibit many cultural similarities with West African groups residing in surrounding nations, as wood carvings, traditional music, and subsistence farming are commonplace. Notwithstanding its small geographic size and comparatively few inhabitants, Liberia is home to over a dozen ethnic groups that speak differing languages. Tribalism continues to be the primary influence on society outside of Monrovia. Syncretism between Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs frequently occurs, with the majority of the population participating in ancestor worship or gender-based secret societies. Approximately 30% of men practice polygamy, but polygamous marriages are often unstable due to conflict between wives. The cultural view of marriage differs dramatically from Western norms and is viewed as a process rather than an event, which may include bridewealth payments that can last for years.⁷³³ Alcohol consumption rates are low compared to the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$400 (2011) [0.83% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.329

Corruption Index: 3.2 (2011)

With 80% of the population estimated to live below the poverty line in 2000, Liberia is one of the world’s poorest countries, as both civil wars destroyed existing economic infrastructure, prevented economic development, and dissuaded foreign investment. Much of the fighting in Liberia during the civil wars was centered in and around Monrovia, where most of the country’s infrastructure and industry was located. International bans were in place for Liberian diamonds during the civil wars, which were a major source of income for the country. These bans have been lifted since the civil wars have ended. Liberia has large amounts of resources

⁷³² “Background Note: Liberia,” Bureau of African Affairs, 8 March 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm>

⁷³³ “Liberia,” Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 30 March 2011. <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Liberia.html>

and a suitable climate for agriculture. Iron ore, lumber, diamonds, gold, and hydropower are natural resources. Services employ 22% of the workforce and generate 18% of the GDP. Agriculture employs 70% of the workforce and generates 77% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 8% of the workforce and generates 5% of the GDP. Rubber, coffee, cocoa, rice, cassava, palm oil, sugarcane, bananas, sheep, and goats are common crops and agricultural products. Major industries include rubber processing, palm oil processing, wood products, and diamond extraction. Corruption is perceived as widespread and a major obstacle for greater economic growth and political stability.

Faiths

Christian: 85.6%

Muslim: 12.2%

Traditional religions: 0.6%

Other: 0.2%

None: 1.4%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 166,000

Seventh Day Adventists 26,739 57

Jehovah's Witnesses 5,993 112

Latter-day Saints 6,709 20

Religion

Christians constitute the majority of the population and reside in all areas of the country. Liberians who actively participate in a Christian denomination may be as low as 20%, however.⁷³⁴ Major denominations include Lutherans, Baptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Methodists, Latter-day Saints, and Pentecostals. Many Christians incorporate some indigenous beliefs and practices. Muslims are generally found among the Mandingo, Vai, and Fula ethnic groups. Secret indigenous gender-based societies such as the Poro and the Sande operate in all areas and are often involved in the transition of youth into adulthood. Female genital mutilation is practiced by some Sande followers.⁷³⁵

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Religious groups must register their articles of incorporation and provide a statement of purpose. There have been no reports of religious groups encountering difficulties with the registration process. Indigenous religious groups are not required to register. Education on Christianity is offered in public schools, but not required. There have been a few reports of ritualistic killings throughout the country for the use of body parts in traditional rituals. Such cases have been regarded as homicides by the government, but the government has faced challenges prosecuting offenders due to a lack of credible witnesses and low community cooperation. There have been a few recent instances of ethno-religious conflict between Christian and Muslims, such as in Lofa County in February 2010. There have been no reports of societal abuse of religious freedom. Easter and Christmas are

⁷³⁴ "Liberia," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 30 March 2011. <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Liberia.html>

⁷³⁵ "Liberia," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148698.htm>

recognized national holidays. Muslims have expressed desire for greater recognition and rights to observe religious holidays, as they these are not nationally recognized.⁷³⁶

Largest Cities

Urban: 48%

Monrovia, **Gbarnga, Buchanan, Ganta, Kakata, Zwedru, Harbel, Harper, Pleebo, Foya.**

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

Three of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the national population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

The first LDS Sunday School classes were held in 1985 in New Kru Town. Senior missionary couples arrived in Liberia in 1987, and the first convert baptisms occurred.⁷³⁷ LDS Apostle Elder Marvin J. Ashton dedicated Liberia for missionary work in September 1987. In March 1988, the Liberia Monrovia Mission was organized⁷³⁸ but was discontinued in 1991 due to civil war. Full-time missionaries were reassigned to Sierra Leone in 1989. Liberia was assigned to the Ghana Accra Mission in 1991 and to the Africa West Area in 1998.⁷³⁹ Seminary and institute commenced in 1995. Many Latter-day Saints fled to other countries during the second civil war in the early 2000s. In 2003, there were 150 Liberian Latter-day Saint refugees in the Buduburam Refugee Camp outside of Accra, Ghana. In 2007, Liberia was reassigned to the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission.⁷⁴⁰ In 2013, a mission was organized in Liberia based in Monrovia.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 6,709 (2012)

In March 1988, there were 133 Latter-day Saints.⁷⁴¹ During the civil war in the early 1990s, there were 400 members unaccounted for, 400 who fled the country, and 400 who remained in Liberia.⁷⁴² Membership totaled 1,400 in 1993 and 2,000 in 1997. By year-end 2000, there were 2,956 members. Moderate membership growth occurred in the 2000s as membership increased to 3,871 in 2002, 4,218 in 2004, 4,522 in 2006, and 5,039 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates ranged from a high of 15% and 14% in 2001 and 2002, respectively, to a low of 2.6% in 2008. Annual membership growth rates generally ranged between 3 and 5% during this period. In 2009, one in 721 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 20 (2012)

⁷³⁶ "Liberia," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148698.htm>

⁷³⁷ "Liberia," Country Profile, 10 June 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/liberia>

⁷³⁸ "9 missions created; world total now 221," LDS Church News, 19 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17973/9-missions-created-world-total-now-221.html>

⁷³⁹ "5 new areas announced worldwide," LDS Church News, 4 July 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31389/5-new-areas-announced-worldwide.html>

⁷⁴⁰ "New missions bring total to 347 New missions," LDS Church News, 10 February 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50112/New-missions-bring-total-to-347-New-missions.html>

⁷⁴¹ "9 missions created; world total now 221," LDS Church News, 19 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17973/9-missions-created-world-total-now-221.html>

⁷⁴² "Liberia," Country Profile, 10 June 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/liberia>

In March 1988, there were two LDS congregations: the Congo Town and New Kru Town Branches.⁷⁴³ In 1989, the first district was organized in Monrovia. By 1990, the number of branches increased to eight, but most congregations were closed shortly thereafter due to the civil war,⁷⁴⁴ and members met in small numbers in their homes. There were seven branches in 1993 and nine branches in 1997. A second district was organized in 1995, named the Monrovia Liberia Bushrod Island District. The first stake, the Monrovia Liberia Stake, was organized in 2000 from both Monrovia districts and had eight wards and one branch. The stake was discontinued in 2007 and divided into two districts. The number of congregations remained unchanged between 2000 and 2007. In 2008, two new branches were organized in Harbel and Kakata. Two additional branches were organized in 2009 and 2010 in the Monrovia Liberia District (Paynesville 2nd and Matadi), increasing the number of branches in the district to six. In 2011, the Church created five new branches in a single weekend in the two Monrovia districts.

Activity and Retention

Member activity rates are slightly lower than most West African nations. Seventy priesthood holders attended a district priesthood commemoration activity in Monrovia in 1993.⁷⁴⁵ In early 2012, 800 attended the Monrovia Liberia District Conference and 1,000 attended the Monrovia Liberia Bushrod Island District Conference. The average number of members per congregation increased from 328 in 2000 to 438 in 2009. Four hundred seventy-one were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. In early 2012, most branches in Monrovia appeared to have between fifty and 125 active members, whereas branches in Harbel and Kakata appeared to have fifty to one hundred active members. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 1,800, or 30%–35% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English.

There are no LDS scriptures translated into indigenous languages. The *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and *Gospel Principles* are available in Kpelle.

Meetinghouses

In early 2011, there were approximately ten LDS meetinghouses. Many congregations appear to meet in renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Health and Safety

Access to adequate health care is poor in many areas. Tropical diseases are common and pose a health threat.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Members from Monrovia cleaned the St. Paul Bridge area in 2003.⁷⁴⁶ In 2005, the Church donated 250 wheelchairs to disabled war victims in Monrovia.⁷⁴⁷ In 2006, a water pump project organized by LDS Charities

⁷⁴³ "9 missions created; world total now 221," LDS Church News, 19 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17973/9-missions-created-world-total-now-221.html>

⁷⁴⁴ "Liberia," Country Profile, 10 June 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/liberia>

⁷⁴⁵ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 9 July 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/25332/From-around-the-world.html>

⁷⁴⁶ "Members clean bridge area," LDS Church News, 22 February 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43283/Members-clean-bridge-area.html>

⁷⁴⁷ "Liberians, received wheelchairs," LDS Church News, 27 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47763/>

improved accessibility to water for eight communities in and around Monrovia.⁷⁴⁸ In recent years, helping hands projects have also occurred.⁷⁴⁹ Food and school kits have been donated by the Church in Maryland County for the needy. Other church-sponsored humanitarian or development projects have included emergency aid, textbook donations for public schools, and neonatal resuscitation trainings.⁷⁵⁰

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints benefit from full religious freedom to assemble, proselyte, and worship. Foreign missionaries regularly serve in Liberia without government restrictions. The LDS Church has removed missionaries in the past due to political turmoil. Lawlessness throughout the country has limited national outreach.

Cultural Issues

Tribalism, illiteracy, war, and poverty have adversely affected LDS Church growth in Liberia, as LDS populations have been displaced, many have few economic resources and live in deep poverty, ethnic conflict has contributed to political instability, and literacy rates are low. The high degree of cultural influence of tribalism outside of Monrovia has contributed to a lack of an LDS presence outside the capital, as some indigenous beliefs and practices stand in opposition to LDS teachings. Poor church attendance among the general Christian population has carried over to the LDS Church, as most converts no longer actively participate in church services and likely no longer identify as Latter-day Saints. Poverty is a major concern, and the basic needs are often not met. Low literacy rates create challenges for developing self-sufficient local leadership and for members to develop testimonies based upon personal scripture study but offer an opportunity for Church literacy programs that provide service and can also be used to find new investigators.

National Outreach

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the national population resides in a city with an LDS congregation, and 38% of the population resides in the two administrative counties that receive mission outreach (Margibi and Montserrado). LDS mission outreach was limited to Monrovia until 2008 when congregations were established in two nearby cities, Harbel and Kakata. Missionary activity was severely limited in Harbel and Kakata until early 2011 when full-time missionaries were permanently assigned. Political instability, war, tribalism, low standards of living, language issues, transportation issues, and administrative challenges in Monrovia have delayed the expansion of national outreach outside of Monrovia. Language issues and low literacy rates outside Monrovia have also dissuaded mission and area leaders from assigning missionaries to other cities until recently. Significant opportunities to increase the extent of mission outreach in the Monrovia area remain, as nearly all current LDS members reside in this area, and many communities have no nearby LDS congregations.

Liberia's small geographic size and comparatively small population have not affected the allocation of LDS mission resources, although many more populous and geographically larger nations with widespread religious freedom continue to be completely unreached by the Church. Administering the smallest population of any LDS African mission, the recently organized Liberia Monrovia Mission has increased mission leadership

Liberians-receive-wheelchairs.html

⁷⁴⁸ "Water pumps in Liberia dedicated," LDS Church News, 18 February 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48546/Water-pumps-in-Liberia-dedicated.html>

⁷⁴⁹ Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Helping Hands goes coast to coast," LDS Church News, 24 November 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51353/Helping-Hands-goes-coast-to-coast.html>

⁷⁵⁰ "Projects—Liberia," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 24 March 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-119,00.html>

involvement and augmented the number of full-time missionaries assigned to Liberia. In the coming decade, national outreach is most likely to expand into currently unreached cities near Monrovia and along the Atlantic coast, such as Buchanan, Tubmanburg, and urban communities to the southeast and northwest of Monrovia, such as Wamba Town and Jahtono. The largest cities distant from Monrovia, such as Gbarnga, may not open to missionaries for many more years due to transportation difficulties, tribalism, language issues, and full-time missionaries facilitating local leadership development in presently reached areas.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Historically, low member activity rates in Liberia are primarily due to war displacing LDS populations and disrupting missionary activity, casual societal attitudes regarding weekly church attendance, and poor pre-baptismal preparation. The organization of the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission appears to have improved convert retention rates through greater interaction with mission leaders and greater consistency in mission policies regarding convert baptisms as reflected in the organization of nine new branches since 2008. Leadership development challenges have reduced member activity rates due to some branch presidents and other leaders receiving inadequate training and lack needed administrative skills. There was no change in the number of members enrolled in seminary and institute, suggesting ongoing challenges with member activity and convert retention among youth and young adults. Church education system (CES) programs offer excellent opportunities to solidify member testimonies, increase literacy rates, emphasize missionary preparation, and extend fellowshiping to less-active and inactive members.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic conflict in Liberia appears rooted in linguistic, cultural, and religious barriers that have been exacerbated by particular ethnic groups entitling themselves to greater influence and prestige than others. LDS missionaries report no major ethnic integration challenges in Monrovia. Increasing active LDS membership among multiple ethnic groups may increase the potential for ethnic conflict manifesting itself at church, which may include some members refusing to go to a congregation led by a member from a rival ethnic group. The organization of ethnicity-specific congregations that are conducted in indigenous languages may reduce ethnic integration challenges at church.

Language Issues

Low literacy rates and linguistic diversity challenge efforts to open additional cities to missionary work outside Monrovia. Local Liberian full-time missionaries may be instrumental in the opening of these areas to missionary work if they have language abilities in languages spoken in these areas. Only Kpelle has LDS materials translated, which are limited to only two proselytism and member instruction materials. Prospects for additional LDS materials translated into Kpelle and other most commonly spoken indigenous languages such as Bassa and Grebo dialects appear likely in the coming years. Several languages are not written and will therefore require audio translations if LDS materials are translated into these languages one day.

Missionary Service

In early 2011, there were approximately two dozen full-time missionaries assigned to Liberia, two-thirds of whom were Africans. Two senior missionary couples were assigned to Monrovia at this time, with one couple performing young single adult outreach and the other providing church service. Liberia appears self-sufficient in its missionary force notwithstanding low member activity rates. Continued emphasis on young single adult outreach and seminary and institute attendance is warranted to maintain and increase the number of local members serving missions.

Leadership

Liberia has exhibited some of the most severe local leadership challenges in Africa, as attested by the discontinuation of the Monrovia Liberia Stake in 2007. The stake appeared to be discontinued due to inadequate numbers of active, tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders, administration and leadership challenges, and low member activity rates rather than due to transportation challenges and distance. Channeling limited church leadership personnel into stake leadership and administrative positions likely strained available leadership to support local congregations prior to this time. Missionaries serving in Liberia in 2009 reported that some problems with mishandling church finances by local priesthood leaders were subsequently remedied. There remains a continued need for mission leadership to dedicate more resources and attention for assisting and training leadership without making local members and leaders dependent on foreign missionaries and leaders. With the recent organization of the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission, missionaries and mission leadership have been able to respond more quickly to problems and provide proper guidance and correction when appropriate. Consequently, the number of congregations has begun to increase in recent years and full-time missionaries report that the Monrovia Liberia District is closer to reaching minimal standards for a stake to operate.

Temple

Liberia is assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple district. In 2005, a group of members traveled four days by bus to the Accra Ghana Temple.⁷⁵¹ Temple trips appear to occur infrequently and in small groups. There are no realistic prospects for a prospective temple to be built closer to Liberia in the foreseeable future due to inadequate local leadership, low member activity rates, few total members, and economic difficulties in the region.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church in Liberia experienced some of the slowest membership and congregational growth in Africa during the 2000s, as only three new congregations were organized, and annual membership growth rates were generally below 5%. Only Namibia, Reunion, and Mauritius experienced slower church growth during this period. In 2009, Liberia ranked as the country with the ninth-most Latter-day Saints without a stake. The percentage of the population reached by the Church is comparable to most West African nations. Member activity and convert retention rates have historically been among the lowest in Africa and comparable to Sierra Leone. The percentage of members enrolled in seminary and institute is among the lowest in Africa at 9%.

Other outreach-oriented Christians have experienced comparable membership growth to the LDS Church in recent years but generally extend greater national outreach and have larger church memberships. Many of these groups have operated in the country much longer than the LDS Church. The Seventh Day Adventist Church has operated in Liberia for nearly a century. During the 2000s, Seventh Day Adventists baptized generally between 500 and 1,000 new converts annually, reported over 25,000 members in 2009, and experienced congregational growth from thirty-six churches in 2000 to fifty in 2009.⁷⁵² Jehovah's Witnesses operated over one hundred congregations and had over 6,000 active members in 2010. Other missionary-minded Christian groups have been more successful retaining converts than the LDS Church largely due to reliance on local members instead of foreign missionaries for proselytism and teaching.

⁷⁵¹ "Hope for the future," LDS Church News, 26 March 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47043/Hope-for-the-future.html>

⁷⁵² "Liberia Mission (1945-Present)," www.adventiststatistics.org, retrieved 23 March 2011. http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=C10224

Future Prospects

The outlook for LDS Church growth in Liberia is favorable due to sustained, moderate rates of receptivity, the organization of the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission in 2007 and Liberia Monrovia Mission in 2013, the recent organization of new congregations in and outside of Monrovia, sustained numbers of local members serving full-time missions, and progress with districts in Monrovia reaching many qualifications to become stakes. Tribalism, poverty, and low literacy rates present challenges expanding national outreach outside of Monrovia.

MADAGASCAR

Geography

AREA: 587,041 square km. Located off the coast of Mozambique, Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island and home to many species of plant and animal life not found elsewhere in the world. Terrain varies from hills to low-lying 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.

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.

Population: 22,585,517 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.952% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.96 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 61.97 male, 66.1 female (2012)

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 stepping 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 many African nations, polygamy is illegal and rarely practiced.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$900 (2011) [1.87% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.480

Corruption Index: 3.0 (2011)

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.⁷⁵³ Madagascar is a transshipment point for heroin and a producer of cannabis primarily for domestic consumption.

Faiths

Indigenous beliefs: 52%

Christian: 41%

Muslim: 7%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 4,000,000

Seventh Day Adventists 127,052 653

Jehovah's Witnesses 24,825 575

Latter-day Saints 9,190 37

Religion

Approximately half 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.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵³ "Madagascar," 2011 Index of Economic Freedom, retrieved 18 May 2011. <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/madagascar>

⁷⁵⁴ "Madagascar," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148699.htm>

Religious Freedom

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 one hundred 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 has been some governmental pressure on religious groups that are politically active in opposing government leaders.⁷⁵⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 30%

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

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

Six of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Fifteen percent (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 1988,⁷⁵⁶ the mission president visited in late 1988, and the first convert baptism in Madagascar was performed. By this time, there were approximately fifteen 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 fifty 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.⁷⁵⁷ 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 thirty-three members participated in temple ordinance work.⁷⁵⁸ 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.

⁷⁵⁵ “Madagascar,” International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148699.htm>

⁷⁵⁶ “9 missions created; world total now 221,” LDS Church News, 19 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17973/9-missions-created-world-total-now-221.html>

⁷⁵⁷ Hogenson, Marvyn and La Veeta. “Rich harvest of souls on island of Madagascar,” LDS Church News, 4 February 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26136/Rich-harvest-of-souls-on-island-of-Madagascar.html>

⁷⁵⁸ “Madagascar’s first temple trip,” LDS Church News, 19 January 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41204/Madagascars-first-temple-trip.html>

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 9,190 (2012)

There were 100 Latter-day Saints in 1993, 350 in 1995,⁷⁵⁹ 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: 13 Branches: 25 Groups: 3+ (April 2013)

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 organized, bringing the total to thirteen. Rapid congregational growth began in the late 2000s. There were sixteen congregations in 2005, fifteen in 2006, seventeen in 2008, twenty-four in 2009, and twenty-eight 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 the Antsirabe region, additional branches were organized in the late 2000s, and by late 2010, there were three branches in the city of Antsirabe, one branch in the small village of Manandona, and groups meeting in Enjoma and Sarodroa. The Antsirabe district was organized 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 were operating in Ankazobe, Moramanga, and several additional locations in the Antsirabe area. By mid-2011, there were two stakes and two districts. A second branch was organized in Fianarantsoa in late 2011. In 2012, a second branch was organized in Fort Dauphin. In early 2013, a branch was formally organized in Toliara. By early 2013, groups in Andranomanelatra, Enjoma, and Sarodroa had become branches.

Activity and Retention

Receptivity to the LDS Church is high, and convert retention rates range from moderate to high, depending on the congregation. Nearly all independent congregations have over one hundred active members. Over one hundred 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 retention 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

⁷⁵⁹ Hogenson, Marvyn and La Veeta. "Rich harvest of souls on island of Madagascar," LDS Church News, 4 February 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26136/Rich-harvest-of-souls-on-island-of-Madagascar.html>

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 one hundred 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 thirteen LDS meetinghouses in early 2011. The first LDS chapel was built and dedicated in 1999.⁷⁶⁰ 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 1% 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.⁷⁶¹ 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.

⁷⁶⁰ “‘Long-awaited day’ as first Church building in Madagascar dedicated,” LDS Church News, 5 June 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/35872/Long-awaited-day-as-first-Church-building-in-Madagascar-dedicated.html>

⁷⁶¹ “Projects—Madagascar,” Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 18 May 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-230,00.html>

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 one hundred investigators attended church meetings among the three branches in the Antsirabe area. Before the assignment of missionaries to Fianarantsoa, the branch had only a few 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 of 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 set back missionary work in Madagascar from time to time. Periods of governmental turmoil have left missionaries sometimes unable to leave their residences for several days or limit time devoted to missionary work to 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

Thirteen percent (13%) of the national population resides in cities or villages with an LDS congregation. Ninety-two percent (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 of 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 fourteen 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. Rural outreach occurs in a few areas with groups and branches primarily in the Antsirabe Madagascar District.

The recurring strategy of outreach expansion by LDS mission leadership in newly opened cities in Madagascar has been to establish a single branch in a given city and to wait to organize additional congregations in the city until there are over 200 active members, readily organizing several new congregations thereafter. It has generally taken three to five years for the initial branch to be divided into additional branches. This process has been the pattern for all cities in Madagascar that 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. 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 prepares members for the leadership and administrative responsibilities of independent branches and wards. Dependent branches are flexible and versatile for meeting more immediate growth needs, as they generally do not require area presidency or First Presidency approval to operate. These units vary widely in size from several 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 a mission in Madagascar only in 1998 also delayed earlier outreach expansion. 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 experiences one of the most rapid membership growth rates in the region. Madagascar was one of the few countries in the 2000s that 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 pre-baptismal 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 after baptism and cultural factors appear to be critical elements of past and current successes in retention and member activity. Continued emphasis on seminary and institute attendance, missionary preparation, and youth-oriented teaching and fellowshiping activities will be crucial for 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 fifty missionaries serving in Madagascar in 1999.⁷⁶² By 2010, there were likely no more than one hundred 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.

⁷⁶² "'Long-awaited day' as first Church building in Madagascar dedicated," LDS Church News, 5 June 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/35872/Long-awaited-day-as-first-Church-building-in-Madagascar-dedicated.html>

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 to 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 1999,⁷⁶³ but the stake being organized only in 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 challenge 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 at considerable 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 in the 2000s among countries with fewer than 10,000 members. Between 2000 and 2010, no other country in the world with as many congregations experienced as high of a congregational growth rate (250%). In 2010, the LDS Church in Madagascar experienced the second highest annual membership growth rate of any country with over one hundred 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.⁷⁶⁴ Jehovah's Witnesses number over 20,000 and meet in over 400 congregations. These and other denominations have taken more assertive and strategic 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

⁷⁶³ "New missions created; total now 331," LDS Church News, 10 January 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31386/New-missions-created-total-now-331.html>

⁷⁶⁴ "Indian Ocean Union Mission (2003-Present)," www.adventiststatistics.org, retrieved 18 May 2011. http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=1582374

generate an unmatched opportunity for 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 depend on local members serving missions in greater numbers. Districts in Toamasina and Antsirabe may become stakes over the near or medium term. Branches in Mahajanga, Fianarantsoa, Fort Dauphin, and Toliara may subdivide into additional branches and districts may be organized in each city within the next five years. Groups meeting in Ankazobe and Moramanga may become branches in the near future. Remaining large cities without LDS congregations such as Antanifotsy may open for missionary work in the coming years, and groups may be established in lesser-reached cities surrounding Antananarivo, such as Ambodifontsy and Mahitsy.

MALAWI

Geography

AREA: 118,484 square km. Nicknamed “the warm heart of Africa,” Malawi is landlocked in Southern Africa and borders Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia. Most of Malawi sits on a high plateau. Northern Malawi has some mountains, whereas the south consists of a mixture of valleys, plateaus, and mountains. The climate in Malawi is tropical with wet and dry seasons. Resulting from the Great Rift Valley, Lake Nyasa forms most of the boundary between Malawi and Tanzania and Mozambique. Deforestation, land degradation, pollution, improper disposal of sewage, and siltation in Lake Nyasa are environmental issues. Malawi is divided into twenty-eight administrative districts.

Peoples

Chewa 32.6%
Lomwe 17.6%
Yao 13.5%
Ngoni 11.5%
Tumbuka 8.8%
Nyanja 5.8%
Sena 3.6%
Tonga 2.1%
Ngonde 1%
Other 3.5%

The Chewa people are the largest ethnic group, concentrated in the center of the country. The Nyanja reside in the south around Blantyre, the Tumbuka are found in northern Malawi, and the Yao live to the south of Lake Nyasa. The Lomwe are found south of Blantyre, and the Tonga live north of Lilongwe.

Population: 16,323,044 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.758% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 5.35 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 51.5 male, 53.13 female (2012)

Languages: Chichewa (57.2%), Chinyanja (12.8%), Chiyao (10.1%), Chitumbuka (9.5%), Chisena (2.7%), Chilomwe (2.4%), Chitonga (1.7%), Other (3.6%). Chichewa is the official language of Malawi. English is also spoken and is the language government has adopted. Sixteen native languages are spoken in Malawi. Native languages with more than one million speakers include Chichewa and Chinyanja (7.0 million), Tumbuka (1.0 million), and Yao (1.0 million).

Literacy: 62.7% (2003)

History

Bantu tribes occupied Malawi before the arrival of Europeans in the nineteenth century. The Portuguese were the first to explore the area, but no major European contact occurred. The British began colonizing Malawi in

the late nineteenth century, establishing a protectorate named Nyasaland. Malawi joined neighboring Zambia and Zimbabwe to create the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953, which was still under British control. Independence was granted to Malawi in 1964 and that was followed by three decades of one-party rule. President Hastings Kamuzu Banda ruled Malawi from independence to 2004 and held the first multi-party elections in 1994. President Bingu wa Mutharika has focused on improving economic development and reducing corruption since coming to office in 2004. Political problems have limited progress in improving government functionality, living conditions, and economic development but have not resulted in instability and violence as seen in many other African nations.

Culture

Malawi maintains much of its African heritage and culture despite 73 years of British colonial rule. The country is well known for its tribal dances and woodcrafts. Like many African countries, polygamy is practiced by many. Polygamous marriages are not legally recognized, but local African laws recognize some aspects of polygamous relationships. An estimated 20% of married women in Malawi have a polygamous spouse.⁷⁶⁵ Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are low compared to the worldwide average.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$900 (2011) [1.87% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.400

Corruption Index: 3.0 (2011)

Poverty is a major problem in Malawi, as 53% of the population was estimated to live below the poverty line in 2004. Little economic development has occurred in Malawi due to its landlocked location, corruption, and lack of government initiative until the past decade. The economy is agriculturally driven, with 90% of the Malawian workforce laboring in agriculture. Agriculture and services each account for about 40% of the country's GDP, whereas industry constitutes the remaining 20%. Economic growth has recently occurred in Malawi, with the GDP increasing by over 7.9% since 2006. Primary agricultural products in Malawi are tobacco, tea, and sugar. Malawi's largest import/export partner is South Africa. Countries that receive the most exports include Egypt, Zimbabwe, the United States, and European nations. China, India, Tanzania, and the United States also import into Malawi.

Corruption is widespread in Malawi. Several government officials have had corruption charges. Offenses appear most serious with customs and taxes.⁷⁶⁶

Faiths

Christian: 79.9%

Muslim: 12.8%

Other: 3%

None: 4.3%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 2,000,000

Seventh Day Adventists 363,167 1,310

⁷⁶⁵ "Malawi," Social Institutions & Gender Index, retrieved 3 January 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/malawi>

⁷⁶⁶ "Malawi," 2010 Index of Economic Freedom, retrieved 3 January 2011. <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/malawi>

Jehovah's Witnesses 82,112 1,280
 Latter-day Saints 1,421 6

Religion

Christians account for approximately 80% of the national population. Most Christians adhere to the Catholic and Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Churches. Smaller Christian groups include Anglicans, Baptists, Evangelicals, and Seventh Day Adventists. Most Muslims are Sunni Muslims. Few practice indigenous beliefs.⁷⁶⁷

Religious Freedom

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and respected by the government. To register with the government, religious groups must submit an application and pay a nominal fee. There have been no recent reports of the government refusing to register a religious group. Foreign missionaries may operate but must have employment permits. Public schools teach religious classes. There have been no major societal abuses of religious freedom reported in recent years.⁷⁶⁸

Major Cities

Urban: 19%

Blantyre, Lilongwe, **Mzuzu, Zomba, Karonga, Mangochi, Kasungu, Salima, Nkhonkhotakota, Nsanje**
 Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

Two of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Ten percent (10%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The first members of the Church in Malawi were expatriates living in Lilongwe in the early 1990s. Paperwork was submitted for official recognition of the Church in 1991. The first convert baptisms occurred in the country in July 1992. Later that year, Malawi was included in the Zimbabwe Harare Mission, and the first missionaries to visit were a senior couple. They baptized many Malawians, some of who waited many years to join the Church. The Church was officially registered with the government in 1995. The first missionaries to live in the country arrived in 1999 and resided in Blantyre and visited the Sitima weekly.⁷⁶⁹ Seminary and institute began in 2002. In late 2010, full-time missionaries serving in the Zimbabwe Harare Mission reported that in 2011 a new mission headquartered in Lusaka, Zambia would administer Malawi.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,421 (2012)

In 1991, there was only a small group of foreign members meeting in Lilongwe. Seventy-four Malawians

⁷⁶⁷ "Malawi," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148702.htm>

⁷⁶⁸ "Malawi," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148702.htm>

⁷⁶⁹ "Enduring—Baptized after 14 years," LDS Church News, 18 November 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38907/Enduring---Baptized-after-14-years.html>

joined the Church in 1992. By the end of 2000 there were 274 members in Malawi, with over 200 members in the Sitima Branch and around sixty in the Blantyre Branch.⁷⁷⁰

Membership growth increased more rapidly as the Church became more established in Blantyre. By the end of 2002 there were 377 members. In 2004 membership increased to 480. Membership continued to steadily increase, reaching 600 in 2006 and 742 in 2008.

Since 2000, membership growth rates have ranged from 5%–19% a year. Annual membership growth rates were typically over 10%, and membership increased annually by forty to one hundred members during the 2000s. In 2010, one in approximately 17,200 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 7 Groups: 1 (April 2013)

Sometime before 2000, a branch was created in Lilongwe but was later discontinued in 2002. A second branch was created in May 1999 in Sitima Village, located around one hundred miles north of Blantyre. A second branch was created in Blantyre in July 2000.

The Blantyre Branch was divided in 2005 to create the Blantyre 2nd Branch, bringing the total number of branches in Malawi to three. A branch was recreated in Lilongwe in the fall of 2007.⁷⁷¹ The Sitima Branch was discontinued in 2008 due to challenges meeting its administration needs and its remote location, reducing the total number of branches in Malawi to three. In 2009, all three branches reported directly to the mission in Zimbabwe and were not part of a district or stake. In 2010, a second branch was organized in Lilongwe (Kauma Branch), increasing the number of congregations to four. In early 2011, two new branches were organized in Blantyre, the Zingwangwa and Ndirande Branches, and the first district in Malawi was organized in Blantyre to administer the four branches in the city. In 2011, a group began functioning in Liwonde, which included some of the members of the former Sitima Branch. In early 2013, a third branch was organized in Lilongwe (Kauma 2nd).

Activity and Retention

In 2006, there were between seventy-five and one hundred twenty active members in each of the branches in Blantyre. In late 2009, missionaries serving in Lilongwe reported that sacrament attendance was usually around thirty. Fifty-one were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. Active membership in Malawi is estimated at 500, or 40%–45% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English.

LDS materials translated into Chichewa include the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, the Articles of Faith, and *Gospel Principles*.

Public Health

Poverty and an undeveloped economy result in poor health conditions and low life expectancies. Malawi has a high rate of HIV/AIDS with about 12% of the adult population infected. Sexual promiscuity and drug use

⁷⁷⁰ “Enduring—Baptized after 14 years,” LDS Church News, 18 November 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38907/Enduring---Baptized-after-14-years.html>

⁷⁷¹ “Church grows in Malawi,” LDS Church News, 15 September 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51053/Church-grows-in-Malawi.html>

are societal problems that challenge Church teachings. Tropical diseases are endemic, medical infrastructure is underdeveloped, and health care access is limited.

Meetinghouses

The first meetinghouse built by the Church was dedicated in 2005 in Blantyre. The meetinghouse was built by the Church to handle future growth in the city and be a stake center once a stake is organized.⁷⁷² Congregations in Lilongwe meet in a rented space or a renovated facility. Newly organized congregations in Blantyre and Liwonde meet in renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church undertook a campaign to vaccinate Malawians against measles in 2008.⁷⁷³

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

No government regulations limit Latter-day Saints from proselytism, assembly, or worship. Foreign full-time missionaries report few challenges obtaining needed documentation to serve in Malawi.

Cultural Issues

Widespread Christian beliefs with little syncretism with indigenous beliefs reduces cultural challenges that are often apparent in many African countries. High rates of church attendance and religious activity in the general population benefit LDS mission outreach efforts, as many have developed personal, regular religious habits. Those who practice polygamy and want to join the Church must end their polygamous relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency. Tobacco is one of the most widely produced crops. Those who grow tobacco and join the Church may be pressured to change their vocation or grow a different crop.

National Outreach

Notwithstanding the Church's presence in Malawi for nearly twenty years and missionary presence for over ten years, outreach is limited to only the two largest cities. About 8% of the population is accessible to the Church, assuming meetinghouses are easily reached in Blantyre and Lilongwe. There has been no effort to establish the Church in northern Malawi or central Malawi between Blantyre and Lilongwe with the exception of the organization of a group in Liwonde in 2011.

Opportunities exist to establish the Church in remaining large cities, many of which are not distant from Blantyre and Lilongwe. Malawi likely receives few mission resources because of its isolation from the rest of the Zimbabwe Harare Mission, but the organization of the Zambia Lusaka Mission will likely increase the mission resources dedicated to Malawi in the coming years. In the past, Zambia and Zimbabwe have required greater mission assistance and resources due to their larger church memberships and more widespread Church presences. Rural areas in Malawi are largely untouched and will likely remain unreached until great emphasis is placed on expanding national outreach and member-missionary programs.

⁷⁷² "Meetinghouse in Malawi," LDS Church News, 20 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47721/Meetinghouse-in-Malawi.html>

⁷⁷³ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Fighting measles," LDS Church News, 17 May 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/52000/Fighting-measles.html>

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Activity and retention appear to have stayed constant or have slightly worsened since the creation of the first branch in 1999. The creation several new branches in recent years indicates increases in active membership capable of fulfilling leadership responsibilities.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Due to the small church membership concentrated in only the two largest cities in Malawi, ethnic diversity has not caused integration issues as of early 2011. Ethnic issues may arise when multiple ethnic groups met in the same congregation or if branches speaking different languages pertain to the same district. As Malawi has seen few ethnic tensions, it does not appear that difficulties are likely to arise in integrating different ethnic group into the same congregations.

Language Issues

The Church has been established primarily among those who speak English and Chichewa, as these are the only languages in which any Church materials have been translated. Half of the population speaks Chichewa, providing great opportunities for the Church to reach a large portion of the population with limited language translations. Once more Church materials are translated into Chichewa, the Church will be able to reach the majority of the population more efficiently. Other languages such as Lomwe, Tonga and Yao will likely have some basic church materials translated once congregations are established where these languages are widely spoken. Like many other African countries, requirements may exist in Malawi for those who join the Church to have a certain degree of competency in English or Chichewa before baptism.

Missionary Service

Few Malawians have served missions. Malawi heavily depends on foreign missionaries to staff its missionary force, as there were few, if any, Malawian missionaries serving in their home country in 2010. In 2005, there were six missionaries and one senior couple serving in Malawi.⁷⁷⁴ Missionaries were assigned for the first time to Lilongwe in the fall of 2008. In 2009, Malawi was a missionary zone in the Zimbabwe Harare Mission. Prospects appear high for the assignment of additional missionaries to Malawi in the near future due to Malawi's low levels of self-sufficiency in local leadership and a large, unreached, receptive population.

Leadership

The Church has seen some success in developing local leadership in the past decade. When the Lilongwe Branch was recreated in 2007, both the branch president and counselor were local members.⁷⁷⁵ Stronger leadership growth has occurred in Blantyre. The delayed organization of a district and additional branches in Blantyre indicate challenges augmenting the number of active priesthood holders.

Temple

Malawi is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Temple trips have likely occurred from the branches in Blantyre where missionaries have focused on strengthening members and families for a decade.

⁷⁷⁴ "Meetinghouse in Malawi," LDS Church News, 20 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47721/Meetinghouse-in-Malawi.html>

⁷⁷⁵ "Church grows in Malawi," LDS Church News, 15 September 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51053/Church-grows-in-Malawi.html>

A potential temple in Harare, Zimbabwe appears likely in the medium term and would reduce travel costs and time for members attending the temple.

Comparative Growth

Malawi experienced comparable growth to most African nations that had between 100 and 300 members in 2000. Togo and Cameroon both had less than 300 members in 2000 and had between 700 and 800 members in 2008. Other African nations with less than 300 members experienced less rapid growth, such as Namibia, which grew from 274 members in 2000 to 562 members in 2008. However, Malawi has seen no increase in congregations since 2000, whereas Cameroon and Togo both saw congregations increase from one to three. Malawi has one of the lowest percentages of members in Africa among countries with an official Church presence. Member activity and convert retention rates appear lower than average among African countries.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists have experienced strong growth in Malawi. These and other Christian denominations have existed for many decades in the country. Seventh Day Adventists have achieved some of the most impressive growth in recent years, with 3% of Malawians belonging to the SDA Church in some areas of the country. The LDS Church has yet to enter rural areas of the country in which most Christian denominations already have a presence.

Freedom of religion, a predominantly Christian population, and development needs have combined to create an atmosphere favorable for rapid growth among Christian denominations. Freedom of religion has eliminated government involvement in religious affairs that can limit a church's growth. Most have a background in Christianity, which usually increases the receptivity of people to the LDS Church. Interest in religion among Malawians appears widespread.

Future Prospects

The creation of a new LDS mission specifically administering Zambia and Malawi in 2011 greatly increase the prospects for more rapid LDS Church growth in Malawi in the coming years, as for the first time, greater numbers of full-time missionaries may be assigned and additional areas of the country may open to full-time missionary work. Continued congregational growth in Lilongwe and Blantyre appear likely due to their large populations and recent successes increasing the number of branches in both cities. Additional cities will likely not open to missionary work or receive independent congregations until active members move to these locations, cities with a current Church presence experience stronger membership and leadership growth, and the number of full-time missionaries assigned to Malawi increases. An independent branch may be organized in Liwonde in the near future. Zomba and Mzuzu seem the most likely cities to have a future LDS presence due to their large populations. Malawi is in need of greater numbers of local members serving full-time missions to improve self-sufficiency and lay a foundation for future leadership development that grows at a more rapid pace. A district may be organized in Lilongwe within the near future and a separation mission for Malawi may be organized within the next five years.

MALI

Geography

AREA: 1,240,192 square km. In Sub-Sahara West Africa, Mali is landlocked and surrounded by Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal, and Mauritania. The Sahara Desert occupies the northern half of Mali and savannahs in semi-arid and tropical areas cover the center and south. Three distinct seasons occur, with a hot and dry season from February to June, a rainy and mild season from June to November, and a cool and dry season from November to February. Plains cover most of the landscape, with some hilly terrain in the northeast and along the Guinean border. The Niger River flows through much of the south and provides water crucial for agriculture and sustaining life. Desertification, deforestation and soil erosion are serious environmental concerns. Little access to usable water in some areas and recurrent droughts challenge human development. Mali is divided into eight administrative regions.

Peoples

Mande: 50%

Peul: 17%

Voltaic: 12%

Tuareg and Moor: 10%

Songhai: 6%

Other: 5%

Mande peoples populate southwestern Mali. The Puel are related to Fulani peoples in West Africa and primarily reside in central Mali and a small area northwest of Bamako. Voltaic groups are concentrated near the border with Burkina Faso. The Tuareg and Moor reside in northern Mali. The Songhai populate areas in central and southeastern Mali along the Niger River.

Population: 14,533,511 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.613% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 6.35 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 51.43 male, 54.73 female (2012)

Languages: Bambara (80%), other African languages and French (20%). French is the official language. Bambara and similar dialects are spoken in varying degrees of competence by as much as 80% of the population. Fifty-six indigenous languages are spoken. Most spoken languages with less than one million speakers include Soninke, Kita Maninkakan, Dogon dialects, Tamasheq, Pulaar, Songhay dialects, and Tamajaq. Arabic has around 100,000 native speakers. Languages with over one million speakers include Bambara (2.7 million), Senoufo dialects (1.3 million), and Maasina Fulfulde [Fula] (1.0 million).

Literacy: 46.4% (2003)

History

Several pre-colonial empires flourished in Mali. The Ghana, Mali, and Songhai Empires established centers for trade and learning and helped spread the influence of Islam. Moroccans invaded in the late sixteenth century,

collapsing the Songhai Empire prior to European exploration and colonization of the region. France took control of the region in the late nineteenth century and named it French Sudan. Mali gained independence from France in 1960 as a federation of the Sudanese Republic and Senegal, the latter withdrawing from the federation after a few months. Dictators controlled the government until ousted by a military coup in 1991 under Amadou Toure. President Toure ushered in a democratic government resulting in elections deemed fair and free by international observers in 1992, 1997, 2002, and 2007. President Toure returned to power in 2007 and has helped established one of the strongest democratic nations in West Africa. In early 2012, a Tuareg-led rebellion resulted in rebel troops occupying approximately two-thirds of the country in the Azawad region. In March 2012, a military coup overthrew the government due to disapproval for how the president was handling the crisis. In early 2013, French troops engaged in successful offensives against rebel strongholds.

Culture

Islam heavily influences society. During the Middle Ages, Mali was a center of Islamic learning. Mali is well known for its unique music, and oral tradition continues to play an important role. Most eat food based from rice and millet. Polygamy is widespread. Soccer is the most popular sport.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,300 (2011) [2.7% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.359

Corruption Index: 2.8 (2011)

Mali ranks among the poorest nations in the world. It has struggled to develop economically, as it is landlocked and two-thirds desert. No increase has occurred recently in GDP per capita, and inequality of wealth is high. Agriculture accounts for 45% of the GDP and employs 80% of the workforce. Services and industry make up 38% and 17% of the GDP, respectively. Unemployment is high (30%) and over a third of the population lives below the poverty line. Primary agriculture products include cotton, millet, and rice. Industry is limited to food processing, construction, and phosphate and gold mining. Cotton and gold account for most exports. Primary export partners include China, Thailand, and Denmark, whereas primary import partners include Senegal, France, and Cote d'Ivoire.

Government has aggressively fought widespread corruption but with unsuccessful results. Companies frequently report that they are forced to pay bribes in order to obtain contracts or accomplish their goals.⁷⁷⁶ Corruption dissuades foreign investment and further sets backs economic development and greater distribution of wealth.

Faiths

Muslim: 90%

Christian: 1%

Indigenous beliefs: 9%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic: 200,000

Seventh Day Adventists 1,570 3

Jehovah's Witnesses 289 7

⁷⁷⁶ Chene, Marie. "Overview of corruption and government's efforts against corruption in Mali." Transparency International, 7 March 2008. <http://www.u4.no/helpdesk/helpdesk/query.cfm?id=159>

Latter-day Saints less than 50 0

Religion

Most Malians are Muslims. Islam is followed with greater tolerance of minority religious groups than in other Muslim-majority nations. Many Muslims follow Islam due to their culture and upbringing. Most Christians are Catholics. Protestant denominations have a small and growing presence in urban areas.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 7th

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and respected by the government. Government does not tolerate religious abuse or discrimination. Although Islam is the dominant religion, the constitution states that Mali is a secular state. Foreign missionaries may operate in the country.⁷⁷⁷ However, an Islamist military coup in March 2012 and the establishment of an Islamic state in the north by rebels led to the harsh persecution of Christians. Order has improved through the efforts of French and multinational troops, yet acts of religious unrest and intolerance may persist for some time, especially in northern areas affected by the rebellion.

Largest Cities

Urban: 32%

Bamako, Sikasso, Mopti, Segou, Koutiala, Kayes, Nioro, Kati, Markala, Gao.

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

None of the ten largest cities have a congregation. 12.5% of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The First Malians joined the Church in the 1980s in Mali and other nations such as Canada. Modibo Diarra was likely the first Malian convert baptized in Mali in 1981. Sacrament meetings began to be held in 1981.⁷⁷⁸ Church meetings were held as early as the mid-1980s. No branch was established, and members likely met as a group. Some members returned to their homeland and participated with foreign members for meetings. Three American member families lived in Bamako in early 1988.⁷⁷⁹ The first Malian to serve a mission was Amadou Diarra, the son of Modibo Diarra, in the early 1990s in French-speaking Canada, where he helped many Muslim Africans join the Church. By mid-1993 the only known Church member in Mali was Modibo Diarra.⁷⁸⁰ In 2012, the first Malian Latter-day Saint to serve as a missionary began his mission in Arizona.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

The Church has not reported membership totals for Mali as of early 2010 as there is no official presence. There are likely fewer than fifty members. Several Malians with Muslim backgrounds have joined the Church

⁷⁷⁷ "Mali," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127243.htm>

⁷⁷⁸ Arnold, Chirley. "Trials increase record keeper's faith," LDS Church News, 25 February 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19006/Trials-increase-record-keepers-faith.html>

⁷⁷⁹ "Mali LDS Church participate in sacrament meeting presentation," LDS Church News, 30 January 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17925/Mali-LDS-children-participate-in-sacrament-meeting-presentation.html>

⁷⁸⁰ Diarra, Modibo. "After my trial came blessings," Liahona, August 1993, p. 8.

in the United States in recent years. Church members who speak Bambara have numbered enough to merit the translation of a couple of Church materials.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 Groups: 1? (2012)

Mali was included in the Africa West Area following its creation in 1998. In early 2010, members may have met in a group for Sunday meetings. Mali has never been associated with a mission, and stewardship for Mali falls under the Africa West Area.

Activity and Retention

Members who follow Church teachings may be a fraction of the small local membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French, Arabic.

All LDS scriptures and nearly all Church materials are available in French. The Church has translated all LDS scriptures in Arabic and many unit, priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, young men, young women, primary, missionary, family history, and audiovisual materials. The Church has translated *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* in Bambara.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings likely occur in members' homes or in a rented space.

Health and Safety

HIV/AIDS infects 1.5% of the population. Poor sanitation and medical care may have influenced the Church to not establish an official presence.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church sent Atmit to Mali in 2005 to relieve hunger and famine in the region.⁷⁸¹

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church has yet to utilize the religious freedom present in Mali. Few Muslim majority nations permit foreign missionaries to enter and allow proselytizing. No legal challenges appear to have delayed the Church's establishment.

Cultural Issues

The influence of Islam may be the largest obstacle for the Church to face. Muslims have been much more tolerant of minority religious groups and should not pose a challenge to proselytism. However, Islam's influences on daily life and family may produce challenges for Muslim converts who may face ridicule and ostracism

⁷⁸¹ Weaver, Sarah Jean. "Efforts to help starving children in Niger," LDS Church News, 20 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47709/Efforts-to-help-starving-children-in-Niger.html>

for joining the Church. Low literacy rates for men and women challenge potential converts' ability to deepen doctrinal understanding and serve in the Church. Those who desire to join the Church participating in a polygamous marriage must end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency.

National Outreach

No mission outreach occurs in Mali. Only those with association to members have contact with the Church. It is likely difficult for members who move to Mali to locate the Church, as the Church does not publish any information concerning its presence. The greatest opportunity for outreach is in Bamako. Bamako is one of the most rapidly growing cities in Africa and will become an important city for the Church to spread to other large cities.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

With the exception of several Malians baptized in the 1980s, no converts have joined the Church in Mali. The degree of understanding of Church doctrine and depth of conversion are likely reflected on the quality of teaching and fellowshiping received in the nations in which they join the Church. Many Malians who have joined the Church in the United States have received high quality teaching and strong member fellowship and have developed a habit of regular Church attendance prior to baptism.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

French and Bambara will assist the Church in integrating ethnic groups into the same congregation if necessary. Some of the peoples in the south have stronger animist backgrounds and will likely differ in their needs from the backgrounds of Muslim or Catholic converts. The Catholic community may provide strength to the Church as a source of investigators with a Christian background open to learning about the teachings of the Church. Ethnic groups tend to be separated by distance, but the high ethnic diversity in Mali will challenge future mission outreach.

Language Issues

The Church has some materials available in Bambara that will greatly facilitate the establishment of the Church in Mali. Modibo Diarra assisted in the translation of these materials.⁷⁸² Most Malians speak Bambara or French, which lessens the demand for additional native language materials. In some African nations with limited membership and high ethnic diversity, the Church has required converts to demonstrate some proficiency in the country's official language to ensure that they can be taught or pastored with resources and leadership speaking their language. This procedure may be applied in Mali if directed by the area presidency.

Leadership

Mali has potential for strong local leadership with few members. Returned missionaries are very few yet may assist in the Church's formal establishment.

Temple

Mali is not assigned to a temple district, but members would likely travel to the Accra Ghana Temple.

⁷⁸² Diarra, Modibo. "After my trial came blessings," Liahona, August 1993, p. 8.

Comparative Growth

Few African nations have had native members for as long as Mali but without an official Church presence. Burundi, Gabon, and Somalia are additional countries that have seen past Church activity without a Church presence in early 2010.

Christian denominations in Mali struggle to gain greater national outreach and rapid growth. Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses both experience slow growth. Protestant groups have operated for several decades in Mali and have converted less than 1% of the population. Few Muslims have converted to Christianity.

Future Prospects

Formal Church establishment is possible in the medium term due to a tolerance for Christianity and a small number of native members. However, recent political instability and the Tuareg rebellion make any immediate possibilities for an official church establishment highly unlikely. Malians who joined the Church abroad and return to their homeland will likely be instrumental in the Church's establishment. Once established, the Church may face slow membership and congregational growth like other Christian denominations.

MAURITIUS

Geography

AREA: 2,040 square km. Mauritius is a small island in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar. The tropical climate has wet summers and dry, warm winters. Mountains dominate the interior, and plains occupy coastal areas. Cyclones and reefs are natural hazards. Environmental issues include water pollution and coral reef degradation. Mauritius is administratively divided into nine districts and three dependencies.

Peoples

Indo-Mauritian: 68%

Creole: 27%

Sino-Mauritian: 3%

Franco-Mauritian: 2%

Mauritius had no indigenous inhabitants. Current inhabitants arrived from the British and French relocating peoples in other colonies to work in plantations, particularly from India and China. Few Europeans, mainly French, remain on the islands.

Population: 1,313,095 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.705% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.78 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 71.25 male, 78.35 female (2012)

Languages: Creole (80.5%), Bhojpurī (12.1%), French (3.4%), English (less than 1%), other (3.7%), unspecified (0.3%). English is the official language. No languages have over one million speakers. Creole has the most speakers (800,000).

Literacy: 84.4% (2000)

History

Arab and Malay sailors first discovered Mauritius in the tenth century. The Portuguese discovered the island in the sixteenth century. Mauritius was settled by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. The French took control in 1715, developing the island's resources and establishing a naval base. The British conquered the island in 1810, developed the country's naval base and established an air base. Mauritius remained part of the United Kingdom until independence in 1968. Stability and democracy attracted investment. The nation has one of the most developed economies in Africa, but the stability of the country depends on sugar prices, textile production, and favorable weather.

Culture

A blend of ethnicities has resulted in a very heterogeneous culture influenced by Indian, Chinese, and European influences. Cuisine draws upon a combination of these influences. Rum production from sugar has occurred for hundreds of years. Extinct for hundreds of years, the Dodo bird only lived on Mauritius and still has

cultural significance. Ethnic groups tend to live separately from one another due to differences in language, culture, and religion. Recreation continues to gain popularity. Indians dominate government and politics. Cigarette consumption rates compare to the worldwide, average whereas alcohol consumption rates are low.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$15,000 (2011) [31.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.728

Corruption Index: 5.1 (2011)

Originally dependent on agriculture, the economy of Mauritius has diversified to include industrial, financial, and tourist sectors. Stability since independence attracted foreign investment for sugar, tourism and banking. The location of the island provides a cheaper alternative compared to more industrialized nations around the Indian Ocean like Singapore or the United Arab of Emirates. Services generate 70.5% of the GDP. Textile manufacturing is a major industry. Sugar is the most important cash crop. Emerging industries include fishing and technology. Primary export partners include the United Kingdom, France, and the United States. Primary import partners include India, France, and South Africa.

Corruption levels rank among the lowest in Africa. Bribe taking among politicians and government favoritism toward specific private companies are issues of concern.⁷⁸³

Faiths

Hindu: 48%

Christian: 32.2%

Muslim: 16.6%

Other: 2.5%

Unspecified: 0.3%

None: 0.4%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 303,086

Seventh Day Adventists 4,633 33

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,718 26

Latter-day Saints 428 2

Religion

Many of the Indians taken to Mauritius by the British retained their Hindu or Muslim beliefs. The Catholic Church is the largest Christian denomination as a result of French rule and claims 92% of the population of the small island of Rodrigues. Northern areas of the main island are more Hindi, and central areas are more Catholic. Tensions exist between Hindus, the largest religious group, and the smaller Christian and Muslim populations. Ethnic and religious groups tend to live separate from one another in close knit communities.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸³ "No to corruption, yes to integrity," Transparency Mauritius, retrieved 3 January 2011. <http://transparencymauritius.intnet.mu/introeng.htm>

⁷⁸⁴ "Mauritius," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148707.htm>

Religious Freedom

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and generally upheld by the government. Many Catholic and Hindu holidays are recognized by the government. To register, religious groups must have at least seven members. Tax-exempt status is granted by the Ministry of Finance. No religious groups appear to have been denied registration. Tensions exist between Hindus, Muslims, and Christians, but all groups were allowed to worship freely. In March 2010, Christians and Hindus clashed resulting in numerous injuries and damaged property as a result of fifteen Hindu men harassing a Pentecostal group. Foreign missionaries may proselyte but must obtain both a visa and work permit.⁷⁸⁵

Major Cities

Urban: 42%

Port Louis, Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, Vascoas-Phoenix, **Curepipe**, **Quatre Bornes**, **Triolet**, **Goodlands**, **Bel Air**, **Central Flacq**, **Le Hochet**.

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

Two of the ten largest cities have a published Church presence. Forty-eight percent (48%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The first member, Elder George Kershaw, arrived in 1856 as a missionary. During the two months of his stay, around ten people joined the Church. Few to no members lived in Mauritius, and no Church presence existed between the late 1850s and 1979. The Church was reestablished in 1979 through the International Mission, and in 1986, the South Africa Johannesburg Mission began administering Mauritius. Two years later, the Mascarene Islands Mission was created in Reunion that also included Mauritius and Madagascar.⁷⁸⁶ Elder Marvin J. Ashton dedicated Mauritius and Reunion for missionary work in November 1988.⁷⁸⁷ In 1991, the mission's headquarters were transferred to Durban, South Africa. Mauritius has pertained to the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission since the creation of the mission in 1998.⁷⁸⁸ Seminary and institute began in 1993.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 428 (2012)

By 1988, there were 400 members living in Mauritius and Reunion.⁷⁸⁹ By 2000, there were 295 members on Mauritius. Membership increased to 361 in 2004 and 363 in 2008. The most rapid annual membership growth rate occurred in 2001 at 12.9%. Annual membership growth rates declined in 2005 and 2008 by around 1% but in most years ranged from 0% to 3%.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 2 (2012)

The first branch was created by missionaries in 1982 and likely belonged to the St. Denis Reunion District, which was created the same year. By 1988, two branches functioned.

⁷⁸⁵ "Mauritius," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148707.htm>

⁷⁸⁶ "Mauritius," Country Profile, retrieved 3 January 2011. <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/mauritius>

⁷⁸⁷ "News of the Church," Ensign, Mar. 1989, 74–80. <http://lds.org/ensign/1989/03/news-of-the-church?lang=eng>

⁷⁸⁸ "Mauritius," Country Profile, retrieved 3 January 2011. <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/mauritius>

⁷⁸⁹ "Mauritius," Country Profile, retrieved 3 January 2011. <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/mauritius>

Both of the branches were combined into one branch in the 1990s. A second branch was recreated in 2004. In late 2009, there were two branches: the Rose Hill and Phoenix Branches. Both branches report directly to the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission.

Activity and Retention

Twenty-three were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2008–2009 school year. Active membership for each branch is likely between fifty and one hundred, indicating there are likely 100–150 active members in Mauritius, or 40% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, French, Tamil, Urdu.

All LDS scriptures and most Church materials are translated in French. Translations of LDS materials into Mauritian Creole are limited to *Gospel Principles*. The Church translated the Book of Mormon and some audiovisual materials in Tamil. The Book of Mormon, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, and a few audiovisual materials are available in Urdu.

Meetinghouses

The Rose Hill and Phoenix Branch met in separate meetinghouses, both of which are likely rented spaces or renovated buildings.

Health and Safety

HIV/AIDS infects 1.7% of the population. Cyclones are a risk from November through May. Good private health care is available in Mauritius.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Missionaries supervised local members making 250 bags for school children in Rose Hill, le Morne, and Flaq.⁷⁹⁰

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

No legal obstacles prohibit proselytism. The Church has yet to take greater advantage of religious freedom in missionary work, especially with the significant Hindu and Muslim populations.

Cultural Issues

The racial diversity found in Mauritian society challenges the Church in integrating multiple ethnic groups into the same congregations. Most ethnic groups have little interaction with one another. Tensions between religious groups challenge Church outreach by the diverse religious background of the population. Lack of interest in religion as greater economic prosperity continues may be partly responsible for slow membership growth since the mid-2000s.

⁷⁹⁰ "School bags for children," LDS Church News, 3 February 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50090/School-bags-for-children.html>

National Outreach

Despite most of the population living on the main island that is only thirty miles across, most of the inhabitants do not live near established Church centers. The inhabitants of Rose Hill and Phoenix account for only 17% of the national population, and many of these individuals likely have little awareness of the Church and its beliefs. Only one of the nine districts and none of the island dependencies has a congregation. The Church has had the opportunity to conduct missionary work for thirty years, yet only a fraction of the population has a congregation nearby in two of the three largest cities. Only one or two sets of missionaries served in the country in late 2009.

Reasons why little outreach has occurred despite a long, continual Church presence are plentiful. Current Church congregations function in the more Catholic areas of Mauritius, indicating that the greatest success in proselytism initially occurred among Catholics or that the Church's first missionary efforts began in this region and did not expand elsewhere. Lack of receptivity in Mauritius and Reunion may be one of the reasons that led to the relocation of the Mascarene Islands Mission to Durban, South Africa. Distance between Durban, South Africa and Mauritius likely limited mission presidency visits that may have lessened local membership training and support during the 1990s. Few missionaries were likely assigned during this period due to distance and greater receptivity in South Africa, Madagascar, and Reunion. Besides the late 1980s and early 1990s, the greatest outreach may have occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s before more rapid growth occurred in Madagascar. The recent rapid increase in convert baptisms and congregations in Madagascar has required greater mission resources, which have likely put prospects for greater outreach in Reunion and Mauritius on hold.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity appears to have remained unchanged over the past decade but is perhaps higher than other African nations with small memberships. Many African nations with little outreach and few members can have only one congregation for 500 or 600 members. The increase in membership in the early 2000s may have contributed to the creation of a second branch. Emigration problems in addition to few convert baptisms likely contribute to nearly no change in membership since 2005.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic issues in congregations likely do not pose significant challenges for the Church at present. Rather, the segregated living conditions of most due to differences in religion and language appear difficult for finding those interested in the Church and integrating them into LDS congregations.

Language Issues

Due to the small Mauritian membership, only one Church resource is translated into Mauritian Creole. The lack of any LDS scriptures and other materials in the most widely spoken language challenge greater outreach among the population. Bhojpuri is the second most widely spoken language yet does not have any Church materials translated due to a lack of a Church presence in areas of India where Bhojpuri is spoken.

Missionary Service

Mauritius has had few, if any, members serve full-time missions and relies on foreign full-time missionaries to staff its missionary force. Missionaries who serve in Mauritius first serve in Reunion to develop greater fluency in French. Only a couple of missionary companionships were serving in the country in 2009. Inadequate

numbers of full-time missionaries assigned to the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission have contributed to few full-time missionaries working on the island.

Leadership

Both branches were led by local Mauritian members in late 2009. The Church has benefited from local leadership mature enough to lead two branches in a country with a membership of less than 400. Detachment from mission headquarters may have contributed to the resilience of local leadership that has learned better self-reliance in managing Church affairs compared to other African countries with small LDS populations. Developed local leadership provides the opportunity for greater accommodation of new converts.

Temple

Mauritius belongs to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District, nearly 2,000 miles away. The small membership likely has few temple visits due to distance and expenses. A closer, potential temple in Madagascar in the future would significantly lessen demands on time and finances to visit the temple.

Comparative Growth

Mauritius has experienced the slowest membership growth in Africa. The only other countries in Africa with smaller membership either have not had a continuous Church presence or had the Church first established after 2000. The small Church membership appears more resilient than other comparable African nations with small memberships, as manifested by two congregations functioning.

Most Christian denominations experience more limited growth in Mauritius compared to other African nations. Outreach for other churches is also limited due to the islands' remote location and greater receptivity in other African nations. Pentecostals have seen the greatest growth. Despite similar challenges with the LDS Church, other Christian groups have memberships in the thousands or tens of thousands. This likely demonstrates that most Christian groups have more active membership in sharing their beliefs with those around them and that these groups have been more efficient with limited missionary resources.

Future Prospects

Due to limited missionary resources and a lack of member involvement in missionary work, little membership growth will likely occur in the medium-term future. Additional cities in predominantly Hindu and Muslim areas are challenging to open with full-time missionaries but are key to greater country outreach. In order to accommodate the unique challenges in Mauritius and Reunion, a mission for the two islands may one day be reorganized and based in Reunion. A district may be organized one day for Mauritius if additional congregations are created and staffed by local members.

MAYOTTE

Geography

AREA: 374 square km. Located in the Mozambique Channel of the Indian Ocean and comprising a small island part of the Comoro Archipelago, Mayotte is a departmental collectivity of France with dependent status. Hilly terrain crossed with deep valleys comprise most the terrain. Some small islands surround the main volcanic island. Cyclones are a natural hazard.

Peoples

Mayotte native: 64.7%

Comorian: 28.1%

French/overseas French: 3.9%

Madagascan: 2.8%

Other: 0.5%

Two-thirds of the island population are indigenous. Most of the remaining one-third are Comorian.⁷⁹¹

Population: 231,139 (July 2010)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.171% (2010)

Fertility Rate: 5.4 children born per woman (2010)

Life Expectancy: 60.99 male, 65.63 female (2010)

Languages: Maore (68%), Bushi (28%), other (4%). French is the official language. Maore is a Bantu language related to Swahili and Comorian, whereas Bushi is a Malayo-Polynesian language related to Malagasy.

Literacy: 86%

History

Along with the remainder of the Comoro Archipelago, Mayotte [the French corruption of the Arabic word *Maore* or *Mawuti* meaning island of the dead⁷⁹²] was first populated by Austronesian and Bantu settlers during the first millennium AD. Arab traders and merchants traveled from the Horn of Africa and established a trading and transit center on the islands to traffic goods from the African interior. Arabs introduced Islam to the indigenous inhabitants and intermarried. In the mid-nineteenth century, the French gained control and established a colony. In 1974, Mayotte was the only island in the archipelago that did not vote in favor of independence from France. In March 2009, Mayotte voted to become France's 101st department and fifth overseas department. Comoros continues to claim Mayotte.

Culture

Mayotte shares many cultural similarities with Comoros but integrates many aspects of French and Western

⁷⁹¹ "Mayotte," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 19 January 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayotte>

⁷⁹² "Mayotte," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 19 January 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayotte>

culture into society, specifically education. Nearly the entire population is Muslim. Arabs have heavily influenced culture, but locals have retained many of their own cultural practices, customs, and some indigenous beliefs. Rice, fish, coconuts, and roots are staple foods. Alcohol consumption rates are low. Polygamy has traditionally been socially accepted and legal, although polygamous marriages are banned as of 2011 due to Mayotte becoming a department of France.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$4,900 (2005) [12.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: N/A

Corruption Index: N/A

Agricultural activity drives the local economy, mainly fishing and raising livestock. French financial assistance and food imports are vital to economic growth and stability, as Mayotte does not produce enough food to feed its population. Vanilla, ylang-ylang, coffee, and copra are common crops. Industries include construction and lobster and shrimp fishing. Trade primarily occurs with metropolitan France.

Faiths

Muslim: 97%

Christian: 3%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 6,934

Jehovah's Witnesses 81 1

Seventh Day Adventists 1,402 17 (includes Reunion)

Latter-day Saints less than 10 1?

Religion

The population is homogenously Muslim. Christians account for virtually all remaining non-Muslims. Most Christians are Catholic. There are small numbers of Protestants and Evangelicals.

Religious Freedom

The French constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the local government. There are no restrictions regarding proselytism or the placement of foreign missionaries.

Largest Villages

Labattoir, Kawéni, Mtsapéré, Pamandzi, Kavani, Passamainty, Sada, Koungou, Mamoudzou, Chiconi.

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

None of the ten largest villages have an LDS congregation. Forty-seven percent (47%) of the population resides in the ten most populous villages.

LDS Background

The Church reported a small presence on Mayotte between 2005 and 2009. Most Latter-day Saints that lived

on Mayotte during this period were native Mahoran. There were seven Latter-day Saints in 2005, thirteen in 2006, and seven in 2007. No membership totals have been reported since 2008. Most members appeared to have left the island in 2008 and 2009, possibly emigrating elsewhere. In early 2011, there were likely less than ten members. The Mayotte Branch was discontinued in late 2009. LDS meetings previously occurred in a member's home. Most members appeared to be active in the late 2000s, and activity rates were likely over 50%. All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in French and Malagasy. LDS materials translated into Comorian are limited to the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and *Gospel Principles*. The *Liahona* magazine has twelve French issues and four Malagasy issues a year. LDS Church had not conducted humanitarian or development work in Mayotte as of early 2013. It is unclear whether an LDS congregation or Latter-day Saints remain on the island. Mayotte is assigned to the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission, the Africa Southeast Area, and the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district.

Opportunities

The government does not restrict missionaries from open proselytism. The Church does not appear to face any legal obstacles preventing the reestablishment of a branch or assignment of full-time foreign missionaries. Due to the small geographic size and high population density of Mayotte, half a dozen mission outreach centers could effectively reach the majority of the population. Reestablishment of the Church would most likely occur in the most populous urban areas of Mamoudzou and Pamandzi or in communities with concentrated numbers of Christians. There remain few, if any, active members on Mayotte. A few convert baptisms may have occurred when the Mayotte Branch operated. Latter-day Saint converts appear highly dedicated to the Church and experience moderate to high retention, as they must overcome strong ethno-religious ties. Mahoran and Comorian communities share common culture and closely related languages, reducing potential ethnic integration challenges at church. Widespread use of French reduces the need for additional translations of LDS materials into Comorian or Maore. Literacy rates are higher in Mayotte than in neighboring Comoros, which increases the utility of distributing LDS proselytism literature in French and Comorian. Local members staffed the leadership for the tiny Mayotte Branch when it operated. A lack of local members and potential leadership may have contributed to the closure of the branch. Independent local leadership will be required to ensure long-term sustainability.

Challenges

The highly homogenous Muslim population has tolerated a Christian minority but remains largely unresponsive and resistant to Christian missionary efforts. French culture has increased secularism that has been apparent in reduced mosque attendance. Although Mayotte does not impose legal restrictions on proselytism like Comoros, Mayotte retains a deep Islamic heritage. The status change of Mayotte to an overseas department of France in 2011 may weaken some Islamic influence on society, but religious practice may only become supplanted with secularism and indifference to religion altogether. With the closure of the Mayotte Branch in 2009, the entire population is unreached by the LDS Church. Low receptivity, limited missionary manpower and resources assigned to the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission, distance from established mission outreach centers, and lack of native members challenge efforts to reestablish a church presence in the near future. Mayotte natives living in France or other overseas French departments are often accessible by LDS missionaries, but their small numbers and strong ethno-religious ties to Islam make concentrated mission efforts unfeasible. No missionaries appear to have served from Mayotte, and no foreign missionaries have been assigned. Infrequent visits from missionaries serving in the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission may occur. Mayotte is one of a few Muslim African nations that have ever had a published LDS presence. The only homogenous Muslim country in the region that had a reported LDS congregation in early 2011 was Djibouti, and the branch primarily served United States servicemen. With the exception of nations in North Africa, Somalia is the only other predominantly Muslim country in Africa to have ever had an LDS presence. Missionary-oriented Christian groups have a tiny presence in Mayotte and have not achieved noticeable,

sustainable growth due to challenges developing a missionary approach tailored to the religious and cultural background of the indigenous population.

Prospects

A resistive population to Christian missionary activity, remote location, small population, lack of local Latter-day Saints, and limited missionary resources dedicated to the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission create a less favorable outlook for the future reestablishment of a permanent LDS congregation on Mayotte. The changed political status of Mayotte to an overseas department of France in 2011 may eventually improve the openness of local culture to Christianity, although this is uncertain, as Mayotte remains homogenously Muslim after more than a century and a half of French administration. The closure of the sole LDS branch in 2009 may indicate challenges for reestablishment of the church due to continued member emigration.

MOZAMBIQUE

Geography

AREA: 799,380 square km. Mozambique occupies a large portion of the Indian Ocean coast of southeastern Africa. Bordering countries include South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Tanzania. A tropical to a semi-tropical climate results from Mozambique's latitudinal location and position next to the Indian Ocean. Northern Mozambique is marked by many plateaus and highlands, while central and southern Mozambique consist of flatter areas with mountains near Maputo. The Zambezi River divides the country in half as it flows from west to east, emptying in the ocean. Mozambique is divided into ten provinces and one city.

Peoples

African: 99.66%

Euro-Africans: 0.2%

Indians: 0.08%

Europeans: 0.06%

African peoples are Bantu in origin and primarily include Makhuwa and Lomwe in the north, Tsonga in the south, and Sena around the Zambezi River. Indians arrived over hundreds of years. Europeans of Portuguese heritage form most of the white population.

Population: 23,515,934 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.442% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 5.4 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 51.26 male, 52.8 female (2012)

Languages: Emakhuwa (26.1%), Xichangana (11.3%), Portuguese (8.8%), Elomwe (7.6%), Cisena (6.8%), Echuwabo (5.8%), other ethnic languages (32%), other foreign languages (0.3%), unspecified (1.3%). Portuguese is the official language that is spoken by 33% of Mozambicans as a second language. Forty-three languages are spoken in Mozambique. Languages with over one million speakers include Makhuwa (3.1 million), Tsonga (1.7 million), Ndau (1.6 million), Lomwe (1.5 million), Sena (1.3 million), and Tswa (1.2 million).

Literacy: 47.8% (2003)

History

Contact with the Middle East and South Asia came around 1000 AD. The Portuguese colonized the area of what is now Mozambique from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Mozambique was one of the last large African countries to gain independence from its colonizing European nation in 1975. Marxism was quickly adopted, and civil war erupted in 1977. The civil war lasted until 1992, resulting in the widespread planting of landmines and delayed economic and social development. During the first decades of independence, many emigrated from Mozambique due to war and drought. After the civil war ended, many Mozambicans returned.

to their homeland. Despite recent growth and development of the country's infrastructure, Mozambique has some of the lowest standards of living, life expectancy, and health care.

Culture

Mozambique shares many cultural similarities with Portugal due to the hundreds of years of Portuguese colonialism. Use of Portuguese as a second language has facilitated the unification of the country's many ethnic groups. The Catholic Church is a strong influence on society. A greater emphasis on Mozambican's native African heritage and culture has emerged following independence. Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are lower than world averages.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,100 (2011) [2.29% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.322

Corruption Index: 2.7 (2011)

Due to Mozambique's long-lasting civil war, little economic growth occurred until recently. Agriculture drives the economy, with over 80% of Mozambique's labor force employed in agriculture. Food, chemicals, and aluminum mining dominate industry. Greater economic growth may result in projects improving Mozambique's infrastructure. Mozambique fails to take advantage of its coastal location to trade outside of Africa. South Africa is Mozambique's largest import and export partner. Other countries that receive Mozambican exports include Italy, Spain, and Belgium. A large hydroelectric dam on the Zambezi River provides needed electricity but falls short of requirements to further develop the economy. Corruption is perceived as widespread and present in all areas of society. Mozambique is a transshipment point for illicit drugs, some of which are also produced in Mozambique. The banking system is vulnerable to money laundering, but the poor banking and economic infrastructure limit Mozambique's utility as a money laundering center.

Faiths

Christians: 41.3%

Muslim: 17.8%

Other: 17.8%

None: 23.1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic: 4,000,000

Zion Christian 3,792,124

Seventh Day Adventist 275,639 994

Jehovah's Witnesses 51,214 1,032

Latter-day Saints 6,029 21

Religion

Mozambique has one of the largest populations in Africa that does not profess any religion organized religion, with many following tribal beliefs. Catholicism arrived with Portuguese colonization and is strongest in

Quelimane. Muslims mainly reside in the north, and their numbers are disputed. Protestant groups function throughout the country and are quickly growing.⁷⁹³

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects the freedom of religion, which is also upheld by the government. Christian missionaries operate freely. Some Muslims feel mistreated due to most government leaders professing Christianity.

Major Cities

Urban: 37%

Maputo, Matola, Nampula, Beira, Chimoio, **Nacala**, Quelimane, **Mocuba**, Tete, **Gurué**, **Lichinga**, **Pemba**, **Xai-Xai**, Maxixe.

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

Eight of the fourteen cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the national population resides in the fourteen most populous cities.

LDS History

The first Mozambicans joined the Church in other countries. These early converts later returned, shared the gospel with their families, and assisted in establishing the Church and preparing the way for missionaries to arrive. The first branch in Mozambique was created in Maputo in 1996,⁷⁹⁴ where Brother Samo Paulo Goncalves proved instrumental in the Church's legal recognition by the government in that same year. In the Beira area, the first converts baptized in the city organized several unofficial congregations with hundreds attending in 1999. In 1999, the first senior missionary couple and the first two young full-time missionaries were assigned to the country from the South Africa Johannesburg Mission. Elder Richard G. Scott visited in October and dedicated Mozambique for missionary work.⁷⁹⁵ Mozambique as a whole was assigned to the South Africa Johannesburg Mission sometime in late 1999 or the early 2000s. The Mozambique Maputo Mission was organized in 2005 and also included Angola. In the late 2000s and in 2010, missionaries were assigned to half a dozen cities outside of Beira, Maputo, and Marromeu for the first time.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 6,029 (2012)

There were 200 members in 1997 and 528 members in 2000. Rapid membership growth occurred throughout most of the 2000s as membership reached 1,352 in 2002, 2,951 in 2004, 3,733 in 2006, 4,851 in 2008, and 5,392 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates ranged from a high of 60.6% in 2001 to a low of 4.7% in 2009 and generally varied from 15%–50%. In 2010, one in 4,256 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 21 Groups: 3+ (April 2013)

In 1999, there were two branches in Mozambique: one in Beira and one in Maputo. The Beira Branch was administered by the Zimbabwe Harare Mission, whereas the Maputo Branch was administered by the South

⁷⁹³ "Mozambique," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2011. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148708.htm>

⁷⁹⁴ "Mozambique," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/mozambique>

⁷⁹⁵ Stahle, Shaun D. "New mission: Miracle in Mozambique," LDS Church News, 8 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46689/New-mission-Miracle-in-Mozambique.html>

Africa Johannesburg Mission. A branch was created in 2000 in Marromeau, an isolated town on the banks of the Zambezi River in central Mozambique.⁷⁹⁶ By the end of 2000, there were five branches.

Rapid growth in membership and new congregations continued, resulting in the creation of the first district in Mozambique in Beira in 2003. The Beira Mozambique District initially included the Beira 1st, Beira 2nd, Manga, Inhamizua, and Marromeau Branches.⁷⁹⁷ A second district was organized in Maputo in July 2003. The number of branches totaled nine in 2003, fourteen in 2004, seventeen in 2005, fifteen in 2007, eighteen in 2008, seventeen in 2009, eighteen in 2010, and nineteen in early 2011.

The first branches outside of Beira and Maputo were organized in 2005 in Nampula, Tete, and Quelimane. Branches in Nampula and Quelimane were discontinued in 2007. The Nampula Branch became a group, and it is unclear whether a group continues to function in Quelimane. In the fall of 2008, the Nampula Branch was reorganized, and missionaries were assigned to the city for the first time. New branches organized in 2010 and 2011 included the Manga 3rd and the Luaha Branches. For reasons that are not entirely clear, two branches in Marromeau were consolidated into a single branch in 2011. In 2011, there were at least six groups operating in Chimoio, Djuba, Maxixe, Quelimane, and Dondo (Dondo and Balansa). In 2012, branches were organized in Chimoio and Quelimane.

Activity and Retention

Six hundred fifty members attended the organization of the Beira Mozambique District in 2003. The average number of members per congregation increased from 106 in 2000 to 300 in 2010. Four hundred thirty were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. The number of active members in Mozambique is difficult to ascertain due to sporadic changes in sacrament attendance in many of the branches. Many Mozambican members who attend sacrament meetings do not do so regularly, leaving many branches with problems with leadership. Missionaries frequently serve in branch presidencies or report vacancies in branch presidencies that take months to fill.

In Marromeau, many members attend the two branches. Even with high attendance that rivals nearby Beira where an entire district of the Church of six branches functions, one of the three missionary companionships in Marromeau was designated as reactivation missionaries in the fall of 2009. By the spring of 2009, attendance in the Nampula Branch was reported to be around seventy people a week. Some branches report sacrament attendance as high as 200 on some weeks.

Nationwide, the average number of active members appears to be around one hundred active members per branch. Most groups have between forty and 120 attending church meetings weekly, although most are investigators. The number of active members in Mozambique is estimated at approximately 2,000 or 38% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Portuguese.

Most church materials and all LDS scriptures are available in Portuguese. No native languages have church materials translated.

⁷⁹⁶ "Man with a mission shared faith among friends, neighbors," LDS Church News, 2 December 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38963/Man-with-a-mission-shared-faith-among-friends-neighbors.html>

⁷⁹⁷ Orton, Elder Ferron; Orton, Sister Peggy. "Spreading the gospel in Africa," LDS Church News, 17 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43773/Spreading-the-gospel-in-Africa.html>

Meetinghouses

One of the challenges missionaries serving in Mozambique report is the Church's difficulty in adjusting to Mozambican standards of living. Some LDS chapels built in the country look very out of place in a nation where many of the people live in poverty. Missionaries reported some congregations meet in very humble, more commonplace locations such as in older buildings and in tent-like structures. However, a recently completed chapel in Marromeau is perhaps the most modern, well-built structure in the entire town. Although the Church seeks to provide clean and beautiful chapels for worship, some of these structures are reported by missionaries to seem very out of place and perhaps even condescending in the context of Mozambican living standards, in addition to the high costs incurred in their construction and maintenance.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Mozambique suffers from poverty and high unemployment. The Church has participated in humanitarian projects, most of which aim to meet Mozambicans most immediate needs of clean water and aid from natural disaster. Many humanitarian projects had been carried out by the Church since as early as 1990.⁷⁹⁸ Aid was sent to Mozambique and other drought-affected African nations in 1992.⁷⁹⁹ Another shipment of aid to Mozambique and Zimbabwe was sent by the Church in 2000.⁸⁰⁰ The Church donated wheelchairs that were distributed among the ten administrative provinces in 2004.⁸⁰¹ The Church in conjunction with other aid organizations such as the American Red Cross began a country-wide vaccination of children for measles in an effort to try to eliminate the disease. A total of seven million youth received vaccinations in a ten-day period in 2005.⁸⁰² The Church has also held employment workshops and has carried out clean water projects.⁸⁰³

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church has increasingly utilized widespread religious freedom with the organization of the Mozambique Maputo Mission and the opening of additional cities to missionary work. Opportunities for missionary work among Muslim groups, which in many nations cannot be proselytized, have yet to be explored in northern Mozambique.

Cultural Issues

LDS missionaries report that Mozambicans are highly receptive to missionary activity and willingly accept baptism but often struggle to develop habitual church attendance and a single affiliation with a particular Christian denomination. Many converts are consequently baptized prematurely and are not retained. Illiteracy and poverty limit growth and member activity. Nominalism and syncretism may also have contributed to the low LDS activity rates.

⁷⁹⁸ Cannon, Mike. "LDS volunteer efforts bless lives worldwide," LDS Church News, 15 December 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20212/LDS-volunteer-efforts-bless-lives-worldwide.html>

⁷⁹⁹ "Deadly drought," LDS Church News, 26 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22762/Deadly-drought.html>

⁸⁰⁰ Dockstader, Julie. "Church ships flood aid to Africa," LDS Church News, 11 March 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37312/Church-ships-flood-aid-to-Africa.html>

⁸⁰¹ "Wheelchairs donated in Mozambique," LDS Church News, 18 September 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46145/Wheelchairs-donated-in-Mozambique.html>

⁸⁰² Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Fighting measles in Mozambique," LDS Church News, 24 September 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47859/Fighting-measles-in-Mozambique.html>

⁸⁰³ "Projects—Mozambique," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 27 May 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-236,00.html>

National Outreach

Of the national population, 16.5% resides in cities with LDS congregations. LDS mission outreach significantly expanded in the 2000s, as membership increased by a factor of ten, and the number of congregations nearly quadrupled. Despite recent progress expanding national outreach, many areas of the country still do not have an official church presence. Mozambicans living in the six provinces without an independent branch amounted to 10.6 million in 2007, or 51% of the total population of the country. Unreached areas with the highest populations are in northern Mozambique. The lack of national outreach has partly resulted from the Church's recent entry into Mozambique.

The location of the Mozambique Maputo Mission's headquarters in the southernmost tip of the country creates a large obstacle for the future growth. Although Maputo is Mozambique's capital and largest city, it is disconnected from the rest of the country where the majority of people reside. This has presented greater difficulty in opening additional cities to missionary work in the north. No cities or towns in the surrounding areas of Maputo have opened to missionary work since the mission was organized in 2005, indicating that distance is not the absolute factor in determining when and where new cities are opened for missionary work. Rather, the lack of new cities being opening for missionary work has resulted from low member activity rates, limited missionary manpower, and an emphasis on building up established congregations.

Additional cities will likely open as Mozambicans join the Church and move to cities without LDS congregations and the number of missionaries assigned to the mission increase. Some cities without congregations have members who travel to the city with the closest branch for Sunday meetings. Missionaries serving in Nampula in 2009 reported that the first counselor in the branch presidency traveled every week from his home in Nacala for Church meetings. Devoted Mozambican members are laying a foundation for growth in the years to come in congregations closest to where they reside and in the communities in which they live.

Teaching literacy skills to illiterate Mozambicans provides opportunities for service and outreach. Numerous humanitarian opportunities also exist that can help to expand national outreach.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The number of branches increased from fourteen at the end of 2004 to eighteen at the end of 2008, while membership increased from 2,951 to 4,851. Due to membership growth rates exceeding congregation growth rates, the average number of members per branch increased from 170 in 2000 to 270 in 2008. This indicates either a worsening member inactivity problem or policies delaying the creation of new branches until existing branches achieve larger active membership. Missionaries reported that inactivity and retention problems were most severe in Beira, where missionaries report that little gospel teaching and preparation provided to converts during the years when the most rapid growth in nominal membership occurred. Overall, Mozambican membership struggles with increasing dedication and consistency in church activity.

The large number of converts who are not retained limits church growth. Many investigators were rushed to baptism without developing habits of regular church attendance before baptism. Since the organization of the Mozambique Maputo Mission, retention in the country appears to have stabilized, but the number of baptisms in the country has declined dramatically. This decrease in the convert baptisms reflects increased missionary time spent strengthening less active members, training active members, and assisting in leadership positions, but less missionary time is spent proselyting and finding with the exception of cities recently opened to missionary work. The mission has made significant progress increasing convert baptismal standards in recently opened cities such as Dondo and Maxixe, as indicated by waiting for investigators to develop habitual church attendance and receive training and support to later hold leadership positions, thereby reducing demands of

full-time missionaries for administrative duties. Time will only tell whether these standards are consistently enforced.

Membership in Mozambique is concentrated in Beira, Maputo, and Marromeau. The distribution of the bulk of membership between these three widely separated cities lessens the likelihood of a stake being organized in Mozambique in the near future. Other African nations with smaller memberships have experienced the organization of a first stake when church membership has been concentrated around one large city. These African nations also have higher member activity rates than Mozambique.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Little ethnic violence occurs in Mozambique compared to neighboring nations. Challenges exist in accommodating converts of differing cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds into the same congregations.

Language Issues

No Church materials or scriptures have been translated into native languages of Mozambique. Nearly all missionary work is conducted among those who can speak Portuguese. The scriptures and most Church materials are available in Portuguese due to the large Portuguese-speaking membership in South American and Portugal. The Book of Mormon and several Church materials have been translated into Shona, a language spoken in neighboring Zimbabwe, which has linguistic similarities with many languages in central Mozambique such as Ndaou. The long-term potential for Portuguese is limited, as only about 40% of Mozambicans speak Portuguese as a first or second language, and most of these, approximately 33%, are second-language speakers with limited proficiency. As the Church grows in areas where most Mozambicans do not speak Portuguese, it is likely that church materials will be translated into commonly spoken native languages. Low literacy rates delay the need for translations of LDS materials into indigenous languages.

Missionary Service

The first missionary from Mozambique to serve a full-time mission was called in 2000. Two years later, twenty Mozambican missionaries were called or serving.⁸⁰⁴ By the end of 2004 there were approximately thirty missionaries serving in Mozambique.⁸⁰⁵ Starting in late 2005 or early 2006, missionaries serving in Mozambique began attending the Missionary Training Center (MTC) in Sao Paulo, Brazil to be instructed in the Portuguese language. In addition to Mozambique, missionaries serving from Angola, Cape Verde, and Zimbabwe also began to receive training at the Brazilian MTC.⁸⁰⁶ In 2009, the number of missionaries serving in Mozambique increased to around one hundred. Local members regularly serve full-time missions but are unable to be self-sufficient in staffing the Mozambique Maputo Mission. Emphasis on youth attending seminary and institute offers valuable missionary preparation and training that could increase rates of missionary service.

Leadership

Growth in membership maturity was evident in the Maputo Mozambique District Conference in November 2004 when forty men were sustained to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.⁸⁰⁷ Local members appear to serve

⁸⁰⁴ "Mozambique," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/mozambique>

⁸⁰⁵ Stahle, Shaun D. "New mission: Miracle in Mozambique," LDS Church News, 8 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46689/New-mission-Miracle-in-Mozambique.html>

⁸⁰⁶ Soli, Ana Claudia. "'Happiest place' is Brazil's MTC," LDS Church News, 7 January 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48352/Happiest-place-is-Brazils-MTC.html>

⁸⁰⁷ Stahle, Shaun D. "New mission: Miracle in Mozambique," LDS Church News, 8 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com>

as branch presidents in nearly all branches in the country, whereas full-time missionaries often lead groups or dependent branches. Although limited in number, returned missionaries offer an excellent source of trained, experienced leadership if they remain active after their missions. Careful and coordinated efforts to retain male converts and channel them into leadership positions in their local congregations may increase the strength and size of the local leadership body.

Temple

Mozambique is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Temple trips do not appear to occur regularly despite relative close proximity to the temple in South Africa. Travel costs and time appear to be the primary barriers reducing the number of members who would potentially go to the temple. Prospects for a closer temple to Mozambique appear unlikely for the foreseeable future due to limited church membership in the region.

Health and Safety

Apostle Elder Russell M. Nelson visited Mozambique with his wife in May 2009 and attended a district conference. Prior to attending the district conference, Elder and Sister Nelson and the mission president and his wife were assaulted and robbed in the mission home by armed assailants.⁸⁰⁸ Missionaries and mission leaders hoped that the incident would not lead to animosity between the Church and Mozambique. This incident was a reminder of the dangers that exist in many of the nations where the Church is now established.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church in Mozambique experienced some of the most rapid membership and congregational growth in the world during the 2000s among countries with fewer than 10,000 members. Member activity rates and the percentage of members enrolled in seminary and institute are comparable to other nations in southern Africa. The percentage of the population reached by the Church is representative of Africa. No other nation in Africa appears to have experienced as great an expansion in national outreach as Mozambique during the past decade.

Other Christian denominations that stress member involvement in missionary work report moderate to rapid growth. Pentecostal Christianity has experienced great success in Mozambique, whereas Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses report moderate growth in recent years. Most outreach-oriented Christians have operated in Mozambique for decades longer than the LDS Church. Recent growth in most Christian denominations in Mozambique indicates that Mozambicans demonstrate interest in Christianity and in organized religion.

Future Prospects

The Church will likely experience moderate growth in the coming years in Mozambique due to the high receptivity of Mozambicans but will also experience continued struggles with maintaining member activity rates and retaining converts. Challenges will likely continue for new converts to stay active in the Church, serve in various Church callings, and develop in spiritual maturity. Groups in Dondo, Maxixe, and Djuba will likely become branches in the near future as long as self-sustaining leadership is established. Additional cities will likely open to missionary work and have groups established, including Inhambane, Nacala, and Xai-Xai due to periodic visits by missionaries to some of these cities and the proximity of these cities to cities in which

[com/articles/46689/New-mission-Miracle-in-Mozambique.html](http://www.lds.org/articles/46689/New-mission-Miracle-in-Mozambique.html)

⁸⁰⁸ "Elder Russell Nelson, wife robbed in Mozambique," LDS Church News, 31 May 2009, <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57416/Elder-Russell-Nelson-wife-robbed-in-Mozambique.html>

the Church has already been established. To better serve populations in northern areas, an additional mission may be organized in Beira and may facilitate greater progress with chronic inactivity issues in Beira. More regular training for local leadership and greater monitoring of convert baptismal standards would likely occur if a second mission were created in Beira. The Maputo Mozambique District appears closest to becoming a stake, as the headquarters for the mission is based in the city and growth has been more sustainable.

NAMIBIA

Geography

AREA: 390,757 square km. Bordering a large section of the Atlantic coast of Southern Africa, Namibia borders Angola, Zambia, Botswana, and South Africa. Most of the country consists of high plateaus subject to an arid, hot climate. The Namib Desert is the most defining geographical feature. Namibia has the second lowest population density in the world after Mongolia. The country is divided into thirteen administrative regions.

Peoples

Ovambo: 50%
Kavangos: 9%
Herero: 7%
Damara: 7%
Mixed: 6.5%
White: 6%
Nama: 5%
Caprivian: 4%
Bushmen: 3%
Baster: 2%
Tswana: 0.5%

Black Africans make up 87.5% of the population. Half the population is Ovambo, and slightly more than a tenth is mixed race or white. Most black ethnic groups belong originate from Bantu settlers. Nama are the largest Khoisan ethnic group.

Population: 2,165,828 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.817% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.41 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 52.47 male, 51.86 female (2012)

Languages: Afrikaans (60%), German (32%), English (7%), Indigenous languages (1%). English is the official language, yet Afrikaans and German are important for communication between ethnic groups and business. Oshiwambo is the most widely spoken native language, with 807,000 speakers. There are no native languages with over one million speakers, and Afrikaans is the only second language with over one million speakers.

Literacy: 85% (2001)

History

Khoisan peoples first settled Namibia, and Bantu tribes arrived in the fourteenth century. Namibia became a German protectorate in the late nineteenth century named South West Africa. South Africa took control starting in World War I. The South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), a Marxist guerrilla group, began a war for independence in 1966. The United Nations struck a peace plan in which South Africa agreed

to stop its administration of South West Africa in 1988. Independence from South Africa occurred in 1990 under the name Namibia, named after the Namib Desert. Walvis Bay remained administered by South Africa until integration into Namibia in 1994. SWAPO continues to govern the country.

Culture

Segregation continues between whites and blacks due to inequality of wealth. Whites control most businesses and live separate from black communities. Those living in rural areas are pastoralists or farmers. Namibians are proud of their nature conservancy efforts, as Namibia was the first country to have nature conservancy as part of its constitution.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$7,300 (2011) [15.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.625

Corruption Index: 4.4 (2011)

The economy is strongly tied to the South African economy due to recent independence. Electricity is supplied from South Africa, and the Namibian dollar is set one to one with the South African rand. Whites possess most of the wealth, whereas most blacks live in poverty. 55.8% of the population lives on less than two U.S. dollars a day. Mining is the most important industry. Namibia is one of the top world producers of uranium and other minerals including zinc, copper, silver, and diamonds. Agriculture employs half of the workforce. Tourism continues to grow. Namibia partially depends on food imports to feed its population. Government has recently begun utilizing its fisheries. Namibia experiences some of the lowest corruption levels in Africa.

Faiths

Christian: 80–90%

Indigenous beliefs: 10–20%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Lutheran 1,054,333

Seventh Day Adventists 17,507 79

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,838 38

Latter-day Saints 763 2

Religion

Half of Christians are Lutherans. Catholics and Anglicans are other major Christian denominations. Many other Christian groups operate and have smaller followings. Pentecostals are growing rapidly. Some syncretism occurs between indigenous beliefs and Christianity, although not as widespread as in other African nations. Hundreds of years of missionary activity in Namibia have deeply established Christianity and kept syncretism to a minimum. The Himba, Herero, and San traditionally practice indigenous religions.⁸⁰⁹

Religious Freedom

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and respected by the government. Government does not

⁸⁰⁹ "Namibia," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148710.htm>

sponsor any religious group and seeks to treat its citizens equally, regardless of religious affiliation. To register with the government, a Church must have 250 members and have operated in Namibia for at least two years.⁸¹⁰

Major Cities

Urban: 37%

Windhoek, **Rundu**, **Walvis Bay**, **Oshakati**, **Swakopmund**, **Katima Mulilo**, **Rehoboth**, **Otjiwarongo**, **Grootfontein**, **Keetmanshoop**.

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

Only Windhoek has a Church presence. Twenty-four (24%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

Few Church members lived in Namibia between the early 1970s and 1990. In 1978, the first missionaries arrived.⁸¹¹ Elder Russell M. Nelson dedicated Namibia for the preaching of the Gospel in August 1992.⁸¹² The seminary program began in 1995. Many Namibian members traveled to South Africa to hear Elder M Russell Ballard speak in 1996.⁸¹³ In 2013, Namibia was reassigned to the newly organized Botswana Gaborone Mission.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 763 (2012)

In 1990, there were less than twenty members nationwide. A year later, there were one hundred people attending church meetings in two branches and around seven convert baptisms a month.⁸¹⁴ By the end of 2000, there were 274 members.

Membership growth rates have widely fluctuated in the 2000s. The most rapid growth occurred when membership increased by 15%. Negative growth occurred once in 2005 when membership dropped by 2.5%. Growth rates typically range from 8%–14%. Membership has increased by twenty to sixty a year since 2000 except for 2005. By the end of 2008, there were 562 members. Most members were blacks in 2009.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 2 Groups: 1 (April 2013)

The first group was organized in 1973 and met in a home of a church member. A branch was organized in Windhoek in 1983.⁸¹⁵ Missionaries did not establish a permanent presence until 1990 when four elder and

⁸¹⁰ "Namibia," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148710.htm>

⁸¹¹ "Namibia," Country Profile, retrieved 31 December 2010. <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/namibia>

⁸¹² Mostert, Mary. "Prayers of dedication offered on 4 nations in central, southern Africa," LDS Church News, 26 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22452/Prayers-of-dedication-offered-on-4-nations-in-central-southern-Africa.html>

⁸¹³ "5,000 attend conference in South Africa; example of growth of the Church," LDS Church ENws, 2 March 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27515/5000-attend-conference-in-South-Africa-example-of-growth-of-the-Church.html>

⁸¹⁴ Newman, Mark; Hagen, Greg. "Namibia: Gospel springs forth in harsh desert land of new African nation," LDS Church News, 5 October 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21431/Namibia-Gospel-springs-forth-in-harsh-desert-land-of-new-African-nation.html>

⁸¹⁵ "Namibia," Country Profile, retrieved 31 December 2010. <http://beta-newsroom.lds.org/country/namibia>

a senior missionary couple arrived from the South Africa Cape town Mission. A second branch was created in Rehoboth around this time. A district was created from the Windhoek and Rehoboth Branches in 1991 that was discontinued the following year.⁸¹⁶ The Rehoboth Branch was discontinued in the 1990s. In 1998, Namibia was included in the Africa Southeast Area.

A second branch was again created in 2006 in northern Windhoek, named the Katutura Branch. A group of twenty members met in northern Namibia in 2009 for church meetings but likely not as an official group. In late 2009, there were four missionaries serving in the Windhoek branch and six missionaries serving in the Katutura Branch. Missionaries belonged to the Namibia Zone of the South Africa Cape Town Mission.

Activity and Retention

Missionaries estimate that 120–140 members are active among the 300 members in the Katutura Branch. Both branches report a sacrament attendance around 125 a week, indicating that active membership is likely no more than 250 for the entire country, or 45% of total membership. In 1991, nearly all reported members were active, evidenced by sacrament meeting attendance sometimes larger than Namibia's membership.⁸¹⁷ Activity rates began falling in the 1990s. Retention for new converts seems average for most African countries, with likely at least 50% of new members retained a year after baptism. Most of those considered less active or inactive live outside of Windhoek in remote areas of the country, especially in the north. Missionaries work regularly on reactivation of less active members. Fifty-eight members were enrolled in seminary or institute in 2008. Activity among membership living in Windhoek may be as high as 60–70%.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Afrikaans, English, German.

All LDS scriptures are available in Afrikaans, but limited Church materials include the Relief Society Declaration, *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*. German has all LDS scriptures and a wide selection of Church materials translated. No tribal languages have translations of any Church materials. Several Church members speak Portuguese.

Meetinghouses

The first Church built meetinghouse was completed in 1997 for the Windhoek Branch. The Katutura Branch meets in a school in northern Windhoek.

Health and Safety

Namibia suffers from the fifth highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the world. Fifteen percent (15%) of the adult population is infected with HIV/AIDS. Limited health infrastructure, a high number of motor vehicle accidents, and high rates of violent crime all present safety concerns.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Church members have provided community service since the 1990s. In 2006, the Church provided measles

⁸¹⁶ Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac, "Namibia," page 379.

⁸¹⁷ Newman, Mark; Hagen, Greg. "Namibia: Gospel springs forth in harsh desert land of new African nation," LDS Church News, 5 October 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21431/Namibia-Gospel-springs-forth-in-harsh-desert-land-of-new-African-nation.html>

vaccinations in an effort to eradicate the disease in Africa.⁸¹⁸ Local service has been offered through Mormon Helping Hands projects in recent years.⁸¹⁹

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

No government regulations limit the Church's right to assemble and proselyte. The government openly welcomed missionaries upon their return in 1990. Local members have yet to take greater advantage of the freedom of religion provided by their legislation to conduct member missionary work. In the early 2010s, difficult securing foreign missionary visas has disrupted proselytism efforts.

Cultural Issues

Christianity's spread throughout Namibia has brought most to a belief in Christ. Few indigenous beliefs interfere with LDS teachings. Differences in wealth and culture may present some challenges to church growth.

National Outreach

The Church's presence is limited to Windhoek, which accounts for half the population living in the ten largest cities and 14% of the national population. Even in a city with over a quarter of a million people, little outreach is available, considering only two congregations function in the city. Full-time missionaries serve in appreciable numbers for a city with a small Church membership. Two congregations in Windhoek help to accommodate growth. Opportunities exist for converts from unreached areas living in Windhoek to return to their hometowns and establish the Church among family and friends.

A large number of less active members already live too far from Windhoek to attend meetings. Due to separation from the rest of the South Africa Cape Coast Mission, Church leadership has likely been reluctant to open other cities to missionary work. Growth in congregations and membership in areas outside of Windhoek must come from persistence to establish the Church in these locations by local membership and from effort by mission and area leadership to open unreached areas.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity is significantly affected by the distribution of members across a large, sparsely populated country, which means membership numbers are adequate to sustain congregations only in Windhoek. Member activity and church growth may increase if groups or branches are established in remote locations close to where members live. The dissolution of the Rehoboth Branch may have resulted from poor convert retention or member apostasy, but it was more likely due to active members moving away, leaving insufficient infrastructure to maintain church functions. Like South Africa, Namibia may experience emigration issues, particularly with white and wealthier members. This may have been the cause for membership decline in 2005. The other likely cause for membership decline would be updating membership records.

⁸¹⁸ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Measles initiative continues to fight disease in Africa," LDS Church News, 30 September 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49498/Measles-initiative-continues-to-fight-disease-in-Africa.html>

⁸¹⁹ "Blessing Africa with widespread service," LDS Church News, 4 October 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/54590/Blessing-Africa-with-widespread-service.html>

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Tensions between whites and blacks complicate integrating the few white converts into branches that are predominantly black. Membership was likely mostly white when the Church first arrived.

Language Issues

The widespread use of Afrikaans, English, and German facilitate missionary work and convert understanding of the Church's doctrines published in these languages. Missionary work in these languages provides the opportunity to reach most of the population and later translate scriptures or materials in local languages as needed.

The earliest members spoke Afrikaans, English, and German. Currently, Church meetings are likely conducted in English. Several members from nearby African countries stay temporarily and sometimes have difficulty communicating and participating in Church services, speaking their tribal languages or Portuguese (from Angola). Oshiwambo seems the most likely native language for future Church material translations.

Missionary Service

Few local members have served missions, and the LDS Church in Namibia depends on foreign missionaries to staff its local missionary needs. Nearly all local members who serve missions are assigned to missions in Africa. Emphasis on youth-oriented outreach and seminary and institute may improve the sustainability and increase the number of members serving full-time missions.

Leadership

Both branch presidencies are staffed by local Namibian members or African members from neighboring countries. Additional congregations in Windhoek do not appear to be limited by a lack of local leadership. Additional branches or groups outside of Windhoek may have not been created due to a lack in leadership in these areas.

Temple

Namibia is part of the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District. Prospects of closer temple to membership appear highly unlikely due to the small size of membership in Namibia and western South Africa. Temple excursions may occur but appear infrequent.

Comparative Growth

Namibia has experienced the slowest membership growth in mainland Africa. No other country in Africa has had a continual Church presence since the early 1980s or even the 1990s and has fewer than 600 members with the exception of Mauritius. The Church was established in neighboring Botswana in the early 1990s and today has six congregations in multiple cities, a Book of Mormon translation in a tribal language, and more than twice as many members as Namibia.

Jehovah's Witnesses number a thousand more than Latter-day Saints, and Seventh Day Adventists numbered 17,000 in 2008. Despite the small population, many Christian churches have established themselves and achieved sizeable membership. The LDS Church may have not seen as rapid growth as other Christian churches due to the more recent establishment of the Church as well as the allocation of few resources, as LDS

congregations and mission outreach are presently limited to the capital of Windhoek. Local missionary efforts are underdeveloped.

Future Prospects

The outlook for LDS Church growth is positive, as membership growth rates have increased and LDS demographics are representative of the general Namibian population, but outreach remains limited to Windhoek. Additional congregations may be organized in Windhoek as the two functioning branches continue to grow in size. Once there are at least three branches, a district may be organized. Additional cities will likely not open for missionary work in the near future. However, groups or small branches are likely to be established in larger cities, such as Otjiwarongo, Rehoboth, Rundu, and Walvis Bay. Difficulties obtaining foreign missionary visas will likely hamper outreach expansion efforts until sufficiently resolved.

NIGER

Geography

AREA: 1,267,000 square km. Landlocked in Sub-Saharan Western African, Niger is landlocked and borders Libya, Chad, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Algeria. The Sahara Desert experiences a hot, arid climate and occupies all but the southern 20% of the country. Agriculture is limited to the southern areas with savannas receiving the most precipitation. The terrain is very flat with a few mountains in the middle of Niger. The Niger River runs through the far western portions of the country. Overgrazing and desertification are the primary environmental concerns. Niger is divided into eight administrative regions, one of which is the capital district.

Peoples

Haoussa: 55.4%

Djerma Sonrai: 21%

Tuareg: 9.3%

Peuhl: 8.5%

Kanouri Manga: 4.7%

Other: 1.2%

Haoussa live in the most densely populated areas in southern Niger and in northern Nigeria. Djerma Sonrai populate areas along the Niger River. Tuareg reside in northern desert areas, the Peuhl or Fulani in Central Niger, and the Kanouri Manga in southeastern areas.

Population: 17,078,839 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.63% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 7.52 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 52.51 male, 55.13 female (2012)

Languages: Hausa (36%), Zarma (15%), other (49%). French is the official language. Twenty-one native languages are spoken. Most widely spoken languages with less than one million speakers include Fula dialects (900,000), Tamajaq dialects (700,000), and Kanuri dialects (420,000). Languages with over one million speakers include Hausa (5.46 million) and Zarma (2.35 million).

Literacy: 28.7% (2003)

History

African tribes settled Niger thousands of years ago. Various African kingdoms have exerted influence on the region, namely the Songhai, Mali, and Hausa. France began trading and exploring the area in the nineteenth century but did not make Niger a colony until the 1920s. Independence from France occurred in 1960 followed by single-party military rule until 1991. Niger held its first multi-party elections in the early 1990s that led to the establishment of a democratic government in 1993. The democratic government was short-lived and was overthrown in 1996 by military leader named Ibrahim Bare. Pro-democracy fighters killed Bare in 1999 and reestablished the democratic government. Mamadou Tandja has remained president for the past

decade and continues to push toward lengthening his term in office. Fighting between ethnic groups and little government control of Niger has consistently hurt economic development and stability. Insurgency has regularly occurred with some marginalized ethnic groups, mainly the Tuaregs. The Tuaregs rebelled in 2007 and brought war to northern Niger for two years before a ceasefire was reached. Another military coup overthrew the government in February 2010.

Culture

Islam heavily influences society. Polygamy is widespread and socially accepted. At least one-third of women are in a polygamous marriage.⁸²⁰ Niger has low rates of substance abuse, including alcohol and tobacco. The population suffers from having few social and educational institutions. Only 15% of women are literate.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$800 (2011) [1.66% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.295

Corruption Index: 2.5 (2011)

Niger is one of the poorest nations in the world and ranks as one of the worst for quality of life. The greatest obstacles that have prevented growth and continue to curtail economic development include rapid population growth, a landlocked location, recurrent drought, and desertification. Economic growth has been sporadic, increasing by an estimated 9.5% in 2008 and only 3.3% and 3.2% in 2007 and 2009, respectively. High inequality of wealth also characterizes the economy. Agriculture employs 90% of the workforce and produces 39% of the GDP. Services account for 44% of the GDP but employ 4% of the population. Nearly two-thirds of Nigeriens live below the poverty line. Primary agriculture products include cowpeas, cotton, and peanuts. The largest industry is uranium mining, which provides the majority of the export earnings. Fluctuating world prices in uranium heavily influence the overall economy. Several mineral resources remained poorly or not fully exploited including gold, coal and oil. Niger's primary export partner is Japan, which receives 80% of exports. Primary import partners include France, China, and Algeria.

Niger has widespread corruption that has also limited economic growth and development. Corruption levels rank average for the rest of Africa. The president dissolved parliament and the constitutional court in order to retain his power after these institutions declared that he could not run for a third term.⁸²¹ Little progress has been made to improve corruption problems.

Faiths

Muslim: 97%

Christian and other: 3%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic: 16,000

Seventh Day Adventists 181 1

Jehovah's Witnesses 319 6

Latter-day Saints less than 50 0

⁸²⁰ "Gender equality and social institutions in Niger," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 5 February 2010. <http://genderindex.org/country/niger>

⁸²¹ "Corruption Perceptions Index 2009, Regional Highlights: Sub-Saharan Africa," Transparency International, 2009. <http://www.transparencia.org.es/INDICE%20DE%20PERCEPCI%C3%93N%202009/Regiones.%20Africa%20subsahariana.pdf>

Religion

Islam dominates society and daily life. Indigenous beliefs exist particularly in rural areas among minority groups, but the nation has become increasingly Muslim. There is a small Christian community in the larger cities, especially Niamey, which also comprise foreigners from nearby African nations.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 50th

The constitution provides religious freedom, which is usually upheld by the government. Government has expressed concern over maintaining harmony between religious groups, and some officials unsuccessfully tried to restrict freedom of speech in order to maintain civil order. Government recognizes both Christian and Muslim holidays. Political parties are not permitted to integrate religion with politics. Religious groups must register with the government. Government has not shown favoritism to particular religious groups. Foreign missionaries may operate in the country but must register with the government. Religious courses may not be taught in public schools.

Largest Cities

Urban: 16%

Niamey, Zinder, Maradi, Agadez, Tahoua, Arlit, Dosso, Birni n'konni, Tessaoua, Dogondoutchi.

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

None of the ten largest cities have a congregation. Ten percent (10%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

Few or no Nigeriens have joined the Church. Members living in Niger are either Nigeriens who joined the Church in other nations and returned back to their homeland or foreigners.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 (2012)

In 1998, Niger was included in the Africa West Area. No congregations are organized in Niger.

Activity and Retention

Active members likely only consist of native or foreign members who live Church teachings but do not meet for worship services.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French, Arabic.

All LDS scriptures and nearly all Church materials are available in French. The Church has translated all LDS scriptures in Arabic and many unit, priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, young men, young women, primary, missionary, family history, and audiovisual materials. The Church has translated *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* in Hausa.

Meetinghouses

There are no LDS meetinghouses in Niger.

Health and Safety

HIV/AIDS infects 0.8% of the population. Poor sanitation conditions exist and medical infrastructure is limited.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has conducted emergency relief from drought and development work for agriculture. Using funds donated from members during a fast in 1985 for those stricken by famine in Africa, the Church funded a project to start nurseries to provide trees for farmers to plant in order to reduce soil erosion. This project involved government agencies to ensure success in the long run.⁸²² Forty tons of Atmit, a nutritious porridge for those suffering starvation, arrived in Niger in 2005 to feed 7,000 malnourished children. Additional shipments were also made. Logistics were provided by the Catholic Church.⁸²³

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church has not taken advantage of the degree of religious freedom enjoyed in a predominantly Muslim country. No legal issues appear to have prevented the Church's establishment.

Cultural Issues

The influence of Islam may be the largest obstacle for the Church to face. Muslims have been much more tolerant of minority religious groups and should not pose a challenge to proselytism. However Islam's influences on daily life and family may produce challenges for Muslim converts who may face ridicule and ostracism for joining the Church.

The low literacy rate will greatly challenge the Church's establishment, as most cannot read or write. Low literacy for women has contributed to the high birth rate, as they are less likely to find employment and instead stay at home. Leadership development will be challenging if converts are illiterate. The Church has the opportunity to provide service and find investigators through literacy programs.

The large number of Nigeriens in polygamous marriages challenges missionary efforts. Those married to a polygamous spouse must divorce polygamous spouses in order to join the Church. Those with formerly polygamous background also need an interview with a member of the mission or area presidency to approve their baptisms.

National Outreach

No mission outreach occurs in Niger. Only a few members may reside in the country. Outreach will likely begin from Nigeriens joining the Church in other nations and returning to their homeland.

⁸²² "Program 'tailored to meet special needs,'" LDS Church News, 26 May 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20498/Programs-tailored-to-meet-unique-needs.html>

⁸²³ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Efforts to help starving children in Niger," LDS Church News, 20 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47709/Efforts-to-help-starving-children-in-Niger.html>

Urban centers with small Christian populations provide the greatest opportunities for establishing the Church. These locations allow those in surrounding rural areas to travel and learn about the Church and prepare for additional cities to open.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity is limited to relocated members living the teachings of the Church.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Church may face some integration challenges between the Haoussa majority and other ethnic groups once a presence is established.

Language Issues

The Church benefits from limited language materials in Hausa and a large body of materials in French. No LDS materials are available in other native languages. Additional language materials in Hausa and other Nigerien languages are unlikely until a large, strong local membership is developed.

Leadership

The Church lacks local members and does not appear to have any capable of leading a congregation.

Temple

Niger is not assigned to a temple district, but members would likely travel to the Accra Ghana Temple.

Comparative Growth

Several continental African countries have had no reported Church activity like Niger, including The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, and Senegal.

Christian denominations have struggled to establish congregations and attract converts for the past several decades. Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists both had less than 500 members in 2008. Evangelical groups also report severely limited outreach. The greatest organized Christian activity appears to occur with the Catholic Church, which has had a long legacy compared to Protestant denominations. The strong influence of Islam on daily life and the remoteness of Niger appear especially responsible for the low success of Christian proselytism.

Future Prospects

Establishing the Church in Niger will be challenging, as there has never been a Church presence in Niger, and there are very few, if any, Nigeriens who have joined the Church abroad. Together with recent government turmoil, a Church presence in Niger appears unlikely for many more years.

NIGERIA

Geography

AREA: 923,768 square km. Located in West Africa, Nigeria is geographically one of the largest nations in the region and borders Cameroon, Benin, Niger, Chad, and the Gulf of Guinea. Diversity in climate and terrain is high due to Nigeria's latitudinal location. Northern areas stretch into the Sahel and experience semi-arid conditions that gradually transition into savannah in central areas and wet and tropical conditions in southern areas along the coast. Plains occupy most areas with some plateaus and low mountains in central and eastern areas. The Niger River is the largest river and empties into the Gulf of Guinea at the Niger Delta. Drought and flooding are natural hazards. Environmental issues include soil degradation, deforestation, pollution, desertification, oil spills, and urbanization. Nigeria is administratively divided into thirty-six states and one territory.

Peoples

Hausa and Fulani: 29%

Yoruba: 21%

Igbo: 18%

Ijaw: 10%

Kanuri: 4%

Ibibio: 3.5%

Tiv: 2.5%

Other: 12%

Ethnically one of the most diverse nations in Africa, Nigeria has over 250 different ethnic groups. The Hausa and Fulani together constitute the largest portion of Nigerians (29%) and reside in northern states. The Yoruba reside in western states, and the Igbo populate the southeast. The Ijaw are concentrated in the Niger Delta, the Kanuri in the extreme northeast, the Ibibio in the southeast, and the Tiv in Benue State.

Population: 170,123,740 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.553% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 5.38 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 48.95 male, 55.33 female (2012)

Languages: Nigerian Pidgin English (21%), Yoruba (13%), Hausa (13%), Igbo (13%), Fulani (7%), Kanuri (2%), Tiv (2%), Anaang (1%), Ebira (1%), Edo (1%), Izon (1%), Igala (1%), Nupe (1%), other or unknown (23%). There are 514 languages spoken in Nigeria, approximately 80 of which have over 100,000 speakers. The use of English is widespread in Nigeria as a language of interethnic communication. Native languages with over one million speakers include Nigerian Pidgin English (30 million), Yoruba (18.9 million), Hausa (18.5 million), Igbo (18 million), Fulani (9.32 million), Kanuri (3.2 million), Tiv (2.21 million), Anaang (1.4 million), Ebira (1 million), Edo (1 million), and Izon (1 million).

Literacy: 68% (2003)

History

African peoples have inhabited Nigeria for thousands of years. Hausa kingdoms and the Bornu Empire flourished in northern Nigeria beginning in the eleventh century and were significant trading centers between North Africa and West and Central Africa. In the fifteenth century, the Yoruba founded the kingdom of Oyo in southwestern Nigeria, and the kingdom of Benin was founded in south central Nigeria. Islam has historically heavily influenced northern Nigeria. Portuguese explorers were some of the first Europeans who began visiting the area. The British gained control of Nigeria during the late nineteenth century and established colonial rule that led to the unification of several British colonies in the area as Nigeria in 1914. British administration for northern and southern Nigeria was separate, as the Muslim north retained Islamic courts and administrative structure, whereas the government and societal institutions in the Christian and animist south were greatly influenced by the British. Nigerians experienced greater autonomy during the middle of the twentieth century until independence was ultimately achieved in 1960. A military coup overthrew the government in 1966 but failed to unify ethnic groups and reduce tensions. The military realigned administrative divisions from four regions into twelve states, granting greater autonomy to major ethnic groups. Instability persisted as the predominantly Christian southeast attempted to succeed as the Republic of Biafra, resulting in the Nigerian Civil War between 1967 and 1970. Reconstruction and reconciliation was swift following the civil war, although a military coup overthrew the government in 1975. During the remainder of the twentieth century, twenty-four additional administrative states were created. The Nigerian capital was relocated from Lagos to Abuja in 1991. Democratic rule was restored in 1999.⁸²⁴ In recent years, instability has continued in the oil-rich Niger River Delta between ethnic groups. Violence has periodically targeted non-Nigerians in the area. Christian and Muslim tensions are among the most severe in the world. Focused in states where the population shifts from being predominantly Christian to predominantly Muslim, these tensions have left hundreds dead in episodes of attack and retaliation.

Culture

Nigerians have numbered among the most influential African peoples and have significantly contributed to international literature and African music and art. Several prominent West African ethnic groups have large populations in Nigeria or are indigenous to Nigeria, including the Hausa, Fulani, and Yoruba. Cultural customs and traditions differ significantly by ethnic group, with ethnic groups in northern areas generally demonstrating a strong ethno-religious connection with Islam, whereas other ethnic groups exhibit a weaker or no clear ethno-religious ties and generally adhere to Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs. Shari'a courts dictate legal matters for Muslims in twelve northern states where polygamy is permitted. Nigerian cuisine is representative of West Africa and heavily utilizes palm oil, yams, vegetables, rice, corn, fruits, breads, and beans. Soccer is the most popular sport. Cigarette consumption rates rank among the lowest in the world, whereas alcohol consumption rates are high compared to the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,600 (2011) [5.41% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.459

Corruption Index: 2.4 (2011)

Past military-backed governments have failed to diversify the economy, resulting in continued dependence on Nigeria's vast oil resources to sustain the economy. Nigeria has the tenth largest proven oil reserves worldwide and the eighth largest natural gas reserves. Over the past decade, the government has sought economic reform and debt reduction assistance. Modernization the banking system and adoption of free-market economic policies have been areas of focus in recent years. Inadequate national infrastructure is a primary deterrent to greater growth. Seventy percent (70)% of the population lives below the poverty line. Unemployment is low,

⁸²⁴ "Background Note: Nigeria," Bureau of African Affairs, 20 June 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2836.htm>

but underemployment is high. Agriculture, industry, and services each roughly account for one-third of the GDP. Agriculture accounts for 70% of the labor force, whereas services and industry account for 20% and 10% of the labor force, respectively. Common crops include cocoa, peanuts, cotton, palm oil, grains, cassava, yams, and rubber. Cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and fish are common livestock and agricultural products. Major industries include petroleum, coal, tin, rubber, wood products, hides and skins, textiles, construction, food processing, printing, and steel. The United States, China, and India are the primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and present in all areas of society. Nigeria is a haven for drug traffickers and a significant transshipment point for heroin and cocaine between Europe, East Asia, and North America. Criminal activity is a serious problem, and organized crime has exacerbated corruption nationwide. Money laundering has been an ongoing issue but has been the target of increasing awareness and action from the government.

Faiths

Muslim: 50%

Christian: 40%

Indigenous beliefs: 10%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 25,000,000

Jehovah's Witnesses 330,316 5,468

Seventh Day Adventists 288,322 899

Latter-day Saints 109,998 350

Religion

Muslims are estimated to comprise half of the population. Most Muslims are Sunnis, although Shi'a Islam is a growing minority. Christians are predominantly Protestant. Northern areas of Nigeria are traditionally Muslim due to the prominence of ethnic groups with strong ethno-religious ties, including the Hausa, Fulani, and Kanuri. Small numbers of Christians reside in the north in separate communities, but some have intermarried with neighboring Muslims over the past half century. There are approximately equal numbers of Muslims and Christians in the southeast and the Middle Belt. Some northern, predominantly Muslim, states of Nigeria implemented Sharia law into government, which incorporates Islamic teachings into the legal system. Tension between Christians and Muslims has left hundreds dead in attacks. Oftentimes, there are retaliatory attacks after one group massacres the other, which can spread violence to other areas in the region. One such attack from Christians on Muslims left 700 Muslims dead in 2004.⁸²⁵ These conflicts are found in states in the Middle Belt, such as Plateau and Kano. Christians constitute a strong majority in the southeast and the Niger Delta. Several ethnic groups continue to observe traditional religious beliefs and practices in tandem with Christianity or Islam, such as the Yoruba and Igbo. Pentecostal Christianity is one of the most rapidly growing religious groups in Nigeria today.⁸²⁶

⁸²⁵ "Nigeria: Religious Violence Fueled by Impunity," Human Rights Watch, 25 May 2005. <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2005/05/22/nigeria-religious-violence-fueled-impunity>

⁸²⁶ "Nigeria," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148713.htm>

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 13th

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. There are no laws that prohibit individuals from changing their religion, proselytizing, teaching about religion, or observing religious customs and laws. There is no state religion. Major Muslim and Christian holidays are recognized national holidays. Shari'a law is instituted in twelve northern Nigerian states for determining criminal and civic affairs for Muslims, whereas customary law is applied to non-Muslims in these states. There have been some controversies in recent years determining whether additional states may institute Shari'a law for Muslims and whether non-Muslims may choose to adjudicate in Shari'a courts. Customary practices related to Shari'a law have often been implemented into society in northern states such as the separation of males and females in public schools, which has affected non-Muslims. In order to protect its citizens and maintain law and order, the government at times limits religious activity. The legal status of Nigerian citizens as native to the location in the country where they reside (known as "indigenes") or as foreign to the location in the country where they reside (known as "settlers") has significantly affected the status of religious freedom in some Nigerian states, as indigenes benefit from greater privileges for holding government positions and employment and lower school fees. Religious groups must register with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) to obtain permits for building or renovating religious buildings. Some northern states have refused permits for Christian groups to construct or renovate churches. Students in public schools may only receive religious instruction for their own religion, but there are reports from government officials that Christian education is required for all students in predominantly-Christian southern states. There have been comparatively few instances of governmental abuses of religious freedom, whereas societal abuses of religious freedom have been ongoing and widespread. Recent instances of societal abuse of religious freedom include religiously-motivated communal killings, job discrimination, the destruction of religious buildings, and physical intimidation.⁸²⁷

Largest Cities

Urban: 50%

Lagos, **Kano**, Ibadan, Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Benin City, **Maiduguri**, **Zaria**, Aba, Jos, Ilorin, **Oyo**, Enugu, Abeokuta, Abuja, **Sokoto**, Onitsha, Warri, Calabar, **Katsina**, Akure, Bauchi, Ebute Ikrodo, **Makurdi**, **Minna**, **Effon Alaiye**, Ilesa, **Owo**, Umuahia, Ondo, **Damaturu**, Ikot-Ekpene, **Iwo**, **Gombe**, **Jimeta**, **Gusau**, **Mubi**, **Ikire**, Owerri, **Shagamu**, Ijebu-Ode, **Ugep**, **Nnewi**, **Ise-Ekiti**, **Ila Orangun**, **Saki**, **Bida**, Awka, **Ijero-Ekiti**, **Inisa**, Abuja, **Sapele**, **Kishi**, **Gbongan**, **Ejigbo**, **Funtua**, **Igboho**, **Buguma**, **Ikirun**, Abakaliki, Okrika, **Amaigbo**, **Lafia**, **Gashua**, **Modakeke**, **Bama**, **Ilobu**, **Jalingo**, **Okigwi**, **Offa**, **Esuk Oron**, Nsukka, **Nguru**, **Hadejia**, **Ijebu-Igbo**, **Uromi**, **Birnin Kebbi**, **Pindiga**, **Azare**, **Nkpor**, **Ikerre**, **Lafiagi**.

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

Twenty-eight of the eighty-two cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Twenty-six percent (26%) of the national population resides in the eighty-two most populous cities.

LDS History

In the mid-twentieth century, interested Nigerians sent letters inquiring about the LDS Church and requested additional information. Self-identified members organized congregations patterned after the LDS Church and registered with the Nigerian government under the Church's official name. Visa problems prevented the visit of LDS leaders at the time, however. Likely precipitated by the June 1978 revelation extending the priesthood to all males regardless of race or color, a fact-finding trip headed by Elder Cannon and Merrill Bateman of Brigham Young University occurred in August 1978 and recommended that an official LDS Church presence

⁸²⁷ "Nigeria," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148713.htm>

be established. The first LDS missionaries called to West Africa were sent to Nigeria in November 1978 and organized the first branch in Ikot Eyo, called the Aboh Branch. In March 1979, 184 converts were baptized in a two-day period in Ikot Eyo. A single branch operated in Nigeria in Ikot Eyo and up to fifteen groups were under the administration of the branch in 1979. An additional group of prospective Latter-day Saints meeting under the name “L.D.S. Nigerian Mission” nearby the city of Owerri was discovered by church representatives shortly thereafter. International church leaders began making their first visits to Nigerian Latter-day Saints in 1979, including regional representatives and apostles.⁸²⁸ Many large Nigerian cities had their first LDS congregations organized in the 1980s. Seminary and institute commenced in 1988. LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley visited Nigeria in 1998.⁸²⁹

Missions

The West Africa Mission was created in 1980 and renamed the Nigeria Lagos Mission in 1985. Additional missions were organized in Aba [relocated to Port Harcourt in 1995] (1988), Ilorin [discontinued in 1993] (1992) and Jos [relocated to Enugu in 1993] (1992). Religious violence and instability appear the primary reasons for the closure of the Nigeria Ilorin Mission and the relocation of the Nigeria Jos Mission. Additional missions were organized in 2002 in Ibadan and Uyo [relocated to Calabar in 2008]. In 2007, the Nigeria Ibadan Mission was relocated to Lagos and renamed the Lagos Nigeria East Mission. The mission was discontinued in 2009. The number of missions increased from two in 1990 to three in 2000, five in 2005, and decreased to four in 2011. In 2013, a fifth mission was organized in Benin City.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 109,998 (2012)

In the 1960s, there were approximately 16,000 self-identified Nigerian Latter-day Saints meeting in over sixty congregations.⁸³⁰ In 1983, there were 2,255 Latter-day Saints. Membership reached 8,000 in 1987, 22,000 in 1993, 33,000 in 1997, and 49,935 in 2000. There were 60,087 Latter-day Saints in 2002, 68,777 in 2004, 79,482 in 2006, 88,374 in 2008, and 98,359 in 2010. During the 2000s, LDS annual membership growth rates decreased from 6%–11% between 2001 and 2006 to 5%–6% from 2007 to 2010. In 2010, one in 1,578 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 159 Branches: 201 (April 2013)

There were fifty LDS congregations in Nigeria in 1987. The number of congregations increased to 126 in 1993, 148 in 1997, and 194 in 2000. Moderately high rates of congregational growth were sustained in the 2000s as LDS congregations numbered 220 in 2002, 237 in 2004, 254 in 2006, 260 in 2008, and 306 in 2010. By June 2011, there were 311 LDS congregations. During the 2000s, congregational growth occurred throughout Nigeria but was slowest in Ibadan and surrounding cities. The most rapid congregational growth occurred in Rivers, Edo, Imo, and Akwa Ibom States. The number of wards increased from seventeen in 1993 to seventy-nine in 2000, 109 in 2005, and 139 in June 2011.

The first districts were organized in the 1980s. In 1988, the first stake in Nigeria was organized in Aba. At the time, there were seven districts functioning in Benin City, Calabar, Etinan, Ikot Ekong, Lagos, and

⁸²⁸ “News of the Church,” Ensign, February 1980. <http://lds.org/ensign/1980/02/news-of-the-church/nigeria-and-ghana-a-miracle-precedes-the-messengers?lang=eng&query=nigeria>

⁸²⁹ Hart, John L. “Nigeria needs gospel in hearts of its people,” LDS Church News, 21 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30292/Nigeria-needs-gospel-in-hearts-of-its-people.html>

⁸³⁰ “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>

Uyo.⁸³¹ Additional stakes were organized in Port Harcourt (1990), Benin City Ihogbe (1993), Eket (1996), Etinan (1996), Umuahia (1996), Lagos (1997), Benin City Ikpokpan (1997), Owerri (1998), Ikot Akpaden (1999), Nsit Ubium (1999), Uyo (2001), Calabar (2002), Port Harcourt West (2003), Lagos West (2005), Aba Ogbor Hill (2006), Benin City New Benin (2007), Lagos South (2011), Port Harcourt East (2011), Benin City Siluoko (2012), Benin City Ugbowo (2012), and Abuja (2012). In 2005, the Umuahia Nigeria Stake was discontinued and divided into two districts. The number of stakes increased from three in 1993 to eight in 1997, eleven in 2000, fourteen in 2005, and twenty in March 2012. The number of districts in Nigeria increased from eight in 1998 to fifteen in 1993, eleven in 1997, twelve in 2000, thirteen in 2005, and twenty-one in mid-2011. In mid-2011, districts were operating in Enugu (1988), Onitsha (1988), Ibadan (1991), Jos (1993), Ijebu-Ode (1993), Abeokuta (1993), Umuahia (1995), Akamkpa (1998), Warri (1999), Ile-Ife (1999), Okpuala Ngwa (2005), Asaba (2006), Ibiono (2008), Oron (2009), Ikot Ekpene (2009), Okrika (2009), Abak (2010), Ekpoma (2010), Mbaise (2010), and Ibesikpo (2010). In 2009, one district was discontinued in Akure. The district at the time only had two branches in Akure and Ondo. Several mission branches operate in Abakaliki, Afikpo, Ilorin, Okposi, and Yenagoa (4).

Activity and Retention

The LDS Church in Nigeria experiences high rates of member activity and convert retention. Sacrament meeting attendance in the Aba Nigeria Stake ranged from 44%–75% in 1988 when the stake was first organized.⁸³² Large meetings have been well attended. In 1998, over 12,400 attended a regional conference in Nigeria.⁸³³ 2,000 attended the groundbreaking for the Aba Nigeria Temple in 2002.⁸³⁴ 25,095 attended the open house of the Aba Nigeria Temple, and 7,415 members attended the dedicatory services in 2005.⁸³⁵ 6,788 were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. The average number of members per congregation doubled between 1987 and 2010 from 160 to 321, not due to inactivity issues but because of the maturation of branches into wards between 1988 and 2010. Congregational and membership growth rates have been commensurate since the mid-2000s, as larger numbers of branches and wards have been organized and fewer branches have matured into wards. The number of active members per congregation generally ranges from fifty to 200. Nationwide active membership is estimated at approximately 50,000, or 50%–55% of total church membership.

Public Affairs and Finding

Local LDS leaders and members have participated in public affairs and finding through proselytizing and holding meetings and support groups. Local LDS Relief Societies have sponsored self-help exhibitions for members and nonmembers alike, providing opportunities for finding investigators.⁸³⁶ In 1996, an open house for an LDS chapel in the Nigeria Port Harcourt Mission was attended by 1,600 nearby residents in the community and yielded 120 referrals for visits from full-time missionaries.⁸³⁷ In 2003, an LDS member in

⁸³¹ "Nigeria marks twin milestones," LDS Church News, 21 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19779/New-regional-representatives.html>

⁸³² "New 'first' for western Africa: stake is formed in Aba, Nigeria," LDS Church News, 21 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18221/New-first-for-western-Africa-stake-is-formed-in-Aba-Nigeria.html>

⁸³³ Hart, John L. "'Nigeria needs gospel in hearts of its people,'" LDS Church News, 21 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30292/Nigeria-needs-gospel-in-hearts-of-its-people.html>

⁸³⁴ Noorda, Elder Norman; Noorda, Sister Sharon. "Nigerian members gather for groundbreaking," LDS Church News, 9 March 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41420/Nigerian-members-gather-for-groundbreaking.html>

⁸³⁵ "Aba Temple facts," LDS Church News, 13 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47690/Aba-Temple-facts.html>

⁸³⁶ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 30 October 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22941/From-around-the-world.html>

⁸³⁷ "African open house sparks referrals," LDS Church News, 27 April 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27249/African-open-house-sparks-referrals.html>

Enugu presented cassette tapes of recordings of LDS hymns and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir to a local radio station for broadcasting.⁸³⁸ That same year, primary children from a ward in Port Harcourt were featured on a television station for Nigeria's Independence Day.⁸³⁹ The Church sponsors literacy classes in several areas of Nigeria providing opportunities for introducing the gospel to nonmembers seeking literacy skills.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Igbo, Yoruba, Efik.

All LDS scriptures and a few church materials are available in Igbo, whereas the Book of Mormon and a few church materials are available in Yoruba and Efik. *Gospel Principles* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* are available in Fulani and Hausa.

Meetinghouses

In 2011, there were over 150 LDS meetinghouses in Nigeria. Larger congregations in major cities often meet in church-built meetinghouses, whereas congregations in other locations generally assemble in renovated buildings, rented spaces, or outdoors.

Health and Safety

Threats of violence directed towards non-Africans has prompted LDS international leaders to only call African missionaries to serve in Nigeria, with the exception of mission presidents and senior missionary couples. In February 2007, four Nigerian missionaries serving in Emohua, Rivers State were abducted and held hostage for five days. Their captors likely kidnapped the missionaries believing they had a connection with the oil industry. Local Nigerian members were instrumental in their release, which was done peacefully and with no ransom paid.⁸⁴⁰ Violence in Aba prompted LDS leaders to close the Aba Nigeria Temple in 2009 for a year. Temple missionaries reported that the temple received threats from some in the area who left bullet holes in some doors in the temple complex. The temple was closed as a precaution against violence towards members and non-Nigerian temple workers. Prior to reopening, the temple was made more secure for temple patrons.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Numerous humanitarian and development projects have occurred in Nigeria, many of which headed and carried out by local members. Professors and students from Brigham Young University donated medical texts to a Nigerian nursing college in 1990.⁸⁴¹ In 2003, local church members in Ijebu-Ode donated supplies to a local library and prison.⁸⁴² Local LDS youth in Lagos helped clear city drains and fill potholes in 2004.⁸⁴³ That same year local members in Enugu helped remodel the hospital room at a local prison.⁸⁴⁴ Additional

⁸³⁸ "Music donated to radio," LDS Church News, 10 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43727/Music-donated-to-radio.html>

⁸³⁹ "Nigerian Primary children featured on TV spot," LDS Church News, 15 November 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44112/Church-donates-supplies-to-library.html>

⁸⁴⁰ Swensen, Jason. "Hostages freed in peaceful resolution," LDS Church News, 24 February 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50175/Hostages-freed-in-peaceful-resolution.html>

⁸⁴¹ "Medical texts donated to Nigeria," LDS Church News, 18 August 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20106/Medical-texts-donated-to-Nigeria.html>

⁸⁴² "Church donates supplies to library," LDS Church News, 26 July 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44112/Church-donates-supplies-to-library.html>

⁸⁴³ "Cleanup receives commendations," LDS Church News, 14 August 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46002/Cleanup-receives-commendations.html>

⁸⁴⁴ "Members renovate hospital room at prison," LDS Church News, 30 October 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46414/Members-renovate-hospital-room-at-prison.html>

projects have included measles initiatives, clean water projects, health fairs, and neonatal resuscitation training sessions.⁸⁴⁵

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints benefit from full religious freedom to worship, proselyte, and assemble in all administrative divisions in Nigeria. Friction between Christians and Muslims and threats of violence in the conflict-ridden Middle Belt in central Nigeria have contributed to a limited LDS presence restricted to Abuja and some small nearby cities and towns, Jos, Kaduna, and Bauchi. The enforcement of Shari'a law in twelve northern states imposes Islamic religious code on the Muslim population but does not significantly impact the operation of Christian denominations like the LDS Church. Christians in many northern states have been targets of religious violence, and some meetinghouses have been demolished. Ongoing societal abuse of religious freedom in northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt may prevent any expansion of LDS outreach in the region for years to come.

Cultural Issues

The population of Nigeria overall has exhibited among the highest receptivity to the LDS Church, as demonstrated by rapid church growth over the past three decades, which has been largely fueled by local members staffing leadership, serving missions, and performing member-missionary work. Interest in religion and church attendance rates for Nigerian Christians are among the highest in the world and provide cultural advantages for Latter-day Saints. Some cultural practices have presented challenges for the Church. Upon the initial establishment of the Church in 1979, LDS missionaries discovered that many new members and self-identified Latter-day Saints incorporated many elements of Pentecostal Christianity into their worship, including shouting hallelujahs, dancing, and the use of collection plates and drums. Some Nigerians may be initially disinterested in the LDS Church due to the absence of these and other traditional religious customs in LDS worship services. Interested individuals appear willing to make the necessary changes in their private and public worship once they begin learning about the Church and are baptized. Alcohol and illicit drug use poses challenges for LDS mission outreach for those who habitually use these substances.

Illiteracy is a challenge for growth in the LDS Church in Nigeria, as some individuals have a limited understanding of church teachings and rely on others for developing their personal testimonies. Literacy rates in Nigeria are substantially higher than many African nations, although approximately one-third of Nigerians are illiterate, and many more have limited literacy. Members with low literacy may demonstrate a solid understanding of church teachings over time and devotion to the Church through weekly church attendance, scripture reading, and prayer but offer limited utility as leaders. Church literacy classes help to meet local needs and provide opportunities for community outreach.

Poverty has been a major challenge for members to develop economic self-reliance and help build up the Church financially. As of 2009, the Perpetual Education Fund had yet to be introduced to Nigeria. Undertaking development work centered on employment workshops, and constructing and staffing schools may meet local needs and provide greater reinforcement for long-term stability in the LDS Church by discouraging emigration and developing a stronger LDS Nigerian community.

LDS teaching approaches have been tailored to Christians, and the greatest growth in the Church in Nigeria

⁸⁴⁵ "Projects—Nigeria," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 23 June 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-122,00.html>

has occurred in predominantly Christian areas. The lack of LDS materials tailored for those with a Muslim background limits the Church's missionary efforts in predominantly Muslim areas of Nigeria. Of the twelve states under Shari'a law, only two have an LDS congregation (Kaduna and Bauchi). Lower receptivity among Muslim populations has likely contributed to extremely limited outreach in predominantly Muslim areas, but widespread religious freedom nonetheless offers valuable opportunities to establish church infrastructure, especially in the event Muslims become more receptive one day. The practice of polygamy in states that practice Shari'a law poses a major obstacle to LDS outreach in the region, as those engaged in a polygamous marriage must divorce polygamous spouses and be interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency to be baptized. The development of LDS teaching approaches for Muslim audiences may improve prospects for growth in Muslim-majority areas.

National Outreach

Approximately 23% of the national population resides in a city or location with an LDS congregation. Twenty-two of the thirty-seven administrative divisions have an LDS congregation. Approximately half of the Nigerian population resides in administrative states with one or no LDS congregations. Forty percent (40%) of the national population resides in the fifteen unreached states (Adamawa, Benue, Borno, Ekiti, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Nassarawa, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, and Zamfara), whereas 9% of the national population resides in the three states with only one LDS congregation (Kaduna, Bauchi, and Kwara). Sixty-one percent (61%) of the population residing in cities over 100,000 inhabitants live in cities with LDS congregations.

Ratios of LDS congregations to state populations provide insights into the scope of LDS outreach by state, as congregations serve as mission outreach centers and the percentage of Latter-day Saints in the general population by Nigerian state. LDS outreach appears most penetrating, and the percentage of Latter-day Saints appears highest, in Akwa Ibom, Edo, and Abia States, as indicated by each of these states having less than 100,000 inhabitants per LDS congregation. Nigerian states with an LDS presence that appear to have the lowest percentage of members each have over one million inhabitants per LDS congregation and include Kaduna (one congregation per 6.1 million inhabitants), Bauchi (one in 4.65 million), Kwara (one in 2.37 million), Ondo (one in 1.73 million), Niger (one in 1.32 million), and Plateau (one in 1.07 million). On average, there is one LDS congregation per half million inhabitants in Nigeria.

Societal abuses of religious freedom, lower receptivity rates, violence between Christians and Muslims, distance from mission outreach centers, the lack of LDS materials in local languages, and no LDS teaching materials tailored toward those with a Muslim background have limited national outreach in northern Nigeria. Prospects for opening additional LDS congregations in currently unreached northern states is poor due to safety concerns stemming from ongoing societal abuse of religious freedom and violence. States without an LDS congregation at present that appear most likely to receive LDS outreach in the foreseeable future include Adamawa, Benue, Ekiti, Kogi, Nassarawa, and Taraba, as each of these states are not under Shari'a law and have sizeable Christian populations, notwithstanding Muslims outnumbering Christians in most of these states. Past failed LDS efforts to organize new missions in central Nigeria in Jos and Ilorin in the early 1990s may prevent any attempted expansion of LDS mission outreach in central and northern areas until threats of religious violence diminish.

Prospects for expanding LDS outreach appear most favorable in southeastern and southwestern Nigeria, the Niger Delta, and Edo State as these areas have demonstrated the highest receptivity and are generally more stable than the Middle Belt and northern areas. Unparalleled LDS outreach has occurred in rural areas of southeastern states since the establishment of the Church in the late 1970s, and at present, nearly a dozen stakes and districts function in rural areas of Akwa Ibom State. Some of the greatest advances in expanding national outreach in Africa since 2000 have occurred in southeastern Nigeria, as rapid congregational growth

has occurred in rural areas, most notably Ibiono, Ikot Ekpene, and Okpuala Ngwa. In contrast with most areas of the world, urban areas appear less reached by Latter-day Saints than many rural areas in Akwa Ibom State. Significant opportunities for continued expansion of outreach in southeastern Nigeria exist despite recent advances, as most of the region is not within the geographical boundaries of established stakes and districts. Holding cottage meetings, organizing dependent branches, and assigning ward and branch missionaries to proselyte in these locations may facilitate continued national outreach expansion. Expansion of LDS outreach into rural areas in Edo State began in the late 2000s and experienced marked success as the number of branches in Ekpoma increased from two in the late 2000s to seven by mid-2011. Notable success in multiplying the number of LDS congregations in some of the largest cities occurred in the 2000s, most notably in Benin City and Lagos. Created in 2007, the Benin City Nigeria New Benin Stake had six wards and by mid-2010 the number of wards increased to fifteen. Today, Benin City appears to be the most reached Nigerian city with over one million inhabitants.

The LDS Church has utilized media and other means to expand outreach in Nigeria, but these efforts appear inconsistent and uncoordinated with mission leadership. Significant opportunities for conducting persistent LDS outreach by television, radio, and the Internet in Nigeria have yet to be explored.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity and convert retention rates appear to be higher than in most African nations and rank among the highest in the world for nations with over 10,000 members. Good member activity and convert retention rates appear to have occurred primarily from local member and missionary self-sufficiency and cultural customs that strongly encourage church attendance. The country has developed a much larger and stronger leadership and membership base than many other African nations. The Church has focused on retaining converts and developing leadership to meet member needs and facilitate future growth. The Church strives to maintain a balance between developing strong local membership and leadership by adding new converts without overburdening the existing church infrastructure. High involvement of local members in missionary activity has benefited convert retention and member activity rates and reduces demands of the limited number of full-time missionaries assigned to the country. The utilization of African missionaries has also likely facilitated investigator and recent convert understanding of LDS teachings, as native missionaries have greater familiarity with local culture. Competition for converts with other Christian denominations has likely led to attrition of some LDS converts who have returned to their former churches or have joined other denominations.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Geography has historically separated ethnic groups and reduced ethnic integration issues, but over the past half century, many ethnic groups have relocated to locations to which they are not native. Ethnic integration issues pose the greatest challenges for the LDS Church in the Middle Belt, where resource competition, discrimination, and ethno-religious violence are commonplace. Ethnic integration challenges have not appeared to pose significant challenges for the Church in most areas in which it is established. Common usage of English has facilitated the integration of differing ethnic groups.

Language Issues

The use of English as an official language and for business, government, and interethnic communication has facilitated the growth of the LDS Church, as many utilize LDS materials in English. Some LDS materials are available in the native language of two-thirds of the Nigerian population, although LDS scripture is only available in the native language of slightly less than half of the population. Translating additional church materials and LDS scriptures in local languages will be needed to facilitate local member comprehension of church doctrines and to perpetuate church growth, especially in rural areas where English is less commonly

spoken. Linguistic diversity is extreme in some areas with sizeable LDS populations such as in Akwa Ibom State, where approximately a dozen indigenous languages are spoken. Prospects appear most favorable for additional LDS materials and scriptures to be translated into Igbo, Yoruba, and Efik but poor for additional translations in Hausa and Fulani due to few speakers among Latter-day Saints and a lack of LDS outreach in areas where speakers of these languages reside. Additional translations of materials and scriptures will be required to make greater headway in proselytizing speakers of these languages. Prospects of translations of LDS materials in additional languages may be forthcoming for languages spoken in rural areas with sizeable numbers of speakers that have experienced recent church growth, such as Edo, Ibibo and Ijaw.

Missionary Service

Nigerians have historically served full-time missions in large numbers, resulting in the self-sufficiency of the LDS missionary force in Nigeria. In 1988, there were forty-six Nigerians serving full-time missions when LDS membership was nearly 10,000. In 2011, there may have been over 500 Nigerians serving full-time missions, almost all in Africa. Opportunities abound for increasing the number of Nigerian members serving missions, which will be critical toward expanding LDS outreach both within Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa. Increased emphasis on seminary and institute attendance for mission preparation may increase the number of local members serving missions in the coming years.

Leadership

The LDS Church in Nigeria has self-sufficient local leadership that staffs administration of practically all congregations and is capable of expanding outreach through coordination with mission leadership. Success in achieving good local leadership development has hinged on enthusiastic LDS members training and mentoring new converts and high rates of missionary service. Poverty, illiteracy, and limited leadership training in isolated congregations pose challenges for increasing the number of priesthood holders capable of holding leadership positions. Several districts have likely not become stakes due to challenges reaching the minimal number of active Melchizedek Priesthood holders, but often this may be due to limited LDS membership altogether. Delays in stake creations due to activity or leadership challenges may have occurred in districts in western Nigeria, such as in Ibadan. Several Nigerians have served in international church leadership positions. David William Eka from Port Harcourt was called as a regional representative in 1990.⁸⁴⁶ In 1995, Christopher N. Chukwurah from Lagos was called as an area authority.⁸⁴⁷ In 2001, David William Eka was called to preside over the Nigeria Lagos Mission.⁸⁴⁸ In 2003, Alexander A. Odume from Benin City and Adesina J. Olukanni from Ikeja were called as Area Authority Seventies.⁸⁴⁹ In 2007, Loveday Iheanyichi Nwankpa from Aba was called to preside over the Nigeria Port Harcourt Mission⁸⁵⁰ and Frederick C. Ihesiene from Aba⁸⁵¹ and David W. Eka from Port Harcourt were called as Area Seventies.⁸⁵² In 2010, Elder Adume was called as the Aba

⁸⁴⁶ "New regional representatives," LDS Church News, 22 December 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19779/New-regional-representatives.html>

⁸⁴⁷ "Church names area authorities," LDS Church News, 5 August 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26627/Church-names-area-authorities.html>

⁸⁴⁸ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 17 March 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39474/New-mission-presidents.html>

⁸⁴⁹ "New Area Authority Seventies," LDS Church News, 18 April 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43636/New-Area-Authority-Seventies.html>

⁸⁵⁰ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 31 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47690/Aba-Temple-facts.html>

⁸⁵¹ "46 Area Seventies called; 29 released," LDS Church News, 7 April 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50423/46-Area-Seventies-called-29-released.html>

⁸⁵² "New Area Seventy," LDS Church News, 9 June 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50686/New-Area-Seventy.html>

Nigeria Temple president.⁸⁵³ In the coming years, Nigerian LDS membership may play a major role in overseeing LDS missionary activity in other African nations due to its large numbers and strong devotion.

Temple

Nigeria is assigned to the Aba Nigeria Temple. Announced in 2000 and completed in 2005, the Aba Nigeria Temple is a small temple with two endowment rooms and two sealing rooms. Endowment sessions are made by appointment. The temple appears moderately utilized, primarily by members living in southeastern Nigeria. Members from other regions of the country appear to infrequently attend the temple due to travel times and costs. Due to poverty and relatively few Latter-day Saints in the country, the LDS Church in Nigeria appears to heavily rely on the international church for finances, which may delay the construction of additional temples. Concentrated populations of LDS members in other areas of the country may merit the construction of additional temples in the coming years. Benin City and Lagos appear the most likely to support future temples due to their large populations, the operation of three or more LDS stakes in each city, and consistent congregational growth and stake organizations in both cities.

Comparative Growth

Nigeria supports the largest number of LDS members, stakes, districts, congregations, and missions in Africa and ranks twenty-first worldwide in members and stakes, seventh in number of districts, the eleventh in congregations, and the thirteenth in missions, although Nigeria ranks eighth in population size. No other country in the world is known to have as high an activity rate for Latter-day Saints as Nigeria. Thirty percent (30%) of LDS membership in Africa is in Nigeria. The ratio of LDS missions to the general population is comparable to most of Sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria remains largely underserved by LDS mission outreach despite widespread religious freedom and a highly receptive population. If the ratio of LDS missions to the general population in Nigeria were at the same ratio as in Mexico, there would be thirty-three LDS missions in Nigeria. Member activity rates in Nigeria are slightly above average for Sub-Saharan Africa, whereas the percentage of the population residing in areas with LDS congregations was representative for the region. No other country with more members than Nigeria experienced as high an annual membership growth rate as Nigeria during most of the 2000s. The increase in the number of LDS congregations in Nigeria between 2000 and 2010 was among the largest worldwide. Nigeria was one of only four countries in the world to grow by more than one hundred LDS congregations over this period, the others being the United States, Mexico, and Brazil.

Other Christian churches with a strong focus in missionary work have experienced strong growth in Nigeria, but many have experienced less rapid growth and report smaller membership numbers than in other African nations notwithstanding Nigeria supporting Africa's largest population. Most Christian denominations operating in Nigeria today were established decades prior to the LDS Church. For example, when the LDS Church was first established in Nigeria in the late 1970s, there were 40,000 Seventh Day Adventists. Jehovah's Witnesses reported 313,000 active members organized in 5,045 congregations whereas the Seventh Day Adventist Church had 263,000 members in 804 congregations in 2008. Pentecostals and Evangelicals appear to be the most successful Christian denominations in Nigeria and continue to report rapid growth and tens of millions of members, although outreach in northern and central areas remains spotty and difficult due to ethno-religious violence.

Future Prospects

The outlook for future LDS Church growth in Nigeria is favorable due to a well-established body of self-sufficient

⁸⁵³ "New temple president," LDS Church News, 20 February 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58814/New-temple-president.html>

local leadership, high rates of missionary service among members, continued expansion of national outreach over the past three decades into rural areas, consistent congregational growth, strong member activity and convert retention, and high rates of receptivity in many areas. Several stakes appear close to splitting to organize additional stakes, and some districts may become stakes within the near future. Additional stakes may be organized in Akwa Ibom State, and additional districts may be organized in Yenagoa, Afikpo, and Ohafia. Over the medium and long term, the LDS Church in Nigeria may expect to experience growth comparable to the Philippines and Brazil during the last few decades of the twentieth century, but with higher member activity and convert retention rates. The opening of a missionary training center in Nigeria, the introduction of the Perpetual Education Fund, and a small LDS university to supply training to Nigerian missionaries and foster local sustainability are measures that may one day warrant consideration from regional and international church leadership. Prospects appear favorable for the construction of additional temples in Nigeria in the foreseeable future in Benin City and Lagos, but the low degree of financial self-sustainability may delay the building of additional temples for many more years.

REUNION

Geography

AREA: 2,512 square km. Located in the West Indian Ocean, Reunion is an overseas department of France comprising a single island between Madagascar and Mauritius. Terrain consists of rugged mountains with some fertile coastal plains. Tropical climate occurs year round, marked by a cool, dry season and a hot, rainy season. Flooding and volcanoes are natural hazards. Pollution and land conservation are environmental issues. Reunion is divided into four administrative arrondissements.

Peoples

East Indian: 25%

White: 25%

Mixed race and other: 50%

Official statistics are not gathered on ethnicity in Reunion, but East Indians and whites are estimated to each account for one-quarter of the population. Those of mixed ancestry appear to account for half the population or more. Chinese account for approximately 3%.

Population: 827,000 (2009)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.63% (2000)

Fertility Rate: 2.61 children born per woman (2000)

Life Expectancy: 69.28 male, 76.24 female (2000)

Languages: Reunion Creole French (71%), Tamil (15%), Chinese languages (3%), other (11%). French is the official language and widely understood. Reunion Creole French is based on standard French with many loan words from Malagasy and Tamil.⁸⁵⁴

Literacy: unreported (likely over 90% in 2011)

History

Arab and Swahili sailors were among the first to sight Reunion, followed by the Portuguese who found the island uninhabited in the early seventeenth century. France claimed Reunion shortly thereafter and utilized the island as a refueling and resting point for ships traveling from Europe to the East Indies. Colonization began in the late seventeenth century and immigration increased, especially from South and Southeast Asia. The United Kingdom briefly occupied the island during the Napoleonic Wars until it returned to French sovereignty in 1815. Reunion became a department of France in 1946. In the mid-2000s, mosquitoes spread a disease similar to dengue fever known as chikungunya that infected over a third of the island's inhabitants.

Culture

Over the centuries, French government policy has stressed the integration of differing ethnic groups into a

⁸⁵⁴ "Reunion Island," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 21 March 2011. <http://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Reunion-Island.html>

single society, which has resulted in a shared, eclectic cultural identity. Chinese and Gujarati Muslims are minority groups that have maintained many of their religious practices and ethnic languages. Most do not feel a strong tie to metropolitan France, notwithstanding French occupation for centuries and the island becoming a department of France in 1946. Catholicism is one of the major influences on society, as most are Catholic. Disparities in wealth are extreme and many are unemployed, resulting in over 60% of the population receiving welfare benefits.⁸⁵⁵

Economy

GDP per capita: \$33,300 (2010) [69.6% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.872

Corruption Index: 6.8 (note: above figures are for France)

Sugarcane cultivation and tourism sustain the economy. Wealth is unevenly distributed, resulting in conflict between differing socioeconomic classes. Sugar is the primary export. Unemployment is as high as 40%. Corruption ranks lower than in most nations in the region.

Faiths

Christian: 85%

Hindu: 7%

Muslim: 2%

Other/nonreligious: 6%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 661,000

Evangelical 49,000

Jehovah's Witnesses 2,196 33

Seventh Day Adventists 1,449 15 (includes Mayotte)

Latter-day Saints 882 5

Religion

Most the population is Catholic. There are smaller numbers of Protestants, Hindus, and Muslims. Hindus and Muslims primarily consist of East Indians.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which in general is upheld by the government. Separation of church and state occurred in 1905. Traditional Catholic holidays are recognized by the government. Religious organizations may register with the government as an association of worship or as a cultural association. Associations of worship may only organize religious activities, whereas cultural associations grant religious organizations the right to make profits and receive government subsidies but are not tax-exempt. Foreign missionaries may serve in Reunion, France, or other French overseas departments but are required to obtain a long-duration visa if their home country is not exempted from French visa entry requirements. Religious education does not occur in public schools.

⁸⁵⁵ "Reunion Island," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 21 March 2011. <http://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/Reunion-Island.html>

Largest Cities

Urban: 95%

Saint-Denis, Saint-Paul, Saint-Pierre, **Le Tampon**, Saint-André, **Saint-Louis**, Le Port, **Saint-Joseph**, **Saint-Benoît**, Sainte-Marie.

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

Four of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. 79% of the island population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

LDS missionary activity began in 1979 under the International Mission, and the first branch was organized by the end of the year. The first members to live on Reunion joined the Church up to a decade earlier in metropolitan France.⁸⁵⁶ In 1988, the Church organized the Mascarene Islands Mission with headquarters in Reunion.⁸⁵⁷ Prior to the organization of the new mission, the South Africa Johannesburg Mission administered Reunion and Mauritius. In late 1988, Elder Marvin J. Ashton dedicated Reunion for missionary work.⁸⁵⁸ In 1991, mission headquarters were transferred to Durban, South Africa and the mission was renamed the South Africa Durban Mission. Reunion was assigned to the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission and the Africa Southeast Area in 1998.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 882 (2012)

There were fewer than one hundred members in 1987. Membership totaled 500 in 1993 and 700 in 1997. By year-end 2000, there were 728 members. Stagnant membership growth occurred for the first half of the 2000s that was followed by slow membership growth as there were 740 members in 2002, 722 members in 2004, 760 in 2006, and 789 members in 2008. Annual membership growth rates ranged from a low of -1.4% in 2003 to a high of 4.1% in 2009 during the 2000s. Membership generally increases by between ten and thirty a year. In 2009, one in 1,007 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 5 Groups: 1 (April 2013)

There was one LDS branch by 1980. The St. Denis Reunion District was organized in 1982. Between 1985 and 1992, three additional branches were organized in St. Pierre, Le Port, and St. Marie.⁸⁵⁹ By 2000, there were five branches (Le Port 1st, Le Port 2nd, St. Andre, St. Denis, and St. Pierre). The number of branches fluctuated between four and five during the 2000s as there were four branches in 2001, five branches in 2004, and four branches in 2008. In early 2011, four branches were functioning in Le Port, St. Denis, St. Marie, and St. Pierre. Later that year, a fifth branch was organized in Saint Paul. In early 2013, a group was organized in Saint-André.

⁸⁵⁶ "Reunion," Country Profile, 10 June 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/reunion>

⁸⁵⁷ Workman, Barbara. "Gerard and Annie Giraud-Carrier: Always Beginning," *Liahona*, Nov. 1995, 14.

⁸⁵⁸ "News of the Church," *Ensign*, Mar. 1989, 74-80.

⁸⁵⁹ "Reunion," Country Profile, 10 June 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/reunion>

Activity and Retention

In 2004, there were approximately one hundred endowed members.⁸⁶⁰ Thirty-seven were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. Most branches appear to have between twenty-five and seventy-five active members. Total active membership is estimated at 200, or 25% of total church membership.

Public Affairs and Finding

Local church leaders have focused on improving awareness of the Church and its image by holding open houses, sending press releases to newspapers, and purchasing newspaper space.⁸⁶¹

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French, Tamil, Malagasy, Chinese (traditional and simplified characters). All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in French, Malagasy, and Chinese (traditional and simplified characters). The Book of Mormon and a limited number of church materials are available in Tamil. The *Liahona* magazine has monthly issues in French and Chinese and four issues a year in Malagasy.

Meetinghouses

There were four LDS meetinghouses in early 2011. Congregations meet in church-built meetinghouses or renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Health and Safety

The spread of tropical diseases by mosquitoes is a concern that in the past has infected sizeable portions of the population.

Humanitarian and Development Work

There had been no major LDS humanitarian or development projects in Reunion as of early 2011.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints benefit from full religious freedom to proselyte, worship, and assemble. Foreign full-time missionaries serve regularly on Reunion.

Cultural Issues

Materialism, secularism, and nominal and traditional affiliation with the Catholic Church are the primary cultural barriers confronting LDS missionary efforts. These challenges may continue to deepen due to dependence on welfare programs and Reunion's status as a department of France. Receptivity among non-Catholics is low with the exception of some Christian African immigrant groups, such as Malagasies. The LDS Church continues to struggle developing effective proselytism approaches targeting nominal Christians, Hindus, and

⁸⁶⁰ Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Forging ahead on Reunion Island," LDS Church News, 5 June 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45649/Forging-ahead-on-Reunion-Island.html>

⁸⁶¹ Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Forging ahead on Reunion Island," LDS Church News, 5 June 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45649/Forging-ahead-on-Reunion-Island.html>

Muslims, contributing to slow membership growth over the past fifteen years. Deep socioeconomic divides challenge the ability of local leaders and full-time missionaries to successfully integrate members from differing socioeconomic classes into the same congregations. Outreach appears most challenging among Hindus and Muslims, as many have withstood Christian proselytism attempts for generations.

National Outreach

Notwithstanding the widest portion of Reunion Island being approximately 75 kilometers across, most do not reside in a city with an LDS congregation. In early 2011, 36% of the island population resided in cities with an LDS congregation, and 85% of the island population resided in an arrondissement with an LDS congregation. Saint-Benoit is the only arrondissement that does not receive mission outreach. Low receptivity to the LDS Church, limited missionary resources dedicated to the region, isolation from mission headquarters on Madagascar, inadequate numbers of active members and local leaders to open additional congregations, and high receptivity and church growth on Madagascar drawing away the majority of mission resources have all limited national outreach on Reunion today. Greater missionary outreach has occurred in Reunion than on neighboring Mauritius, as Reunion served as the original headquarters of the Mascarene Islands Mission, and twice as many LDS congregations operate at present. Expansion of national outreach will depend on local leadership coordinating missionary activity by holding cottage meetings and establishing home groups in the most populous unreached cities of Saint Benoit, Saint Joseph, Le Tampon, and Saint-Giles les Hauts. Performing LDS missionary activity in these five cities would increase the percentage of the population reached by the Church to approximately 75%. There is no Internet outreach directed toward Reunion, but the Church operates many French-language websites that can assist in mission outreach and proselytism efforts.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Low member activity rates in Reunion appear to result from quick-baptism tactics in the late 1980s and early 1990s during the years in which membership growth was most rapid; little success has been achieved at reactivation efforts in recent years. The number of active members does not appear to have varied significantly over the past decade, as the number of congregations declined by one and the number of students enrolled in seminary and institute in the late 2000s was relatively unchanged. Developing youth-oriented mission outreach, stressing seminary and institute attendance for investigators and less-active members, and involving youth in missionary preparation courses may improve member activity rates over the long run.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The population is a mixture of African, South Asian, and European populations that have blended over time. Nonnative whites, Malagasy immigrants, and Hindu and Muslim Indians pose the greatest challenge assimilating into congregations populated primarily by those of mixed race due to ties to their ancestral languages and religious practices. Significant integration challenges exist for differing socioeconomic groups into the same congregations.

Language Issues

LDS materials are available in the native or second language of approximately 99% of the population. Widespread use of French as a first or second language simplifies mission outreach. Reunion Creole French does not warrant translations of LDS materials at present, as it is rarely written, and local schools teach students in standard French. LDS materials are available in Tamil and Chinese (traditional and simplified characters) but do not appear to be regularly used in proselytism efforts on Reunion.

Missionary Service

Few local members have served full-time missions and foreign missionaries constitute the majority of missionaries assigned to Reunion. In 2010, approximately a dozen full-time missionaries appeared to be assigned to Reunion. Missionary preparation for LDS youth will be required to reduce reliance on foreign missionaries to staff local needs and facilitate greater sustainability of local leadership in the long term.

Leadership

Limiting the number of full-time missionaries assigned to Reunion has contributed to the self-sufficiency of local leadership. Most branches appear to have full branch presidencies comprised of local members. A district has operated for nearly three decades notwithstanding low membership growth rates and fewer than 1,000 members on record at present. Increasing the number of members serving full-time missions and decreasing emigration will be required to sustain and expand the local leadership body.

Temple

Reunion is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Temple trips appear to occur occasionally as a district, but distance and travel costs limit the number of members attending for the first time and the regularity of temple attendance thereafter. Prospects for a future temple closer to Reunion may be forthcoming over the medium or long term in Madagascar where rapid membership and congregational growth has occurred that may eventually merit the construction of a temple if sustained.

Comparative Growth

Together with Namibia and Mauritius, Reunion experienced some of the slowest membership growth in Africa during the 2000s and was one of the only African nations or territories that experienced a decline in the number of congregations during this period. Member activity rates and the percentage of members enrolled in seminary and institute appear to be among the lowest in Africa and is comparable to Western European and Latin American levels. Local leadership is among the most developed among African nations or territories with fewer than 1,000 members. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in the general population is among the highest in Africa.

Missionary-minded Christian groups report slow church growth trends. Seventh Day Adventists reported fifty or fewer convert baptisms annually during the 2000s and stagnant congregational growth since 2003.⁸⁶² Jehovah's Witnesses experience slow membership growth. Notwithstanding similar growth trends with Latter-day Saints, other outreach-oriented Christian groups have established congregations in nearly all large cities. Evangelicals appear to have experienced the greatest growth.

Future Prospects

Contrary to the belief of some, Reunion illustrates that a developed local leadership body operating among a predominantly Christian population does not guarantee greater prospects for growth in the LDS Church, as Reunion has experienced some of the slowest membership growth in Africa over the past fifteen years. Prospects for attaining greater growth in the LDS Church in Reunion will rely on increasing the number of youth converts, emphasizing seminary and institute attendance, augmenting the number of local members serving full-time missions, and developing outreach approaches tailored to the needs of nominal Catholics.

⁸⁶² "Reunion Conference (1992-Present)," www.adventiststatistics.org, retrieved 18 March 2011. http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=C10378

RWANDA

Geography

AREA: 26,338 square km. One of the smallest countries in continental Africa, Rwanda is a landlocked country in Central Africa that borders Tanzania, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Uganda. Terrain ranges from hilly to mountainous. The lower elevation areas of the country are near Lake Kivu, which forms much of the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west. The climate is temperate, with two rainy seasons and cooler weather in the mountains. The country is well-watered from the various lakes and rivers throughout its interior and along its borders. Rwanda is Africa's most densely populated country and is administratively divided into four provinces and one city.

Peoples

Hutus: 84%

Tutis: 15%

Twa: 1%

The largest ethnic group in Rwanda is the Hutus, who make up 84% of the population. Hutus also live outside of Rwanda, forming the largest ethnic group in neighboring Burundi. Some Hutus live in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo as refugees from Rwanda and Burundi. Tutsis make up 15% of the Rwandan population. Tutsis may also be found outside of Rwanda in neighboring Burundi. Twa are a Pygmy ethnic group and comprise 1% of the population.

Population: 11,689,696 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.751% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.81 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 56.96 male, 59.96 female (2012)

Languages: Kinyarwanda (99%), French, English, Swahili

The three ethnic groups in Rwanda speak Kinyarwanda, also called Rwanda, which is an official language. French and English are the other official languages in Rwanda, although French speakers are limited to educated Rwandans. Few speak English as a second language. Swahili is used as a trade language in commercial centers.

Literacy: 70.4% (2003)

History

A Tutsi monarchy rose to power in the fifteenth century and maintained a close relationship with the Hutus under a system of rule and society similar to serfdom, as the Hutus pledged their allegiance to their Tutsi overlords in return for the use of pastures, arable land, and loans of livestock. The first known European to enter Rwanda was a German in the 1890s, and by the turn of the century Rwanda became a German protectorate. In 1915, Belgian forces from present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo invaded and annexed Rwanda. Rwanda and Burundi were united as the territory of Ruanda-Urundi after World War I under a mandate from the League of Nations delegated to Belgium. Belgians played a major role influencing the overthrow of the Tutsi monarchy in 1959 by the Hutus. Over 100,000 Tutsis fled the country following the fall of the Tutsi

monarchy, and Rwanda achieved independence from Belgium in 1962. Corruption and ineffective government resulted in stagnant economic growth and social progress and exacerbated ethnic tensions during the following decades as violent acts committed against Tutsis were often unpunished. In 1990, exiled Tutsis launched an invasion of Rwanda from Uganda under the name of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). War persisted until a cease fire was reached in 1992. Both the Rwandan and Burundian presidents were killed in 1994 as an airplane carrying both presidents was shot down by the RPT. Between April 6th and the beginning of July 1994, approximately 800,000 were killed in a massive genocide targeting Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Meanwhile the RFT waged a civil war against the Rwandan military until overrunning the country by the summer. As a result of the Rwandan genocide and concurrent civil war, one million were killed, one million were displaced within Rwanda, and two million fled to other countries. In 1996, Rwandan troops from the former government and Ugandan forces invaded and retook the country. Consequently, over a million Rwandans returned to their homeland. Since the genocide, ethnic tensions have remained, although violence between the groups has abated. There are an estimated 50,000 or fewer Rwandans living outside their homeland displaced from the conflict and consist of the defeated RPF military forces and its allies. In recent years, the government as sought to address legal issues and rebuild the judicial system.⁸⁶³

Culture

Rwanda traditionally possessed a culture dominated by the intricate intertwining of Tutsi and Hutu ethnicities. Today, agriculture and Christianity are the predominant influences on society and culture. Alcohol consumption rates are higher than most African nations and slightly higher than the world average. Dance and music are important cultural practices. Common foods include fruit, sweet potatoes, beans, and cassava.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,300 (2011) [2.7% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.429

Corruption Index: 5.0 (2011)

Due to its landlocked position and the 1994 genocide, Rwanda's economy has struggled to develop and integrate with the international community. Rwanda lost many of its interested investors due to the genocide, yet economic prosperity has returned to levels before the genocide occurred. The small geographical size of Rwanda challenges efforts to diversify the economy. Industrial and service sectors of the economy are very undeveloped and over 90% of Rwandans work in agriculture. Primary crops grown in Rwanda include coffee, tea, bananas, beans, and potatoes. Poverty remains a major problem that was exacerbated by the genocide. The primary trade partners include Kenya, Uganda, and China. Corruption is perceived at levels lower than most of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Faiths

Christian: 93.6%

Muslim: 4.6%

No Religion: 1.7%

Indigenous Beliefs: 0.1%

Christians

Denomination Members Congregations

Catholic 5,917,404

⁸⁶³ "Background Note: Rwanda," Bureau of African Affairs, 12 April 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2861.htm>

Seventh Day Adventists 505,235 1,559
 Jehovah's Witnesses 20,509 446
 Latter-day Saints 121 2

Religion

Most Rwandans identify themselves as Christian. In 2001 Roman Catholics accounted for 56.5% of the population while Protestants claimed an additional 26% of Rwandans. Seventh Day Adventists are the second largest Christian group (11.1%). Muslims make up 4.6% of the population. Few Rwandans claim no religion (1.7%) or indigenous beliefs (0.1%).⁸⁶⁴

Religious Freedom

Due to the large Christian majority in Rwanda, religious freedom is present in Rwanda and the government is open to many Christian denominations preaching and functioning in the country. The government requires religious groups to register with the government to obtain legal status. Foreign missionaries must obtain a visa and foreign identity card. To obtain a visa, foreign missionaries must complete an application, have the religious group's legal representative sign the application letter, submit an authorization letter from the organization, and pay a fee of \$87. Foreign missionary visas last one year and are multiple-entry visas. Religious studies are a required subject of study in public schools. A few Christian leaders participated during the 1994 genocide and most did little to stop it. However, the genocide was not motivated due to religious affiliation. Jehovah's Witnesses have had some government scrutiny, which is likely due to the denomination's views of government.⁸⁶⁵

Major Cities

Urban: 19%

Kigali, **Gitarama**, **Butare**, **Ruhengeri**, **Gisenyi**, **Byumba**, **Nyanza**, **Cyangugu**, **Kabuga**, **Ruhango**.
 Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

One of the ten largest cities has an LDS congregation. Fifteen percent (15%) of the national population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

Mission presidents from both the Uganda Kampala Mission and the Kinshasa Democratic Republic of Congo Mission visited Rwanda in late 2006 with their assistants to determine whether the country was ready to open for missionary work and what language (English or French) missionary work should be conducted in if the country were opened. Rwanda was shortly thereafter assigned to the Uganda Kampala Mission, and a group was meeting in Kigali in late 2007. The first independent branch was organized in Kigali by the mission president of the Uganda Kampala Mission in 2008. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland dedicated Rwanda for missionary work in August 2009 on a hill overlooking Kigali.⁸⁶⁶ Missionaries periodically visited the Kigali Branch after the dedication to perform baptisms, and the first senior missionary couple was likely assigned to Rwanda in 2010. As of early 2011, the Church was still awaiting legal recognition in Rwanda and is poised to assign the first proselytizing, young full-time missionaries in the near future. Seminary and institute had not been

⁸⁶⁴ "Rwanda," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148714.htm>

⁸⁶⁵ "Rwanda," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148714.htm>

⁸⁶⁶ <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57850/Dedication-blesses-two-African-nations.html>

established as of 2011. In 2012, two additional branches were organized in Kigali and the first proselytizing missionaries were assigned.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 121 (2012)

There were seventeen Latter-day Saints in 2008. President Christensen visited the Kigali Branch on its one-year anniversary of becoming a branch in March 2009 and noted that nine were baptized the day of his visit and that eighteen had joined the Church in the past year. A senior missionary couple reported that membership in the branch increased from twelve when it was organized to forty-five a year later.

In September 2009, ten Rwandans were baptized in Lake Muhazi, and several returned missionaries, most from other nations living in Rwanda, were reported to be part of the branch. In 2009, one in approximately 237,000 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 3 (April 2013)

The Kigali Branch was the only LDS congregation in Rwanda in early 2011. In early 2013, all three branches were administered by the Uganda Kampala Mission.

Activity and Retention

With small, relatively recent membership in Rwanda, activity and retention appear very high. The Kigali Branch appears to grow in church attendance as additional converts join the Church. Active membership is estimated to number as many as forty, or 80% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, French, and Swahili.

Only *Gospel Principles* and *The Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* are translated into Kinyarwanda. The Church likely conducts meetings in French and English.

Meetinghouses

The first LDS meetings in Rwanda were held in a hotel in Kigali. It appears that meetings continue to be held in the hotel or in another rented space.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Senior couples serving in the Uganda Kampala Mission reported that authorization for humanitarian work was given in the fall of 2008. Humanitarian work in Rwanda began in early 2009. In the fall of 2009, a humanitarian missionary couple serving in the Uganda Kampala Mission reported that the Church was working on a refugee project in the Gihembe Refugee Camp, located north of Kigali near the town of Byumba. The humanitarian project was done through Deseret International Charities, together with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Senior missionaries visited the camp and assisted in the distribution of needed clothing, hygiene, school, and healthcare items such as newborn kits. At the time, there were a reported 18,000 refugees in the camp who arrived across the border from the Democratic Republic of Congo due to ongoing and renewed civil unrest and war. A neonatal resuscitation project organized by the Church was planned for Rwanda in early 2010.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Rwanda enjoys religious freedom on a level not present in many African nations. This presents a major opportunity for proselytism without constraints that prohibit or restrain missionary work. Delays in obtaining legal recognition from the government have postponed the introduction of proselytizing full-time missionaries.

Cultural Issues

The past genocide in Rwanda presents several issues for the Church. Currently, the Church cannot baptize those who have committed serious sins such as murder without an interview from the mission president, and in some cases baptism must be approved by the First Presidency. Issues of war crimes and past violence have generated issues for faiths that were established in the country in the early 1990s, including Seventh Day Adventists. Rwandans also use alcohol frequently in celebrations and declining the offer of a drink in a Rwandan's home is considered a great insult. Unlike many African nations, few Rwandans practice polygamy, which is not recognized in the country and is illegal.

National Outreach

Less than 8% of the national population resides in Kigali, the only city with LDS congregations. Most the inhabitants of Kigali are unaware of an LDS presence, as the Kigali Branch was organized in 2008, and no formal proselytism occurred until 2012. Past ethnic violence, distance from LDS mission outreach centers in other countries, a lack of Rwandan LDS converts in other countries, and few mission resources allocated to the region have contributed to the lack of LDS outreach in Rwanda until recently and continue to prevent greater outreach. Rwanda's large rural population will likely take many years to reach and will probably come as a result of the Church establishing its presence in the population centers throughout the country. National outreach expansion for the LDS Church will most likely occur as member-missionary programs take precedence, greater mission resources are allocated to the country, and legal recognition is obtained.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Activity in Rwanda appears to be very high, as most recent converts have been retained. Inactivity in Rwanda likely only exists for a small number of new converts since 2008 who have not been retained. Inactivity may exist at higher rates among the few Rwandans who joined the Church abroad and later returned to their home country. Isolation from the headquarters of the Uganda Kampala Mission appears to have not hampered retention and has likely increased the devotion of converts, as consistent church attendance has been required for baptism. Separation from mission headquarters and no assigned full-time, young missionaries has likely increased the involvement of local members in the teaching and fellowshiping of new converts, thereby increasing convert retention rates. The size and maturity of other missionary-minded Christian groups in Rwanda may thwart LDS efforts to baptize converts from these groups and lead less-active members to return to their previously affiliated churches.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Rwanda's recent genocide significantly contributed to the Church's delayed entry into Rwanda. In early 2013, local members reported no difficulties assimilating Hutus, Tutsis, and other ethnicities into the same congregations despite past ethnic violence.

Language Issues

As several of the leaders of the Church in Rwanda come from other nations, Church services will likely not be held in Kinyarwanda until greater growth occurs in local Rwandan membership. Few Rwandans speak English or French well enough to enjoy a more meaningful Church experience in these languages. It is unclear whether there are any requirements for converts joining the Church in Rwanda of proficiency in a second language. For example, in Kenya, converts usually cannot join the Church unless they can pass a baptismal interview in English because the Church lacks resources, membership, and leadership to pastor those who speak minority languages. A transition to Church meetings being held in Kinyarwanda will likely occur in the near future because it is a national language and most widely spoken in Rwanda. Constraints on language in other African nations by the Church are mainly due to the great diversity in local languages, small Church membership, and the lack of skilled translators. As of yet, no plans have been announced for translating any additional Church materials in Kinyarwanda. This will likely occur once local membership requires it. Experienced speakers of English and Kinyarwanda are needed to assist in the translation of Church materials. Proficient LDS speakers of both languages may not yet exist since the first independent branch was only organized in 2008.

Leadership

In 2009, all members of the branch presidency served a full-time mission, according to missionaries who visited Rwanda. Non-Rwandan members serve in branch leadership, two of whom are from Kenya and India. Local Rwandan leadership appears to be forthcoming as Rwandans join the Church. The consistent assignment of a missionary couple and regular visits from mission leadership may help to develop self-sufficient local Rwandan leadership in the coming years.

Temple

Rwanda is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District. It does not appear that any temple trips have been organized since the first branch was created in 2008. Temple preparation classes and temple trips for the branch will likely be organized in the near future. A future temple in Kenya appears likely over the medium or long term and would drastically decrease the time and financial burdens for Rwandan members to visit the temple.

Comparative Growth

Rwanda is one of the most recently entered nations for the LDS Church in Africa. As of May 2011, other nations that had an LDS presence recently established, reestablished, or pending included South Sudan (2009), Djibouti (2010), Burundi (2010), and Gabon. In 2009, Rwanda had the smallest reported LDS membership of any African nation with an LDS congregation. In 2010, Rwanda had the second fewest Latter-day Saints among countries with reported LDS membership totals after Senegal.

Other outreach-focused Christians have experienced tremendous growth in Rwanda. Rwanda is one of the countries with the highest percentage of self-identified Seventh Day Adventists (11%). During the 2000s, Adventists organized approximately 500 new congregations and baptized between 17,500 and 40,700 new converts annually.⁸⁶⁷ There were approximately half a million Adventists in 2011. Jehovah's Witnesses reported 15,705 active members in 375 congregations in 2008. These denominations have seen strong growth in Rwanda as a result of a long established presence in the country and strong national outreach primarily through the mobilization of local members.

⁸⁶⁷ "Rwanda Union Mission (2003-Present)," www.adventiststatistics.org, retrieved 16 May 2011. http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=1580286

Future Prospects

The Church's establishment in Rwanda since 2008 appears to be similar to the Church's establishment in Benin in 2003. Rwandan Church membership could increase to over 200 in the early 2010s considering that membership growth in Benin increased from 11 in 2004 to 253 in 2008. Future growth in membership and congregations will likely come with the assistance of missionaries, as the Church has taken interest in Rwanda by dedicating the country for missionary work prior to the arrival of missionaries. Strong, rapid growth in the Church in Africa has occurred without the assistance of missionaries, such as in the central Democratic Republic of Congo. Additional branches may be organized in Kigali with membership growth and distribution demands. A district could then be organized once enough leadership and active members can fill all the callings required for additional branches and a potential district. Humanitarian work also appears to present opportunities for the Church to maintain positive relations with the government and Rwandan people while introducing the Church through service. A separate mission servicing Rwanda and Burundi may be likely within the medium term.

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

Geography

AREA: 964 square km. Consisting of two main mountainous islands in the Gulf of Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe is one of Africa's smallest countries. Extinct volcanoes formed both islands of Sao Tome and Principe. Tropical, hot climate prevails throughout the year with a rainy season from October to May. Environmental issues include deforestation, soil erosion, and overuse of the limited number of agricultural lands. Sao Tome and Principe is divided into two administrative regions; one for each island. Principe has autonomy.

Peoples

Six different ethnic groups inhabit Sao Tome and Principe: Mestico (mixed Portuguese and African), Angolares (descendents of Angolan slaves), Forros (descendants of freed slaves), Servicais (contract laborers from Portuguese-speaking African nations), Tongas (children of Servicais born in Sao Tome and Principe), and Europeans (mainly Portuguese). Slaves have historically originated from West and Central Africa.

Population: 183,176 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.996% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.94 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 62.27 male, 64.74 female (2012)

Languages: Portuguese and Portuguese-based creoles (95%), other (5%). Portuguese is the official language. Sãotomense and Principense are recognized Portuguese creoles.

Literacy: 84.9% (2001)

History

The Portuguese discovered and colonized the previously uninhabited islands of Sao Tome and Principe in the late fifteenth century. African slaves were brought to the islands to staff sugar plantations followed by cocoa and coffee plantations in the 1800s. Due to its position in the Gulf of Guinea, the islands became a transit point for the slave trade. Slavery and the recruitment of contract labor workers from mainland Africa continued into the mid-twentieth century. Independence movements began in the 1950s. Independence from Portugal occurred in 1975, but democratic reforms and free elections did not occur until the late 1980s and early 1990s. At independence, twenty Portuguese families owned 93% of the total land area.⁸⁶⁸ Political instability has threatened the integrity of the government and frequently changed leadership in the past two decades. Greater correspondence has occurred with Angola and other Portuguese-speaking African nations due to common language and colonial past.

Culture

Sao Tome and Principe experiences a fusion of cultural practices and attitudes borrowed from mainland Africa

⁸⁶⁸ "Sao Tome and Principe," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 7 August 2010. <http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/S-o-Tom-e-Pr-ncipe.html>

and Portugal. Each ethnic group possesses unique cultural customs and beliefs. The islands are known for their music. Unlike many African nations, polygamy is neither socially accepted nor widely practiced. Alcohol consumption rates are moderate and rank average for the region. Cuisine draws upon African and Portuguese influences.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,000 (2011) [4.16% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.509

Corruption Index: 3.0 (2011)

Sao Tome and Principe depends heavily on cocoa revenues to drive the economy. The small population and limited land area challenge greater economic development and attracting foreign investment. There is a shortage of skilled labor. The discovery of oil in the Gulf of Guinea in recent years provides opportunity for increased revenues and greater diversification of the economy, but prospects in extracting this resource have been delayed due to negotiations with Nigeria over oil rights. A tourist industry may develop due to the islands' tropical climate and scenery. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the population in 2004 lived below the poverty line. Seventy-one percent (71%) of the GDP is produced from services, 15% from industry, and 14% from agriculture. Most of the population depends on fishing and subsistence agriculture for work. Primary crops include cocoa, coconuts, palm kernels, copra, fish, and fruit, whereas primary industries include construction, textiles, soap, and fishing. Portugal, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Belgium are major trade partners.

The prevalence of corruption compares to most Sub-Saharan nations and is widespread. Bribery, embezzlement, and mismanagement of public funds are serious concerns. Few government regulations have contributed to corruption. Many claim elections have tended to initiate an increase corruption due to political candidates using money and other means to gain votes. The government appears to have made some improvements addressing corruption.⁸⁶⁹

Faiths

Christian: 97%

Muslim: 2%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 149,437

Evangelical 5,977

New Apostolic 3,516

Seventh Day Adventists 3,811 10

Jehovah's Witnesses 613 9

Latter-day Saints less than 20

Religion

Catholics account for 85% of the population. Protestants constitute 12% of the population and have grown rapidly due to missionary activity. Muslims have arrived more recently and consist primarily of Nigerian and

⁸⁶⁹ "Sao Tome and Principe," 2010 Index of Economic Freedom, retrieved 7 August 2010. <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/saotomeprincipe>

Cameroonian immigrants. There is some syncretism between indigenous African beliefs, Christianity, and Islam.⁸⁷⁰

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by government laws and policies. There have been no reported instances of abuse of religious freedom. To operate in the country, a religious group must send a letter to the Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary Affairs requesting authorization. Once authorization is granted, the religious group must register its name and charter at the national registrar's office. The government has not rejected any past requests from religious groups desiring authorization, and unregistered groups report meeting without opposition. Many Christian and Catholic holidays are national holidays.⁸⁷¹

Largest Cities

Urban: 61%

Sao Tome, Trindade, Santo Amaro, Neves, Santana.

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

None of the five largest cities have an LDS congregation. Fifty-one percent (51%) of the national population resides in the five largest cities. The city of Sao Tome accounts for a third of the population.

LDS History

In 1998, the Africa Southeast Area administered Sao Tome and Principe. The Mozambique Maputo Mission currently administers Sao Tome and Principe. There has been no reported Church activity.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 20 (2012)

There have been no reported Church members living on the islands.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 (2012)

As of 2010, there were no LDS congregations reported.

Activity and Retention

No convert baptisms have occurred on the islands.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Portuguese.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Portuguese.

⁸⁷⁰ "Sao Tome and Principe," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127251.htm>

⁸⁷¹ "Sao Tome and Principe," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127251.htm>

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 2010, the Church had not conducted any past development or humanitarian work in Sao Tome and Principe.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church faces no legal obstacles preventing the establishment of the Church and formal missionary work. Full religious freedom, no reported instances of societal abuses of religious freedom, a Christian population, and strong growth among missionary-oriented Protestants creates a favorable environment for LDS growth. The Church has established a presence in many other nations in which corruption is viewed as more pervasive than Sao Tome and Principe.

Cultural Issues

The Catholic Church has historically familiarized the population with Christianity. However, levels of religious participation appear low. Poverty and low living standards are economic challenges in which the LDS Church may assist addressing through humanitarian and development work.

National Outreach

All but 6,000 reside on Sao Tome. With such a small geographic area and centralized population, future LDS missionary activity would require few outreach centers and resources to proselyte the majority of the population.

Distance from established mission centers, few if any indigenous members, and a small population have likely contributed to the lack of a formal Church presence. Mission resources are very limited in the Mozambique Maputo Mission, which in addition to all of Mozambique, also administers Angola—a nation of thirteen million with a severely limited Church presence but with a high potential for future growth. Distance from mission headquarters in Maputo, Mozambique and headquarters for the Church in Angola in Luanda diminish prospects in the near future of beginning national outreach in Sao Tome and Principe.

Seeking converts among Portuguese-speaking African nations with Sao Tome and Principe natives may help establish an initial Church presence. However, many of these individuals do not return to their home country due to poor living standards.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

There are no known converts from the islands. Low church participation in other denominations may carry over to the LDS Church if converts do not establish a routine of weekly church attendance.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The complexity of the islands' demography creates significant challenges for LDS mission planners to address. Common language among most of the population appear a major factor that will be favorable for growth, but differing customs and traditions for the differing ethnic groups may lead to future instability in LDS congregations.

Language Issues

Unlike the African mainland, Sao Tome and Principe have little linguistic diversity due to the lack of an indigenous population and strong Portuguese colonial legacy for several centuries. Informal Portuguese-based creoles offer some challenges for future missionary efforts, but the widespread use of Portuguese by almost the entire population simplifies language issues.

Missionary Service

No missionaries have been reported to have served from Sao Tome and Principe.

Leadership

The development of indigenous leadership may take years to accomplish as there appear to be few if any LDS members in the country.

Temple

Although not assigned to a temple district, members in Sao Tome and Principe would most likely attend the Johannesburg South Africa Temple.

Comparative Growth

Sao Tome and Principe is one of several predominantly Christian African nations that have never had an official Church presence. Other Christian majority nations without an official LDS presence include Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Seychelles.

The Church has made little progress over the past decade beginning missionary work on island African nations likely due to the small populations, remote locations, and limited mission resources. Not until around 1990 did the Church begin to establish a presence in Portuguese-speaking Africa. Sao Tome and Principe shares many historical similarities with Cape Verde—the Portuguese-speaking African nation with the most Latter-day Saints—which may indicate that Sao Tome and Principe may as well be a fruitful nation for future mission outreach. Many Pacific nations have smaller populations but have experienced strong LDS membership growth and activity.

Evangelicals appear to be the most successful Christian group in gaining new converts since independence. During the 2000s, both Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists generally added few new members year to year. Christian churches tend to struggle with low levels of church participation.

Future Prospects

In a period of Church history with unprecedented opportunities to expand mission outreach in Africa, Sao Tome and Principe remains a lesser priority due to the lack of local members, remote location, and small Portuguese-speaking population. The Mozambique Maputo Mission and regional Church leaders may need to conduct an exploratory trip to determine conditions and search for any members who may live on the islands. The assignment of even one senior missionary couple may provide an impetus toward establishing a permanent presence and the opening of the islands to LDS missionary work.

SENEGAL

Geography

AREA: 169,722 square km. Located on the Atlantic coast and the westernmost portion of continental African, Senegal borders Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and The Gambia. Senegal almost completely surrounds The Gambia with the exception of where the Gambia River enters the ocean. Other important rivers include the Senegal River—which forms the boundary with Mauritania—and the Casamance River in the south. The climate consists of hot weather that is subject to a rainy season from May to November and a dry season from December to April. Low plains and some hills account for most the terrain. Flooding and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include poaching, deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, and overfishing. Senegal is divided into fourteen administrative regions.

Population: 12,969,606 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.532% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.69 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 58.22 male, 62.19 female (2012)

Peoples

Wolof: 43.3%

Pular: 23.8%

Serer: 14.7%

Jola: 3.7%

Mandinka: 3%

Soninke: 1.1%

European and Lebanese: 1%

Other: 9.4%

Most Senegalese are from West Bantoid ethnic groups. The Wolof are the largest ethnic group and reside in western Senegal near Dakar. Serer also reside in western Senegal just north of The Gambia. Pular live in north-eastern areas. Jola are primarily found in southern Senegal. Mandinka and Soninke are both Mande ethnic groups and populate the interior between The Gambia and Mali.

Languages: Wolof (33%), Pular dialects (25%), Mandinka dialects (10%), Serer-Sine (10%), Jola-Kasa (3%), other (19%). French is the official language. 37 native languages are spoken. Languages with over one million speakers include Wolof (3.93 million), Pular dialects (2.9 million), and Serer-Sine (1.13 million).

Literacy: 39.3% (2002)

History

Senegal has been populated for several millennia. Islam spread to the region around 1000 AD, and neighboring African kingdoms to the east generally ruled the region until the arrival of Europeans in the fifteenth century. The French established a colonial presence that lasted for several hundred years until the 1950s. Following independence from France, Senegal and French Sudan joined to create the Mali Federation in

1960 that operated only a few months until Senegal declared independence. Senegal has developed one of the most peaceful and stable governments in all of Africa since independence and frequently mediates with international peacekeeping. Separatist movements have occurred over the past several decades in the Casamance region between Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia, as this region has a small Wolof presence and fewer adherents of Islam.

Culture

Daily life and society are often influenced by Islam. Senegal is known for its unique and influential musical heritage of mbalax—a popular form of dance and music that draws upon European and indigenous sources. Several Senegalese musicians are well known for their work. Rice, fish, and vegetables are common food staples. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are lower than most nations. Polygamy is practiced in many areas.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,900 (2011) [3.95% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.459

Corruption Index: 2.9 (2011)

The economy remains reliant on foreign assistance for improvements in infrastructure and extracting natural resources. Economic reform in the 1990s has reduced inflation and some other economic problems frequently experienced in developing nations. Current projects that have received funding or investment from overseas include modernizing Dakar's sea port and constructing modern roads in the interior. The percentage of unemployed and those living below the poverty line remain high at 48% and 54%, respectively. Agriculture employs over three-quarters of the workforce and produces 14% of the GDP. Primary crops include peanuts, millet, corn, sorghum, and rice. Nearly two-thirds of the GDP originates from services. Major industries include mining, food processing, and fertilizer production. Primary trade partners include France, Mali, the United Kingdom, and India.

Corruption is generally regarded as widespread. A lack of government transparency remains a major problem. Some improvement and efforts to reduce corruption have occurred recently. Illegal drugs from Latin America and Southeast Asia destined for Europe and North America are trafficked through Senegal.

Faiths

Muslim: 94%

Christian: 5%

Indigenous beliefs: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 300,000

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,139 24

Seventh Day Adventists 514 3

Latter-day Saints less than 20 0

Religion

Over 90% of the population is Muslim. Christians comprise most of the non-Muslims and consist primarily

of Catholics but also include Protestants and syncretic Christian groups. Followers of indigenous religious beliefs account for 1%–2% of the population.⁸⁷²

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is typically preserved through established government laws and policies. The law does not allow for the abuse of religious freedom or discrimination by government or individuals. There is no state religion. Muslims may choose to follow Islam-based laws concerning family. Both Muslim and Christian holidays are observed by the government. Registration for religious groups is usually granted and only rejected if a legal basis can be provided. Registered religious groups operate independently from the government and can own property, conduct business transactions, and receive many tax benefits. Private schools may teach their own religious curriculum. Government assists in funding the travel expenses for Muslims and Catholics making pilgrimages. No recent societal abuses of religious freedom have been reported.⁸⁷³

Largest Cities

Urban: 42%

Dakar, Grand Dakar, Thiès Nones, Saint-Louis, Ziguinchor, Tiébo, Mbaké, Kolda, Richard Toll, Joal-Fadiout.

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

None ten of the largest cities have an LDS congregation. 41% of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

Senegal became part of the Africa West Area in 1998.⁸⁷⁴ In 2004, a Church member lived in Senegal for a couple of months assisting the government on improving cultural and political conditions.⁸⁷⁵ There has never been an official LDS presence in Senegal. Some Senegalese immigrants have received some mission outreach in the United States, particularly in Indianapolis.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 20 (2012)

Any LDS members living in Senegal are foreigners living temporarily for business or natives who joined the Church elsewhere and returned home. There were thirteen Latter-day Saints in 2009.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 Groups: 1? (2012)

⁸⁷² "Senegal," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127252.htm>

⁸⁷³ "Senegal," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127252.htm>

⁸⁷⁴ "5 new areas announced worldwide," LDS Church News, 4 July 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31389/5-new-areas-announced-worldwide.html>

⁸⁷⁵ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Spurred to do good by religious convictions," LDS Church News, 21 February 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45122/Spurred-to-do-good-by-religious-convictions.html>

In 2010, the Church reported no organized congregations. A group may function under the Africa West Area Branch.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French.

All LDS scriptures and most Church materials are available in French. Materials translated into Wolof, Fulani, and Mandinka include *Gospel Principles* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Only one humanitarian activity has been reported by the Church in Senegal since 1985. The Church provided emergency relief for victims of conflict in Dakar.⁸⁷⁶

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

No legal obstacles appear to have prevented the official establishment of the Church in Senegal. Few predominately Muslim nations provide non-Muslims with as many rights and privileges. Other Christian denominations have an open presence and generally do not experience opposition in conducting their activities. Conflict in southern Senegal resulting from the separatist movement may hamper outreach in this region longer than in others.

Cultural Issues

The importance of Islam in everyday living for most Senegalese creates the greatest cultural barrier for missionary work. Conversion from Islam is generally frowned upon. The LDS Church can take advantage of low substance abuse rates that fall in line with Church teachings. Those participating in a polygamous relationship must end these marriages in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency to be baptized.

National Outreach

The entire population remains unreached by the Church. Distance from established mission centers in West Africa has likely been a major deterrent in establishing the Church in Senegal. The greatest potential for establishing the Church will likely be with Christians—especially Catholics—in the large cities. Dakar will be instrumental in developing national outreach capabilities, as many of Senegal's ethnic groups have communities in the capital and can later take the Church to their home regions.

Many Senegalese work abroad in some nations with an LDS Church presence. Missionaries and members can work with Senegalese migrant workers and immigrants in an effort to establish bring the Church to Senegal one day.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

No convert baptisms appear to have occurred in Senegal. Member activity rates and issues will most likely resemble those in the countries in which members joined the Church.

⁸⁷⁶ "Projects—Senegal," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 15 June 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-92,00.html>

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic tensions between Wolof and a few other ethnic groups exist in some areas, especially in the south. These tensions may result in the Church targeting the most receptive ethnic group during initial mission outreach efforts.

Language Issues

Two mission outreach resources—*Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*—are available in the native languages spoken by 68% of the population. Church materials in French allow for increased proselytism efforts among most Senegalese. However, not even 40% are literate, challenging future efforts to increase convert's understanding of the Gospel, serve in leadership, and distribute church literature. Humanitarian and development programs sponsored by the Church teaching literacy may help address this issue and establish a positive relationship with locals and the government.

Missionary Service

Few, if any, Senegalese have served full-time missions. No missionary work had occurred in Senegal as of 2010.

Temple

Senegal is assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple district.

Comparative Growth

Several other Muslim-majority nations in West Africa have no official LDS presence. Nations in West Africa that have no reported congregations and few, if any, members include Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, The Gambia, Niger, and Burkina Faso.

Most Christian denominations have gained relatively few converts over the years, yet nonetheless have experienced growth. Over the past decade, Seventh Day Adventists have experienced very slow membership growth rates and no increase in the number of congregations. Jehovah's Witnesses also report low increases in membership, but have increased to twenty-six congregations nationwide.

Future Prospects

Senegal offers the considerable opportunity of a tolerant Muslim-majority nation with wide religious freedoms and no evident legal obstacles to establishing congregations or sending missionaries. The primary limitations appear to be on the LDS side, as neither LDS mission planners nor area leaders have felt that establishing a church presence is a sufficient priority to warrant the allocation of mission resources. The plateauing of LDS missionary manpower with the decline in LDS birthrates and the primary focus of the missionary program on the United States, Latin America, and other areas with well-developed membership, may delay any formal introduction of the Church in Senegal for many more years. Although the Senegalese population has shown less receptivity to Christianity than that of some other surrounding nations, opportunities for growth are still significant and meaningful. The record from other countries demonstrates that many years are often needed to develop local church leadership and strong member-missionary programs; neglect of opportunities that could be developed with the assignment of even two or three missionary companionships may leave the LDS Church unprepared for future opportunities of greater receptivity, in contrast to groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists who continue to grow local membership, develop indigenous leadership, and

expand congregational outreach. As a rapidly growing nation of more than twelve million, Senegal warrants greater consideration for LDS outreach from the standpoint of scriptural mandate, strategic importance, and humanitarian concern, in contrast to many much smaller areas where the Church has chosen to send missionaries, or to stagnant congregations in established areas where missionaries have made little difference. If not currently operating, a group under the Africa West Area Branch may be formed to meet the needs of the tiny body of Latter-day Saints in the coming years.

SEYCHELLES

Geography

AREA: 455 square km. Seychelles constitutes over one hundred small islands in the Indian Ocean north of Madagascar. Approximately one-third of the islands are rocky, hilly, granite-based islands, whereas the remainder of the islands are flat and coral-based. Tropical climate occurs year round with some seasonal fluctuation in temperature. Droughts are natural hazards and dependence on rainwater to satisfy fresh water needs is an environmental issue. Seychelles is divided into twenty-three administrative districts.

Peoples

Seychellois (mixed French and African): 98.4%
Indian/Chinese 1.1%⁸⁷⁷
Other: 0.5%

Population: 90,024 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 0.922% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 1.9 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 69.14 male, 78.54 female (2012)

Languages: Seychellois Creole (91.8%), English (4.9%), other (3.1%), unspecified (0.2%). English and French are the official languages and commonly spoken. Seychellois Creole is a French-based Creole with low levels of intelligibility with other French-based Creoles.

Literacy: 91.8% (2002)

History

Europeans first sighted the uninhabited islands in the early sixteenth century, and in the eighteenth century, the French asserted possession of the islands. The British won control of Seychelles in 1814 following the Treaty of Paris, and the islands were administered as a dependency of British-controlled Mauritius until becoming a separate British Crown Colony in 1903. An independence movement took hold in the mid-twentieth century, and Seychelles became independent in 1976 from the United Kingdom. Political instability quickly enveloped the islands, resulting in the formation of a one-party socialist state in 1977 under Albert Rene. Multi-party elections occurred in 1993 and ended socialist rule. In recent years, political parties have fiercely competed for control of the government.⁸⁷⁸

Culture

Local culture draws primarily from French and African influences. The government provides free health care.⁸⁷⁹ Many are born out of wedlock, and society is predominantly matriarchal. Seychelles is known worldwide for

⁸⁷⁷ "Background Note: Seychelles," Bureau of African Affairs, 4 June 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6268.htm>

⁸⁷⁸ "Background Note: Seychelles," Bureau of African Affairs, 4 June 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6268.htm>

⁸⁷⁹ "Background Note: Seychelles," Bureau of African Affairs, 4 June 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6268.htm>

its strict environmental legislation and land conservation to protect its fragile island ecosystem. Many species are indigenous only to the islands.⁸⁸⁰ Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are lower than world averages. Seychelles is among the most wealthy nations in Africa and is Africa's least populated nation.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$24,700 (2011) [51.4% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.773

Corruption Index: 4.8 (2011)

Tourism has fueled economic growth, employing 30% of the labor force and generating 70% of currency earnings. Tuna fishing has also contributed to the economy. Cinnamon trees, fish, and copra are natural resources. Services employ 74% of the workforce and generate 66% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 23% of the workforce and generates 31% of the GDP. Agriculture accounts for less than 3% of the GDP and workforce. Common agricultural goods include coconuts, cinnamon, vanilla, fruit, and root crops. The United Kingdom, France, and Saudi Arabia are the primary trade partners. Corruption is perceived as present in all levels of government. The ruling political party has at times granted its supporters monetary payments, land distribution, free building materials, and job assistance.⁸⁸¹

Faiths

Christian: 93.2%

Hindu: 2.1%

Muslim: 1.1%

Other non-Christian: 1.5%

Unspecified: 1.5%

None: 0.6%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 72,777

Anglican 5,660

Seventh Day Adventists 708 5

Jehovah's Witnesses 338 4

Latter-day Saints less than 10 0

Religion

Most Seychellois are Catholic (82%). Anglicans account for the second largest religious group (6%). The remaining 12% of the population is primarily Protestant. There are also small numbers of Hindus, Muslims, and Baha'is.⁸⁸²

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Most Catholic holidays are

⁸⁸⁰ "Seychelles," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 13 January 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seychelles>

⁸⁸¹ "Seychelles," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 11 March 2008. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100502.htm>

⁸⁸² "Seychelles," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148718.htm>

recognized by the government. Religious groups are not required to register with the government but must register to obtain tax exempt status. There have been no reported societal abuses of religious freedom.⁸⁸³

Largest Cities

Urban: 54%

Victoria, Baie Sainte Anne, Anse Etoile, Cascade, Au Cap, Beau Vallon, Anse Royale, Anse Boileau, Anse aux Pins, Grand Anse.

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

None of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Seventy-one percent (71%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities. 90% of the population resides on Mahe Island.

LDS Background

There was no LDS presence in Seychelles as of early 2011. Seychelles does not appear to have ever been officially assigned to a church area or mission. Any church activity is likely administered by the Africa Southeast Area or the Madagascar Antananarivo Mission. In 1988, there were twenty Seychellois Latter-day Saints worldwide.⁸⁸⁴ Active membership is limited to members worshiping in their homes, studying the gospel, and living church teachings on an individual basis. Estimated current LDS membership for the islands is less than ten. There are no LDS congregations operating. All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in French. No humanitarian or development work has been pursued by the Church in Seychelles. Seychelles does not pertain to a temple district, but members would most likely attend the Johannesburg South Africa Temple.

Opportunities

There are no legal restrictions that would inhibit an official LDS Church establishment in Seychelles. Religious freedom is respected by the government and society, and many missionary-oriented Christian groups operate. Latter-day Saint Seychellois living abroad may facilitate prospects for commencing mission outreach in the coming years. Establishing several mission outreach centers on the main island of Mahe would reach up to 90% of the population. European and African populations have thoroughly mixed over the past several centuries, creating a highly homogenous population. Ethnic integration issues do not pose a significant challenge to prospective LDS mission outreach. Most the populations speak English or French as a second language, reducing the need for LDS materials in Seychellois Creole. The small number of Seychellois Creole speakers worldwide reduces the urgency and need for translations of LDS scripture and church materials. Seychellois Latter-day Saints abroad appear capable of participating in future translation work if needed. In 2011, Seychelles was the only nation in the Indian Ocean that was predominantly Christian without an LDS presence and one of the few Christian African nations without an LDS congregation. Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and Sao Tome and Principe are the only other Christian-majority African nations without an official Church presence.

Challenges

The entire population is unreached by the LDS Church, as there are no LDS congregations operating and no missionaries assigned to the islands. Isolated location, a small population, greater prospects for growth in other African nations, and limited worldwide missionary resources appear to be the primary reasons why the

⁸⁸³ "Seychelles," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148718.htm>

⁸⁸⁴ Williams, Sandra. "In His Own Language," Liahona, Aug. 1988, 25.

Church has not invested in establishing a presence in Seychelles. Materialism and periods of political instability are cultural issues that have contributed to the lack of an LDS presence. The high rate of children born out of wedlock is a major challenge for prospective LDS mission outreach. Traditional ties to the Catholic and Anglican Churches among most Seychellois create cultural barriers to proselytism and may result in low receptivity to the LDS Church. Many Seychellois are nominally Christian and have not developed personal religious habits that are regularly practiced. Several Seychellois Latter-day Saints have served missions since 1984,⁸⁸⁵ but no local LDS leadership appears to have been developed. Most missionary-oriented Christian groups have a presence, but many report slow or stagnant church growth. Seventh Day Adventists report slow membership growth but have operated since 1936.⁸⁸⁶ Jehovah's Witnesses regularly baptize small numbers of new converts and operate four congregations. Evangelicals have experienced the strongest growth over the past several decades.

Prospects

Seychelles offers favorable potential for establishment of an LDS presence over the medium term due to a predominantly Christian population, no reports of societal abuse of religious freedom, a couple dozen Seychellois Latter-day Saints living abroad since the late 1980s, and high standards of living. The small size of the population, remote location, and limited missionary resources continue to delay the establishment of the Church. Seychellois baptized into the Church abroad who return to the islands will be a valuable asset in developing self-sustaining local leadership one day.

⁸⁸⁵ "FYI: For Your Information," *New Era*, June 1984, 44.

⁸⁸⁶ "Seychelles Mission," *Adventist Online Yearbook*, retrieved 13 January 2011. <http://www.adventistyearbook.org/default.aspx?page=ViewAdmField&AdmFieldID=SEYM>

SIERRA LEONE

Geography

AREA: 71,740 square km. One of the smallest West African countries, Sierra Leone borders the Atlantic Ocean, Guinea, and Liberia. With the exception of mountains in the east, plains and plateaus cover most of the terrain. Sierra Leone has a wet climate, receiving up to nearly 500 centimeters of rain annually, and a dry season. Most of the country is heavily forested, with mangroves on the coast and tropical forest in the interior. Deforestation and overfishing are the greatest environmental concerns. Sierra Leone is administratively divided into three provinces and one area. Each of the three provinces is further divided into districts.

Peoples

Temne: 35%
Mende: 31%
Limba: 8%
Kono: 5%
Creole: 2%
Mandingo: 2%
Loko: 2%
Other: 15%

There are approximately twenty African ethnic groups. The Temne and Mende are the largest ethnic groups, together comprise two-thirds of Sierra Leoneans, and reside in the north and the south, respectively. Creole [Krio] are descendents of freed slaves.

Population: 5,485,998 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.277% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.9 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 54.08 male, 59.11 female (2012)

Languages: Mende (26%), Themne (22%), Krio (10%), other (42%). English is the official language. Although only 10% of Sierra Leoneans speak Krio as a first language, 95% speak Krio as a second language. Krio originated from freed Jamaican slaves who settled around the Freetown area and spread throughout the country as a language for communication between different ethnic groups. All together there are sixteen ethnic groups in the country, each having their own language. Mende is most widely spoken in southern and eastern Sierra Leone, and Temne is most widely spoken in northern Sierra Leone. Languages with over one million speakers include Mende (1.48 million) and Themne (1.23 million).

Literacy: 35.1% (2000)

History

West African tribes populated the region prior to European exploration. Sierra Leone received its name from Portuguese explores in the 1400s, meaning “Lion Mountains” and was one of the first areas of West Africa contacted by Europeans. Slaves were regularly trafficked from Sierra Leone by the British to coastal areas

of North America during the eighteenth century. The British freed 500 slaves from North America in the late eighteenth century and established one of their first African colonies in Freetown in 1792. During the following century, the British ruled their West African colonies from Freetown, such as The Gambia and Gold Coast. Ethnic conflict prevailed during the nineteenth century between the indigenous population, Krios, and Europeans, and ethnic tension deescalated for much of the twentieth century. Independence occurred peacefully from the United Kingdom in 1961.⁸⁸⁷ Following independence, the government suffered from instability and was accused of corruption and favoring certain ethnic groups more than others. Instability continued until the Sierra Leone Civil War erupted in 1991. The war came to an end in 2002. During this time, tens of thousands died and millions vacated the country to surrounding nations. Since the end of the civil war, Sierra Leone has grown increasingly more stable due to the military highly involved in enforcing security after the withdrawal of United Nations peacekeepers, although corruption and low standard of living remain major challenges.

Culture

Tribalism, Islam, and Christianity are the primary cultural influences on society. Sierra Leoneans stress politeness and good manners. Sierra Leone was once known in West Africa for its high quality education, but recent war and ethnic conflict have resulted in widespread poverty and low standards of living. Common foods include cassava, okra, and fish. Alcohol consumption rates are comparable to the worldwide average. Marriage usually requires the groom to pay a bride price and is sometimes arranged by families. Polygamy is commonplace, especially in rural areas.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$800 (2011) [1.66% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.336

Corruption Index: 2.5 (2011)

One of the poorest countries in the world, Sierra Leone ranks among the nations with the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) ratings. Rampant corruption and inequality in the distribution of wealth characterize the economy. Significant natural resources valuable for economic development have yet to be exploited, such as valuable minerals and favorable agricultural conditions. Diamond exports account for half of total exports. Agriculture employs half of the workforce whereas industry and services employ 31% and 21% of the workforce, respectively. Sierra Leone lacks an educated population and infrastructure to support greater economic growth. The economy will more likely develop as peace is kept and commercial farming and mining operations employ the local population. Unemployment remains a major problem in Sierra Leone due to the recent end of the civil war. Diamond mining, manufacturing, petroleum, refining, and ship repair are major industries. Common crops include rice, coffee, palm kernels, palm oil, and peanuts. Primary trade partners include Belgium, the United States, South Africa, and the Netherlands.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and present in all areas of society. Instances of corruption in government officials are commonplace. Low literacy rates have likely contributed to high levels of corruption.

Faiths

Muslim: 77%

Christian: 21%

Indigenous beliefs/other: 2%

⁸⁸⁷ "Background Note: Sierra Leone," Bureau of African Affairs, 8 March 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5475.htm>

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 175,000

Seventh Day Adventist 19,549 52

Latter-day Saints 11,664 27

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,935 34

Religion

Most of the population adheres to Islam. The percentage of Muslims in the country has increased since independence. Many Christians are Catholic. Syncretism between Islam, Christianity, and indigenous beliefs and practices is common.⁸⁸⁸

Religious Freedom

The constitution allows religious freedom, which is protected by government. There are no requirements for religious groups to register in order to operate in Sierra Leone. Government recognizes both Muslim and Christian holidays.⁸⁸⁹

Largest Cities

Urban: 38%

Freetown, Bo, Kenema, **Koidu**, Makeni, Waterloo, **Port Loko**, Goderich, **Daru**, **Lunsar**.

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

Six of the ten largest cities have a congregation. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The first Sierra Leonean Latter-day Saints were baptized in the Netherlands and Ghana and later returned to Sierra Leone in the 1980s. A study group was formed in January of 1988. Sierra Leone was included in the Liberia Monrovia Mission when it was organized in March 1988. In May 1988, the first senior couple missionaries arrived, and the first fourteen converts were baptized the following month. The first branch was organized in Goderich in August 1988. The first Sierra Leonean Mission began serving as full-time missionaries in 1989.⁸⁹⁰ The first young missionaries to serve in Sierra Leone arrived around 1990. The first official LDS meetings in Bo occurred in July 1990 with just five members.⁸⁹¹ Due to a civil war in Liberia, the Liberia Monrovia Mission was relocated to Sierra Leone in 1990 and discontinued in 1991. Full-time missionaries were first assigned to Kenema in 2004.⁸⁹² Administrative responsibility for Liberia and Sierra Leone pertained to the Ghana Accra Mission until the organization of the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission in 2007.

⁸⁸⁸ "Sierra Leone," International Religious Freedom Report 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127254.htm>

⁸⁸⁹ "Sierra Leone," International Religious Freedom Report 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127254.htm>

⁸⁹⁰ "Sierra Leone," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/sierra-leone>

⁸⁹¹ Thomas, President Kent; Thomas, Sister Carolyn. "Church, tribal leaders pleased with start of first chapel in Sierra Leone," LDS Church News, 6 November 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46437/Church-tribal-leaders-pleased-with-start-of-first-chapel-in-Sierra-Leone.html>

⁸⁹² Thomas, President Kent; Thomas, Sister Carolyn. "Church, tribal leaders pleased with start of first chapel in Sierra Leone," LDS Church News, 6 November 2004.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 11,664 (2012)

Church membership grew rapidly in the late 1980s and early 1990s as there were less than one hundred Latter-day Saints in 1988 and approximately 1,900 in 1993. Membership stood at 2,700 in 1997 and 3,920 in 2000. During the 2000s, steady membership growth occurred, as church membership totaled 4,782 in 2002, 5,712 in 2004, 6,938 in 2006, 8,054 in 2008, and 8,907 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates during this period ranged from a high of 12% in 2002 to a low of 3.4% in 2008 but generally ranged from 7%–10%. In 2004, there were 2,177 members in the Bo Sierra Leone District, constituting 38% of the national LDS membership. In 2010, one in 602 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 8 Branches: 20 Groups: 1? (April 2013)

Rapid congregational growth occurred between 1988 and 1993 as the number of branches increased from one to fourteen. The first district was organized in Freetown in 1990 followed by two additional districts in 1991 in Wellington and Bo. The number of branches increased to sixteen by 2000. There were seventeen branches in 2003, fifteen in 2005, seventeen in 2006, eighteen in 2007, twenty-two in 2009, and twenty-three in 2010. Congregational growth in the late 2000s was concentrated in Freetown and Bo. Districts in Freetown and Wellington were consolidated into a single district in 2005, and the Freetown district was divided to create the Freetown Sierra Leone East District in 2011. In 2009, a district branch was organized in Bo for members meeting in groups within the boundaries of the district. In April 2011, there were nine branches in the Bo Sierra Leone District and thirteen branches in the Freetown Sierra Leone District. In late 2011, four additional branches were organized: Two in Kenema (IDA and Simbeck) and two in Freetown (Belliar Park and Koso Town). Groups appear to function in Makeni and possibly Moyamba. In late 2012, the first stake in Sierra Leone was organized in Freetown with eight wards and a separate district was created for Kenema. In early 2013, a group began operating in Waterloo.

Activity and Retention

The LDS Church experienced low member activity and convert retention rates in Sierra Leone from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s due to rushing investigators into baptism with little pre-baptismal preparation. In 2010 and early 2011, the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission made noticeable progress improving convert retention and member activity rates. 1,100 attended district conference in Freetown in March 2011, and 1,660 attended in August 2011 when the district was divided. One thousand ninety attended the Bo Sierra Leone District Conference in late 2011. The average number of members per congregation increased from 135 in 1993 to 245 in 2000 and 387 in 2010. Two thousand fifty were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. In early 2011, most branches had between 100 and 200 active members. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 3,500, or 35%–40% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English.

All LDS scriptures and materials are available in English. The Articles of Faith are available in Mende.

Meetinghouses

In early 2011, there were approximately a dozen LDS meetinghouses. The Church began construction of its first Church-built meetinghouse in 2004 in Bo. There are additional church-built meetinghouses, but most congregations meet in rented spaces or renovated buildings.

Health and Safety

Tropical diseases are endemic, and health infrastructure is poor. HIV/AIDS infects 1.7% of the population. Sexual promiscuity is widespread and contributes to the spread of disease.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Poverty is a major issue in Sierra Leone. The Church has periodically organized “Helping Hands” service projects for local members to clean streets and hospitals. In 2007, the Church planned measles vaccinations for children after programs were successfully conducted in other African nations.⁸⁹³ In 2008, senior missionaries reported that the Church assisted in building seventy-one wells around the city of Bo. Additional humanitarian and development projects have included wheelchair donations for the disabled, a clean water project in Waterloo, donating health care equipment, and providing neonatal resuscitation training.⁸⁹⁴

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

No government regulations limit proselytism or the arrival of foreign missionaries. Sierra Leone offered unrealized opportunities for the Church prior to the organization of the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission. These opportunities continue not to be fully utilized, as few full-time missionaries serve in the country and most areas receive no LDS mission outreach.

Cultural Issues

Poverty reduces the ability of many to be self-reliant economically and obtain vocational training and education. Low literacy rates severely challenge efforts for the Church to establish self-sustaining local leadership and for illiterate members to obtain and grow their testimonies on an individual basis. Poor standards of living nonetheless provide opportunities for development and humanitarian projects for the Church that at present have been severely limited. Tribalism and ethnic conflict in some unreached areas have likely contributed to no increase in national outreach by the Church for nearly a decade. Many have been receptive to the Church notwithstanding the prominence of Islam in local culture. As in many Muslim-majority African nations, the prevalence of polygamy presents an obstacle for some who wish to join the Church. If those participating in a polygamous marriage wish to join the Church, men must divorce their additional wives, and women must divorce their husbands if they are not the first wife. Many investigators stop investigating the Church when the issue of polygamy and joining the Church is brought up. There have been some faithful investigators who have divorced additional wives in order to become members of the Church. Polygamy remains a cultural obstacle for many Sierra Leoneans to join the Church, as it adversely affects family and community relationships.

National Outreach

Twenty-three percent (23%) of the national population resides in a city with an LDS congregation, and LDS congregations operate in three of the four administrative divisions. The Church conducts excellent mission outreach in most areas of Freetown, Bo, and Kenema, and the majority of the population of these cities resides within a kilometer of an LDS meetinghouse. The decision in recent years to organize additional branches in Freetown rather than consolidate active membership into larger congregations to form prospective wards

⁸⁹³ Weaver, Sarah Jane. “Measles initiative continues to fight disease in Africa,” LDS Church News, 30 September 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49498/Measles-initiative-continues-to-fight-disease-in-Africa.html>

⁸⁹⁴ “Projects—Sierra Leone,” Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 30 April 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-117,00.html>

for a future stake present a good planning and outreach approach that encourages growth and accessibility. LDS meetings have only recently begun in Makeni, and no independent branch or full-time missionaries are assigned.

The Church initially made significant inroads expanding national outreach following an official church establishment in the country, as several congregations were established in Freetown and Bo, but war, poverty, leadership training challenges, convert retention issues, ethnic conflict, distance to mission headquarters, and limited missionary resources dedicated to the region contributed to no additional cities opening to missionary work between the early 1990s and the mid-2000s. The organization of the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission in 2007 directed greater mission resources to Sierra Leone in the late 2000s, and the mission has recently prepared for the opening of additional cities to missionary work, such as Makeni and Moyamba. Full-time missionaries reported that both Makeni and Moyamba almost opened to full-time missionaries in early 2011, but area leadership recommended that mission efforts be concentrated on establishing stakes in Bo and Freetown prior to opening additional cities to proselytism. Notwithstanding continuing delays in expanding national outreach due to administrative and activity challenges in established church centers, mission leadership has broadened its vision for expanding outreach and in early 2011 announced to full-time missionaries serving in the mission that between one and two dozen new branches would be organized in Sierra Leone and Liberia within the coming year. Prospects for expanding outreach in the medium and long term are favorable, as receptivity has been historically high and in 2013 the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission was reduced to administer only Sierra Leone following the organization of a separate mission in Liberia.

LDS mission outreach will face significant challenges proselytizing the rural population. The majority of the population resides in small cities, towns, and villages inhabited by less than 10,000 people. Transportation difficulties, tribalism, a lack of LDS materials in native languages, and few or no members residing in these locations create barriers to outreach outside the largest cities.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Many are willing to listen to what the missionaries teach but overall struggle to remain active and develop lasting church attendance. One missionary in August 2009 reported that the branch he was serving in the Freetown Sierra Leone District had 400 members but fewer than one hundred attended Church meetings regularly. Low member activity and poor convert retention have contributed to the lack of a stake in Sierra Leone. High membership growth rates are less impressive when poor convert retention and low member activity rates are considered. The small increases in the number of branches that have not kept pace with nominal membership growth since the early 1990s demonstrate the severity of the retention problem. The new mission was created partially to address Sierra Leone's worsening member activity and convert retention problems, and in 2010 and 2011 noticeable results were forthcoming, as evidenced by an increase in active membership and congregations and stable seminary and institute enrollment numbers. Emphasis on establishing weekly church attendance and personal gospel living habits will be required to improve member activity and convert retention over the long term.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Sierra Leone is the African country with the highest percentage of Muslims (77%) with an LDS mission. Unlike many other African nations, there appears to be little violence or conflict between Christians and Muslims in Sierra Leone. Despite the small number of Christians in the country, the Church has made many converts. These converts do not come from just one religious group and consist of fellow Christians, Muslims, and followers of other religions. LDS missionaries have not reported significant ethnic integration issues, notwithstanding chronic ethnic conflict in Sierra Leone. Expanding LDS outreach into rural and northern areas may increase the likelihood of ethnic tensions presenting at church.

Language Issues

Only the Articles of Faith have been translated into Mende. No other LDS materials or scriptures have been translated any into any indigenous African languages. English is the official language of Sierra Leone, but its use is limited primarily due to low literacy rates. Foreign missionaries learn and speak Krio while serving in the country. As Krio is widely spoken across Sierra Leone, it is the most likely candidate for future translations of church materials and scripture. Additional church material translations into Mende appear likely in the coming years due to church growth in Mende-speaking areas such as Bo and Kenema.

Missionary Service

Sierra Leone is nearly self-sufficient in its missionary manpower, but many local members serve elsewhere in West Africa instead of in their home country such as Nigeria and Ghana. In early 2011, approximately half of the full-time missionary force was North American. Eighty-nine local members were serving full-time missions by year-end 1993, forty-one of which were from the six branches operating in Freetown at the time.⁸⁹⁵ North American full-time missionaries and African missionaries regularly serve in Sierra Leone. There have been some reported challenges training and preparing male LDS youth to serve missions and return honorably. Maintaining high rates of seminary and institute participation will facilitate higher rates of missionary service.

Leadership

Missionaries serving in Sierra Leone point to difficulties in developing strong, educated local leadership as well as problems with convert retention and low member activity. Despite these problems, active members of the Church in Sierra Leone provide great service and support to full-time missionaries and the overall functioning of the Church. Full-time missionaries frequently report on the high level of involvement of local branch missionaries in teaching and fellowshiping investigators, recent converts, and less active members. Many Sierra Leonean members serve missions, with some branches having over half a dozen members serving in the mission field at a time. It does not appear that the widespread corruption in the country has significantly impaired the functioning of the Church. Missionaries have reported several instances of some local leaders dealing haphazardly with church finance responsibilities. These issues were resolved quickly by area, district, and mission presidencies. In recent years, the number of returned missionaries has increased, greatly strengthening leadership manpower and training, resulting in the organization of the first stake in 2012 and possibly more in the near future.

Temple

Sierra Leone is assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple district. One of the first groups of members to go to the temple attended the Ghana Accra Temple in May 2006. A total of forty-two members from Freetown and Bo participated, and eighteen couples were sealed.⁸⁹⁶ Temple trips occur infrequently due to distance to the temple and travel costs. There are no realistic prospects for a prospective temple to be built closer to Sierra Leone in the foreseeable future due to inadequate local leadership, low member activity rates, few total members, and economic difficulties in the region.

Comparative Growth

Membership growth rates and seminary and institute enrollment for the LDS Church in Sierra Leone have been comparable to other African nations in recent years, although convert retention, member activity, and

⁸⁹⁵ "Sierra Leone," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/sierra-leone>

⁸⁹⁶ Gunnell, President Grant. "Joy at Ghana temple," LDS Church News, 27 May 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49002/Joy-at-Ghana-temple.html>

congregational growth rates have been considerably lower and comparable to Liberia. The Church in Sierra Leone had the fourth most members without a stake in 2010. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in the general population is among the highest in Africa and comparable to Ghana.

Other outreach-oriented Christian faiths experience similar obstacles in Sierra Leone. Jehovah's Witnesses have a small membership in the country and claimed about 1,800 active members in thirty-three congregations in 2008, baptizing about one hundred new members a year. Seventh Day Adventists numbered 17,151 in fifty-two churches for the same year. Only one new Adventist congregation was created between 1997 and 2008 during which time SDA membership in Sierra Leone increased by 5,000. Comparing the results of other church's missionary programs with the LDS Church reveals that even some of the most organized and successful Christian churches in Africa experience high convert attrition in Sierra Leone. Problems with the people in Sierra Leone actively participating in Christian churches may be linked to low literacy, extreme poverty, and a culture that is dominated by Islam.

Future Prospects

The outlook for future LDS Church growth is favorable due to the organization of the Sierra Leone Freetown Mission in 2007 that has emphasized higher standards for convert baptisms, provided more consistent leadership training, and recently held a vision for expanding national outreach in the coming months and years. The establishment of additional stakes appears highly likely in the near future in both Freetown and Bo. Missionaries report that branches may soon be organized in Makeni and Waterloo. Additional cities will likely open for missionary work within the next decade, but outreach will likely not occur in rural areas for many more years. The Sierra Leone Freetown Mission may administer currently unreached nations in West Africa one day, such as Guinea and The Gambia. Poverty, low levels of religious commitment, and mediocre literacy rates will continue to limit growth and present persistent challenges toward establishing long-term, self-sufficient leadership.

SOMALIA

Geography

AREA: 637,657 square km. Located in East Africa on the Horn of Africa, Somalia borders Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean. Desert covers most the country, and some areas experience a seasonal monsoon that moderates temperatures. Periods between monsoons tend to be hot and humid. The terrain is flat with some plateaus and small mountains in the north. Drought, dust storms, and floods are natural hazards. Environmental issues include famine, contaminated drinking water, deforestation, soil erosion, and desertification. Somalia is divided into eighteen administrative regions.

Peoples

Somali: 85%

Other: 15%

Other ethnic groups consist of Bantu or non-Somali peoples.

Population: 10,085,638 (July 2012)—Note: population estimates vary widely

Annual Growth Rate: 1.596% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 6.26 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 48.86 male, 52.8 female (2012)

Languages: Somali languages (97%), other (3%). Somali is the official language. Arabic, English, Italian, and Swahili are also spoken. Languages with over one million speakers include Somali (8.34 million) and Maay (1.86 million).

Literacy: 37.8% (2001)

History

Since ancient times, Somalia has been a center of trade for East Africa and the Middle East. The Kingdom of Punt was headquartered in Somalia and traded with many civilization including the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Phoenicians. Islam quickly arrived to Somalia, and Mogadishu became an important center for religion in East Africa. Although never formally colonized, portions of Somalia were annexed by European powers in the late nineteenth century. Britain ruled northern Somalia, named Somaliland, but several decades of civil disorder occurred due to Dervish leaders who sought independence and an end to foreign rule. The rebellion was not put down until 1920 when the British used aircraft for the first time in a military campaign in Africa. Italian Somaliland consisted of central and southern Somalia and came under Italian rule in the late nineteenth century. During World War II, Italy invaded British Somaliland and united the two regions. Control of both states fell to the British following the war, and Italy regained jurisdiction for Italian Somalia shortly thereafter. Independence occurred in 1960 as European forces vacated the country and united both British and Italian sections.

In 1969, a coup brought authoritarian socialist rule that created greater stability until its collapse in the early 1990s. The United Nations conducted a humanitarian mission from 1993 to 1995 to relieve suffering from famine and the lawlessness that overtook the country. Increasing anarchy has occurred over the past two

decades as Somalia has divided into several smaller autonomous and semi-autonomous states that remain unrecognized by the international community. The Republic of Somaliland appears the most stable and promising, as a full functioning government is in place. Other de facto states or political powers include Puntland, Xisbul Islam, the Somali Federal Government, and Harakat al-Shabaab Mujahideen. Pirate attacks on cargo ships, oil tankers, and passenger vessels off the Somali coast occur frequently and are a subject of increasing international concern.

Culture

Sitting at the crossroads of East Africa and the Middle East, Somalia has diverse cuisine and literature. Somali music possesses many unique characteristics, such as being based on a five-pitch music system instead of the common seven-pitch system. Many live nomadic lives. Islam heavily influences daily living. Laws originate from three different sources: civil law, Shari'a law, and Xeer (a customary law). Polygamy is widely practiced.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$600 (2009) [1.25% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.284

Corruption Index: 1.0 (2011)

The lack of a central government presents many unique economic conditions. Local businesses print their own money, and many hotels have their own private militias for security. Agriculture produces and employs most the population. Many are nomads and heavily depend on their livestock for survival. Primary agriculture products include bananas, sorghum, corn, and livestock. Natural resources are scarce; lawlessness has prevented much of the discovery and exploitation mineral, petroleum, and hydropower resources. Somalia does have a developed telecommunications industry. Primary trade partners include the United Arab Emirates, Djibouti, and Yemen.

Faiths

Muslim: 99%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 100

Religion

Nearly all Somalis are Muslim. There are fewer than 1,000 Christians.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 5th

The transitional federal charter allows for freedom of religion, but this right is restricted in practice. De facto states range in their tolerance towards non-Muslims, but overall, Christians are not accepted and are actively persecuted. The charter claims Islam as the national religion, and Somaliland and Puntland also declare Islam as the state religion. In Puntland, the government does not tolerate the spread of non-Islamic religions and closely monitors religious activities. The al-Shabaab militia group, which controls southern Somalia, commits

acts of violence to enforce a radical interpretation of Islam including beheading, amputations, stoning, and grave desecration.⁸⁹⁷

Largest Cities

Urban: 37%

Mogadishu, Hargeysa, Berbera, Chisimayu, Jamaame, Baidoa, Burao, Bender Cassim, Afgooye, Galcaio. Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregation.

No cities have a congregation. Most the urban population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The Church established a branch in the early 1980s for foreign members living in Somalia, many of whom were assisting the government. The branch was discontinued after members returned to their home countries. Church services were held for American military in the early 1990s. In 1998, Somalia was assigned to the Africa Southeast Area. An American member thwarted a pirate attack on a cargo ship off the coast of Somalia in 2009.⁸⁹⁸

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 50 (2012)

Somali converts have joined the Church in Kenya.⁸⁹⁹ Some Somali members attended a meeting with President Hinckley in 1998.⁹⁰⁰ The few Somali members either joined the Church when a branch operated in the 1980s or in a country with a Church presence and later returned to their homeland.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 (2012)

As of 2004, there were no organized Church groups in the country.⁹⁰¹ The Kenya Nairobi Mission appears to administer Somalia.

Activity and Retention

It does not appear that many Somalis joined the Church when there was a Church presence, as prior congregations served primarily expatriate members, and no active proselytism is known to have occurred. Any LDS members remaining in Somalia likely keep their membership secret in order to avoid persecution and death threats.

⁸⁹⁷ "Somalia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127255.htm>

⁸⁹⁸ Caceres, Michelle. "Prayer, quick thinking thwart pirate attack," LDS Church News, 13 June 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57461/Prayer-quick-thinking-thwart-pirate-attack.html>

⁸⁹⁹ "McDonald, Hiram. "Church is growing in east Africa," LDS Church News, 6 September 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29126/Church-is-growing-in-east-Africa.html>

⁹⁰⁰ Hart, John L. "'This work will grow and grow in this land,'" LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30434/This-work-will-grow-and-grow-in-this-land.html>

⁹⁰¹ "Somalia," Deseret News 2010 Church Almanac, p. 575.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English, Italian, Swahili.

All LDS scriptures are available in Arabic, Italian, and Swahili. A wide range of ecclesiastic materials are available in Arabic and Italian, whereas Church material translations in Swahili include limited unit, priesthood, Relief Society, hymns, and Church proclamations. *Gospel Fundamentals* is available in Swahili. Church materials in Somali are limited to *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*.

Meetinghouses

Meetings occurred in members' homes or on military compounds when units were organized in Somalia. No organized LDS meetings occur in Somalia at present.

Health and Safety

Nationwide lawlessness and the violent enforcement of Islamic law create dangerous conditions for Christian missionaries and workers. Non-government organizations (NGOs) with strictly humanitarian missions have had to evacuate periodically due to threats of violence. The threat of spreading disease is lower than many African nations, and HIV/AIDS has infected 0.5% of the population, although some tropical diseases are endemic, health care infrastructure is extremely limited, and access to medicine is poor or nonexistent. Outsiders become frequent targets of harassment and violence, as they are accused of conducting missionary work or spying for Ethiopia. The United States and many other Western governments strongly advise their citizens against travel to Somalia.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church provided humanitarian relief to Somalia and surrounding countries in the early 1990s due to drought.⁹⁰² Long-term assistance in food donations and rehabilitation were offered by the Church in 1994.⁹⁰³

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The current state of religious freedom in Somalia, along with political collapse, lawlessness, and widespread violence, represent major obstacles preventing the establishment of the Church. Although the charter guarantees religious freedom, most local governments do not protect these rights. This results in the tolerated abuse and harassment of Christians and other non-Muslims. Current conditions suggest that any Church presence would be highly sensitive and would require members to meet in private locations in order to avoid lawlessness. Greater religious freedom occurs in Somaliland and Puntland, but the laws of these de facto states severely limits the functioning of Christian churches, barring any missionary activity.

Cultural Issues

Somalia has a highly homogenous religious demography, creating greater challenge for the Church to attract converts. Very few have any background in Christianity, resulting in many misunderstandings about the Bible and Christian theology. Low literacy rates impede any passive missionary activity, as few can read tracts and

⁹⁰² "Deadly drought," LDS Church News, 26 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22762/Deadly-drought.html>

⁹⁰³ "Church's humanitarian efforts provide relief around the world," LDS Church News, 13 August 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24169/Churchs-humanitarian-efforts-provide-relief-around-the-world.html>

pamphlets expounding and clarifying the Church's doctrines and practices. Internet access is extremely limited or nonexistent in most areas. Lawlessness creates challenges in forming boundaries between opposing clans and pseudo-nation states. The nomadic lifestyle of many Somalis will render this portion of the population unreached by the Church for many years following any formal Church establishment due to remote locations in which they reside and the transient nature of their lifestyle. The common practice of polygamy may challenge future mission outreach, as those married to a polygamous spouse must end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency to be baptized.

National Outreach

The entire population of nearly ten million is unreached by current mission outreach. Any future organized missionary work will likely occur through the Kenya Nairobi Mission and Africa Southeast Area. Although missionary work in Somali is presently prohibited by law, lawlessness, violence, and a tiny LDS membership, future endeavors will likely be limited by the large, receptive populations of neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia—which have thirty-nine million and eighty-five million people, respectively—drawing away limited mission resources and manpower.

Outreach among Somalis in nations with active missionary work may prepare for national outreach in Somalia. Neighboring Ethiopia has over five million Somalis and Kenya has half a million. Somali communities are also found in Europe, the United States, Canada, and the Middle East.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

There is no LDS presence in Somalia, and likely few native members.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The lack of ethnic diversity allows for fewer ethnic tensions and hostilities. However, clan violence between different Somali groups does occur and may become a source of conflict in the Church once a congregation is reestablished. Differing political views and allegiances to various militia groups among Somalis may lead some to not pursue learning about the Church if most LDS members belong to one political entity.

Language Issues

The Church benefits from a population that only speaks Somali languages. The translation of two Church resources into Somali likely indicates that the Church has had some prior success in attracting converts from Somalia. At present, LDS outreach to Somalis occurs primarily in Ethiopia and Kenya.

Leadership

Potential Somali Church leadership may be limited to only a couple individuals. Greater leadership development will need to occur prior to the establishment of Somali-speaking congregations in Somalia and among Somali diaspora communities.

Temple

Somalia pertains to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. No temple trips occur from Somalia. Members face challenges in long distance, airfare, and obtaining visas to visit the temple.

Comparative Growth

Somalia is the only African nation that once had an LDS presence and has no LDS presence at present. With the exception of North Africa, Somalia was the only African nation with more than 95% of the population adhering to Islam that had an LDS congregation. Nearby East African nations that are predominantly Christian have an established Church presence. By the end of 2009, both Kenya and Uganda had over 8,000 members and had experienced rapid membership growth for several years. Christians do not proselyte in Somalia and most of the mission-oriented denominations have no current presence. Christian outreach among Somalis has occurred in other nations.

Future Prospects

The outlook for a future Church presence in Somalia appears unfavorable, as the country lacks a central government, and Somali de facto states have highly restrictive laws against proselytism and typically tolerate violence towards non-Muslims. Somali members living in other nations have shown keen interest in bringing the gospel to their native country. Even if a national government tolerant toward non-Muslims emerges, the Church will face many challenges in its establishment, as virtually the entire population is Muslim and suffers from high illiteracy. The most probable method of an eventual reestablishment of an LDS presence will be through Somali members joining the Church in Ethiopia and Kenya and returning in large enough numbers to justify the recreation of a congregation in Mogadishu.

SOUTH AFRICA

Geography

AREA: 1,219,090 square km. South Africa occupies the most southern areas of Africa, bordering Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Swaziland. South Africa entirely surrounds Lesotho. South Africa borders both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The Cape of Good Hope is one of the most defining geographic features. Most areas have a temperate climate partially affected by altitude. Western areas have drier climates, the driest being the Namib Desert. The wettest climates are in the southwest. Landscape in western and northern South Africa is flat, with mountainous areas stretching from Lesotho to the northwest and plateaus in the south. South Africa is divided into nine provinces.

Peoples

Black African: 79%

White: 9.6%

Colored: 8.9%

Indian/Asian: 2.5%

South Africa has some of the richest ethnic diversity in Africa. Black Africans consist of Ndebele, Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Swazi, Venda, and Tsonga peoples in addition to immigrant groups from neighboring African countries, especially Zimbabwe. Refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia number 33,000 and 20,000, respectively. Blacks form the greatest majorities in the northwestern provinces. The Limpopo Province has the largest majority (95%) and the Western Cape Province has the smallest percentage (less than 30%). Whites come from many countries in Western and Central Europe and are most represented in Gauteng Province (over 20%), the largest cities, and western South Africa. Whites are least found in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, and Eastern Cape Provinces. The colored population, which entails non-Bantu African groups, some Asians and mixed-raced individuals, constitute up to half of the population in parts of western South Africa and do not make up more than 5% of the population in eastern South Africa. The Indian/Asian population has its greatest percentage of the population in KwaZulu-Natal (8%) and small minorities elsewhere.

Population: 48,810,427 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: -0.412% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.28 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 50.34 male, 48.45 female (2012)

Languages: Commonly spoken official or national languages include IsiZulu (23.8%), IsiXhosa (17.6%), Afrikaans (13.3%), Sepedi [North Sotho] (9.4%), English (8.2%), Sesotho (7.9%), Setswana (8.2%), and Tsonga (4.4%). Additional official or national languages include Ndebele, Swati, and Venda, which, combined with other languages, are spoken by 7.2%. Ndebele has 640,000 speakers, and Venda has 980,000 speakers. Languages with over one million speakers include Zulu (9.98 million), Xhosa (7.79 million), Afrikaans (4.74 million), Southern Sotho (4.24 million), Northern Sotho (4.09 million), English (3.67 million), Tswana (3.41 million), Tsonga (1.94 million), Portuguese (1.5 million), and Swati (1.01 million). There are also likely millions of speakers of Shona, primarily immigrants from Zimbabwe.

Literacy: 86.4% (2003)

History

Khoisan and, later, Bantu peoples settled South Africa before European contact. Portuguese explorers first sailed around the Cape of Good Hope in the late nineteenth century. The Dutch founded Cape Town in 1652 as a stopping point for travel between Europe and Asia and was the first permanent European settlement in South Africa. Cape Town fell to British rule in the early nineteenth century, and conflict continued between Dutch settlers, known as the Boers, many of whom fled north to escape British rule. The Boer Wars were fought from 1880–1881 and 1899–1902. Although defeated, the Boers shared power over the Union of South Africa that integrated Boer republics with the rest of South Africa. The National Party came into power in 1948 and segregated whites and blacks under a policy called apartheid that lasted until 1994 when multi-racial elections were held. The African National Congress has ruled since, bringing blacks to political power. Party instability increased in the 2000s, resulting in the resignation of President Thabo Mbeki in 2008. President Kgalema Motlanthe will administer the country until upcoming elections.

Culture

Each of the ethnic groups maintains its individual culture. Apartheid prevented interaction between ethnic groups, resulting in greater disharmony. Since the end of apartheid, greater integration has occurred between ethnic groups although neighborhoods are still segregated due to differences in socioeconomic class, language, religion, and culture. Western South Africa is known for its high quality wines. Meat is eaten in abundance. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are comparable to the world average. Polygamy is uncommon and may be practiced under customary law.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$11,000 (2011) [22.9% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.619

Corruption Index: 4.1 (2011)

The largest stock exchange in Africa is based in Johannesburg. Abundant natural resources, a diversified economy, and a developed infrastructure generate wealth and growth potential. Water and energy shortages have reduced this potential, however. Extreme inequality of wealth is due to economic development concentrated in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town, and Port Elizabeth as well as large disparities in education and employment. Half of the population lives below the poverty line, with many of the poor living in rural areas. Whites have had and continue to have greater wealth than other races, but there is a growing black middle class. Most exports are metals and minerals, including gold, diamonds, and platinum. Main export/import partners include Japan, the United States, Germany, and China. South Africa numbers among the least corrupt African countries, but corruption is pervasive. Money laundering and illicit drug production, cultivation, and trafficking are major issues.

Faiths

Christian: 79.7%

Muslim: 1.5%

Other: 2.3%

Unspecified: 1.4%

None: 15.1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Zion Christian 5,444,826

Pentecostal/Charismatic 4,022,304

Catholic 3,482,727

Methodist 3,335,569

Dutch Reformed 3,286,517

Anglican 1,863,995

Catholic 4,863,731

Protestant 1,919,894

Seventh Day Adventists 97,498 962

Jehovah's Witnesses 91,814 1,831

Latter-day Saints 59,807 152

Religion

Syncretism between Christianity and indigenous beliefs is common. Independent African churches have the most adherents and experience the greatest syncretism. Many classified as nonreligious may follow indigenous religions. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of whites are Christian, and 1.4% are Jewish.⁹⁰⁴ Although small in numbers, Islam has rapidly grown among blacks, but most Muslims are of Malay, Indonesian, or Indian origin in Cape Town. Rising secularism among whites may account for some of the large minority claiming no religion.

Religious Freedom

Freedom of religion is protected by the constitution. Government respects this right and has not restricted religious freedom. Most religious communities are respectful to one another.

Major Cities

Urban: 61%

Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Soweto, Port Elizabeth, Benoni, Vereeniging, Pietermaritzburg, East London, Tembisa, Bloemfontein, Boksburg, Vanderbijlpark, Newcastle, Krugersdorp, Welkom, **Brakpan**, Carletonville, Springs, Uitenhage, Witbank, Alberton, Botshabelo, Paarl, Midrand, Kimberley, Klerksdorp, Verwoerdburg, **Westonaria**, Somerset West, Bisho, Randfontein, **Middelburg**, Rustenburg, **Nigel**, Potchefstroom, George, Nelspruit, **Phalaborwa**, **Emnambithi**, Pietersburg, Potgietersrus.

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

The Church has a congregation in thirty-seven of the forty-three largest cities. The population of cities with over 100,000 inhabitants account for 39% of the national population.

LDS History

The first missionaries arrived in April 1853 in Cape Town, and South Africa was dedicated for missionary work the following month. The first congregation was organized in August 1853; by 1855, there were three LDS congregations. Between 1865 and 1903, missionaries did not serve in Africa due to government restrictions

⁹⁰⁴ "South Africa," International Religious Freedom Report 2005, retrieved 25 May 2011. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51496.htm>

and missionaries unable to learn to speak Afrikaans.⁹⁰⁵ Missionaries were prohibited from entering the country between 1919 and 1921.

President David O. McKay visited South Africa in 1954 and empowered the mission president to bestow the priesthood upon members at his discretion.⁹⁰⁶ Foreign missionaries were not allowed to enter in 1955 due to civil unrest, but the Church was able to send missionaries from Canada and other British Commonwealth nations.⁹⁰⁷ This restriction was lifted shortly thereafter. The first South African missionaries began serving outside their homeland in 1966. Seminary and institute commenced in 1972. President Kimball rededicated South Africa for missionary work in 1979. In 1984, the South Africa Johannesburg Mission was divided to create a second mission in Cape Town. In 1990, the Africa Area was organized with headquarters in Johannesburg. The first member of the Church elected as a mayor occurred that same year.⁹⁰⁸ In 1991, a third mission was organized in Durban from a division of the South Africa Johannesburg Mission and the relocation of the Mascarene Islands Mission formerly headquartered in Reunion. In 2013, the South Africa Johannesburg Mission was divided to create a separate mission for Botswana.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 59,807 (2012)

Six months later, forty-five converts had been baptized. There were about 130 members in 1855, with most of living near Cape Town. By 1858, 243 South Africans had joined the Church.⁹⁰⁹ In 1903, only a few members remained after decades without missionaries serving and little contact with Church Headquarters. In 1935, membership reached 1,261, and members were found in other areas of the country, including Bloemfontein and Johannesburg.

By 1965, there were 4,764 members. At the end of 1971, there were 3,128 members in the Transvaal Stake and 2,718 members in the South Africa Mission, excluding Rhodesia. Some of the highest membership growth rates occurred in the 1980s. Membership reached 17,216 by 1990. There were an estimated 22,000 members by 1993, growing to 24,450 in 1996 and 29,220 by the end of 1999.

Membership continued to steadily increase in the 2000s. Black membership surpassed 50% of LDS membership in the early 2000s.⁹¹⁰ By the end of 2004, there were 40,482 members and 48,112 members at the end of 2009. Annual membership growth rates have declined in the past decade from almost 7% in 2000 to about 4.5% in 2008. Growth rates rebounded to between 6%–8% in 2009 and 2010. In 2010, one in 891 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 81 Branches: 73 Groups: 5+ (April 2013)

President Marion G. Romney visited in 1968 and challenged members to help grow the Church so that a stake could be organized. The Transvaal Stake was created in 1970, the first in South Africa. In 1973, the stake had

⁹⁰⁵ "South Africa," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/south-africa>

⁹⁰⁶ Johnson, R. Val. "South Africa: Land of Good Hope." Ensign February 1993, 33. <http://lds.org/ensign/1993/02/south-africa-land-of-good-hope?lang=eng>

⁹⁰⁷ Cummins, Lawrence. "The Saints in South Africa," Ensign, March 1973. <http://lds.org/ensign/1973/03/the-saints-in-south-africa?lang=eng>

⁹⁰⁸ Cook, Elder Darwin; Cook, Sister Maurine. "Church member is elected mayor of South African city," LDS Church News, 15 September 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19633/Church-member-is-elected-mayor-of-South-African-city.html>

⁹⁰⁹ Johnson, R. Val. "South Africa: Land of Good Hope." Ensign February 1993, 33. <http://lds.org/ensign/1993/02/south-africa-land-of-good-hope?lang=eng>

⁹¹⁰ Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Church in Africa growing, strengthening," LDS Church News, 31 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43818/Church-in-Africa-growing-strengthening.html>

five wards and five branches. There were two districts functioning in the early 1970s. The Cape District had two branches, and the Natal District had three branches. Five independent mission branches also functioned under the South Africa Mission, some of which were in the country. A second stake was created in Pretoria in 1978, and the third stake was created in Durban in 1981.

The 1978 revelation extending priesthood and temple blessing to African members opened up black communities that had not had congregations. Branches were established among black townships in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng Provinces, most of which pertained to stakes. The Cape Town South Africa Stake was organized in 1984. The first Zulu missionary began serving in 1984.⁹¹¹ The Benoni South Africa Stake was created in 1987, bringing the number of stakes up to five.

Four new stakes were created in between 1995 and 1999, three of which (Roodepoort, Bedfordview, and Soweto) were in the Johannesburg area. These new stakes were created mainly due to the rapid growth among blacks joining the Church. The Soweto South Africa Stake, for instance, began as a branch for the black township in the 1980s.⁹¹² The Hillcrest South Africa Stake was created in 1999 from a division of the Durban South Africa Stake.

Districts in East London and Port Elizabeth matured into stakes in 2002 and 2005 respectively. Between 2005 and 2007 there were eleven stakes and no districts. Mission branches began to multiply, resulting in the formation of four districts between late 2007 and late 2009 in Richards Bay, Newcastle, Bloemfontein, and Tzaneen. The Richards Bay South Africa District was created from a single ward that was meeting in several different locations. The ward was divided into five branches at the creation of the district. The Newcastle South Africa District was created from five mission branches in Newcastle, Madadeni, and Ezakheni. The Bloemfontein South Africa District was organized with ten branches in Lesotho, Bethlehem, and the Johannesburg South Africa Stake. The Tzaneen South Africa District was created from five mission branches in Limpopo Province. Swaziland was included in different stakes in South Africa from the 1990s until 2008 when the Mbabane Swaziland District was created. In 2011, a stake was organized in Centurion bringing the total number of stakes and districts to twelve and four, respectively.

There were sixty LDS congregations in 1987, ninety-seven in 1993, ninety-four in 1997, and one hundred in 2000. Approximately half of LDS congregations in 2000 were wards. Congregational growth increased during the 2000s, as there were 103 units in 2002, 116 in 2004, 128 in 2006, 141 in 2008, and 147 in 2010. In mid-2011 there were 148 LDS congregations. Dependent branches and home groups operate in several areas of the country under the jurisdiction of the South Africa Durban or South Africa Cape Town Mission Branches or other units, such as Kosi Bay Group.

Activity and Retention

President Hinckley visited about 9,000 members and investigators in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg in 1998 and noted that attrition due to the emigration of members from South Africa presented a challenge.⁹¹³ 3,792 were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. The average number of members per congregation increased from 321 to 374 between 2000 and 2010. The ratio of wards to branches has also experienced little change, indicating that activity and retention levels have remained stable unless the number of active member per congregation has decreased. Active membership varies widely, from newly

⁹¹¹ Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Church in Africa growing, strengthening," LDS Church News, 31 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43818/Church-in-Africa-growing-strengthening.html>

⁹¹² "Monument of Hope: Groundbreaking ceremony draws interest in South Africa township," LDS Church News, 18 January 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22145/Monument-of-hope—Groundbreaking-ceremony-draws-interest-in-South-Africa-township.html>

⁹¹³ Fidel, Steve. "Members urged to build up homeland," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31080/Members-urged-to-build-up-homeland.html>

established branches in remote areas with less than fifty active members to larger wards in Johannesburg with between 100–200 active members. Total active membership is likely between 17,000 and 20,000, or 30%–35% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Afrikaans, English, Setswana, Shona, Xhosa, Zulu.

The first Afrikaans-speaking missionaries were assigned in 1963. The Church completed and distributed the Book of Mormon in Afrikaans in 1972.⁹¹⁴ Other LDS scriptures are available in Afrikaans, but limited Church materials include the Relief Society Declaration, *Gospel Principles* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Book of Mormon in selections in Zulu were translated in 1987 and the full book in the early 2000s. The Church completed the Xhosa translation of the Book of Mormon in 2000. The Setswana Book of Mormon translation was completed in the early 2000s. Limited missionary, priesthood, Relief Society, music, and Sunday School materials are available in Setswana, Xhosa and Zulu. Church materials translated into Sesotho are limited to *Gospel Principles*, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, and the sacrament prayers. SiSwati Church materials are limited to *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*. Zimbabwean members have all LDS scriptures available in Shona, along with a large number of Church materials. The Articles of Faith are the only LDS material available in Sepedi.

Health and Safety

Violent crime poses major obstacles for Church growth. South Africa suffers from the one of the world's highest rates of violent crime and rape. The sexual assault and robbery of a pair of sister missionaries serving in the South Africa Durban Mission in 2006 resulted in the withdrawal of all sister missionaries from South Africa in that year.⁹¹⁵ Full-time missionaries limit proselytism on the basis of areas and time of day for safety reasons. Driving also poses safety hazards, evidence by the death of a missionary in the Johannesburg mission in 2008.⁹¹⁶

South Africa's population has the fourth highest percentage of those infected with HIV/AIDS in the world at 17.8% of the adult population. HIV/AIDS generally spreads through illicit sexual relations and drug use. Other sources of infection include contaminated needles and HIV-positive mothers. Church members infected with HIV/AIDS are less able to contribute to long term growth and establishing families in the Church due to the disease shortening their life spans and limiting potential for raising a family.

Meetinghouses

The first meetinghouse was built in 1917. By 1973 there were sixteen meetinghouses nationwide. One of the first meetinghouses in a black township began construction in 1992 in Soweto. Wards and larger branches typically meet in Church built meetinghouses or renovated buildings. Smaller branches tend to meet in rented spaces or members' homes. The Church renovated remodeled buildings used as the Africa Southeast Area

⁹¹⁴ Cummins, Lawrence. "The Saints in South Africa," Ensign, March 1973. <http://lds.org/ensign/1973/03/the-saints-in-south-africa?lang=eng>

⁹¹⁵ "South Attack puts safety on Utahns' minds," LDS Church News, 6 July 2006. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,640192620,00.html>

⁹¹⁶ "Missionary dies in South Africa," LDS Church News, 18 January 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51552/Missionary-dies-in-South-Africa.html>

offices in 2001 and held an open house with 750 government and community leaders in attendance.⁹¹⁷ Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy dedicated the Johannesburg Missionary Training Center in 2003.⁹¹⁸

Humanitarian and Development Work

Local members provided land for gardening for local school children in Loxton in 2001.⁹¹⁹ A garden project in Katlehong provided abundant food for impoverished members in the area starting in 2001.⁹²⁰ Local members donated clothing for children born from HIV-positive mothers.⁹²¹ Mormon Helping Hands projects have cleaned schools and served the communities in which members live.⁹²² The Church donated wheelchairs with other charitable organizations in 2008.⁹²³ Additional projects have included donating bedding, emergency food relief, and furnishings for a care center and providing HIV/AIDS education and health fairs.⁹²⁴

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church enjoys full religious freedom. Opportunities for missionary work with full-time missionaries are well utilized. The lack of tension between religious communities and widespread member missionary work are opportunities that have yet to be realized.

Cultural Issues

Receptivity to the LDS Church among the black population has been moderate over the past four decades, although cultural issues among all ethnicities present challenges for LDS outreach and long-term church growth. Historical segregation between races under apartheid resulted in little interethnic mixing and contact, exacerbating ethnic tensions. As a result of concentrated mission efforts among whites until the late 1970s, seasoned church members with full families in the Church tend to be whites living in Johannesburg, Durban, or Cape Town, notwithstanding whites account for less than 10% of the national population. The emigration of whites has destabilized LDS population in some areas of the largest cities. Materialism and disinterest in religion appear most widespread among whites and coloreds. Blacks have the strongest interest in religion, and much of the church growth over the past two decades has come from native African ethnic groups, but member activity and convert retention rates have been modest. Disinterest in religion among whites and limited outreach towards coloreds is manifest in the slow growth in the Western Cape Province. Although current South African President Kgalema Motlanthe practices polygamy, most South Africans do not.

⁹¹⁷ "Community visits new headquarters, learns of Church," LDS Church News, 10 February 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39306/Community-visits-new-headquarters-learns-of-Church.html>

⁹¹⁸ "South Africa trains own missionaries," LDS Church News, 9 August 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44166/South-Africa-trains-own-missionaries.html>

⁹¹⁹ "Garden project a 'blessing from heaven' in South Africa," LDS Church News, 21 July 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40222/Garden-project-a-blessing-from-heaven-in-South-Africa.html>

⁹²⁰ Jensen, Elder Gerald W. "Garden project sprouts fruits of success," LDS Church News, 15 June 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41977/Garden-project-sprouts-fruits-of-success.html>

⁹²¹ "A 'clothes mountain' in Africa," LDS Church News, 24 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50282/A-clothes-mountain-in-Africa.html>

⁹²² Heaps, Julie Dockstader. "Helping Hands goes coast to coast," LDS Church News, 24 November 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51353/Helping-Hands-goes-coast-to-coast.html>

⁹²³ Jackson, Elder Eric. "Church and radio station join in wheelchair project," LDS Church News, 4 October 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/54589/Church-and-radio-station-join-in-wheelchair-project.html>

⁹²⁴ "Projects—South Africa," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 25 May 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-179,00.html>

National Outreach

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the national population resides in cities of over 30,000 inhabitants with an LDS congregation. All nine administrative provinces have at least one congregation, four have at least one stake, six have a stake or district, and three have a mission. Large cities nationwide typically have a congregation. Some rural areas nearby larger or middle sized cities also have congregations, particularly in Free State, Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal.

The Church has hesitated to conduct missionary work among people who do not live near meetinghouses. Missionaries were charged in 1997 to avoid teaching and baptizing those who have difficulty traveling to Church meetings due to distance since most travel on foot.⁹²⁵ In the past two decades, the Church created dozens of new branches in townships or neighborhoods closer to the homes of members and investigators to meet local needs, capitalize on receptivity, and expand national outreach. In the early 2010s, new proselytism areas opened regularly, although most were in the largest cities, and only a few were in formerly-unreached locations.

The Northern Cape Province is the least proselytized, with 1.06 million inhabitants and only one congregation in the capital of Kimberley. At least 84% of the population is unreached by the Church in the province. In Western Cape Province, congregations are limited to Cape Town and its suburbs, George, and Knysna. About half the population live in cities and towns with no congregations despite the Church's first establishment in South Africa in Cape Town in the 1850s and again in the 1900s. The Church has likely been reluctant to open areas to missionary work far away from Cape Town in rural areas with few members and inhabitants. Some Church members live in isolated areas and meet in small groups. Other provinces have a more widespread presence among the larger cities, but contain large rural areas and small cities without any official Church presence.

Many ethnic groups have little to no mission outreach. Muslim Cape Malays have likely had little exposure to the Church, as well as coloreds from India. Greater emphasis has been placed in the Western Cape Province around Cape Town in establishing more branches, likely in an effort to reach the large number of coloreds in the province. Khoisan peoples have likely had no exposure to the Church.

The Church has yet to create congregations in more cities with over 30,000 inhabitants. In mid-2011, there were approximately fifty cities with over 30,000 inhabitants with no LDS outreach. Many unreached cities are in Western Cape Province and on the outskirts of Johannesburg, particularly on the east side. Congregations have systematically been organized in many of these smaller cities on the peripheries of Johannesburg, but dozens of middle sized cities remain unreached.

The Church maintains an Internet site for South Africa at <http://www.lds.co.za/> providing links to other English-language LDS websites, local church news, and information of church beliefs, practices, and programs. Use of the website by missionaries and local members can magnify proselytism efforts and expand national outreach.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Mediocre convert retention and member activity rates have largely arisen due to quick-baptism tactics of those who have often not firmly established gospel habits or achieved an adequate understanding of basic gospel principles. These mission practices have been most regularly employed among black townships where there is an insufficient number of longtime members, further compounding activity and retention issues. Generally

⁹²⁵ McDonald, Hiram. "Open houses in Africa show rapid growth," LDS Church News, 15 February 1997. <http://www.ldschurch-news.com/articles/29601/Open-houses-in-Africa-show-rapid-growth.html>

black townships exhibit the lowest member activity rates because of these issues. Many Africans demonstrate little long-term conviction to a particular denomination, which has further influenced LDS activity rates. Convert retention and member activity also appear low in areas with the least developed church infrastructure, such as Limpopo Province, due to local leadership struggles and distance from meetinghouses.

The Church in the North West and Mpumalanga Provinces appears dependent on the stakes in Johannesburg. Neither of these provinces has a stake or district, and there is no ward in Mpumalanga Province. The inclusion of congregations in these regions in Johannesburg stakes can facilitate greater local leadership development through frequent visits from stake presidencies and stake high counselors. Stakes may have assisted mission leadership in the opening of additional congregations in these areas, providing greater long-term support from local members and leaders.

Increasing enrollment in seminary and institute in the late 2000s indicates success in increasing the number of active members, but the rate of growth of enrollment in Church Education System classes remains far below the number of youth and young adult convert baptisms. Greater emphasis on attending seminary and institute for new converts and investigators may increase long-term activity rates, strengthen testimonies, and augment the number of local members serving missions. The Church organized its first young single adult (YSA) congregation in Africa in the 2000s, which can help address activity issues among single members and provide youth and young-adult-centered outreach.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Apartheid continues to divide much of the country, with many wealthier white South Africans living in compounds with high security and blacks or coloreds living in rural areas or in poorly built areas on the outskirts of larger cities. Differences in language and location cause wards and branches to be established in a manner that have limited mixing of ethnicities in Church congregations, although many large-city congregations are diverse. LDS missionaries report the greatest ethnic integration challenges among white members or investigators attending predominantly black congregations and black members attending predominantly white congregations.

Language Issues

The linguistic diversity of South Africa presents challenges for teaching the gospel in local languages. Most missionaries do not learn native languages fluently and heavily rely on English for conducting missionary work. English has served as a language that has united different ethnic groups in the same congregation, facilitating growth with fewer mission resources. The Book of Mormon has not been translated into half of the official languages of South Africa. As membership increases among speakers of these languages, additional translations of LDS scriptures will likely come forth.

Missionary Service

The LDS Church in South Africa is only partially sufficient in staffing its full-time missionary force due to activity issues among youth and young adults and significant increases in the number of foreign full-time missionaries assigned to the country in recent years. In late 2009, the South Africa Johannesburg Mission had grown to one of the largest in Africa with 185 missionaries. The Johannesburg Missionary Training Center is small and had capacity for only thirty-two missionaries in 2003⁹²⁶ but offers valuable instruction and structure for LDS missionary operations in the region. Increased emphasis on missionary preparation through assigning young adults as ward or branch missionaries, attendance in seminary and institute, and cooperative

⁹²⁶ "South Africa trains own missionaries," LDS Church News, 9 August 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44166/South-Africa-trains-own-missionaries.html>

proselytism efforts that involve local members and full-time missionaries may increase the number of local members serving missions.

Leadership

White members have the greatest leadership experience in South Africa due primarily to a longer church legacy and seasoned multigenerational LDS families among whites. Nearly all the stakes are headquartered in areas with higher white populations, although this is likely to change in coming years due to increased church growth among blacks and low receptivity among whites and continued white emigration. Several South Africans have served as Area Authorities. David J. Barnett was called as an Area Authority in 2001,⁹²⁷ Allen P. Young was called as an Area Authority in 2004,⁹²⁸ and Colin H. Bricknell was called as an Area Authority in 2008.⁹²⁹ The Church faces problems with active white leadership emigrating from South Africa. Reasons for emigration likely include members wanting to live in other countries with a larger Church presence, economic reasons, and fears over violence.

Blacks in many of the townships have been receptive, but some townships appear to struggle developing self-sustaining leadership, and so few additional congregations have been organized. The Kwa Mashu Branch in the Durban area has functioned for nearly three decades but has not yet become a ward. In 1998, the branch had a reported 175 members attending Sunday meetings out of 300 total members.⁹³⁰ Similar challenges have occurred in Cape Town as missionaries have focused on organizing a second stake in the city for years, but limited local leadership has prevented any significant progress.

Temple

The Johannesburg South Africa Temple has served the greater portion of Africa since its dedication in 1985. The temple is well utilized on Fridays and Saturdays, with nine to twelve endowment sessions scheduled every hour or half hour in the morning and evening in 2011. Greater emphasis appears placed on stake and ward or branch temple excursions rather than individual temple trips, likely due to demand for special sessions for members living throughout the vast temple district covering most of the Africa Southeast Area. The temple appears to be underutilized on weekdays, particularly in the morning. In October 2011, the Church announced plans for constructing a temple in Durban. At present, no other cities appear likely to have temples constructed for the foreseeable future.

Comparative Growth

South Africa has the second highest LDS membership in Africa after Nigeria. No other country in Africa has had as long of a church presence. Growth since 1980 is among the most rapid experienced by the Church in Africa. Only Nigeria and Ghana have experienced more rapid growth since 1980 and have over 40,000 members. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in the general population and the percentage of the population reached by the Church is higher than in most African nations. Member activity and convert retention rates are comparable to other nations in southern Africa but lower than Central and West Africa.

Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, and other mission-oriented Christian denominations have

⁹²⁷ "12 men are sustained to Quorums of Seventy," LDS Church News, 31 March 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39606/12-men-are-sustained-to-Quorums-of-Seventy.html>

⁹²⁸ "New Area Authority Seventies," LDS Church News, 24 April 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45458/New-Area-Authority-Seventies.html>

⁹²⁹ "38 Area Seventies called," LDS Church News, 12 April 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51857/38-Area-Seventies-called.html>

⁹³⁰ Hart, John L. "Durban, South Africa," LDS Church News, 6 June 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31359/Durban-South-Africa.html>

experienced comparable growth to the LDS Church in South Africa, although these Christian groups operate significantly more congregations. These denominations have utilized local member missionary efforts, resulting in a broader outreach and faster growth that has been sustained. Some of the most rapid growth for Christians was in the 1990s following apartheid. Severe social, economic, and health problems, including HIV/AIDS and violent crime, have also limited their growth compared to other African nations. Cultural diversity has challenged Christian resources to reach groups that the LDS Church has also struggled or not attempted to reach, including Cape Malays and Khoisan peoples. Non-African churches have experienced slower growth than other African nations due to the large number of independent, syncretic African churches that claim a sizable portion of the population.

Future Prospects

Continued high receptivity and congregational growth will likely continue in the coming years, resulting in the organization of additional stakes, the maturation of some districts into stakes, and the expansion of LDS national outreach. Socioeconomic and ethnic divides in many areas pose obstacles for growth and blacks will likely greatly outnumber whites among LDS leadership in the coming years. HIV/AIDS may threaten the stability of long-term church growth for the LDS Church. The Church has established a firm foundation of leadership and active membership in the larger cities that are able to better accommodate greater growth. Goals have been set for a third stake to be created in the Durban area in the coming years. Districts in Bloemfontein and Newcastle appear the closest districts to becoming stakes. Additional stakes will likely be organized in the Johannesburg area. Once branches in the Cape Town South Africa Stake mature into wards, a second stake could be organized. The two wards and a branch in the East London South Africa Stake located one hundred miles to the northwest in the Queenstown area will likely be made into a separate district or stake if greater growth in membership and congregations occurs. Additional districts will likely be created in North West and Mpumalanga Provinces based in Klerksdorp, Witbank, and Nelspruit. Two more districts in the Eastern and Western Cape in Grahamstown and George may be created from mission branches. The greatest progress in beginning missionary work in unreached areas will likely be in larger cities or cities between 30,000 and 100,000 people, especially around Johannesburg. The South Africa Durban Mission has focused on strengthening local membership and increase the number of congregations in the mission so a temple can be announced for Durban. President Hinckley visited Durban in 1998 and predicted that the day would come when there would be five stakes in Durban.⁹³¹ Additional missions may be organized over the medium term.

⁹³¹ Fidel, Steve. "Members urged to build up homeland," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31080/Members-urged-to-build-up-homeland.html>

SOUTH SUDAN

Geography

AREA: 619,725 square km. Landlocked in Central Africa, South Sudan borders Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic. Floodplains, swamps, and pastureland along the Nile River and its tributaries constitute most the terrain and are subject to tropical climate. Wildlife flourishes in South Sudan in the swamps and floodplains that are generally sparsely populated. Flooding, drought, and wildfires are natural hazards. Environmental issues include pollution and improper disposal of waste. South Sudan is divided into three administrative states. The status of whether Abyei State pertains to Sudan or South Sudan remains undetermined.

Peoples

Dinka: 12.5%

Other: 87.5%

With hundreds of ethnic groups, the South Sudanese population exhibits extreme ethnic diversity, with the largest ethnic group comprising only 12.5% of the national population. Ethnic groups in the country pertain either to Nilotic, Sudanese, or Semitic-Hamitic ethnic families. Pertaining to the Nilotic group, the Dinka are the largest ethnic group and are estimated to number over one million. Most ethnic groups rely on subsistence agriculture and reside in rural areas. Other major ethnic groups include the Shilluk, Acholi, and Nuer (Nilotic) and the Azande, Bor, and Jo Luo (Sudanese).⁹³²

Population: 10,625,176 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 4.32% (average growth rate from 1993 to 2008)

Fertility Rate: N/A [Sudan—4.84 children born per woman (2011)]

Life Expectancy: N/A [Sudan—54.18 male, 56.71 female (2011)]

Languages: Dinka dialects (17%), Nuer (9%), Bari (5%), Zande (4%), Shilluk (2%), Otuho (2%), Jur Modo (1%), Toposa (1%), other or unknown (58%). Arabic and English are the official languages. Only Dinka has over one million speakers (1.35 million).

Literacy: N/A (61.1% for Sudan [2003])

History

Most of the tribes that populated South Sudan settled the region a millennium ago and maintained self-rule until the late nineteenth century. Egypt conquered Sudan during the nineteenth century but only maintained a few outposts in the south during this period. Slave raiders would at times venture into the south and carry away indigenous peoples as slaves in the north. The United Kingdom annexed Sudan in the late nineteenth century but had little involvement in the south and restricted its administration primarily to northern areas and Khartoum. Sudan achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1956, but civil war enveloped the country between the Muslim north and animist and Christian south for nearly the entire remainder of the

⁹³² "Background Note: Sudan," Bureau of African Affairs, 8 April 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5424.htm>

twentieth century due to ethno-religious differences, repression of non-Arab and non-Muslim peoples, and debate over the representation of Islam in government. Violence was most severe in the south, where an estimated two million perished and four million were displaced between 1983 and 2005. In 2002, Sudan granted South Sudan the right to self-determination, and in 2005, the north and south signed a peace treaty ending the civil war. In January 2011, an independence referendum was held for South Sudan in which 98.83% of South Sudanese voters opted for independence from the north, resulting in the formation of an independent nation named the Republic of South Sudan in July 2011. The political status of the border state Abyei remains undetermined.⁹³³

Culture

Tribalism, war, and violence have dominated local culture for the past half century as a result of one of the longest civil wars in African history. The result of the civil war was extremely devastating on South Sudanese populations, as LDS senior missionary couples reported in 2008 that in some areas most adults perished in the war, and there were none of the rising generation who knew how to grow traditional crops and engage in sustenance agriculture.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,200 (2010) [4.64% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.531

Corruption Index: 1.6 [statistics are for Sudan]

The economy is largely undeveloped, and most of the labor force is employed in subsistence farming and agriculture. Petroleum reserves and arable farmland are the primary natural resources and have been poorly utilized and exploited. War, poverty, political instability, corruption, and landlocked location have limited economic development and international trade.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and present in all areas of society.

Faiths

Christian (usually incorporated with indigenous beliefs): 50%

Indigenous religions and other: 50%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 2,000,000 (includes Sudan proper)

Seventh Day Adventists 17,429 46

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,826 65 (includes Sudan proper)

Latter-day Saints ~100 1

Religion

The religious demographics of the South Sudanese population have not been well studied due to war and political instability lasting for decades, but many believe that Christians account for approximately half the population. Christianity has rapidly spread in South Sudan since early 1990. Most Christians incorporate

⁹³³ "Background Note: Sudan," Bureau of African Affairs, 8 April 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5424.htm>

indigenous beliefs and practices into their worship. Followers of indigenous religious beliefs account for most of the remaining half of the population, whereas Muslims appear to constitute a small minority.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. There have been no recent reports of societal abuse of religious freedom. There are no laws punishing potential violations of religious freedom by private actors. There are no proselytizing restrictions and no penalties for defaming religion or apostasy.⁹³⁴

Largest Cities

Urban: N/A (Sudan proper: 40%)

Juba, **Wau, Malakal, Uwayl.**

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

One of the four largest cities has an LDS congregation. 9% of the national population resides in the four most populous cities.

LDS History

The first Sudanese Latter-day Saints joined the Church in Europe, the United States, and Australia, but no LDS missionary activity in South Sudan occurred until the late 2000s. In late 2007 and early 2008, reports began to circulate among members and missionaries in Uganda of large numbers of self-identified Latter-day Saints perhaps numbering in the hundreds who were unofficially meeting in the name of the Church. To investigate these reports and under the direction of the Africa Southeast Area Presidency, Uganda Kampala Mission President Christensen became the first LDS authority to visit South Sudan in July 2008. President Christensen traveled to a small town in eastern South Sudan named Nyamlel where approximately 2,500 individuals assembled to learn more about the Church. Due to flooding in the region prior to the visit by President Christensen, many of those interested in the Church were unable to travel to the meeting from nearby villages. At the time, there were a reported six or seven congregations of self-identified Latter-day Saints in the Nyamlel area who likely initially heard about the Church from Sudanese converts baptized abroad. President Christensen informed the assembled congregation during his visit that the Church would not be immediately established in South Sudan but that the congregation was to prepare and learn more about the Church in order to be baptized and for official congregations to be organized. Several local leaders were provided with LDS literature and taught to teach others in the area. South Sudan was assigned to the Uganda Kampala Mission in late 2008 or early 2009. The registration of the LDS Church in South Sudan was approved by the Church in the spring of 2009. Several members from neighboring East African nations like Kenya were residing in Juba in 2008, and by November 2009, the first LDS congregation was organized in Juba. Several investigators in Juba learned about the Church through a Canadian member who shared the Gospel with them in Khartoum over a decade before and many were baptized in 2009 and 2010. In 2010, full-time missionaries reported that an additional group of members operated in Akobo. As of early 2011, missionary work has not officially begun in South Sudan, as the Church has only authorized mission leaders to conduct humanitarian work. It is anticipated that full-time, proselytizing LDS missionaries may be assigned sometime in the 2010s once greater political stability and regional security are achieved.

⁹³⁴ "Sudan," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148722.htm>

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: ~100 (2012)

The Church has not released membership statistics for South Sudan as of early 2011. Total LDS membership is estimated at approximately one hundred. In 2010, approximately one in 80,000 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 Groups: 2+? (2012)

One independent branch operates in Juba under the Uganda Kampala Mission. LDS groups operate in several cities such as Akobo and Nyamlel, but it is unclear whether these congregations are officially organized congregations under the Uganda Kampala Mission or self-established, unofficial groups of prospective Latter-day Saints.

Activity and Retention

Active membership in early 2011 was estimated to range between fifty and seventy-five, or 50%–75% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Arabic.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Arabic.

Meetinghouses

The Juba Branch appears to meet in a rented space whereas other groups meet outdoors or in members' homes.

Health and Safety

Safety is a major concern that has led the Church to move very cautiously into South Sudan despite abundant opportunities for rapid membership and congregational growth. One of the members in the Akobo Group was killed in a nighttime attack in late 2009 but did not appear to be targeted because of religion. Those meeting in the Church's name in the Nyamlel area take care of hundreds of freed child slaves from the Darfur region. Most in South Sudan do not have access to clean water. HIV/AIDS has infected 1.4% of the population. Tropical diseases are common, and living standards are very low.

Humanitarian and Development Work

LDS senior missionary couples began planning humanitarian and development projects in late 2008. In 2009, bore holes for ten wells were drilled in South Sudan, wheelchairs were donated, and school supplies for orphaned children in the areas by Nyamlel were distributed. The Church has also provided emergency relief for the victims of religious violence in Akobo and Chikol.⁹³⁵

⁹³⁵ "Projects—Sudan," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 3 May 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-123,00.html>

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church benefits from widespread religious freedom in South Sudan, as there are no proselytism restrictions, and Latter-day Saints and other Christians may worship and assemble freely. There are no restrictions on foreign missionaries operating in the country, but safety concerns may prompt LDS area and mission leaders to only assign African missionaries to South Sudan until greater political stability is established. The Church faced difficulties performing humanitarian and development work in South Sudan in the late 2000s due to international sanctions enforced on Sudan for human rights violations. No LDS missionaries were assigned, and no official proselytism occurred in South Sudan prior to independence due to the semi-official political status of the country.

Cultural Issues

Poverty, tribalism, and war have been the predominant influences on South Sudanese society for decades, creating serious economic challenges for locals to obtain an education and stable employment. Indigenous beliefs are widespread, and LDS teaching and proselytism approaches will need to adapt to the understanding and religious background of non-Christian animists and syncretic Christian-animists. The Church may face challenges with prospective converts retaining local religious customs and practices following their baptism in the LDS Church that could lead to some doctrinal integrity issues. The degree of member-missionary work exhibited by Sudanese in sharing LDS teachings with friends and family and high rates of receptivity to the LDS Church are major cultural advantages that favor long-term, self-sustaining growth. Literacy rates are unknown for South Sudan but appear to be low and present additional challenges for training illiterate or inadequately literate members for local leadership and administration. Opportunities for humanitarian and development work are immense and in many areas take precedence over proselytism to meet basic humanitarian needs.

National Outreach

With no formal missionary presence, the LDS Church in South Sudan operates one official congregation in Juba that potentially could reach 5% of the national population if missionary activity occurred. In 2010, full-time LDS missionaries were not assigned to the Juba Branch and only visited periodically to provide training, perform baptismal interviews and baptisms, and evaluate conditions in preparation for the establishment of a permanent missionary presence. Groups of self-identified Latter-day Saints in Akobo and Nyamlel offer opportunities to expand national outreach outside of Juba upon the decision by LDS leaders to begin proselytism, assign full-time missionaries, and prepare and baptize investigators in these locations. LDS humanitarian activities and the operation of unofficial LDS congregations may increase the percentage potentially reached by the Church to 10%.

Delays in opening South Sudan to formal proselytism are varied and complex and include the semi-official political status of the country until independence in 2011, low standards of living, political instability, religious violence in northern border areas, isolation from mission headquarters in Uganda, and limited mission resources dedicated to the region. A formal LDS missionary presence will likely be established following official independence of South Sudan in July 2011, as full-time missionaries serving in the Uganda Kampala Mission reported in 2010 that the mission president intended to open the country to missionary work as soon as possible. The lack of large cities and the majority of the Sudanese population residing in rural locations will present major challenges for LDS missionary paradigms that traditionally utilize full-time missionaries to effectively expand outreach over remote, large expanses of terrain that are sparsely populated. Continued

emphasis on local members to perform missionary activity will most likely ensure growth and outreach that is widespread and minimally reliant on full-time missionary resources.

Sudanese populations in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia provide opportunities for Sudanese to learn about the Church and spur leadership and missionary resources that can be later allocated to South Sudan. At present, outreach to Sudanese has been sporadic and uncoordinated, but efforts to systematically reach Sudanese worldwide may provide for accelerated growth and stability for the LDS Church in South Sudan over the long run.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

As of early 2011, member activity and convert retention rates were high, as the few recent converts who have joined the Church developed habitual church attendance prior to baptism and several known foreign Latter-day Saints attended church meetings in Juba. The dedication and devotion of many prospective Latter-day Saints is impressive, as it has endured for years despite no official church establishment and provides a fair outlook for future member activity and convert retention rates due to extended preparation of investigators for baptism and undertaking church responsibilities. Some member activity challenges likely exist due to some Latter-day Saints being unaware of an LDS presence in Juba or residing in areas with no nearby congregations. Member activity and convert retention challenges have occurred among LDS Sudanese populations in the United States, as a Nuer-speaking branch once operated in Omaha, Nebraska in the mid-2000s but was discontinued due to low member activity rates and several members and leaders leaving the Church.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Reports from senior missionary couples visiting South Sudan have reported no significant ethnic integration issues among the local population, although ethnic conflict has been intense in the past with the Arab north. Tribalism may present some ethnic integration issues, but these will likely be minimal in the coming years, as most ethnic groups are geographically separated.

Language Issues

LDS services in the Juba Branch are conducted in English, and initial proselytizing efforts will likely occur in English for many years as at present there are no LDS materials in local languages. Dinka and Nuer are likely candidates for prospective translations of LDS materials due to their widespread use in South Sudan and use among local investigators and members.

Missionary Service

No Sudanese Latter-day Saints appear to have served a full-time mission from South Sudan, but Sudanese members in other countries appear to have served missions in recent years. Seminary and institute have yet to be established in South Sudan and provide an effective approach to retain converts, strengthen member testimonies and understanding of the gospel, and provide missionary preparation.

Leadership

All local leaders appear to be native Sudanese Latter-day Saints or African members from neighboring nations. There is no official LDS leadership in unofficially organized congregations. The LDS Church tends to shy away from baptizing entire congregations because conversion is seen as an individual process that requires personal commitment to the living of the teachings of the gospel. The seeds of apostasy can also be subtly sown when converts join the Church en masse, as some previous leaders may desire to retain leadership authority

or persuade others to disobey LDS teachings based upon personal opinion. Due to some previous problems retaining converts who join the Church collectively, the Church prefers to develop local leadership and slowly and steadily add to its numbers, which has occurred since late 2010 in Burundi and is also underway in South Sudan. Once local membership and leadership can better address the needs and responsibilities of larger numbers of converts and a higher degree of self-sufficiency, greater flexibility is exhibited in permitting the baptism of larger groups of people.

Temple

South Sudan is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Due to the recent establishment of the Church in South Sudan, there have been no reported organized temple visits. Travel to the temple is extremely difficult and costly, rendering temple attendance for most a nearly insurmountable task. Prospects for a small temple in Nairobi, Kenya appear forthcoming over the medium or long term and would reduce travel demands and costs for temple-going members.

Comparative Growth

South Sudan is among countries most recently reached by the LDS Church and is one of only two African nations with independent LDS branches without full-time missionaries assigned (the other being Djibouti). The scope of preliminary LDS activity and number of self-identified Latter-day Saints is comparable to Nigeria and Ghana in the 1970s prior to an official LDS establishment in both countries. Receptivity to the LDS Church by the general population is among the highest in Africa. South Sudan is one of several African nations with groups of self-identified Latter-day Saints awaiting an official LDS establishment in their cities and villages with other countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Burundi, and Ethiopia.

Other missionary-oriented Christian groups have experienced rapid growth over the past two decades and operate in South Sudan despite past political uncertainty of the destined fate of the south and the prevalence of indigenous religious beliefs and practices. The Seventh Day Adventist Church reported 8,062 members meeting in twenty churches in 2010. The number of Adventist churches nearly doubled, and the number of members tripled between 1999 and 2009. Mainly mainstream Protestant denominations have reported rapid membership growth since the 1990s.

Future Prospects

A highly receptive population with several groups of prospective Latter-day Saints awaiting baptizing, the independence of South Sudan in 2011, preparation and mobilization of LDS missionary manpower in the Uganda Kampala Mission to enter the country, humanitarian and development work occurring since 2009, and the organization of the first branch in Juba in late 2009 generate a favorable outlook for future LDS Church growth in the coming years. The challenges and opportunities the Church faces in South Sudan are among the most exciting and daunting in the world at present, but a lack of LDS materials in local languages and the threat of increasing political instability following independence may create long-term challenges for maintaining a widespread LDS presence. Addressing humanitarian concerns may take precedence in many areas before proselytism occurs.

SWAZILAND

Geography

AREA: 17,364 square km. Landlocked between South Africa and Mozambique, Swaziland is a small country in Southern Africa. The terrain is mostly hilly and mountainous, increasing in altitude from lowlands in the east to higher mountains in the west. Forests and grassland cover most of the landscape and are subject to tropical and temperate climates. Drought is a natural hazard. Environmental issues include soil erosion and degradation, fresh water scarcity, excessive hunting, and overgrazing. Swaziland is divided into four administrative districts.

Peoples

African: 97%

European: 3%

Most Africans are Swazi. The largest minority African group is Zulu.

Population: 1,386,914 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.195% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 3.03 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 49.77 male, 49.06 female (2012)

Languages: SiSwati (84%), Zulu (6.5%), Tsonga (1.6%), Other (7.9%). English and siSwati are both official languages. 5 indigenous languages are spoken in Swaziland. English is widely spoken as a second language. No languages are spoken by more than one million speakers. SiSwati is the only language with over one million speakers (1 million).

Literacy: 81.6% (2003)

History

The Swazi people are believed to have arrived in Southern Africa before the sixteenth century from present day Mozambique. Conflict with the local Zulus forced the Swazis to retreat into the area of what is known today as Swaziland. Under leadership of Mswati II, the Swazi established their southern borders with the Zulus in the 1840s. Contact with the British occurred during the mid-nineteenth century, and the Swazi appealed to the British for assistance repelling Zulu raids into Swazi territory. The Swazi established a long-term relationship with South Africans, and the British and South Africa administered Swaziland from 1894 to 1902 and the British from 1902 to 1968. The British originally planned for Swaziland to be incorporated into South Africa, but intensifying racial discrimination and segregation in the mid-twentieth century prompted British authorities to prepare Swaziland to become its own sovereign, independent nation. Political instability occurred in the 1960s prior to independence in 1968. The Swazi king Sobhuza repealed the constitution and dissolved parliament in 1973, allegedly because he believed that they were not compatible with the Swazi way of life, and assumed all governmental powers. A new parliament convened in 1979. Swaziland has continued

to struggle between monarchy rule and democratic government. In recent years, the spread of HIV/AIDS has been prolific and at present infects up to 39% of the adult population.⁹³⁶

Culture

Swaziland is known for producing handicrafts and its traditional African way of life. Agriculture and a mixture of traditional African and Christian beliefs are the primary influences on society. Meat, pumpkins, corn, sorghum and beans are common foods.⁹³⁷ Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are low compared to the world average. Immorality is a serious problem. Polygamy is less common than in nearby Africa countries.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$5,200 (2011) [10.8% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.522

Corruption Index: 3.1 (2011)

The small size and landlocked position of Swaziland has limited economic growth. Agriculture employs 70% of the labor force but generates only about one tenth of the GDP. Sugarcane is the primary crop. Coal and wood pulp are major industries. These and soft drink concentrates are all major exports. Swaziland is heavily dependent on South Africa, from which 90% of imports arrive and 60% of exports are destined. Unemployment rates over 40% and 69% of the population living below the poverty line have resulted from a lack of foreign investment and economic development. The economy is too developed and the people not poor enough to receive financial assistance available to other, less wealthy African nations. Corruption is perceived as widespread but not as pervasive as in some other African countries.

Faiths

Christian: 83%

Muslim: 10%

Other: 7%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 224,639

Seventh Day Adventists 5,745 20

Jehovah's Witnesses 3,059 87

Latter-day Saints 1,522 4

Religion

Christians account for the majority of the population. A high amount of syncretism occurs with indigenous beliefs and Christianity, partially due to the small amount of European influence during British colonialism. Half of Christians are Zionists, which combine Christian and indigenous beliefs. Twenty percent (20%) of the population is Catholic. Muslims are a visible minority.

⁹³⁶ "Background Note: Swaziland," Bureau of Africa Affairs, 7 April 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2841.htm>

⁹³⁷ "Cuisine of Swaziland," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 6 May 2011. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuisine_of_Swaziland

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom and is generally upheld by the government. The government has favored Christianity by recognizing Christian holidays as national holidays, permitting Christian groups to broadcast on radio, and allowing the teaching of Christian doctrine in schools. Some Christian churches have a contentious relationship with one another, but this appears to be politically rather than theologically motivated. In order for a religious group to erect a house of worship, they must obtain permission from local village leaders in rural areas and the government in urban areas. Religious groups must register with the government to operate. Societal abuse of religious freedom targets Muslims, who are often viewed with suspicion in rural areas. There have been some isolated instances of village chiefs not permitting Jehovah's Witnesses to build meetinghouses.⁹³⁸

Major Cities

Urban: 25%

Mbabane, Manzini, **Big Bend**, **Mhlume**, **Malkerns**, Nhlengano, **Simunye**, **Piggs Peak**, Siteki, Ngomane. Cities listed in **bold** have no LDS congregations.

Four of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Thirteen percent (13%) of the national population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

The first Church members to live in Swaziland were non-Africans who arrived in 1984. The first branch was organized in 1986, and government recognition for the Church was obtained in 1987. A senior missionary couple arrived, and the first baptisms of local Swazi members occurred the same year. Elder Neal A. Maxwell dedicated Swaziland in February 1990.⁹³⁹ Swazi members were among the 5,000 who attended an area conference in Johannesburg in 1996.⁹⁴⁰ The South Africa Johannesburg Mission administered Swaziland until July 1998 when the country was transferred to the South Africa Durban Mission.⁹⁴¹ Swaziland pertains to the Africa Southeast Area.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,522 (2012)

In 1990, there were 115 members, and the entire branch was African except the branch president's family.⁹⁴² Rapid membership growth occurred in 1990 with over one hundred convert baptisms.⁹⁴³ There were 700 members in 1993 and 800 in 1997. By 2000, membership stood at 814.

⁹³⁸ "Swaziland," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148724.htm>

⁹³⁹ Cook, Elder Darwin; Cook, Sister Maurine. "Six lands are dedicated: 'New day dawning' in 2 small African mountain kingdoms," LDS Church News, 10 March 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19958/Six-lands-are-dedicated-New-day-dawning-in-2-small-African-mountain-kingdoms.html>

⁹⁴⁰ "5,000 attend conference in South Africa; example of growth of the Church, LDS Church News, 2 March 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27515/5000-attend-conference-in-South-Africa-example-of-growth-of-the-Church.html>

⁹⁴¹ "Missionaries build home for family in southern Africa," LDS Church News, 11 July 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30645/Missionaries-build-home-for-family-in-southern-Africa.html>

⁹⁴² Cook, Elder Darwin; Cook, Sister Maurine. "Six lands are dedicated: 'New day dawning' in 2 small African mountain kingdoms," LDS Church News, 10 March 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19958/Six-lands-are-dedicated-New-day-dawning-in-2-small-African-mountain-kingdoms.html>

⁹⁴³ "In 'beautiful mountain kingdom' of Swaziland, 3 branches created, local leaders installed," LDS Church News, 16 March 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21542/In-beautiful-mountain-kingdom-of-Swaziland-3-branches-created-local-leaders-installed.html>

Slow membership growth occurred in the 2000s, as membership reached 856 in 2002, 922 in 2004, 1,007 in 2006, 1,132 in 2008, and 1,287 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates ranged from a high of 8.4% in 2010 to a low of 1.8% in 2002 and were generally 4%–6% during this period. Church membership generally increases between forty and one hundred annually. Membership became entirely African after the last white family moved away in early 2009.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 4 Groups: 2 (April 2013)

Non-Swazi members met as a group in the mid-1980s until a branch was organized in 1986. In 1991, three new branches were organized due to rapid membership growth from the previous year.⁹⁴⁴ Swaziland was organized into a district under the jurisdiction of the Benoni South Africa Stake the same year.⁹⁴⁵ By 1992, there were five branches: the Ezulwini, Mazini, Mbabane 1st, Mbabane 2nd, and Nhlangano Branches. During the mid-1990s, the district was fully absorbed into the Benoni South Africa Stake, and the two branches in Mbabane were combined to create the Mbabane Ward. The Ezulwini Branch was also discontinued, leaving one ward and two branches in the country. LDS congregations in Swaziland were transferred to the Durban South Africa Stake in 1998 and then the Hillcrest South Africa Stake when the latter stake was organized the following year. The Mbabane Swaziland District was reorganized in February 2008 with four branches, one of which was a new branch in Ezulwini. In 2010, LDS meetings commenced in the small town of GeGe on a biweekly basis and later on a weekly basis as a group under the administration of the Nhlangano Branch. In 2012, missionaries reported that a group was organized in Siteki.

Activity and Retention

Two hundred attended the groundbreaking of the first Church built chapel in 1992.⁹⁴⁶ Swaziland experienced high retention and activity until after the mid-1990s. Church attendance has rebounded since 2008. In April 2009, sacrament attendance doubled for the Mbanane Branch from the beginning of 2008 to 213. The Nhlangano Branch was established in the early 1990s and had only eighteen attending Church meetings in early 2008. By April 2009, sacrament attendance increased to fifty-five. The other two branches likely have between fifty and one hundred active members. Attendance at Mbabane Swaziland District conferences increased from 220 in February 2008 to 330 a year later. Many were unable to attend due to transportation issues. One hundred twenty-one were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. Active membership is estimated to be no greater than 500, or 45% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Zulu.

The Book of Mormon has been translated into Zulu, along with basic missionary, priesthood, and relief society materials. SiSwati translations of LDS materials include *Gospel Principles* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*.

⁹⁴⁴ "In 'beautiful mountain kingdom' of Swaziland, 3 branches created, local leaders installed," LDS Church News, 16 March 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21542/In-beautiful-mountain-kingdom-of-Swaziland-3-branches-created-local-leaders-installed.html>

⁹⁴⁵ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 1 June 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21414/New-mission-presidents.html>

⁹⁴⁶ Mostert, Mary. "Angels are happy' for Swaziland event," LDS Church News, 11 July 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22286/Angels-are-happy-for-Swaziland-event.html>

Meetinghouses

The first Church built meetinghouse was dedicated in 1993. Other meetinghouses are likely renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Public Health

Living conditions are poor and result in inadequate health care. Illicit sexual relations have contributed to Swaziland having the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the world at 26.1%. The disease has also spread through contaminated needles, drug use, and birth to HIV-positive mothers. Converts who are infected with HIV/AIDS and join the Church are less able to strengthen the Church in the long term due to the disease reducing their lifespan. The rate of HIV/AIDS also threatens the safety of missionaries.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 1993, members in South Africa visited and cared for orphans at a local hospital in Mbabane and also cleaned and planted trees by a Church meetinghouse.⁹⁴⁷ Missionaries in 2004 assisted in an Easter activity held for children who had parents die from AIDS.⁹⁴⁸ Thousands of boxes of food items were provided for drought relief in 2004.⁹⁴⁹ Swaziland was included in the Church's African campaign to eradicate measles by vaccinating children in 2006.⁹⁵⁰ The Church has provided neonatal resuscitation training.⁹⁵¹

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church has not experienced any problems with proselytism in Swaziland. Excellent opportunities exist for missionary work due to freedom of religion upheld by government.

Cultural Issues

The high percentage of churchgoers in Swaziland presents a great opportunity for the Church to take advantage of a culture that encourages weekly church attendance. The large amount of syncretism between indigenous beliefs and Christianity may lead to misunderstandings of Church doctrines like baptisms for the dead, as ancestor worship is practiced. Polygamy is an issue missionaries watch for in teaching investigators, as those involved in polygamous relationships cannot join the LDS Church without being divorced from all but one spouse. Muslims may present a challenge to proselyte to due to differences in theology and culture. Poverty and low standards of living present challenges for economic and financial stability among many but also provide opportunities for humanitarian and development work. Casual sexual relations are common and present a cultural challenge for missionaries and local leaders to address. The high percentage of the population infected with HIV/AIDS is a major concern that threatens to destabilize society and establish a long-term LDS presence with full member families.

⁹⁴⁷ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 25 September 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22938/From-around-the-world.html>

⁹⁴⁸ "Elder help 200 children," LDS Church News, 15 May 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45580/Elders-help-200-children.html>

⁹⁴⁹ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Nature's blows softened by aid in Africa, Peru," LDS Church News. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45903/Natures-blows-softened-by-aid-in-Africa-Peru.html>

⁹⁵⁰ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Measles initiative continues to fight disease in Africa," LDS Church News, 30 September 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49498/Measles-initiative-continues-to-fight-disease-in-Africa.html>

⁹⁵¹ "Projects—Swaziland," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 6 May 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-177,00.html>

National Outreach

The small population and size of the country provide the opportunity for the Church to conduct missionary work with a fewer number of outreach centers. With the establishment of the Church in Mbabane, Manzini, Nhlangano, and GeGe, at least 62% of the urban population has a congregation of the Church. A foundation for penetrating unreached areas of the country has been laid since out of the four districts in Swaziland, only the Lubombo District does not have a Church presence. Most of the country is still unreached since the urban population accounts for only 25% of the national population. Many living in cities with congregations likely are aware of the Church but unfamiliar with its beliefs and practices.

The reestablishment of the Ezulwini Branch indicates a significant step towards the Church recovering from past setbacks in establishing additional congregations in the 1990s. A village between Mbabane and Manzini not found on most maps, Ezulwini is the most rural location that has an independent LDS congregation. The establishment of a group in GeGe and the assignment of full-time missionaries in early 2011 is another positive development that may perpetuate additional rural villages opening for missionary work. The assignment of missionaries to GeGe was a long and arduous process headed by senior couple missionaries as allocating proper housing and performing other preparations in accordance with mission standards was time consuming. Additional rural locations will likely only open to missionary work as active members move out of cities with a Church presence, and expanding national outreach will be accomplished most effectively if directed by local leaders and branch missionaries. Accurate membership records may not exist in some of the branches, indicated by a massive reordination project in 2009 for men in the Church who did not have records for their priesthood ordinations. The Nhlangano Branch has struggled, likely a result of its remote location, but has seen positive improvement in Sunday attendance the late 2000s and early 2010s.

Swazis also live adjacent to Swaziland in the South African province of Mpumalanga, where only two branches function, in Nelspruit and KaNyamazane. Members in Swaziland can play an important role in the greater establishment of the Church across the border in South Africa due to commonalities in culture and language.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The reassignment from the South Africa Johannesburg Mission to the South Africa Durban Mission combined with organization the Mbabane Swaziland District has helped alleviate inactivity and address convert retention problems. The Church in Swaziland suffered a drop in member activity and growth after the rapid growth in the early 1990s. It appears that the Church may have shifted focus from extending its influence to additional areas to gathering active membership, resulting in the combining of the district with stakes in South Africa and the discontinuance of two branches. This move would likely not have occurred unless member activity and local leadership were unable to maintain the congregations established. A drop in convert retention in the 1990s may have resulted in a drop in convert baptisms, which precipitated into stagnant growth for the following decade.

Recent changes in congregation organization and administration appears to have reversed stagnation in membership growth and begun to focus on expanding the Church's outreach in the country. The large increase in district conference attendance of over one hundred between 2008 and 2009 and consistent increases in enrollment in seminary and institute increasing from 74 in 2008 to 95 2009 and 121 in 2010 indicate greater dedication of local members to attend meetings, the reactivation of less active members, and the baptism and retention of new converts. The large numbers of people attending Church meetings in Mbabane also indicates increased member activity and convert retention. As members stay active and strengthen their knowledge of the Church's doctrines, greater opportunities will await for more rapid growth with higher retention.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Due to most of the population being Swazi, no problems integrating different ethnic groups into the Church have been reported. This may become a greater issue if more minority groups, such as Zulus, join the Church. Integration issues will likely be more cultural than language based due to the widespread use of English.

Language Issues

Due to English being the language of instruction in schools, there has been a lesser demand for translations of Church materials and scriptures into siSwati. Even though many speak English well enough to learn and worship, the Church will likely expand the body of siSwati translations of Church materials in order to reach the few who do not speak English and so that Swazis can hear and learn the gospel in their native language. SiSwati speakers are the majority in the areas north and west of Swaziland in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa, which increases the need for more language materials. The small Tsonga-speaking minority will likely not have any Church materials translations into Tsonga due to the very limited Church membership in Tsonga-speaking areas of South Africa where the majority of speakers live.

Missionary Service

The LDS Church in Swaziland appears partially sufficient in staffing its local missionary needs. In 1990, there were six local members serving full-time missionaries.⁹⁵² A year later seven local members were serving missions, and fourteen missionaries were serving in the country.⁹⁵³ Twelve elders and two senior couples were serving in the Swaziland Zone in 2008.

Leadership

Priesthood leadership developed quickly after the Church's initial establishment. In 1990, there were six members serving missions, and the sole Mbabane Branch had local leadership serving as branch president counselors and other positions notwithstanding the first Swazi convert baptisms occurring three years previously.⁹⁵⁴ Local priesthood was strong enough for a ward to be created in Mbabane in the 1990s. Retention of priesthood holders may have led to the dissolution of two of the branches during this time.

At the creation of the Mbabane Swaziland District, a goal was set for the district to mature into a stake by 2010. This goal was not achieved in 2010, as there remained only four branches in the country and fewer than the required 1,900 members for a stake to operate. The organization of additional congregations and the consistent growth of active membership will be required for the establishment of a stake to become more likely.

Temple

Swaziland is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Local members began attending the temple in Johannesburg in the early 1990s in larger numbers. Increased temple attendance was also reported in 2009. Mission leadership has focused on reactivating and baptizing full families to have them sealed in the

⁹⁵² Cook, Elder Darwin; Cook, Sister Maurine. "Six lands are dedicated: 'New day dawning' in 2 small African mountain kingdoms," LDS Church News, 10 March 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19958/Six-lands-are-dedicated-New-day-dawning-in-2-small-African-mountain-kingdoms.html>

⁹⁵³ "In 'beautiful mountain kingdom' of Swaziland, 3 branches created, local leaders installed," LDS Church News, 16 March 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21542/In-beautiful-mountain-kingdom-of-Swaziland-3-branches-created-local-leaders-installed.html>

⁹⁵⁴ Cook, Elder Darwin; Cook, Sister Maurine. "Six lands are dedicated: 'New day dawning' in 2 small African mountain kingdoms," LDS Church News, 10 March 1990.

temple. Travel to the temple is more convenient for members than in many other African members due to close proximity to Johannesburg, South Africa. Mission leadership has endeavored to make the district into a stake to increase the likelihood of a temple announcement for Durban, South Africa.

Comparative Growth

Most Southern African countries with less than five million people and had the Church's first establishment in the late 1980s or early 1990s experienced membership and congregational growth comparable to Swaziland. Botswana had nearly as many members but two more congregations in 2009. Lesotho had half as many members and two congregations. Slower growth has likely come as a result of distance from mission headquarters and fewer mission resources dedicated to Swaziland between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s. Other African nations that experience political and social turmoil limiting the number or presence of fulltime missionaries have seen much stronger growth. This may indicate that membership in Swaziland struggles to fulfill member-missionary efforts. The presence of only four congregations also points towards higher inactivity than most other African countries.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists have experienced modest growth in Africa in Swaziland comparable to Latter-day Saints. These and other Christian denominations have likely been cautious with proselytism due to the high amount of syncretism between Christianity and indigenous religions. The LDS Church heavily depends on foreign missionaries for outreach, who are difficult to allocate to remote areas with few to no members.

Future Prospects

The greater allocation of missionary resources, added emphasis to local missionary efforts, steadily increasing seminary and institute enrollment, recent congregational growth, and accelerated membership growth generate a favorable outlook for LDS Church growth. The Mbabane Branch will likely be divided to create a second branch, as sacrament attendance has reached over 200 in recent years. A second branch in Mbabane will greatly increase the likelihood of the organization of a stake within the coming decade. National outreach will likely continue to slowly expand in the coming years, and outreach may begin in Matsapha, as it is one of the most populous unreached cities and likely has several members due to its in close proximity to Manzini. Villages and urban center nearby Mbabane and Manzini appear favorable locations for expanding outreach due to close proximity to established LDS centers. Greater numbers of LDS materials in siSwati appear forthcoming.

TANZANIA

Geography

AREA: 947,300 square km. Located in East Africa, Tanzania borders Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya to the north, the Indian Ocean to the east, Mozambique and Malawi to the south, and Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west. Tanzania also includes the two small, densely populated islands of Pemba and Zanzibar near the largest city of Dar es Salaam. A third small island named Mafia Island sits off the coast to the south. Due to the Great Rift Valley in western Tanzania, several large lakes including Lakes Nyasa, Tanganyika, and Victoria form the nation's inland border. Tropical plains dominate the Indian Ocean coastal areas, with temperate highlands in the north and south of the country. Africa's highest mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro, is located near the border with Kenya and reaches a height of almost 20,000 feet. Vast plateaus in the central and western portions of Tanzania are home to the Serengeti. Many wildlife parks and refuges preserve habitat for wildlife. Tanzania is divided into twenty-six regions.

Population: 43,601,796 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.96% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.02 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 51.62 male, 54.7 female (2012)

Peoples

African: 99% (Bantu peoples make up 95% of Africans in more than 130 tribes)

Other: 1% (Arabs, Asians and Europeans)

Note: Zanzibar's population is a mixture of Arabs, Africans, and those of mixed ethnicity.

Most densely populated areas in Tanzania are along the Indian Ocean coast, in and nearby the largest cities, and on the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. Non-African ethnic groups are concentrated in the largest cities, Zanzibar, and Pemba.

Languages: Swahili and English (both official), Arabic and Kiunguja (Swahili dialect) in Zanzibar. These languages have few native speakers, but are spoken by many Tanzanians in official settings, business, and between ethnic groups. Swahili is spoken by around 90% of the population; English usage has diminished since independence. Indigenous languages with over one million speakers include Sukuma (5.43 million), Gogo (1.44 million), Haya (1.3 million), Ha (1 million), Makonde (1 million), and Nyamwezi (1 million).

Literacy: 85.1% (2002 census)

History

African tribes inhabited Tanzania for thousands of years and came into contact with traders from the Middle East before 1000 AD. Islam spread to the coastal areas in the eighth century. Omani Arabs claimed the Tanzanian coast in the 1800s and established Zanzibar as the capital for their empire during which Zanzibar played a significant role in the Arab slave trade. Germany colonized the interior, named German East Africa, and the United Kingdom later took control of Zanzibar. During World War I, fighting occurred between German and British forces in East Africa. The British gained control of German East Africa following the war.

and named the territory Tanganyika. Independence from the United Kingdom was granted to Tanganyika and Zanzibar in the early 1960s. Later, the two nations combined to form Tanzania, named by combining Tanganyika and Zanzibar. One-party rule was established in the 1970s; democratic elections were first held in 1995. Instability has occurred since independence, with a war with Uganda in 1979 and friction resulting from Zanzibar's desire for greater autonomy.

Culture

Arabs, Europeans, and local African tribes have each influenced modern-day Tanzanian culture. Tribalism remains a major force in society, as most speak their village language and Swahili. Tourism and the environment are popular national issues. Art and sculpting are important expressions of indigenous culture. Tea and coffee are drunk several times a day by most Tanzanians. Cigarette consumption rates rank very low compared to the world average, whereas alcohol consumption rates are comparable to world averages. Polygamy is permitted by law.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,500 (2011) [3.12% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.466

Corruption Index: 3.0 (2011)

The Tanzanian economy is agriculturally driven, with 80% of the workforce employed in agriculture. Other sectors of the economy are weak, yet account for nearly 75% of the nation's GDP. Due to climate and geography, only 4% of the land is used for agriculture. In recent years, the government has sought to improve the country's infrastructure and develop manufacturing and industry. Tourism is a growing area of the economy, with many visiting the country's game reserves and coastal areas. Mining has also increased in recent years and contributed to economic growth. In 2008, the GDP increased by over 7%. Tanzania's geographic position is favorable for trading with other African or Asian nations. Trading partners include neighboring African countries, China, Europe, India, and the Middle East.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and a serious detriment toward economic development. Tanzania is a major intercontinental transshipment point for illicit drugs, namely hashish, cocaine, and heroin.

Faiths

Christian: 62%

Muslim: 35%

Other: 3%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 9,000,000

Seventh Day Adventists 415,149 1,993

Jehovah's Witnesses 16,012 444

Latter-day Saints 1,220 6

Religion

Christians comprise nearly two-thirds of the population, and many missionary-minded groups experience rapid growth. Zanzibar is over 98% Muslim, and the coastal areas on the Indian Ocean are predominantly

Muslim, especially around Dar es Salaam. Muslims are also concentrated in the south. Christians comprise the majority in the west and northwestern portions of Tanzania. Religious affiliation largely corresponds to geographical location. Some syncretism occurs between Christianity and indigenous beliefs.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 24th

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Christians are subject to customary and statutory laws, whereas Muslims in Zanzibar are subject to Islamic kadhi courts to determine many civic matters. Muslims on mainland Tanzania also generally are subject to Islamic law. Some limitations on worship and Christian activities exist in predominantly Muslim Zanzibar. Tensions exist between Christians and Muslims in areas where Muslims desire to incorporate Islamic law into life and government.⁹⁵⁵

Major Cities

Urban: 25%

Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, **Zanzibar**, Arusha, **Mbeya**, **Morogoro**, **Tanga**, **Dodoma**, **Kigoma**, **Moshi**, **Tabora**, **Songea**, **Musoma**, **Iringa**, **Uvinza**, **Katumba**.

Cities listed in **bold** do not have a LDS congregation.

Three of the sixteen largest cities have an LDS congregation. Fourteen percent (14%) of the national population resides in the sixteen most populous cities.

LDS History

The first Church members to live in Tanzania were two families from the United States and Canada. In 1991, Tanzania was assigned to the Kenya Nairobi Mission, and the first Church meetings were held in 1991 in Dar es Salaam.⁹⁵⁶ The first Tanzanian to join the Church was in Cairo, Egypt in 1991; the first converts in Tanzania were baptized in 1992.⁹⁵⁷ The first senior couple missionaries began serving in February 1992, the same year legal recognition was granted by the government. The first branch was organized at the end of 1992 in Dar es Salaam.⁹⁵⁸

In 1998, President Hinckley visited Nairobi, Kenya where some Tanzanian members were in attendance. President Hinckley predicted future growth of the Church in East Africa, stating that tens of thousands of members would one day live in places where there were only hundreds of members at the time.⁹⁵⁹ When the Africa Area was divided in 1998, Tanzania was assigned to the Africa Southeast Area. Tanzania was dedicated for missionary work in November 2003.⁹⁶⁰

⁹⁵⁵ "Tanzania," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148725.htm>

⁹⁵⁶ "Tanzania," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/tanzania>

⁹⁵⁷ "Gospel takes root in Tanzania," LDS Church News, 29 November 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44749/Gospel-takes-root-in-Tanzania.html>

⁹⁵⁸ "Gospel takes root in Tanzania," LDS Church News, 29 November 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44749/Gospel-takes-root-in-Tanzania.html>

⁹⁵⁹ Hart, John L. "This work will grow and grow in this land," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30434/This-work-will-grow-and-grow-in-this-land.html>

⁹⁶⁰ "Gospel takes root in Tanzania," LDS Church News, 29 November 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44749/Gospel-takes-root-in-Tanzania.html>

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,220 (2012)

In 1991, there were seventeen Latter-day Saints in Tanzania.⁹⁶¹ LDS membership reached 100 in 1993, 200 in 1997, and 457 in 2000. During the 2000s slow membership growth occurred as membership increased to 540 in 2002, 720 in 2004, 797 in 2006, 915 in 2008, and 1,007 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates during the 2000s ranged from a low of 3.8% in 2009 to a high of 18.3% in 2003. In 2010, one in 42,450 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 6 (2012)

There was one branch in 1993 and 1997. By 2000, there were three branches, all of which were in Dar es Salaam: The Kinondoni, Ubungu and Chang'ombe Branches.⁹⁶² A fourth branch was created in Dar es Salaam in 2004 named the Kinondoni 2nd Branch. The first district in Tanzania was created in December 2005 in Dar es Salaam comprising the four branches in the city. In 2008, the first LDS branch outside of Dar es Salaam was organized in Arusha from a group. In early 2011, a sixth branch was organized in Mwanza. In 2011, both the Arusha and Mwanza Branches were not part of a stake or district and reported directly to the Kenya Nairobi Mission.

Activity and Retention

In 2002, a temple trip to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple resulted in twenty-seven Tanzanian members receiving their own endowments, ten families being sealed, and ordinances completed for their deceased ancestors. The trip took sixty-eight hours by bus and was planned eight months in advance. Before the trip, only six members were endowed.⁹⁶³ Sixty were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. Three hundred attended a special meeting with Elder Nelson in 2003.⁹⁶⁴ Eighty attended church services in the Arusha Branch in late 2009. The average number of members per congregation increased slightly between 2000 and 2010 from 171 to 201, suggesting high rates of convert retention. Senior missionaries who regularly visited the Arusha Branch in 2008 and 2009 reported that investigators attended church meetings for extended periods of time before baptism. This resulted in half of those at Church meetings being members of the Church. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 600, or 60% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Swahili, Arabic.

All LDS scriptures are available in Swahili and Arabic. Extensive Arabic translations of church materials are produced by the Church. Some Church materials are available in Swahili, including a limited number of missionary, priesthood and Relief Society resources.

⁹⁶¹ "Six new missions to be created missions are added in Europe, Africa, Caribbean and U.S.," LDS Church News, 23 March 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20711/Six-new-missions-to-be-created-missions-are-added-in-Europe-Africa-Caribbean-and-US.html>

⁹⁶² "Gospel takes root in Tanzania," LDS Church News, 29 November 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44749/Gospel-takes-root-in-Tanzania.html>

⁹⁶³ "Determined to keep covenants," LDS Church News, 18 May 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41833/Determined-to-keep-covenants.html>

⁹⁶⁴ "Gospel takes root in Tanzania," LDS Church News, 29 November 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44749/Gospel-takes-root-in-Tanzania.html>

Meetinghouses

One Church-built meetinghouse may exist in Dar es Salaam. The four branches in Dar es Salaam met in three locations in the city in 2010. Branches in Arusha and Mwanza appear to meet in remodeled buildings.

Humanitarian and Development Work

LDS humanitarian aid and service projects appear limited in Tanzania. A branch service activity for the Ubungu Branch cleaned a local orphanage in 1998.⁹⁶⁵ A similar project was undertaken by the Chang'ombe Branch in 2000.⁹⁶⁶ In 2001, the Church sent two shipping containers of aid containing food and medical supplies.⁹⁶⁷ Tanzania was included in a program by the Church to vaccinate youth against Measles in the 2000s.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Unlike many countries with significant Muslim populations, the Church appears to have few obstacles with preaching the Gospel in Tanzania. This presents great opportunity. The Church has established itself only in Arusha and Dar es Salaam, yet Dar es Salaam is the largest city and has a large Muslim population. The Church may encounter difficulty becoming established in Zanzibar, where the overwhelming Muslim majority has more autonomy than in other areas of the country and practicing Muslims exhibit low receptivity to Christian proselytism.

Cultural Issues

Tanzanians demonstrate high receptivity to missionary-focused Christian groups, as indicated by rapid growth of denominations like Seventh Day Adventists. Tanzanian cultural practices of regularly drinking tea and coffee are impediments to LDS teachings. Those practicing polygamy must end polygamous marriages in divorce and be interviewed by a member of the mission or area presidency to be baptized. Syncretism blending Christianity with indigenous beliefs and superstition also presents challenges. Low standards of living and few economic opportunities pose difficulties for the LDS Church in Tanzania to be financially self-sufficient. Literacy rates are among the highest in the region and benefit local leadership development and testimony building for individual members.

National Outreach

Eight percent (8%) of the national population resides in cities with an LDS congregation. LDS outreach only officially occurs in Dar es Salaam, Arusha, and Mwanza, notwithstanding widespread religious freedom outside of Zanzibar and Pemba. LDS outreach was limited to just Dar es Salaam until 2008. Few LDS mission resources dedicated to the Kenya Nairobi Mission and Africa as a whole and proselytism activity only occurring in English until 2011 have contributed to very low levels of LDS national outreach.

Prospects appear very favorable for expanding national outreach but will rely on local member-missionary

⁹⁶⁵ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 26 December 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/34999/From-around-the-world.html>

⁹⁶⁶ "Brightening rest home, orphanage," LDS Church News, 7 October 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38594/Brightening-rest-home-orphanage.html>

⁹⁶⁷ "Church aid arrives in Tanzania," LDS Church News, 23 June 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40099/Church-aid-arrives-in-Tanzania.html>

efforts to achieve noticeable progress. The opening of Arusha and Mwanza to missionary work occurred initially as a result of active members moving to these locations and requesting to form groups and have full-time missionaries assigned. Greater proactive efforts from area and mission leadership will be needed for the LDS Church to reach its national outreach potential before receptivity wanes as receptive individuals continue to be shepherded into other outreach-focused Christian groups.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Activity and retention in Tanzania appear high due to longer periods of convert preparation than many other nations. Measured growth has facilitated training local leadership. A fourth branch created in Dar es Salaam in 2004 together with the creation of the first district in the country in 2005 indicates that active membership has steadily increased. Growth in Church infrastructure in Tanzania also points to local membership ready to receive greater leadership responsibilities. Stagnant enrollment numbers in seminary and institute may indicate challenges with retaining or providing additional church education to youth and young adults.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Senior missionaries serving in the Kenya Nairobi Mission suggest that one of the reasons for why the Church has experienced slow growth in Tanzania is due to the majority of Church membership residing in areas that are predominantly Muslim. With the opening of the first branch in the interior of Tanzania in 2008, missionaries anticipated greater, more rapid growth than in Dar es Salaam, as the majority of the inhabitants in northeastern Tanzania adhere to Christianity or indigenous beliefs. Due to the Church's very limited presence, it will be difficult to tell whether those in the interior of Tanzania are more receptive to the LDS Church until the Church has been established in the region for a number of years. The Church will likely experience increased diversity in membership as a result of the large number of ethnic groups. A diverse membership provides opportunities for establishing the Church more widely. However, a diverse membership can also challenge leadership and congregation unity if various ethnic groups in a given congregation experience differences or cultural conflicts. To date, ethnic integration issues do not appear to have presented major challenges.

Language Issues

Swahili and English language resources are used by missionaries and local members. In 2011, the decision was made for proselytism and teaching to occur in Swahili for the first time as prior to this time all converts were required to speak English well enough to pass their baptismal interviews. Several Church materials are already available in Arabic for use in regions where Arabic is predominantly spoken, mainly in Zanzibar and coastal regions along the Indian Ocean. No scripture or Church materials are available in any of the native languages in Tanzania. As Church membership is concentrated in Dar es Salaam in Arusha, additional language translations are unlikely to be produced until necessitated by membership growth.

Missionary Service

Local members have served missions but in few numbers. Tanzania relies on foreign missionaries to staff its local missionary needs. Few mission resources are dedicated to Tanzania, as greater progress and needs are presented by the Church in Kenya. Holding missionary preparation classes and youth-focused outreach may improve prospects for increasing local missionary self-sustainability.

Leadership

Many African nations with as few members as Tanzania do not have districts organized, indicating that Tanzania appears to have more mature leadership development. Both the Arusha and Mwanza Branches have

local members serve as branch presidents. A solid foundation of priesthood leadership generates a favorable outlook for organizing additional congregations once merited by greater increases in active membership.

Temple

Tanzania is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Church leadership has suggested the possibility of a temple in neighboring Kenya once warranted by membership growth and maturity. A temple in neighboring Kenya would drastically decrease the time and expense of attending the temple in South Africa.

Comparative Growth

The Church has seen more limited growth in Tanzania than many other African countries. Uganda had nearly the same number of members in 1991 as Tanzania, but had almost 7,000 members at the end of 2008. Mozambique had no Church presence until the mid-1990s but has nearly 5,000 members today. Both of these nations suffer from high inactivity, but the Church has been able to be established in many of the largest urban areas in these nations, whereas outreach in Tanzania remains extremely limited. Madagascar had its first branch created around the same time as Tanzania's first branch, yet Madagascar had twenty-four congregations and a stake with more than 5,000 members in late 2009.

Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other outreach-oriented faiths have experienced dynamic and sustained growth in Tanzania. Seventh Day Adventists have established themselves most strongly in the regions of Tanzania bordering Lake Victoria, with one region reporting one Seventh Day Adventist out of every twenty Tanzanians. These denominations have the majority of their membership in northwestern Tanzania, which may indicate that this area of the country may be more receptive for Christian proselytism. Adventists have made extensive use of public multimedia presentations, church schools, and medical clinics.

The primary reason for slow LDS growth in Tanzania appears to be the lack of resources and attention given to church growth and national outreach in the country. The Church had no outreach in Tanzania outside of Muslim-majority areas until 2008. Although the country has more than forty million inhabitants and, if it were in the Western hemisphere, would likely support between five and fifteen missions, Tanzania to date has no independent LDS mission but is served only by a subset of missionaries from the Kenya Nairobi Mission.

The Kenya Nairobi Mission also administered to Ethiopia and Uganda until 2005. Mission resources, especially missionaries and mission president visits, had to be divided between the four nations originally covered by the mission. After the division of the Kenya Nairobi Mission in 2005, greater attention could be devoted to Tanzania that may have contributed to the establishment of the district late that year. Due to Kenya's larger membership and number of congregations, Tanzania continues receives fewer mission resources. LDS outreach in Tanzania remains extremely limited.

Future Prospects

Additional growth for the Church in Tanzania in the near future appears most likely with expanding the Church's presence to additional cities while building up the existing six branches in the country. Church growth potential appears strongest in the northern portion of the country where the Church established its first presence in Arusha in 2008. Due to the closer proximity to Nairobi than Dar es Salaam, it appears more likely than the rest of the country to have additional areas opened for missionary work. Cities that seem to be suitable candidates are Moshi and Musoma due to their close proximity to Arusha and sizeable populations. Additional cities could also have groups or branches created as members of the Church share LDS teachings with their friends and families. Other larger cities along the coast in Tanzania appear likely possibilities to have a Church presence. A future Church presence in the Tanzanian capital of Dodoma may also be likely. Rural

areas, southern Tanzania and Zanzibar appear the least likely to have a Church presence in the near future due to their distance from mission headquarters in Nairobi or predominantly Muslim population.

The Dar es Salaam Tanzania District will not mature into a stake until additional congregations are organized and membership increases. Stakes usually require at least 2,000 members and five congregations, including 150 active Melchizedek Priesthood holders. At current growth rates, a stake may not be likely for another decade.

Humanitarian work could prove to be a means for the Church to become more established in Tanzania. Several projects in the past have involved local membership, which, if continued in the future, could help build positive public relations and open doors for the Church's influence to reach into additional areas of the country.

An independent mission covering Tanzania is greatly needed, and it is likely that Tanzania could eventually support many LDS missions. Yet very few mission resources have been allocated to this important nation notwithstanding its large population and broad religious freedom. With a present population that has been highly receptive to Christian proselytism outside of Muslim-majority areas, future growth prospects in Tanzania will greatly depend upon the allocation of missionary manpower and resources. Opportunities for growth are often time-sensitive. Receptivity may wane, and growth conditions may not be as favorable once a mission is eventually established in Tanzania and commensurate resources and missionary manpower are dedicated to outreach in the country. Many previously receptive individuals are already being disciplined into other churches, which may lead to further declines in receptivity over time.

TOGO

Geography

AREA: 56,875 square km. Located in West Africa and occupying a small strip of land between Benin and Ghana, Togo runs from the Atlantic Ocean to the south to Burkina Faso on the north. Togo is one of the smaller countries in Africa in geographical size but experiences a wide range of climate as the tropical south gradually transitions to the semi-arid savannahs of the north in the Sahel. Terrain consists of low elevation plains and flatlands with marshes and lagoons along the coast. Reduced visibility caused by harmattan winds and occasional droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation and pollution. Togo is divided into five administrative regions.

Peoples

African: 99%

Other: less than 1%

There are over twenty indigenous ethnic groups with most of the population concentrated along the Atlantic Coast and the north-south highway. The largest of these are the Ewe, Mina and Kabye. The Ewe and Mina are most prevalent in the south, whereas the Kabye reside in northern areas. The Ewe constitute approximately one-fifth of the population and account for many of Togo's professionals, merchants, and civil servants due to greater European influence in the south during the colonial period.⁹⁶⁸

Population: 6,961,049 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.748% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 4.64 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 60.64 male, 65.77 female (2012)

Languages: Ewe (14%), Kabye (11%), Gbe dialects (7%), Tem (3%), Gen (3%), Moba (3%), Ikposo (3%), Aja (2%), Nawdm (2%), Gourmanchema (2%), Lama (2%), Ife (2%), Ntcham (2%), Fulani (1%), other or unknown (43.8%). French is the official language and language of commerce. English is commonly spoken in the south and along the Ghanaian border.⁹⁶⁹ No indigenous languages have over one million speakers. There are 13 indigenous languages with over 100,000 speakers.

Literacy: 60.9% (2003)

History

Many of the African ethnic groups that populate Togo today migrated to the area from neighboring areas, such as the Ewe from the Niger River valley between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to explore coastal areas in the fifteenth century, following which various European powers raided native populations to supply the slave trade for the next two centuries, naming the area "The Slave Coast." Germany established the protectorate of Togoland in present-day Togo in 1884 and maintained rule

⁹⁶⁸ "Background Note: Togo," Bureau of African Affairs, 14 March 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5430.htm>

⁹⁶⁹ "Background Note: Togo," Bureau of African Affairs, 14 March 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5430.htm>

until 1914 when British and French forces invaded and captured the colony. Following World War I, France and the United Kingdom shared a League of Nations mandate over Togoland until after World War II when the United Nations appointed both nations to administer Togoland as a UN trust territory. In 1957, British Togoland united with the Gold Coast to form the nation of Ghana, and French Togoland became the independent nation of Togo in 1960 after several years of increasing autonomy. Political instability followed shortly thereafter, resulting in a coup in 1967 that overthrew the government and culminated in the establishment of a military-led government under Etienne Eyadema that endured until 2005. General Eyadema granted some democratic freedoms in the early 1990s when multi-party elections were first held. A poor human rights record isolated Togo for much of the remainder of the twentieth century. Greater democratic reforms have been instituted following the death of General Eyadema although government leaders face serious challenges revitalizing the economy and confronting accusations of electoral fraud.⁹⁷⁰

Culture

Wood carvings used for worship and trophies, tribalism, and indigenous religion are traditional cultural practices and beliefs that continue to influence contemporary Togolese culture. Christianity and Islam have gained many converts in recent years among animists, although many retain customs and practices from traditional religions. French is the most commonly spoken language and is utilized for interethnic communication. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are low compared to the world average. Polygamy is common and most prevalent in rural areas. Half of illiterate women are joined to a polygamous marriage compared to one-third of literate women.⁹⁷¹

Economy

GDP per capita: \$900 (2011) [1.87% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.435

Corruption Index: 2.4 (2011)

The economy is based on subsistence and commercial agriculture. Like neighboring Benin, Togo's largest cash crop is cotton. Coffee and cocoa are also major exports. Togo is the world's fourth largest producer of phosphate. Difficulties attracting foreign investment have been ongoing. Agriculture employs 65% of the labor force and generates 48% of the GDP. Coffee, cocoa, cotton, yams, cassava, vegetables, sorghum, rice, livestock, and fish are common agricultural products. Services employ 30% of the labor force and generate 27% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 5% of the labor force and generates one-quarter of the GDP. Phosphate mining, food processing, cement, handicrafts, beverages, and clothing are major industries. Primary trade partners include China, Germany, India, and Burkina Faso. Corruption is perceived as widespread. Togo is a transshipment point for heroin and cocaine.

Faiths

Christian: 48%

Indigenous beliefs: 33%

Muslim: 14%

None: 5%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

⁹⁷⁰ "Background Note: Togo," Bureau of African Affairs, 14 March 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5430.htm>

⁹⁷¹ "Togo," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 7 April 2011. <http://www.genderindex.org/country/Togo>

Catholic 1,896,158
 Jehovah's Witnesses 17,240 253
 Seventh Day Adventists 5,343 40
 Latter-day Saints 1,861 11

Religion

A university study in 2004 found that Christians constitute approximately half of the population and generally reside in southern areas. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of Togolese are Catholic, whereas 10% are Protestant and 10% identify with other Christian denominations. Muslims comprise 14% of the population and generally reside in northern areas. Indigenous beliefs and practices are often incorporated into Islam and Christianity. Those practicing indigenous beliefs account for one-third of the population. Members of differing religious groups frequently intermarry.⁹⁷²

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Political parties are not permitted to be based on religion, ethnic group, or region. Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam are state religions. Religious groups are required to register as associations and are entitled to the same rights as state religions, including duty-free status for importing materials for humanitarian and development projects. To register, a religious group must submit a summary of its finances, a site map and site use agreement, names and addresses of administrative leaders, the group leader's diploma, and a statement on its doctrines and statutes. There have been no instances of rejected applications in recent years. Religious instruction is not provided in public schools, but Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic schools are common. There have been no reported instances of societal abuse of religious freedom.⁹⁷³

Largest Cities

Urban: 43%

Lomé, **Sokodé, Kara, Atakpamé, Kpalimé, Dapaong, Tsévié, Notsé, Aného, Bassar.**

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

One of the ten largest cities has an LDS congregation. Forty percent (40%) of the national population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

In July 1997, the LDS Church established its first member group in Lomé with twenty-five members. Most members appeared to have joined the Church abroad or were introduced locally by friends and family. In 1999, Togo came under the jurisdiction of the Ivory Coast Abidjan Mission, a senior missionary couple was assigned to begin missionary work, and the first branch was organized.⁹⁷⁴ Seminary and institute commenced that same year. Togo was assigned to the Ghana Cape Coast Mission in 2005⁹⁷⁵ and reassigned to the Ghana

⁹⁷² "Togo," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148726.htm>

⁹⁷³ "Togo," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148726.htm>

⁹⁷⁴ "Togo," Country Profile, 18 October 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/togo>

⁹⁷⁵ Stahle, Shaun. "Missions created on opposite sides of Africa," LDS Church News, 11 June 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47427/Missions-created-on-opposite-sides-of-Africa.html>

Accra Mission in 2007.⁹⁷⁶ In 2008, Togo was reassigned to the Cote d'Ivoire Abidjan Mission and in 2011 was included in the newly organized Benin Cotonou Mission.⁹⁷⁷

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,861 (2012)

There were 117 Latter-day Saints in 2000, increasing to 361 in 2002, 504 in 2004, 575 in 2006, and 793 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates during the 2000s ranged from a high of 90% in 2002 to a low of 6% in 2005. Membership increased 30% in 2009. In 2010, one in 5,435 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 11 (2012)

A second branch was organized in 2006 (Tokoin), followed by a third branch in 2008 (Hedzranawoe), a fourth branch in late 2009 (Be-Kpota), a fifth branch in 2010 (Ablogame), and a sixth branch in 2011 (Doumassesse). In 2010, the Lome Branch was renamed the Souzanetime Branch. The Lome Togo District was organized in late 2009. In late 2012 and early 2013, five new branches were organized (Adidogome, Akodessewa, Anfane, Attiegou, and Wuiti).

Activity and Retention

One hundred seventy-three were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. During the spring of 2009, missionaries reported that the smallest branch was the Hedzranawoe Branch, with sacrament attendance of between fifty and sixty people a week. Sacrament attendance for the Lome and Tokoin Branches averaged around 110 and 130, respectively, during this period. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 400, or 35%–40% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: French.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in French. The *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* is available in Ewe, Fon, and Fulani. *Gospel Principles* is available in Ewe and Fulani.

Meetinghouses

Branches meet in renovated building and rented spaces. In 2013, the first church-built meetinghouse was completed to operate as the district center.

Health and Safety

The risk for infectious diseases is very high. Common diseases include typhoid fever, hepatitis A, bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, malaria, yellow fever, schistosomiasis, meningococcal meningitis, rabies, and influenza. HIV/AIDS infects 3.2% of the population.

⁹⁷⁶ "New missions bring total to 347 New missions," LDS Church News, 10 February 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50112/New-missions-bring-total-to-347-New-missions.html>

⁹⁷⁷ "New boundaries announced for several missions," LDS Church News, 19 February 2011. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/60512/New-boundaries-announced-for-several-missions.html>

Humanitarian and Development Work

LDS humanitarian and development work has been limited to a single measles vaccination initiative project.⁹⁷⁸ Full-time missionaries fulfill weekly service hours in their areas.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church benefits from full religious freedom and experiences no restrictions regarding proselytism, worship, or assembly. There have been no reported instances of societal abuse of religious freedom targeting Latter-day Saints. Foreign missionaries serve without restrictions.

Cultural Issues

Low literacy rates and poverty are challenges that limit local member self-sufficiency in leadership and economic self-reliance but also provide opportunities for LDS humanitarian and development projects that can meet these needs in the general population and also raise public awareness of the Church, provide finding opportunities for full-time missionaries, and offer opportunities for local members to introduce friends and family in need to services provided by the Church. Clean water projects, wheelchair donations, education assistance, employment workshops, and medical care are potential development and humanitarian activities that have yet to be explored by the LDS Church in Togo. The common practice of polygamy in rural areas and in some cities outside of Lome creates a major barrier for LDS mission outreach, as those engaged in a polygamous relationship who desire to join the Church must first end these relations in divorce and then be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency to be considered for baptism.

National Outreach

Twenty-four percent (24%) of the national population resides in Lome, the only city with an LDS presence. The Togolese population residing outside of Lome remains entirely unreached by LDS mission efforts. Many areas of Lome are less reached due to distance from church meetinghouses and LDS outreach commencing in some communities only within the past couple years.

With widespread religious freedom and a highly receptive population to LDS mission efforts, Togo presents excellent opportunities for expanding national outreach in currently unreached locations. Delays in opening additional congregations in Lome and the continued lack of outreach outside elsewhere in Togo is largely attributed to limited LDS mission resources dedicated to the region, the plateauing of LDS missionary manpower worldwide, and the several changes since 2000 with mission boundaries involving Togo and Benin. Past missions that administered Togo have included three or more nations within their boundaries, and most mission resources were dedicated to the nation in which the mission was based. It is likely that information about local membership and leadership in Togo has not been properly passed on to succeeding or newly transferred missionaries, mission presidents, and regional leaders. Togo's geographic separation from missions it has pertained to over the years has likely resulted in inadequate training and emphasis placed on the retention of converts. When Togo was under the jurisdiction of missions in Ghana, missionaries would have to learn French and local African languages if transferred to the country. This would complicate the efforts of mission presidency members traveling to Togo to provide training and assistance if they did not know French or African languages spoken in the Lome area.

⁹⁷⁸ "Projects—Togo," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 7 April 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-115,00.html>

The allocation of mission resources to Togo will likely increase in the coming years following the creation of the Benin Cotonou Mission in 2011 and improve prospects for establishing additional mission outreach centers outside of Lome.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Overall, Togo experiences moderate rates of member activity and convert retention largely due to commensurate increases in congregations and full-time missionaries assigned and high receptivity by the indigenous population in Lome. Inactivity issues have largely been attributed to distance from church meetinghouses and language barriers. The Lome Branch had over 500 members on its records in 2005, and many of these members likely did not attend church meetings regularly or at all. Significant improvement was made between 2005 and 2010 as the number of congregations increased to five and the average number of members per congregation fell from over 500 to 249. Missionaries report that efforts to address inactivity challenges have primarily focused on opening additional congregations closer to the homes of members, but no English-language congregations have been established for English-speaking Nigerians who primary originate from Abia State. Consequently, English-speakers' comprehension of church meetings is limited, and language barriers frustrate opportunities to fellowship with French-speaking members, which have reduced nationwide member activity rates. There may be additional challenges maintaining member activity rates for youth and young adults, as evidenced by the number of members enrolled in seminary and institute declining between the 2007–2008 and 2009–2010 school years from 259 to 173. The opening of additional congregations staffed by local members, maintaining high standards for convert baptisms, emphasizing seminary and institute attendance, and enlisting local members in reactivation efforts may facilitate the continuation of the trend of congregational increase since 2006.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic conflict in Togo has been concentrated between the Ewe and other ethnic groups. LDS missionaries have not reported that ethnic integration issues have carried over the LDS congregations, likely due to geography separating many of these ethnic groups. Potential for ethnic integration challenges exists and deserves careful observation by church leaders and stress by local and mission leaders to emphasize the unity of local members, notwithstanding ethnic rivalries or historical incompatibilities.

Language Issues

Low literacy rates create serious challenges for developing self-sustaining local leadership but provide the opportunity of extending LDS literacy classes designed to meet illiteracy needs among members and nonmembers. Literacy programs can be an effective finding and retention approach. The Church is currently unprepared to meet the needs demanded by the high degree of linguistic diversity as most local languages have no LDS materials available and the few languages with translations of materials have only one or two LDS resources. Church meetings and missionary work are usually conducted in French and English due to these challenges, which provide unity among differing ethnic groups within the same congregations. Language-specific congregations may be organized if the number of active members speaking differing languages warrants it and if qualified leadership is available. An English-speaking congregation to meet the needs of Nigerian members in Lome appears likely in the near future. Languages in the greatest need of LDS scriptures and a wide selection of basic proselytism materials include Ewe, Kabye, and Gbe.

Missionary Service

There were nearly twenty LDS missionaries assigned to Togo in March 2011, including a senior missionary couple. Togolese members have served full-time missions in increasing numbers, but appear unable to staff

their local missionary needs. Continued emphasis on seminary and institute attendance and mission preparation may lead to greater numbers of local members serving missions and over the medium term generate a body of experienced, returned missionaries to provide additional leadership manpower to expand national outreach.

Leadership

Sustainable local leadership in sufficient numbers to justify the organization of multiple congregations and a district did not occur until the late 2000s, notwithstanding that the LDS Church in Togo had over 500 members in the mid-2000s meeting in one congregation. The organization of four additional branches by 2010 indicates advancements in meeting local leadership development issues and increasing convert retention rates notwithstanding past member activity and local leadership challenges. Increasing the number of full-time missionaries assigned commensurate to increases in the number of active members and congregations has safeguarded against full-time missionaries undertaking local administrative and leadership responsibilities. The reassignment of non-Ivorian missionaries serving in Cote d'Ivoire to Benin and Togo in late 2010 and early 2011, and the organization of the Benin Cotonou Mission in 2011 will likely increase the number of full-time missionaries assigned to Togo and may impact local leadership development. Full-time missionaries report that additional missionaries will be utilized to facilitate the opening of additional congregations rather than be assigned to congregations with one or two missionary companionships, which would lessen the possibility of full-time missionaries reducing the self-reliance of established branches.

Temple

Togo is assigned to the Accra Ghana Temple district. Crossing the international boundary is a challenge for many to travel to the temple, although members in Togo benefit from closer proximity to a temple than most members in Africa. Temple trips appear to be held irregularly and in small groups. There are no realistic prospects for a temple closer to Togo for the foreseeable future.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church in Togo experienced some of the most rapid membership and congregational growth in Africa during the 2000s among countries with fewer than 2,000 members as membership increased tenfold and the number of branches increased from one to five. The Church organized its first districts in six African nations during the 2000s, including Togo; others include Ethiopia, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zambia. The percentage of the population reached by the LDS Church, member activity rates, and the percentage of members enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2009–2010 school year in Togo (17%) is comparable to most West African nations.

Missionary-minded Christian groups report moderate to rapid church growth in Togo. Adventist membership more than doubled during the 2000s, although the number of Adventist congregations increased only by 30%.⁹⁷⁹ Jehovah's Witnesses reported 15,173 active members in 246 congregations in 2008. Many Christian groups have operated in Togo longer than the LDS Church, have relied on local members to perform proselytism activities to increase membership, and have a presence throughout the country, whereas Latter-day Saints highly rely on full-time missionaries to proselyte and baptize new converts and continue to operate only in Lome.

⁹⁷⁹ "Togo Mission (1989–Present)," www.adventiststatistics.org, retrieved 7 April 2011. http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=1552882

Future Prospects

The outlook for future LDS Church growth in Togo is favorable due to fair convert retention rates in recent years, increasing numbers of local priesthood leaders, high rates of receptivity, consistent congregational growth, and the creation of a single mission to administer Togo and Benin in 2011. Additional congregations in the Lome area will likely be organized in the near future as additional numbers of missionaries are assigned. Currently unreached cities may open to missionary work over the medium term, especially those within close proximity to Lome and that have multiple members. Togo may have its own LDS mission organized one day if greater numbers of local members serve missions and if warranted by steady, sustained growth in Benin and Togo. In 2012, missionaries reported plans to organize the first stake in Lome within the near future.

UGANDA

Geography

AREA: 241,038 square km. Landlocked in East Africa, Uganda borders South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Several large lakes surround Uganda, the largest being Lake Victoria to the south. Lake Edward and Lake Albert straddle the Congolese border, and Lakes Kwanaia and Kyoga occupy a substantial amount of area in the center of the country. The Victoria Nile and Albert Nile Rivers flow between several of the large lakes. Topographically, Uganda consists primarily of plains and plateaus. The climate in Uganda is tropical with a dry season lasting between November and February. Agriculture is productive in Uganda, resulting from the fertile soil found throughout the country. Environmental issues include loss and destruction of wetlands, deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, and wildlife poaching. Uganda is divided into eighty administrative districts.

Peoples

Baganda: 16.9%
Banyakole: 9.5%
Basoga: 8.4%
Bakiga: 6.9%
Iteso: 6.4%
Langi: 6.1%
Acholi: 4.7%
Bagisu: 4.6%
Lugbara: 4.2%
Bunyoro: 2.7%
Other: 29.6%

No ethnic group in Uganda makes up a large percentage of the population. The largest ethnic group is the Baganda, comprising 16.9% of the population. Ethnicity percentages were provided by the 2002 census.

Population: 35,873,253 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.582% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 6.65 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 52.4 male, 54.54 female (2012)

Languages: English is the national and official language of Uganda and is used in government and education. Arabic and Swahili speakers are also present due to Uganda's geographic position between East Africa and North Africa. Many Baganda speak Ganda and reside between Kampala and the Tanzania-Uganda border. A total of forty-three languages are spoken. The most widely spoken native language is Luganda [Ganda]. Languages with over one million native speakers include Luganda (4.13 million), Nyankore (2.33 million), Soga (2.06 million), Chiga (1.58 million), Teso (1.57 million), Lango (1.49 million), Acholi (1.17 million), and Masaaba (1.12 million).

Literacy: 66.8% (2002)

History

Named from the Buganda Kingdom in southern portion of the country, Uganda was ruled by several local African kingdoms for centuries prior to the arrival of Arab traders in the 1830s and the British searching for the source of the Nile River in the 1860s. Protestant missionaries arrived in 1877, and Catholic missionaries shortly followed thereafter in 1879. The Kingdom of Buganda became a British protectorate in 1894, and Uganda attained self-rule in 1961. Uganda achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1962. Interethnic conflict and controversies surrounding local kingdom and tribal representation and self-rule culminated in political instability during the 1960s, resulting in Ugandan president Milton Obote suspending the constitution and consolidating all government power. In 1971, a coup overthrew the government and established Idi Amin Dada as president. Serious human rights violations occurred in the 1970s during Dada's rule, as ethnic groups that supported the previous president were targets of violence and discrimination. With assistance from Ugandan rebels, armed forces in Tanzania launched an offensive against Dada following his incursion into Tanzanian territory that ultimately resulted in the removal of Dada from power despite backing from Libyan forces. Other nations in the past have sought to influence Ugandan government, politics, and economics, including China and the Soviet Union. Intense fighting and insurrections occurred in the early 1980s.⁹⁸⁰ President Museveni came to power in 1986 and brought greater stability and peace to the region. Instability in the north has continued as a result of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which opposes the Ugandan government. Civil war in the north displaced many from their homes and caused untold suffering and hardship. In 2009, severe drought devastated many areas of the north, which has experienced decreasing violence and political instability in recent years.

Culture

Due to the large number of ethnic groups, culture in Uganda varies for each ethnic group. Ugandans are generally religious, and many mix some of their indigenous beliefs with Christianity. Cuisine shares many similarities with East African, Arab, and Indian foods, and dishes commonly utilizes beans, meat, nuts, and vegetables. Polygamy is widespread and legal. Alcohol consumption rates are high compared to the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,300 (2011) [2.7% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.446

Corruption Index: 2.4 (2011)

Due to instability and low levels of development, abundant natural resources have not been utilized and developed, such as cobalt, copper, oil, and abundant farmland and productive soils. Since the beginning of President Museveni's rule, Uganda has taken several steps to reform the economy by trying to lessen inflation and increase wages for Ugandans. Uganda's landlocked position in East Africa makes it less able to trade and interact with the rest of the world. Economic growth continues to occur, although a third of Ugandans live below the poverty line. Agriculture employs 82% of the labor force and constitutes 23.6% of the GDP, whereas services employ 13% of the labor force and generate 51.9% of the GDP. Coffee, tea, cotton, tobacco, cassava, potatoes, corn, grains, flowers, poultry, beef, goat and goat milk are common agricultural products. Industry employs 5% of the labor force and generates 24.5% of the GDP. Major industries are generally agriculturally based and include sugar, tobacco, cotton-made clothes, cement, and steel. Kenya, Sudan, India, and the United Arab Emirates are the primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and a serious barrier to economic growth. Insurrections and ethnic conflict have facilitated corruption and criminal activity.

⁹⁸⁰ "Background Note: Uganda," Bureau of African Affairs, 2 March 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2963.htm>

Faiths

Christian: 83.9%
 Muslim: 12.1%
 Other: 3.1%
 None: 0.9%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 13,562,845
 Anglican 11,620,671
 Pentecostal 1,489,000
 Seventh Day Adventists 218,576 833
 Jehovah's Witnesses 5,580 118
 Latter-day Saints 11,442 25

Religion

Most Ugandans are Christian (84%), and approximately half are Catholic. Anglicans are the largest Protestant group, claiming 36% of Christians. Other major Christian groups include Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Orthodox Christians. Catholics are most prevalent in the northern and West Nile regions. Islam is practiced by 12.1% of Ugandans, and Iganga District in the east has the highest percentage of Muslims.⁹⁸¹ Those following other religions constitute 3.1% of the population, and those with no religion consist of 0.9% of Ugandans.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 47th

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Political parties are not permitted to be based on religion. Several local, nontraditional Christian groups are deemed as cults by the government and subject to government surveillance. There have been no issues of the government denying visas to foreign missionary groups entering the country.⁹⁸² Some Christian denominations persecute or distance themselves from smaller, newly arrived denominations.

Major Cities

Urban: 13%

Kampala, Kira, Gulu, Lira, **Mbarara**, Mbale, Jinja, Nansana, Masaka, Entebbe
 Cities in **bold** have no LDS congregation.

Nine of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Eight percent (8%) of the national population resides within the ten most populous cities.

⁹⁸¹ "Uganda," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148727.htm>

⁹⁸² "Uganda," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148727.htm>

LDS History

Expatriate members were the first members to reside in Uganda, holding church meetings as early as the 1960s. The first Ugandan members joined the Church in Europe and returned to their home country. A couple serving for a USAID program began holding meetings in the spring of 1990 and invited those around them to attend meetings. Later that year, the first baptism in the country occurred as a result of an LDS pen pal from Denmark sharing the gospel with a Ugandan named Mugisa James Collins.⁹⁸³ The first LDS missionaries were a senior couple who arrived in December 1990. A second senior missionary couple arrived in the spring of 1991.⁹⁸⁴ Official recognition of the Church occurred in early 1991. Uganda was included in the newly-organized Kenya Nairobi mission in the summer of 1991. The Kenya Nairobi Mission also included at the time Tanzania. Elder James E. Faust, then of the Council of the Twelve, dedicated Uganda in addition to Kenya and Zimbabwe for missionary work in October 1991.⁹⁸⁵ Seminary and institute programs commenced in 1992.

The Uganda Kampala Mission was organized in 2005 by a division of the Kenya Nairobi Mission and also included Ethiopia. The new mission allowed greater emphasis on Uganda and Ethiopia and significantly increased the number of missionaries serving in Uganda. The LDS Church in Uganda has facilitated the introduction of the Church to additional nations in the region in recent years, as in 2008 Rwanda was assigned to the Uganda Kampala Mission. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, Djibouti and Sudan were assigned to the mission, and for the first time since the early 1990s, additional cities in Uganda were opened for missionary work (Busia, Gulu, Iganga, Lira, Lugazi, Masaka, Njeru, and Mbale).

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 11,442 (2012)

In October 1990, LDS leaders reported there were thirty-two members in Uganda.⁹⁸⁶ Attendance in the country's sole branch averaged around thirty to thirty-five people each Sunday in the spring of 1991.⁹⁸⁷ Membership increased to 800 in 1993, 1,700 in 1997, and 2,598 in 2000.

Slow membership growth rates occurred during the first half of the 2000s and were followed by rapid membership growth rates. Membership increased to 3,089 in 2002, 3,788 in 2004, 4,358 in 2006, 6,919 in 2008, and 9,024 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates in the 2000s ranged from a high of 47.2% in 2008 to a low of 3.5% in 2005 but generally ranged from 10%–20%. In 2010, one in 3,836 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 6 Branches: 20 Groups: 1? (April 2013)

The first branch was organized in 1990. The number of branches increased to six in 1993, seven in 1997, and twelve in 2000. Two districts were operating in Kampala and Jinja by 1993. The number of branches increased to fourteen in 2003, sixteen in 2008, and eighteen in 2009. The Church's presence was limited to Kampala

⁹⁸³ "From a tiny start, Church begins to grow in African nation of Uganda," LDS Church News, 30 March 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20973/From-a-tiny-start-Church-begins-to-grow-in-African-nation-of-Uganda.html>

⁹⁸⁴ "From a tiny start, Church begins to grow in African nation of Uganda," LDS Church News, 30 March 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20973/From-a-tiny-start-Church-begins-to-grow-in-African-nation-of-Uganda.html>

⁹⁸⁵ "Three nations dedicated in Africa," LDS Church News, 23 November 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21541/Three-nations-dedicated-in-Africa.html>

⁹⁸⁶ "LDS leaders, visitors: 'Friendly exchange' dignitaries call at Church headquarters," LDS Church News, 27 October 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19643/LDS-leaders-visitors-Friendly-exchange-dignitaries-call-at-Church-headquarters.html>

⁹⁸⁷ "From a tiny start, Church begins to grow in African nation of Uganda," LDS Church News, 30 March 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20973/From-a-tiny-start-Church-begins-to-grow-in-African-nation-of-Uganda.html>

and its surroundings, Jinja, and Entebbe until 2008. A group began meeting in Gulu in early 2008, became a branch in mid-2008, and was assigned full-time missionaries in the spring of 2009. In late 2008, Mbale was opened for missionary work, and a group began functioning. A group was created in Lira in mid-2009 and became a branch in early 2011. In the fall of 2009, a branch was created on the Kenya side of the Uganda-Kenya border town of Busia that may have contributed to Busia, Uganda opening for missionary work in late 2011.

In 2010, the Kampala Uganda Stake was organized and included six wards and five branches in the Kampala area. In late 2011, there were six branches in the Jinja Uganda District, and mission branches were operating in Gulu and Lira. In 2011, the first branches were organized in Masaka, Mbale, and Njeru, and home groups began meeting in Busia and Iganga. In 2012, branches were formed in Busia, Iganga, Lugazi, and Njeru.

Activity and Retention

The average number of members per congregation increased from 133 in 1993 to 217 in 2000 and 501 in 2010. Four hundred seventeen were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. Missionaries in 2009 reported short-term convert retention to be 88% as defined by attending church meetings at least once a month. The mission president reported in late 2008 that sacrament attendance had increased dramatically that year, resulting in the Church purchasing land for three new chapels in Uganda. Missionaries reported that sacrament attendance for the Uganda Kampala Mission was over 1,500 people for the first time in the middle of 2009. Considering that combined membership for all the nations in the Uganda Kampala Mission was between 7,500 and 8,000 at the end of 2008, these figures indicate that Uganda experiences some of the lowest member activity rates in Africa. Missionaries reported in 2008 and 2009 that most branches had fewer than one hundred attending sacrament meeting regularly, indicating that many of the converts baptized during years of rapid membership growth were likely not retained. Missionaries reported that the Kololo Branch had as 1,000 individuals on the records with about 150 attending meetings weekly in 2009. One hundred forty attended church services in Gulu in early 2011. One thousand five hundred attended a meeting with Elder Holland in the late 2000s. When a new meetinghouse was dedicated for the Mukono Branch in the Kampala Uganda District in 2002, there were 900 visitors and 142 in attendance the Sunday of the dedication.⁹⁸⁸ One thousand attended the conference to organize the Kampala Uganda Stake in 2010.⁹⁸⁹ Nationwide active membership is estimated at 2,500, or 20%–25% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Arabic, English, Swahili.

All LDS scriptures and many church materials are available in Arabic and Swahili. *Gospel Principles* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* are available in Luganda.

Meetinghouses

The first church-built chapel was dedicated in 1997 for the Kololo Branch, and a second was dedicated in 1998 in Jinja. A new meetinghouse was dedicated for the Mukono Branch in the Kampala Uganda District in 2002.⁹⁹⁰ Most congregations meet in renovated buildings or rented spaces.

⁹⁸⁸ “New meetinghouse in Kenya a symbol, testimony of gospel,” LDS Church News, 19 May 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39890/New-meetinghouse-in-Kenya-a-symbol-testimony-of-gospel.html>

⁹⁸⁹ Christensen, Erin. “Saints celebrate first stake formed in Uganda.” LDS Church News, 6 February 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58751/Saints-celebrate-first-stake-formed-in-Uganda.html>

⁹⁹⁰ “New meetinghouse in Kenya a symbol, testimony of gospel,” LDS Church News, 19 May 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39890/New-meetinghouse-in-Kenya-a-symbol-testimony-of-gospel.html>

Health and Safety

HIV/AIDS infects 6.5% of the adult population. The risk for infectious disease is very high for hepatitis A, typhoid fever, malaria, plague, African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), schistosomiasis, and rabies. Standards of living are low.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In recent years, the Church completed thirty-one humanitarian and development projects in Uganda, including clean water projects, donating classroom furniture and supplies, agricultural projects, emergency aid donations, neonatal resuscitation training, wheelchair donations, and vocational training.⁹⁹¹ The Church has helped curtail poverty by a wide variety of projects supervised by senior couples serving in the Uganda Kampala Mission. Some projects have aimed at meeting the immediate needs of food and clothing donations to refugee camps on the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. Others include starting up plantations where local people learn skills needed to produce their own food and crops to sell. Several well-drilling projects are also conducted throughout the country. These programs benefit locals irrespective of religious affiliation. Humanitarian efforts have provided vast opportunities for service among Ugandans. In the United States in October 1990, Church representatives met with Ugandan Ambassador Katenta-Apuli in Salt Lake City and discussed humanitarian and health issues in Uganda.⁹⁹²

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church has utilized the religious freedom enjoyed in Uganda over the years by increasing the number of missionaries serving in the country. No restrictions limit LDS missionary activities.

Cultural Issues

Poverty and natural disasters afflict many Ugandans, but these challenges offer opportunities for humanitarian and development projects. The Church has utilized abundant opportunities to relieve poverty and foster economic self-sufficiency among Ugandans. Although Uganda has a higher GDP per capita than many other African countries, many areas of Uganda are very poor. The traditional custom of paying a dowry for a bride to get married is a burden on young adults and results in fewer Ugandans marrying. Polygamy is a widespread practice in Uganda, and those who participate in a polygamous marriage must make their marriage relationships monogamous and legally recognized before baptisms. Those who have previously participated in a polygamous relationship must be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency before joining the Church. Uganda has moderate level of literacy, notwithstanding low standards of living, providing opportunities to develop local leadership among many who can read and write. Receptivity has been very high in many areas of the country due to interest in religion and the humble living conditions of most Ugandans.

National Outreach

Less than 8% of the national population resides in a city with an LDS congregation despite LDS congregations operating in nine of the ten most populous cities. Uganda has a large population that remains largely unreached by the Church, as most live in small towns and villages in rural areas. As of early 2011, there have

⁹⁹¹ "Projects—Uganda," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 3 May 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-132,00.html>

⁹⁹² "LDS leaders, visitors: 'Friendly exchange' dignitaries call at Church headquarters," LDS Church News, 27 October 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19643/LDS-leaders-visitors-Friendly-exchange-dignitaries-call-at-Church-headquarters.html>

been no concentrated LDS outreach efforts in rural communities, home to 87% of the national population. All cities and areas are unreached outside of Kampala and its suburbs, Jinja, Entebbe, Busia, Gulu, Iganga, Lira, Lugazi, Mbale, Masaka, and Njeru.

Since the organization of the Uganda Kampala Mission, national outreach has expanded, and considerable progress has occurred. Two cities in northern Uganda were opened to missionary work and independent branches were established (Gulu and Lira), branches were established in two additional cities in eastern and western areas (Mbale and Masaka), an additional branch was organized in Kampala for the first time in nearly a decade (Mutungo), and the number of full-time missionaries serving has steadily increased. Expansion in national outreach did not occur for over a decade between the early 1990 and mid-2000s due to distance from Uganda to the headquarters of the Kenya Nairobi Mission, few mission resources allocated to East Africa, political instability, and low standards of living. Full-time missionaries serving in Uganda in the late 2000s and early 2010s reported several Ugandans organizing unofficial LDS congregations and contacting friends and family in unreached cities such as Iganga. The Church was first established in northern Uganda through a similar process, and over time, such instances will likely facilitate the opening of additional cities to missionary work. Senior couple missionaries in early 2011 reported that the fortuitous establishment of an LDS group in the city of Masaka occurred through an investigator meeting with missionaries in Kampala and subsequently moving to Masaka to later fortuitously meet a senior missionary couple performing humanitarian and development work in the area. Full-time missionaries in Kampala accompanied the senior couple during later visits and proselytized the city for a couple of days, resulting in dozens of contacts desiring to be taught by the missionaries and attending church meetings. Several investigators were baptized, and a group was formally established. The Uganda Kampala Mission has experienced considerable strain and logistical challenges due to the spontaneous gatherings of Ugandans desiring to learn about the Church and be baptized, while the mission simultaneously provides administrative guidance through full-time missionaries and mission leaders to local members and leaders in five countries, several of which, including South Sudan and Ethiopia, also have unofficial groups of prospective Latter-day Saints awaiting formal establishment of the LDS Church. Increasing the involvement of local members in expanding national outreach by calling ward and branch missionaries, organizing additional groups and dependent branches in lesser-reached communities in Kampala, and emphasizing missionary preparation for Ugandan LDS youth and young adults may reduce the administrative burden on mission leaders and utilize opportunities of high receptivity. The organization of additional missions in the area currently administered by the Uganda Kampala Mission appears likely in the near future and would allow for greater mission outreach in Uganda.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The LDS Church in Uganda exhibits low member activity rates that appear to be linked to quick-baptism tactics. Many LDS converts have subsequently joined other churches or returned to their prior churches. Efforts to establish a stake in Kampala may have exacerbated low member activity rates as the creation of additional congregations was postponed to increase the number of active members in established LDS congregations. Distance to church meetinghouses appears to have also contributed to member activity challenges. Emphasis on the unique doctrinal teachings of the LDS Church and the development of weekly church attendance and habitual personal gospel study habits will be required to improve member activity rates. No noticeable change in the number of members enrolled in seminary and institute may indicate a lack of emphasis on attending Church Education System classes that provide socialization opportunities with fellow Latter-day Saints and an increased understanding of LDS teachings and practices. In recent years, missionaries report that the number of people attending LDS congregations has steadily increased, but this has been well below the rate of increase for nominal LDS membership as indicated by the average LDS congregation in Uganda quadrupling in membership between 1993 and 2010.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Although Uganda is ethnically diverse with the largest ethnic group comprising only 16.9% of the population, little ethnic violence has occurred in Uganda compared to many other African nations, and most ethnic conflict is politically based. Some areas of Uganda have several ethnic groups residing in the same city or area and experience ethnic tensions, but ethnic groups are generally geographically separated. Many of Uganda's ethnic groups are unreached by the Church, but the Church's establishment in Kampala and other large cities will likely ameliorate this problem, as many different ethnic groups have family connections with larger cities where relatives can join the Church and then introduce the Church to their families and friends at home.

Language Issues

Uganda's strong emphasis on English as a national language has decreased the need to translate materials into additional languages. The use of English in church services has also assisted in uniting members of different ethnic groups who speak different languages. As the Church grows in areas of the country outside of the capital and Jinja, additional materials will likely be translated into Luganda and other indigenous languages.

Missionary Service

Many Ugandan members serve full-time missions, but the recent increase in the number of full-time missionaries assigned to Uganda does not appear to have been commensurate with the increase in the number of local members serving missions. Ugandan missionaries commonly serve throughout East Africa and South Africa. Emphasis on seminary and institute attendance may increase the number of local members serving full-time missions.

Leadership

Leadership in the Kampala area has matured to the point that a stake was created in January 2010, but the number of local leaders remains limited and unable to support the organization of additional congregations or develop any of the five branches within the boundaries of the stake into wards as of early 2011. Efforts to consolidate local leadership may have set back the development of additional leadership manpower from new converts. Leadership is likely very limited in northern and eastern Uganda in Gulu, Lira, and Mbale due to the Church's recent establishment in these areas and limited mission training due to the heavy administrative burden of the Uganda Kampala Mission. The mission president living in Uganda has provided Ugandan Church members with additional training and support primarily in the Kampala area. Returned full-time missionaries will provide a significant source of strength and manpower to maintain and increase the number of local church leaders.

Temple

Uganda is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple district. Temple trips appear to be regularly scheduled on a stake or district level, but travel costs and distances make temple attendance unaffordable and unfeasible for most. A prospective future LDS temple in Nairobi, Kenya would drastically reduce travel time and expenses and may become likely over the medium or long term, but at present, active LDS leadership in East Africa is too limited to justify the construction of a temple.

Comparative Growth

LDS membership growth in Uganda was representative of the region until the mid-2000s when the Church in Uganda ranked among the most rapidly growing worldwide among countries between 4,000 and 10,000

Latter-day Saints. Congregational growth rates continue to lag behind most African nations, and member activity rates are among the lowest in the region. The extent of LDS national outreach and the percentage of members in the population are comparable to most African nations.

Most Christian churches with strong missionary programs report rapid growth in Uganda. Jehovah's Witnesses reported 4,701 active members in 107 congregations in 2008. The Seventh Day Adventist Church reported 186,982 members meeting in 806 churches in 2008. Pentecostals have also seen large growth in the last several decades. Many other missionary-minded Christians have operated in Uganda for decades longer than the LDS Church and adopt more aggressive proselytizing campaigns focused on church planting and utilizing local leadership resources.

Future Prospects

Uganda offers abundant opportunities for LDS Church growth due to widespread religious freedom, increasing government stability, greater numbers of full-time missionaries assigned to the country, a highly receptive population, and excellent opportunities for humanitarian and development projects. Low standards of living, leadership training, administration challenges, and low member activity rates present ongoing obstacles. The organization of a separate mission for Ethiopia appears likely in the near future and would allow for greater numbers of mission resources to be dedicated to Uganda. In early 2011, full-time missionaries reported that the number of missionaries allocated to the Uganda Kampala Mission was significantly increased, which may lead mission and area leaders to permit the opening of additional cities to missionary work. Kampala remains minimally reached by LDS congregations and the prospects for organizing additional congregations in the area appear favorable. A second stake may be organized in Kampala in the next decade pending the maturation of branches into wards and the organization of additional congregations. Additional branches will likely be organized in Gulu in the near future, as church attendance has steadily increased and a district for Gulu and Lira may be organized. Additional medium-sized cities such as Kitgum and Soroti may open for missionary work.

ZAMBIA

Geography

AREA: 752,618 square km. Landlocked in Southern Africa, Zambia borders Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Southwestern Zambia consists of plains, and northwestern Zambia contains some mountains. Zambia has a tropical climate and experiences a rainy season from October to April. The Zambezi River, one of Southern Africa's longest rivers, originates in Zambia. Several famous waterfalls exist where rivers cascade from high plateaus into valleys. Drought and tropical storms are natural hazards. Environmental issues include pollution, acid rain, poaching, deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, and fresh water scarcity. Zambia is divided into nine administrative provinces.

Peoples

African: 99.5% (Bemba, Tonga, Chewa, Lozi, Nsenga, Tumbuka, Ngoni, Lala, Kaonde, Lunda, and other African groups)

Other: 0.5% (Europeans, Asians, and Americans)

Population density is highest in and near urban areas, especially the Copperbelt Province and along the border with Zimbabwe. Over seventy different native ethnic groups live in Zambia.⁹⁹³ The Bemba, Chewa and Lunda mainly live in northern Zambia. The Tonga, Lozi, and Tumbuka reside in eastern Zambia with many of the other largest ethnic groups (Nsenga and Ngoni) found in eastern Zambia. Zambia experiences a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, as 15.2% of the adult population is infected with HIV/AIDS.

Population: 14,309,466 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 3.034% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 5.9 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 51.35 male, 53.83 female (2012)

Languages: Forty-three indigenous languages are spoken in Zambia. English is widely spoken. Bemba (30.1%), Nyanja/Chichewa (10.7%), Tonga (10.6%), Lozi (5.7%), Lunda (2.2%), Kaonde (2%), Luvala (1.7%), and English (1.7%) are all official. Other widely spoken languages include Chewa (4.9%), Nsenga (3.4%), Tumbuka (2.5%), and Lala (2%). Indigenous languages with over one million speakers include Bemba (3.3 million) and Tonga (1 million).

Literacy: 80.6% (2003)

History

Several ethnic groups in Zambia established themselves in the country in the centuries prior to European exploration in the late 1700s and 1800s. European explorers, such as David Livingstone, arrived in the area in the mid-1800s. Zambia became known as Northern Rhodesia in the late 19th century. The South Africa Company administered Northern Rhodesia until the British took full control in 1923. Copper mining began

⁹⁹³ "Zambia," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 4 April 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambia>

during this time. In the 1950s, Northern Rhodesia joined Zimbabwe and Malawi to form a federation that lasted until independence in 1964. The name Zambia was adopted at independence. Drought and low copper prices hurt the economy in the later quarter of the twentieth century. Political instability arose in the 1990s after the fall of one-party rule; political and economic stability improved in the 2000s.

Culture

Most Zambian customs and traditions are indigenous to the various Bantu ethnic groups. British colonization resulted in multiple tribes living in the same urban area, whereas previously, tribes lived separately. Corn, beans, other vegetables, meat, and fish are common foods.⁹⁹⁴ A 2003 survey found that 16% of married women were joined to a polygamous marriage.⁹⁹⁵ Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are low comparable to the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,600 (2011) [3.33% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.430

Corruption Index: 3.2 (2011)

Since British colonialism, Zambia has been highly dependent on copper revenues for the growth and stability of the economy and vulnerable to copper price fluctuations. The economy of Zambia, as of many other developing nations, is based primarily on raw materials and agriculture. A focus on education of skilled workers and professionals and infrastructure and industry will be necessary to develop the economy. Zambia incurred high debt during one-party rule in part due to declining copper prices. In the past decade, the economic situation in Zambia has improved, with the GDP increasing 6% a year between 2006 and 2008. Government has focused on trying to diversify the economy by placing less stress on copper mining. Despite the importance of copper mining, 85% of the workforce is employed in agriculture, and 58% of the GDP originates from services. Zambia's imports from South Africa account for over 50% of all imports into the country. Export partners are mainly in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Corruption in Zambia is widespread. Government officials show little transparency when working with the public and commonly take bribes, especially with land titles. There is little control and confirmation for government expenditures.⁹⁹⁶

Faiths

Christian: 50–75%

Indigenous beliefs: 24–49%

Muslim or Hindu: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 3,000,000

Seventh Day Adventists 747,539 2,023

Jehovah's Witnesses 161,974 2,388

Latter-day Saints 3,044 12

⁹⁹⁴ "Zambia," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 4 April 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambia>

⁹⁹⁵ "Zambia," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 4 April 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/zambia>

⁹⁹⁶ "Zambia," 2011 Index of Economic Freedom, retrieved 4 April 2011. <http://www.heritage.org/Index/Country/Zambia>

Religion

During the colonial era, the British brought Christianity to Zambia. Ethnic groups previously followed indigenous religious. Christians constitute the majority, although syncretism occurs between Christian and indigenous beliefs. Catholics have the largest number of members. There are many Pentecostal and evangelical churches. The Seventh Day Adventist Church forms a large minority, claiming 10% of the population in southern areas. Muslims form a small minority mainly found in urban areas. A small Jewish community also exists in the country.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Several Christian holidays are recognized national holidays. Religious groups must register with the government to operate. To register, a religious group must demonstrate the ability to maintain law and order, hold a system of beliefs consistent with the constitution, and possess a unique name. Unregistered religious groups may be fined and imprisoned. There have been no recent reports of religious groups being denied registration. Christian instruction is required in public schools. There have been no recent instances of societal abuse of religious freedom.⁹⁹⁷

Major Cities

Urban: 35%

Lusaka, Ndola, Kitwe, **Kabwe**, **Chingola**, Mufulira, Luanshya, **Livingstone**, **Kasama**, **Chipata**.

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

Five of the ten largest cities have an LDS congregation. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

The Church had a missionary presence in the Copperbelt Province of northern Zambia in the 1960s, but this presence was discontinued later in the decade.⁹⁹⁸ The first Zambians joined the Church outside of their home country. President Vern Marble from the Zimbabwe Harare Mission traveled to Zambia in 1991 to look for a couple who had been baptized and was reportedly living in the country. President Marble found the couple who had been baptized in England, which facilitated the Church's establishment in Zambia. Missionary work began with the arrival of a senior missionary couple in April 1992. The Church was formally registered with the government the following July. In August, Zambia was dedicated for missionary work by Elder Russell M. Nelson. The seminary program began in 1995. Zambia remained assigned to the Zimbabwe Harare Mission until 2011 when the Church organized the Zambia Lusaka Mission to administer Zambia and Malawi. Zambia is assigned to the Africa Southeast Area.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 3,044 (2012)

In 1992, there were fifty-four attending church meetings; a large increase from the less than ten in September

⁹⁹⁷ "Zambia," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148728.htm>

⁹⁹⁸ "Branches organized in Zambia," LDS Church News, 4 January 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43043/Branches-organized-in-Zambia.html>

1991.⁹⁹⁹ By the end of 1992 there were approximately one hundred Latter-day Saints.¹⁰⁰⁰ Membership increased to 500 in 1997 and 725 in 2000. Moderate membership growth occurred in the 2000s as membership climbed to 951 in 2002, 1,442 in 2004, 1,905 in 2006, and 2,237 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates during the 2000s ranged from a high of 25% in 2003 to a low of 6.7% in 2008. Membership generally increases by 100 to 300 members a year. Additional congregations opening throughout Lusaka and Copperbelt Province to missionary work in 2002 helped to increase membership growth rates in the mid-2000s. In 2009, one in 6,205 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 12 Groups: 1 (2012)

The first branch was organized in Lusaka in July 1992. A second branch was organized in Lusaka, named the Libala Branch, around 1997. By the end of 2000, there were four branches in Zambia. The number of congregations in Zambia increased rapidly in the early 2000s, from four in 2001 to ten by year-end 2003. The first district was organized in Lusaka in 2003. Branches totaled five in the district in September 2003.¹⁰⁰¹ Two additional branches were organized in Lusaka, numbering seven by 2006. Three branches were established in the Copperbelt Province in the cities of Kitwe, Luanshya, and Ndola in 2002.¹⁰⁰² These branches were united into a district in 2005 named the Kitwe Zambia District. An additional branch in Zambia, named the Zambia Branch, functioned for a number of years during the 2000s and was discontinued in 2009. This branch likely included several groups or members living in remote cities around the country. Missionaries serving in the Copperbelt Province in 2009 reported that a group was meeting in Kawama, on the outskirts of Mufulira, located twenty miles north of Kitwe. Kawama became a branch in 2011. A group began meeting in Bauleni, Lusaka in 2011.

Activity and Retention

The average number of members per congregation remains almost unchanged during the 2000s, increasing from 195 to 203 between 2000 and 2008. Shortly after the three branches were created in the Copperbelt Province in 2002, there were reported to be around 160 attending Sunday meetings among the three branches.¹⁰⁰³ A missionary serving in the Libala Branch in Lusaka reported in 2007 that sacrament attendance averaged around forty people. Considering this was one of the smallest branches in Zambia, active membership in Zambia likely stands at an average of seventy-five per branch, or 750. Activity rates may be as low as 30% nationwide.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English.

Church materials are available in two indigenous languages in Zambia. Bemba translations for Church materials are limited to *Gospel Principles* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Nyanja (Chichewa) only has the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* translated. The Church likely conducts church meetings in the most widely spoken languages of English, Bemba and Nyanja due to these languages often used in urban settings.

⁹⁹⁹ Mostert, Mary. "Prayers of dedication offered on 4 nations in central, southern Africa," LDS Church News, 26 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22452/Prayers-of-dedication-offered-on-4-nations-in-central-southern-Africa.html>

¹⁰⁰⁰ "Zambia," Country Profile, 18 October 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/zambia>

¹⁰⁰¹ "Fireside focuses on family history," LDS Church News, 6 September 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44294/Fireside-focuses-on-family-history.html>

¹⁰⁰² "Branches organized in Zambia," LDS Church News, 4 January 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43043/Branches-organized-in-Zambia.html>

¹⁰⁰³ "Branches organized in Zambia," LDS Church News, 4 January 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43043/Branches-organized-in-Zambia.html>

Furthermore, the Church has also established itself in Lusaka and the Copperbelt Province, which is where Bemba and Nyanja are most spoken. English is likely used most often when various ethnic groups meet in the same congregation.

Meetinghouses

The first meetinghouse was dedicated in Lusaka in 1998.¹⁰⁰⁴ Most meetinghouses in Zambia are renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Public Health

Living conditions in Zambia are poor and result in inadequate health care. Large numbers of Zambians are infected with HIV. Those who join the Church and have HIV/AIDS are less able to build the Church in the long term due to the disease significantly shortening their lifespan. Tropical diseases are endemic and health care infrastructure is poor.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Perpetual Education Fund became available in Zambia in late 2009. The first ten applicants were returned missionaries.¹⁰⁰⁵ LDS Humanitarian and development assistance has been limited to donating school and hygiene kits to the needy in Lusaka.¹⁰⁰⁶

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Zambia has enjoyed religious freedom and stability that many African nations lack. Other Christian denominations have taken advantage of this opportunity to preach and gain large numbers of converts.

Cultural Issues

Polygamy is a common practice in Zambia and is legally recognized, with 16% of women involved in its practice.¹⁰⁰⁷ Participants in polygamous marriage can join the Church only after divorce. These challenges include establishing full-member families and assisting with the temporal welfare for members in need. Syncretism between Christianity and indigenous beliefs is common. Due to poverty and interest in religion, many churches in Zambia have seen increases in membership.

National Outreach

Twenty percent (20%) of the national population resides in cities with an LDS congregation. Only two of Zambia's nine provinces have a Church presence. In the Lusaka and Copperbelt Provinces, the Church is only established in the largest cities. No independent branch operates in any city with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. Additional groups or dependent branches may exist in areas of Zambia that are not reported by

¹⁰⁰⁴ "Zambia," Country Profile, 18 October 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/zambia>

¹⁰⁰⁵ "Perpetual Education Fund benefits Zambia returned Mormon missionaries," LDS Church News, 4 November 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58173/Perpetual-Education-Fund-benefits-Zambia-returned-Mormon-missionaries.html>

¹⁰⁰⁶ "Projects—Zambia," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 4 April 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-158,00.html>

¹⁰⁰⁷ "Zambia," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 4 April 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/zambia>

the Church. Only the Copperbelt Province has had the Church actively open additional cities to missionary work in the past decade. Low levels of national outreach are linked to few missionary resources dedicated to Zambia, as the LDS Church in Zambia in the past has depended on the Zimbabwe Harare Mission for outreach, which shared mission resources with Zimbabwe and Malawi. Implementing a centers-of-strength approach to proselytism and missionary work has contributed to a lack of progression expanding national outreach in recent years. The formation of the Zambia Lusaka Mission in 2011 will allocate greater numbers of missionary resources and increase prospects of additional cities opening for missionary work. Additional congregations will likely be established in lesser-reached communities in cities with an LDS presence in the Copperbelt Province.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Membership activity and retention appear to be problematic in Zambia, considering that the branches in Lusaka were not united into a district until 2003 when membership was nearly 1,000. Due to most Church members residing in Lusaka, much of Zambia's member activity and convert retention reflects member activity and convert retention in Lusaka. Rapid membership growth in Zambia has occurred in tandem with increases in congregational growth nonetheless, indicating some maturation of new converts into local leadership positions. The lack of any new branch organizations in Zambia since 2006 points toward low convert retention and a lack of self-sufficiency.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Integration of members of different ethnic groups into church congregations has not posed major difficulties due to the widespread use of English and fewer ethnic tensions than in some other African nations.

Language Issues

Church services are mainly held in English, which appears to be adequate for current membership. Growth to date has been confined to just two provinces, and some language issues may arise when proselyting begins in ethnically diverse provinces where fewer people speak English. The Church can benefit from high literacy in Zambia for developing greater independence and leadership among its members.

Additional church materials may be likely to be translated into Bemba and Nyanja, as these languages are the most widely spoken where the Church is currently established in Zambia. As membership growth and leadership development continues, branches may be divided to address the language needs in areas of Lusaka or the Copperbelt Province. Many Zambian members are fluent in their native languages and English, which would facilitate the translation process for additional Church materials and scriptures.

Missionary Service

Two or three dozen full-time missionaries appeared to be serving in Zambia in early 2011. By 2009, ten missionaries were serving in the Copperbelt Province. Local members regularly serve full-time missions throughout Africa and appear close to being self-sufficient in staffing their local missionary needs.

Leadership

Strong local leadership is present in the two districts in Zambia. Many Zambians have served missions and later returned to serve in leadership positions in their local branches. Additional Zambian returned missionaries will likely expedite the creation of a stake in Lusaka. Leadership development in Zambia appears limited due to its past isolation from mission headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe. Visits from mission leadership are

also divided with Malawi and Zimbabwe, the latter which has much larger membership and missionary effort. Senior couples serving in Zambia likely contribute to training and support Zambian membership and leadership. Isolation from mission headquarters appears to have increased self-reliance in some congregations.

Temple

Zambia is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District. Although closer than many other countries in the temple district, Zambian members of the Church have limited opportunities to visit the temple. No temple excursions were reported to occur regularly by missionaries serving in Zambia, although this does not indicate that they do not exist. Neighboring Zimbabwe appears as a likely possibility for a future temple due to the size and activity of LDS membership in that nation. A temple in Zimbabwe would likely allow for greater numbers of Zambians with closer, more feasible, and frequent access to a temple.

Comparative Growth

Zambia rests in the middle of the spectrum for church growth in African nations opened to missionary work in the early 1990s. Some nations have experienced slower growth, such as Botswana, which in late 2008 had about 1,000 fewer members than Zambia and five congregations. Other nations have experienced more rapid growth, such as the Republic of Congo, which grew to over 4,000 members in fourteen congregations in 2008.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists have experienced some of the strongest growth in Africa in Zambia. Seventh Day Adventists report that areas with the highest percentages of membership are south of Lusaka and between the Copperbelt and Lusaka, with up to 10% of the population belonging to the Adventist Church in some areas. Strong growth has occurred in these and other Christian denominations due to religious freedom and interest among Zambians in Christianity.

Stronger LDS growth has not occurred in Zambia due to low resource allocation, as mission resources were divided among the three nations of the Zimbabwe Harare Mission before the organization of the Zambia Lusaka Mission, with Zimbabwe receiving the majority of resources, missionary manpower, and attention from mission and area leaders. Widespread syncretism between Christianity and indigenous beliefs presents challenges for proselytism, and LDS outreach in Zambia has been cautious to ensure that new members are adequately pastored. Strong membership growth in most denominations reflects high local receptivity.

Future Prospects

The LDS Church has the potential to grow much more rapidly in Zambia due to the establishment of a membership and leadership base to nurture and fellowship additional converts. The Lusaka Zambia District will likely become a stake in the coming years when membership and leadership are able to meet the requirements. The district in late 2009 had enough congregations to become a stake but may be lacking in total membership or member activity, as no new congregations had been created in the city since 2006. In coming years, additional cities will likely be opened for missionary work with the recent organization of the new mission, especially in the Copperbelt Province, as several large cities without missionaries are in close proximity to established church centers. Likely candidates for future missionary efforts include Chililabombwe, Chingola, and Mufulira in the Copperbelt Province and Kabwe, between Lusaka and the Copperbelt.

ZIMBABWE

Geography

AREA: 390,757 square km. Nicknamed the breadbasket of Africa, Zimbabwe is landlocked in Southern Africa and borders Mozambique, South Africa, Botswana, and Zambia. Most of Zimbabwe has a tropical climate modified by high plateaus and some mountains near the border with Mozambique. The Zambezi River divides Zimbabwe and Zambia. Drought is a natural hazard. Environmental issues include deforestation, erosion, pollution, poaching, and inefficient mining practices. Zimbabwe is administratively divided into eight provinces and two cities with provincial status.

Peoples

Shona: 82%

Ndebele: 14%

Other African: 2%

Mixed African and Asian: 1%

White: less than 1%

The majority of Zimbabweans are Shona. Ndebele are concentrated in the southwest in and around the city of Bulawayo. Other African and non-African groups mainly come from other nations for employment.

Population: 12,619,600 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 4.357% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 3.61 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 51.95 male, 51.68 female (2012)

Languages: Shona (81.6%), Ndebele (11.8%), English (1.9%), other (4.7%). English is the official language and Shona is the national language. Kalanga, Manyika, and Ndaue are most spoken among minority ethnic groups. Native languages with more than one million speakers include Shona (10.7 million) and Ndebele (1.55 million).

Literacy: 90.7% (2003)

History

Zimbabwe was the site of several ancient kingdoms between the birth of Christ and the arrival of Europeans in the late nineteenth century. The British South African Company controlled and colonized the area, which was given the name Southern Rhodesia after the British colonist Cecil Rhodes. Southern Rhodesia was combined with Northern Rhodesia (present day Zambia) and Nyasaland (present day Malawi) to create the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953. Independence from Great Britain was declared in 1965 but not recognized until 1980. British colonists who remained in the country played a key role in the independence movement from the United Kingdom. Robert Mugabe came to power in 1987, bringing Zimbabwe into deeper poverty and economic disaster resulting from failed economic policies and land redistribution. Many of the white colonists fled the country due to increased persecution and property confiscation by the regime. Voting fraud in presidential elections in the 2000s was heavily condemned by the international community.

Morgan Tsvangirai ran for president in 2002 and again in 2008 in opposition to President Mugabe. In 2008, Tsvangirai gained a plurality of the vote, but Mugabe refused to give up his power. In 2009, a deal was reached in which Mugabe retained his presidency and Tsvangirai became prime minister.

Culture

Zimbabwe maintains much of its African heritage and adopts some British customs due to colonization. Tea is served in the morning and late afternoon. Polygamy may be practiced by as much as 75% of the population.¹⁰⁰⁸ The Shona are known for sculpting large statutes of the gods worshipped by indigenous religions. Cigarette consumption rates are among the lowest worldwide, whereas alcohol consumption rates are lower than the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$500 (2010) [1.04% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.376

Corruption Index: 2.2 (2011)

Zimbabwe has experienced extreme instability in the economy due to hastily executed land reforms, widespread corruption, and unsound policies leading to the failure of the Zimbabwean Dollar. Zimbabwe has become one of the neediest countries in the world despite being once one of the most agriculturally productive countries in southern Africa. The GDP of Zimbabwe has experienced accelerating decline in recent years, plummeting 14.4% in 2008. The 2008 inflation rate was 11.2 million percent, and unemployment was estimated at 80% in 2005. Services make up the greatest percentage of the Zimbabwe's GDP, whereas most Zimbabweans work in agriculture. Zimbabwe overwhelmingly receives imports from South Africa. Most exports are to South Africa, other neighboring African countries, Eastern Asia, and Europe.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and infiltrates all areas of society. Human trafficking for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor is a major concern. Zimbabwe remains highly vulnerable to continued and worsening conditions for human trafficking due to political and societal instability. Zimbabwe is a transshipment point for some illicit drugs.

Faiths

Syncretic Christian and Indigenous Beliefs: 50%

Christian: 25%

Indigenous beliefs: 24%

Muslim and Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Pentecostal/Evangelical 5,000,000

Catholic 4,000,000

Anglicans/Methodists/Presbyterians 2,000,000

Seventh Day Adventists 679,849 1,324

Jehovah's Witnesses 39,005 997

Latter-day Saints 23,117 60

¹⁰⁰⁸ "Zimbabwe," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 11 May 2011. <http://genderindex.org/country/zimbabwe>

Religion

Indigenous beliefs are highly syncretized with Christianity. Christians may account for as many as 84% of the population according to some estimates. Many Christian denominations have grown rapidly in Zimbabwe in the last few decades. Christian churches are more visible in urban areas whereas indigenous beliefs are stronger in rural areas. Muslims account for fewer than 1% of the population and consist principally of Mozambican and Malawian immigrants.¹⁰⁰⁹

Religious Freedom

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and is generally upheld by the government. Religious leaders critical of the current government have suffered harassment in recent years. The law states that witchcraft is a crime, but prosecution is inconsistent. Religious groups are not required to register with the government to operate and may apply for tax-exempt status. Christian prayers are commonly offered in public schools. In recent years, the government has viewed some Christian missionary groups suspiciously if they had suspected political affiliations. There have been recent instances of local police disrupting the religious freedom of some Christian denominations, particularly Anglicans.¹⁰¹⁰

Major Cities

Urban: 37%

Harare, Bulawayo, Chitungwiza, Mutare, Gweru, Epworth, Kwekwe, Kadoma, Masvingo, Marondera

All ten of the largest cities have an LDS congregation. Thirty-one percent (31%) of the national population resides in the ten most populous cities.

LDS History

Missionary work in Zimbabwe began as early as 1930 and was followed by sporadic visits until 1950 when eight missionaries were assigned to work in Salisbury [Harare] and Bulawayo. The first member joined the Church in Zimbabwe in 1951,¹⁰¹¹ and the first African member joined in 1965. Zimbabwean membership did not become predominantly black until after the revelation on extending the priesthood and other blessings to all men in 1978.¹⁰¹² The Zimbabwe Harare Mission was created in 1987 from the South Africa Johannesburg Mission. President George T. Brooks of the Zimbabwe Harare Mission was killed in a car accident and his wife was critically injured in 1990.¹⁰¹³ Zimbabwe was dedicated for missionary work by Elder James E. Faust in October 1991.¹⁰¹⁴ LDS apostle Elder Russell M. Nelson visited in 2004. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland visited the Mutare Zimbabwe District Conference in the fall of 2009.¹⁰¹⁵ Zimbabwe has been assigned to the Africa Southeast Area since 1998.

¹⁰⁰⁹ "Zimbabwe," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148729.htm>

¹⁰¹⁰ "Zimbabwe," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148729.htm>

¹⁰¹¹ "Zimbabwe," Country Profile, retrieved 11 May 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/zimbabwe>

¹⁰¹² Fidel, Steve. "Zimbabwe pioneers take front row seats at historic occasion," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30651/Zimbabwe-pioneers-take-front-row-seats-at-historic-occasion.html>

¹⁰¹³ "Mission president in Zimbabwe killed, wife injured in car accident," LDS Church News, 4 August 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20363/Mission-president-in-Zimbabwe-killed-wife-injured-in-car-accident.html>

¹⁰¹⁴ "Three nations dedicated in Africa," LDS Church News, 23 November 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21541/Three-nations-dedicated-in-Africa.html>

¹⁰¹⁵ "Dedication blesses two African nations," LDS Church News, 5 September 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57850/Dedication-blesses-two-African-nations.html>

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 23,117 (2012)

Church membership grew slowly during the first several decades of an LDS presence, increasing from 345 in 1971 to 657 in 1983. Membership growth accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s, as there were 1,300 members in 1987, 5,300 in 1993, 7,400 in 1997, and 8,923 in 2000.

Membership growth continued in the 2000s despite many Zimbabweans leaving the country due to the unstable political and economic situation. Many Zimbabwean members immigrated to South Africa.¹⁰¹⁶ Membership increased to 10,655 in 2002, 14,561 in 2004, 16,240 in 2006, 17,241 in 2008, and 18,549 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates in the 2000s varied from a high of 18.4% in 2003 to a low of 1.6% in 2008 but generally ranged from 4%–10%. In 2010, one in 651 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 31 Branches: 29 Groups: 2+ (April 2013)

There were six branches in 1987. The number of branches increased to twenty-four in 1993 and decreased to twenty-three in 1997. During the mid-1990s, there were two districts operating in Harare and Bulawayo. The first stake in Zimbabwe was the Harare Zimbabwe Stake and was organized in 1999. The stake included the following five wards and two branches: the Glenview, Highlands, Mabelreign, Marimba Park, and Tafara Wards and the Highfield and Mbare Branches. At the end of 2000 there were five wards and twenty-three branches for a total of twenty-eight congregations. In 2001, the Bulawayo Zimbabwe District had six branches.

In 2000, an additional district was created in Mutare. The following year, the Mutare Zimbabwe District had five branches in the city.¹⁰¹⁷ In 2001, mission branches operated in Bindura, Enterprise, Gweru (Gweru, Mboka 2nd, Mboka 3rd), Kadoma, Kwe Kwe, Marondera, and Masvingo. A third district was organized in Gweru in 2003 from around half a dozen branches in-between Bulawayo and Harare. In 2005, a second Zimbabwean stake was organized in Bulawayo, and in 2008, the third stake was organized in Harare from a division of the Harare Zimbabwe Stake. During the 2000s, congregational growth trends fluctuated, as there were twenty-six units in 2001, twenty-nine in 2002, thirty-four in 2003, forty-two in 2004, forty-nine in 2005, forty-five in 2006, forty-four in 2008, and forty-seven in 2009. Declining numbers of congregations during some years in the 2000s resulted from efforts to consolidate branches to form larger congregations in anticipation of creating wards in stakes. Emigration of active members and convert retention problems were additional causes. In 2009, three new branches were organized in Harare, Bulawayo, and Bindura. There were forty-eight units in 2010 and forty-seven in early 2011. In 2011, the Gweru Zimbabwe District became a stake, and mission branches operated in Bindura (3), Kadoma, Marondera, and Masvingo. In 2012, the Bindura Zimbabwe District was organized with four branches.

Activity and Retention

Large meetings have historically been well attended. Over 200 members and investigators attended the dedication of the country for missionary work in 1991. When President Hinckley visited and spoke to members in Zimbabwe in 1998, 1,500 attended.¹⁰¹⁸ In 2004, nearly 2,400 members from the Harare Zimbabwe Stake

¹⁰¹⁶ Hart, John L. "Durban, South Africa," LDS Church News, 6 June 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31359/Durban-South-Africa.html>

¹⁰¹⁷ "New stake presidencies," LDS Church News, 22 January 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37069/New-stake-presidencies.html>

¹⁰¹⁸ Fidel, Steve. "Zimbabwe pioneers take front row seats at historic occasion," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30651/Zimbabwe-pioneers-take-front-row-seats-at-historic-occasion.html>

attended a stake conference with Elder Nelson.¹⁰¹⁹ Activity rates in Zimbabwe overall appear higher than most African nations but likely differ from city to city. When Elder Nelson visited members in the Harare Zimbabwe Stake Conference in 2004, turnout was equivalent to 74% of the stake's membership. If this percentage of membership were active throughout Zimbabwe, active membership may be as high as 13,000. However, the average number of members per congregation increased from 319 to 386 between 2000 and 2010, indicating challenges maintaining convert retention rates. 1,581 were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2009–2010 school year. The consolidation of several branches in the Mutare Zimbabwe District in 2006 may indicate that retention and inactivity problems or member emigration prevented the continued operation of the branches. Political instability and economic collapse seem to have most strongly affected activity and retention through the emigration of active membership and leadership, particularly to South Africa. Most wards appeared to have between 100 and 200 active members in early 2011, whereas most branches likely had between fifty and one hundred active members. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 6,000, or 30%–35% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Shona.

A limited number of church materials and all LDS scriptures are translated into Shona. Sections from the Book of Mormon were translated into Shona in 1988, and the full book was translated in 1999. Hymns, Relief Society, priesthood, and Sunday School materials are also available in Shona. Only the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and the Articles of Faith are available in Ndebele.

Meetinghouses

A Church-owned meetinghouse is situated next to the mission home for the Zimbabwe Harare Mission. Some stake conferences in the past have been held in large rented meeting halls due to the lack of a large enough building to accommodate church membership into one body. Other meeting places include a mixture of church-built meetinghouses, renovated buildings used as chapels, and rented spaces for newer or smaller congregations.

Health and Safety

Tropical diseases including malaria are endemic, and health care infrastructure is poor. Clean water and sanitary food may be unavailable in areas. Violence from political turmoil threatens missionary activities. Mission president deaths in Africa in 1990 and 2007 from car accidents indicate danger in driving from poorly maintained roadways, reckless driving and lax traffic regulations. Corrupt law enforcement sometimes demands bribes for passage. The Church has been reluctant to send more missionaries to Zimbabwe due to health and safety issues.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Humanitarian work has been conducted by the Church in Zimbabwe for many years. In 1988, members in the Eastern United States donated over 100,000 books to Zimbabwe.¹⁰²⁰ Latter-day Saint Charities worked with other aid organizations in literacy and development projects in the 1990s.¹⁰²¹ When flooding struck

¹⁰¹⁹ Stahle, Shaun D. "Growing strength among members in Africa," LDS Church News, 4 December 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46547/Growing-strength-among-members-in-Africa.html>

¹⁰²⁰ "Stacks of books bound for Africa," LDS Church News, 26 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17937/Stacks-of-books-bound-for-Africa.html>

¹⁰²¹ Dockstader, Julie A. "Lifetime of literacy manifest through service," LDS Church News, 17 July 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/36074/Lifetime-of-literacy-manifest-through-service.html>

the region in 2000 the Church sent 1.3 million U.S. dollars' worth in aid supplies to Mozambique and Zimbabwe.¹⁰²² Additional aid was sent in 2002.¹⁰²³ The Church has concentrated on building Zimbabweans' self-reliance and employment opportunities through employment workshops and community gardens.¹⁰²⁴ This has resulted with Zimbabwean members involved in starting their own businesses and contributing to the country's economic development on a local level.¹⁰²⁵ The Church donated 500 wheelchairs to the Zimbabwean government in 2004.¹⁰²⁶ The Church held a luncheon meeting for Zimbabwean government official to introduce LDS beliefs to them and explain the different humanitarian programs undertaken in the country in 2009.¹⁰²⁷

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

No government regulations limit or restrict proselyting; however, proselyting experiences some de facto limitations due to instability and safety issues.

Cultural Issues

Overall, Zimbabweans are receptive to the LDS Church and other missionary-oriented Christian groups due to the acceptance of Christianity and interest in religion exhibited by society. Declining LDS membership growth in the late 2000s appeared due to economic and political turmoil resulting in the emigration of active members. Many Zimbabweans have moved to South Africa for better living conditions. Decreased emphasis on proselytism and greater focus on meeting temporal needs through community gardens and employment workshops may also be a reason for declining membership growth. Efforts to expand LDS national outreach have likely been deterred due to doctrinal integrity challenges in view of the high amount of syncretism between indigenous beliefs and Christianity. Most of Zimbabwean Christians retain many of their indigenous beliefs, some of which conflict with Church teachings. The Shona place much emphasis on their ancestors and use alcohol in ceremonies,¹⁰²⁸ which oppose LDS teachings. At present, LDS outreach is almost completely limited to urban areas where the practice of indigenous beliefs is less common. Those engaged in a polygamous relationship must end these relations in divorce prior and be interviewed by a member of the mission presidency in order to be considered for baptism.

National Outreach

Zimbabwe experiences moderate LDS mission outreach, as one LDS mission services twelve million people, and all ten of the most populous cities have an LDS congregation. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the national population resides in a city with an LDS congregation. Of the eight administrative provinces in Zimbabwe,

¹⁰²² Dockstader, Julie A. "Church ships flood aid to Africa," LDS Church News, 11 March 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37312/Church-ships-flood-aid-to-Africa.html>

¹⁰²³ "\$1 million donation to relieve suffering in Africa," LDS Church News, 27 July 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42179/1-million-donation-to-relieve-suffering-in-Africa.html>

¹⁰²⁴ Jensen, Elder Karl S.; Jensen, Sister Dixie. "Self-employment workshops help participants find success," LDS Church News, 21 August 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46024/Self-employment-workshops-help-participants-find-success.html>

¹⁰²⁵ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Teaching principles of provident living," LDS Church News, 21 August 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46015/Teaching-principles-of-provident-living.html>

¹⁰²⁶ "Donating wheelchairs to Zimbabwe," LDS Church News, 16 October 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46359/Donating-wheelchairs-to-Zimbabwe.html>

¹⁰²⁷ Jackson, Elder Eric. "Forming friendships with government officials in Africa," LDS Church News, 28 August 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57832/Forming-friendships-with-government-officials-in-Africa.html>

¹⁰²⁸ "Shona—Religion and Expressive Culture," Countries and Their Cultures, retrieved 11 May 2011. <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Shona-Religion-and-Expressive-Culture.html>

only Matabeleland North and South Provinces, with a combined population of 1.35 million, or about 12% of the population, do not have a church presence. Masvingo Province in southeastern Zimbabwe has 1.3 million inhabitants but only one LDS congregation in the provincial capital of Masvingo. These three provinces have a nonexistent or extremely limited church presence, likely due to their small, predominately rural populations and distance from mission headquarters in Harare. Other Zimbabwean provinces have a greater church presence but contain vast rural areas without a congregation. As of mid-2011, there were no independent LDS congregations operating in rural areas populated by 63% of the national population.

Doctrinal integrity concerns, transportation issues, low standards of living, missionary resources focusing on districts becoming stakes, and severe economic and political instability have contributed to the lack of LDS outreach in rural areas and no additional cities opening for missionary work since the early 2000s. Emigration of active members and local leaders has further challenged efforts to expand national outreach, as mission leadership has needed to tend to fill empty leadership positions created by emigration. Progress has occurred expanding outreach in Harare and Bulawayo in recent years, as additional congregations have been organized in lesser-reached areas of these cities. Forming dependent branches and groups in these locations may facilitate congregational growth over the long term.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity appears highest in the cities of Harare and Bulawayo, as both have stakes, and high attendance has been reported at stake conferences in Harare over the past decade. The displacement of many members as a result of political and economic turmoil and difficulty finding lost members appear to be the primary causes of member activity and convert retention problems today. Overall, pre-baptismal teaching, fellowshiping, and member missionary efforts appear adequate and do not appear to have adversely affected activity rates. Inactivity and poor convert retention appear more prevalent in areas where local leadership is less developed and is a reason why the Mutare Zimbabwe District has not matured into a stake. The organization of additional congregations closer to members' homes may improve activity rates and accelerate congregational growth. The number of members enrolled in seminary and institute in the late 2000s was stable and did not increase commensurately with membership growth, possibly indicating some convert retention challenges.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Tensions exist between the Ndebele in western Zimbabwe and the Shona. The Shona majority often discriminates against the Ndebele, especially in government affairs. The Ndebele desire greater autonomy over the areas in which they live. Despite British colonialism that lasted in the region for nearly a century, these two ethnic groups have had little assimilation. Violence between the Shona and Ndebele was most extreme in the 1980s following official independence when the government became dominated by the Shona majority.¹⁰²⁹ Congregations of Shona and Ndebele members are usually segregated due to differences in language and location. Most Ndebele members live in Bulawayo and have little association with Shona members. Differences in language and location lessen the demands on the Church for integrating these rival ethnic groups into the same congregation. It does not appear that ethnic differences have presented significant fellowshiping problems in an ecclesiastical setting. Other smaller ethnic groups do not appear to have as much conflict as the Shona and Ndebele. The Church has not had many members from smaller ethnic groups due to their geographical isolation and small numbers.

Language Issues

The majority of Zimbabweans speak Shona, Ndebele, and English. The small number of widely-spoken

¹⁰²⁹ "Assessment for Ndebele in Zimbabwe," Refworld, retrieved 11 May 2011. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,MARP,,ZWE,,469f3aeb14,0.html>

languages greatly simplifies missionary work in the native languages compared to many other African nations. Many Zimbabwean congregations have meetings conducted in Shona and English or in Bulawayo, Ndebele, and English.

Few Church materials and no LDS scriptures are available in Ndebele. Since the Bulawayo Zimbabwe Stake has many speakers of Ndebele, additional translations may be produced in the future. Additional church materials in Ndebele could facilitate the Church's establishment in unreached Matabeleland North and South Provinces. Other minority languages, such as Kalanga, Manyika, and Ndau, have under a million speakers each. These languages will likely not have translations of church materials until membership grows in greater numbers and among native speakers.

Missionary Service

The LDS Church Zimbabwe is self-sufficient in staffing its local missionary needs and is a significant source of African missionaries for the Africa Southeast Area. The first Zimbabwean senior couple missionaries were called to serve in 2000. The senior couple had served in various leadership positions in the Church and had established a family that actively participated in Church meetings and leadership.¹⁰³⁰ Missionaries from Zimbabwe began receiving training in the Brazil MTC in 2005.¹⁰³¹ Non-African missionaries continue to serve in Zimbabwe despite political instability and economic collapse. Local leadership appears instrumental in preparing youth and young adults for serving full-time missions and is a model to other African nations that struggle to meet their own missionary needs.

Leadership

When Elder Nelson visited in late 2004, over 250 attended the priesthood session of the Harare Stake Conference.¹⁰³² This indicates that there are a large number of Zimbabwean men actively involved in the Church, at least in the Harare stakes. Missionaries serving in South Africa have noted that many Zimbabwean members and leaders have left the country due to instability. Some of these members served in church leadership in Zimbabwe, indicating that the local church may suffer from strong, active members regularly leaving to find better living conditions in South Africa. Notwithstanding persistent economic challenges, the LDS Church in Zimbabwe is able to support four stakes with fewer than 20,000 members nationwide. Returned missionaries appear to comprise a significant portion of local leadership.

Welfare

Church growth and expansion are often limited when people do not have basic humanitarian needs met. Challenges with self-reliance and employment have not only limited membership growth but also member retention and spiritual growth. In order to maintain doctrinal integrity and assist in local leadership development, the first stake presidents in Harare and Bulawayo were both employed by teaching seminary and institute. Their counselors were employed elsewhere. Friction may exist between leaders employed by the Church and unemployed members. The Church addresses difficult economic conditions by emphasizing education, planting community gardens, and organizing employment workshops.

¹⁰³⁰ "Couple's talents fit varied needs of mission, country," LDS Church News, 24 February 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39391/Couples-talents-fit-varied-needs-of-mission-country.html>

¹⁰³¹ Soli, Ana Claudia. "'Happiest place' is Brazil's MTC," LDS Church News, 7 January 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48352/Happiest-place-is-Brazils-MTC.html>

¹⁰³² "Donating wheelchairs to Zimbabwe," LDS Church News, 16 October 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46359/Donating-wheelchairs-to-Zimbabwe.html>

Temple

Zimbabwe is assigned to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple District, and temple excursions have periodically occurred since the temple's dedication in 1985.¹⁰³³ Travel to the temple in South Africa is difficult due to crossing the international border and past challenges with Zimbabweans fleeing into South Africa in search for employment and peace. Members are hopeful that a garden spot reportedly near the Zimbabwe Harare Mission home and chapel may become the site of a future temple.¹⁰³⁴ Membership and activity in Zimbabwe appear strong enough to support a temple, but issues with poverty and self-reliance among Zimbabwean membership have likely taken precedence.

Comparative Growth

Zimbabwe has seen arguably slower growth than most African countries with a church presence predating 1980; Namibia is the only nation the Church entered before 1980 with fewer members today. Both Ghana and Nigeria had a Church presence established in the late 1970s; membership at the end of 2008 was 38,224 in Ghana and 88,374 in Nigeria. However, both Ghana and Nigeria have multiple missions (two in Ghana, five in Nigeria) and much larger populations, and many areas of those countries remain entirely without LDS mission outreach. Some other African nations with a church presence for just over twenty years have experienced more rapid growth than Zimbabwe. Church presence was first established in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the mid-1980s, and at the end of 2008 there were nearly 21,000 members. The Church has achieved a higher percentage of membership to population in Zimbabwe than in most other African nations, and national outreach is significantly more penetrating with congregations in all ten of the most populous cities. In 2010, Zimbabwe ranked sixth among countries with the highest church membership without a temple.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists have experienced strong growth in Zimbabwe for decades. These and other Christian denominations have operated in Zimbabwe for decades longer than the LDS Church. Seventh Day Adventist growth in Zimbabwe has been very rapid, with those affiliated with the Church totaling around 5% of the population. Many Protestant churches have seen rapid growth also. It appears that many Christian Zimbabweans retain many of their traditional religious beliefs, and syncretism remains a major problem. Adherents of various denominations differ in the depth and conviction to Christianity.

Future Prospects

As indicated by the presence of four stakes, moderate levels of national outreach, and the third-highest ratio of LDS members to population in Africa, Zimbabwe has established a strong membership and leadership foundation capable of sustaining rapid future membership growth. Although membership growth has slowed in Zimbabwe in the late 2000s, this is likely a temporary trend due to severe economic and political turmoil.

The greatest growth in membership and congregations will likely continue to occur in the largest cities already opened for missionary work in Zimbabwe due to the size of their populations and established church infrastructure. Although additional wards have not been created in Harare since the mid-2000s, several new branches have been organized in the city that will likely eventually mature into wards. Additional stakes could be created in Harare in coming years. The stake in Bulawayo continues to grow in membership and congregations and may be divided in the coming years, as it had nine wards, six branches, and a couple of groups in

¹⁰³³ Haight, David B. "Elder Haight: Gratitude and service," LDS Church News, 1 April 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39701/Elder-Haight-Gratitude-and-service.html>

¹⁰³⁴ Fidel, Steve. "Zimbabwe pioneers take front row seats at historic occasion," LDS Church News, 28 February 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/30651/Zimbabwe-pioneers-take-front-row-seats-at-historic-occasion.html>

spring 2012. The Mutare Zimbabwe District may become a stake in the near future. With all of the potential stakes in Zimbabwe, the number of stakes could increase to eight by 2015.

Few additional districts appear likely to be organized in the near future, as there has been little recent expansion into other cities without a Church presence. The most likely cities in Zimbabwe to receive a district in the coming years are Kadoma, Marondera, and Masvingo if additional branches are created these cities.

The Church may also begin to expand into the rural areas of Zimbabwe as it is established in most of the largest cities and economic and political stability returns. Areas that appear most likely for a future church presence include smaller cities near existing centers, especially around Bulawayo and Harare.

EAST ASIA

**Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong,
Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Mongolia,
North Korea, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea,
Taiwan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam.**

REGIONAL PROFILE

Geography

AREA: 16,290,857 square km. Extending from Mongolia in the north to Indonesia in the south, the Philippines and Japan to the east, and Burma and China to the west, East Asia possess nearly all the world's climates and terrains due to its large geographical area dominated by large mountain ranges, deserts, islands, rivers, and surrounding ocean. East Asia borders the Pacific Ocean to the east and the Indian Ocean to the south and southwest. Coastal areas of Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and Japan consist of countless peninsulas and islands. Tropical climate occurs year round in most of Southeast Asia and the Philippines, whereas subtropical to temperate conditions occur in mountainous areas in northern Burma, Laos, and Thailand, Taiwan, and southern China. Japan, the Korean Peninsula, the North China Plain, the Sichuan Basin, and Manchuria experience temperate climate marked by humid, hot summers and cold, dry winters. Semi-arid and arid conditions occur in western China and Mongolia, where there are several large deserts, most notably the Gobi and Taklamakan. Cold temperate climate occurs in northern interior areas. Major rivers in East Asia include the Yangzi, Huang, Chang Jiang, Xi Jiang, Mekong, Irrawaddy, Chao Phraya, and Han. Earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, volcanoes, droughts, and forest fires are common natural hazards. Major environmental issues include pollution, sound government management of densely populated areas, rapid urbanization, acid rain, fresh water scarcity, deforestation, soil erosion, and desertification.

Peoples

Chinese: 58.4%

Japanese: 5.7%

Korean: 3.4%

Burmese: 1.7%

Population: 2,185,250,760 (July 2011)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.008% (2011)

Fertility Rate: 1.97 children born per woman (2011)

Life Expectancy: 70.87 male, 76.32 female (2011)

Languages: Chinese languages (54.9%), Japanese (5.7%), Javanese (3.9%), Vietnamese (3.6%), Korean (3.4%), Thai dialects (2.3%), Burmese (1.6%), Sunda (1.6%), Filipino (1.2%), Bahasa Indonesian (1.1%), Malay dialects (1.1%), Tagalog (1%), other (18.6%). Languages with over one million native speakers include Chinese languages (1.2 billion), Japanese (124.6 million), Javanese (85.2 million), Vietnamese (78.7 million), Korean (76.2 million), Thai dialects (50.3 million), Burmese (35 million), Sunda (35 million), Filipino (26.2 million), Bahasa Indonesian (24 million), Malay dialects (24 million), Tagalog (21.9 million), Cebuano (15.8 million), Khmer (15 million), **Zhuang dialects (14.6 million)**, Madura (13.6 million), **Miao dialects (10.1 million)**, **Uighur (8.4 million)**, Batak dialects (7.05 million), Ilocano (6.92 million), **Mongolian (6.1 million)**, Hiligaynon (5.77 million), Minangkabau (5.53 million), Bicolano dialects (4.6 million), Musi (3.93 million), Aceh (3.5 million), Banjar (3.5 million), Bugis (3.5 million), **Tibetan dialects (3.4 million)**, Bali (3.33 million), Karen dialects (3.2 million), Shan (3.2 million), Lao (3.0 million), Betawi (2.7 million), **Bouyei (2.6 million)**, Waray-Waray (2.57 million), Sasak (2.1 million), **Nuosu (2 million)**, Pampangan (1.9 million), Makasar (1.6 million), Tay (1.48 million), **Dong dialects (1.46 million)**, **Kazakh (1.25 million)**,

Bai dialects (1.24 million), Pangasinan (1.16 million), Muong (1.14 million), Rohingya (1.0 million), Okinawan (1 million), and Maguindanao (1 million).

Literacy: 59%–99% (country average: 89.5%)

History

Believed to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited areas in the world, East Asia and its culture has been dominated by China for millennia, as China was home to some of the most advanced civilizations in the ancient world. Ancient Chinese civilizations thrived in the east and went through several cycles of unification and division from several centuries before Christ until the establishment of the Song Dynasty in the tenth century. China once held large portions of Southeast Asia in its sphere of influence, and surrounding peoples with which the Chinese came into contact—Koreans, Japanese, Vietnamese, and others—adapted much from Chinese language, culture, and technology. Indigenous states or empires ruled Korea, Japan, and areas of Southeast Asia prior to Chinese domination of regional culture, language, and technology.

The defeat of the Chinese armies at what is now Talas, Kyrgyzstan, by the Arabic Abbasid Caliphate in 751 AD ended Chinese hopes of hegemony in Central Asia. Korea became a unified nation in the seventh century. Vietnam became an independent kingdom in 939 AD. The powerful Angkor Empire occupied Cambodia between 900 and 1200 AD. The first known kingdom that encompassed most of present-day Burma was the Bagan or Pagan Kingdom between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Arab traders visited the southern Philippines and introduced Islam between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Christianity spread throughout the Philippine archipelago during the following several centuries. The Mongols invaded East Asia in the thirteenth century, and at its high point, the Mongol Empire stretched from Eastern Europe, Asia Minor, and the Middle East to the west, Iran, Tibet and southern China to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the east. Westward Mongol expansion was halted only by the death of Genghis Khan in 1227 AD. The empire fragmented into smaller Mongol states, such as the Yuan Dynasty in China under Kublai Khan. In the fourteenth century, the Lan Xang kingdom was established in present-day Laos. Between the seventh and fourteenth centuries AD, the Buddhist Srivjaya Empire flourished on Sumatra and the Hindu Kingdom of Majapahit governed eastern Java. Much of present-day Indonesia was unified under alliances in the fourteenth century. Islam was introduced in the twelfth century and became the dominant religion on Java and Sumatra by the sixteenth century. The Sultanate of Brunei reached its height in power and influence in the region between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The Ming Dynasty began in the fourteenth century and reestablished Chinese rule in China. In the fifteenth century, Thailand became a unified kingdom, and the Vietnamese conquered the Champa Kingdom and extended its borders south to the Mekong Delta. In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese established the first European settlement in East Asia in Macau and colonized Timor-Leste. At this time, China began colonizing Taiwan, which was previously populated by Polynesians. In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan claimed the Philippines for Spain. In the seventeenth century, the Qing Dynasty came to power and expanded China's border to include Mongolia. Christianity and Islam were introduced to eastern islands of Indonesia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indonesia was colonized in the early seventeenth century by the Dutch and quickly became one of the wealthiest European colonies worldwide. With minimal interaction with its neighbors and Western powers, Korea was nicknamed the “Hermit Kingdom” due to its isolative stance. Thailand was never colonized by a European nation. European powers, especially the United Kingdom, occupied large regions of China and fought for greater influence and power in the nineteenth century in several military conflicts, including the Opium Wars. Singapore came under British control in 1824. The British annexed Hong Kong following the Chinese defeat in the First Opium War in 1842. In Japan, Western influence quickly reformed economic, political, and social systems and institutions in the late nineteenth century known as the Meiji restoration, as the feudal system was removed, the emperor gained greater political power,

and Western-style legal and education systems were implemented. By the end of the nineteenth century, Japan had modernized and became a world power.

In the nineteenth century, the British conquered Burma and Malaysia, and the French colonized Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The British made Brunei a British protectorate in 1888. Chinese resistance to foreign domination culminated in the Boxer Rebellion of 1898–1901. Japan captured Taiwan in 1895 and did not return control to China until 1945. 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.

Japan annexed Korea in the 1900s, making the peninsula a protectorate in 1905 and a Japanese colony in 1910. In 1912, the Republic of China was established, ending the Qing Dynasty. During the first half of the twentieth century, Chiang Kai-Shek and the Nationalists attempted to unify China and fought the communists led by Mao Zedong. Mongolia became an independent nation in 1921 with help from the Soviet Union and had a communist government set up in 1924. Japan annexed former German territorial possessions in the Pacific north of the Equator in 1919 through a mandate of the League of Nations. Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and China in 1937. In 1935, the Philippines became a self-governing American commonwealth. In December 1941, Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor and within a couple years had conquered Micronesia, the Philippines, Indonesia, northern New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Southeast Asia, and several coastal areas of China. The United States and Allied forces successively liberated Japanese-controlled territories beginning in 1943 and ultimately forced Japan to surrender in August 1945 after the dropping of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Approximately three million Japanese perished as a result of the war, and Japan lost all of its overseas possessions, including Korea, Manchuria, southern Sakhalin, and the Kuril Islands. Korea regained independence from Japan in 1945. Burma achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1948, and a military regime and single party ruled followed shortly thereafter and persist to present day. Following the Second Sino-Japanese War, civil war broke out in China in 1949. Communist forces overpowered the Nationalists who fled to Taiwan and maintained the Republic of China, whereas the Communists established the People's Republic of China on the mainland. In 1946, the Philippines achieved independence from the United States. France granted independence to Vietnam in 1945, Laos in 1949, and Cambodia in 1953. Malaysia gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1957. Singapore seceded from Malaysia in 1965.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, Mao Zedong sought to rapidly modernize China and attempted to outcompete the world's leading agriculture producing nations, but resulted in tens of millions of deaths due to famine caused by drought, poor agriculture practices, and the shipment of food by government officials to certain areas to fabricate unexpectedly abundant harvests. Mao also initiated the Cultural Revolution, which aimed to erase China's cultural history and traditions through destruction of historical sites, the banning of art and literature seen as a threat to the communist state, and the production of art and literature supporting the communist and socialist cause by state-sponsored writers and artists.

Military-oriented governments were in power in most nations in East Asia between the 1960s and the 1980s. Proxy wars fought between the Soviet Union and the United States occurred in Korea (1950–1953) and Vietnam (1960s–1970s), resulting in the continued division of the Korean Peninsula at present and the temporary division of Vietnam between capitalists and communists until the north overtook the south in 1975. Internal and regional instability was intense in Southeast Asia between the 1960s and the 1980s as several islands in Indonesia attempted to secede, wars were fought between Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, and the Khmer Rouge committed mass genocide through implementation of revolutionary socialism. Regional and internal stability in Southeast Asia did not return until the 1990s. China has achieved remarkable economic growth since the early 1980s due to economic reforms establishing a free-market economy but nonetheless maintains strict government control and resistance to greater societal change, as indicated by the Tiananmen

Square Massacre in 1989. Rapid economic growth during the late twentieth century also occurred in Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. Hong Kong and Macao were both officially ceded to China by the end of the twentieth century but maintain previously instituted economic and democratic freedoms. Timor-Leste gained independence from Indonesia in 2002 after decades of ethnic and military conflict between separatists and Indonesian military forces.

East Asia has experienced several serious conflicts and natural disasters in recent years. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami devastated coastal areas of the Sumatra, killing over 130,000 and leaving half a million homeless. Separatists in Aceh reached a peace deal with the government in 2005.¹⁰³⁵ Thousands have died from violence caused by Malay separatist movements in southern Thailand. Taiwan has not declared independence from China; issues relating to independence versus reintegration with mainland China continue to be debated. Military skirmishes between North Korea and South Korea have continued since the signing of the armistice in 1953 and remain largely unreported. There have been proposals from both North Korea and South Korea to reunify the peninsula as a single nation, but these efforts have not come to fruition due to escalated hostility regarding North Korea's nuclear weapons program, North Korea's belligerent attitude, periodic military hostilities, and conflicting political and ideological systems. 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.¹⁰³⁶

Culture

Chinese culture and religions have heavily influenced East Asia as a whole. Historically, China was a technologically advanced civilization and was the first to invent paper, printing, the compass, and gunpowder and boasts a proud, ancient tradition of astronomy. Traditional Chinese values focus more on stability, harmony, order, and societal good, and less on change, innovation, and personal liberties than Western societies. Chinese cultural values often emphasized the importance of emulating exemplars of the past and revering ancestors. Education is highly valued. Principles of personal, family, and national honor and behavior according to socially accepted principles are very important to Chinese. Confucianism and Daoism originated in China, and many principles in these religions are apparent in nations that have received strong Chinese influence, such as Korea, Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, and Malaysia. Confucianism provided the source and philosophy for government and society in China for nearly two millennia and served as the basis, at least in part, for a well-ordered system of civil service exams for prospective public servants under the emperors. Communist reforms in China, North Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia, and Laos have removed much of the previous role religion played in culture and daily life, although many traditional beliefs and practices are still widespread. Many East Asian nations have preferred males over females—especially in the countryside—resulting in a disproportionate number of males due to gender-selective abortions (which are illegal in most nations), and a gender imbalance with many men unable to marry.

Greater fusion of Western and Eastern ideals and values has occurred in nations or territories that received greater Western influence, namely Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, and South Korea. Today, these nations and territories experience excellent living standards, are highly secularized, and possess some of the safest cities in the world. Japanese, Koreans, Taiwanese, and many other East Asian peoples are renowned for their high work ethic, ingenuity, and business skills, which have transformed their nations into some of the most technologically advanced in the world.

The Philippines has adopted many aspects of culture from China, the United States, and Spain. Many nations

¹⁰³⁵ "Background Note: Indonesia," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 4 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2748.htm>

¹⁰³⁶ "Background Note: Philippines," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 19 April 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2794.htm>

in Southeast Asia exhibit strong influences from indigenous culture. Tribalism and indigenous cultural practices are widely practiced in Indonesia. Nomadic lifestyles and agrarianism dominate daily life for many in Mongolia. Ethnic tensions primarily occur in Burma, Cambodia, China, and Indonesia and are often religiously or socioeconomically related.

Buddhism and communism or one-party politics are the primary influences on society in Burma, Cambodia, China, and Vietnam. In Burma and Taiwan, there are a large number of Buddhist pagodas, monasteries, and temples that hold cultural significance. Shintoism, Buddhism, and militarism dominated Japanese society for centuries prior to the mid-twentieth century. Islam is the dominant influence on society in Brunei and Indonesia and is a major societal influence in Malaysia.

Although there are major differences in cuisine in East Asia, commonly eaten foods include rice, fish, vegetables, fruit, noodles, soup, and pork. Tea is widely consumed. Soccer and martial arts are the most popular sport. Illicit drug trafficking and the sex industry are common in areas of Southeast Asia. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates vary widely by nation, but are generally higher than world averages.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$7,400 national median (2011) [15.6% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.702

Corruption Index: 4.3

Economies in East Asia exhibit a wide continuum of development and government policies that have resulted in some nations achieving the most rapid, sustained economic growth in the world, whereas other nations number among the poorest and most destitute. The advanced, high-technology and trade-oriented economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan have diversified economies and have brought widespread wealth and high living standards to their populations. Many of the world's largest, most powerful companies are based in these nations and territories. In Japan, high government debt, approximately twice the nation's GDP, has contributed to the stagnation of economic growth in recent years, however. China is a world economic power second only to the United States after surpassing Japan in 2010, but wealth has been unevenly distributed. Economies in Brunei and Macau are highly specialized in oil exploitation and tourism, respectively, but also experience advanced economic development and wealth. Steady economic growth has been achieved in recent years in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Cambodia, but these nations are still developing and have not reached high standards of living. Moderate to low levels of economic growth have occurred in the Philippines and Mongolia largely due to corruption. Antiquated, unsound economic policies in the past and present and war have contributed to poor levels of economic development and sustainability in Burma, Laos, North Korea, and Timor-Leste. Agriculture employs over 50% of the workforce in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam and nearly 40% in China. Major industries in the region include electronics, mining, manufacturing, clothing, tourism, machinery, shipping, petroleum, natural gas, plastics, logging, rubber and palm oil processing, food processing, and pharmaceuticals. Rice, wheat, barley, cassava, corn, fruit, vegetables, coffee, cocoa, sugar beets, coconuts, soybeans, fish, and pork are common agricultural products. Most trade occurs within East Asia and also with the United States and Western Europe.

The level of perceived corruption widely varies in East Asia, with Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan experiencing low levels of corruption, whereas Burma, Laos, and Cambodia experience high levels of corruption. In Burma, information concerning much of the perceived illegal activity is limited due to the tight control exerted by the government. Common illegal activity includes drug trafficking, illegal logging, human trafficking, and close ties between junta leaders and organized crime. Burma is the world's second largest producer of opium after Afghanistan. Human trafficking occurs with neighboring nations as well as between rural communities and industrial centers for industrial, commercial, and sex trade purposes. Laws punishing corruption are not enforced. Over the past few years, the only area where corruption has been reduced has been in money

laundering.¹⁰³⁷ In China, a centralized government with few checks and balances has perpetuated corruption. China has struggled to fight drug trafficking, especially heroin, originating from Southeast Asia. Human trafficking of Chinese in nations around the world for exploitation and a poor human rights record are major international concerns. China has experienced some success in addressing organized crime in some of the larger cities. Hong Kong is an international transshipment point for heroin and methamphetamine, an increasing user of illicit synthetic drugs, and a money laundering center due to its modern banking infrastructure. In Indonesia, personal associations often heavily influence business deals and transactions. Customs is regarded as one of the most corrupt areas of government. Bribery is common. Investment laws reduce competition and economic growth. The government lacks transparency in many areas.¹⁰³⁸ In Laos, bribery is widespread, and there are few checks and balances to prevent corruption among officials or address its occurrence. In Malaysia, human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor are ongoing concerns that have not been adequately addressed. In North Korea, the level of perceived corruption is difficult to ascertain, as the government heavily controls outsiders visiting the country. The centralized government is highly susceptible to corruption, as high-ranking government officials possess totalitarian powers. In the Philippines, 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 ten million and consists primarily of migrant workers. In South Korea, bribery occurs frequently and is a means to exert influence on others. Prostitution and sexual crimes are the most common law offenses. Thailand serves as a center for many illegal activities in Southeast Asia, such as human trafficking, prostitution, illegal drugs distribution, and poaching. In Vietnam, freedom of speech is limited and complicates the exposure and punishment of corruption. Government has stepped up its fight against corruption among government officials and police but has seen limited results.

Faiths

Buddhist: 12.4%

Muslim: 12.3%

Christian: 9.2%

Shinto: 4.9%

Other/Chinese religions/none: 61.2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 113,838,415

Seventh Day Adventists 1,649,139 8,364

Latter-day Saints 1,039,000 1,903

Jehovah's Witnesses 536,047 8,453 (includes only countries with reported statistics)

Religion

Nonreligious individuals and those who follow some aspects of East Asian and Chinese religions, such as Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, constitute the majority of the population in China, Hong Kong, North Korea, South Korea, and Vietnam. A 2007 survey found that 31% of Chinese citizens over sixteen years old were religious believers. In 2007, a public opinion polling firm based in China concluded 11%–16% of adults identify as Buddhists and less than 1% consider themselves Taoist. Most religiously active Chinese

¹⁰³⁷ Chene, Marie. "Overview of corruption in Burma (Myanmar)," Transparency International, 23 March 2009.

¹⁰³⁸ "Background Note: Indonesia," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 4 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2748.htm>

follow an agglomeration of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism.¹⁰³⁹ Nonreligious individuals and the followers of some aspects of East Asian and Chinese religions account for sizeable percentages as minorities in Mongolia (40%), Macau (35%), Laos (31.5%), Singapore (16.5%), Brunei (10%), and Japan (7.8%).

Buddhists comprise the majority or the largest religious group in Burma, Cambodia, Japan, Laos, Macau, Mongolia, Taiwan, and Thailand. Most Burmese and Laotians are Theravada Buddhists. In Japan, the majority of the population doubly affiliates as Shinto and Buddhist, resulting in the number of religious members totaling approximately 206 million, nearly twice the Japanese population. There are six major schools of Buddhism (Tendai, Shingon, Jodo, Zen, Nichiren, and Narabukkyo) and two main schools of Shintoism (Jinjahoncho and Kyohashinto).¹⁰⁴⁰ Countries in which Buddhists account for sizeable percentages, as minorities include Singapore (42.5%), South Korea (23.2%), Malaysia (19.2%), Brunei (13%), and Vietnam (9.3%).

Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei are predominantly Muslim. Indonesia represents a patchwork of religious traditions, although most Indonesians are Sunni Muslim. Most ethnic Malays are Muslims and live in West Malaysia. Sharia law is enforced and adherence to Muslim teachings is conservative in Brunei. Countries in which Muslims account for sizeable percentages as minorities include Singapore (14.9%) and the Philippines (7%).

The Philippines and Timor-Leste are the only East Asian nations that are predominantly Christian. Catholics constitute between 80% and 85% of the Philippine population. 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, the Philippine Independent Church, and Iglesia ni Cristo. Some Christians incorporate indigenous beliefs into their religious practice.¹⁰⁴¹ In Timor-Leste, approximately 98% of the population is Catholic. Traditional customs and beliefs continue to be followed by many, although they are not viewed as religious.¹⁰⁴² Christians account for the largest and most active religious group in South Korea. Many ethnic minority groups in Southeast Asia have higher percentages of Christians than other major religious, particularly in northern Burma, Eastern Malaysia, and Papua Province, Indonesia. Countries in which Christians account for sizeable percentages as minorities include South Korea (26.3%), Macau (15%), Singapore (14.6%), Brunei (10%), Hong Kong (10%), Malaysia (9.1%), Indonesia (8.7%), and Vietnam (8.3%).

Religious Freedom

The constitutions of most nations in East Asia protect religious freedom, but religious freedom is not upheld by all governments in the region. Religious freedom is widely enjoyed in Cambodia, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Timor-Leste, with only a few restrictions or abuses of religious freedom. In Cambodia, the official religion is Buddhism, which is promoted by the government. Religious groups must be registered to construct buildings and hold meetings. Only Buddhism can be taught in public schools; other religions can be taught in private schools. In Japan, there have been some societal abuses of religious freedom reported in recent years that have targeted religious minority groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church. Acts of abuse have included abductions and negative

¹⁰³⁹ "China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau), International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

¹⁰⁴⁰ "Japan," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148871.htm>

¹⁰⁴¹ "Philippines," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127285.htm>

¹⁰⁴² "Timor-Leste," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127290.htm>

rhetoric by a government official.¹⁰⁴³ In the Philippines, 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.¹⁰⁴⁴ In Singapore, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church are banned and are fined for distributing literature, as they are seen to disrupt social order. Government closely monitors religious communities to maintain social order.¹⁰⁴⁵ In Thailand, there is no state religion, but Buddhism receives greater favoritism and government funding. Government limits the number of foreign missionaries, but the quota on foreign missionaries has increased in recent years. Missionaries proselyte freely without government interference. Laws restrict freedom of speech, as it is illegal to insult Buddhism.¹⁰⁴⁶ In Timor-Leste, some instances of societal abuses of religious freedom have occurred and were typically aimed at Protestant denominations. However, demonstrations to bar the operations of these denominations have failed due to government and international police support of preserving religious freedom.¹⁰⁴⁷

Greater government restrictions on religious freedom occur in Brunei, Burma, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, North Korea, and Vietnam. In Brunei, the official religion is Islam. Less tolerance is demonstrated towards non-Muslims than in the past, as indicated by the government discontinuing the right to religious instruction in private schools. Proselytism by non-Muslim groups is forbidden. The government promotes Islam and pressures Muslims to refrain from interfaith relations. Some non-Muslim groups report challenges in bringing religious literature into Brunei. Marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims is prohibited. In Burma, foreign missionaries were expelled in the 1960s. Religious groups experience increasing difficulty importing religious literature at present. Local Christians oftentimes are not allowed to proselyte. Christians and Muslims face restrictions on vocabulary, as the Pali language is viewed as sacred and only to be used by Buddhists. Christians and Muslims face delays or restrictions on constructing new buildings and maintaining existing ones. Preferential treatment of Buddhists and persecution of South Asian Muslims frequently occurs.¹⁰⁴⁸ In China, there is no state religion. Five state-sanctioned religious groups (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant) are registered as patriotic religious organizations that may register individual congregations and operate places of worship or assembly. Proselytism may occur in a private setting or registered place of worship. Foreigners are banned from proselytism and face many restrictions interacting with local citizens. The distribution of religious literature is controlled by the government. Registered religious groups may produce and gather materials for the use by their members. Members of many religious groups have been imprisoned by government authorities for failing to comply with local laws and regulations pertaining to religious practice and generally serve prison sentences in labor camps. In recent years, the government has permitted the public greater access to religious writers and granted NGOs permission to conduct humanitarian work. The degree of religious freedom varies by location, with Tibet and Xinjiang Autonomous Regions experiencing the lowest levels of religious freedom.¹⁰⁴⁹ In Indonesia, the government only recognizes six religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Unrecognized religious groups or sects stemming from recognized religious groups are deemed deviant and often persecuted

¹⁰⁴³ "Japan," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148871.htm>

¹⁰⁴⁴ "Philippines," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127285.htm>

¹⁰⁴⁵ "Singapore," International Religious Freedom Report 2005, retrieved 21 May 2011. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51529.htm>

¹⁰⁴⁶ "Thailand," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, retrieved 15 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127289.htm>

¹⁰⁴⁷ "Timor-Leste," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127290.htm>

¹⁰⁴⁸ "Burma," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127266.htm>

¹⁰⁴⁹ "China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau), International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

but can register with the government as social organizations. Members of unrecognized religious groups often face challenges obtaining identity cards, registering marriages and births, and building meetinghouses. Local laws in some areas restrict the religious freedom of religious minorities, and the government has not used its power to revoke such laws. The government has done little to prosecute those alleged of abusing the religious freedom rights of others. The degree of religious freedom granted to religious minorities widely varies by location and is largely controlled by local or regional government. Proselytism and the distribution of religious literature are banned by the government under the justification that such activity may lead to disruption in public order in religiously diverse areas. Foreign missionaries may operate in the country and must obtain religious worker visas.¹⁰⁵⁰ In Laos, the government restricts religious activities, especially in rural areas. Christians have faced limitations or are prohibited from importing Bibles and religious materials, whereas Buddhists do not have restrictions. Violators can face fines and have materials confiscated. Foreigners are forbidden to proselyte. Christians in some provinces face harassment even when they assemble in private homes.¹⁰⁵¹ In Malaysia, the law forbids the proselytism of Muslims. If Muslim Malays are interested in converting to another religion and wish to denounce Islam beforehand, they must appeal for public apostasy in order to have their Muslim status revoked. Proselytism laws vary among provinces, with the most liberal provinces in East Malaysia. In Mongolia, proselytism is limited by legislation. Religious visas are difficult to obtain. Law requires that a certain percentage of individuals affiliated with foreign organizations must be staffed by Mongolians. Government requires religious organizations to have Mongolians holding over half of the total number of clergy or employee positions. Between July 2008 and October 2009 around seventy foreign religious workers were forced to leave Mongolia. Christians and Muslims in some areas report that local government refuses to register new congregations. In North Korea, some religious groups are recognized by the government, but these groups maintain close ties with the government and are generally regarded as a government effort to create an illusion of religious freedom. The government sought to eliminate Christianity from society in the 1960s, replacing preexisting faiths with a personality cult for high-ranking government leaders. The ownership of religious materials is prohibited. The government has permitted some faith-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to perform humanitarian work, but these groups are not allowed to proselyte, must be accompanied by an escort at all times, and are restricted in their interaction with nationals. Due to the isolated stance of the regime, little is known about the everyday life of citizens who are religious. The status of societal abuse of religious freedom is unknown.¹⁰⁵² In Vietnam, all religious activities, whether by officially recognized or unrecognized religious groups, require some registration by the government. Registered religious groups and congregations receive greater rights for assembly, whereas unregistered congregations can be closed down. Many Christian congregations have applied for recognition but remain unregistered. Obtaining land and approval for constructing meetinghouses is challenging. Missionaries may serve in Vietnam but require approval from the government and a sponsor from a national or local religious group. Open proselytism is frowned upon. The printing of religious material is restricted, and the shipping of religious materials into the country can be difficult and requires special permissions. Some registered and unregistered groups report pressure to renounce their beliefs. In recent years, the government has grown increasingly more accommodating to many religious groups, and restrictions of religious freedom have decreased.¹⁰⁵³

Largest Cities

Urban: low (20%—Cambodia); high (100%—Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore)

Tokyo, Guangzhou, Seoul, Manila, Shanghai, Jakarta, Osaka, Beijing, Shenzhen, Bangkok, **Wuhan**, Taipei,

¹⁰⁵⁰ "Indonesia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127271.htm>

¹⁰⁵¹ "Laos," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127276.htm>

¹⁰⁵² "Korea, Democratic People's Republic of," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148874.htm>

¹⁰⁵³ "Vietnam," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127294.htm>

Tianjin, Nagoya, Saigon, Hong Kong, **Shenyang, Chongqing**, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Xi'an, Chengdu, Nanjing, Yangon, **Shantou, Harbin**, Hangzhou, Qingdao, Busan, **Changchun, Dalian, Jinan, Kunming, Taiyuan, Zhengzhou, Fuzhou, Bandung**, Surabaya, **Changsha**, Kaohsiung, **Pyongyang**, Medan, **Wenzhou, Shijiazhuang**, Daegu, Hanoi, Suzhou, **Zibo**, Sapporo, Cebu, **Guiyang, Urumqi**, Fukuoka, **Lanzhou, Anshan, Hefei, Quanzhou, Wuxi**, Taichung, **Nanchang, Ningbo, Nanning, Tangshan, Xiamen, Jilin**, Hiroshima, **Changzhou, Huizhou, Baotou, Xuzhou**, Semarang, **Luoyang, Yantai, Qiqihar**, Kitakyushu, Phnom Penh, Sendai, **Taizhou, Liuzhou**, Gwangju, **Weifang, Yangzhou**, Daejeon, **Huainan, Zhuhai, Palembang, Xiangfan**, Davao, **Linyi**, Okayama, **Makassar**, George Town, **Daqing, Hohhot, Haikou, Tainan, Datong, Cixi, Mudanjiang, Yiwu, Zhanjiang**, Hamamatsu, Naha, Ulsan, **Tai'an, Yancheng, Himeji**, Ulaanbaatar, Kumamoto, **Jixi, Baoding**, Changwon, **Pingdingshan, Xining, Jining, Yichang, Zaozhuang, Mandalay, Zhangjiakou, Yueyang, Guilin, Zhuzhou, Shaoxing, Huai'an, Batam, Yangjiang, Hengyang**.

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

Fifty-one of the 127 cities with over one million inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Twenty-two percent (22%) of the regional population resides in 127 most populous cities.

LDS History

LDS missionaries first arrived to East Asia in the mid-nineteenth century and proselytized in China, Hong Kong, and Thailand but established no long-term presence. The Church performed missionary work in Japan between 1901 and 1924 until the Japanese Mission was closed. In World War II, a temporarily LDS presence was established in the Philippines for LDS American servicemen. LDS American servicemen facilitated the reestablishment of the Church in Japan following the close of World War II and baptized the first Japanese converts in 1946 in Nagoya. The Japanese Mission was reorganized in 1948 with headquarters in Tokyo. In 1949, LDS apostle Elder Matthew Cowley dedicated Hong Kong for missionary work on Victoria Peak; the following year full-time missionaries were assigned and began proselytism. Missionaries first arrived in South Korea in 1954. The Philippines were dedicated for missionary work in 1955.¹⁰⁵⁴ The Church was first established in Taiwan in the late 1950s, initially among American military personnel. In 1961, Elder Gordon B. Hinckley visited the Philippines and initiated full-time missionary efforts. The Chinese translation of the Book of Mormon was first printed in 1965 and remaining LDS scriptures were printed in 1974. Tagalog became the first Philippine language with a 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.¹⁰⁵⁵

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated Thailand for missionary work in 1966,¹⁰⁵⁶ and full-time missionaries were assigned in 1968. LDS missionary activity occurred in South Vietnam during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Elder Ezra Taft Benson dedicated Indonesia for missionary work in 1969,¹⁰⁵⁷ and the Church organized its first branch in Jakarta, received official recognition, and assigned the first missionaries in 1970.¹⁰⁵⁸ The first LDS missionaries were assigned to Malaysia in the early 1970s. The Church established a permanent presence in Macau in the mid-1970s. Latter-day Saints have lived in Brunei and Burma since the 1980s. The LDS Church had little contact with the People's Republic of China until the late 1970s. Since 1989, the Church has sent members to work as English teachers in Chinese universities. The last LDS Church services in Vietnam

¹⁰⁵⁴ "Growth 'just amazing,'" LDS Church News, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹⁰⁵⁵ "Translations in Philippine languages moving forward," LDS Church News, 30 November 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21565/Translations-in-Philippine-languages-moving-forward.html>

¹⁰⁵⁶ "Thailand," Country Profiles, retrieved 13 March 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/thailand>

¹⁰⁵⁷ "Native missionaries, sign of Church growth in Indonesia," LDS Church News, 6 March 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58910/Native-missionaries-sign-of-Church-growth-in-Indonesia.html>

¹⁰⁵⁸ Mitchell, David. "Indonesian Saints," Liahona, Aug. 1992, 11

were held in 1975¹⁰⁵⁹ until a church reestablishment in the 1990s. In Vietnam, two senior missionary couples were assigned to Hanoi on humanitarian assignment in 1993.¹⁰⁶⁰ In May 1996, President Gordon B. Hinckley visited and rededicated Vietnam for missionary work.¹⁰⁶¹

In 1991, Japan, South Korea, and North Korea were assigned to the newly organized Asia North Area with area headquarters in Tokyo.¹⁰⁶² The LDS Church entered Mongolia in 1992 as the government requested the Church to assist in its transition from communism to a free market economic system with the help of LDS senior missionary couples.¹⁰⁶³ Mongolia was dedicated for missionary work in 1993, and the Church in Mongolia was legally registered in 1994. The first official LDS meeting in Cambodia was held in 1994 in Phnom Penh, and the church was officially recognized by the government. President Hinckley dedicated Cambodia for missionary work in 1996. In 1998, the Philippines became its own area.¹⁰⁶⁴ The Philippines became one the first nations worldwide in which the Perpetual Education Fund was implemented in the early 2000s.¹⁰⁶⁵ Between 2002 and 2004, the Church assigned Elder Dallin H. Oaks to serve as president of the Philippines Area, marking the first time an apostle was assigned abroad in half a century.¹⁰⁶⁶

The first LDS congregation in Laos was organized in 2003, and Laos was dedicated for missionary work in 2006.¹⁰⁶⁷ In 2005, President Hinckley dedicated a new church administration building in Hong Kong for the Asia Area.¹⁰⁶⁸ No proselytism has occurred in the People's Republic of China. In recent years, non-Chinese members have moved to China for employment in greater numbers. Greater freedom has also been granted to Chinese members who now may meet in segregated congregations from the foreign members and also may join the Church through family connections.

Missions

The first LDS mission organized in East Asia was the Siam Mission, which opened and closed in 1854. The Japanese Mission opened in 1901 but closed in 1924 and was not reopened until 1948. In 1949, the Church opened the Chinese Mission with headquarters in Hong Kong, but it was closed in 1953 due to the Korean War. The Japanese Mission divided into the Northern Far East and Southern Far East Missions in 1955, with the former headquartered in Japan and also administering South Korea and the latter headquartered in Hong Kong and also administering the Philippines, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. The Korean Mission [later renamed the Korea Seoul Mission] was organized in 1962. The Philippine Mission [later renamed the Philippines Manila Mission] was organized in 1967. In 1968, the Northern Far East Mission divided to create the Japan [renamed Japan Tokyo in 1974 and Japan Tokyo North in 1978] and Japan-Okinawa Missions [renamed

¹⁰⁵⁹ Britsch, R. Lanier; Holloman, Richard C. Jr. "The Church's Years in Vietnam," *Ensign*, Aug 1980, 25.

¹⁰⁶⁰ "Couples enter Vietnam to teach English," *LDS Church News*, 30 January 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23222/Couples-enter-Vietnam-to-teach-English.html>

¹⁰⁶¹ "Pres. Hinckley dedicates Cambodia: Gives 'addendum' to prayer during his visit to Vietnam," *LDS Church News*, 8 June 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27459/Pres-Hinckley-dedicates-Cambodia-Gives-addendum-to-prayer-during-his-visit-to-Vietnam.html>

¹⁰⁶² "New areas created in Asia, Europe," *LDS Church News*, 7 September 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21578/New-areas-created-in-Asia-Europe.html>

¹⁰⁶³ "Six missionary couples to help with Mongolia's higher education," *LDS Church News*, 19 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22538/Six-missionary-couples-to-help-with-Mongolias-higher-education.html>

¹⁰⁶⁴ "5 new areas announced worldwide," *LDS Church News*, 4 July 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31389/5-new-areas-announced-worldwide.html>

¹⁰⁶⁵ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Perpetual Education Fund helps 5,360," *LDS Church News*, 26 October 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42702/Perpetual-Education-Fund-helps-5360.html>

¹⁰⁶⁶ "Elder Oaks, Holland assigned abroad," *LDS Church News*, 13 April 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41659/Elders-Oaks-Holland-assigned-abroad.html>

¹⁰⁶⁷ "Laos dedicated," *LDS Church News*, 25 March 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48673/Laos-dedicated.html>

¹⁰⁶⁸ Hill, Greg. "Hong Kong: Most significant experience," *LDS Church News*, 6 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47661/Hong-Kong-Most-significant-experience.html>

Japan Kobe in 1974] in 1968. The Singapore Mission was organized in 1969. The Taiwan Mission [later renamed the Taiwan Taipei Mission] was organized in 1971, and Thailand became its own mission in 1973.

Additional missions were organized in Japan East [renamed Japan Sapporo] (1970), Japan West [renamed Japan Fukuoka] (1970), Japan Nagoya (1973), Japan Sendai (1974), Philippines Cebu City (1974) [relocated to Bacolod in 1988], Indonesia Jakarta (1975), Korea Pusan (1975), Japan Okayama [relocated to Hiroshima in 1998] (1976), Philippines Davao (1977), Tokyo South (1978), Korea Seoul West (1979), Philippines Quezon City (1979) [relocated to Baguio in 1981 and Urdaneta in 2011], Japan Osaka (1980), Korea Taejeon (1986), Philippines Quezon City (1986), Philippines Cebu East (1987) [renamed Cebu in 1988], Philippines Cagayan de Oro (1988), Philippines Quezon City West (1988) [relocated to San Fernando in 1991 and later to Olongapo in 1994], Philippines Naga (1989), Japan Okinawa (1990), Philippines San Pablo (1990), Philippines Tacloban (1990), Philippines Ilagan (1990), Philippines Cabanatuan (1992) [relocated to Angeles], Mongolia Ulaanbaatar (1995), Cambodia Phnom Penh (1998), Philippines Laoag (2004), Philippines Butuan (2006), Philippines Iloilo (2010), Philippines Quezon City North (2011), Japan Tokyo South (2013), Korea Seoul South (2013), Philippines Cavite (2013), Philippines Cebu East (2013), Philippines Legaspi (2013), and Philippines Urdaneta (2013).

The Singapore and Indonesia Jakarta Missions periodically closed and reopened between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s. In 1996, the Japan Okinawa Mission closed, and in 2001, the Japan Kobe Mission was closed.¹⁰⁶⁹ In 2007, the two Tokyo missions were consolidated into a single mission, and the Japan Osaka Mission was renamed the Japan Kobe Mission.¹⁰⁷⁰ In 2010, the Japan Hiroshima Mission was consolidated with missions based in Fukuoka and Kobe,¹⁰⁷¹ and the Korea Seoul West Mission was consolidated with the Korea Seoul Mission and Korea Daejeon Mission.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,039,000 (2012)

There were 50,625 Latter-day Saints in Asia in 1973¹⁰⁷² and approximately 200,000 members in East Asia by 1983. East Asian LDS membership numbered 314,300 in 1987, 534,200 in 1993, 627,900 in 1997, and 731,900 members in 2000. There were 861,900 members in 2005 and 998,830 in 2010. Among countries with an LDS presence in 2000, LDS membership grew most rapidly between 2000 and 2010 in China (567%), Malaysia (459%), Vietnam (400%), and Cambodia (393%) and grew most slowly or declined in Macau (−27%), Japan (12%), South Korea (16%), and Hong Kong (18%). Overall church membership increased by 36% in East Asia between 2000 and 2010. LDS membership in the Philippines has accounted for over 50% of LDS membership in East Asia since the late 1980s and in 2010 accounted for 65% of regional church membership. In 2010, 91% of LDS membership in East Asia was the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Among countries with a known church presence, the ratio of the general population to LDS membership varies from a high of one member per 450,000 in Burma to a low of one member per 158 in the Philippines. There are no known LDS members in Timor-Leste and North Korea. In 2010, one in 2,188 was LDS.

¹⁰⁶⁹ "New and Returning Mission Presidents," LDS Church News, 10 March 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39468/New-and-Returning-Mission-Presidents.html>

¹⁰⁷⁰ "New missions bring total to 347 New missions," LDS Church News, 10 February 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50112/New-missions-bring-total-to-347-New-missions.html>

¹⁰⁷¹ "New missions 10 announced in seven areas," LDS Church News, 13 February 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58775/New-missions-10-announced-in-seven-areas.html>

¹⁰⁷² "Membership distribution of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," Deseret News 1974 Church Almanac, p. 117.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 896 Branches: 990 Groups: 100+ (2010)

There were 1,009 LDS congregations in East Asia in 1987. LDS congregations numbered 1,525 in 1993, 1,642 in 1997, 1,863 in 2000, 1,804 in 2005, and 1,886 in early 2011. Likely between 100 and 200 groups operate in the region primarily in China and the Philippines.

The first LDS stake in East Asia was organized in Tokyo, Japan in 1970. Other countries that have stakes at present provided with the year the first stake was organized include the Philippines and South Korea (1973), Hong Kong and Taiwan (1976), Singapore and Thailand (1995), Mongolia (2009), and Indonesia (2011).

The number of stakes increased from one in 1970 to 28 in 1980, 76 in 1987, 94 in 1993, 111 in 1997, 139 in 2000, 140 in 2005, and 144 in May 2011. In May 2011, stakes discontinued since 2000 were located in the Philippines (6), Japan (4), and Hong Kong and new stakes organized were located in the Philippines (17), Taiwan (5), Japan (2), and Mongolia and Indonesia (1). The number of districts in East Asia numbered 57 in 1987, 123 in 1993, 130 in 1997, 118 in 2000, 133 in 2005, and 139 in May 2011.

Activity and Retention

The number of active members per congregation varies widely by country and region, with some branches and wards in Japan and South Korea with fewer than fifty active members, whereas some wards in the Philippines have as many as 200 active members. Some branches in the region have as few as thirty active members, particularly in Japan and South Korea. Member activity rates appear 50% or higher in China, Laos, Burma, and Brunei due to government restrictions and societal abuse of religious freedom demanding a high degree of devotion to the Church among converts before baptism and support and fellowshipping from local members thereafter. Member activity rates are poorest in South Korea (12%), Hong Kong (14%), and Japan (17%) due to low standards for convert baptisms during the years of the most rapid membership growth in these nations. Member activity rates for other nations in the region range from 20% to 40%. Today, convert retention rates in the region rank from modest to excellent, with the highest retention rates occurring in China, Laos, Burma, and the lowest convert retention rates occurring in the Philippines, Cambodia, and Malaysia. Active LDS membership in East Asia is estimated to number approximately 200,000, or 20% of total church membership.

Finding and Public Affairs

Open houses in developing nations are commonly utilized to find investigators. New investigators are found in nations with government restrictions barring open proselytism primarily by member referral. Full-time missionaries utilize English classes and street proselytism to find investigators in South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan and have generally received few member referrals in the past. In the mid-2000s, the Church produced a DVD for the Asia North Area and Taiwan that provided a culturally-tailored introduction to LDS beliefs that identified similarities in Japanese, Korean, and Chinese culture with LDS teachings and taught basic church doctrine with a family-focused approach.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean, Thai, Indonesian, Tagalog, Cebuano, Khmer [Cambodian], Mongolian, Laotian, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, Bikolano, Waray-Waray, Pampango, Pangasinan, Tamil, English, Dutch, Portuguese.

All LDS scriptures and most, or a large number of, church materials are available in Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean, Thai, Indonesian, Tagalog, Cebuano, Khmer [Cambodian], Mongolian, Ilokano, Pangasinan, Dutch, and Portuguese. Select passages of the Book of

Mormon and limited numbers of church materials are available in Laotian. The Book of Mormon and limited numbers of church materials are translated into Hiligaynon, Bikolano, Waray-Waray, Pampango, and Tamil. Burmese translations of Church materials are limited to *Gospel Fundamentals* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. A few General Conference talks have been translated into Burmese, starting in the 2000s. Only *Gospel Fundamentals*, the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, a pedigree chart, and the Articles of Faith are translated into Malay. The Articles of Faith are available in Iban. LDS Church materials in Kazakh are limited to sacrament prayer translations, the Articles of Faith, and selected hymns and children's songs. The *Liahona* magazine has monthly issues in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Tagalog, Cebuano, English, Dutch, Portuguese, bimonthly issues in Indonesian, Cambodian, and Mongolian, and four issues a year in Vietnamese.

Meetinghouses

There are approximately 1,400 LDS meetinghouses in East Asia. With the exception of some small or newly organized branches, nearly all LDS meetinghouses in Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong meet in church-built meetinghouses. The Church operates several church-built chapels in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, and Thailand. LDS meetings in other nations generally occur in rented facilities or in the homes of members.

Health and Safety

Southeast Asia and rural areas of industrializing nations in East Asia experienced poor standards of living and exhibit high risk for the spread of infectious disease. Waterborne diseases, malnutrition, and low quality medical care are major issues. Traffic safety is a challenge due to poorly maintained roads and inconsistent observance of traffic laws. In China, pollution and the environmental impact of rapid industrialization over the past few decades have influenced health. Most of the largest cities have poor air quality. The leading cause of death is respiratory and health diseases resulting from air pollution. Approximately 300 million are estimated to drink contaminated water. Health issues exist in ultra-modernized Hong Kong where the SARS outbreak in 2003 interfered with the functioning of the church and missionary activity, as the arrival of new missionaries was delayed, and local members held small sacrament meetings in their homes.¹⁰⁷³ Among East Asian nations, the percentage of those infected with HIV/AIDS is the highest in Thailand at 1.4%. In Thailand, the spread of the disease has been propagated by illicit sexual relations and drug use. Other methods of infection include contaminated needles and HIV-positive mothers.

The Church faces potential safety risks in several nations with severe government restrictions or ethnic violence and separatist movements. In China, strict obedience to government policies pertaining to religious conduct is required for the perpetuation of positive relations between the Church and the government. Deviation from government-approved activities jeopardizes the legitimacy of any Church activity among Chinese citizens and foreigners, is against LDS Church policy, and poses risks to individual members. Other religious groups that have disregarded local laws or suffer poor relations with the government have had many members arrested and sentenced to labor camps for charges of disrupting public order. In the Philippines, the LDS missionary department has not sent nonnatives to Mindanao for over a decade, due to political instability and threats against Americans from Muslim separatist groups.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The LDS Church has completed at least 192 humanitarian and development projects in East Asia, most occurring in Vietnam (33), Indonesia (30), China (26), Cambodia (17), Mongolia (16), and Thailand (14).¹⁰⁷⁴

¹⁰⁷³ Thornell, Linda. "In a time of fear Asian members coping with SARS," LDS Church News, 3 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43705/In-a-time-of-fear-Asian-members-coping-with-SARS.html>

¹⁰⁷⁴ "Locations—Asia," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 25 May 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/>

There has been no known LDS humanitarian or development work to have occurred in Brunei or North Korea as of early 2011. Projects have primarily included emergency relief, teaching effective agricultural practices, wheelchair donations, neonatal resuscitation training, clean water projects, and teaching English. In Burma, the Church provided continued humanitarian and development assistance for several years following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.¹⁰⁷⁵ Water projects have occurred over the past several years in locations such as Kayin State. Senior missionaries donated 200 school bags for children at a local monastery. LDS charities have donated funds to bring clean water for local hospitals. In China, the Church donated \$15,000 for humanitarian assistance for flood victims in 1998.¹⁰⁷⁶ In Hong Kong, over 120 members participated in a tree-planting service project in which more than 150 trees were planted in Sai Kung West Park in 1999.¹⁰⁷⁷ In 2003, local church membership and missionaries assembled 3,000 hygiene kits to distribute to the needy in Hong Kong in wake of the SARS outbreak.¹⁰⁷⁸ The Church donated 250 wheelchairs to the disabled in 2004.¹⁰⁷⁹ In Indonesia, the LDS Church purchased rice and hygiene supplies that were assembled into kits by members in Jakarta for refugees on Timor in 2000.¹⁰⁸⁰ Local church members in Jakarta prepared over 10,000 meals for some of the 30,000 homeless flood victims in 2002.¹⁰⁸¹ The Church helped finance a road construction project in Solo in 2003.¹⁰⁸² Following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, Latter-day Saints assisted nearly 300,000 and donated over 6,000 hours of service. Long-term development projects ensued in the following months, such as providing medical equipment and building restoration work on a hospital in Banda Aceh. Elder Subandriyo was intimately involved in many of the projects.¹⁰⁸³ Immediately following the disaster, the Church donated over 50,000 body bags at the government's request.¹⁰⁸⁴ In 2005, the Church donated medical equipment needed after a devastating earthquake in Sumatra.¹⁰⁸⁵ The Church provided mental health assistance in Banda Aceh in 2005 to tsunami victims.¹⁰⁸⁶ Local LDS youth in Jakarta took part in an anti-drug campaign in 2006.¹⁰⁸⁷ In 2006, Latter-day Saint charities and the Church helped construct a new medical rehabilitation center in Aceh Province.¹⁰⁸⁸ Additional projects undertaken in 2006 with other aid agencies in tsunami-stricken areas included building sixteen schools, three health clinics, 1,000 permanent houses, many

project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-3,00.html

¹⁰⁷⁵ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Unprecedented year," LDS Church News, 14 January 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48384/Unprecedented-year.html>

¹⁰⁷⁶ "Church gives aid to China," LDS Church News, 5 September 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31357/Church-gives-aid-to-China.html>

¹⁰⁷⁷ "Adding to 'breathtaking scenery,'" LDS Church News, 10 July 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/36038/Adding-to-breathtaking-scenery.html>

¹⁰⁷⁸ Thornell, David; Thornell, Linda. "Preventing SARS," LDS Church News, 24 May 2003.

¹⁰⁷⁹ "Wheelchairs donated," LDS Church News, 16 October 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46335/Wheelchairs-donated.html>

¹⁰⁸⁰ "Indonesian minister thanks Church for aid," LDS Church News, 6 May 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37733/Indonesian-minister-thanks-Church-for-aid.html>

¹⁰⁸¹ "Providing relief for flood victims," LDS Church News, 23 February 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41370/Providing-relief-for-flood-victims.html>

¹⁰⁸² Thornell, Linda M. "New road in Indonesia paves way for future generations," LDS Church News, 15 November 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44695/New-road-in-Indonesia-paves-way-for-future-generations.html>

¹⁰⁸³ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Proposing projects to villages of tsunami survivors," LDS Church News, 19 March 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47006/Proposing-projects-to-villages-of-tsunami-survivors.html>

¹⁰⁸⁴ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Emergency response is appropriate, immediate," LDS Church News, 15 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46735/Emergency-response-is-appropriate-immediate.html>

¹⁰⁸⁵ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "In earthquake's wake," LDS Church News, 16 April 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47175/In-earthquakes-wake.html>

¹⁰⁸⁶ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Tsunami support turns to mental health," LDS Church News, 14 May 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47302/Tsunami-support-turns-to-mental-health.html>

¹⁰⁸⁷ "Anti-drug campaign," LDS Church News, 4 March 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48610/Anti-drug-campaign.html>

¹⁰⁸⁸ Allen, Connie. "Reconstruction," LDS Church News, 27 May 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49014/Reconstruction.html>

boats for villagers, and water and sanitation systems for twenty villages.¹⁰⁸⁹ Emergency aid was donated to victims of the 2006 Java Tsunami.¹⁰⁹⁰ Almost eight tons of food and water were provided for flood victims in Jakarta in 2007.¹⁰⁹¹ In 2007, the Church provided humanitarian aid and food to earthquake victims in Bengkulu.¹⁰⁹² More than a dozen large-scale development projects in areas affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami were completed in early 2008.¹⁰⁹³ In 2008, the Church completed a clean water project in Kaliwungu with assistance from full-time missionaries.¹⁰⁹⁴ The Church participated in a government effort for citizens to hold a weekly family night in 2008.¹⁰⁹⁵ In Japan, LDS meetinghouses were utilized as emergency shelters in the Kobe area following a major earthquake in 1995,¹⁰⁹⁶ and Latter-day Saints in California donated quilts to earthquake victims.¹⁰⁹⁷ In 2001, members in Yokohama visited a nursing home, socialized with seniors, and gave as gifts cards and lap quilts.¹⁰⁹⁸ The Church has also donated wheelchairs to the disabled, food and medicine for the homeless, and furniture and medical items for hospitals in recent years.¹⁰⁹⁹ The Church provided emergency assistance following the 2011 earthquake. In Laos, the Church delivered donated rice sent by a three-truck caravan from Thailand to Vientiane in 1994. The Church also contributed to costs for transporting rice to the needy within Laos.¹¹⁰⁰ Humanitarian senior couples have served in Laos teaching English since the early 2000s.¹¹⁰¹ The Church's worldwide clean water programs began from a single clean water project in Laos in 2002.¹¹⁰² Neonatal resuscitation training has been sponsored by the Church.¹¹⁰³ Senior missionaries continue to conduct clean water and sanitation projects and donate school supplies. Wheelchairs were donated in 2008.¹¹⁰⁴ In Malaysia, the Church conducted a major clean water project in East Malaysia that benefited fifteen villages in Sarawak in 2007.¹¹⁰⁵ In Mongolia, members of the Church in Utah donated

¹⁰⁸⁹ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Work continues in Southeast Asia," LDS Church News, 27 May 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49004/Work-continues-in-Southeast-Asia.html>

¹⁰⁹⁰ "New disaster prompts more aid to Indonesia," LDS Church News, 22 July 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49217/New-disaster-prompts-more-aid-to-Indonesia.html>

¹⁰⁹¹ "Flood victims fed by the Church," LDS Church News, 24 February 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50159/Flood-victims-fed-by-the-Church.html>

¹⁰⁹² "Church aid victims of Indonesia earthquake," LDS Church News, 6 October 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51128/Church-aids-victims-of-Indonesia-earthquake.html>

¹⁰⁹³ "Tsunami relief, aid finished in Indonesia," LDS Church News, 26 January 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51578/Tsunami-relief-aid-finished-in-Indonesia.html>

¹⁰⁹⁴ Palmer, Elder Douglas; Palmer, Sister Jane. "Gift of clean water," LDS Church News, 21 June 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/52129/Gift-of-clean-water.html>

¹⁰⁹⁵ Palmer, Elder Douglas; Palmer, Sister Jane. "Indonesia program focuses on family," LDS Church News, 2 August 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/53191/Indonesia-program-focuses-on-family.html>

¹⁰⁹⁶ "Quake hits Japan, 40 members mission," LDS Church News, 21 January 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/25720/Quake-hits-Japan-40-members-mission.html>

¹⁰⁹⁷ "Northridge Ward quilts sent to Kobe victims," LDS Church News, 18 February 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26140/Northridge-Ward-quilts-sent-to-Kobe-victims.html>

¹⁰⁹⁸ "Sisters help senior citizens," LDS Church News, 27 January 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39251/Sisters-help-senior-citizens.html>

¹⁰⁹⁹ "Projects—Japan," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 19 February 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-65,00.html>

¹¹⁰⁰ "Church donates rice to Laos," LDS Church News, 27 August 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24136/Church-donates-rice-to-Laos.html>

¹¹⁰¹ "Pure religion: Time to fill a need," LDS Church News, 24 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43805/Pure-religion-Time-to-fill-a-need.html>

¹¹⁰² Askar, Jamshid. "Clean water all around the world," LDS Church News, 22 August 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57788/Clean-water-all-around-the-world.html>

¹¹⁰³ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Saving babies' lives," LDS Church News, 12 November 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48131/Saving-babies-lives.html>

¹¹⁰⁴ "Wheelchairs," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 9 March 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6213-1-3215-1,00.html>

¹¹⁰⁵ "A reliable supply of clean water," LDS Church News, 12 May 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50564/A-reliable-supply-of-clean-water.html>

food and clothing to Mongolia following a harsh drought followed by a severe winter in 2000.¹¹⁰⁶ In 2003, the Church provided relief after flooding in Ulaanbaatar. Supplies were sent from Salt Lake City and distributed by missionaries in Mongolia.¹¹⁰⁷ During the same year the Church News reported that humanitarian and welfare missionaries in the Mongolian Ulaanbaatar Mission were teaching skills such as knitting to help the Mongolian people.¹¹⁰⁸ In 2004, the Church provided medical training to Mongolia via video recordings of surgical procedures for surgeons in the country.¹¹⁰⁹ The Church News published a lengthy article about humanitarian work done by the Church in Mongolia in 2005. Examples of service provided included wheelchair donations, clean water projects, vision restoration programs, and neo-natal resuscitation programs.¹¹¹⁰ Humanitarian projects continue in Mongolia today, with many now currently carried out by local Church leaders instead of aid sent from abroad to Mongolia. Examples of such projects include a local member quilt-making activity in Ulaanbaatar for those in need and removing litter from city streets and public places. In the Philippines, the Philippines Manila Mission organized a health fair providing free medical checkups and mini-lessons on health related issues in Binan in 1988.¹¹¹¹ 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.¹¹¹² 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.¹¹¹³ 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.¹¹¹⁴ In 2006, the Church provided humanitarian aid to mudslide victims in Guinsaugon.¹¹¹⁵ Later that year, Latter-day Saints in nineteen stakes and districts in the Metro Manila area donated clothing and toys for children to aid typhoon victims in south-east Luzon. Six members perished from the disaster, and the Church also donated humanitarian aid.¹¹¹⁶ Additional humanitarian activities in recent years include clean water projects, vision care, wheelchair donations, and emergency relief for victims of natural disasters.¹¹¹⁷ In Taiwan, missionaries provided service in helping provide accurate English translations of Chinese signs in many of the cities throughout the country in the late 2000s. In Thailand, twenty missionaries trained English teachers from 429 Bangkok-area schools how to more effectively teach the English language in 1997.¹¹¹⁸ In 2000, youth from the Bangkok Thailand Stake

¹¹⁰⁶ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Church responds to Mongolia's appeal," LDS Church News, 27 May 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37852/Church-responds-to-Mongolias-appeal.html>

¹¹⁰⁷ "Church provides relief for Mongolian flood victims," LDS Church News, 16 August 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44189/Church-provides-relief-for-Mongolian-flood-victims.html>

¹¹⁰⁸ "10-year-olds knit loom hats for orphans," LDS Church News, 18 October 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44574/10-year-olds-knit-loom-hats-for-orphans.html>

¹¹⁰⁹ "Medical videos in Mongolia," LDS Church News, 28 August 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46068/Medical-videos-in-Mongolia.html>

¹¹¹⁰ "Worldwide welfare initiatives," LDS Church News, 27 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47767/Worldwide-welfare-initiatives.html>

¹¹¹¹ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 27 February 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17976/From-around-the-world.html>

¹¹¹² "From around the world," LDS Church News, 5 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18327/From-around-the-world.html>

¹¹¹³ "Lifting Filipino members from poverty," LDS Church News, 29 February 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22766/Lifting-Filipino-members-from-poverty.html>

¹¹¹⁴ "Area presidency given a warm reception in meeting with leader," LDS Church News, 17 October 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21970/Area-presidency-given-a-warm-reception-in-meeting-with-leader.html>

¹¹¹⁵ "Church quick to respond with aid following Philippines mudslide," LDS Church News, 25 February 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48572/Church-quick-to-respond-with-aid-following-Philippines-mudslide.html>

¹¹¹⁶ Pilobello, Anna Lenore. "Quick response to Philippines typhoon," LDS Church News, 23 December 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49914/Quick-response-to-Philippines-typhoon.html>

¹¹¹⁷ "Projects—Philippines," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 14 October 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-104,00.html>

¹¹¹⁸ "Missionaries assist English teachers in Bangkok," LDS Church News, 26 July 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29004/Missionaries-assist-English-teachers-in-Bangkok.html>

gathered toys, clothing and other needed items for children in a needy neighborhood.¹¹¹⁹ In 2001, humanitarian service missionaries worked on nearly two dozen projects aimed at reducing malnutrition among children. The missionaries helped schools become self-sufficient in feeding their students by planting gardens with nutritious foods.¹¹²⁰ Immediately following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Church donated food, water and body bags to southern Thailand.¹¹²¹ Local members in Bangkok assembled aid relief to those affected.¹¹²² Thirty missionaries served as translators for stranded tourists following the tsunami.¹¹²³ LDS Charities donated one hundred wheelchairs in 2010.¹¹²⁴ In Timor-Leste, the Church donated clothing, food, and hygiene kits to refugees in West Timor who fled from East Timor in 2000. A director of humanitarian services for the Church who visited refugee camps in West Timor prompted the aid, for which the Church was thanked by the Indonesian government.¹¹²⁵ Indonesian members packed and sent over 30,000 hygiene kits to Timor in 2000.¹¹²⁶ New Zealander members also donated bedding, hygiene kits, and clothing.¹¹²⁷ A single aid package worth over \$156,000 was delivered for Christmas 2000 to Dili.¹¹²⁸ In 2002, the Church provided the transportation for delivering wooden fishing boats from Australia to East Timor that were crafted by the Aussie Boats for East Timor charity.¹¹²⁹ In Vietnam, the Church donated medical supplies and prostheses in 1992.¹¹³⁰ Senior missionary couples have taught English for service since 1993.¹¹³¹ In 2008, the Church donated wheelchairs.¹¹³²

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church benefits from full religious freedom and does not face legal restrictions in Cambodia, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. There are some societal restrictions on missionary activity in some of these nations. In the Philippines, missionary activity encounters some restrictions in Mindanao among the Muslim population. Full-time missionaries avoid proselytizing

¹¹¹⁹ "Member youth in Bangkok provide truckload of goods," LDS Church News, 21 October 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38753/Member-youth-in-Bangkok-provide-truckload-of-goods.html>

¹¹²⁰ Peacock, Bryon. "Humanitarian project helps alleviate hunger," LDS Church News, 24 February 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39399/Humanitarian-project-helps-alleviate-hunger.html>

¹¹²¹ Swensen, Jason. "Tsunami disaster: More than 100,000 dead," LDS Church News, 1 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46682/Tsunami-disaster-More-than-100000-dead.html>

¹¹²² Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Emergency response is appropriate, immediate," LDS Church News, 15 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46735/Emergency-response-is-appropriate-immediate.html>

¹¹²³ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Help in devastation," LDS Church News, 8 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46697/Help-in-devastation.html>

¹¹²⁴ Hardy, Annette and Keith. "Thailand: Wheelchairs are presented to 100 individuals," LDS Church News, 10 February 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58774/Thailand-Wheelchairs-are-presented-to-100-individuals.html>

¹¹²⁵ "Indonesian minister thanks Church for aid," LDS Church News, 6 May 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37733/Indonesian-minister-thanks-Church-for-aid.html>

¹¹²⁶ Sheffield, Sheridan. "Delivering hope with humanitarian aid," LDS Church News, 21 October 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38759/Delivering-hope-with-humanitarian-aid.html>

¹¹²⁷ "Relief Society gives humanitarian aid," LDS Church News, 22 July 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38157/Relief-Society-gives-humanitarian-aid.html>

¹¹²⁸ "Christmas aid to help East Timor regrow," LDS Church News, 30 December 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39120/Christmas-aid-to-help-East-Timor-regrow.html>

¹¹²⁹ "Church supports boats for Timor," LDS Church News, 26 October 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42706/Church-supports-boats-for-Timor.html>

¹¹³⁰ "Church donates medical gift to Vietnam," LDS Church News, 11 January 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22585/Church-donates-medical-gift-to-Vietnam.html>

¹¹³¹ "Couples enter Vietnam to teach English," LDS Church News, 30 January 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23222/Couples-enter-Vietnam-to-teach-English.html>

¹¹³² "Wheelchairs," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 9 March 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6213-1-3215-1,00.html>

Muslims out of respect for local customs and due to ongoing conflict with Christians in Mindanao. In Singapore, many Christian churches condemn the LDS Church as un-Christian, intimidate converts and investigators, and send hateful letters to missionaries. In South Korea, open proselytism on subways and visiting door to door in apartment buildings occurs but is often discouraged by local administration, as it is seen as intrusive and bothersome. There are no legal barriers for the LDS Church to obtain recognition and operate in Timor-Leste, but there have been past instances of societal abuse of religious freedom targeting non-Catholic Christians.

Restrictions on religious freedom significantly limit or impede LDS activities in Brunei, Burma, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, North Korea, and Vietnam. In Brunei, government restrictions on proselyting and increasing intolerance for religious minorities severely limit LDS activities. Meetings for the Brunei group are not published due to the conservative nature of this Islamic state, as the Church does not have official status. Some members may reside in Brunei who cannot find the Church due to these restrictions. In Burma, current legislation and government policies prohibit the Church's foreign missionary program and limits missionary work among members. The LDS Church carefully honors and obeys the law in Burma. Existing members are generally permitted to meet, but outreach is largely limited to family and personal contacts of members. In China, the amount of religious freedom and tolerance for both local and foreign members to worship—albeit always separately—is a major opportunity the Church has gained in the past decade, which has been essential for current and future church growth. Chinese officials have permitted local members to share the gospel with family members. Nonnatives do not appear to face proselytism restrictions among foreigners. Foreign members may receive training and visits from international Church leadership. Government does not permit international Church leaders to train and meet with local Chinese members. As a result of widespread religious freedom in Hong Kong, Chinese from mainland China desiring to join the Church sometimes briefly visit Hong Kong, are taught by full-time missionaries, and baptized before returning back to the mainland, in a matter of several hours. In Indonesia, LDS missionaries report that the government severely restricts the number of visas granted for foreign full-time missionaries, resulting in high reliance on the local full-time missionary force to staff the Indonesia Jakarta Mission. Latter-day Saints have no presence in most areas that have local laws that restrict the religious freedom of minorities. LDS missionaries do not engage in open proselytism and work primarily through casual conversations with strangers and member referrals. Latter-day Saint Indonesians report few instances of societal abuse or prejudice. In Laos, the Church faces many restrictions that limit missionary work. Young full-time missionaries served briefly and had many restrictions regarding whom they could speak with and were unable to distribute literature. Many of the members are picked up by a bus to go to Church. In 2009, police told the bus driver he was not allowed to transport members from outside the city into Vientiane for Church services. In Malaysia, missionaries have to leave the country frequently to renew their visas and comply with visa laws. This results in periodic hiatuses from missionary work and expenses in taking missionaries temporarily out of the country, usually to Singapore. This is a particularly time-consuming and difficult journey for missionaries in East Malaysia, who travel by plane to get their visas renewed. Missionaries in Malaysia avoid the title “Elder” on mail due to potential threats from radical Islamic groups. In Mongolia, laws that restrict proselytism challenge the scope and freedom with which the Church may conduct missionary work, yet these laws have also motivated members to assist in finding investigators for missionaries and increase outreach and Church growth. In 2009, significant challenges arose with the government regarding foreign missionary visas. No foreign missionaries were expelled from the country, but the government refused to issue visas to prospective new missionaries. Some portions of the visa issues were resolved in early 2010 when several senior couples were granted visas. In early 2010, many American missionaries were temporarily reassigned to missions in the United States while they waited for the Mongolian visas. Missionaries report that one of the reasons for the government refusing to issue additional visas was that government officials expressed concern about ecclesiastical activities of foreign missionaries in addition to humanitarian work and teaching English. In North Korea, any Latter-day Saint presence, whether official or unofficial, is currently unattainable due to stringent government regulations and policies restricting religious freedom, especially for Christians. The Church may be able to perform some

humanitarian and development work, but the government severely restricts the activities of NGOs, and such service would have no realistic prospects of attaining government recognition and establishing a church presence at present. In Vietnam, religious freedom has increased over the past two decades. The government has given permission for LDS humanitarian missionaries to enter, recognized two congregations, allows baptisms to occur, and permits Vietnamese natives to serve as full-time missionaries. Open proselytism is restricted, and no Vietnamese missionaries can serve as proselytizing missionaries. The creation of new congregations is difficult, as the Church is not officially recognized, and many Christian groups face resistance from multiple levels of government. In 2009, Church attorneys were working diligently to get the Church official recognition. Several Protestant groups received official recognition in 2008.

Cultural Issues

Communist, socialist, and military junta governments have significantly reduced the influence and practice of traditional East Asian religions in Burma, China, Laos, Mongolia, North Korea, and Vietnam, resulting in a weakening in ethno-religious ties and the disappearance of many religiously based customs and beliefs. The high percentage of nonreligious individuals in the region does decrease the potential for difficulties with traditions that may interfere with LDS teachings, but the Church will likely face challenges in motivating potential converts to fully embrace the gospel and make necessary changes in lifestyle to not only remain active in the Church but also serve as leaders and teachers for others. Many religiously active individuals, particularly Christians, are marginalized by societies in many East Asian nations, resulting in challenges attracting and retaining converts and maintaining member activity rates.

Materialism, high cost of living, and secularism are major cultural challenges that frustrate LDS mission outreach in Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, and Singapore. Full-time missionaries and members struggle to develop mission outreach approaches that are effective in proselytizing the highly irreligious population that exhibits little familiarity with Christianity. Many converts are not retained, as they fail to develop habitual church attendance and personal gospel study habits. The LDS Church faces major cultural challenges for missionaries and members to live and proselyte in an environment where sexual relations out of marriage, smoking, and abortion are commonplace. Education is competitive, and many youth spend large amounts of time attending school and studying, reducing opportunities for interaction with missionaries. The development of a Latter-day Saint community over the past half century in these nations has provided a social outlet for members to associate and rely upon to avoid cultural practices and social pressures not in harmony with LDS teachings. Full-time missionaries in some areas report that local members have demonstrated a disinterest in missionary work, as they believe that most prospective converts will ultimately not develop regular church attendance and a self-sustaining testimony of the Church. LDS congregations have become increasingly tight-knit and entrenched as small numbers of active members limit their social interaction with nonmembers and rarely invite nonmember friends, family, and coworkers to church or to meet with full-time missionaries.

Traditional Chinese religion is a syncretic mix of Confucian philosophy, Buddhism, Taoism, and folk traditions. All of these religions are primarily individual and meditative, with little emphasis on organized worship. Many Christian principles, such as the existence of an all-powerful God instead of a nebulous harmony of the universe, need for a Savior, and even the existence of sin, are foreign to many Chinese. In particular, the break of Christianity from the tradition of ancestors, the concept of a caring God who can hear and answer prayers, the need for organized worship and service in the church, principles of divine authority, and the idea of one true church as opposed to the development of personal worldview from syncretic elements of competing faiths and philosophies, all pose challenges for many LDS investigators. Chinese have their own strong sense of ethics and morality, although the need for such behaviors tends to be explained by the need for societal order, achieving harmony, maintaining order, and following the pattern of the heavens, in contrast to Judeo-Christian concepts of obedience, sin, repentance, and judgment, although considerable commonality exists when semantic barriers are bridged.

Religiously active Christians in East Asia have provided some of the greatest strength to the LDS Church in the region, as many have established personal habits of church attendance, scripture study, and prayer and have a religious background that is better suited for LDS proselytism and teaching approaches. This has likely fueled church growth for the LDS Church in the Philippines and among Christian tribes in East Malaysia, but quick-baptism tactics generally compromise this cultural advantage for the LDS Church. Receptivity to the LDS has been high in some traditionally Buddhist nations such as Cambodia and Mongolia, but successes in these nations have been largely attributed to local member-missionary efforts. Poverty has likely increased receptivity in these areas. Common in many nations of East Asia, extensive genealogical records handed down for millennia offer excellent opportunities for local members to engage in temple work and use family history research as a segue for member-missionary work and finding. In 2000, one local member in Hong Kong obtained a 175-volume set of his family's genealogical records containing over 200,000 ancestor names dating back to 602 AD.¹¹³³

There are several demographic issues that challenge LDS proselytism and church growth ambitious. In China, the One Child Policy has created many demographic challenges regarding the male-female gender ratio. In the long term, this may lead some male members unable to marry due to a shortage of Chinese women in some areas. In Japan, the aging population and low birth rates create assimilation challenges with youth and older adults in many congregations as generation gaps and age-based cultural differences have created significant obstacles toward retaining and fellowshiping individuals from both populations within the same congregations, which oftentimes have few active members. In Mongolia, many couples face significant challenges getting married and finding a home to live in together. Housing in Mongolia is expensive and usually unaffordable by newly married couples, so many hesitate to marry until they are able to find a place to live.

Some cultural practices stand in opposition to LDS teachings. The drinking of green tea is a cultural practice in East Asia prohibited by LDS Church teachings and can be source of tension as well as a testimony building issue for investigators, new converts, and less active members. High smoking and alcohol use rates in some nations pose challenges for many to who habitually engaged in these practices prohibited by the Church. Some cultures proscribe the use of alcohol or particular alcohol beverages for certain ceremonies or special events, such as the death of a loved one in the Iban tribe in Sarawak, East Malaysia. Mission and local leaders must address these issues with sensitivity in order for members and investigators to comply with LDS teachings while mitigating potential individual, familial, or community conflict for discontinuing customs and practices that are valued by their respective ethnic groups to which they pertain.

The large number of ethnic minorities in some nations is a challenge for proselytism due to the diversity of cultural practices and religious beliefs. LDS congregations in Malaysia and Singapore are extremely diverse. Active religious engagement in many areas is a sensitive matter due to governmental and social pressures to limit potential conflict between various ethnic groups such as in Indonesia where conversion and Christian missionary activity in many areas is frowned upon.

Unemployment and underemployment have been major challenges for Latter-day Saints in the Philippines and in 1988, as many as half of Latter-day Saints were unemployed, and 30% of employed members were underemployed.¹¹³⁴ Poor economic conditions have prompted many to work abroad and send home money for family members. In 2005, LDS apostle Elder Dallin H. Oaks noted that separation of spouses for extended periods of time for employment purposes should be avoided.¹¹³⁵ The Church has begun to address these issues

¹¹³³ Stahle, Shaun. "Small events lead to major collection of family names," LDS Church News, 8 January 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37004/Small-events-lead-to-major-collection-of-family-names.html>

¹¹³⁴ "Growth 'just amazing,'" LDS Church News, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹¹³⁵ "Notable progress in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 30 April 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47240/>

in the Philippines and elsewhere in East Asia through the establishment of the Perpetual Education Fund in order for members to gain needed education for future employment.

Latter-day Saints are socially stigmatized in several nations. In South Korea, LDS outreach to church-going Christian Koreans has seen some success, but heavy social involvement in their respective churches has made this group largely unreceptive to even brief and basic LDS proselyting approaches. Misconceptions about the LDS Church are widespread and lead most Koreans to dismiss the church as a socially unacceptable institution or confuse it with other unaccepted denominations such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church. In Singapore, some Christian groups have performed counter-proselytism efforts targeting Latter-day Saints.

National Outreach

Thirteen percent (13%) of the regional population resides in cities with known LDS congregations, but many who live in cities with LDS congregations do not have access to full-time missionaries, such as in China, Burma, and Laos. The percentage of the population reached by the LDS Church is highest in Macau and Singapore (100%), Hong Kong (94%), South Korea (70%), and Japan and Taiwan (60%). Among countries that receive official LDS missionary activity, the percentage of the population reached by the LDS Church is lowest in Indonesia (11%), Cambodia (13%), Thailand (14%), and Malaysia. Less than 10% of populations of countries that have no official presence and no proselytizing full-time missionaries are reached by LDS congregations, such as Burma, Vietnam, China, Laos, and Brunei. Timor-Leste and North Korea are completely unreached by the LDS Church.

LDS outreach efforts in East Asia are concentrated in the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan as these are the only nations in the region with more than one LDS mission, and twenty-eight of the thirty-four missions (82%) in East Asia are based in these four nations that account for 14% of the regional population. Past receptivity has been the greatest in the region of these four nations, prompting additional missionary resources, but abundant opportunities for expanding outreach exist in other nations that have yet to be better realized by the LDS Church.

Declining numbers of LDS congregations in the 2000s in the Philippines (–51), South Korea (–32), Japan (–31), and Hong Kong (–7) have not noticeably reduced the percentage of the national population residing in cities with LDS congregations in these nations, as most units that were consolidated were located in cities with multiple LDS congregations or in cities and towns with few inhabitants. There has been no expansion in LDS outreach in these nations for over a decade however, halting progress in expanding national outreach.

Some populations or ethnic groups are legally unreached by the LDS Church in nations that experience some LDS missionary activity. Muslim Malays are completely unreached by the LDS Church in Malaysia and Brunei. Government policies in many nations forbid open proselytism, and consequently those with access to LDS outreach are limited to close friends, family, and acquaintances of members or sincere investigators. Many of these nations lack sufficient local member-missionary resources to effectively provide outreach, such as in Burma.

The Church is only accessible by Cambodians living in or around Phnom Penh, Battambang, Kampong Cham, Siem Reap, and Kampong Thom. The remaining large cities lack a Church presence, including Kampong Saom on the coast and Sisophon near the Thai border. About half of the approximate 14.5 million Cambodians live in a province that does not have a congregation. Even in the provinces with a church presence, most have hundreds of thousands of people in unreached areas. The majority of Cambodia's population is rural, which presents challenges in proclaiming the gospel more widely.

The Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission has established branches and opened new proselytizing areas on the outskirts of Phnom Penh. Branches currently operate in Sen Sok (about five miles northeast of Phnom Penh), Ta Khmau (about five miles south of Phnom Penh) and Kean Svay (about five miles east of Phnom Penh). These branches belong to one of the two Cambodian-speaking districts in Phnom Penh. As the Church grows in Phnom Penh, cities and villages near the capital may eventually have congregations established. Areas to the northeast and south of Phnom Penh are some of the most densely populated areas in Cambodia.

The Vietnamese LDS community in Phnom Penh conducts limited outreach in Vietnam, where non-Vietnamese are barred from serving as missionaries. In the late 2000s, Vietnam-native missionaries had to be temporarily withdrawn to serve in Vietnamese areas of Phnom Penh and train newly arrived North American missionaries.

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Only 1% of the population would be LDS if the Church's entire membership of fourteen million lived in China. With the exception of personal contacts of members, the entire population of 1.33 billion remains unreached by mission outreach. If missionary work occurred in cities with an established LDS English-speaking branch, just 3% of the national population would have access to mission outreach. The Church has made considerable progress among natives in cities with English-speaking branches that also have congregations designated for Chinese members. Some large cities without English-speaking congregations have Chinese-designated congregations, such as Kunming in Yunnan Province.

The Church will face major mission logistic challenges once full-time missionaries serve in China as China's population exceeds that of North and South America combined by half a billion. Current international mission resources could not efficiently administer to such a large population even if they were all entirely dedicated to China. If the average of one LDS mission per four million people in North and South America were applied to China, the Church would need to create 333 missions; just seven shy of the worldwide total in 2010. Even if there was one LDS mission per twenty million people (the mission-population ratio in Japan), the Church would need to operate sixty-seven Chinese missions.

Traditional LDS paradigms of missions staffed primarily by full-time proselyting missionaries are unlikely to be implemented in China for two reasons. First, the strong preference given to native Chinese and the heavy restrictions on foreigners, especially as relates to proselytism, will require that outreach efforts be conducted primarily, and likely exclusively, through native leaders and native member-missionaries. Second, the LDS missionary force has plateaued in recent years due to declining LDS birth rates and slower growth, and the Church has lacked the free resources and manpower to assign missionaries even to some unreached nations that allow proselyting, like Senegal at present or Kyrgyzstan in the 1990s. The limited LDS mission resources that could potentially be mobilized are wholly inadequate to serve China's vast population. For both legal and practical reasons, future LDS outreach in China will inevitably depend primarily upon the outreach of local members. Denominations like the Seventh Day Adventists, which grow primarily through local member outreach, have therefore experienced considerable outreach advantages over Latter-day Saints due to the traditional LDS dependence on full-time foreign missionaries and the lack of comparably well-organized member-missionary programs and resources.

Effective future LDS mission outreach will require wise appropriation of limited native missionary manpower, effective and independent congregational member-missionary programs, and the development of a self-sustaining native Chinese missionary force.

Although China ranks as the fourth largest in geographic size, most regions are sparsely populated. The western half of China accounts for about 10% of the population, as the southwest is mountainous, and the northwest is primarily desert. Ninety percent (90%) of the population lives in the eastern half of China. The most densely populated areas include the Sichuan Basin, coastal areas between Beijing and Hong Kong, and interior areas between Shanghai, Beijing, and Zhengzhou. Half the national population resides in eight of the twenty-two mainland provinces, which include Guangdong (113 million), Henan (99 million), Shandong (92 million), Sichuan (87 million), Jiangsu (75.5 million), Hebei (68 million), Hunan (67 million), and Anhui (65 million). Mission planners can maximize the scope of potential mission outreach by allocating resources and development work to these most populous provinces.

Large Chinese communities exist in most nations around the world and currently provide a portal to mission outreach to mainland China within the confines of Chinese law. Several nations with only a few hundred Latter-day Saints have many Chinese LDS members, such as Greece and Cyprus. Chinese-speaking congregations have been organized in the United States (12 Chinese, 2 Mandarin), Canada (3 Mandarin, 2 Chinese, 1 Cantonese), Australia (2 Chinese), Malaysia (1 Mandarin), and Singapore (1 Chinese). One Mandarin-speaking branch operates in Hong Kong. Missionaries over the past decade have been called in increasing numbers to serve Mandarin-speaking missions in areas throughout the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia. Chinese-speaking congregations outside of China and Chinese mission outreach worldwide help coordinate efforts for members returning to mainland China and provide outreach among the large Chinese population living abroad.

Ethnic minority groups with significant LDS memberships outside China may be more receptive to future mission outreach initiatives even if they tend to reside in less-densely populated areas that would ordinarily not receive outreach for decades following the initial start of proselytism. The Church has well-developed leadership and mission outreach capabilities in South Korea and Mongolia. Korean and Mongolian Chinese number in the millions and sometimes travel to these two nations. These individuals may join the Church outside the country and return home and help prepare to establish the Church in rural or isolated locations in Inner Mongolia or along the North Korean border. In 2009, South Korea alone had over 600,000 Chinese foreign residents. Seventy-one percent (71%) were ethnic Koreans; most of whom resided in the Seoul area.¹¹³⁶ Some mission outreach among this group has occurred through both member referrals and missionary proselytism.

Small geographic size, a long-standing Latter-day Saint presence, and consistent numbers of full-time missionaries assigned have resulted in excellent levels of national outreach, as approximately 94% of the population resides in cities with an LDS congregation. All cities with over 85,000 inhabitants have a mission outreach center. Most unreached or lesser-reached cities have fewer than 24,000 inhabitants.

Congregation consolidations in the 2000s have not eliminated outreach in many communities, as full-time missionaries proselyte in many affected communities, and many active members continue to reside in these locations, but declining numbers of congregations have resulted in many urban areas becoming less reached by LDS congregations and local leaders. With 82,700 inhabitants, Pok Fu Lam is the most populous city without an LDS congregation; although at one time a ward operated in Pok Fu Lam, the unit was discontinued in the 2000s. Assigning local Chinese leaders to head the reestablishment of dependent congregations in some lesser-reached areas many reverse the trend of congregational decline and provide for long-term support and mentoring that does not detract from LDS missionary resources abroad.

¹¹³⁶ "More Than 1 Million Foreigners Live in Korea," The Chosun Ilbo, 6 August 2009. http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2009/08/06/2009080600243.html

Expensive and limited real estate is a challenge for the Church to open additional meetinghouses, resulting in multiple congregations utilizing the same LDS meetinghouses. Long travel distances to LDS meetinghouses for some can reduce church attendance levels.

Hong Kong ranked thirtieth among countries with the most visitors to the Church's website in 1997.¹¹³⁷ The Church operates a country website for Hong Kong available in English at <http://www.lds.org.hk/en/> and in traditional Chinese characters at <http://www.lds.org.hk/>. The Internet site provides local news; meetinghouse locations and times; explanation of LDS doctrines and teachings; and links to LDS scriptures translated into traditional characters. Use of the website in member-missionary activity can enhance national outreach and provide accurate information on the Internet to the general population.

Eleven percent (11%) of the national population resides in cities with an LDS mission outreach center. All but three LDS congregations are on the island of Java. Manado, Medan, and Denpasar (Bali) are the only mission outreach centers off of Java and reach no more than 3% of the population. Of these three cities, missionaries appear to have been regularly assigned only to Manado. Most of the twenty-four million Indonesians living in cities with full-time missionaries are unaware of a Latter-day Saint presence and church teachings. Proselytism bans reduce outreach potential in areas with LDS congregations and assigned missionaries.

The Church has not placed full-time missionaries in additional cities for decades. Distance from mission headquarters in Jakarta and the limited numbers of foreign full-time missionaries permitted to serve by the government challenge efforts to assign missionaries to additional cities off of Java. The small number of convert baptisms over the past two decades has given the Church little impetus to expand national outreach. On Java, many Latter-day Saints travel long distances to attend church meetings. Members living far from church meetinghouses may help to establish additional mission outreach centers closer to their homes one day. Prospects for such activity outside Java appear unlikely for the foreseeable future due to the small LDS populations in Manado, Medan, and Bali. Due to visa restrictions limiting the number of foreign full-time LDS missionaries and no large increase in the number of native full-time missionaries, other methods must be utilized to revitalize mission outreach initiatives and expand national outreach to areas that may be more receptive to LDS teachings, such as Kalimantan and Papua. Unexplored tactics that can help expand national outreach include calling a Latter-day Saint family to an unreached area to plant an LDS congregation and establishing Church-sponsored educational facilities in disadvantaged areas.

Strong LDS Church growth in East Malaysia among indigenous peoples like the Iban may indicate that the native peoples in Indonesian-controlled Kalimantan will be more receptive to LDS teachings than other ethnic groups in other areas of Indonesia. Many indigenous peoples in Kalimantan exhibit strong cultural ties and similarities with groups in Sarawak and Sabah in East Malaysia and have Christian communities. In 2010, there was no known LDS presence in any of the four Kalimantan provinces that are inhabited by nearly fourteen million people. With the exception of Manado, Latter-day Saints have never had a presence in predominantly Christian areas. Unreached Christian areas that may have responsive populations to LDS mission outreach include East Nasu Tenggara, Papua, and a few areas in central Sulawesi and northern Sumatra. There are almost four million inhabitants in Irian Jaya who are predominantly Christian and unreached by Latter-day Saints. There is only one LDS congregation on Sulawesi, populated by over seventeen million Indonesians. Sumatra has just one branch in Medan, yet is inhabited by fifty million.

The Church maintains an Internet site for Indonesia at <http://www.gerejajesuskristus.or.id>. The website provides information about church beliefs, meetinghouse locations, and local news. Local Latter-day Saints

¹¹³⁷ "Internet users find LDS web site," LDS Church News, 1 March 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29302/Internet-users-find-LDS-web-site.html>

referring friends and relatives to the website is a passive proselytism approach that with the proper vision can lead to increased numbers of convert baptisms and expansion of national outreach.

There are meaningful opportunities for Latter-day Saints to proselyte Indonesians living abroad. Full-time missionaries report teaching Indonesians in Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and Hong Kong. No LDS missions outside Indonesia have specific programs for mission outreach directed toward Indonesians.

Fifty-two percent (52%) of the national population resides in a city over 150,000 inhabitants with an LDS congregation. LDS congregations are in 123 of the 160 cities with over 150,000 people. With only a few exceptions, each of the thirty-seven cities with over 150,000 without an LDS congregation is located within a major metropolitan area and most are within ten kilometers of the nearest mission outreach center. As many as 60% of the population resides within fifteen kilometers of an LDS meetinghouse. All forty-seven administrative prefectures have at least one LDS congregation. Okinawa is the prefecture that receives the most penetrating LDS mission outreach, as evidenced by the lowest ratio of population to congregations of one LDS congregation for 81,513 inhabitants. Prefectures with fewer than 300,000 inhabitants per congregation are among the most reached by Latter-day Saints and include Wakayama, Tottori, Hokkaido, Shimane, Aomori, and Ehime. Prefectures with over 800,000 inhabitants per congregation are among the least reached and include Yamaguchi, Tochigi, Yamanashi, Saga, and Fukui. Six prefectures have only one LDS congregation (Yamaguchi, Yamanashi, Saga, Fukui, Tokushima, and Kochi) and have populations ranging from 770,000 to 1.5 million. Located on Hokkaido, Urakawa appears to be the least populated city with an LDS congregation, with approximately 15,000 inhabitants. There are hundreds of additional cities over 20,000 inhabitants without a mission outreach center.

The highly urbanized population provides an excellent opportunity for the Church to reach the majority of Japanese with fewer missionaries and congregations. An aggressive chapel-building program in the 1960s facilitated the expansion of national outreach¹¹³⁸ and occurred primarily in the largest cities, during a time when the Japanese population appeared to be the most receptive to LDS mission outreach. During the peak of church growth and activity in Japan in the late twentieth century, missions allocated a large number of full-time missionaries to individual congregations. In 1991, thirty-two full-time missionaries were assigned to work in one ward and two branches in the Kyoto area.¹¹³⁹ While taking advantage of a time when the population was at a greater receptivity and providing adequate outreach to a large population were primary motives in allocating large numbers of full-time missionaries to a single congregation, this policy reduced local member involvement in missionary work, reinforced dependence on full-time missionaries for many ecclesiastical and administrative tasks, and contributed to the continuing trend of congregation consolidations that began in the early 2000s. While over thirty congregations were closed in the 2000s, the percentage of the national population residing in cities with mission outreach centers does not appear to have noticeably decreased, as most discontinued units were in the largest cities that continue to be serviced by multiple LDS congregations. Holding cottage meetings and forming groups and dependent branches in lesser-reached cities and neighborhoods in the Tokyo and Osaka metropolitan areas may increase prospects of establishing additional self-sustainable congregations over the medium term. Congregations in smaller cities or urban areas with few active members are susceptible to closure in the coming years due to stagnant active membership growth, low receptivity, and continued reluctance of many local members to participate in missionary work.

High cost of living and limited receptivity has increasingly made assigning large numbers of full-time missionaries unfeasible. The number of missions and missionary complement assigned to Japan have been reduced in recent years, and so the Church has attempted to expand outreach in other ways. Japan had the third

¹¹³⁸ Britsch, R. Lanier. "The Blossoming of the Church in Japan," *Ensign*, Oct. 1992, 32.

¹¹³⁹ Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Kyoto, the cultural center of Japan," *LDS Church News*, 22 June 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21603/Kyoto-the-cultural-center-of-Japan.html>

most Internet users in 2007¹¹⁴⁰ and the Church has maintained Internet outreach to assist in proselytism efforts since the early 2000s. When the Church launched its first official website in 1997, Japan had the fourth most visitors.¹¹⁴¹ A country website for Japan at <http://www.ldschurch.jp/> provides local church news, meetinghouse locations, and explanations on church doctrine and practices tailored for a nonmember audience, youth-directed outreach, and links to Japanese-language LDS websites such as <http://www.mormon.jp/>. Online member-missionary activity remains limited, but the Church will likely institute member profiles on mormon.org in Japanese in the near future, as Japanese is spoken by over one hundred million speakers, and the Internet is highly utilized by Japan.

The Church has a tiny presence in Laos, as only Vientiane (3% of the national population) has a congregation, and no foreign missionaries may proselyte. The majority the inhabitants in Vientiane are unaware of the Church. The only opportunity for Laotians to join the Church is through personal contact with a Church member. Local members will be instrumental in expanding the Church's national presence. Outreach to northern provinces appears the most difficult, as these regions experience greater intolerance toward religious minorities.

Members who travel to meetings by bus provide opportunity for expanded outreach outside of Vientiane. If government restricts the movement or logistics of Church members traveling to attend church services, this may result in the creation of small groups or branches in lesser-reached communities with some LDS members.

Nearly the entire population resides within close distance to the mission outreach center. Missionaries serve throughout Macau. Most know little about the LDS Church, however. Creative and insightful mission outreach methods such as Internet outreach and service projects may help bring greater awareness of the Church and its members to the general population. There are significant opportunities to proselyte mainland Chinese vacationing in Macau.

Six of Malaysia's thirteen states do not have mission outreach (Kedah, Kelantan, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perlis, and Terengganu). Residing in unreached states are 7.7 million inhabitants, or 30% of the national population. Currently, the Church does not have a presence in any cities of less than a 100,000 people in West Malaysia. In East Malaysia, which has the most liberal proselytism laws and presents the greatest opportunity for church growth, only half the population live in cities larger than 10,000 inhabitants. Outreach into smaller cities and villages will one day be necessary to reach a larger segment of the population.

Currently about one-third of the population lives in the capital, Ulaanbaatar. The Church has a strong presence in the city with six wards and five branches. However, there has been hardly any increase in the number of congregations in Ulaanbaatar since 2001 due to the focus on maturing branches into wards, as well as a general decline in growth rates and growing inactivity problems. With continued growth, additional congregations may be created within the boundaries of the new stake. Züünmod, a small town near Ulaanbaatar with about 15,000 inhabitants, might open to missionary work in the coming years.

With the Church most established in the largest city of the country, it is able to influence the Mongolian people who visit the city from other outlying areas of Mongolia. The Church has a congregation in the next four largest cities of the country, which have populations ranging from 30,000 to 75,000. It is not until cities below 30,000 inhabitants do we see cities that as of yet have no congregations established in them. Many of these cities are in western or southern Mongolia and are very isolated from the rest of the country. Most of

¹¹⁴⁰ "Internet Usage Worldwide by Country, 2007," Infoplease.com, retrieved 31 December 2010. <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0933606.html>

¹¹⁴¹ "Internet users find LDS web site," LDS Church News, 1 March 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29302/Internet-users-find-LDS-web-site.html>

the twenty-one provinces have no Church presence, and each has about 100,000 people or less. It is most likely that the Church will grow the most in the larger cities in Mongolia due to their already existing Church presences and bigger populations. However, if the Church is to preach the Gospel to the entire population of Mongolia, greater progress is to be made in establishing branches in the smaller cities throughout the country and among those who reside on the steppes and live nomadic lives. This will also create challenges in establishing congregations in the future when many of the potential members in a rural area live far apart from each other and periodically move their homes as they tend their livestock. However, because over 90% of the population speaks Mongolian, the Church will be able to penetrate many areas of the country without problems with a large number of different local languages.

The city of Khovd has provided missionaries serving in Mongolia with the unique experience of teaching the Gospel to some Muslims. With a strong branch numbering well over one hundred active members, missionaries are able to come into contact with more Turkic peoples than in any other regions with a Church presence. Just to the west of the city Khovd is the province of Bayan-Olgii, where the majority of the population is Kazakh. However, no missionaries currently serve in Bayan-Olgii.

The majority of Mongolians do not reside in Mongolia but in neighboring countries, chiefly in China. The Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region in the People's Republic of China contains about four million Mongolians. The Liaoning Province, which is between Inner Mongolia and North Korea, contains over 600,000 Mongolians. An estimated one million Mongolians live in Russia. Because the Gospel has taken hold in Ulaanbaatar and larger regional cities in Mongolia, it has a greater chance to spread to these other areas among the Mongolian population as family members share the Gospel with relatives who many reside one of these locations. Mongolians living in Inner Mongolia may one day join the Church when Mongolian members bring it to them. This could provide greater strength and opportunity for the Gospel to go forth to neighboring China.

The entire population of North Korea is unreached by LDS mission outreach. If government regulations prohibiting foreign missionary activity were lifted, Pyongyang and Kaesong would most likely be the first cities to open for missionary work, as Pyongyang has a large population, central location, and state-controlled religious groups in the city, whereas Kaesong is near the South Korean border and past dialogue and economic agreements that have bridged the two countries have centered on Kaesong. LDS mission outreach centers in the two cities would reach 12% of the national population. Members in South Korea and Korean members in other nations will likely play a pivotal role in the establishment of the Church in North Korea due to greater familiarity with language and culture and close proximity to South Korea.

Thirty-nine percent (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. Forty-seven of the 284 cities with over 20,000 inhabitants do not have mission outreach centers, amounting to 2% 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.

Sixty-eight of eighty provinces (85%) have a mission outreach center and account for 95% of the national population. Twelve 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 who 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.¹¹⁴² 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 forty convert baptisms followed from her efforts to share the gospel with her relatives.¹¹⁴³ 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.

Singapore is one of the only countries where the Church is not restrained by geography, resulting in the opportunity of reaching the entire population with few outreach centers. Outreach is limited due to the diversity in the culture, language, and religious background of the population. Although 58.8% of the population speaks a Chinese language, only one of the eight congregations in Singapore is Chinese speaking. This indicates that Chinese Singaporeans have few Church resources given to them, usually meet in English speaking congregations, or are less responsive to missionary work.

Mission outreach is primarily limited to cities with over 100,000 inhabitants. Seventy percent (70%) of the national population resides in cities with an LDS presence. Most rural areas and cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants have no mission outreach centers. Some cities, such as Hanam, once had mission outreach centers but no longer do. Opportunities for increasing national outreach appear most favorable in currently

¹¹⁴² "From around the world," LDS Church News, 5 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18327/From-around-the-world.html>

¹¹⁴³ "Sacred devotion," LDS Church News, 29 March 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51783/Sacred-devotion.html>

unreached large to medium-sized cities near Seoul and other large cities. Examples of cities in the Seoul/Gyeonggi Province area include Pyeongnae/Hopyeong, Gwacheon, Uiwang, and Dongtan

In the recent past, Korean Church leadership has expressed little interest in opening additional cities for missionary work and creating additional congregations in cities where members travel long distances to attend Church meetings. Southeast of Seoul, Gwangju has 80,000 inhabitants but has no LDS congregation or mission presence, although dozens of members live in the city. Members attend several different congregations nearby but must travel longer distances and are more prone to becoming less active due to issues of distance, accessibility, and limited fellowshiping opportunities. Church members often dismiss missionary opportunities in cities like Gwangju due to the availability of established congregations in nearby cities, but this policy has reduced national outreach capabilities and has contributed to the declining number of congregations over the past decade. Many areas within the city boundaries of Seoul have almost no LDS presence and no nearby congregations, such as the Guro region. Past efforts to open new branches in these locations that did not come to fruition may have contributed to the lack of interest by local leaders to organize groups or small branches in lesser-reached areas.

The declining number of missionaries has further contributed to the declining national outreach of the Church in South Korea. Missions can barely staff the needs of current congregations. Missionaries have been called in fewer numbers due to the declining receptivity of the general population and stretched mission resources worldwide.

The Church has successfully established congregations in nearly all cities over 100,000 inhabitants. Sixty percent (60%) of the population lives in a city with a congregation. Every county on the island of Taiwan has at least one congregation of the Church. Although the Church has established itself in nearly all the major population centers in Taiwan, some areas have seen greater success than others. Since 2000 the Church has seen marked progress in establishing itself outside of Taipei by districts maturing into stakes and established stakes greatly growing in the number of congregations. The number of congregations increased from six wards and one branch in the Taichung Taiwan Stake to thirteen wards and two branches within the boundaries of the two stakes in Taichung in 2009. The number of wards has also grown in the stakes in Kaohsiung and Tainan, increasing from six wards in each stake to ten wards and two branches in the Kaohsiung Taiwan Stake and nine wards and two branches in the Tainan Taiwan Stake. Some areas of Taiwan with multiple small or middle-sized cities do not have congregations close by, such as the coastline between Taichung and Tainan and areas along the northeastern and eastern coasts of the country.

One of the reasons the Taiwan Kaohsiung Mission was discontinued was that two missions could provide nearly the same amount of outreach that the three missions were producing. The Taiwan Kaohsiung Mission was one of the least productive areas for missionary work in Taiwan during the last decade, as no new stakes were organized within its boundaries. The other Taiwanese missions saw an increase in stakes during this time, most notably the Taiwan Taichung Mission. Taiwan had one of the lowest population per mission ratios in Asia with less than eight million people per mission. Other industrialized Asian countries like Japan and South Korea have much higher population per mission ratios of over ten million people per mission. With the mission realignment, each of Taiwan's missions serve eleven to twelve million people.

The Church has operated inside Thailand continuously since the late 1960s, yet membership (both numerical and active) is very small compared to the national population. With the exception of the Phuket Group, the Church has no presence in any of the cities or fifteen provinces south of Bangkok. Of the seventy-six administrative provinces, around twenty-five have an LDS congregation. Areas with the highest population density unreached by the Church include southern Thailand, coastal areas between Bangkok and Cambodia, and provinces between Bangkok and Phitsanulok.

Almost all mission outreach occurs in urban areas, which account for a third of the national population, yet slightly more than half of cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have no congregation. Rural areas and smaller cities and towns are unlikely to be reached by full-time missionaries until additional large cities are assigned missionaries. Cottage meetings may be instrumental in not only introducing the Church to larger cities without a congregation with only a few members but also to small communities on the outskirts of cities with established congregations.

Limited mission resources, distance from mission headquarters in Jakarta, the lack of native members, the lack of church material in the dominant language, Timor-Leste's small population, limited infrastructure, recent independence, and history of instability have likely reduced the priority of commencing missionary work. Conditions for the initial establishment of the Church appear most accommodating in Dili due to its large population, somewhat central location, and greater tolerance toward non-Catholic groups. Outreach in rural areas will likely not occur for many years following formal Church establishment in Dili. Separated from the rest of Timor-Leste, the small Oecussi region may not receive mission outreach.

In Vietnam, the Church's presence is limited to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City; at least 94% of the population lives in areas without an LDS congregation. Government regulations limit proselytism and Church contact to friends of members. Most ethnic groups do not have a single Church member and have never had contact with the Church. Greater national outreach is unlikely to occur until full government recognition is achieved, and as for other Christian denominations with government recognition, achieving permissions to organize new congregations may be difficult. The greatest opportunities for improving national outreach is likely to be through the Church conducting humanitarian service in areas without congregations, as well as the influence of isolated members who follow church teachings. Such efforts foster positive relations with local and national government and may facilitate approval for additional congregations.

The lack of a mission in Vietnam limits national outreach. Vietnamese missionaries also serve in the three Vietnamese-speaking branches in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The limited number of Vietnamese missionaries sometimes results in the removal of some missionaries from Vietnam to provide language training to newly arrived foreign missionaries serving in the Vietnamese-speaking branches in Cambodia. Missionaries serving from Vietnamese-speaking branches in Phnom Penh cannot serve in Vietnam currently. If government one day permits foreign proselyting missionaries, Vietnamese missionaries from Cambodia and the United States will be a valuable asset to humanitarian service and national outreach.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The Church experiences low member activity rates in East Asian countries that have had a long-term LDS presence due to quick-baptism tactics, inconsistent convert baptismal standards enforced by mission leaders for decades, and often an overstaffing of LDS congregations with full-time missionaries in the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Many active members are highly dedicated to church service and have helped perpetuate growth, but diligent work ethic and capitalist mindset have likely contributed to these mission practices. Losing contact with less active members that move away from the congregation in which they were baptized, inadequate local leadership to accommodate large numbers of youth converts, past congregation consolidations and confusion on meetinghouse locations and times, negative cultural attitudes and practices regarding organized religion and weekly church participation, and increasing secularism and materialism have further exacerbated member activity rates and frustrate reactivation efforts. Reactivation efforts by full-time missionaries in these nations demand large amounts of mission resources, delaying the progress of mission outreach in other more receptive nations and areas. Stake consolidations in the Philippines, Japan, and Hong Kong and steady declines in the number of congregations between 2000 and 2010 in the Philippines (–51), South Korea (–32), Japan (–31), and Hong Kong (–7) provide further evidence of low member activity rates and reactivation frustrations notwithstanding steady membership growth during this

period. Most of East Asia's districts are located in these countries and many have been unable to become stakes because of chronic member activity challenges. Transportation challenges and costs have also contributed to lower member activity rates in the Philippines.¹¹⁴⁴ In South Korea, there was no noticeable increase in sacrament attendance nationwide between the early 1990s and late 2000s despite steady nominal membership growth. The closure of missionary training centers in South Korea and Japan in the late 2000s occurred partially due to low activity rates and rates of missionary service. The LDS Church in Taiwan has experienced poor convert retention for decades, but active membership has increased during this time permitting the organization of additional stakes and congregations.

In the Philippines, church activity rates among Latter-day Saints appeared to be among the highest in Asia during the first decade of a church establishment,¹¹⁴⁵ but during the following years missions inconsistently implemented and enforced 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. Conditions became so problematic regarding activity rates and local leadership in the Philippines that LDS Apostle Dallin H. Oaks was assigned as the Area President from 2002 to 2004. 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. 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. The Philippines continue to lack consistent convert retention and member reactivation programs among its sixteen 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 fellowshipping to the long-term prospects for improved convert retention and member activity in the Philippines.

Countries with a more recent LDS Church establishment generally experience poor to modest activity rates. In Cambodia, LDS membership increased eightfold, and the number of congregations increased nearly five times. Problems with recent converts and church activity linked to their dependence on welfare monies is not unusual for Southeast Asia. In Malaysia, factors hampering convert retention include missionary pressure to quickly baptize converts with limited understanding before meaningful church activity becomes routine, lack of adequate church materials in indigenous languages, church services held in languages that members of diverse backgrounds may not understand, and limited local leadership to nurture converts joining the Church in large numbers. In Mongolia, single adults and youth comprise the majority of converts. These groups carry greater needs for fellowshipping and teaching in order to remain active and marry within the Church. The missionary program has provided a valuable resource in the retention of youth and young adults, but many become inactive after serving their missions. Inactive and less active members provide finding opportunities for the Church, as they likely have more nonmember friends and associates who may want to learn about the Church compared to active members who tend to decrease their nonmember social interaction over time. In Thailand, inconsistent mission policies for convert baptismal standards have challenged efforts to organize additional congregations and prevent congregation consolidations.

¹¹⁴⁴ "The Church in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 11 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21021/The-Church-in-the-Philippines.html>

¹¹⁴⁵ Britsch, R. Lanier. "'Faithful, Good, Virtuous, True': Pioneers in the Philippines," *Liahona*, Feb 1998, 41.

LDS member activity and convert retention rates appear highest in nations with the greatest legal restrictions on religious freedom, but government policies and the sensitive nature of the Church in these nations challenges local members who joined the Church abroad to find the Church if they return to their home country. In China, the source of converts from the relatives of members appears to have produced high convert retention and strong member activity. Members baptized abroad who return to China are the most likely to go inactive, as many live in areas where there is no congregation or only a few members to provide fellowship. Furthermore, many are unaware of any Church presence in China and do not have contact information for congregations. In Laos, moderately high activity and retention appear the result of most converts seriously investigating the Church over a longer period of time and developing a habit of regular Church attendance prior to baptism. Investigators have often overcome significant cultural pressures and opposition before joining the Church and tend to be strongly committed. However, more than half the active members rely on Church-provided transportation to travel to Sunday meetings. If transportation is not provided to members outside Vientiane, many may be unable to actively participate. In Vietnam, the hiatus in Church activities between 1975 and the 1990s resulted in the Church losing contact with almost all 150–200 members. Few have been found and are active in the Church in Vietnam today. Members living substantial distances from congregations likely struggle to actively participate in meetings and are prone to become less active. The absence of foreign proselyting missionaries and government restrictions on proselytism may facilitate increased member activity and convert retention, as local members actively fulfill member-missionary responsibilities, and converts usually attend Church meetings for extended periods prior to baptism. In Indonesia, the Church overall demonstrates moderate levels of member activity, as seminary and institute are well attended, but some smaller branches are tight-knit and pose challenges for integrating new converts, as many have inactive members who stopped attending church regularly because of perceived offense by a fellow member.

No LDS baptisms appear to have occurred in Brunei, North Korea, or Timor-Leste.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Homogenous ethnic populations in Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong have eliminated ethnic integration issues for the LDS Church with the exception of foreign workers and residents. English-language congregations often operate to meet nonnative language needs. Geography mitigates many ethnic issues in East Asia, as many ethnic groups are separated by sea, mountains, rivers, or other topographic features. The extremely limited LDS presence in many nations with significant ethnic diversity such as Laos, Burma, and Indonesia has also reduced ethnic integration challenges at church, but expansion of national outreach in some nations may increase the possibility of ethnic integration challenges at church in areas where multiple ethnic groups reside together. Many ethnic groups in East Asia have no known Latter-day Saints, including many ethnic minority groups in southern China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Burma. Ethnic minority groups are marginalized in these nations and pose significant cultural, societal, and linguistic challenges to assimilation, with congregations comprised of the most prevalent ethnic group. Religious and government restrictions render some ethnic groups unreachable by the LDS Church, such as Malays in Malaysia and Muslim peoples in Mindanao, Philippines. Government policy prohibiting the assembly of citizens and foreigners in the same religious congregations has reduced potential ethnic integration issues in China. Ethnic issues may be somewhat present in international branches in China, as members come from many nations.

At present, ethnic integration issues for the LDS Church have been most manifested in Malaysia, Cambodia, and the Philippines. A single branch in West Malaysia may have up to fifty different nationalities. Converts from many different nations meeting in the same congregation pose challenges meeting cultural and language needs. Converts must often overcome differences in culture and language with other immigrant workers in the Church, but the lack of a clear majority in many congregations fosters unity in the face of diversity. Immigrant workers in the country often lack sufficient resources to lead congregations due to the transient nature of their employment and living accommodations and generally experience low rates of convert retention. Future,

sustained growth among immigrants and migrant workers in West Malaysia will require careful coordination between differing ethnic groups, new converts, and full-time missionaries meeting unique needs and situations. Language differences and ethnic tensions between Khmer and Vietnamese in Cambodia contributed to the establishment of language-specific congregations and districts in Phnom Penh. In the Philippines, 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 and the lack of a Church presence in areas populated by these groups and LDS materials in native languages.

Language Issues

High literacy rates benefit LDS outreach and have facilitated growth and local self-sufficiency. Teaching literacy skills appears only merited in Timor-Leste due to mediocre literacy rates. Approximately 80%–85% of the regional population has LDS materials translated in their first or second language notwithstanding minimal LDS outreach in East Asia largely due to the large number of Chinese languages that utilize traditional or simplified characters and LDS materials available in the many of the commonly spoken languages in the region. Countries and territories in which 95% of the population or higher has LDS materials available in their first or second language include Cambodia, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan.

There are twenty-eight East Asian languages with over one million speakers without translations of LDS materials, thirteen of which are native to Indonesia and eight of which are native to China. Ten percent (10%) of the regional population speaks one of these twenty-eight languages. Most of these languages are unlikely to have translations of LDS materials in the near future due to few or no known Latter-day Saint speakers or no LDS outreach extended in areas in which these languages are spoken. Many speakers of these languages also speak a second language that has LDS materials, reducing the urgency for translating scriptures and materials into these languages. Only Karen and Javanese appear likely languages to have translations of LDS materials in the coming years.

Many East Asian languages have an insufficient number of LDS materials available and LDS scriptures. Thousands of Latter-day Saints appear to speak Iban in Malaysia, yet LDS materials in Iban are limited to only a couple proselytism and instructional materials. Greater emphasis on translating additional materials in Iban as well as more commonly spoken languages with few LDS materials and no LDS scriptures such as Burmese will be required to extend proper LDS outreach, provide materials that are easily understood by local members in their native languages and increase the effectiveness of LDS teaching approaches centered on personal gospel study.

Some East Asian nations struggle to meet language needs in individual congregations due to extreme ethnic diversity in LDS membership, often warranting the use of English or another language as an intermediary language. Use of a second language or a lesser-known or unknown language to conduct church meetings for some members has contributed to convert retention and member activity challenges. Meeting individual language needs according to the resources available for linguistically-diverse congregations may help ameliorate these difficulties.

Missionary Service

The LDS Church in all countries in East Asia has had local members serve full-time missions in recent years with the exception of Brunei, North Korea, and Timor-Leste. The Philippines, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea, Cambodia, and China appear to produce the most missionaries for the Church in the region, but only Mongolia is self-sufficient in staffing its local missionary force. In the Philippines, local members constitute

the majority of full-time missionaries (80% in 1988),¹¹⁴⁶ but as few as 10% of Filipino LDS youth serve full-time missions. A missionary training center opened in Manila in 1983¹¹⁴⁷ and provides missionary preparation for missionaries from many countries in the region. In Japan, the Tokyo Missionary Training Center opened in 1979 and trained approximately 300 missionaries annually in the early 1990s.¹¹⁴⁸ In 2000, there were approximately 1,000 full-time missionaries serving in Japan, 18% of whom were native Japanese.¹¹⁴⁹ By early 2011, the number of LDS missionaries in Japan nearly halved to 638, but the percentage of local members in the full-time missionary force increased to 34%.¹¹⁵⁰ The sustainability in the small native full-time missionary force is a positive development that has endured an era of congregation consolidations and stagnant membership growth. The closure of the Japan Missionary Training Center in the late 2000s is a troubling development that may indicate worsening problems maintaining the past rates of missionary service among Japanese members. In Mongolia, the unique demographics of local church membership—coupled with the high missionary enthusiasm of new members—have contributed significantly to the high rates of missionary service in Mongolia. Many serve one-month local mini-missions before embarking on full-time missions. The number of Mongolians desiring to serve missions was so great at one time that prospective missionaries were required to serve at least six months in a significant local calling, often as a branch missionary or in a local leadership or teaching position. In 2001, a visiting General Authority at a fireside in Shanghai, China, announced that 40% of missionaries from the Asia Area come from Mongolia. Mongolia also has consistently had the highest baptism rate per missionary in the Asia Area. All of this has grown out of one of the smallest missions in the church—growing from sixteen young missionaries serving in Mongolia in 1995 to thirty-four in 1997. The one hundred-missionary mark was crossed in late 1999. As of June 2009 there were 155 Mongolian missionaries who were serving or who had received calls to serve; 115 were currently serving in the Mongolian Ulaanbaatar Mission.¹¹⁵¹ 200 missionaries were serving in the Mongolian Ulaanbaatar Mission. In mid-2009, there were a total of 660 known returned Mongolian missionaries, 402 of whom were living in Mongolia. At the end of 2009 the number of Mongolian missionaries in the mission field reached 226; more than half of whom served in Mongolia. This represents a large increase from two and a half years before when only 40 Mongolians were serving missions. Only 59% were still active in the Church, an improvement from before senior missionaries were tasked to find and reactive them. In South Korea, there were likely around 300 full-time missionaries nationwide in mid-2010. The Church established a missionary training center next to the Seoul Korea Temple in the 1980s. In the late 2000s, the Korea MTC closed, and native missionaries traveled to the United States to receive training. At its peak in the 1980s and 1990s, the native Korean missionary force may have grown as large as 200–250 just in South Korea. In November 2009, there were 114 South Koreans serving missions worldwide. Although South Korea is the top missionary-sending country outside of the United States for Protestant missions, rates of LDS missionary service from Korea have been mediocre, due in large part to low member activity, especially among men. The national requirement for young men to serve fourteen months in the military and intense university schedules that allow little allowance for an extended hiatus make it difficult for young men to fit in missionary service without compromising education and career. In Cambodia, the number of missionaries serving in the country had risen to about one hundred in 2004, half of whom were Cambodian. In China, the first full-time missionary to serve from China completed his mission in 2006. By the end of March 2010, 42 missionaries from mainland China were serving full-time

¹¹⁴⁶ "Growth 'just amazing,'" LDS Church News, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹¹⁴⁷ "The Church in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 11 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21021/The-Church-in-the-Philippines.html>

¹¹⁴⁸ Britsch, R. Lanier. "The Blossoming of the Church in Japan," *Ensign*, Oct. 1992, 32.

¹¹⁴⁹ Searle, Don L. "Japan: Growing Light in the East," *Ensign*, Sept. 2000, 44.

¹¹⁵⁰ Taylor, Scott. "LDS Church in Japan: Moving missionaries, making donations," LDS Church News, 15 March 2011. <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700118775/LDS-Church-in-Japan-Moving-missionaries-making-donations.html>

¹¹⁵¹ Phillips, Elder James; Soyolmaa. "First stake in Mongolia is organized," LDS Church News, 10 June 2009. First <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57449/First-stake-in-Mongolia-is-organized.html>

missions, many in the United States and Canada, and the number of local members who had served or were serving missions topped 100.

Fewer numbers of local members serve missions from Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Low activity rates among youth and young adults have contributed to mediocre levels of missionary service among members in these nations. Large numbers of North Americans have served in these nations over the past half century, with the exception of Indonesia, where the number of local members serving missions has declined over the past two decades. In 1992, there were sixty local members serving missions,¹¹⁵² but in March 2010 there were forty.¹¹⁵³ A reduction in the full-time missionary force is attributed to fewer youth convert baptisms at present compared to the 1970s and 1980s. Many members who currently serve full-time missions appear to come from full-member families and were raised in the Church.

Few members have served missions from Burma, Laos, Macau, and Vietnam. The second Burmese missionary to serve a mission from Burma began his mission in 2007. The first two missionaries to serve from Laos received their mission calls in early 2006. In Macau, most missionaries assigned are North Americans. Senior couples serve regularly in the country and assist with church administration. Low fertility rates create challenges for long-term growth due to few youth converts and small LDS family sizes. In Vietnam, consistent numbers local members serve missions despite a tiny membership and government restrictions. The majority of missionaries serve from Ho Chi Minh City.

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. Paths for nontraditional missionaries, extended youth mini-missions, and a greater emphasis on member-missionary work may help to increase missionary activity throughout East Asia.

Leadership

LDS leadership manpower is large enough to support stakes only in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. Overall, these countries face significant challenges increasing the number of capable LDS leaders, resulting in reduced congregational growth rates, but nearly all congregations appear to be staffed by local members. Each of these nations experiences unique challenges toward strengthening and developing leadership. In Hong Kong, local church leadership has been developed but remains limited and strained due to responsibilities fulfilling leadership positions in Hong Kong while simultaneously providing mentoring and support for mainland Chinese Latter-day Saints while being in compliance with PRC government regulations. Church employees regularly serve in church leadership positions, such as stake presidencies, likely due to a shortage of capable leaders among ordinary members. Members from Hong Kong have served as regional representatives, mission presidents, temple presidents, and area seventies. In Indonesia, local members have served as mission presidents and area seventies. In Japan, the LDS Church supports the largest and most well-developed priesthood leadership body in non-Christian Asia capable of supporting over two dozen stakes, soon to be three temples, nearly all operating wards and branches, and many of Japan's missions. A lack of active membership appears the primary barrier toward greater increases in the number of Japanese LDS leaders today. Japanese leaders have regularly served in many regional and international church leadership positions as mission presidents, missionary training center presidents, regional representatives, area authority seventies, temple presidents, and general authorities. In Mongolia, the large number of young men and women who have served or are serving missions is astounding as a proportion of total membership and has significantly contributed to the strength and size of local leadership

¹¹⁵² Mitchell, David. "Indonesian Saints," *Liahona*, Aug. 1992, 11.

¹¹⁵³ "Native missionaries, sign of Church growth in Indonesia," *LDS Church News*, 6 March 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58910/Native-missionaries-sign-of-Church-growth-in-Indonesia.html>

manpower. Returned missionaries have greatly strengthened the congregations of the Church throughout the country. In Ulaanbaatar, all but one of the twelve members of the two stake or district presidencies and their wives have served a full-time mission. Developing local leadership among members who have not served full-time missions has been more challenging. In the Philippines, 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, notwithstanding local members having regularly served as mission presidents, regional representatives, area seventies, temple presidents, and general authorities. Inadequate numbers of local leaders and active members has consistently prevented the organization of congregations and has resulted in congregation consolidations. In Singapore, the Church benefits from a small but well-trained local leadership that was capable of operating a stake with fewer than 3,000 members in the country until 2010. In South Korea, local members have served as mission presidents, temple presidents, regional representatives, area authorities, and general authorities. Korean leadership overall is well-trained and dedicated, but few new converts become leaders, and many medium-sized and small cities face ongoing leadership shortages. In Taiwan, local leadership has served as mission presidents, area seventies, and temple presidents. Low activity rates and few active male members prevent the organization of additional congregations and additional stakes. In Thailand, the Bangkok Thailand Stake has faced challenges developing local leadership, especially for those who do not also work for the Church. The mission president has consistently mentored and support local Thai leadership both within and outside of the stake. Few Thai members serve missions, resulting in few returned missionaries whom the Church can draw upon for future leadership.

Limited priesthood manpower staffs leadership positions for multiple LDS congregations in Cambodia, China, Macau, Malaysia, and Vietnam but only districts in Cambodia, China, and Malaysia. Local members staff leadership in nearly all congregations in these nations. In Cambodia, the majority of the population is under the age of thirty. This creates challenges for fellowshipping young converts while limiting those who can lead congregations due to their age. However, many youth converts who remain active later become pillars of strength as they live the gospel, serve missions, and marry and raise families in the Church. Most members have access to Church Education System programs designed to strengthen the testimonies and establish a doctrinal foundation. In China, Elder Chu-Jen Chia became an Area Authority Seventy in the late 1990s and has directed the affairs of the Church in China for most of the past fifteen years. Church leaders in Hong Kong have provided assistance developing local leadership. Chinese members in leadership positions experience high levels of independence and stewardship. International branches benefit from many members who have lived in areas where the Church runs administrative functions smoothly. Inadequate local leadership for foreign members only becomes an issue in areas where total foreign members is extremely limited. In Macau, active Chinese priesthood holders appear limited in number and likely contributed to the closure of the Macau Third Branch in 2006. In Malaysia, very few members have been to the temple or received the Melchizedek Priesthood. One senior missionary couple in East Malaysia in 2009 reported that only one couple from their branch had been through the temple. Most branches have few Melchizedek Priesthood holders, and limited numbers of priesthood holders prevent the organization of additional congregations.

The extremely small LDS leadership force in Brunei, Burma, and Laos is capable of supporting only one congregation, often relies on foreign senior missionaries for administrative support, and prevents expansion of national outreach due to restrictions of foreign missionary service. The recent arrival of the Church in these nations has also contributed to a lack of local leadership. In 2006, a senior missionary served as the president of the Rangoon Branch. In Laos, the Vientiane Branch had native members serving in the branch presidency in 2006.¹¹⁵⁴ Members conducted home teaching visits after Church meetings due to government restrictions in 2009. At the time the branch had twelve home teaching companionships. Priesthood advancements appear to occur regularly. Some mentoring by the mission president and senior couples to Laotian Church leaders

¹¹⁵⁴ "Laos dedicated," LDS Church News, 25 March 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48673/Laos-dedicated.html>

occurs. In Vietnam, both branches have a native branch president. A counselor in the Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission presidency resides in Vietnam and is an American.

There is no known LDS leadership in North Korea and Timor-Leste. Without indigenous Church members, foreign missionaries will most likely hold leadership positions for several years following the assignment of the first senior missionary couple.

Temple

There are seven operating temples in East Asia, and two temples are in the planning stages. The Tokyo Japan Temple was the first LDS temple constructed in Asia and was completed in 1980 to serve members throughout the region. Additional temples were constructed in Taipei Taiwan (1984), Manila Philippines (1984), Seoul South Korea (1985), Hong Kong China (1996), Fukuoka Japan (2000), and Cebu City Philippines (2010). Temples have been announced for Sapporo Japan (2009), with ground broken on October 22, 2011, and Urdaneta Philippines (2010). The Manila Philippines Temple is among one of the most heavily utilized temples in East Asia, as indicated by endowment sessions scheduled hourly on weekdays and every half hour or hour on Saturdays. The Cebu City Philippines Temple is moderately utilized, with six endowment sessions scheduled on weekdays and five sessions on Saturdays. The Hong Kong China Temple is well-utilized by active Latter-day Saints, as demonstrated by six endowment sessions scheduled Tuesdays through Fridays and five sessions scheduled on Saturdays. In 2010, the Church completed a temple patron housing building for the Hong Kong China Temple capable of accommodating up to fifty individuals who travel long distances from mainland China, Southeast Asia, Mongolia, and the Indian subcontinent. Local members frequently staff the temple to accommodate the needs of temple patrons traveling from outside of Hong Kong. Three to four endowment sessions are scheduled on weekdays at the Taipei Taiwan Temple, and sessions occur on the half hour or as needed on Saturdays. The Seoul Korea and Tokyo Japan Temples are moderately utilized by members, and six to eight endowment sessions generally occur on most days the temples are open. The Fukuoka Japan Temple is poorly attended on weekdays, as the temple is not open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and only one sessions occurs on Thursdays and two sessions occur on Fridays. The temple is moderately utilized on Saturdays, as six sessions are scheduled.

Southeast Asia, China, and Mongolia are assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple. Temple trips from these nations occur regularly, but distance, travel costs, and visa challenges severely reduce the frequency and number of members who can feasibly attend the temple. Prospects for the construction of small temples in Singapore; Bangkok, Thailand; Phnom Penh, Cambodia; and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia over the medium or long term would drastically reduce travel times and costs for members residing far from operating temples. In the Philippines, 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 appear 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. In Japan, additional temples appear possible over the medium term for small temples on Okinawa or in Osaka or Nagoya, but stagnant active membership and congregational growth may delay the construction of any additional temples for many years.

Comparative Growth

No other world region has as large a population as East Asia. The LDS Church has a small presence in East Asia compared to other world regions and over half of the number of stakes, members, and congregations in East Asia are located in the Philippines although the Philippines ranks fourth by population in the region. Excluding the Philippines, the size of the LDS Church in East Asia far surpasses South Asia and is comparable to Western Europe. The extent of national outreach for the LDS Church in East Asia is lower than most world regions largely due to the lack of an official church presence and minimal mission outreach performed

in the populous nations of China, Vietnam, and Burma and extremely limited LDS outreach in Indonesia. Together, these four constitute 79% of the population of East Asia. The LDS Church overall appears to experience higher member-missionary activity in East Asia compared to most other world regions largely due to government restrictions limiting proselytism and the desire for members to share LDS teachings with family and friends. Membership and congregational growth rates have been comparable to South America, as slow membership growth and stagnant congregational growth occurred in the 2000s. Member activity rates are lower than most world regions, and the degree of dependency on North American missionaries to staff regional missionary needs is comparable to most world regions. East Asia includes several of the most populous nations with no LDS missions.

Missionary-minded Christian groups report smaller numbers of members in East Asia but generally experience moderate to rapid growth. Unlike Latter-day Saints, these denominations generally report sizeable numbers of members in the region's most populous nations. In 2010, there were approximately 200,000 Seventh Day Adventists in Indonesia and 400,000 in China, whereas Latter-day Saints numbered fewer than 10,000 in each nation. Government restrictions have limited the scope and consistency of outreach for many Christian groups in the region, notwithstanding moderate to high rates of receptivity in many nations. Christian groups report frustrations working in secularized East Asian nations but generally experiencing increasing numbers of congregations and membership and higher convert retention rates than Latter-day Saints due to greater time invested in preparing converts for baptism and member-missionary-focused programs. Other Christian groups have been much more effective and precise in outreach directed toward ethnic minority groups in southern China and in Southeast Asia, resulting in some ethnic groups comprising primarily Christians in northern Burma. Latter-day Saints and most missionary-minded Christian groups have a comparably-sized presence in East Asian nations with smaller populations, such as Mongolia and Cambodia.

Future Prospects

The outlook for future LDS Church growth in East Asia is mixed due to low member activity rates, decreasing numbers of congregations, stake consolidations, few members serving full-time missions, and declining receptivity in most nations with a long-term LDS presence and sizeable LDS populations. Local leadership is self-sustaining in several nations like South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, but member activity rates are low, convert retention rates are poor, and prospects for expanding national outreach are unlikely. The development of LDS teaching and outreach approaches tailored to cultural conditions is warranted in these and other East Asian nations in order to improve LDS outreach capabilities. Maintaining the current degree of outreach in these nations may be challenging in the coming years due to these issues. Opportunities for LDS outreach in nations with more receptive populations has only been significantly realized in the Philippines, but legal restrictions and government policies in many nations prevent the assignment of proselytizing missionaries and require coordinated efforts between mission or area leadership and local branch or ward missionaries. Local member-missionary efforts will likely continue to produce good results for convert retention and member activity in nations with government restrictions on foreign missionaries or open proselytism. Prospects for the strongest church growth appear most favorable in China, the Philippines, Mongolia, Cambodia, and Malaysia due to high receptivity and developing self-sufficiency among local members and leaders. The first LDS stakes in Cambodia, China, and Malaysia may be organized within the next decade, and additional stakes will likely be organized in Mongolia, the Philippines, and Taiwan in the coming years. Some stakes may be consolidated in South Korea and Japan if stagnant growth continues and additional congregations are closed. Conditions appear favorable for the construction of additional temples in locations with sizeable, self-sufficient LDS populations, primarily in Southeast Asia and the Philippines. Additional missions are likely to be organized in the Philippines in the coming years due to high receptivity, administrative and leadership training needs, and the large size of the Filipino missionary force. Some nations may have additional missions organized in the coming years, such as Thailand and Malaysia. National outreach will most likely experience the greatest expansion in China and Malaysia in the coming years. Additional congregations

may be organized in Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Thailand, and Vietnam as a result of member families moving to cities without a church presence and full-time missionaries opening cities to missionary work if permitted. Developing efficient, smart, and legal tactics of employing local members in expanding national outreach in nations with government restrictions limiting the number of full-time missionaries or barring their service altogether will be required to make any significant headway in Burma, China, Indonesia, and Vietnam for the foreseeable future. Humanitarian and development projects abound in many nations in the region and offer continued opportunities for passive LDS outreach.

INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY PROFILES

BRUNEI

Geography

AREA: 5,765 square km. Located on the western side of the island of Borneo, Brunei consists of two small enclaves surrounded by East Malaysia on the South China Sea. The climate is hot, tropical, and rainy. The terrain includes coastal plains and hills in the interior. Seasonal smoke and haze from fires in Indonesia is the primary environmental issue. Brunei is divided into four administrative districts.

Peoples

Malay: 66.3%

Chinese: 11.2%

Indigenous: 3.4%

Other: 19.1%

Malays are the largest ethnic group. Chinese arrived as early as the fourteenth century. Other ethnic groups are indigenous or primarily come from East Malaysia. Foreign workers constitute a sizeable minority.

Population: 408,786 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.691% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.85 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 74.09 male, 78.75 female (2012)

Languages: Malay [Brunei dialect] (66%), Chinese languages (11%), Bisaya (10%), Iban (5.5%), Tutong (4%), English (2%), other (1.5%). Malay is the official language. English and Chinese are widely spoken. No languages have over one million speakers.

Literacy: 92.7%

History

Islam arrived in the twelfth century, and was adopted in the fifteenth century when a Malay Muslim became Sultan. The Sultanate of Brunei reached its height in power and influence in the region between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Territory controlled included coastal areas of northeastern Borneo and the southern Philippines. The Sultanate of Brunei began to decline due to political instability, pirate attacks, and European powers exerting their influence in the region. The British made Brunei a British protectorate in 1888. With the exception of a brief period of Japanese occupation in the 1940s, Brunei was ruled by Great Britain until independence occurred in 1984. Oil and natural gas profits have made Brunei one of the wealthiest nations in Asia. The royal family has continued to rule for over 600 years.

Culture

Brunei proudly professes its adherence to Islam and shares many commonalities with Malaysia. Government bans the public sale and consumption of alcohol. Minority groups practice their own unique traditions and customs. Ancient influence from Hinduism is still apparent in some customs. Crime rates are very low. Government leaders have expressed some concern over the balance of integrating into the international community without losing local culture or disrupting social systems.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$49,400 [103% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.838

Corruption Index: 5.2 (2011)

Brunei's economic success is attributed to revenues from oil and natural gas, which account for more than 90% of exports. Foreign investment has also contributed to the nation's wealth. Industry employs 63% of the workforce and produces 74% of the GDP. Services account for most of the remainder of these two indicators. Revenues fund free education through the university level and provide free health care. Government aims to diversify the economy through increasing tourism, banking, and agriculture. Primary trade partners include Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Faiths

Muslim: 67%

Buddhist: 13%

Christian: 10%

Other: 10%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 712

Latter-day Saints less than 100 2

Religion

Muslims are the predominant religious group and number approximately 200,000. Sharia law is enforced, and adherence to Muslim teachings is more conservative than in Malaysia. There are over 16,000 Buddhists and 7,500 Christians. Hindus, Baha'is, atheists, Taoists, and Sikhs all number less than 500. Almost 17,000 Bruneians express no religious preference. Religious groups do not typically experience conflict and interact peacefully. Converts to Islam receive financial incentives from the government.¹¹⁵⁵

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 27th

The constitution allows for religious freedom of non-Muslims, although government restricts these rights. The official religion is Islam. Less tolerance is demonstrated towards non-Muslims than in the past, as indicated by the government discontinuing the right to religious instruction in private schools. Proselytism by non-Muslim groups is forbidden. The government promotes Islam and pressures Muslims to refrain from

¹¹⁵⁵ "Brunei," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127265.htm>

inter-faith relations. Some non-Muslim groups report challenges in bringing religious literature into Brunei. Marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims is prohibited.¹¹⁵⁶

Largest Cities

Urban: 75%

Bandar Seri Begawan, **Kuala Belait, Seria, Tutong, Bangar.**

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

One of the five largest cities has a group, which is smaller than a branch and is not considered an independent congregation. Forty percent (40%) of the national population lives in the five largest cities.

LDS History

Members have lived in Brunei from as early as the 1980s. Elder Russell M. Nelson visited with members from Brunei during the Miri East Malaysia District conference in early 2010.¹¹⁵⁷ Brunei is assigned to the Singapore Mission.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: Less than 100 (2012)

There are likely fewer than one hundred members in the country, consisting primarily of expatriate workers and few native members. Convert baptisms are infrequent due to restrictions on formal proselytism, although members can share their beliefs with friends and relatives.

Congregational Growth

Groups: 2 (2012)

Two small groups in Brunei are administered by the Miri East Malaysia District and meet in Bandar Seri Begawan and Kuala Belait.

Activity and Retention

Limited information is available, and most active members appear to be expatriate workers. There may be additional inactive members who are not known to the Church among expatriate workers.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Chinese.

All LDS scriptures are available in Chinese. Only *Gospel Principles Simplified* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are translated into Malay. The *Articles of Faith* are translated into Iban.

Meetinghouses

There are no LDS chapels in Brunei. Meetings likely occur in the home of a member or in a rented space.

¹¹⁵⁶ "Brunei," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127265.htm>

¹¹⁵⁷ "Asian saints taught by Elder Nelson," LDS Church News, 13 March 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59001/Asian-saints-taught-by-Elder-Nelson.html>

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church is not known to have conducted humanitarian or development work in Brunei.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Government restrictions on proselyting and increasing intolerance for religious minorities severely limit Church activities. Meetings for the Brunei group are not published due to the conservative nature of this Islamic state, as the Church does not have official status. Some members may reside in Brunei who cannot find the Church due to these restrictions. In addition to laws rendering the population unreached by the Church's missionary efforts, local members also face challenges regarding their religious freedom and must be careful to respect and obey local laws.

Cultural Issues

Many cultural issues faced by the Church in Brunei mirror those in Malaysia but with less tolerance toward minority religious groups. Many Bruneians live lifestyles in harmony with some Church teachings, as indicated by low alcohol consumption and crime rates.

National Outreach

The entire population is unreached by the Church missionary program. Only non-Muslims with personal contacts with Church members may potentially learn about the Church. The small size of Brunei and urbanized population would potentially allow for few outreach centers to reach the population if proselytism were less restricted.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The sensitive nature of the Church in Brunei poses barriers for church activity, as expatriate members experience difficulty making contact with the local church. Convert retention is likely high as few, if any, converts in Brunei likely join the Church after overcoming considerable opposition and developing habits of regular church attendance.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Two-thirds of the population, virtually all Malay, are unreached by the Church due to their adherence to Islam. Indigenous groups and immigrants from East Malaysia and elsewhere may be challenging to integrate into congregations due to cultural differences.

Language Issues

With the exception of native English speakers and Chinese, the population lacks LDS scriptures in the native languages. The Book of Mormon translation into Malay was initiated in the late 2000s but will likely take many years to complete. Worship services likely use English or Malay.

Leadership

Limited active membership results in limited leadership insufficient for the organization of a branch. The

Church in Brunei appears to be largely dependent on transient expatriate members. Training and mentoring local leaders will be difficult due to government restrictions on religious freedom.

Temple

Brunei is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. Temple trips likely occur through the Miri East Malaysia District, as the active Church membership in Brunei is likely too small to support its own temple trips. Such trips are likely to be infrequent due to long distances and travel costs, as well as the preponderance of transient expatriate members who may have easier temple access in their home regions. A temple in Singapore would reduce these burdens.

Comparative Growth

Due to restrictions, there has been little growth in Brunei, with the small group servicing primarily foreign expatriate workers. The Church's presence in Brunei is comparable in size to some Muslim nations, primarily in North Africa.

Christian groups report that little to no progress has been made in increasing their congregations over the past couple of decades.

Future Prospects

With a small population and heavy government restrictions on non-Muslim faiths, Brunei is unlikely to experience significant church growth in the medium-term future. No other Muslim nation in Southeast Asia is as intolerant towards Christians. Government restrictions and Malay cultural customs limit missionary efforts among religious minorities to personal contacts of Church members in Brunei.

Prospects exist for groups to mature into independent branches under the Miri East Malaysia District. Greater progress will not occur without increased member-missionary outreach towards non-Muslim personal contacts of members who join the Church in greater numbers. Additional foreign members who relocate to Brunei may help strengthen the congregation if they are able to locate it.

BURMA

Geography

AREA: 676,578 square km. Burma, officially the Union of Myanmar, occupies a large area of Southeastern Asia by the Indian Ocean and borders China, Laos, Thailand, Bangladesh, and India. The southwest monsoon occurs from June to September, whereas the northeast monsoon lasts from December to April. Milder temperatures and less rainfall characterize the winter, and the summer consists of tropical, hot, and rainy weather. Mangroves line many of the coastal areas, especially near Rangoon. Flood plains dominate the terrain around Rangoon and rugged highlands cover the northeastern areas bordering Thailand, Laos, and China. The northernmost areas reach into the Himalayas. Mountain ranges stretch along the Indian border from the northernmost areas down to the Indian Ocean. The Irrawaddy River flows north to south, traveling from the Himalayas and emptying into the ocean by Rangoon. The Salween is another major river that cuts through the highlands and empties by Maulmain. A strip of land travels southward from the Salween River down to the Isthmus of Kra with many small islands along the coast. Frequent earthquakes and cyclones are natural hazards, the latter especially in the Irrawaddy Delta. The greatest environmental issues are deforestation and pollution. Burma is administratively divided into seven divisions and seven states.

Peoples

Burman: 68%
Shan: 9%
Karen: 7%
Rakhine: 4%
Chinese: 3%
Indian: 2%
Mon: 2%
Other: 5%

Burmans constitute the majority and populate coastal regions from the Bangladeshi border to the Irrawaddy Delta, the plains along the Irrawaddy River from Rangoon northward to the middle of Sagaing Division and southern Kachin State, and coastal areas and islands of Tanintharyi Division. The Shan reside in the highlands located in Shan State. Karen populate areas along the Thai border in Kayah and Kayin States and reside along the border of Thailand all the way south to the Isthmus of Kra. Rakhine live in Rakhine State. The Chinese have a presence in many large cities and have populations concentrated in a couple areas along the Chinese border in Kachin State. Indians primarily live in Rangoon and Mandalay. The Mon populate the Mon State. Other notable minority ethnic groups include Chin, Thai, Va, De'ang, Jingpo, Lisu, Naga, Lahu, and Akha.

Population: 54,584,650 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 1.07% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 2.23 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 62.91 male, 67.71 female (2012)

Languages: Burmese (66%), Karen dialects (7%), Shan (7%), Chinese (2%), Rohingya (2%), other (16%). Burmese is the official language. One hundred eleven languages are spoken in Burma. Languages with over

one million speakers include Burmese (32 million), Karen dialects (3.2 million), Shan (3.2 million), Chinese (1.0 million), and Rohingya (1.0 million).

Literacy: 89.9% (2006)

History

Various ethnic groups have lived in Burma for thousands of years. The first known kingdom that encompassed most of present-day Burma was the Bagan or Pagan Kingdom between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. The Mongols invaded in the late thirteenth century. Following their departure, the region fragmented into smaller kingdoms. Larger kingdoms began to assimilate the smaller kingdoms in the sixteenth century, notably under the Taungoo Kingdom. The Konbaung Dynasty expanded Burma into the Assam region of India in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The British took control of Burma during the nineteenth century and did not conquer the entire territory for sixty-two years. Burma was administrated by British controlled India until 1937 when it was made into its own colony. Independence from Great Britain took place in 1948 and was quickly followed by single party military rule. Ne Win ruled from 1962 to 1988, when he was overthrown by the military. The National League for Democracy (NLD) won the multiparty elections in 1990, but the junta refused to relinquish their power and placed the leader of the NLD under house arrest for the majority of the time until present. Anti-government demonstrations and civil disorder occurred in the fall of 2007, which were quickly suppressed with the deaths of at least thirteen and the imprisonment of thousands of protesters. Pro-democracy activists and Buddhist monks were at the forefront of the demonstrations. Cyclone Nargis caused widespread devastation in May 2008 and left at least 80,000 dead. A new constitution was adopted in May 2008 by public referendum as a result of the ruling party's roadmap to democracy initiative. Elections were held in 2010 for the first time since 1990 and again in 2012, although the elections were criticized for irregularities by international observers. Increasing political freedoms have been applauded by many foreign countries, although significant challenges remain.

Culture

Theravada Buddhism continues to heavily influence Burmese culture. At times, there has been intolerance of Christian groups. There are a large number of pagodas and monasteries that hold cultural significance. Soccer is the most popular sport. Cuisine has similarities with Southeast Asia and includes seafood, noodles, rice, and soup. Most live in poverty, while the small elite are alleged to earn much of their money through the narcotics trade. Historically, women received a large amount of respect and rights, but the ruling regime has limited women's rights. Overall, Burmese are friendly and warm people.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,300 (2011) [2.7% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.483

Corruption Index: 1.5 (2011)

The ruling junta, widely criticized for corruption by international agencies, poorly managed the economy and failed to attract greater foreign investment in a nation rich in natural resources. Elections have led to more moderate national leadership, although the army retains a strong army influence on politics and many vestiges of the old system remain. Poverty is especially widespread and severe in rural areas. A third of the national population is estimated to live below the poverty line. Agriculture accounts for 43% of the GDP and employs 70% of the workforce. Primary agriculture products include rice, pulses, and beans. Services claim 37% of the GDP and 23% of the workforce. Primary industries include food processing, timber and wood products, and mining. Commonly mined minerals and resources include copper, tin, tungsten, iron, oil, gems, and natural gas. Primary exports include natural gas, wood products, and agricultural products. Economic sanctions on Burma from many in the international community have limited trade. Thailand receives half the exports.

Other important export partners include India, China and Japan. Primary import partners include China, Thailand, and Singapore.

Burma ranks as one of the worst countries worldwide for corruption. Information concerning much of the perceived illegal activity occurring is limited due to the tight control exerted by the government. Common illegal activity includes drug trafficking, illegal logging, human trafficking, and close ties between junta leaders and organized crime. Burma is the world's second largest producer of opium after Afghanistan. Human trafficking occurs with neighboring nations as well as between rural communities and industrial centers for industrial, commercial, and sex trade purposes. Laws punishing corruption are not enforced. Over the past few years, the only area where corruption has been reduced has been in money laundering.¹¹⁵⁸

Faiths

Buddhist: 89%

Christian: 4%

Muslim: 4%

Animist: 1%

Other: 2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Baptist 1,444,132

Catholic 450,000

Seventh Day Adventists 29,817 217

Jehovah's Witnesses 3,685 70

Latter-day Saints ~100 2

Religion

Most Burmese are Theravada Buddhists. Estimates on the number of Muslims widely vary, with some reports claiming that as much as 20% of the population is Muslim. Muslims mainly belong to the Rohingya, Malay, Panthay (Burmese Chinese), and Burmese Indian ethnic groups. Seventy-five percent (75%) of Christians are Baptists, and the remainder mainly consists of Catholics. Many of the Christians are from ethnic minority groups (Chin, Kachin, Karen, Lahu, Lisu, and Kachin) rather than the Burmese majority.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 32nd

Religious freedom is mentioned in the new constitution, but the government retains the right to limit religious freedom of any groups and often imposes restrictions. Foreign missionaries were expelled in the 1960s. Religious groups experience increasing difficulty importing religious literature at this time. Local Christians oftentimes are not allowed to proselyte. Christian and Muslims face restrictions on vocabulary, as the Pali language is viewed as sacred and only to be used by Buddhists. Government limits the number of Bibles imported. Christian and Muslims face delays or restrictions from constructing new buildings and maintaining existing ones. Preferential treatment of Buddhists and persecution of South Asian Muslims frequently occurs. The greatest suppression of religious freedom occurs when religious groups coupled political motives in opposition to the military junta. In recent years, politically active Buddhist monks have experienced heavy

¹¹⁵⁸ Chene, Marie. "Overview of corruption in Burma (Myanmar)," Transparency International, 23 March 2009.

persecution from the government. Muslims in Rakhine State experience the heaviest persecution, and many have fled to refugee camps in neighboring Bangladesh.¹¹⁵⁹

Largest Cities

Urban: 33%

Rangoon, **Mandalay**, **Mawlamyine**, **Patheingyi**, **Bago**, **Monywa**, **Akyab**, **Meiktila**, **Taunggyi**, **Mergui**, **Dawei**, **Lashio**, **Pyaw**, **Myingyan**, **Henzada**, **Maymyo**, **Pakokku**, **Thaungtha**.

Cities in **bold** do not have congregations.

One of the eighteen largest cities has a congregation. Seventeen percent (17%) of the national population lives in the eighteen largest cities.

LDS History

The first Burmese members joined the Church in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Burmese members traveled to the Thai border and were taught and baptized in Thailand before returning to Burma.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: ~100 (2012)

In the late 2000s, six refugees from Burma were members of the Haven Ward in the South Salt Lake Stake.¹¹⁶⁰ In 2009, significant Karen-speaking membership growth prompted the creation of the first Karen-speaking branch in Utah. Fifty members belonged to the branch at its creation, and over fifty converts join the Church during the following six months. In addition to Karen, members also spoke Burmese and Karenni. Sacrament attendance for the branch has climbed to the 170s.¹¹⁶¹

Several Burmese members have joined the Church in South Asia. Kham Kho Chin Thang went to Malaysia in the early 2000s where he joined the Church and introduced the Church to his fiancé, who also joined. They later returned to Burma and remained faithful despite a limited Church presence. The couple attended the temple in Hong Kong in 2006 and continues to reside in Burma.¹¹⁶²

Due to the status of the government and lack of official Church presence, the Church does not report official membership totals.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 2 Groups: 1? (2012)

The first missionaries arrived in Burma in the 1840s and 1850s and preached in Rangoon. The branch was shortly thereafter discontinued and later recreated in the 1880s. A small branch was established that was

¹¹⁵⁹ "Burma," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127266.htm>

¹¹⁶⁰ Askar, Jamshid. "Part of the family: Mentors knit close ties with their charges," LDS Church News, 13 May 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57324/Part-of-the-family-Mentors-knit-close-ties-with-their-charges.html>

¹¹⁶¹ Stettler, Jeremiah. "Finding refuge—and resources—in the LDS Church," The Salt Lake Tribune, 2010.1.1 http://www.sltrib.com/lds/ci_14095518

¹¹⁶² "The search for a better life," News from the Church, 2 July 2008. http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?locale=0&sourceId=64df050a380ea110VgnVCM100000176f620a____&vgnnextoid=7cecc8fe9c88d010VgnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD

discontinued prior to 1900.¹¹⁶³ Burma was assigned to the Singapore Mission in 1969 and then to the Thailand Bangkok Mission in 1973.¹¹⁶⁴

A branch in Rangoon has functioned for many years. A branch was organized in under the Thailand Bangkok Mission named the Thailand Bangkok Mission Burmese Branch for members living in remote locations. Members likely meet in small groups in additional locations, perhaps including Mandalay. One member group meets in northern Burma and has infrequent visits and may not be authorized to hold sacrament meetings. Some missionary reports indicate that additional branches may have been organized in 2009 or 2010.

Multiple senior missionary couples serve at a time and have worked in Burma for many years. Senior couples primary work on humanitarian and development projects and also provide some training and mentoring for Burmese members.

Activity and Retention

Activity and retention levels are difficult to ascertain as the Church does not report membership or congregation information. Local members appear to exhibit high self-sufficiency and activity. As many as one hundred members actively participate in Sunday meetings that may represent over 50% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese Chinese.

All LDS scriptures and most Church materials are available in Mandarin and Cantonese. Burmese translations of Church materials are limited to *Gospel Fundamentals* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*. A few General Conference talks have been translated into Burmese starting in the 2000s.

Meetinghouses

The building housing the Rangoon Branch is a renovated building that is either owned or rented by the Church. Groups likely meet in the privacy of members' homes.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church provided continued humanitarian and development assistance in Burma for several years following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.¹¹⁶⁵ Water projects have occurred over the past several years in locations such as in Kayin State. Senior missionaries donated 200 school bags for children at a local monastery. LDS charities have donated funds to bring clean water for local hospitals.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church has made significant progress in establishing the Church in Burma despite the restrictive nature of the military junta. Current legislation and government policies prohibit the Church's foreign missionary program and limits missionary work among members. The LDS Church carefully honors and obeys the law

¹¹⁶³ "India," Deseret News 2010 Church Almanac, p. 502-4

¹¹⁶⁴ "The Church in Thailand," Friend, Apr 1975, 42.

¹¹⁶⁵ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Unprecedented year," LDS Church News, 14 January 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48384/Unprecedented-year.html>

in Burma. Existing members are generally permitted to meet, but outreach is largely limited to family and personal contacts of members.

Cultural Issues

Persecution of Christians from Buddhists and the government is a major cultural issue that has persisted over the past fifty years.

National Outreach

Virtually the entire population remains unreached by the Church. Only those with close friends or family members in the Church have access to learning more about the Church. The branch in Rangoon and other congregations in different locations may one day provide the Church with the opportunity to conduct missionary work both in and outside Rangoon if open proselytism is allowed. The mission president from the Thailand Bangkok Mission frequently visits Burma to meet with local members in the Rangoon Branch and other locations. The large rural population will be a challenge for the Church to reach in the coming decades.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity appears among the highest in Asian countries without an official Church presence. It is unclear whether many convert to join the Church in Burma or whether most members joined the Church in other nations and later returned to their homeland. Member activity is likely limited due to the distribution of few members in many areas around the country.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Church does not appear to have faced issues with differing ethnic groups assimilating into the same congregation, likely due to the extreme limited member presence. Challenges may occur if the Church experiences greater growth with differences between Burmese and other ethnic groups.

Language Issues

Church meetings are held in Burmese or English. Sunday School is conducted in Burmese. Members fluent in both Burmese and English assist senior missionaries in traveling around the country and translating Church materials. The lack of any LDS scripture translations in Burmese greatly challenges the development of a Burmese member base and limits understanding of gospel principles.

With the exception of a couple Chinese languages, the lack of church resources in any minority language materials also limits outreach and the doctrinal understanding of members from minority groups. The recent rapid increase of Karen speaking membership in Salt Lake City may necessitate the translation of Church materials in Karen and other minority languages that could be utilized in Burma.

Leadership

In 2006, a senior missionary served as the president of the Rangoon Branch. The second Burmese missionary to serve a mission from Burma began his mission in 2007. Local leadership continues to be very limited and limits greater membership growth outside of Rangoon.

Temple

Burma belongs to the Hong Kong China Temple District. Some Burmese members have been to the temple to receive their endowments. The trip for members to Hong Kong is expensive and demanding on time and distance. Prospects of a nearer temple in Thailand or Singapore would greatly reduce the challenges members experience to go to the temple.

Comparative Growth

Burma has seen comparable growth to other South and Southeast Asian nations in which the Church does not have official recognition. Nepal and Laos have similarly sized membership and national outreach. The Church in Burma has achieved greater progress than in Bangladesh. Among nations without an official Church presence with organized branches in Asia, Burma faces challenges in sending out local full-time missionaries.

Baptist and Catholic denominations gained the majority of their converts and established themselves prior to the rise of the current government. However, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists have seen continued growth and have numerous congregations throughout the country. These denominations benefit from local members who carry on ecclesiastical duties with little to no assistance from outside the country. Christian groups report increases in membership, but government restrictions on proselytizing limit growth. Nonetheless, the continued expansion of such groups demonstrates the potential for considerable LDS growth through member-missionary efforts even under challenging conditions.

Future Prospects

The growth of the LDS Church in Burma will depend on local members sharing the Church's teachings with close friends and family for membership growth to occur. Burmese baptized abroad and returning home may provide additional resources to increase the strength and reach of the Church in Burma. Once additional congregations are created in the Rangoon area, a district may be organized. Outreach to the population will be limited to close friends and family of members until significant change occurs in government policies regarding religion and proselytism.

CAMBODIA

Geography

AREA: 181,035 square km. Cambodia is located in Southeastern Asia and borders Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and the Gulf of Thailand. The climate in the country is tropical, with plains occupying most of the country covered in rainforest and jungle, much of which is swampy. The Mekong River enters Cambodia from the north and exits to the southeast into Vietnam before emptying into the South China Sea. A large, shallow lake with swampy coastlines named Tonle Sap exists between the capital city of Phnom Penh and the second largest city of Battambang to the northwest. A few small islands near the coast of Cambodia in the Gulf of Thailand also belong to the country. Flooding is the primary natural hazard, whereas deforestation and strip mining are environmental concerns. There are twenty-three administrative provinces.

Peoples

Khmer: 90%
Vietnamese: 5%
Chinese: 4%
Other: 4%

Cambodians call themselves Khmer and account for 90% of the population. The Vietnamese are concentrated primarily in the capital, Phnom Penh. Chinese constitute about 1%, whereas other ethnicities such as Cham comprise the remaining 4%. The Cham were targeted by the Khmer Rouge along with the Chinese and had their numbers significantly reduced.

Population: 14,952,665 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.687% (July 2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.78 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 60.66 male, 65.53 female (2012)

Languages: Khmer [Cambodian] (95%), Vietnamese (2.7%), Cham (2.0%), other (0.3%). Khmer is the official language; 23 languages are spoken. Only Khmer has over one million speakers (13.8 million).

Literacy: 73.6% (2004)

History

The powerful Angkor Empire occupied what is today Cambodia between 900 and 1200 AD. The French colonized Cambodia in the late nineteenth century and controlled the region until World War II when the area was invaded by Japan. Following World War II, France regained jurisdiction until independence in the early 1950s. A communist regime named the Khmer Rouge overtook Phnom Penh in 1975 under Pol Pot. For the following several years, an estimated one to three million people in the country were executed or died from starvation or exhaustion due to ethnic cleansing and the implementation of radical communist ideology. The Khmer Rouge was driven out by the Vietnamese in the late 1970s and 1980s. For the following decade and a half Cambodia suffered from political instability between the Khmer and Vietnamese. A stable government was elected in the late 1990s. Since this time, Cambodia has enjoyed increasing peace and stability.

Cambodia is home to many temple sites build in the twelfth century, such as the famous Angkor Wat temple complex. Many of the tourists come to Cambodia to visit Angkor Wat and similar sites.

Culture

Buddhism and the Angkor Empire have heavily shaped Cambodian culture. Social views on wealth and its public display have changed rapidly since the fall of the Khmer Rouge. Wealth is generally displayed through jewelry or clothing. Rapid industrialization continues to increase materialism. Etiquette is deeply related to the Khmer language. Ethnic tensions between Khmer and Vietnamese are high. Fish and rice are important food staples. Bonn Om Teuk, a boat racing festival, occurs annually on the Mekong River. Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are lower than most countries.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,300 (2011) [4.78% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.523

Corruption Index: 2.1 (2011)

Most of the economy centers on agriculture. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the workforce was employed in agriculture in 2004. Economic conditions in Cambodia are quickly improving with growth in tourism, construction, textiles, and agriculture. Growth appears to be primarily centered in the largest cities. The countryside remains very poor and isolated from urban, wealthier cities. Primary crops include rice, silk, nuts, and vegetables. The area around the second largest city Battambang is the most productive for agriculture, and rice can be grown year round due to easily accessible water for irrigation. Oil reserves were discovered off the coast of Cambodia around 2005, and plans were made to extract this resource, which is expected to generate revenue in 2013. Other natural resources include gems and wood products. Cambodia sends over half of its exports to the United States, whereas Thailand sends the most imports. Geographically Cambodia is located in a favorable location. Thailand, Vietnam, China, and Indonesia also represent important trading partners.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and a serious detriment to society and the modernization of the economy. There have been some reports of government, police, and military authorities participating in illicit drug trafficking. Money laundering remains a serious concern.

Faiths

Buddhist: 93%

Muslim: 5%

Christian: 2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 20,000

Latter-day Saints 11,469 27

Seventh Day Adventists 5,571 6

Jehovah's Witnesses 498 9

Religion

The 1998 census in Cambodia found that 96.4% of people identified themselves as Buddhists and 2.4% identified as Muslims. Islam is practiced by the Cham people who live around the city of Kampong Cham.

Christianity is practiced by less than 2% of the population. There has been concern about some Christian groups that have disturbed public life and tried to coerce Buddhists to abandon Buddhism for food or money.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Government does not permit religious discrimination. The official religion is Buddhism, and the government recognizes Buddhist holidays and promotes the religion. Religious groups must be registered to construct buildings and hold meetings. Only Buddhism can be taught in public schools; other religions may be taught in private schools.

Largest Cities

Urban: 22%

Phnom Penh, **Kâmpóng Saôm**, Battambang, Siem Reap, **Sisophon**, **Kracheh**, Kampong Thum, Ta Khmau, **Pousat**, **Prey Veng**.

Cities in **bold** do not have congregations.

Five of the ten largest cities have a congregation. Ten percent (10%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The first Cambodian members of the Church were baptized in the United States in the 1970s after emigrating due to war in Southeast Asia. In the late 1980s, a French doctor shared copies of the Book of Mormon with a few Khmer colleges in Phnom Penh and donated a few others to local education institutions. In 1991, there were eight missionaries teaching the Gospel in Cambodia in Boston, Massachusetts among the Cambodian population.¹¹⁶⁶ However in 2009, there were no Cambodian speaking congregations in the Northeast United States. Missionaries who have served in the region report of hundreds of inactive Cambodian members.

Legal recognition was granted to the Church in Cambodia on March 4, 1994. The first Church representatives in the country served in humanitarian and service efforts. Senior missionary couples serving as humanitarian/service missionaries teaching English began to labor in neighboring Vietnam in 1993. At this time the senior missionaries in Cambodia were not allowed to proselyte. The first Church meeting in the country was held on March 27, 1994 in a hotel. The first convert baptism in Cambodia was in May, and congregations were created shortly thereafter.¹¹⁶⁷ President Hinckley visited Cambodia in May of 1996 and dedicated the country for the preaching of the Gospel. President Hinckley spoke at a special fireside with 439 in attendance, half of whom were not church members. In July 1997, the Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission was created from the Thailand Bangkok Mission.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 11,469 (2012)

There were 601 Latter-day Saints at the end of 1997, 891 the following year and over 1,000 by year-end 1999. Membership more doubled in 2000 to 2,136. For the next five years, the Church experienced rapid growth in membership. By the end of 2002, membership had climbed to nearly 5,100. Membership increased by another thousand members to 6,089 by the end of 2003. Growth began to slow with membership increasing to 6,865 at year-end 2004, 7,465 in 2005, and 7,874 in 2006. In the late 2000s, membership growth accelerated as

¹¹⁶⁶ "Boston: Gospel rolls forward in one of nation's oldest cities," LDS Church News, 28 September 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20681/Boston-Gospel-rolls-forward-in-one-of-nations-oldest-cities.html>

¹¹⁶⁷ White, Leland D. and Joyce B. "The Gospel Takes Hold in Cambodia," Liahona, Oct 1997, 41.

membership reached 10,530 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates ranged from 12%–63% between 2001 and 2004 and declined to 2%–9% between 2005 and 2009. In 2010, annual membership growth rates increased to 18.2%.

The majority of the growth of the Church over the years has taken place in Phnom Penh. In Battambang, the branch experienced rapid growth during the first year and a half of its existence. In April 2005 that membership in the branch reached 150 and had outgrown their rented building used for Sunday Church meetings.¹¹⁶⁸ By July 2005 the first five missionaries were called to serve missions from the branch, and membership had risen to 170.¹¹⁶⁹ In 2010, one in 1,396 was nominally LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 28 (April 2013)

The first district was created in Phnom Penh in November 1995, with three branches (two Cambodian-speaking and one Vietnamese-speaking) and over 200 members. By the end of 1997 there were three Cambodian-speaking branches and one Vietnamese-speaking branch. A fifth congregation was organized by 1999.¹¹⁷⁰

Congregations began to be established outside of the capital city in the 2000s. In 2000, the number of branches increased from five to eleven. A Vietnamese-speaking district was created for the three Vietnamese branches in Phnom Penh in December 2001, and the Cambodian-speaking district was divided in December 2002 to create a second Cambodian-speaking district in Phnom Penh. A branch was created in Kampong Cham sometime before 2001. The first branch in Battambang was organized in December 2003. In 2004, there were twenty congregations. A fourth district in Cambodia was created in 2005 in the city of Kampong Cham, where there were three branches established.

New additional cities were opened to missionary work and branches were established in 2007. These cities were Siem Reap and Kampong Thom, both located between Phnom Penh and Battambang north of Tonle Sap. In 2009, two new branches were created in Cambodia. An English speaking branch, named the Phnom Penh 13th Branch, was created. The Battambang Branch divided into the Battambang 1st and the Battambang 2nd Branches. In 2010, Battambang became its own district with a mere two branches. In 2011 and 2012, several new branches were organized the Church created the Phnom Penh Cambodia East District.

As of June 2011, there were four Cambodian-speaking congregations in the United States, consisting of three congregations in California (one ward and two branches) and one branch in Utah. The first U.S. Cambodian-speaking ward was organized in Long Beach, California in 2005.

Activity and Retention

Branch members are preparing for the responsibilities of wards and stakes, but as of yet no announcement or projection has been made for the first stake. Low member activity appears to be the main impediment to the creation of a stake in Phnom Penh. Nominal membership growth became increasingly uncoupled from congregational growth in the mid-2000s. The number of branches increased from fourteen in 2002 to twenty-four in 2009, while nominal membership more than tripled, indicating that most new members were not retained. The average number of members per congregation increased from 194 in 2000 to 439 in 2010. Most

¹¹⁶⁸ "Cambodian branch remembers anniversary," LDS Church News, 30 April 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47241/Cambodian-branch-remembers-anniversary.html>

¹¹⁶⁹ "Called to serve," LDS Church News, 2 July 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47501/Called-to-serve.html>

¹¹⁷⁰ Stahle, Shaun D. "Emerging Church in Cambodia," LDS Church News, 14 February 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45081/Emerging-Church-in-Cambodia.html>

branches in Phnom Penh had between 100 and 200 active members in 2011. In September 2009, sacrament meeting attendance in the Siem Reap Branch was reported to be around 130, double the number from a year before. During the 2009–2010 school year, 603 were enrolled in seminary and institute. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 3,500, or 30%–35% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Khmer, Vietnamese.

All LDS scriptures are available in Khmer, Vietnamese, and Chinese. The Church has translated some priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, young women, primary, missionary, audio/visual, family history, and scripture materials into these languages. Some CES materials are also available in Khmer.

Meetinghouses

The first Church built meetinghouse was dedicated in 2004 to be used by all three districts in Phnom Penh for large meetings. During 2008, at least two new chapels were built in Phnom Penh. A district meetinghouse for the Phnom Penh Cambodia North District was dedicated at the end of May. A meetinghouse for the Phnom Penh 4th and 11th Branches was dedicated later that year in the southeastern portion of the city.

Health and Safety

Cambodia has a high risk for the spread of infectious disease; 0.8% are infected with AIDS/HIV.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Many members of the Church in the United States have periodically participated in donation and humanitarian work for Cambodia.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church enjoys religious freedom and does not face legal challenges in conducting missionary work. Members and missionaries may openly worship, assemble, and proselyte.

National Outreach

Thirteen percent (13%) of the national population resides in cities with an LDS congregation. The Church is only accessible by Cambodians living in or around Phnom Penh, Battambang, Kampong Cham, Siem Reap, and Kampong Thom. The remaining large cities lack a Church presence, including Kampong Saom on the coast and Sisophon near the Thai border. About half of the approximate 14.5 million Cambodians live in a province that does not have a congregation. Even in the provinces with a church presence, most have hundreds of thousands of people in unreached areas. The majority of Cambodia's population is rural, which presents challenges in proclaiming the gospel more widely.

The Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission has established branches and opened new proselytizing areas on the outskirts of Phnom Penh. Branches currently operate in Sen Sok (about five miles northeast of Phnom Penh), Ta Khmau (about five miles south of Phnom Penh) and Kean Svay (about five miles east of Phnom Penh). These branches belong to one of the two Cambodian speaking districts in Phnom Penh. As the Church grows

in Phnom Penh, cities and villages near the capital may eventually have congregations established. Areas to the northeast and south of Phnom Penh are some of the most densely populated areas in Cambodia.

The Vietnamese LDS community in Phnom Penh conducts limited outreach in Vietnam, where nonnatives are barred from serving as missionaries. In the late 2000s, Vietnam-native missionaries had to be temporarily withdrawn to serve in Vietnamese areas of Phnom Penh and train newly arrived North American missionaries.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The Church in Cambodia has grown rapidly with modest to low retention rates. During the decade of the 2000s, membership increased eightfold, and the number of congregations increased nearly five times. Membership and congregation growth has slowed dramatically between 2006 to present. One reason for the slowdown in growth is mission leadership devoting more time and resources to preparing members of the Church in Phnom Penh for a stake to be created instead of adding as many converts as in prior years. The division of the Battambang branch was delayed until the summer of 2009, notwithstanding rapid numerical membership growth, due to challenges of low convert retention and difficulties with leadership development.

Poverty produces challenges for retention when individuals join the Church in hopes of material improvement. In Kampong Cham, where many members joined at least partly due to strong church welfare programs, only about 50 of the 390 members in one branch attend Church meetings. Problems with recent converts and actively linked to their dependence on welfare monies is not unusual among many other nationalities in Southeast Asia in their home countries and in the United States. It can be difficult for missionaries and leadership to discern whether there are those learning about the Church for the right reasons, especially if they struggle financially.

Another key factor in the slowdown has been prior practices of quickly baptizing who were not regularly attending church before baptism and who lacked other gospel habits and subsequently did not become and remain active members. A focus on ensuring the proper teaching of prospective converts and requiring that necessary life changes be consistently implemented and firmly established before baptism will be essential to decrease avoidable convert losses.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Language differences and ethnic tensions between Khmer and Vietnamese contributed to the establishment of language-specific congregations and districts in Phnom Penh. Integration of the Cham people into congregations may be challenging due to the large differences in culture, language and religion.

Language Issues

The large range of ecclesiastical materials and all LDS scriptures in Khmer and Vietnamese allow potential outreach for 97.7% of the population. Outreach among the Muslim Cham and small, isolated tribes speaking native languages will be challenging as the Church has yet to begin outreach in these locations.

Missionary Service

In 1997, there were seventeen missionaries serving in the country. Earlier that year, the first missionary from Cambodian was called to serve from in Idaho. The number of missionaries serving in the country increased to twenty-four by the end of 1998. In 2004, the number of missionaries serving in the country had risen to about one hundred, half of whom were Cambodian. While Cambodians tend to serve in greater numbers than

other Asian nations, Cambodia does not appear self-sufficient in its missionary force. A modest number of Cambodian youth have served missions in Cambodia and outside the country.

Leadership

With the exception of the English-speaking branch, all branches appear to be led by local Cambodian members. The majority of Cambodia's population is under the age of thirty. This creates challenges for fellowshipping young converts while limiting those who can lead congregations due to their age. However, many youth converts who remain active later become pillars of strength as they live the gospel, serve missions, and marry and raise families in the Church. Most members have access to Church Education System (CES) programs designed to strengthen the testimonies and establish a doctrinal foundation. Senior missionaries serving in the Siem Reap and Kampong Thom Branches reported in 2009 that the seminary and institute programs were available for members of the Church in these remote branches for the first time, preparing many youth to serve missions.

Temple

Cambodia is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. Periodic temple trips are subsidized, as most members would not otherwise be able to afford the travel expenses, but still require member sacrifice. A temple in Cambodia may be more likely to be constructed after multiple stakes are organized in Phnom Penh.

Comparative Growth

Both Mongolia and Cambodia have experienced similar history regarding the establishment of the Church, its rapid growth, and size of their current LDS membership. The Church in Mongolia has seen higher retention and higher rates of missionary service than Cambodia, notwithstanding Cambodian immigrants in the United States being taught long before missionaries were serving in either Cambodia or Mongolia. Cambodia is the country in Southeast Asia with the second highest percentage of Latter-day Saints in the population after Singapore. In mid-2011, Cambodia was the country with the most members without a stake.

Like Mongolia, Cambodia has a very small Christian population. Other missionary-oriented Christian churches have small memberships in Cambodia, although various Baptist and Evangelical groups reported rapid growth from the mid-1990s to the present with church-planting approaches. The Seventh Day Adventist Church reported 5,952 members in Cambodia in six congregations in 2008 after operating in the country for eighty years and experiencing its most rapid growth between 1995 and 2000. Jehovah's Witnesses reported 329 members in 2008 for Cambodia. Both of these Christian groups had reported very slow growth rates in recent years. The majority of Cambodian Christians belong to mainline Protestant denominations.

Future Prospects

Cambodia offers abundant opportunities for future church growth. The creation of the first stakes appears likely within the next few years. Missionary work to date has been confined to a few major population centers and surrounding suburbs; most of the nation remains unreached. In 2009, missionaries reported that the Church is growing the strongest in Phnom Penh. Rapid, continued expansion into other regions of the country is likely as the member base becomes stronger in existing congregations. The recent slowdown in membership and congregation growth brings concern about whether Cambodians are becoming less receptive to the Gospel or whether more focus is centered on reactivation and training membership for their responsibilities in the Church. An increased focus on gospel habits and preparation for baptism as well as fellowshipping and integration will be necessary to improve convert retention rates and strengthen local congregations.

CHINA

Geography

AREA: 9,596,961 square km. The world's fourth largest country and occupying a large portion of East and Central Asia, China is a nation of great diversity in terrain and climate. The most densely populated areas in eastern China have temperate to sub-tropical climates with monsoon rains in the summer and dry weather in the winter. The Tibet Plateau, which consists of semi-arid plains and rugged peaks with little vegetation, subject to cold winters and mild summers, is the dominant geographic feature of western China. Rugged mountain ranges stretch from the Tibetan Plateau toward the fertile plains in the east. Large arid basins with remote mountain ranges are found in the northwest where the Taklamakan Desert is located. The Gobi Desert stretches into China along the Mongolian border. Manchuria experiences extreme ranges in temperature from hot, humid summer months to cold, dry winter months. The North China Plain and Sichuan Basin are densely populated. Major rivers include the Yangzi, Huang, Chang Jiang, and Xi Jiang. Typhoons, floods, tsunamis, droughts, and earthquakes are natural hazards. Environmental issues vary by region and include pollution, acid rain, inadequate supplies of potable water, desertification, deforestation, and soil erosion. The Three Gorges Dam was completed in 2008 and became fully operational in July 2012. It remains a subject of environmental debate due to the flooding of vast areas of riverfront, the displacement of millions who once lived in the area now occupied by the reservoir, and the threat to endangered species. The dam has provides hydroelectric power, thus reducing air pollution, and reduces flooding along the Yangtze River, which has affected millions in the past. China is administratively divided into twenty-three provinces, five autonomous regions, and four municipalities. China claims Taiwan as a province, although the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China maintain two separate administrations, with the latter based on the island of Taiwan. Land and border disputes continue along several regions along the Indian and Pakistani border and in additional locations.

Peoples

Han Chinese: 91.5%

Other: 8.5%

Most the population is Han Chinese. Other large minority ethnicities include Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Miao, Uighur, Tujia, Yi, Mongol, Tibetan, Buyi, Dong, Yao, and Korean. Most of these ethnic groups live near border regions or in a patchwork of communities, such as the Hui. The government over the past several decades has moved Han Chinese throughout the country in an effort to increase national stability and mute regional ethnic differences in culture and identity.

Population: 1,343,239,923 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.481% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.55 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 72.82 male, 77.11 female (2012)

Languages: Mandarin Chinese is the official language and used in all schools, but 292 indigenous languages are spoken in China. Many of these languages use the simplified Chinese character script officially adopted by China. Native speakers of Chinese languages number approximately 1.15 billion (86.5%). Languages with

over one million speakers include Mandarin Chinese (840 million), Wu Chinese (77.2 million), Yue Chinese (52 million), Jinyu Chinese (45 million), Xiang Chinese (36 million), Hakka Chinese (25.7 million), Min Nan Chinese (25.7 million), Gan Chinese (20.6 million), Zhuang dialects (14.6 million), Min Bei Chinese (10.3 million), Miao dialects (10.1 million), Min Dong Chinese (8.82 million), Uighur (8.4 million), Huizhou Chinese (4.6 million), Tibetan dialects (3.4 million), Mongolian (3.38 million), Min Zhong Chinese (3.1 million), Bouyei (2.6 million), Pu-Xian Chinese (2.52 million), Nuosu (2 million), Korean (1.92 million), Dong dialects (1.46 million), Kazakh (1.25 million), Bai dialects (1.24 million).

Literacy: 90.9% (2000)

History

China was home to some of the most advanced civilizations in the ancient world but did not establish its current boundaries until the twentieth century. Ancient Chinese civilizations thrived in the east and went through several cycles of unification and division from several centuries before Christ until the establishment of the Song Dynasty in the tenth century. China once held large portions of Southeast Asia in its sphere of influence, and surrounding peoples with which the Chinese came into contact—Koreans, Japanese, Vietnamese, and others—adapted much from Chinese language, culture, and technology. The defeat of the Chinese armies at what is now Talas, Kyrgyzstan, by the Arabic Abbasid Caliphate in 751 AD ended Chinese hopes of hegemony in Central Asia. The Mongols invaded in the thirteenth century and established the Yuan Dynasty under Kublai Khan. The Ming Dynasty began in the fourteenth century and reestablished Chinese rule. In the seventeenth century, the Qing Dynasty came to power and expanded China's border to include Mongolia. European powers, especially the United Kingdom, occupied large regions of China and fought for greater influence and power in the nineteenth century in several military conflicts, including the Opium Wars. Chinese resistance to foreign domination culminated in the Boxer Rebellion of 1898–1901. In 1912, the Republic of China was established thereby ending the Qing Dynasty. During the first half of the twentieth century, Chiang Kai-Shek and the Nationalists attempted to unify China and fought the communists lead by Mao Zedong. War with Japan occurred from 1937 to 1945 and ended only with the Japanese surrender at the end of World War II. Following the Second Sino-Japanese War, civil war broke out until 1949. Communist forces overpowered the Nationalists, who fled to Taiwan and maintained the Republic of China, whereas the Communists established the People's Republic of China on the mainland.

Mao Zedong sought to rapidly modernize China and attempted to outcompete the world's leading agriculture producing nations through the Great Leap Forward. The program instituted massive agrarian reforms and established communes in an effort to increase crop yield and productivity but resulted in tens of millions of deaths due to famine caused by drought, poor agriculture practices, and the shipment of food by government officials to certain areas to fabricate unexpectedly abundant harvests. Mao also initiated the Cultural Revolution, which aimed to erase China's cultural history and traditions through destruction of historical sites, the banning of art and literature seen as a threat to the communist state, and the production of art and literature support the communist and socialist cause by state-sponsored writers and artists. Deng Xiaoping came to power in 1976 following Mao's death and brought about major economic and social reforms that prepared for the modernization of China. In 1979, the controversial state-sponsored family planning program called the One Child Policy came into effect, which limited Chinese couple to have just one child to slow population growth. In 1989, anti-government protesters clashed with law enforcement and military in the Tiananmen Square Massacre, which reaffirmed China's intolerance toward rapid social change and rebellion. Rapid economic growth has occurred in the 1990s until present, as many institutions have become decentralized and a free-market economy has been established.

China, the “Middle Kingdom,” or 中国, was viewed by Chinese as the center of civilization and center of the known world. Although China has experienced its share of internal and external conflicts, China on the whole has historically been a relatively peaceful nation without the expansionistic aims of an Alexander the Great,

Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, or Tamerlane to carve out a vast empire of subject peoples; many of its actions—from the construction of the Great Wall of China to the Sino-Japanese Wars—have been primarily defensive. This is reflected to this day by the fact that over 80% of the citizens of modern China are Han Chinese. Even Tibet was incorporated into the Mongol Empire and then inherited by the Yuan Dynasty of China founded by Kublai Khan, rather than being conquered by the Chinese, and the ongoing dispute over Taiwan is viewed by the Chinese as a matter of territorial integrity.

China's current status as a developing nation is a historical anomaly, as China was a world leader in technology and development through much of its history, although China's rapid growth and strong economy suggest that it is on track to again take a preeminent place among the nations.

Culture

Traditional Chinese values focus more on stability, harmony, order, and societal good, and less on change, innovation, and personal liberties, like Western societies. The Chinese people have experienced a long and illustrious history with no tradition of democracy in the Western sense; most modern Chinese appear to be generally content with their government and accept various controls as necessary to maintain order. Chinese cultural values often emphasized the importance of emulating exemplars of the past and revering ancestors. Change and innovation were often viewed less positively than in the West, although numerous important inventions that have benefited the West—the adjustable plow, the stirrup, and thousands more—were invented in China.¹¹⁷¹ To this day, Chinese demonstrate dedication and love of learning. Chinese pupils and students at all levels often study much longer than their Western counterparts, and Westerners are sometimes regarded as less disciplined. Principles of personal, family, and national honor and behavior according to socially accepted principles are very important to Chinese.

Few foreigners have succeeded in mastering the intricacies of Chinese language and protocols. Even the depth of a bow has significant meaning depending on the age, status, and relationship of individuals. To the civilized Chinese, foreigners were regarded largely as barbarians. These social barriers have begun to break down with government policies encouraging Han Chinese to intermarry with ethnic minorities, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang, as well as increasing cross-cultural relationships among Chinese working and studying overseas.

Confucianism and Daoism originated in China. Confucianism provided the source and philosophy for government and society for nearly two millennia and served as the basis, at least in part, for a well-ordered system of civil service exams for prospective public servants under the emperors. The ideals of the proper Confucian gentleman, or Junzi, continue to significantly influence Chinese culture. Communist reforms have removed much of the previous role religion played in culture and daily life. Han Chinese are the most influential ethnic group. Historically, China was a technologically advanced civilization and was the first to invent paper, printing, the compass, and gunpowder and boasts a proud, ancient tradition of astronomy. Scholarship and interest in science continue today. Soccer, martial arts, and many Western sports are popular recreational activities. China hosted the 2008 Olympic Games, which brought increased worldwide attention and awareness of the country. Alcohol consumption rates are moderate, whereas cigarette consumption rates are high. Chinese customs and culture have preferred males over females—especially in the countryside—resulting in a disproportionate number of males due to gender-selective abortions (which are illegal), and a gender imbalance with many men unable to marry. Some relaxation of the one-child policy has occurred in recent years to allow a second child if the first is a girl. Non-Chinese ethnicities also receive some exemptions to the One Child Policy.

¹¹⁷¹ Temple, Robert. *The Genius of China: 3,000 Years of Science, Discovery and Invention*. Inner Traditions International, Limited, 2007.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$8,400 (2011) [17.5% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.687

Corruption Index: 3.6 (2011)

The economy has transformed dramatically over the past thirty years from a centralized, closed system to a free-market economy with international investment and trade. Hundreds of millions have relocated from rural areas to cities and eastern provinces for better employment, creating major demographic and ecological challenges. China has the world's largest workforce and is capable of leading the world economically if development continues. In mid-2010, China overtook Japan to become the world's second largest economy after the United States. China's per capita income under a controlled economy and communist government is now at least three times the per capita income in India, the world's largest democracy, although both nations have similar populations and started at approximately the same level of income and development at independence in the late 1940s after World War II.

The environmental impact of mass population migrations has been devastating, but the agriculture section has the largest percentage of the workforce (39.5%) followed by services (33.2%). Industry employs 27.2% of the workforce. Agriculture produces only 10.6% of the GDP, whereas industry and services account for 46.8% and 42.6% of the GDP, respectively. GDP growth rates rank among the highest worldwide despite China's massive population. Only 2.7% of the population lives below the poverty line (2007), but many experience poor living conditions. Primary agriculture products include rice, wheat, potatoes, and corn. Major industries include mining, metal, machinery, textiles, oil and oil products, toys, electronics, food processing, vehicles, spacecraft, and telecommunications equipment. Primary trade partners include the United States, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Germany.

With a centralized government with few checks and balances, corruption is apparent in many aspects of society. As China integrates into the global economy, much of the nation's wealth is controlled by a small subset of the population. China has struggled to fight drug trafficking, especially heroin originating from Southeast Asia. Human trafficking of Chinese in nations around the world for exploitation and a poor human rights record are major international concerns. China has experienced some success in addressing organized crime in some of the larger cities.

Faiths

Chinese religions, Buddhism, nonreligious, atheist: 94%

Christian: 4%

Muslim: 2%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 17,300,000

Seventh Day Adventists 393,280 1,137

Latter-day Saints ~10,000 80+

Religion

A 2007 survey found that 31% of Chinese citizens over sixteen years of age were religious believers. In 2007, a public opinion polling firm based in China concluded 11%–16% of adults identify as Buddhists and less than 1% consider themselves Taoist. Most religiously active Chinese follow an agglomeration of Buddhism,

Taoism, and Confucianism. Muslims primarily consist of the Hui and Uighurs, who reside in north and northwestern China in the Ningxia Hui and Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Regions. The largest Protestant denomination is Baptist, followed by Lutheran. In recent years, many religious groups report rapid increases in followers.¹¹⁷²

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 37th

The constitution protects the freedom of religious belief but restricts religious activity and expression. There is no state religion. Traditional Chinese religion consists of a mix of Confucian ideals, Buddhism, Taoism or Daoism, and folk traditions. Five state-sanctioned religious groups (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant) are registered as patriotic religious organizations that may register individual congregations and operate places of worship or assembly. Proselytism may occur in a private setting or registered place of worship. Foreigners are banned from proselytism and face many restrictions interacting with local citizens. Many Christians meet in unregistered house churches. According to the constitution and law, religiously active Chinese are not to be under any foreign religious authority, resulting in religious groups such as Catholics having many underground clergy. The government has targeted many Protestant groups that hold home meetings and are not registered with the government. Muslims in some areas are restricted in their ability to perform pilgrimages, and some individuals are not permitted to enter local mosques. The distribution of religious literature is controlled by the government. Registered religious groups may produce and gather materials for the use of their members. Members of many religious groups have been imprisoned by government authorities for failing to comply with local laws and regulations pertaining to religious practice and generally serve prison sentences in labor camps. In recent years, the government has permitted the public greater access to religious writers and granted NGOs permission to conduct humanitarian work. The degree of religious freedom varies by location, with Tibet and Xinjiang Autonomous Regions experiencing the lowest levels of religious freedom.¹¹⁷³

Largest Cities

Urban: 43%

Shanghai, Beijing, **Nanchong**, **Tai'an**, **Kaifeng**, **Wuhan**, **Chongqing**, Chengdu, Tianjin, **Puyang**, **Shenyang**, **Shiyan**, **Harbin**, Xi'an, **Lanzhou**, Guangzhou, Nanjing, **Taiyuan**, **Yunfu**, **Changchun**, **Changsha**, **Jinan**, **Dalian**, **Zhengzhou**, **Shijiazhuang**, **Jilin**, Hangzhou, **Nanchang**, Qingdao, **Tangshan**, **Xinyang**, **Ürümqi**, **Fushun**, **Luoyang**, **Hefei**, **Liuyang**, **Handan**, Suzhou, **Shantou**, **Baotou**, **Anshan**, **Xuzhou**, **Fuzhou**, **Guiyang**, **Dayan**, **Wuxi**, **Datong**, **Xianyang**, **Huainan**, **Kunming**, Shenzhen, **Jieyang**.

Cities listed in **bold** do not have an LDS congregation.

Nine of the fifty-two largest cities have an English-speaking LDS congregation. Ten percent (10%) of the national population resides in the fifty-two largest cities. Nearly 400 cities have over 100,000 inhabitants, which accounts for 18% of the national population.

LDS History

President Brigham Young first considered sending missionaries to China in 1849. Three years later, three missionaries were called to preach in China. The missionaries arrived in Hong Kong in 1853 and only remained for two months, as they were unable to learn the language, the English-speaking population was

¹¹⁷² "China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau), International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

¹¹⁷³ "China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau), International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

unreceptive, and political instability was too great for travel outside of Hong Kong. Church leaders visited China a few times during the first half of the twentieth century to assess conditions for missionary work, but no missionaries were called. In 1949, the Church opened the Chinese Mission with headquarters in Hong Kong. A Church presence was established also in Macau, but the Church had little contact with the People's Republic of China until the late 1970s. Since 1989, the Church has sent members to work as English teachers in universities. In 1986, branches were organized in Beijing and Xi'an as non-Chinese members moved to China temporarily for work, and Chinese joined the Church elsewhere and returned to their homeland.¹¹⁷⁴ In 1996, President Hinckley briefly visited China by invitation to Shenzhen to visit Chinese folk villages modeled after the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii.¹¹⁷⁵ No proselytism has occurred in the People's Republic of China. In recent years, non-Chinese members have moved to China for employment in greater numbers. Greater freedom has also been granted to Chinese members who now may meet in segregated congregations from the foreign members and also may join the Church through family connections.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: ~10,000 (2012)

By year-end 2000, there were likely over 1,000 Church members. In 2010, membership was approaching 10,000. Growth has occurred from foreigners—primarily Westerners—moving for temporary employment, Chinese who joined the Church abroad and return, and converts from part-member families.

Congregational Growth

Branches and Groups: 80+ (2012)

The Beijing China International (English) District was organized in 1998 and administered the entire country. In the early 2000s, only two congregations functioned for foreigners and no independent branches appear to have been established for Chinese members. In 2008, a second district international (English) district was organized in Shanghai. In 2010, 14 branches functioned for English-speaking nonmainland Chinese and were based in Beijing, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Qingdao, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Suzhou, Tianjin, and Xi'an. Two district branches met administrative needs for members living in remote cities with too few members to justify the creation of a branch. In late 2009, the Beijing China International (English) District Branch had eleven organized groups. In 2010, the district based in Beijing had eight branches, and the district in Shanghai had six branches. The most recently created international branches include the Chengdu and Hangzhou Branches. In 2011, two additional international districts were organized in Shanghai and X'ian (Central China International).

In 2008, Elder Russell M. Ballard reported that there were approximately twenty small branches for Chinese members in mainland China that had government authorization to meet.¹¹⁷⁶ Many Chinese members meet in groups throughout the country.

Activity and Retention

Activity rates appear moderate or slightly higher than in most nations, but membership experiences high turnover due to the transient presence of most foreigners, such as English teachers and families temporarily employed in China. Unknown inactive or less active members may greatly exceed the number on congregational roles due to the lack of any mechanism to track those who lose contact with the church.

¹¹⁷⁴ "China," Deseret News 2003 Church Almanac, p. 314.

¹¹⁷⁵ Avant, Gerry. "President Hinckley visits China," 1 June 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27984/President-Hinckley-visits-China.html>

¹¹⁷⁶ "Elder Ballard speaks on future BYUH, PCC roles," BYU Hawaii Newsroom, 11 June 2008. <http://newsroom.byuh.edu/node/1762>

Each of the international branches in Beijing appears to have over one hundred active members. Some branches like the Xi'an Branch had fewer than thirty active members in 2009. The total number of active foreign members appears to be around 1,000.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Chinese (traditional), Chinese (simplified), Mongolian, Korean.

All LDS scriptures are available in Chinese (both traditional and simplified characters), Mongolian, and Korean. Most Church materials are available in Chinese. Only a few materials are available in simplified characters, such as *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*. A large selection of audio-visual materials is available in Mandarin and Cantonese. LDS Church materials in Kazakh are limited to sacrament prayer translations, the Articles of Faith, and selected hymns and children's songs.

Meetinghouses

The Church has not built any meetinghouses in mainland China. Congregations meet in government-approved locations. Some members worship in the privacy of their homes.

Health and Safety

Strict obedience to government policies pertaining to religious conduct is required for the perpetuation of positive relations between the Church and the government. Deviation from government-approved activities jeopardizes the legitimacy of any Church activity among Chinese citizens and foreigners, is against Church policy, and poses risks to individual members. Other religious groups that have disregarded local laws or suffer poor relations with the government have had many members arrested and sentenced to labor camps for charges of disrupting public order.

Pollution and the negative environmental impact of rapid industrialization over the past few decades have led to deteriorated health for many Chinese. Most of the largest cities have poor air quality. The leading cause of death is respiratory and health diseases resulting from air pollution. Approximately 300 million are estimated to drink contaminated water.

Humanitarian and Development Work

As of 2009, the Church had conducted at least twenty-six humanitarian or development projects in China. These projects primarily consisted of book donations to school libraries, English and educational training, clean water projects, emergency relief, and wheelchairs.¹¹⁷⁷ In 1998, the Church donated \$15,000 for humanitarian assistance for flood victims.¹¹⁷⁸

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The amount of religious freedom and tolerance for both local and foreign members to worship—albeit always separately—is a major opportunity the Church has gained in the past decade, which has been essential for current and future church growth. Chinese officials have permitted local members to share the gospel with

¹¹⁷⁷ "Projects—China," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 12 July 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-227,00.html>

¹¹⁷⁸ "Church gives aid to China," LDS Church News, 5 September 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31357/Church-gives-aid-to-China.html>

family members. Nonnatives do not appear to face proselytism restrictions among foreigners. Many Chinese members join the Church abroad in nations with greater religious freedom and later return to China. Foreign members may receive training and visits from international Church leadership. Government does not permit international Church leaders to train and meet with local Chinese members. The Church will likely find opportunities for humanitarian and development work in rural areas, which may one day help lay the foundation for mission outreach.

Cultural Issues

In addition to increasing materialism and consumer-oriented culture in many of the largest cities, most Chinese are not religious due to the communist legacy. Many of the urban areas in which the Church would be most likely to receive permission to begin mission outreach work have highly secularized populations that have little exposure to religion. The high percentage of nonreligious does have the potential for difficulties with traditions that may interfere with LDS teachings, but the Church will likely face challenges in motivating potential converts to fully embrace the gospel and make necessary changes in lifestyle to not only remain active in the Church but also serve as leaders and teachers for others. Most Chinese find Christianity peculiar and are very surprised when they encounter someone who attends a church regularly. Latter-day Saints emphasis on the family resonates well with many Chinese and is of central importance to current and future outreach. The One Child Policy has created many demographic challenges regarding the male-female gender ratio. In the long term, this may lead some male members unable to marry due to a shortage of Chinese women in some areas.

The drinking of green tea is a cultural practice prohibited by LDS Church teachings and can be source of tension as well as a testimony building issue for investigators, new converts, and less active members. High smoking rates and moderate alcohol use pose challenges for many to who habitually engaged in these practices prohibited by the Church.

Traditional Chinese religion is a syncretic mix of Confucian philosophy, Buddhism, Taoism, and folk traditions. All of these religions are primarily individual and meditative, with little emphasis on organized worship. Many Christian principles, such as the existence of an all-powerful God instead of a nebulous harmony of the universe, need for a Savior, and even the existence of sin, are foreign to many Chinese. In particular, the break of Christianity from the tradition of ancestors, the concept of a caring God who can hear and answer prayers, the need for organized worship and service in the church, principles of divine authority, and the idea of one true church as opposed to the development of personal worldview from syncretic elements of competing faiths and philosophies, all pose challenges for many LDS investigators. Chinese have their own strong sense of ethics and morality, although the need for such behaviors tends to be explained by the need for societal order, achieving harmony, maintaining order, and following the pattern of the heavens, in contrast to Judeo-Christian concepts of obedience, sin, repentance, and judgment, although considerable commonality exists when semantic barriers are bridged.

While historically very family-oriented, secularization in China has led to an increasing gap between traditional values and contemporary behaviors. In China, 70% of **Beijing** residents reported **sex** before marriage in 2005, compared to just 15% in 1989.¹¹⁷⁹ A poll of 900 female university graduates in Shanghai conducted by journalism professor Liao Shengqing and reported in the *People's Daily Newspaper* found that 70% think that one-night stands are not immoral.¹¹⁸⁰ The information age has resulted in greater exposure for the Church and greater opportunities for sharing the gospel, even as some problematic behaviors contrary to church teachings have become more prevalent.

¹¹⁷⁹ Beech, Hannah, "Sex Please—We're Young and Chinese," *Time Asia Magazine*, January 23, 2006.sss

¹¹⁸⁰ "Porn unblocked for Chinese web users," 23 July 2010, <http://www.3news.co.nz/Porn-unblocked-for-Chinese-web-users/tabid/417/articleID/167070/Default.aspx>, accessed 1 August 2010.

National Outreach

With the exception of personal contacts of members, the entire population of 1.33 billion remains unreached by mission outreach. Only 1% of the population would be LDS if the Church's entire membership of fourteen million lived in China. If missionary work occurred in cities with an established LDS English-speaking branch, just 3% of the national population would have access to mission outreach. The Church has made considerable progress among natives in cities with English-speaking branches and also has designated congregations for Chinese members. Some large cities without English-speaking congregations have Chinese designated congregations, such as Kunming in Yunnan Province.

The Church will face major mission logistic challenges once full-time missionaries serve in China as China's population exceeds that of North and South America combined by half a billion. Current international mission resources could not efficiently administer to such a large population even if they were all entirely dedicated to China. If the average of one LDS mission per four million people in North and South America were applied to China, the Church would need to create 333 missions; just seven shy of the worldwide total in 2010. Even if there was one LDS mission per twenty million people (the mission-population ratio in Japan), the Church would need to operate 67 Chinese missions.

Traditional LDS paradigms of missions staffed primarily by full-time proselyting missionaries are unlikely to be implemented in China for two reasons. First, the strong preference given to native Chinese and the heavy restrictions on foreigners, especially as relates to proselytism, will require that outreach efforts be conducted primarily, and likely exclusively, through native leaders and native member-missionaries. Second, the LDS missionary force has plateaued in recent years due to declining LDS birth rates and slower growth, and the Church has lacked the free resources and manpower to assign missionaries even to some unreached nations that allow proselyting, like Senegal at present or Kyrgyzstan in the 1990s. The limited LDS mission resources that could potentially be mobilized are wholly inadequate to serve China's vast population. For both legal and practical reasons, future LDS outreach in China will inevitably depend primarily upon the outreach of local members. Denominations like the Seventh Day Adventists, which grow primarily through local member outreach, have therefore experienced considerable outreach advantages over Latter-day Saints due to the traditional LDS dependence on full-time foreign missionaries and the lack of comparably well-organized member-missionary programs and resources.

Effective future LDS mission outreach will require wise appropriation of limited native missionary manpower, effective and independent congregational member-missionary programs, and the development of a self-sustaining native Chinese missionary force.

Although China ranks the fourth largest in geographic size, most regions are sparsely populated. The western half of China accounts for about 10% of the population as the southwest is mountainous and the northwest is primarily desert. Ninety percent (90%) of the population lives in the eastern half of China. The most densely populated areas include the Sichuan Basin, coastal areas between Beijing and Hong Kong, and interior areas between Shanghai, Beijing, and Zhengzhou. Half the national population resides in eight of the twenty-two mainland provinces, which include Guangdong (113 million), Henan (99 million), Shandong (92 million), Sichuan (87 million), Jiangsu (75.5 million), Hebei (68 million), Hunan (67 million), and Anhui (65 million). Mission planners can maximize the scope of potential mission outreach by allocating resources and development work to these most populous provinces.

Large Chinese communities exist in most nations around the world and currently provide a portal to mission outreach to mainland China within the confines of Chinese law. Several nations with only a few hundred Latter-day Saints have many Chinese LDS members, such as Greece and Cyprus. Chinese-speaking congregations have been organized in the United States (12 Chinese, 2 Mandarin), Canada (3 Mandarin, 2 Chinese,

1 Cantonese), Australia (2 Chinese), Malaysia (1 Mandarin), and Singapore (1 Chinese). One Mandarin-speaking branch operates in Hong Kong. Missionaries over the past decade have been called in increasing numbers to serve Mandarin-speaking missions in areas throughout the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia. Chinese-speaking congregations outside of China and Chinese mission outreach worldwide help coordinate efforts for members returning to mainland China and provide outreach among the large Chinese population living abroad.

Ethnic minority groups with significant LDS memberships outside China may be more receptive to future mission outreach initiatives even if they tend to reside in less-densely populated areas that would ordinarily not receive outreach for decades following the initial start of proselytism. The Church has well-developed leadership and mission outreach capabilities in South Korea and Mongolia. Korean and Mongolian Chinese number in the millions and sometimes travel to these two nations. These individuals may join the Church outside the country and return home and help prepare to establish the Church in rural or isolated locations in Inner Mongolia or along the North Korean border. In 2009, South Korea alone had over 600,000 Chinese foreign residents. Seventy-one percent (71%) were ethnic Koreans, most of whom resided in the Seoul area.¹¹⁸¹ Some mission outreach among this group has occurred through both member referrals and missionary proselytism.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The source of converts from the relatives of members appears to have produced high convert retention and strong member activity. Members baptized abroad who return to China are the most likely to go inactive, as many live in areas where there is no congregation or few members to provide fellowshiping. Furthermore, many are unaware of any Church presence in China and do not have contact information for congregations. In 2013, the Church launched a website to help improve member accountability for Chinese nationals returning to mainland China at <http://mormonsandchina.org>.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Government policy prohibiting the assembly of citizens and foreigners in the same congregation has reduced potential ethnic integration issues. Ethnic issues may be somewhat present in international branches, as members come from many nations. For example, many Korean, Filipino, and American families attend the international branches.

Non-Han Chinese comprise 8.5% of the national population, and most of these ethnic groups have no known LDS members and have received no mission outreach. Potential ethnic integration issues may arise in remote provinces with high ethnic diversity and an increasing percentage of Han Chinese. Xinjiang and Tibet have at times experienced violence between these Uighurs, Tibetans, and Han Chinese. Ethnic minority groups in eastern China may be prone to marginalization by outreach efforts targeting Han Chinese who primarily populate urban centers.

Language Issues

Chinese is the oldest continuously used writing system in the world. Modern Chinese employs a logographic script with over 47,000 monosyllabic characters, although many are variants, and full literacy requires knowledge of only 3,000–4,000 characters. The first printing press was designed in China long before its invention in the West, although the vast number of characters made the press much less practical for Chinese than for alphabetic scripts. Written Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and scripts of some other small East Asian languages have borrowed heavily from Chinese characters.

¹¹⁸¹ "More Than 1 Million Foreigners Live in Korea," The Chosun Ilbo, 6 August 2009. http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2009/08/06/2009080600243.html

The Chinese languages constitute a set of languages using the same writing system but different speech. The same text can generally be understood by both Mandarin and Cantonese speakers, although the spoken languages are mutually unintelligible. Government efforts for nationwide use of Mandarin Chinese reduce the initial need for a wide range of language resources for mission outreach efforts as well as the much greater homogeneity of the Chinese population compared to that of India. The Church possesses a large body of previously translated Chinese ecclesiastical materials in traditional characters. The Church has recently begun to increase the scope of materials in simplified characters and completed the full translation of the Book of Mormon in 2001. The demand for traditional character materials from the more numerous Chinese church membership in Taiwan and elsewhere has diminished.

The use of Chinese characters among many of China's minority languages greatly reduces the demand for translating Church materials. If nonnative missionaries were allowed to proselyte in China, the Church would face major challenges in accommodating to regional dialects of the Chinese language and may standardize missionary work in Mandarin until missionaries began speaking and teaching in regional Chinese dialects. Audio-visual materials are only available in Mandarin and Cantonese. Language materials already translated into Mongolian, Korean, and Kazakh allow for greater potential outreach among these groups within the confines of Chinese law.

No LDS materials have been translated into Zhuang, Miao, Uighur, Tibetan, Buyei, Nuosu, Dong, Bai, and about 200 additional languages, many of which have hundreds of thousands of speakers. Most of these languages have adopted their own unique writing script or utilize a modified Latin script. Proficiency and use in Mandarin Chinese as a second language varies by linguistic group.

Missionary Service

No proselytism occurs in the People's Republic of China. The first full-time missionary to serve from China completed his mission in 2006. As of 2010, fewer than one hundred members from China are returned missionaries. By the end of March 2010, forty-two missionaries from mainland China were serving full-time missions, many in the United States and Canada.

Leadership

Elder Chu-Jen Chia became an Area Authority Seventy in the late 1990s and has directed the affairs of the Church in China for most of the past fifteen years. Church leaders in Hong Kong have provided assistance developing local leadership. Chinese members in leadership positions experience high levels of autonomy and stewardship over their congregations. International branches benefit from many members who have lived in areas where the Church runs administrative functions smoothly. Inadequate local leadership for foreign members becomes an issue only in areas where total foreign members is extremely limited.

Temple

China belongs to the Hong Kong China Temple district. Although many aspects of religious freedom are suppressed and the few members live long distances apart and in too few numbers to create stakes, the nearby temple, which is easily accessed by train throughout much of eastern China, provides unique opportunities for new members to participate in temple ordinances. Detailed family histories and records provide an ample supply of family history names of Church members to perform temple ordinances in behalf of in the Hong Kong China Temple.

Comparative Growth

Due to its large geographic size, enormous population, and government restrictions, China remains one of the least reached nations. Hong Kong has had an official Church presence for sixty years and had over 24,000 members in 2009. One in 294 in Hong Kong is nominally LDS. If China experienced the same ratio there would be 4.5 million members nationwide. The number of Church members in China is comparable to that of India. Membership growth in China during the 2000s has been among the most rapid over the past decade among nations with fewer than 10,000 members. China is perhaps the only nation in which the Church's rapid growth in recent years has been significantly influenced by natives joining the Church outside the country and returning in large numbers.

Larger Christian denominations tend to have had a presence for several decades or were first established prior to the communist takeover. Many of these groups enjoy government registration and can operate under fewer restrictions than the LDS Church. Seventh Day Adventists in particular have achieved significant breakthroughs in legal status and outreach and have reported rapid growth. An underground Protestant "house church" movement claims between forty and one hundred million participants, although reliable figures are not available, as many of these groups operate outside of the law. The LDS Church maintains one of the most positive and respectful relationships with the Chinese government and is careful to observe all government regulations and restrictions, while remaining one of the smallest Christian groups in China.

Future Prospects

Government policy and law currently forbid proselytism by foreign or native missionaries and restricts the communication between Chinese nationals and international Church leaders. The greatest limitations for future growth are an insufficient supply of local leadership, limited opportunities for mentoring and training from regional and worldwide LDS leadership, and restrictions on the importation and distribution of scriptures and church literature.

Prospects for full recognition of the LDS Church and permissions for foreign missionaries in the medium term appear to be slim to none. However, there is an excellent outlook for continued growth through legal means of members sharing their beliefs with friends and family members and the resultant increase in authorized LDS congregations. The quiet, rapid growth of LDS membership in China over the past decade has occurred principally through the relatives of current LDS members and provides an excellent outlook for future long term growth and sustainability. Furthermore, outreach to Han Chinese outside mainland China continues to expand in vision with the calling of Chinese-speaking missionaries to serve in many nations around the world in addition to the creation of Chinese-speaking congregations abroad. The rapid increase in full-time missionaries in the late 2000s is a major success that will promote long-term growth, increase future leadership manpower, and provide returned missionaries with valuable experience in Church administration in areas where the Church is most established in the United States and other nations in which they may serve.

In contrast to the entry of the LDS Church into Russia following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a basic LDS administrative infrastructure is in place in many regions of China. The Church overall was not fully prepared to meet the needs and opportunities presented when Russia opened to missionary work and consequently experienced low retention, limited national outreach expansion following the first decade of formal missionary activity, and poor local leadership development. The Church has learned many lessons from Russia and has placed a stronger emphasis on member-missionary work in a family setting in accordance with government policy and local laws.

REGIONAL PROFILES

Although there are no prospects at present for the organization of formal full-time proselytizing missions in China, the continued growth through member-missionary outreach to relatives and the proselytism of Chinese residents overseas has resulted in the creation of some new congregations over the past decade. As Chinese continue to accept the gospel in their homeland or abroad, it is likely that LDS congregations may eventually be organized in new provinces in coming years.

This section explores potential issues for church growth in different provinces of China through continued member-missionary efforts, although many provinces currently have no church presence. It also considers issues that may arise if more formal missionary work were permitted one day, although such prospects are presently remote. There is no formal missionary activity and no proposed plans from Church leadership for outreach in mainland China; local growth has resulted solely from the self-directed efforts of native members. The authors are solely responsible for any opinions expressed. All Church affairs are segregated between Chinese nationals and foreigners.

Anhui

Population: 61,350,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (99%), Hui (0.6%), other (0.4%)

Located in east central China south of Beijing, Mandarin-speaking Han Chinese constitute almost the entire population. Very few members have lived in this province. The homogeneous population reduces the potential for language and ethnic integration issues, but distance from church centers and few members in the province may make Anhui a lower priority for future outreach.

Beijing

Population: 22,000,000 (2010)

Peoples: Han (95.7%), Manchu (1.8%), Hui (1.7%), Mongol (0.3%), other (0.5%)

The capital of China, Beijing is one of the largest cities and is central to future mission outreach nationwide. Beijing is one of only two cities in China with at least two English speaking congregations. Chinese natives also meet in Beijing in organized congregations. Due to its small geographical area and high population density, the Church fewer outreach centers will be needed if formal missionary work occurs one day.

Chongqing

Population: 31,442,300 (2007)

Peoples: Han (91%), Tujia (5%), Miao (2%), other (2%)

Located in the Sichuan Basin near the Three Gorges Dam, Chongqing has a Mandarin-speaking Han Chinese Majority with Tujia and Maio minorities. Chongqing had no branches organized for non-Chinese members in 2010. However its small geographic size and large population will likely make it a target for future mission outreach one day. Together with nearby Chengdu, Chongqing may one day serve as a center for Church operations in the Sichuan Basin.

Fujian

Population: 36,270,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (98%), She (1%), Hui (0.3%), other (0.7%)

Located between Hong Kong and Shanghai bordering the East China Sea, Fujian is primarily Min-speaking Han Chinese. The She are a small minority and speak She and Hakka Chinese. Few members appear to currently reside in the province. LDS missionaries serving in New York City report that they frequently work with Fujian natives. Short-term growth may be achieved by Fujian locals joining the Church abroad and returning to their home province. Local full-time missionaries will likely be needed for initial outreach due to the widespread use of Min Chinese.

Gansu

Population: 26,350,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (91%), Hui (5%), Dongxiang (2%), Tibetan (2%)

Located in north central China, Gansu is a large, sparsely populated province that is primarily Mandarin-speaking Han Chinese. Chinese Muslim peoples such as the Hui and Dongxiang account for 7% of the population. Gansu has one of the lowest standards of living in China and may be a suitable location for future humanitarian and development work. Few if any members live in the province today.

Guangdong

Population: 113,000,000 (2010)

Peoples: Han (99%), Zhuang (0.7%), Yao (0.2%), other (0.1%)

China's most populated province, Guangdong has a population greater than all but the ten largest nations worldwide. Located in southern China, Guangdong surrounds Hong Kong and Macao and is home to Guangzhou—one of the largest cities in China. The population is almost completely Han Chinese, speaking Min, Hakka, Mandarin, and Cantonese. The Church organized an English branch in Guangzhou in the past decade that has a large active membership. Guangzhou also appears to be a center of strength among native Chinese membership and may one day administer missionary activity in South China. The Church has many international members who claim ancestry from Guangdong and speak Cantonese.

Guangxi

Population: 48,670,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (62%), Zhuang (32%), Yao (3%), Miao (1%), Dong (0.7%), Gelao (0.4%), other (0.9%)

Guangxi is an autonomous region in southern China bordering Vietnam and home of the Zhuang people. Han Chinese have a smaller presence than in most provinces or regions but constitute the majority and speak Mandarin, Cantonese, and Hakka Chinese. Zhuang account for a third of the population and have no LDS materials available in their language. Other ethnic minorities constitute about 6% of the population. The Church appears to have never had a presence in Guangxi and has had few if any converts outside China among non-Han Chinese ethnic groups found in the region. Guangxi is also among the least Christian Chinese provinces. Nanning will be central to the establishment of any future outreach due to its large population and central location.

Guizhou

Population: 37,960,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (62%), Miao (12%), Buyi (8%), Dong (5%), Tujia (4%), Yi (2%), Gelao (2%), Shui (1%), other (4%)

A mountainous province in southern China, Guizhou has a population that is less than two-thirds Han Chinese. Non-Han ethnic groups in Guizhou with over one million people include Miao, Buyi, Dong, and Tujia; the eponymous languages have no LDS materials available. Due to ethnic diversity, remote location, and few LDS members, outreach in Guizhou will likely occur among the last for Chinese provinces.

Hainan

Population: 8,640,700 (2009)

Peoples: Han (82%), Li (16%), Miao (0.8%), Zhuang (0.7%), other (0.5%)

Hainan is a large island located in the South China Sea just off the mainland. Han Chinese form the majority and primarily speak Min Chinese. Li are a large minority who speak their own language into which no LDS materials have been translated. Due to Hainan's separation from the mainland and comparatively small population and few members, outreach may not occur for many years.

Hebei

Population: 69,890,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (95%), Manchu (3%), Hui (0.8%), Mongol (0.3%), other (0.9%)

Surrounding much of Beijing Municipality, Hebei has a Mandarin-speaking population that is almost entirely Han with small Manchu, Hui, and Mongol minorities. Hebei provides excellent future mission outreach opportunities, as the province contains many large cities, a large population, and close proximity to Beijing. Local Chinese Latter-day Saints are established in some of the largest cities. In 2010, a missionary from Baoding was serving in the Salt Lake City area.

Heilongjiang

Population: 38,300,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (95%), Manchu (3%), Korean (1%), Mongol (0.4%), Hui (0.3%), other (0.3%)

Occupying the northeastern most area of China, Heilongjiang borders Russia and has a predominantly Mandarin-speaking Han Chinese population. The largest ethnic minority groups are Manchu and Korean. Heilongjiang is among the most remote provinces in eastern China, but the presence of several major cities will likely facilitate the growth and development of the Church in the future. Little language diversity will assist in mission efforts and reduce ethnic integration challenges. Christians are most commonly found among Han Chinese.

Henan

Population: 98,690,000 (2007)

Peoples: Han (98.8%), Hui (1%), other (0.2%)

The second most populous province in China, Henan has a homogenous Han Chinese population and a small Hui minority, all of whom speak Mandarin Chinese. Henan is in the heartland of China yet has a minimal LDS presence and no English-speaking branches. Distance from Beijing and Shanghai may reduce initial outreach, but Henan's large population will likely require at least half a dozen LDS missions to reach most of

the urban population. Henan has one of the largest percentages of Christians among Chinese provinces, which may increase receptivity to prospective LDS missionary activity.

Hubei

Population: 59,490,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (95.6%), Tujia (3.7%), Miao (0.4%), other (0.3%)

Hubei is in central China and is predominantly Mandarin-speaking Han Chinese. Tujia account for the largest minority group that has no LDS materials translated in their native language. Capital of Hubei, Wuhan is one of the largest cities in China and is the most populous city without an English branch. Outreach efforts in Wuhan alone will require a large amount of mission resources and local member participation and will likely influence the expansion of mission outreach in the large region between Shanghai and Chengdu.

Hunan

Population: 63,930,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (90%), Tujia (4%), Miao (3%), Dong (1%), Yao (1%), other (1%)

Located in southern China north of Guangzhou and home province of Mao Zedong, most of the population is Han Chinese, speaking Xiang Chinese and Mandarin Chinese. The largest ethnic minorities include Tujia, Miao, Dong, and Yao. The Church has no materials translated in any of these ethnic minority languages. Due to distance from established Church centers elsewhere in the country, the LDS mission efforts may be limited to the capital Changsha for many years. The large Xiang Chinese-speaking population will most likely require the use of native missionaries in any prospective proselytism in Hunan.

Inner Mongolia

Population: 23,840,000 (2004)

Peoples: Han (79%), Mongol (17%), Manchu (2%), Hui (0.9%), Daur (0.3%), other (0.8%)

Consisting of a large, sparsely populated region along the Mongolian border, Inner Mongolia is an autonomous region that is predominantly populated by Mandarin-speaking Han Chinese. Chinese settled the region in the past few centuries, whereas Mongolians have populated Inner Mongolia for millennia. Mongolians in Inner Mongolia tend to use the traditional Mongolian script and constitute the largest concentration of Mongolians in any area of the world. Only 2.6 million Mongolians live in the nation of Mongolia, sometimes referred to as Outer Mongolia, compared to at least four million in China's Inner Mongolia province. The Church has translated all LDS scriptures and a wide range of materials into Mongolian as written in the Cyrillic script used since Soviet times in Mongolia proper but has no materials in the traditional Mongolian script used in Inner Mongolia.

With the largest percentage of Mongolians of any region or province, Inner Mongolia may one day experience considerable church growth, as Mongolians have been uniquely receptive to the Church. Familial ties and the strong LDS presence in neighboring Mongolia may facilitate greater outreach and growth than in other areas of China. The Trans-Mongolian Railway links Mongolian peoples between Ulan-Ude in Russia; Ulan Bator, Mongolia; and Jining, Inner Mongolia; China, and a mutual agreement between China and Mongolia allows visa-free travel to citizens of each. However, ties between Inner Mongolia and the nation of Mongolia have been attenuated by separation since the 1920s under Chinese and Russian spheres of influence, respectively, and family relationships between Mongolians in Inner Mongolia and Mongolia proper are now fairly remote after decades of separation. Mongolian trains run on the wider Russian gauge, whereas the Chinese side uses

a smaller Russian gauge; the entire chassis must be changed at border crossings, which can take several hours. Furthermore, most of the population in Mongolia is concentrated in the north. The Gobi Desert and rugged mountains occupy much of the south of Mongolia and the northern portions of Inner Mongolia. Mongolian settlements on the Mongolian side and on the Chinese side are generally not in close proximity, and natural barriers as well as logistical difficulties serve to enforce the separation. The large LDS membership in Mongolia proper has to this date not resulted in any known church growth in Inner Mongolia, notwithstanding kinship and a common language.

Due to its large population and central location, a congregation may eventually be organized in the capital, Hohhot. Future ethnic integration issues between Han Chinese and Mongolians may occur. However, Mongolians appear to be relatively well integrated into China compared to some other groups due to long-standing ties and considerable Sinicization; China was ruled by the Mongolian Yuan dynasty founded by Kublai Khan from 1271 to 1368 AD.

Jiangsu

Population: 77,245,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (99.6%), Hui (0.2%), other (0.2%)

North of Shanghai, Jiangsu is one of the most densely populated and homogenously Han Chinese provinces. The Church established an English-speaking branch in the 2000s for foreign members in Nanjing. Close proximity to Shanghai provide easy access.

Jiangxi

Population: 44,000,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (99.7%), She (0.2%), other (0.1%)

One of the most homogenously Han Chinese provinces, Jiangxi is north of Guangzhou and west of Shanghai. Gan and Mandarin Chinese are most commonly spoken. Although Jiangxi is close to some of China's largest cities, it remains as one of the poorer provinces. Jiangxi has a large rural or small city-dwelling population, which will one day require many outreach centers. Initial efforts will most likely concentrate on the capital, Nanchang.

Jilin

Population: 27,400,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (91%), Korean (4%), Manchu (4%), Mongol (0.6%), Hui (0.4%)

Jilin consists of a Han population with visible Korean and Manchu minorities speaking Mandarin Chinese or Korean. Koreans are concentrated in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture along North Korean. Jilin shares many similarities with neighboring Manchurian provinces, yet has a smaller population. Christians are especially visible among Koreans. Outreach in Jilin will most likely occur from Heilongjiang or Liaoning Provinces and commence in the capital, Changchun.

Liaoning

Population: 43,060,000 (2008)

Peoples: Han (84%), Manchu (13%), Mongol (2%), Hui (0.6%), Korean (0.6%), Xibe (0.3%), other (0.1%)

Located in southern Manchuria bordering North Korea, Liaoning has a Han Chinese majority population with a significant Manchu minority and few Mongols, Hui, and Koreans. Mandarin Chinese is spoken by most. Many large cities, such as Shenyang, Dalian, and Anshan, are industrial centers, and Liaoning overall enjoys a higher standard of living than most other provinces. Establishing mission outreach centers in the many large cities concentrated between Shenyang and the Yellow Sea allow for fewer mission resources to reach a large portion of the population. Christians are particularly concentrated among Koreans. All LDS scriptures and many church materials are available in Korean and Mongolian. It is unclear how responsive Manchu will be to prospective outreach; Manchus are a distinct ethnic group distantly related to Mongolians and Turkic peoples but most now speak Mandarin. Prospects for future church growth in Liaoning appear high; Shenyang may one day become a church center for Manchuria.

Ningxia

Population: 6,220,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (62%), Hui (34%), Manchu (0.4%), other (3.6%)

With a relatively small population, Ningxia is in central China south of Inner Mongolia and is the Chinese administrative division with the highest percentage of Hui. The Han Chinese are the majority and have arrived in greater numbers through immigration. The Hui comprise a third of the population and descended primarily from Chinese traders along the Silk Road during the Middle Ages. Hui speak Chinese languages and do not require separate language materials for mission outreach. Extending mission outreach among the Hui may be challenging due to their adherence to Islam and may include proselytizing restrictions, low receptivity, and ethnic integration challenges with Han Chinese in church congregations. Christian groups report little success working with the Hui.

Qinghai

Population: 5,570,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (53%), Tibetan (23%), Hui (16%), Tu (4%), Salar (1.8%), Mongol (1.8%), other (0.4%)

Qinghai is located in western China, northeast of the Tibetan Plateau. Han Chinese form a slight majority, whereas the largest minority ethnic groups include Tibetans and Hui. Few large cities and a small population concentrated in rural areas require a greater number of mission outreach centers to effectively preach the gospel to the majority of the population. Prospects for future Church establishment appear highest for the largest city Xining. No LDS materials are available in Tibetan, Tu, or Salar, limiting outreach potential among these groups.

Shaanxi

Population: 37,720,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (99.5%), Hui (0.4%), other (0.1%)

Located in Central China, Shaanxi is a province with a fairly homogenous population of Han Chinese. The ancient Chinese capital of Xian is located in Shaanxi. The Church organized an English branch in Xian in the mid- to late 2000s.

Shandong

Population: 94,000,000 (2008)

Peoples: Han (99.3%), Hui (0.6%), other (0.1%)

Occupying densely population areas between Shanghai and Beijing, Shandong is one of the most populous Chinese provinces and among the most ethnically homogenous. The Church established an English-speaking branch in the mid-2000s in Qingdao. Close proximity to Beijing and Shanghai together with its large population will likely facilitate mission outreach in Shandong prior to many other areas in China.

Shanghai

Population: 19,210,000 (2009)

China's most populous city and center of finance, Shanghai is a municipality and enjoys the highest standard of living among all of China's administrative divisions and is a major cultural influence for the rest of the country. In addition to attracting many migrant workers from across China, Shanghai has a strong foreign community primarily consisting of Westerners, Koreans, and Taiwanese. The most commonly spoken languages are Wu and Mandarin Chinese. Shanghai's large, centralized population allows for fewer outreach centers than many other areas of the country, but rising materialism and secularism may significantly reduce receptivity to the Church prior to any formal missionary activity. The Church possesses some of its strongest foreign and native congregations in Shanghai, creating infrastructure of continued growth. The Church organized the Shanghai China International (English) District in 2008 and in 2010 had two English-speaking branches in Shanghai. Outreach among migrant workers in Shanghai may one day facilitate the introduction of the Church into other provinces.

Shanxi

Population: 33,350,000 (2004)

Peoples: Han (99.7%), Hui (0.2%), other (0.1%)

Located between Beijing and Xian, Shanxi Province has a Mandarin-speaking Han Chinese population and few large cities. Low ethnic diversity help simplify outreach efforts, but Shanxi will likely be a low priority due to its few large cities and distance from large cities in neighboring provinces.

Sichuan

Population: 81,620,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (95%), Yi (2.6%), Tibetan (1.5%), Qiang (0.4%), other (0.5%)

One of the most populous Chinese provinces, Sichuan is located in central China east of Tibet. The Han Chinese speak the regional dialect of Mandarin Chinese and account for almost the entire population. Yi and Tibetans constitute a small minority and speak their ethnic languages—both of which have no translated LDS materials. Sichuan province is of major importance to future outreach in southern and central China due to its large population and location. Chengdu and other large cities in the densely populated areas nearby Chongqing appear most likely for initial spread of church membership.

Tianjin

Population: 12,281,600 (2009)

Peoples: Han (97%), Hui (2%), Manchu (0.6%), other (0.4%)

One of China's largest cities nearby Beijing, Tianjin is a municipality with a homogenous Mandarin-speaking Han population and a small Hui minority. The Church has had an English-speaking branch functioning in the city for several years and likely has a native Chinese LDS community. Tianjin will likely require fewer

outreach centers and has the potential for self-sustaining church growth due to its centralized population, lack of ethnic and linguistic diversity, and emerging LDS community.

Tibet Autonomous Region

Population: 2,910,000 (2009)

Peoples: Tibetan (92.8%), Han (6.1%), Hui (0.3%), Monpa (0.3%), other (0.5%)

Occupying the Tibetan Plateau between the Indian subcontinent and central China, Tibet is geographically one of the largest administrative divisions in China but has one of the smallest populations. Tibet is the administrative division in which there is the smallest percentage of Han Chinese. The population is nearly all Tibetan, but Han Chinese have been steadily immigrating. Throughout most of history, Tibet has maintained its sovereignty and political affairs as a nation state but with significant influence from Mongolia, China, and Nepal. Tibetans regard the Dalai Lama—the religious and nationalistic head of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism—as a perpetual reincarnation of previous Buddhist sages.

Tibet's rural and relatively religious population may become one of the more resistant to LDS mission outreach in China, along with the Uighur in the northwest. Friction between Tibetans and recently immigrated Han Chinese presents difficulties. Ethnic and historic ties with Mongolians, who have been uniquely receptive to church teachings, may be a factor that will result in receptivity and interest. There have been few if any Tibetan converts. Tibetans retain strong ties to their traditional culture and language. The government has also restricted access to Tibet since 2008 for security reasons. The LDS Church remains without Tibetan language resources, limiting outreach potential.

Xinjiang

Population: 21,590,000 (2009)

Peoples: Uighur (45%), Han (41%), Kazakh (7%), Hui (5%), Kyrgyz (0.9%), Mongol (0.8%), Dongxiang (0.3%), Tajiks (0.2%), Xibe (0.2%), other (0.2%)

Encompassing the far northwestern deserts, basins, and mountains of Western China, Xinjiang is an autonomous region with no ethnic majority populated primarily by Muslim Turkic and Chinese peoples. Religious affiliation and ethnicity are highly correlated. The government has encouraged the immigration of Han Chinese from eastern provinces in order to reduce Uighur separatist tendencies and increase national integration. Significant conflict and civil unrest has occurred in recent years between these two groups in Xinjiang and elsewhere. Today Uighurs and Han Chinese each account for over 40% of the population. The remainder of the population consists primarily of Turkic peoples or Muslim Chinese peoples, such as the Hui. With the exception of the Hui, each people speak their respective ethnic languages. Languages in Xinjiang that have LDS materials include Chinese, Kazakh, and Mongolian. Future LDS mission efforts among the Muslim-majority will likely encounter the same issues experienced by the Church in other Muslim-majority areas such as proselytizing and conversion restrictions, restricted religious freedom for non-Muslims, and challenges establishing an LDS community consisting of former Muslim converts. Outreach conducted in Uighur and Mandarin Chinese can potentially reach 86% of the population in their native language. Remote location, sparse population, and long distance from more populated areas will challenge any future outreach. Initial efforts will most likely focus on the largest city, Urumqi. Missionary manpower and kin relationships from Mongolia and Kazakhstan may be helpful in reaching non-Han Chinese ethnicities, although such relationships are generally remote. In the late 2000s, there was at least one Uighur convert who resided in Utah.

Yunnan

Population: 45,710,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (67%), Yi (11%), Bai (3.6%), Hani (3.4%), Zhuang (2.7%), Dai (2.7%), Miao (2.5%), Hui (1.5%), Tibetan (0.3%), other (5.3%)

Located in southern China bordering Burma, Laos, and Vietnam, mountainous Yunnan Province is one of China's most ethnically diverse provinces. Han Chinese account for two-thirds of the population, whereas one-third consists of about twenty-five ethnic groups. The largest non-Han Chinese groups include the Yi, Bai, Han, Zhuang, Dai, and Miao. The LDS Church has no materials translated in any languages spoken by non-Han Chinese and has had no past experience proselytizing these ethnic groups. Many of these groups have active Christian adherents. Remote location, lower standards of living than most provinces, and mountainous terrain will further limit future outreach in Yunnan. The Church has a small presence among nonforeigners in Kunming and has had missionaries from the city serve in the United States in recent years.

Zhejiang

Population: 51,800,000 (2009)

Peoples: Han (99.2%), She (0.4%), other (0.4%)

Zhejiang Province is just south of Shanghai, and the homogeneous population consists of Mandarin-speaking Han Chinese. Little ethnic and language diversity may facilitate future outreach efforts. The Church organized an English-speaking branch for foreigners in 2010 in Hangzhou and may have a small native LDS community. Close proximity to Shanghai, high standards of living, and a larger Christian community than many other provinces may facilitate future church growth.

HONG KONG

Geography

AREA: 1,104 square km. Comprising the Kowloon Peninsula and more than 200 islands, Hong Kong is located in East Asia and is under Chinese administration as a special administrative region. The largest islands are Hong Kong Island and Lantau Island. Steep mountains and hilly terrain occupy most areas with some lowlands in the north. The climate is subtropical and characterized by hot, rainy weather in the spring and summer and cool, humid weather in the winter. Monsoon rains deliver most of Hong Kong's precipitation in the summer months. Typhoons are a natural hazard, and air and water pollution are environmental issues.

Peoples

Chinese: 95%
Filipino: 1.6%
Indonesian: 1.3%
Other: 2.1%

Population: 7,153,519 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.421% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.09 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 79.39 male, 85.05 female (2012)

Languages: Cantonese (90.8%), English (2.8%), Mandarin (0.9%), other Chinese languages (4.4%), other (1.1%). Cantonese and English are the official languages. Over one-third of the population speaks English.¹¹⁸²

Literacy: 93.5% (2002)

History

Archaeologists have dated the earliest human settlement of Hong Kong back to 3,000 BC. Han Chinese began settling the region in the seventh century AD. Trade with Britain commenced in the early eighteenth century and the British annexed Hong Kong following the Chinese defeat in the First Opium War in 1842. Conflict between the Chinese and British formally came to a close at the end of the Second Opium War in 1858. The geographic size of Hong Kong expanded dramatically in 1898 as a result of the United Kingdom obtaining a ninety-nine-year lease of the New Territories from the Chinese government out of defense concerns. The British used Hong Kong as center of economic activity and commerce for East Asia during the twentieth century. Following the communist takeover of mainland China, hundreds of thousands fled to Hong Kong. During the latter half of the twentieth century, Hong Kong emerged as a regional economic power due to its success in manufacturing, tourism, finance, and commerce. Consequently standards of living greatly improved, reaching some of the highest levels of life expectancy, GDP per capita, and literacy in Asia. Sovereignty of Hong Kong transferred to China in 1997 when the British lease expired. With the exception of

¹¹⁸² "Background Note: Hong Kong," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 3 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2747.htm>

foreign relations and defense, Hong Kong remains highly autonomous and will retain its economic, judicial, and political systems until 2047.¹¹⁸³

Culture

Hong Kong represents a fusion of Western and Eastern cultures, attributed to long-term Chinese influence and approximately 160 years of British rule. Consequently capitalism, materialism, and traditional Chinese religion are the dominant influences on society. Most the population does not practice an organized religion but rather follows some aspects of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. There is an internationally-renowned, well-developed entertainment industry that produces many martial arts films. Cuisine comprises a mixture of Chinese and Western foods. Common recreational activities include swimming and hiking. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates compare to the worldwide average rates of use of these substances. Hong Kong is regarded as one of the safest large cities in the world.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$49,300 (2011) [102% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.898

Corruption Index: 8.4 (2011)

International trade and finance drive the modernized economy, which is highly integrated into regional and world trade markets. Tourism is a major source of revenue, and in recent years relaxed travel restrictions with mainland China have dramatically increased the number of tourists. Strong economic growth has occurred for several decades, and recovery from the global financial crisis was speedy. A lack of affordable housing and dependence on international trade are economic challenges. Hong Kong's excellent deep water harbor is its primary natural resource; raw materials and food are imported. Services generate 92% of the GDP, whereas industry generates approximately 8% of the GDP. Clothing, tourism, banking, shipping, electronics, and plastics are major industries. Forty-six percent (46%) of imports and 51% of exports are trafficked with mainland China. The United States and Japan are also major trade partners.

Hong Kong is perceived as being among the least-corrupt nations or territories worldwide but is an international transshipment point for heroin and methamphetamine. Illicit use of synthetic drugs has increased in recent years. Hong Kong is a money laundering center due to its modern banking infrastructure.

Faiths

Chinese religions: 21%

Christian: 15%

Muslim: 1.5%

Other: 5.5%

None: 57%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Protestant 550,000

Catholic 400,000

Latter-day Saints 24,188 33

Jehovah's Witnesses 5,307 64

¹¹⁸³ "Background Note: Hong Kong," "Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs," 3 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2747.htm>

Seventh Day Adventists 4,800 20 (includes Macau)

Religion

Although the Chinese population traditionally followed Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, most are not religiously active today. Practitioners of Buddhism and Taoism number approximately 1.5 million and often worship at the same temples. There are slightly over one million Christians; approximately half are Catholic and half are Protestant. There are small numbers of Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and Sikhs. Eight hundred Christian chapels and churches, 600 Buddhist and Taoist temples, five mosques, four synagogues, one Hindu temple, and one Sikh temple operate.¹¹⁸⁴

Religious Freedom

The Basic Law protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Christmas and the birth of Buddha are recognized national holidays. Religious groups are not required to register with the government but groups must register to obtain government benefits. There have been some exchanges of Catholic and Protestant clergy between Hong Kong and mainland China in recent years. Mainland government authorities have pressured Hong Kong government personnel to restrict the activities of Falun Gong followers.¹¹⁸⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 100%

Kowloon, Victoria, Tuen Mun, Sha Tin, Tseung Kwan O, Kwai Chung, Tin Shui Wai, Tseun Wan, Tai Po, Fanling—Sheung Shui, Ma On Shan, Tsing Yi, Aberdeen, Yuen Long.

All fourteen cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Ninety-two percent (92%) of the population resides in the fourteen most populous cities.

LDS History

The first Latter-day Saint missionaries arrived in April 1853 and served in Hong Kong for four months until returning to the United States as they were unable to learn the language and faced challenges adapting to local culture. In 1949, LDS apostle Elder Matthew Cowley dedicated Hong Kong for missionary work on Victoria Peak; the following year, full-time missionaries were assigned and began proselytism. By the end of 1950, there were eight missionaries serving in Hong Kong, and the first convert baptisms occurred. The Korean War temporarily closed full-time missionary activity in the early 1950s. Based in Hong Kong, the Southern Far East Mission was organized in 1955 and administered Southeast Asia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The Chinese translation of the Book of Mormon was first printed in 1965, and remaining LDS scriptures were printed in 1974. In 1969, the mission was named the Hong Kong-Taiwan Mission, and two years later the mission divided, resulting in the Hong Kong Mission administering Hong Kong and Macau.¹¹⁸⁶ Both seminary and institute were operating by 1974. In 1989, the Church opened an Institute of Religion that could accommodate up to 500 students.¹¹⁸⁷ In 1996, the Church completed its second temple on mainland Asia and its first high-rise temple in Hong Kong. LDS leaders met with the chief executive of Hong Kong in 1997, who assured the Church that religious freedom would remain following the transfer of Hong Kong

¹¹⁸⁴ "Background Note: Hong Kong," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 3 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2747.htm>

¹¹⁸⁵ "China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)," International Religious Freedom Report 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148863.htm>

¹¹⁸⁶ Ricks, Kellene. "Pearls of the Orient," *Ensign*, Sept. 1991, 32.

¹¹⁸⁷ "Asia area: New institute opens," *LDS Church News*, 9 September 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18479/Asia-area—New-institute-opens.html>

from British to Chinese administration.¹¹⁸⁸ In 2005, President Hinckley dedicated a new church administration building in Hong Kong for the Asia Area.¹¹⁸⁹ Hong Kong is assigned to the Asia Area, and the area offices have been located in Hong Kong for several decades.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 24,188 (2012)

Membership stood at 1,300 in 1959 and increased to 3,000 in 1964.¹¹⁹⁰ There were 13,000 Latter-day Saints in 1984¹¹⁹¹ and 14,000 members in 1987. Membership increased to 18,000 in 1993 and 19,000 in 1997. By year-end 2000, there were 20,702 members.

Slow membership growth continued into the 2000s as membership reached 21,302 in 2002, 21,876 in 2004, 22,556 in 2006, and 23,223 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates ranged from 1% to 2% between 2001 and 2008. In 2009, membership increased by 3.8%. The China Hong Kong Mission generally baptizes 300 approximately converts a year. In 2009, one in 294 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 24 Branches: 9 (April 2013)

The first district was organized in 1965.¹¹⁹² The Hong Kong Stake was organized in 1976. Additional stakes were organized in Kowloon East (1980), New Territories (1984), Tolo Harbour (1984), and Kowloon (1994). To meet the needs of non-Cantonese speakers, the Hong Kong China (English) District was organized in 1998. In 2006, the Hong Kong China Kowloon East Stake was consolidated with neighboring stakes.

The first two branches were organized in 1955. There were eight congregations by 1959,¹¹⁹³ increasing to twenty-four in 1987, thirty-two in 1993, and thirty-five in 1997. By year-end 2001, the number of congregations reached a high of forty-one. The number of wards increased from twenty-three in 1987 to twenty-four in 1993, twenty-five in 1997, and twenty-eight in 2000.

Ten congregations were consolidated in the 2000s as the number of congregations declined to thirty-nine in 2002, thirty-seven in 2003, thirty-six in 2005, thirty-three in 2006, thirty-two in 2008, and thirty-one in 2010. During this period the English-speaking Peninsula 1st Branch was discontinued, and the English-speaking Victoria 2nd Branch and Mandarin-speaking Victoria 3rd Branch were organized. Cantonese-speaking units discontinued in the 2000s include the Sau Kei Wan Branch, and the Fanling, Kowloon City, Kwai Chung 1st (YSA), Ngau Tau Kok (YSA), Pok Fu Lam, Shun Lee, and Tuen Mun 1st Wards. The Tseung Kwan O Ward was organized and the Tsing Yi Branch became a ward.

¹¹⁸⁸ "Hong Kong Region leader greets LDS," LDS Church News, 3 May 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29181/Hong-Kong-Region-leader-greets-LDS.html>

¹¹⁸⁹ Hill, Greg. "Hong Kong: Most significant experience," LDS Church News, 6 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47661/Hong-Kong-Most-significant-experience.html>

¹¹⁹⁰ "Hong Kong Temple begins to rise—Rendering shows temple as part of a five-story edifice," LDS Church News, 18 February 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26588/Hong-Kong-Temple-begins-to-rise—Rendering-shows-temple-as-part-of-a-five-story-edifice.html>

¹¹⁹¹ Ricks, Kellene. "Pearls of the Orient," Ensign, Sept. 1991, 32.

¹¹⁹² "Hong Kong Temple begins to rise—Rendering shows temple as part of a five-story edifice," LDS Church News, 18 February 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26588/Hong-Kong-Temple-begins-to-rise—Rendering-shows-temple-as-part-of-a-five-story-edifice.html>

¹¹⁹³ "Hong Kong Temple begins to rise—Rendering shows temple as part of a five-story edifice," LDS Church News, 18 February 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26588/Hong-Kong-Temple-begins-to-rise—Rendering-shows-temple-as-part-of-a-five-story-edifice.html>

Activity and Retention

The LDS Church in Hong Kong experiences extremely low member activity rates. The average number of members per congregation increased from 583 in 2000 to 754 in 2009. Active members are generally highly devoted to the Church. There were 200 institute students in 1989 and 81% of institute students attended four years of classes and graduated from the program.¹¹⁹⁴ In 1992, nearly 3,000 attended a regional conference, the highest attendance for any LDS meeting at the time¹¹⁹⁵ and accounting for approximately 17% of church membership at the time. Five thousand attended the dedicatory services of the Hong Kong China Temple in 1996, most of whom were from Hong Kong.¹¹⁹⁶ More than one hundred youth participated in a youth conference in 2000.¹¹⁹⁷ That same year, 250 non-Chinese members attended a special temple day for the International District.¹¹⁹⁸ 551 were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2008–2009 school year. Active membership in most wards ranges from fifty to one hundred, whereas most branches have approximately 50 active membership. Full-time missionaries serving in one ward in 2010 reported that 40 of approximately 2,000 members were active. Nationwide active membership is estimated to range between 3,000 and 4,000, or 12%–16% of total membership.

Finding and Public Affairs

Nearly 2,000 attended LDS meetinghouse open houses held systematically through the four stakes in Hong Kong in 1988. Missionaries obtained over 750 referrals from the open house event.¹¹⁹⁹ A similar open house finding event attracted 2,524 nonmembers to meetinghouses in 1991.¹²⁰⁰ In 1992, the Hong Kong Island Stake held a free musical performance to the public in an effort to invite the general public into an LDS meetinghouse and talk with members.¹²⁰¹ 13,000 attended the temple open house in 1996. In 1998, BYU-Hawaii students performed Hawaiian dances that were viewed by approximately 2,000 spectators.¹²⁰² Over 700 youth participated in a church basketball tournament in 1999; the number of participants increased to 1,200 in 2000.¹²⁰³ Local members organized a teacher appreciation program in 1995 that recognized over 6,000 members by 2000.¹²⁰⁴ The Church sold one of its oldest buildings at less than market value to the city of Hong Kong in 2004 for the city to turn into a museum. Over 10,700 attended an open house following the sale of the building.¹²⁰⁵

¹¹⁹⁴ "Asia area: New institute opens," LDS Church News, 9 September 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18479/Asia-area-New-institute-opens.html>

¹¹⁹⁵ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 29 February 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22137/From-around-the-world.html>

¹¹⁹⁶ Avant, Gerry. "Hong Kong Temple dedicated," LDS Church News, 1 June 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27973/Hong-Kong-Temple-dedicated.html>

¹¹⁹⁷ "Homantin, hong kong," LDS Church News, 19 August 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38334/Homantin-hong-kong.html>

¹¹⁹⁸ "Members enjoy temple blessings," LDS Church News, 23 September 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38517/Members-enjoy-temple-blessings.html>

¹¹⁹⁹ "First colony-wide open houses in Hong Kong result in 750 referrals," LDS Church News, 31 December 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17545/First-colony-wide-open-houses-in-Hong-Kong-result-in-750-referrals.html>

¹²⁰⁰ "Asia area: 'Constancy amid change,'" LDS Church News, 23 November 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20785/Asia-area-Constancy-amid-change-.html>

¹²⁰¹ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 5 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22444/From-around-the-world.html>

¹²⁰² "From around the World," LDS Church News, 8 August 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31097/From-around-the-World.html>

¹²⁰³ "280 teams play in tournament," LDS Church News, 16 September 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38462/280-teams-play-in-tournament.html>

¹²⁰⁴ "Hong Kong teachers recognized," LDS Church News, 29 April 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37687/Hong-Kong-teachers-recognized.html>

¹²⁰⁵ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Hong Kong hall preserved by Church," LDS Church News, 17 April 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45434/Hong-Kong-hall-preserved-by-Church.html>

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), Tagalog, Indonesian, English. All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Chinese (simplified and traditional characters), Tagalog, and Indonesian. The *Liahona* magazine has monthly issues in Chinese and Tagalog and bimonthly issues in Indonesian.

Meetinghouses

The first church-built meetinghouse was completed in 1966.¹²⁰⁶ There were seventeen LDS meetinghouses in Hong Kong in 1988.¹²⁰⁷ In early 2011, there were at least sixteen LDS meetinghouses.

Health and Safety

The SARS outbreak in 2003 interfered with the functioning of the church and missionary activity, as the arrival of new missionaries was delayed, and local members held small sacrament meetings in their homes.¹²⁰⁸

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has offered humanitarian and development assistance to mainland China from Hong Kong, such as contributing \$20,000 for relief to earthquake victims in Yunnan in 1996.¹²⁰⁹ Over 120 members participated in a tree-planting service project in which more than 150 trees were planted in Sai Kung West Park in 1999.¹²¹⁰ Latter-day Saint youth assembled over 400 hygiene and sewing kits to distribute to Mongolia and India in 2000.¹²¹¹ In 2003, local church membership and missionaries assembled 3,000 hygiene kits to distribute to the needy in Hong Kong in wake of the SARS outbreak.¹²¹² The Church donated 250 wheelchairs to the disabled in 2004.¹²¹³

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints enjoy full religious freedom in Hong Kong and may worship, assemble, and proselyte. Foreign full-time missionaries are assigned regularly. As a result of widespread religious freedom, Chinese from mainland China desiring to be baptized into the Church sometimes briefly visit Hong Kong, are taught by full-time missionaries, and baptized before returning back to the mainland in a matter of several hours.

¹²⁰⁶ Ricks, Kellene . "Pearls of the Orient," *Ensign*, Sept. 1991, 32.

¹²⁰⁷ "First colony-wide open houses in Hong Kong result in 750 referrals," *LDS Church News*, 31 December 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17545/First-colony-wide-open-houses-in-Hong-Kong-result-in-750-referrals.html>

¹²⁰⁸ Thornell, Linda. "In a time of fear Asian members coping with SARS," *LDS Church News*, 3 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43705/In-a-time-of-fear-Asian-members-coping-with-SARS.html>

¹²⁰⁹ "From around the world," *LDS Church News*, 23 March 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27312/From-around-the-world.html>

¹²¹⁰ "Adding to 'breathtaking scenery,'" *LDS Church News*, 10 July 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/36038/Adding-to-breathtaking-scenery.html>

¹²¹¹ "Homantin, Hong Kong," *LDS Church News*, 19 August 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38334/Homantin-hong-kong.html>

¹²¹² Thornell, David; Thornell, Linda. "Preventing SARS," *LDS Church News*, 24 May 2003.

¹²¹³ "Wheelchairs donated," *LDS Church News*, 16 October 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46335/Wheelchairs-donated.html>

Cultural Issues

Materialism, high cost of living, and secularism are major cultural challenges that frustrate LDS mission outreach. Full-time missionaries and members struggle to develop mission outreach approaches that are effective in proselytizing the highly irreligious population that exhibits little familiarity with Christianity. Many converts are not retained, as they fail to develop habitual church attendance and personal gospel study habits. The development of a Latter-day Saint community over the past half century has provided a social outlet for members to associate and rely upon to avoid cultural practices and social pressures not in harmony with LDS teachings.

Extensive genealogical records handed down for millennia offer excellent opportunities for local members to engage in temple work and use family history research as a segue for member-missionary work and finding. In 2000, one local member obtained a 175-volume set of his family's genealogical records containing over 200,000 ancestor names dating back to 602 AD.¹²¹⁴

National Outreach

Small geographic size, a long-standing Latter-day Saint presence, and consistent numbers of full-time missionaries assigned have resulted in excellent levels of national outreach, as approximately 94% of the population resides in cities with an LDS congregation. All cities with over 85,000 inhabitants have a mission outreach center. Most unreached or lesser-reached cities have fewer than 24,000 inhabitants.

Congregation consolidations in the 2000s have not eliminated outreach in many communities, as full-time missionaries proselyte in many affected communities, and many active members continue to reside in these locations, but declining numbers of congregations have resulted in many urban areas becoming less reached by LDS congregations and local leaders. With 82,700 inhabitants, Pok Fu Lam is the most populous city without an LDS congregation. Although at one time a ward operated in Pok Fu Lam, the unit was discontinued in the 2000s. Assigning local Chinese leaders to head the reestablishment of dependent congregations in some lesser-reached areas may reverse the trend of congregational decline and provide for long-term support and mentoring that does not detract from LDS missionary resources abroad.

Expensive and limited real estate is a challenge for the Church to open additional meetinghouses, resulting in multiple congregations utilizing the same LDS meetinghouses. Long travel distances to LDS meetinghouses for some can reduce church attendance levels.

Hong Kong ranked 30th among countries with the most visitors to the Church's website in 1997.¹²¹⁵ The Church operates a country website for Hong Kong available in English at <http://www.lds.org.hk/en/> and in traditional Chinese characters at <http://www.lds.org.hk/>. The Internet site provides local news, meetinghouse locations and times, explanation of LDS doctrines and teachings, and links to LDS scriptures translated into traditional characters. Use of the website in member-missionary activity can enhance national outreach and provide accurate information on the Internet to the general population.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Full-time missionaries and local members engage regularly in reactivation and less active work, but these efforts often yield little success. Low standards for convert baptisms, the rush to baptize prospective converts

¹²¹⁴ Stahle, Shaun. "Small events lead to major collection of family names," LDS Church News, 8 January 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37004/Small-events-lead-to-major-collection-of-family-names.html>

¹²¹⁵ "Internet users find LDS web site," LDS Church News, 1 March 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29302/Internet-users-find-LDS-web-site.html>

quickly with little emphasis on prebaptismal preparation and gospel habits, and the lack of daily religious practice in local culture has created a challenging environment for convert retention and retaining current levels of member activity. Reactivation efforts by full-time missionaries draw large amounts of mission resources, delaying the progress of mission outreach in other more receptive nations and areas.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Church has experienced no significant ethnic integration issues in Hong Kong, as the population is homogeneously Cantonese-speaking Chinese. English and Mandarin-speaking congregations effectively provide outreach for non-Cantonese speakers and diminish ethnic integration challenges by segregating members by language usage.

Language Issues

Widespread use of Cantonese and English simplify mission outreach and require fewer language-specific resources. Constituting their own district, seven English-speaking branches and one Mandarin-speaking branch meet the needs of non-Cantonese speakers. Prospects appear favorable for the establishment of a second Mandarin-speaking branch on the New Territories area in coming years, as many are unable to travel to Hong Kong Island to attend the Victoria 3rd (Mandarin) Branch. Mandarin-speakers have among the most receptive populations to the Church in Hong Kong.

Missionary Service

The Southern Far East Mission had 102 missionaries in 1959, including twelve local members serving full-time missions.¹²¹⁶ In 1988, mission leadership credited the support of local church leaders for the doubling of the number of local missionaries in an eighteen-month period serving full-time missions in the Hong Kong Mission.¹²¹⁷ There were 148 full-time missionaries in the mission that year.¹²¹⁸ The sole Mandarin-speaking branch had ten full-time missionaries assigned in late 2009. As of early 2011, approximately 5,000 full-time missionaries had served in Hong Kong since the establishment of the Church.

Leadership

Local church leadership has been developed but remains limited and strained due to responsibilities fulfilling leadership positions in Hong Kong while simultaneously providing mentoring and support for mainland Chinese Latter-day Saints while in compliance with PRC government regulations. Church employees regularly serve in church leadership positions, such as stake presidencies. In 1965, six of the eight branches had native Chinese branch presidents.¹²¹⁹ In 1992, Chun Shing Johnson Ma from Kwai Chung was called as a regional representative.¹²²⁰ Karl S. Fansworth from Victoria was called as a mission president in 1993.¹²²¹ In 1994, Chung Hei Patrick Wong from Tai Wai was called as a regional representative,¹²²² and in 1995 he was

¹²¹⁶ Ricks, Kellene . "Pearls of the Orient," Ensign, Sept. 1991, 32

¹²¹⁷ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 30 January 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17635/From-around-the-world.html>

¹²¹⁸ "First colony-wide open houses in Hong Kong result in 750 referrals," LDS Church News, 31 December 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17545/First-colony-wide-open-houses-in-Hong-Kong-result-in-750-referrals.html>

¹²¹⁹ Ricks, Kellene . "Pearls of the Orient," Ensign, Sept. 1991, 32.

¹²²⁰ "New regional representatives," LDS Church News, 4 April 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22173/New-regional-representatives.html>

¹²²¹ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 23 January 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23667/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹²²² "New regional representatives," LDS Church News, 27 August 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24738/New-regional-representatives.html>

called as an area authority.¹²²³ Kat Hing Ng from Tsuen Wan was called as the first Hong Kong China Temple president in 1995.¹²²⁴ In 1997, Stanley Tak-Chung Wan from the Pok Fu Lam was called to preside over the Hong Kong Mission.¹²²⁵ In 2002, D. Allen Anderson was called as an Area Seventy.¹²²⁶ Kuen Ling was called as an Area Authority in 2003.¹²²⁷ In 2004, Stanley Wan was called as an Area Authority.¹²²⁸ In 2007, D. Allen Andersen from Victoria was called to preside over the Mongolia Ulaanbaatar Mission.¹²²⁹

Temple

Hong Kong is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. Announced in 1992 and dedicated in 1996, the Hong Kong China Temple administered most of Asia in early 2011. In 2010, the Church completed a temple patron housing building capable of accommodating up to fifty individuals who travel long distances from mainland China, Southeast Asia, Mongolia, and the Indian subcontinent. The temple is well-utilized by active Latter-day Saints as manifested by six endowment sessions scheduled Tuesdays through Fridays and five sessions scheduled on Saturdays. Local members frequently staff the temple to accommodate the needs of temple patrons traveling from outside of Hong Kong.

Comparative Growth

The Church in Hong Kong suffers from some of the poorest levels of member activity and convert retention in the world and had the lowest percentage of members enrolled in seminary in Asia in the late 2000s (2.4% in 2008). Only Chile has a higher ratio of members to congregations than Hong Kong. Membership and congregational growth trends have most closely mirrored Western Europe, albeit nominal church membership accounts for a greater percentage of the population in Hong Kong than any Western European or Asian country except for Portugal and Philippines. Hong Kong boasts the fifth most stakes in Asia, and the Hong Kong China Temple is among the busiest temples in nations with fewer than 30,000 Latter-day Saints.

Missionary-minded Christian groups generally report slow or stagnant church growth. Adventists reported slow, consistent membership growth and stagnant congregational growth in the 2000s, whereas Jehovah's Witnesses experienced moderate membership growth rates and operated sixty-four congregations in 2010. These groups have relied on local members instead of outsourced missionary manpower to sustain growth. Evangelicals have experienced stagnant growth for many years.

Future Prospects

Continued strong church participation and activity among church-going Latter-day Saints in Hong Kong has sustained leadership capable of meeting the responsibilities demanded by stakes, but extremely low member activity rates among the general LDS membership threaten continued congregation consolidations and may

¹²²³ "Church names area authorities," LDS Church News, 5 August 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26627/Church-names-area-authorities.html>

¹²²⁴ "New temple president," LDS Church News, 19 August 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26227/New-temple-president.html>

¹²²⁵ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 29 March 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29077/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹²²⁶ "30 Area Authority Seventies sustained," LDS Church News, 13 April 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41666/30-Area-Authority-Seventies-sustained.html>

¹²²⁷ "New Area Authority Seventies," LDS Church News, 19 April 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43636/New-Area-Authority-Seventies.html>

¹²²⁸ "New Area Authority Seventies," LDS Church News, 24 April 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45458/New-Area-Authority-Seventies.html>

¹²²⁹ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 21 April 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50484/New-mission-presidents.html>

compromise current levels of mission outreach over the medium term. Quick-baptize policies and practices and low standards for convert baptisms have compromised the harvest of the Hong Kong Mission and have fueled very poor convert retention. Poor retention, in turn, has presented long-term challenges for strengthening the local church and has drained the resources of local congregations in efforts to reclaim less active and never-active members still on church rolls who have achieved little success. Increasing standards for convert baptism and emphasizing the need to develop consistent gospel habits will be key to the Church's long-term prospects for real growth. Another stake may be discontinued if congregations continue to close and increased convert retention and reactivation efforts do not come to greater fruition. Materialism and high cost of living have contributed to low birth rates among Latter-day Saints and exacerbate low receptivity. Local leaders stressing participation in seminary and institute may help address retention and member inactivity issues by providing opportunities for less active members and new converts to socially integrate with active membership and strengthen their testimonies and doctrinal understanding.

INDONESIA

Geography

AREA: 1,904,569 square km. Located in Southeast Asia between the Philippines and Australia, Indonesia consists of several archipelagos and over 17,500 large islands, a third of which are inhabited. Kalimantan (Borneo), Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi, and Irian Jaya (western New Guinea) are the largest islands and account for the majority of the population. Lowlands occupy coastal areas and experience hot, tropical climate, whereas larger islands with interior highlands and tall mountains are subject to cooler climatic conditions. Floods, droughts, tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanoes, and forest fires are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, pollution, and poor air quality from forest fires. Indonesia is administratively divided into thirty provinces, two special regions, and one special capital city district.

Peoples

Javanese: 40.6%
Sundanese: 15%
Madurese: 3.3%
Minangkabau: 2.7%
Betawi: 2.4%
Bugis: 2.4%
Banten: 2%
Banjar: 1.7%
Other/unspecified: 29.9%

Population: 248,216,193 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.04% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.23 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 69.07 male, 74.29 female (2012)

Languages: 719 indigenous languages are spoken. Indonesian is the official language, which is spoken by over 140 million as a second language and typically uses the Latin script. Languages with over one million native speakers include Javanese (84.3 million), Sunda (34 million), Bahasa Indonesian (22.8 million), Madura (13.6 million), Malay dialects (8.21 million), Batak dialects (7.05 million), Minangkabau (5.53 million), Musi (3.93 million), Aceh (3.5 million), Banjar (3.5 million), Bugis (3.5 million), Bali (3.33 million), Betawi (2.7 million), Sasak (2.1 million), Chinese languages (2 million), and Makasar (1.6 million).

Literacy: 90.4% (2004)

History

The archipelagos of Indonesia were settled by Austronesians several millennia prior to the birth of Christ. Between the seventh and fourteenth centuries AD, the Buddhist Srivjaya Empire flourished on Sumatra, and the Hindu Kingdom of Majapahit governed eastern Java. Much of present-day Indonesia was unified under alliances in the fourteenth century. Islam was introduced in the twelfth century and became the dominant religion on Java and Sumatra by the sixteenth century. Christianity and Islam were introduced to eastern islands

in Indonesia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The archipelago was colonized in the early seventeenth century by the Dutch and quickly became one of the wealthiest European colonies worldwide. Japan occupied Indonesia for much of World War II, after which Indonesia declared independence. Independence was internationally recognized by 1950 after negotiations with the Netherlands and the United Nations. Within the first decade of independence, several islands, such as Sumatra and Sulawesi, attempted to secede, resulting in internal instability. President Soekarno enacted presidential powers to preserve the unity of the country, which over time experienced increasing power of communist ideologies until a massive rebellion in 1965 in which General Suharto emerged as president. The Communist Party was subsequently banned and dismantled. President Suharto initiated economic development reforms and applied Western economic theory. A military-backed government ruled until the 1990s. The first free parliamentary election occurred in 1999. The province of East Timor declared independence in 1975 but was invaded and occupied by Indonesia. Conflict continued until 1999, when East Timor was released from Indonesia with support of the United Nations. The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami devastated coastal areas of the Sumatra, killing over 130,000 and leaving half a million homeless. Separatists in Aceh reached a peace deal with the government in 2005.¹²³⁰

Culture

Indonesia represents an agglomeration of various religions, civilizations, and countries fusing with local culture. Today Islam is one of the strongest cultural forces, as Indonesia is the country with the most Muslims in the world, although Indonesian Islam is very different from the strict Wahabbi Islam of Saudi Arabia and some other Middle Eastern nations. India, the Dutch, and China each have heavily influenced art, cuisine, religion, and local customs. Individual ethnic groups possess many indigenous cultural characteristics such as dress, dance, music, and religion. Ethnic groups residing in remote areas retain many of the traditional cultural practices and beliefs. Silat is an Indonesian martial art that continues to be widely practiced today. Traditional and Western sports are widely practiced. Common foods and cuisine share many similarities with other Southeastern countries, China, and India. Rice, cassava, sea food, and vegetables are widely consumed. Polygamy and pornography are illegal.¹²³¹ Cigarette consumption rates compare to the worldwide average, whereas alcohol consumption rates are low.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$4,700 (2011) [9.77% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.617

Corruption Index: 3.0 (2011)

The Indonesian economy has outperformed most Asian economies in recent years due to strong domestic production and economic reforms. GDP growth continued despite the global financial crisis in the late 2000s but has slowed from previous levels. Indonesia possesses vast natural resources, including oil, rare minerals, timber, coal, fertile soils, and the twelfth largest natural gas reserves worldwide. Metals and minerals mined include tin, nickel, bauxite, copper, gold, and silver. Challenges that impede greater economic growth and development include corruption, widespread poverty, unemployment, unequal distribution of natural resources throughout the country, and inadequate infrastructure. Agriculture employs 42% of the workforce and generates 15% of the GDP. Primary agricultural products or crops include rice, cassava, peanuts, rubber, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, meat, and animal byproducts. Industry accounts for 19% of the workforce and generates 48% of the GDP. Petroleum, natural gas, textiles, clothing, mining, chemical fertilizers, wood, rubber, and tourism are primary industries. Services employ 49% of the workforce and generate 37% of the GDP. Primary trade partners include Singapore, Japan, China, and the United States.

¹²³⁰ "Background Note: Indonesia," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 4 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2748.htm>

¹²³¹ "Indonesia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127271.htm>

Corruption is perceived as widespread and harmful to economic development. Personal associations often heavily influence business deals and transactions. Customs is regarded as one of the most corrupt areas of government. Bribery is common. Investment laws reduce competition and economic growth. The government lacks transparency in many areas.¹²³²

Faiths

Muslim: 86.4%
 Christian: 8.7%
 Hindu: 1.8%
 Other/unspecified: 3.4%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 8,000,000
 Seventh Day Adventists 217,489 1,486
 Jehovah's Witnesses 22,594 374
 Latter-day Saints 6,904 23

Religion

Indonesia represents a patchwork of religious traditions, although most Indonesians are Sunni Muslim. Shi'a and Ahmadiyya Qadiyani Muslims are common Muslim minority groups. The government estimates Protestants number nineteen million and Catholics total eight million. Consisting of the Indonesian-controlled western half of New Guinea, Papua Province has the highest percentage of Protestants (58%), whereas the eastern Lesser Sunda Islands and West Timor, which together constitute East Nusa Tenggara Province, have the highest percentage of Catholics (55%). Christians constitute sizeable minorities in many areas, such as the Maluku Islands and North Sulawesi. Hindus constitute 90% of the population on the island of Bali and populate scattered areas of Kalimantan, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and Tenggara. Hindus may number as many as ten million, although discrepancies exist between government figures and those published by Hindu groups. The Chinese Indonesian population is approximately 60% Buddhist. Syncretism between government-recognized religious groups and indigenous beliefs occur in many areas, with as many as twenty million practicing indigenous beliefs.¹²³³

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 45th

The constitution protects religious freedom, but the government only upholds this right for some religious groups. The government only recognizes six religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. Unrecognized religious groups or sects stemming from recognized religious groups are deemed deviant and often persecuted but can register with the government as social organizations. Members of unrecognized religious groups often face challenges obtaining identity cards, registering marriages and births, and building meetinghouses. Local laws in some areas restrict the religious freedom of religious minorities, and the government has not used its power to revoke such laws. The government has done little to prosecute those alleged of abusing the religious freedom rights of others. The degree of religious

¹²³² "Background Note: Indonesia," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 4 August 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2748.htm>

¹²³³ "Indonesia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127271.htm>

freedom granted to religious minorities widely varies by location and is largely controlled by local or regional government. Proselytism and the distribution of religious literature are banned by the government under the justification that such activity may lead to disruption in public order in religiously diverse areas. Foreign missionaries may operate in the country and must obtain religious worker visas. The government recognizes several religious holidays from most major religious traditions. Shari'a law is implemented only in Aceh and is not totally enforced throughout the province. Minority Muslim groups and Christians appear the most persecuted by the Sunni Muslim majority, although most religious minorities experience some persecution throughout the country.¹²³⁴

Largest Cities

Urban: 52%

Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Medan, Bekasi, Tangerang, Semarang, **Depok, Palembang, Makasar**, Bogor, **Padang**, Malang, **Bandar Lampung, Pekanbaru, Batam, Banjarmasin, Tasikmalaya**, Denpasar, **Samarinda, Cimahi**, Surakarta, **Pontianak, Balikpapan, Jambi**, Yogyakarta, Manado, **Mataram, Cilegon, Cirebon, Palu, Sukabumi, Kupang, Pekalongan, Bengkulu, Kediri, Tegal, Binjai, Kendari, Ambon, Pematangsiantar, Dumai, Probolinggo, Jayapura, Batu, Padang Sidempuan, Banda Aceh, Lubuklinggau, Madiun, Pasuruan, Palangkaraya, Tanjungpinang, Singkawang, Salatiga, Bitung, Banjar, Ternate, Tarakan, Lhokseumawe, Gorontalo, Banjarbaru, Tanjungbalai, Sorong, Pangkalpinang, Langsa, Tebingtinggi, Palopo, Prabumulih, Metro, Blitar, Magelang, Bima, Bontang, Baubau, Pagaralam, Parepare, Mojokerto, Payakumbuh, Bukittinggi.**

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

Fourteen of the seventy-nine cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Twenty percent (20%) of the national population resides in the seventy-nine largest cities.

LDS History

Elder Ezra Taft Benson dedicated Indonesia for missionary work in 1969.¹²³⁵ Under the Southeast Asia Mission, later renamed the Singapore Mission, the Church assigned the first six full-time missionaries to Indonesia in 1970. Missionaries initially worked in Jakarta, Bogor, and Bandung.¹²³⁶ The Church organized its first branch in Jakarta in February 1970 and received official recognition in August.¹²³⁷ Missionary work expanded into additional cities shortly thereafter, which included Yogyakarta, Surakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, and Malang by 1977. In 1974, missionaries began learning Indonesian prior to entering the mission field. Elder Gordon B. Hinckley became the first LDS apostle to visit Indonesia in 1975. The Indonesian translation of the Book of Mormon was published in 1977.¹²³⁸ Indonesia Jakarta Mission was discontinued in 1981 as a result of government restrictions and other difficulties but was reopened in 1985. Seminary and institute were both operating by 1981. Only native members served in Indonesia after November 1988, and the mission closed again in 1989.¹²³⁹ The Indonesia Jakarta Mission reopened in 1995. President Hinckley met with the Indonesian president and with local members in 2000.¹²⁴⁰ In 2010, Elder Russell M. Nelson visited with high

¹²³⁴ "Indonesia," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127271.htm>

¹²³⁵ "Native missionaries, sign of Church growth in Indonesia," LDS Church News, 6 March 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58910/Native-missionaries-sign-of-Church-growth-in-Indonesia.html>

¹²³⁶ Craig, Alison. "The Saints in Indonesia," *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 86.

¹²³⁷ Mitchell, David. "Indonesian Saints," *Liahona*, Aug. 1992, 11.

¹²³⁸ Craig, Alison. "The Saints in Indonesia," *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 86.

¹²³⁹ Mitchell, David. "Indonesian Saints," *Liahona*, Aug. 1992, 11.

¹²⁴⁰ "President Hinckley meets members on Pacific Rim," LDS Church News, 5 February 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37139/President-Hinckley-meets-members-on-Pacific-Rim.html>

ranking government and Muslim officials in Jakarta.¹²⁴¹ In 2011, Elder David A. Bednar created the first stake in Jakarta.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 6,904 (2012)

There were 1,200 LDS members in 1975.¹²⁴² Church membership reached 4,000 in 1992.¹²⁴³ By year-end 2000, there were 5,374 members. Slow membership growth occurred through the 2000s as Latter-day Saints numbered 5,720 in 2003, 6,144 in 2006, and 6,393 in 2008. Total church membership tends to increase by one hundred a year, or at a rate between 1.5% and 2.5%. Slow membership has consistently occurred in the remote branches of Manado and Medan. In 2009, one in 36,705 was nominally LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 14 Branches: 9 Groups: 2 (March 2013)

The first branches were created in the early 1970s. The Jakarta English Branch was created in 1978.¹²⁴⁴ All three districts operating in Indonesia in 2010 were created prior to 1980. Two branches were functioning in Malang in 1988.¹²⁴⁵ By 1992, there were seventeen branches organized in three districts.¹²⁴⁶ There were twenty congregations by 1993.¹²⁴⁷

The Church reported twenty branches in 2000. In 2001, the Jakarta Indonesia District had six branches (Bandung, Bekasi, Bogor, Jakarta, Jakarta English, Jakarta South), the Surabaya Indonesia District had four branches (Malag, Malang Selatan, Surabaya Barat, Surabaya Timur), and the Surakarta Indonesia District had seven branches (Banjarsari, Jebres, Magelang, Semarang, Solo Barat, Surakarta, Yogyakarta). The number of branches increased to twenty-one in 2001, twenty-two in 2002, and twenty-four in 2005 and then decreased to twenty-three in 2008 and to twenty-two in 2009. In mid-2010, the Jakarta Indonesia District had grown to ten branches with the creation of the Bekasi 2nd, Cigudeg, Tangerang 1st, and Tangerang 2nd Branches over the past decade. The number of branches in the Surabaya Indonesia District declined by one, as both branches in Malang were consolidated. A branch that once operated in Tembagapura, Papua Province, was discontinued in the late 2000s. The Cigudeg Branch was discontinued in late 2010, and members now meet as group. In 2011, the Church created the Bali Branch.

In 2011, the Church created its first stake in Jakarta with eight wards (Bekasi 1st, Bekasi 2nd, Bogor, Jakarta 1st, Jakarta 2nd, Jakarta 3rd [English], Tangerang 1st, and Tangerang) and one branch (Bandung). In 2012, the Church organized a second stake in Surakarta and created the Indonesia Jakarta Mission Branch for members residing in areas without wards or branches. In the early 2010s, a group began functioning in Batam.

¹²⁴¹ "Courtesy calls made in Indonesia," LDS Church News, 13 March 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58997/Courtesy-calls-made-in-Indonesia.html>

¹²⁴² Craig, Alison. "The Saints in Indonesia," *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 86.

¹²⁴³ Mitchell, David. "Indonesian Saints," *Liahona*, Aug. 1992, 11

¹²⁴⁴ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 18 July 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22239/From-around-the-world.html>

¹²⁴⁵ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 27 February 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17976/From-around-the-world.html>

¹²⁴⁶ Mitchell, David. "Indonesian Saints," *Liahona*, Aug. 1992, 11.

¹²⁴⁷ Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Asia area: Welcome mat is out in several countries," LDS Church News, 19. June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22920/Asia-area-Welcome-mat-is-out-in-several-countries.html>

Activity and Retention

Indonesia experiences mediocre levels of member activity and convert retention. In 1992, local church leaders reported that there was a need for improved convert retention and that long distance from church meeting-houses for some may reduce member activity rates.¹²⁴⁸ 420 were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2008–2009 school year.

Most branches have over one hundred active members. Fifty percent (50%) of church members attended church in Semarang in early 2010. There were over one hundred members attending church in Malang in early 2010. Branches with few active members include the Manado (40 active members in late 2009), Bandung, and Medan Branches. In January 2010, Area Seventy Elder Subandriyo reported that the average sacrament attendance in Indonesia was 40% of total membership. Current active membership is estimated at 2,600, or 40% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Bahasa Indonesian, Dutch, English.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Bahasa Indonesian and Dutch. In 2010, the Church posted the LDS scriptures in Indonesian online at <http://www.scriptures.lds.org/ind/>. *Gospel Fundamentals* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Malay. Malaysian members reported that in 2009, the Church authorized the translation of the Book of Mormon into Bahasa Malaysian.

Meetinghouses

In 1988, the Church dedicated a church-built meetinghouse in Malang¹²⁴⁹ and a four-story meetinghouse for two branches and the mission home in Jakarta.¹²⁵⁰ In 2010, LDS congregations met in at least eighteen locations, many of which were meetinghouses built by the Church.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Latter-day Saints have undertaken extensive humanitarian assistance and development work in the past decade following natural disasters. At least thirty humanitarian projects have been completed since 1985, many of which included emergency aid, clean water projects, and wheelchair donations.¹²⁵¹ In 2000, the LDS Church purchased rice and hygiene supplies, which were assembled into kits by members in Jakarta for refugees on Timor. The government thanked the Church for its efforts.¹²⁵² Local church members in Jakarta prepared over 10,000 meals for some of the 30,000 homeless flood victims in 2002.¹²⁵³ The Church helped finance a road construction project in Solo in 2003.¹²⁵⁴ Following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, Latter-day Saints assisted nearly 300,000 and donated over 6,000 hours of service. Long-term development projects ensued in

¹²⁴⁸ Mitchell, David. "Indonesian Saints," Liahona, Aug. 1992, 11.

¹²⁴⁹ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 27 February 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17976/From-around-the-world.html>

¹²⁵⁰ "From Around the World," LDS Church News, 10 September 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18321/From-Around-the-World.html>

¹²⁵¹ "Projects—Indonesia," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 5 October 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-234,00.html>

¹²⁵² "Indonesian minister thanks Church for aid," LDS Church News, 6 May 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37733/Indonesian-minister-thanks-Church-for-aid.html>

¹²⁵³ "Providing relief for flood victims," LDS Church News, 23 February 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41370/Providing-relief-for-flood-victims.html>

¹²⁵⁴ Thornell, Linda M. "New road in Indonesia paves way for future generations," LDS Church News, 15 November 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44695/New-road-in-Indonesia-paves-way-for-future-generations.html>

the following months, such as providing medical equipment and building restoration work on a hospital in Banda Aceh. Elder Subandriyo was intimately involved in many of the projects.¹²⁵⁵ Immediately following the disaster, the Church donated over 50,000 body bags at the government's request.¹²⁵⁶ In 2005, the Church donated medical equipment needed after a devastating earthquake in Sumatra.¹²⁵⁷ The Church provided mental health assistance in Banda Aceh in 2005 to tsunami victims.¹²⁵⁸ Local LDS youth in Jakarta took part in an anti-drug campaign in 2006.¹²⁵⁹ In 2006, Latter-day Saint charities and the Church helped construct a new medical rehabilitation center in Aceh Province.¹²⁶⁰ Additional projects undertaken in 2006 with other aid agencies in tsunami-stricken areas included building sixteen schools, three health clinics, 1,000 permanent houses, many boats for villagers, and water and sanitation systems for twenty villages.¹²⁶¹ Emergency aid was donated to victims of the 2006 Java Tsunami.¹²⁶² Almost eight tons of food and water were provided for flood victims in Jakarta in 2007.¹²⁶³ In 2007, the Church provided humanitarian aid and food to earthquake victims in Bengkulu.¹²⁶⁴ More than a dozen large-scale development projects in areas affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami were completed in early 2008.¹²⁶⁵ In 2008, the Church completed a clean water project in Kaliwungu with assistance from full-time missionaries.¹²⁶⁶ The Church participated in a government effort for citizens to hold a weekly family night in 2008.¹²⁶⁷

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church appears to be registered as a social organization and has a positive relationship with the government due to past humanitarian assistance. Missionaries report that the government severely restricts the number of visas granted for foreign full-time missionaries, resulting in high reliance on the local full-time missionary force to staff the Indonesia Jakarta Mission. Latter-day Saints have no presence in most areas, which have local laws that restrict the religious freedom of minorities. LDS missionaries do not engage in open proselytism and work primarily through casual conversations with strangers and member referrals. Latter-day Saint Indonesians report few instances of societal abuse or prejudice.

¹²⁵⁵ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Proposing projects to villages of tsunami survivors," LDS Church News, 19 March 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47006/Proposing-projects-to-villages-of-tsunami-survivors.html>

¹²⁵⁶ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Emergency response is appropriate, immediate," LDS Church News, 15 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46735/Emergency-response-is-appropriate-immediate.html>

¹²⁵⁷ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "In earthquake's wake," LDS Church News, 16 April 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47175/In-earthquakes-wake.html>

¹²⁵⁸ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Tsunami support turns to mental health," LDS Church News, 14 May 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47302/Tsunami-support-turns-to-mental-health.html>

¹²⁵⁹ "Anti-drug campaign," LDS Church News, 4 March 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48610/Anti-drug-campaign.html>

¹²⁶⁰ Allen, Connie. "Reconstruction," LDS Church News, 27 May 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49014/Reconstruction.html>

¹²⁶¹ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Work continues in Southeast Asia," LDS Church News, 27 May 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49004/Work-continues-in-Southeast-Asia.html>

¹²⁶² "New disaster prompts more aid to Indonesia," LDS Church News, 22 July 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49217/New-disaster-prompts-more-aid-to-Indonesia.html>

¹²⁶³ "Flood victims fed by the Church," LDS Church News, 24 February 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50159/Flood-victims-fed-by-the-Church.html>

¹²⁶⁴ "Church aid victims of Indonesia earthquake," LDS Church News, 6 October 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51128/Church-aids-victims-of-Indonesia-earthquake.html>

¹²⁶⁵ "Tsunami relief, aid finished in Indonesia," LDS Church News, 26 January 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51578/Tsunami-relief-aid-finished-in-Indonesia.html>

¹²⁶⁶ Palmer, Elder Douglas; Palmer, Sister Jane. "Gift of clean water," LDS Church News, 21 June 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/52129/Gift-of-clean-water.html>

¹²⁶⁷ Palmer, Elder Douglas; Palmer, Sister Jane. "Indonesia program focuses on family," LDS Church News, 2 August 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/53191/Indonesia-program-focuses-on-family.html>

Cultural Issues

Active religious engagement in many areas is a sensitive matter due to governmental and social pressures to limit potential conflict between various ethnic groups. Conversion and Christian missionary activity in many areas is frowned upon. Some areas of Indonesia experience significant hostilities between Christians and Muslims, such as Ambon in the Maluku Islands. Latter-day Saints have never had a presence in areas with significant conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims. Although most the population is nominally Muslim, only a minority participates in active, regular worship. Basic religious principles must be stressed to achieve proper understanding and application of principles taught by full-time missionaries, including prayer, church attendance, and personal scripture reading. Animism and indigenous beliefs prevail in many areas, which require proper missionary teaching approaches to overcome. Anti-polygamy laws and greater tolerance of non-Muslims by government and society compared to other Muslim nations provide opportunities for Latter-day Saints to operate with fewer cultural obstacles.

National Outreach

Eleven percent (11%) of the national population resides in cities with an LDS mission outreach center. All but three LDS congregations are on the island of Java. Manado, Medan, and Denpasar (Bali) are the only mission outreach centers off of Java and reach no more than 3% of the population. Of these three cities, missionaries appear to have been regularly assigned only to Manado. Most of the 24 million Indonesians living in cities with full-time missionaries are unaware of a Latter-day Saint presence and church teachings. Proselytism bans reduce outreach potential in areas with LDS congregations and assigned missionaries.

The Church has not placed full-time missionaries in additional cities for decades. Distance from mission headquarters in Jakarta and the limited numbers of foreign full-time missionaries permitted to serve by the government challenge efforts to assign missionaries to additional cities off of Java. The small number of convert baptisms over the past two decades has given the Church little impetus to expand national outreach. On Java, many Latter-day Saints travel long distances to attend church meetings. Members living far from church meetinghouses may help to establish additional mission outreach centers closer to their homes one day. Prospects for such activity outside Java appear unlikely for the foreseeable future due to the small LDS populations in Manado, Medan, and Bali. Due to visa restrictions limiting the number of foreign full-time LDS missionaries and no large increase in the number of native full-time missionaries, other methods must be utilized to revitalize mission outreach initiatives and expand national outreach to areas that may be more receptive to LDS teachings, such as Kalimantan and Papua. Unexplored tactics that can help expand national outreach include calling a Latter-day Saint family to an unreached area to plant an LDS congregation and establishing Church-sponsored educational facilities in disadvantaged areas.

Strong LDS Church growth in East Malaysia among indigenous peoples like the Iban may indicate that the native peoples in Indonesian-controlled Kalimantan will be more receptive to LDS teachings than other ethnic groups in other areas of Indonesia. Many indigenous peoples in Kalimantan exhibit strong cultural ties and similarities with groups in Sarawak and Sabah in East Malaysia and have Christian communities. In 2010, there was no known LDS presence in any of the four Kalimantan provinces, which are inhabited by nearly fourteen million people. With the exception of Manado, Latter-day Saints have never had a presence in predominantly Christian areas. Unreached Christian areas that may have responsive populations to LDS mission outreach include East Nasu Tenggara, Papua, and a few areas in central Sulawesi and northern Sumatra. There are almost four million inhabitants in Irian Jaya who are predominantly Christian and unreached by Latter-day Saints. There is only one LDS congregation on Sulawesi, populated by over seventeen million Indonesians. Sumatra has just one branch in Medan, yet is inhabited by fifty million.

The Church maintains an Internet site for Indonesia at <http://www.gerejajesuskristus.or.id>. The website

provides information about church beliefs, meetinghouse locations, and local news. Local Latter-day Saints referring friends and relatives to the website is a passive proselytism approach that with the proper vision can lead to increased numbers of convert baptisms and expansion of national outreach.

There are meaningful opportunities for Latter-day Saints to proselyte Indonesians living abroad. Full-time missionaries report teaching Indonesians in Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and Hong Kong. No LDS missions outside Indonesia have specific programs for mission outreach directed toward Indonesians.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Indonesia overall demonstrates moderate levels of member activity. Seminary and institute are well attended. One medium-sized stake and two districts operate notwithstanding less than 7,000 nominal members. Distance from members' homes to church meetinghouses has reduced member activity in many areas. Some smaller branches are tight-knit and pose challenges for integrating new converts as many have inactive members who stopped attending church regularly because of perceived offense by a fellow member. Moderate levels of convert retention and member activity have been achieved through the strong representative of local members in the full-time missionary force.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

LDS missionaries report few challenges integrating differing ethnic groups into the same congregations at present. The greatest challenges toward developing self-sustaining and long-term growth appear related to language issues and differing religious backgrounds from LDS converts. Ethnic integration challenges may become more apparent if the size of the LDS population increases among many varying ethnic groups in the same geographic area.

Language Issues

Two-thirds of the national population speaks Bahasa Indonesian as a first or second language, allowing for modest outreach with current LDS materials in Bahasa Indonesian. Widespread use of Bahasa Indonesian as well as the lack of church presence in areas where speakers of other languages predominate has reduced the Church's efforts to translate materials in additional Indonesian languages.

The Church has had abundant opportunities to translate church materials into Javanese over the past three decades, yet Javanese remains the language with the most speakers worldwide without any LDS materials translated. There appear to be many members who could participate in a translation team as well as large populations of unreached Indonesians who speak Javanese who are not adequately reached by existing Church materials. In 2000, a native senior missionary couple was fluent in Javanese, Indonesian, Dutch, English, and German.¹²⁶⁸

Sunda is the language with the sixth most speakers worldwide without any LDS materials. Sunda and other Indonesian languages do not have LDS materials translated at present due to the lack of Latter-day Saints who speak these languages and the lack of a Church presence in areas where these languages are spoken.

An investigative team from BYU in the 1990s concluded that translation of materials into other languages of Indonesia was unnecessary. The basis for this recommendation is unclear, as approximately eighty million Indonesians do not have church materials in a first or second language, and the lack of church materials in other languages severely limits potential for outreach into unreached regions of the country. The lack of any

¹²⁶⁸ "Indonesian couple shows gratitude by serving mission in their homeland," LDS Church News, 20 May 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37799/Indonesian-couple-shows-gratitude-by-serving-mission-in-their-homeland.html>

progress in expanding LDS national outreach to new areas, the failure to develop a core LDS membership among most of Indonesia's numerous ethnicities, and stagnant LDS growth in Indonesia in recent years even while other churches have flourished, all suggest that the Church's one-language policy regarding Indonesia has not produced the desired results and may merit reconsideration.

Not translating materials into additional languages until a sufficient number of Latter-day Saints speak these languages propagates circular logic, as many speakers of these languages do not join the Church because they cannot learn about the Church in their native language. Waiting decades to translate even basic proselytism materials or select scripture passages can result in Latter-day Saints missing windows of opportunity to establish the Church when populations are the most receptive. Other Christian faiths diligently translate materials and perform outreach throughout the islands of Indonesia and may shepherd the majority of the population receptive to Christianity before Latter-day Saints extend outreach in these areas, likely with the absence of proselytism materials in local languages. Bans on distributing religious literature create challenges for the Church to utilize LDS materials and mandate the use of passive member-missionary activity in sharing the gospel through brochures or other church literature. Indonesia experiences higher literacy rates than many developing Muslim nations, reducing challenges for the Church to develop local self-sustaining leadership.

Missionary Service

The first president of the Indonesia Jakarta Mission was a Dutch member who had Indonesian colonist ancestry. Fifty-two missionaries served on Java in early 1977. At this time, four local members were serving full-time missions.¹²⁶⁹ There were forty-nine local missionaries serving in Indonesia in 1988.¹²⁷⁰ In 1992, only local members served as full-time missionaries, which numbered sixty at the time.¹²⁷¹ A mixed German-Indonesian LDS senior missionary couple began serving in 2000.¹²⁷² The number of local members serving members has declined from previous levels, as in March 2010, there were forty native missionaries serving in the Indonesia Jakarta Mission.¹²⁷³ A reduction in the full-time missionary force is attributed to fewer youth convert baptisms at present compared to the 1970s and 1980s. Many members who currently serve full-time missions appear to come from full-member families and were raised in the Church.

Leadership

All Indonesian-speaking congregations appear to have native branch presidents and bishoprics, including branches in Manado and Medan. The creation of the first stake in 2011 demonstrates that the Church has developed a reasonably strong body of active priesthood holders capable of meeting the minimal administrative responsibilities for a stake to function. Indonesian Latter-day Saints have served in some national and international church leadership positions. In 1985, native Indonesian Effian Kadarusman began serving over the Indonesia Jakarta Mission.¹²⁷⁴ President Subandriyo from Jakarta was called to serve as the Indonesia

¹²⁶⁹ Craig, Alison. "The Saints in Indonesia," *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 86.

¹²⁷⁰ "From around the world," *LDS Church News*, 27 February 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17976/From-around-the-world.html>

¹²⁷¹ Mitchell, David. "Indonesian Saints," *Liahona*, Aug. 1992, 11.

¹²⁷² "Indonesian couple shows gratitude by serving mission in their homeland," *LDS Church News*, 20 May 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37799/Indonesian-couple-shows-gratitude-by-serving-mission-in-their-homeland.html>

¹²⁷³ "Native missionaries, sign of Church growth in Indonesia," *LDS Church News*, 6 March 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58910/Native-missionaries-sign-of-Church-growth-in-Indonesia.html>

¹²⁷⁴ Mitchell, David. "Indonesian Saints," *Liahona*, Aug. 1992, 11.

Jakarta Mission president in 1997.¹²⁷⁵ In 2000, Juswan Tandiman from Bekasi was called as the Indonesia Jakarta Mission president.¹²⁷⁶ In 2003, Elder Subandriyo was called as an Area Authority Seventy.¹²⁷⁷

Temple

Indonesia is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. Temple trips occur regularly, and many have attended the temple despite long distances and the high cost for air travel. Prospects for the Church to build a temple closer to Indonesia appear favorable over the medium term due to rapid church growth in Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries. Possible temple locations include Singapore and Bangkok, Thailand.

Comparative Growth

In the 1970s, Indonesia experienced the most rapid LDS membership and congregational growth in Southeast Asia, as other nations with an LDS presence at the time, such as Thailand and Singapore, experienced slow to moderate growth. Since 1990, membership and congregational growth has been among the lowest in Asia. In 2009, Indonesia had the fourth largest population in the world, yet had the sixty-second most Latter-day Saints. In 2010, Indonesia was the country with the sixth most members without a stake. Despite limited membership and congregational growth over the past two decades, Indonesia has maintained one of the highest member activity rates in Asia.

Most missionary-oriented Christian denominations have experienced much stronger growth in Indonesia than the LDS Church. Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians today number in the millions due to persistent and creative church planting efforts. Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists experience moderate rates of membership growth and have larger membership bases compared to Latter-day Saints. Both these denominations have a presence in the majority of the most populated areas. Seventh Day Adventists generally add more members and congregations a year than the size of the entire LDS Church in Indonesia. Adventists organized thirty to forty new congregations and baptized 6,000 to 10,000 converts a year throughout the 2000s. Adventist National outreach occurs throughout the country, as missions, conferences, or attached mission fields operate on Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, Papua, and some smaller islands. Latter-day Saints operate one branch in all of the area covered by the SDA East Indonesia Union Conference, which boasts over 100,000 members in nearly 700 congregations. Jehovah's Witnesses experience more modest growth, but have over 22,000 members and nearly 1,000 converts a year. Adventists and Witnesses have been proactive in church planting initiatives, self-sufficient local member-missionary outreach, and translation of church materials into many native languages, which has contributed to their exponentially greater growth over the years than the LDS Church.

Future Prospects

Potential for church growth remains high, but Latter-day Saints continue to lack the needed nationwide infrastructure and increase in the number of local full-time missionaries to expand mission outreach and reverse the trend of stagnant growth over the past two decades. All but three LDS congregations are on the island of Java, and there are only two more branches in Indonesia in 2010 than in 1993. Church administrative decisions not to translate any church materials into languages spoken by over eighty million Indonesians, low involvement LDS member-missionary programs, the lack of coherent vision for expanding national outreach

¹²⁷⁵ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 22 February 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29079/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹²⁷⁶ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 6 May 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37716/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹²⁷⁷ "New Area Authority Seventies," LDS Church News, 19 April 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43636/New-Area-Authority-Seventies.html>

into unreached areas, and the failure to reach out to receptive ethnic groups and develop a core leadership among them, all bode poorly for the Church's prospects to achieve breakthroughs in growth in Indonesia in the medium term. Other denominations that have implemented broader visions for national outreach and have made better use of available opportunities have achieved far more rapid growth in Indonesia than the LDS Church.

Government restrictions on visas for foreign full-time missionaries has limited expansion of national outreach over the past two decades. Greater local member participation in missionary activity within the bounds of the law is needed to open additional areas to missionary work, although greater institutional vision could considerably facilitate this process. Other Christian groups have demonstrated that excellent church growth opportunities exist but must be properly approached due to restrictive cultural and governmental conditions. Latter-day Saints have developed a capable, sustained local leadership that can assist in opening new areas of the country to the church if desired by regional church leadership. Due to the recent creation two new stakes and reduced administrative burden on the Indonesia Jakarta Mission, additional areas may open to proselytism, but as of early 2012, there were no impending plans to expand outreach into previously unreached areas.

JAPAN

Geography

AREA: 377,915 square km. Japan consists of a chain of volcanic islands in the North Pacific Ocean that stretches from Okinawa in the south to Hokkaido in the north near the Korean Peninsula. The four largest islands are Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. Rugged mountains dominate the terrain. Cool temperate climate occurs in the north whereas tropical climate occurs in the south. Natural hazards include volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, and typhoons. Pollution and the acidification of lakes and reservoirs are environmental issues. Japan is divided into forty-seven administrative prefectures.

Peoples

Japanese: 98.5%
Korean: 0.5%
Chinese: 0.4%
Other: 0.6%

Nearly the entire population is Japanese, with small Korean and Chinese minorities. Other ethnic groups consist primarily of immigrant workers from South Asia.

Population: 127,368,088 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: -0.077% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.39 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 80.57 male, 87.43 female (2012)

Languages: Japanese (97.7%), Okinawan (0.8%), Korean (0.5%), other (1%). Japanese is the official language. Languages spoken by over one million speakers include Japanese (123.9 million) and Okinawan (1 million).

Literacy: 99% (2002)

History

Emperor Jimmu founded the first known Japanese state in 600 BC. The Yamato dynasty ruled the national government, whereas military governors known as shoguns, regents, and nobles held the greatest political power. Cultural, religious, and social influence from China increased during the first millennium AD, as the Chinese writing system was officially adopted in 405 AD and Buddhism spread to the islands in the sixth century. The capital of the Japanese Empire was first based in Nara in 710 AD and remained in Nara until 1867. Contact with Europe first occurred in the mid-sixteenth century, and trade commenced with Portugal, the Netherlands, England, and Spain. Christian missionaries also began proselytism during the sixteenth century. By the mid-seventeenth century, Japan mandated that all missionaries leave and severely restricted trade with other nations out of fear that increasing contact with European powers was a precursor of a military invasion. The United States led the reestablishment of trade and international relations with Japan and the outside world in 1854 at the Convention of Kanagawa. Western influence quickly reformed economic, political, and social systems and institutions in the following decades in a period known as the Meiji restoration, as the feudal system was removed, the emperor gained greater political power, and Western-style legal

and education systems were implemented. By the end of the nineteenth century, Japan had modernized and become a world power.

Japan fought wars with China and Russia in the 1890s and 1900s, respectively, gaining Taiwan and the Pascadores Islands and a high degree of influence in Korea, Manchuria, and southern Sakhalin Island. Japan annexed Korea in 1910 and former German territorial possessions in the Pacific north of the Equator in 1919 through a mandate of the League of Nations. Aspects of a democratic form of government began to be considered in the 1920s, but progress was deterred by the rising influence of military leaders in the 1930s that resulted in invasions of Manchuria in 1931 and China in 1937. In December 1941, Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor and within a couple years had conquered Micronesia, the Philippines, Indonesia, northern New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Southeast Asia, and several coastal areas of China. The United States and Allied forces successively liberated Japanese-controlled territories beginning in 1943 and ultimately forced Japan to surrender in August 1945 after the dropping of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Approximately three million Japanese perished as a result of the war, and Japan lost all of its overseas possessions, including Korea, Manchuria, southern Sakhalin, and the Kuril Islands. The United States became the administering authority over the home islands of Japan following the war and introduced political, social, and economic reforms that were targeted to make Japan a peaceful country with a democratic government. Japan did not regain full sovereignty until 1952, and a total return of administration did not occur until 1972 when the United States delivered Okinawa back to Japanese control.¹²⁷⁸ During the latter half of the twentieth century, Japan experienced unprecedented economic growth and development, resulting in Japan becoming one of the wealthiest, most powerful economies in the world. Economic development slowed substantially in the 1990s, but Japan remains a global economic power. In March 2011, a massive 9.0 earthquake and subsequent tsunami killed over 15,000 and damaged a nuclear power plant near Naraha, resulting in radioactive contamination of nearby areas.

Culture

Shintoism, Buddhism, and militarism dominated Japanese society for centuries prior to the mid-twentieth century. Japanese are renowned for their high work ethic, ingenuity, and business skills that have transformed their economy and society into one of the most technologically advanced in the world. Fish, rice, seaweed, vegetables, and fruit are common foods. Cigarette consumption rates are among the highest worldwide. Alcohol consumption rates are comparable to the worldwide average rate of alcohol use.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$34,300 (2011) [71.3% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.901

Corruption Index: 8.0 (2011)

With the world's fourth largest GDP, Japan supports a large, technologically advanced economy that is heavily integrated into global trade and commerce. Japan is the fourth largest producer and consumer of electricity, third largest oil and natural gas importer, and fifth largest importer/exporter. Services employ 68% of the labor force and generate 76% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 28% of the labor force and generates 23% of the GDP. Motor vehicle manufacturing, electronics, machinery, metals, shipbuilding, chemicals, clothing, and processed foods are major industries. Agricultural activity accounts for 4% of the labor force and generates 1.5% of the GDP. Rice, sugar beets, vegetables, fruit, pork, poultry, eggs, dairy products, and fish are common crops and agricultural products. China, the United States, and South Korea are the primary trade partners. High government debt, approximately twice the nation's GDP, has contributed to the stagnation of economic growth in recent years. Corruption levels in Japan are among the lowest in the region.

¹²⁷⁸ "Background Note: Japan," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 6 October 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4142.htm>

Faiths

Shinto: 83.9%

Buddhist: 71.4%

Christian: 2%

Other: 7.8%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 509,000

Jehovah's Witnesses 218,057 3,078

Latter-day Saints 126,407 281

Seventh Day Adventists 15,307 107

Religion

The majority of the population doubly affiliates as Shinto and Buddhist, resulting in the number of religious members totaling approximately 206 million, nearly twice the Japanese population. There are six major schools of Buddhism (Tendai, Shingon, Jodo, Zen, Nichiren, and Narabukkyo) and two main schools of Shintoism (Jinjahoncho and Kyohashinto). The Agency for Cultural Affairs reports that there are 105 million Shinto, eighty-nine million Buddhists, two million Christians, and nine million that follow other religions. Most Christians are Protestants. There are an estimated 100,000 Muslims, one-tenth of whom are citizens.¹²⁷⁹

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Religious groups are not required to register with the government to operate, but registration is required to receive tax benefits. The government reserves the right under the Religious Juridical Persons Law to investigate and supervise certified religious groups and suspend for-profit activities if the group violates government regulations. There have been some societal abuses of religious freedom reported in recent years that have targeted religious minority groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church. Acts of abuse have included abductions and negative rhetoric by a government official.¹²⁸⁰

Largest Cities

Urban: 66%

Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, Nagoya, Sapporo, Kobe, Kyoto, Fukuoka, Kawasaki, Saitama, Hiroshima, Sendai, Kitakyushu, Chiba, Sakai, Niigata, Hamamatsu, Kumamoto, Shizuoka, Sagamihara, Okayama, Kagoshima, **Funabashi**, Hachioji, Himeji Matsuyama, Utsunomiya, Higashiosaka, **Kawaguchi**.

Twenty-seven of the twenty-nine cities with over half a million inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Thirty-one percent (31%) of the national population resides in the twenty-nine most populous cities.

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

¹²⁷⁹ "Japan," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148871.htm>

¹²⁸⁰ "Japan," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148871.htm>

LDS History

The LDS Church opened the Japanese Mission in 1901 and closed the mission 1924 following deteriorating American-Japanese relations; the 1923 earthquake and fire that destroyed most of Tokyo and Yokoham; and extremely low success baptizing and retaining converts. The first Japanese member to graduate from Brigham Young University was Takeo Fujiwara in the early 1930s. LDS outreach performed by local Japanese members was successful among Japanese Americans in Hawaii during the 1930s, resulting in the formation of the Japanese Mission in Hawaii in 1937. LDS American servicemen facilitated the reestablishment of the Church following the close of World War II and baptized the first Japanese converts in 1946 in Nagoya. The Japanese Mission in Japan was reorganized in 1948 with headquarters in Tokyo. During the twenty-four-year absence of LDS missionaries, some members remained faithful to the Church as indicated by forty-three attending a Sunday School class organized by local members. The outbreak of the Korean War threatened the Japanese Mission's ability to staff its missionary force due to many young Latter-day Saint men being drafted for the American military, resulting in mission leaders focusing on developing a native full-time missionary force that included twenty Japanese full-time missionaries called in 1953 alone. At this time, the Japanese Mission also administered Korea, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Guam, and Okinawa. Seminary began in 1963 and institute commenced in 1971. In 1991, Japan was assigned to the Asia North Area and area headquarters were established in Tokyo.¹²⁸¹ President Hinckley visited Japan in 1996.¹²⁸² In 2004, Keiko Itokazu became the first Latter-day Saint elected to a national office in Japan.¹²⁸³

Missions

The Japanese Mission was renamed the Northern Far East Mission in 1955. The Northern Far East Mission divided to create the Japan [renamed Japan Tokyo in 1974 and Japan Tokyo North in 1978] and Japan-Okinawa Missions [renamed Japan Kobe in 1974] in 1968. Additional missions were organized in Japan East [renamed Japan Sapporo] (1970), Japan West [renamed Japan Fukuoka] (1970), Nagoya (1973), Sendai (1974), Okayama [relocated to Hiroshima in 1998] (1976), Tokyo South (1978), Osaka (1980), and Okinawa (1990). In 1996, the Japan Okinawa Mission closed, and in 2001, the Japan Kobe Mission was closed.¹²⁸⁴ In 2007, the two Tokyo missions were consolidated into a single mission, and the Japan Osaka Mission was renamed the Japan Kobe Mission.¹²⁸⁵ In 2010, the Japan Hiroshima Mission was consolidated with missions based in Fukuoka and Kobe.¹²⁸⁶ In early 2011, there were six missions. In 2013, the Japan Tokyo South Mission was reopened.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 126,407 (2012)

There were fifty-one Latter-day Saints in 1911, which increased to 105 in 1918 and 174 in 1924. LDS Japanese-American membership in Hawaii increased from seventeen in 1937 to 150 in 1941. By year-end 1948, there were twenty-two postwar LDS Japanese converts. Membership reached 600 in 1951. The average

¹²⁸¹ "New areas created in Asia, Europe," LDS Church News, 7 September 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21578/New-areas-created-in-Asia-Europe.html>

¹²⁸² Avant, Gerry. "Pres. Hinckley visits Japan for a fast-paced three days," LDS Church News, 25 May 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27529/Pres-Hinckley-visits-Japan-for-a-fast-paced-three-days.html>

¹²⁸³ "Landslide win in Japanese election," LDS Church News, 25 September 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46191/Landslide-win-in-Japanese-election.html>

¹²⁸⁴ "New and Returning Mission Presidents," LDS Church News, 10 March 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39468/New-and-Returning-Mission-Presidents.html>

¹²⁸⁵ "New missions bring total to 347 New missions," LDS Church News, 10 February 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50112/New-missions-bring-total-to-347-New-missions.html>

¹²⁸⁶ "New missions 10 announced in seven areas," LDS Church News, 13 February 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58775/New-missions-10-announced-in-seven-areas.html>

number of converts annually baptized per missionary increased from 0.7 in 1955 to 5.8 in 1957. There were 6,600 Latter-day Saints by 1962 and 12,000 members in mid-1968. Membership reached 70,998 in 1983, 85,000 in 1987, 103,000 in 1993, 108,000 in 1997, and 112,203 in 2000.

Membership growth slowed in the 2000s, as membership totaled 118,508 in 2002, 120,197 in 2004, 121,744 in 2006, and 123,245 in 2008. Annual membership growth rates have ranged from 0.6% to 1% since 2002. Membership generally increases by between 700 and 1,000 a year.

Although receptivity has been higher among women, 66% of converts baptized in 1987 in the Japan Tokyo Mission were men.¹²⁸⁷ There are few full-member families, as approximately 75% of church membership was single in 2000.¹²⁸⁸ In 2009, one in 1,022 was nominally LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 164 Branches: 116 (April 2013)

In 1948, there was one branch and four Sunday Schools. By August 1949, full-time missionaries were assigned to ten major cities. In 1951, there were twenty-five branches.¹²⁸⁹ The first cities that opened to missionary work were primarily on Honshu. By the 1960s, several cities were opened on Honshu and other islands, such as Nagasaki in 1966.¹²⁹⁰ There were 258 congregations in 1987, increasing to 289 in 1993, 295 in 1997, and 317 in 2000.

Congregation consolidations decreased the number of LDS congregations in the 2000s, as there were 314 congregations in 2001, 309 in 2003, 308 in 2004, 298 in 2006, 294 in 2007, and 288 in 2008, and 286 in 2010. The number of wards declined from 175 in 2000 to 167 in 2005 and 163 in 2008, whereas the number of branches declined from 142 in 2000 to 141 in 2005 and 125 in 2008. Approximately 75% of congregations consolidated during the 2000s were in the Tokyo and Osaka areas. There were no congregations consolidated on Hokkaido, and only one unit was closed on Okinawa during this period.

In 1970, the first stake was organized in Tokyo. Seven additional stakes were organized in the 1970s in Osaka (1972), Yokohama (1974), Saitama (1977), Osaka North (1977), Nagoya (1978), Sapporo (1978), and Fukuoka (1979). In the 1980s, eleven new stakes were organized in Kobe (1980), Machida (1980), Nagoya West (1980), Sendai (1980), Shizuoka (1981), Hiroshima (1981), Takamatsu (1981), Tokyo South (1981), Osaka Sakai (1982), Musashino (1982), and Okayama (1983). In the 1990s, nine new stakes were organized in Kyoto North (1992), Kyoto South (1992), Matsudo (1992), Osaka East (1992), Kumamoto (1997), Fujisawa (1998), Asahikawa (1998), Nagoya East (1998), and Ginowan (1999). In the 2000s, stakes were organized in Kanazawa (2000) and Tokyo Japan South [English] (2003).

Six stakes have been discontinued since 1990 in Takamatsu (1991), Kyoto South (1993), Osaka East (2001), Tokyo South (2003), Nagoya West (2006), and Tokyo South [English] (2010). The Tokyo Japan South (English) Stake was organized as a district for three English-speaking branches in the downtown Tokyo area in 2010.

There were fifteen districts in 1984.¹²⁹¹ By 1987, there were twenty-three stakes and fifteen districts, which

¹²⁸⁷ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 19 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17980/From-around-the-world.html>

¹²⁸⁸ Searle, Don L. "Japan: Growing Light in the East," Ensign, Sept. 2000, 44.

¹²⁸⁹ Britsch, R. Lanier. "The Blossoming of the Church in Japan," Ensign, Oct. 1992, 32.

¹²⁹⁰ "The Church builds on its foundation in Nagasaki," LDS Church News, 8 June 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41947/The-Church-builds-on-its-foundation-in-Nagasaki.html>

¹²⁹¹ Britsch, R. Lanier. "The Blossoming of the Church in Japan," Ensign, Oct. 1992, 32.

increased to twenty-five stakes and twenty-one districts in 1993. There were twenty-six stakes and twenty-two districts in 1997 and thirty-one stakes and nineteen districts in 2000. In early 2011, there were twenty-eight stakes and fifteen districts. Districts discontinued in the 2000s were headquartered in Akita, Mie, Gobo, Nara, and Utsunomiya. With the exception of the Matsuyama Japan District, all districts functioning in early 2011 were organized in the 1970s and 1980s.

Activity and Retention

Only a small number of Japanese LDS converts baptized prior to 1924 were active when the mission closed, whereas nearly all the 150 Japanese-American converts in Hawaii in the late 1930s and early 1940s were active in 1941. By August 1949, there were nearly 1,000 attending church meetings in Japan.¹²⁹²

Two hundred fifty-four students were enrolled in seminary in 1988.¹²⁹³ The Kyoto Ward had approximately eighty active members in 1991, and 70% of active members held a temple recommend.¹²⁹⁴ 6,700 attended a special meeting with President Hinckley in 1996.¹²⁹⁵ 2,500 attended a meeting with President Hinckley in Fukuoka in 1996. At the time there were approximately seven or eight thousand members on Kyushu.¹²⁹⁶ 500 attended the groundbreaking of the Fukuoka Japan Temple in 1999.¹²⁹⁷ Convert retention rates over the short term were as high as 75% in some areas in 2000.¹²⁹⁸ 4,800 attended the three-day Fukuoka Japan Temple open house, and 3,280 attended the dedicatory services.¹²⁹⁹ During the construction of the Fukuoka Japan Temple, over 150 less active members were reactivated as a result of local leaders preparing members in the temple district to attend the temple.¹³⁰⁰ 1,200 young men assembled in Aaronic Priesthood camps as part of the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Church in Japan in 2001.¹³⁰¹

The number of active members varies dramatically by congregation. The Yanai Branch had approximately one hundred attending church in 2000.¹³⁰² In early 2011, the Lizuka Branch had nineteen active members. As many as fifty once attended the branch, but many active members moved. One ward in the Kobe area had forty-five active members in late 2010. In early 2010, the Miki Branch had twenty active members. Less than 100 of the nearly 300 members in the Kita Rokko Ward in the Kobe Japan Stake were active in late 2009. In early 2011, the Sumoto Branch had fewer than ten active members. In late 2009, the Shingu Branch had one active member. Approximately fifty attended church meetings in the Morioka Branch in early 2011. The Iwade Branch in the Osaka Japan Sakai Stake had fewer than ten active members in early 2011. Most branches have fewer than fifty active members, whereas most wards have between fifty and one hundred

¹²⁹² Britsch, R. Lanier. "The Blossoming of the Church in Japan," *Ensign*, Oct. 1992, 32.

¹²⁹³ "From around the world," *LDS Church News*, 9 July 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18322/From-around-the-world.html>

¹²⁹⁴ Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Kyoto, the cultural center of Japan," *LDS Church News*, 22 June 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21603/Kyoto-the-cultural-center-of-Japan.html>

¹²⁹⁵ Avant, Gerry. "Pres. Hinckley visits Japan for a fast-paced three days," *LDS Church News*, 25 May 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27529/Pres-Hinckley-visits-Japan-for-a-fast-paced-three-days.html>

¹²⁹⁶ "Locations for six of 30 small temples given," *LDS Church News*, 23 May 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31405/Locations-for-six-of-30-small-temples-given.html>

¹²⁹⁷ Okata, Takuji. "Japan's second temple, in Fukuoka, celebrates groundbreaking," *LDS Church News*, 27 March 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/35435/Japans-second-temple-in-Fukuoka-celebrates-groundbreaking.html>

¹²⁹⁸ Searle, Don L. "Japan: Growing Light in the East," *Ensign*, Sept. 2000, 44.

¹²⁹⁹ "Facts and figures: Fukuoka Japan Temple," *LDS Church News*, 17 June 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37983/Facts-and-figures-Fukuoka-Japan-Temple.html>

¹³⁰⁰ Hill, Greg. "Church members rejoice over temple in southern Japan," *LDS Church News*, 17 June 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37982/Church-members-rejoice-over-temple-in-southern-Japan.html>

¹³⁰¹ Iwaasa, David B. "Centennial in Japan," *LDS Church News*, 8 September 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40446/Centennial-in-Japan.html>

¹³⁰² Hill, Greg. "Faith thrives in Yanai: Japanese branch rooted in isolated area," *LDS Church News*, 5 August 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38250/Faith-thrives-in-Yanai-Japanese-branch-rooted-in-isolated-area.html>

active members. The average number of members per congregation increased from 354 in 2000 to 431 in 2009. During the 2008–2009 school year, 4,608 were enrolled in seminary and institute. Nationwide active membership is estimated to range between 20,000 and 24,000, or 15%–20% of total church membership.

Finding

The Japan Sapporo Mission distributed 32,000 copies of the Book of Mormon in 1987.¹³⁰³ One Tokyo area stake called forty-three stake missionaries in 1987.¹³⁰⁴ 150 of the 500 attending a special fireside with Brigham Young University Football athletes in 1992.¹³⁰⁵ In 1993, members and missionaries in Tokyo coordinated a Christmas program open to the public that was designed to introduce Christianity to the general population.¹³⁰⁶ 200,000 copies of the Japanese retranslation of the Book of Mormon were sold between August 1995 and December 1996.¹³⁰⁷ In 2004, the BYU-Hawaii Concert Choir performed a concert in the famous Meiji Shinto Shrine in Tokyo.¹³⁰⁸ In the mid-2000s, the Church produced a DVD that provided a culturally-tailored introduction to LDS beliefs that identified similarities in Japanese culture with LDS teachings and taught basic church doctrine with a family-focused approach.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Japanese, Korean, Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), Spanish, Portuguese.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Japanese, Korean, Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), Spanish, and Portuguese. The Church completed its third translation of the Book of Mormon in Japanese in 1996 and also retranslated the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. The retranslation accommodated societal changes in the Japanese language that had occurred in the latter portion of the twentieth century.¹³⁰⁹

Meetinghouses

There were 183 LDS meetinghouses in 2002.¹³¹⁰ There were approximately 240 LDS meetinghouses in early 2011. Most congregations meet in church-built meetinghouses. Small branches often meet in rented spaces or renovated buildings.

Humanitarian and Development Work

LDS meetinghouses were utilized as emergency shelters in the Kobe area following a major earthquake in

¹³⁰³ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 20 February 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17978/From-around-the-world.html>

¹³⁰⁴ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 19 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17980/From-around-the-world.html>

¹³⁰⁵ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 29 February 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22137/From-around-the-world.html>

¹³⁰⁶ "Around the world," LDS Church News, 18 December 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23440/Around-the-world.html>

¹³⁰⁷ Hill, Greg. "New translation brings 'new day,'" LDS Church News, 25 January 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/28820/New-translation-brings-new-day.html>

¹³⁰⁸ "'Come, Come, Ye Saints' Performed in Shinto shrine," LDS Church News, 24 July 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45897/Come-Come-Ye-Saints-performed-in-Shinto-shrine.html>

¹³⁰⁹ Hill, Greg. "New translation brings 'new day,'" LDS Church News, 25 January 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/28820/New-translation-brings-new-day.html>

¹³¹⁰ "New meetinghouse enhances historic site in Japan," LDS Church News, 26 October 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42697/New-meetinghouse-enhances-historic-site-in-Japan.html>

1995¹³¹¹ and Latter-day Saints in California donated quilts to earthquake victims.¹³¹² In 2001, members in Yokohama visited a nursing home, socialized with seniors, and gifted cards and lap quilts.¹³¹³ The Church has also donated wheelchairs to the disabled, food and medicine for the homeless, and furniture and medical items for hospitals in recent years.¹³¹⁴ The Church provided humanitarian relief following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Latter-day Saints benefit from full religious freedom to proselyte, worship, and assemble without governmental or societal interference. Foreign missionaries serve regularly in Japan with no major challenges obtaining visas and needed documentation.

Cultural Issues

Curiosity and interest in foreign religions fostered a climate of high receptivity to the LDS Church in the latter half of the twentieth century during which time most Japanese members were baptized. Christianity remains a largely unknown religion due to its small number of adherents and some stigmatization in society that is homogenously Shinto and Buddhist. Most major Christian groups report struggles to develop regular church attendance among prospective converts and lackluster member activity rates. LDS missionaries report success in meeting and teaching interested individuals but are often unable to motivate investigators follow through on commitments to attend church meetings. Male participation in church services for Latter-day Saints and other Christians is considerably lower than most nations and has resulted in challenges developing a sufficient number of local leaders in many areas. The aging population and low birth rates create assimilation challenges with youth and older adults in many congregations, as generation gaps and age-based cultural differences have created significant obstacles toward retaining and fellowshiping individuals from both populations within the same congregations, which oftentimes have few active members.

Increasing materialism and secularism have created a challenging environment for church members and full-time missionaries to navigate, as sexual relations out of marriage, smoking, and fascination with the occult are commonplace. Abortion is widely accepted. Education is competitive, and many youth spend large amounts of time attending school and studying, reducing opportunities for interaction with missionaries. Full-time missionaries in some areas report that local members have demonstrated a disinterest in missionary work, as they believe that most prospective converts will ultimately not develop regular church attendance and a self-sustaining testimony of the Church, reflecting trends of nearly three decades of little increase in church attendance despite a large increase in nominal membership.¹³¹⁵ Consequently, LDS congregations have become increasingly tight-knit and entrenched, as small numbers of active members limit their social interaction with nonmembers and rarely invite nonmember friends, family, and coworkers to church or to meet with full-time missionaries.

¹³¹¹ "Quake hits Japan, 40 members missing," LDS Church News, 21 January 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/25720/Quake-hits-Japan-40-members-missing.html>

¹³¹² "Northridge Ward quilts sent to Kobe victims," LDS Church News, 18 February 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26140/Northridge-Ward-quilts-sent-to-Kobe-victims.html>

¹³¹³ "Sisters help senior citizens," LDS Church News, 27 January 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39251/Sisters-help-senior-citizens.html>

¹³¹⁴ "Projects—Japan," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 19 February 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-65,00.html>

¹³¹⁵ Numano, Jiro, "Mormonism in Modern Japan," *Dialogue*, 29/1 (Spring 1996), 223–235; Numano, Jiro, "Perseverance amid Paradox: The Struggle of the LDS Church in Japan Today," *Dialogue* 39:4 (Winter 2006): 138–155.

National Outreach

Fifty-two percent (52%) of the national population resides in a city over 150,000 inhabitants with an LDS congregation. Of the 160 cities with over 150,000 inhabitants, 123 have an LDS congregation. With only a few exceptions, each of the thirty-seven cities with over 150,000 without an LDS congregation is located within a major metropolitan area and most are within ten kilometers of the nearest mission outreach center. As many as 60% of the population resides within fifteen kilometers of an LDS meetinghouse. All forty-seven administrative prefectures have at least one LDS congregation. Okinawa is the prefecture that receives the most penetrating LDS mission outreach, as evidenced by the lowest ratio of population to congregations of one LDS congregation for 81,513 inhabitants. Prefectures with fewer than 300,000 inhabitants per congregation are among the most reached by Latter-day Saints and include Wakayama, Tottori, Hokkaido, Shimane, Aomori, and Ehime. Prefectures with over 800,000 inhabitants per congregation are among the least reached and include Yamaguchi, Tochigi, Yamanashi, Saga, and Fukui. Six prefectures have only one LDS congregation (Yamaguchi, Yamanashi, Saga, Fukui, Tokushima, and Kochi) and have populations ranging from 770,000 to 1.5 million. Located on Hokkaido, Urakawa appears to be the least populated city with an LDS congregation, with approximately 15,000 inhabitants. There are hundreds of additional cities over 20,000 inhabitants without a mission outreach center.

The highly urbanized population provides an excellent opportunity for the Church to reach the majority of Japanese with fewer missionaries and congregations. An aggressive chapel-building program in the 1960s facilitated the expansion of national outreach¹³¹⁶ and occurred primarily in the largest cities, during a time when the Japanese population appeared was the most receptive to LDS mission outreach. During the peak of church growth and activity in Japan in the late twentieth century, missions allocated a large number of full-time missionaries to individual congregations. In 1991, thirty-two full-time missionaries were assigned to work in one ward and two branches in the Kyoto area.¹³¹⁷ While taking advantage of a time when the population was at a greater receptivity and providing adequate outreach to a large population were primary motives in allocating large numbers of full-time missionaries to a single congregation, this policy reduced local member involvement in missionary work, reinforced dependence on full-time missionaries for many ecclesiastical and administrative tasks, and contributed to the continuing trend of congregation consolidations that began in the early 2000s. While over thirty congregations were closed in the 2000s, the percentage of the national population residing in cities with mission outreach centers does not appear to have noticeably decreased, as most discontinued units were in the largest cities, which continue to be serviced by multiple LDS congregations. Holding cottage meetings and forming groups and dependent branches in lesser-reached cities and neighborhoods in the Tokyo and Osaka metropolitan areas may increase prospects of establishing additional self-sustainable congregations over the medium term. Congregations in smaller cities or urban areas with few active members are susceptible to closure in the coming years due to stagnant active membership growth, low receptivity, and continued reluctance of many local members to participate in missionary work.

High cost of living and limited receptivity has increasingly made assigning large numbers of full-time missionaries unfeasible. The number of missions and missionary complement assigned to Japan has been reduced in recent years, and so the Church has attempted to expand outreach in other ways. Japan had the third most Internet users in 2007,¹³¹⁸ and the Church has maintained Internet outreach to assist in proselytism efforts since the early 2000s. When the Church launched its first official website in 1997, Japan had the fourth most visitors.¹³¹⁹ A country website for Japan at <http://www.ldschurch.jp/> provides local church news, meetinghouse

¹³¹⁶ Britsch, R. Lanier. "The Blossoming of the Church in Japan," *Ensign*, Oct. 1992, 32

¹³¹⁷ Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Kyoto, the cultural center of Japan," *LDS Church News*, 22 June 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21603/Kyoto-the-cultural-center-of-Japan.html>

¹³¹⁸ "Internet Usage Worldwide by Country, 2007," *Infoplease.com*, retrieved 31 December 2010. <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0933606.html>

¹³¹⁹ "Internet users find LDS web site," *LDS Church News*, 1 March 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29302/>

locations, explanations on church doctrine and practices tailored for a nonmember audience, youth-directed outreach, and links to Japanese-language LDS websites such as <http://www.mormon.jp/>. Online member-missionary activity remains limited, but the Church will likely institute member profiles on mormon.org in Japanese in the near future, as Japanese is spoken by over one hundred million people and the Internet is highly utilized in Japan.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Mission leaders, full-time missionaries, and local leadership significantly contributed to Japan's current low member activity rates by focusing on meeting arbitrary baptismal quotas during the past half century, which has produced impressive membership growth numbers but little growth in active membership. The high Japanese work ethic and capitalist mind set has likely contributed to these mission practices. As a result of focusing on meeting baptismal quotas instead of developing goals centered around member participation in missionary work, the development of habitual weekly church attendance, and required enrollment and attendance in seminary or institute, the number of congregations declined by thirty-one during the 2000s. Many ward and branches experienced a decline in active membership, and self-sustaining membership growth was not achieved. The discontinuation of six stakes since 1990 further demonstrates worrisome sustainability of active membership and the inability of local members and full-time missionaries to increase the number of active members. Cultural attitudes and practices regarding organized religion and daily or weekly participation in church services have further exacerbated low member activity rates, not only among Latter-day Saints, but among other major Christian groups. Church-going Latter-day Saints often exhibit a high degree of independence, strong devotion, and conviction to serve in the Church.

Holding youth-oriented activities and programs can facilitate member activity rates. In some areas the Church has organized the Boy Scout program,¹³²⁰ providing opportunity for youth members to form friendships within the Church and to introduce nonmember friends to the Church by inviting them to scouting activities. Regular attendance in seminary and institute fosters greater doctrinal understanding, offers opportunity for socializing with fellow members, and provides additional missionary preparation. Full-time missionaries have regularly worked with local leaders on reactivation efforts, but report inconsistent effort and few results. Limited understanding of the church's teachings and practices among inactive members who were rushed into baptism and never experienced meaningful church activity creates a nearly insurmountable barrier to activation.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The highly homogenous Japanese population reduces ethnic integration challenges among natives. Foreigners often struggle to assimilate into Japanese-majority congregations, resulting in the formation of English-speaking units in several areas. Only one non-Japanese and non-English-speaking unit appears to have ever operated in Japan. A Latino branch was created in early 2001 for Portuguese and Spanish-speaking members¹³²¹ but was discontinued later in the 2000s. LDS members and new converts remain too limited to justify the creation of additional language units, but there may be some potential for Chinese-language congregations in some of the largest cities within the next decade. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, full-time missionaries reported that they regularly baptized non-Japanese Asians from China and Vietnam. Many of these converts temporarily reside in Japan and return to their home countries, creating challenges for developing self-sustainable

Internet-users-find-LDS-web-site.html

¹³²⁰ "Sapporo, Japan: Boy Scouts serve as they hike," LDS Church News, 19 July 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29048/Sapporo-Japan-Boy-Scouts-serve-as-they-hike.html>

¹³²¹ "First Latino branch created in Japan," LDS Church News, 31 March 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39565/First-Latino-branch-created-in-Japan.html>

congregations meeting the needs of these ethnic groups. There have been no reported LDS successes reaching Koreans in Japan, as many belong to tight-knit communities.

Language Issues

Approximately 99% of the national population has LDS materials available in their native language. The lack of linguistic diversity has simplified LDS proselytism approaches, but difficulty in mastering the Japanese language, especially reading and writing, has created challenges for foreign full-time missionaries to function in Japanese society. The Church has regularly retranslated Japanese-language materials due to difficulties with prior translations and has a wide body of literature available in print and online in Japanese, including LDS scriptures at <http://classic.scriptures.lds.org/jpn>. Prospects are unlikely for the translation of LDS materials into additional languages indigenous to Japan, as many speakers of these languages are also fluent in Japanese, and the small number of speakers of these languages has steadily declined. Only Okinawan has any realistic possibility for the translation of LDS materials.

Missionary Service

There were 200 full-time missionaries assigned to Japan in 1968. The Tokyo Missionary Training Center opened in 1979 and trained approximately 300 missionaries annually in the early 1990s.¹³²² One-third of the full-time missionary force in the Japan Kobe Mission was Japanese in 1990.¹³²³ In 2000, there were approximately 1,000 full-time missionaries serving in Japan, 18% of which were native Japanese.¹³²⁴ By early 2011, the number of full-time missionaries stationed in Japan was nearly half the number assigned in 2000. Despite declining numbers of full-time missionaries assigned to Japan, membership growth rates do not appear to have been adversely affected. The sustainability in the small native full-time missionary force is a positive development that has endured an era of congregation consolidations and stagnant membership growth. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, the number of Japanese full-time missionaries appears to have been generally stable despite low birth rates among Japanese Latter-day Saints and low member activity. However, the closure of the Japan Missionary Training Center in the late 2000s is a troubling development that may indicate worsening problems maintaining the past rates of missionary service among Japanese members. Low member activity rates, poor convert retention, and small LDS family size challenge efforts to maintain or increase the current number of Japanese full-time missionaries.

Leadership

The LDS Church in Japan supports the largest and most well-developed priesthood leadership body in non-Christian Asia capable of supporting over two dozen stakes, soon-to-be three temples, nearly all operating wards and branches, and many of Japan's missions. Japanese LDS leaders have maintained a long-standing tradition of supplying local leadership for congregations since the 1960s. Many of the branches organized in the early 1950s were led by full-time missionaries initially. Accelerated local leadership development occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s as the number of priesthood holders increased from forty-one to 350 between 1955 and 1962.¹³²⁵ Japanese-American Latter-day Saints from Hawaii have staffed various church leadership positions in Japan, such as mission and temple presidencies. A lack of active membership appears the primary barrier toward greater increases in the number of Japanese LDS leaders today. Japanese leaders have regularly served in many regional and international church leadership positions as mission presidents, missionary training center presidents, area authority seventies, and temple presidents.

¹³²² Britsch, R. Lanier. "The Blossoming of the Church in Japan," *Ensign*, Oct. 1992, 32.

¹³²³ "3 new missions in Japan, Philippines," *LDS Church News*, 17 February 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19548/3-new-missions-in-Japan-Philippines.html>

¹³²⁴ Searle, Don L. "Japan: Growing Light in the East," *Ensign*, Sept. 2000, 44.

¹³²⁵ Britsch, R. Lanier. "The Blossoming of the Church in Japan," *Ensign*, Oct. 1992, 32.

In 1988, Masataka Kitamura from Takasaki¹³²⁶ and Masaru Tsuchida from Nagoya¹³²⁷ were called as mission presidents over the Japan Okayama and Japan Sapporo Missions, respectively.¹³²⁸ In 1990, Seiichiro Utagawa from Tokyo¹³²⁹ was called to preside over the Japan Okayama Mission.¹³³⁰ In 1993, Yukio Kumazawa from Yokohama was called to preside over the Japan Tokyo North Mission, and Yutaka Onda from Osaka was called to preside over the Japan Okayama Mission.¹³³¹ In 1994, Ryo Okamoto from Tokyo was called as the Japan Missionary Training Center President.¹³³² In 1995, Yasuhiro Matsushita from Tokyo was called as a mission president¹³³³ over the Japan Kobe Mission.¹³³⁴ In 1996, Kazuhiro Yoshino from Tokyo was called to preside over the Japan Sendai Mission.¹³³⁵ In 1997, Tadashi Komatsu from Osaka was called to preside over the Japan Tokyo North Mission.¹³³⁶ In 1997, Masaru Tsuchida from Nagoya was called to preside of the Japan Missionary Training Center.¹³³⁷ In 2005, Yoshikazu Yokoyama from Tokyo¹³³⁸ was called to preside over the Japan Sapporo Mission,¹³³⁹ Akira Yafuso from Okinawa was called to preside over the Japan Hiroshima Mission,¹³⁴⁰ and Asao Miyashita from Abiko was called to preside over the Japan Sendai Mission.¹³⁴¹ Koichi Aoyagi was called as the Japan Missionary Training Center president in 2005.¹³⁴² In 2006, David Brian Iwaasa from Tokyo was called to preside over the Japan Fukuoka Mission.¹³⁴³

In 1991, Seiya Tanaka from Yokohama was called as a regional representative.¹³⁴⁴ In 1992, Seiji Katanuma

¹³²⁶ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 27 February 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17570/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹³²⁷ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 5 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18117/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹³²⁸ "Assignments announced for new mission presidents," LDS Church News, 19 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17968/Assignments-announced-for-new-mission-presidents.html>

¹³²⁹ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 10 March 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20308/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹³³⁰ "Worldwide missions: 122 leaders assigned," LDS Church News, 31 March 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20305/Worldwide-missions-122-leaders-assigned.html>

¹³³¹ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 27 March 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23682/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹³³² "Missionary training center presidents called," LDS Church News, 22 January 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24861/Missionary-training-center-presidents-called.html>

¹³³³ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 25 February 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26637/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹³³⁴ "New mission presidents assigned," LDS Church News, 18 March 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26630/New-mission-presidents-assigned.html>

¹³³⁵ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 27 April 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27482/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹³³⁶ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 5 April 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29076/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹³³⁷ "New missionary training center presidents," LDS Church News, 13 December 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29781/New-missionary-training-center-presidents.html>

¹³³⁸ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 29 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46779/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹³³⁹ "Mission Presidents for 122 missions," LDS Church News, 26 February 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46913/Mission-Presidents-for-122-missions.html>

¹³⁴⁰ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 19 March 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46999/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹³⁴¹ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 16 April 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47172/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹³⁴² "New MTC presidents," LDS Church News, 3 December 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48230/New-MTC-presidents.html>

¹³⁴³ "New mission presidents," LDS Church News, 11 March 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48611/New-mission-presidents.html>

¹³⁴⁴ "New regional representative," LDS Church News, 6 April 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21296/New-regional-representative.html>

from Atsubetsu was called as a regional representative.¹³⁴⁵ In 1995, Hitoshi Kashikura from Kanagawa-ken, Seiji Katanuma from Hokkaido, and Gary Matsuda from Kanagawa-ken were called as area authorities.¹³⁴⁶ In 2000, Haruyoshi Nakamura from Osaka was called as an Area Authority Seventy.¹³⁴⁷ In 2001, Kazuhiko Yamashita from Fukuoka was called as an Area Authority Seventy.¹³⁴⁸ In 2002, Masayuki Nakano from Osaka and Yasuo Niiyama from Tokyo were called as Area Authority Seventies.¹³⁴⁹ In 2004, Tohru Hotta from Nagoya and Bin Kikuchi from Sapporo were called as Area Authority Seventies.¹³⁵⁰ In 2007, Tetsuji Ishii from Toyohashi was called as an Area Seventy.¹³⁵¹ In 2010, Kouzou Tashiro from Kumamoto-ken was called as an Area Seventy.¹³⁵²

In 1994, Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi from Hokkaido was called as the Tokyo Japan Temple president.¹³⁵³ In 1997, Kensei Nagamine from Okinawa was called as the Tokyo Japan Temple president.¹³⁵⁴ In 2000, Masaru Tshuchida from Fukuoka was called as the Fukuoka Japan Temple president.¹³⁵⁵ In 2003, Kiyoshi Tokuzawa from Kanazawa was called as the Fukuoka Japan Temple president,¹³⁵⁶ and Makoto Fukuda from Musashino was called as the Tokyo Japan Temple president.¹³⁵⁷ In 2006, Ryoushou Nakamura from Kumamoto was called as the Fukuoka Japan Temple president, and Masayuki Nakano from Osaka was called as the Tokyo Japan Temple president.¹³⁵⁸ Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy in 1977 and served in various area presidencies. In early 2011, he served as the Assistant Executive Director in the Temple Department.¹³⁵⁹

Temple

Announced in 1975 and completed in 1980, the Tokyo Japan Temple services the northern half of Japan and Okinawa, whereas the Fukuoka Japan Temple (announced in 1998 and completed in 2000) services members

¹³⁴⁵ "New regional representatives," LDS Church News, 17 October 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21766/New-regional-representatives.html>

¹³⁴⁶ "Church names area authorities," LDS Church News, 5 August 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26627/Church-names-area-authorities.html>

¹³⁴⁷ "39 Area Authority Seventies called," LDS Church News, 8 April 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37529/39-Area-Authority-Seventies-called.html>

¹³⁴⁸ "New Area Authority Seventies," LDS Church News, 14 April 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39723/New-Area-Authority-Seventies.html>

¹³⁴⁹ "New Area Authority Seventies," LDS Church News, 20 April 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41712/New-Area-Authority-Seventies.html>

¹³⁵⁰ "New Area Authority Seventies," LDS Church News, 24 April 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45458/New-Area-Authority-Seventies.html>

¹³⁵¹ "46 Area Seventies called; 29 released," LDS Church News, 7 April 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50423/46-Area-Seventies-called-29-released.html>

¹³⁵² "New Area Seventies," LDS Church News, 24 April 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59238/New-Area-Seventies.html>

¹³⁵³ "New temple president," LDS Church News, 25 June 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24515/New-temple-president.html>

¹³⁵⁴ "New temple presidents," LDS Church News, 27 September 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/28850/New-temple-presidents.html>

¹³⁵⁵ "New temple president," LDS Church News, 27 May 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37844/New-temple-president.html>

¹³⁵⁶ "New temple presidents," LDS Church News, 6 September 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44281/New-temple-presidents.html>

¹³⁵⁷ "New temple presidents," LDS Church News, 13 September 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44322/New-temple-presidents.html>

¹³⁵⁸ "New temple presidents," LDS Church News, 2 September 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49380/New-temple-presidents.html>

¹³⁵⁹ "Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi," General Authorities, retrieved 18 February 2011. <http://lds.org/church/leader/yoshihiko-kikuchi?lang=eng&query=kikuchi>

living in southern Japan. In 2009, a temple was announced for Sapporo, and ground was broken on October 22, 2011. Prior to the completion of the temple in Tokyo, yearly temple trips occurred for Japanese members from 1965 to 1980.¹³⁶⁰ High rates of temple attendance among active members and greater self-sufficiency in monetary donations by local members has contributed to the announcement of three temples in Japan despite the small number of active members. In 2011, the Tokyo Japan Temple scheduled six endowment sessions on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, seven sessions on Fridays, and eight sessions on Saturdays. The Fukuoka Japan Temple scheduled at least one endowment session on Thursday, two on Fridays, and six on Saturdays. Both temples appear moderately busy on Saturdays, whereas only the Tokyo Japan Temple is moderately utilized on weekdays. Many congregations have held monthly temple trips since the 1990s.¹³⁶¹ Additional temples appear possible over the medium term for small temples on Okinawa or in Osaka or Nagoya, but stagnant active membership and congregational growth may delay the construction of any additional temples for many years.

Comparative Growth

The LDS Church in Japan has the seventeenth most members, thirteenth most congregations, eleventh most missions, sixth most temples, and fourteenth most stakes in the world. Japan is the tenth most populous country. The Church in Japan experienced greater growth than any other Asian country except for the Philippines and was among the most rapidly growing nations for church membership during the twentieth century. In mid-1989, Japan had the eighth most stakes among countries outside the United States.¹³⁶² Stagnant membership growth and congregational decline in Japan in the early 2000s was among the most pronounced in the world, as annual membership growth rates were generally less than 1% and over thirty congregations were discontinued. Japan in many areas experienced the same phenomenon as in several islands in the Caribbean (such as Aruba and Curacao), where missions flooded congregations with several missionary companionships despite limited receptivity, which over time has resulted in poor member-missionary participation. The long record of quick baptism tactics advocated by local missions and resulting low convert retention rates have, in many cases, further sapped member enthusiasm for outreach. Consequently, the Church in Japan today remains among the most resistant to member-missionary efforts despite a well-developed local leadership infrastructure present in many areas.

Most Christian denominations report few members and slow or stagnant membership growth. Seventh Day Adventists generally baptized between 200 and 300 new converts annually, and the number of Adventist congregations did not increase between 2000 and 2009.¹³⁶³ Jehovah's Witnesses are the most successful Christian group, maintaining over 3,100 congregations and claiming nearly 220,000 active members. Witnesses have developed self-sustainable congregations and maintain strong member-missionary participation.

Future Prospects

Secularism, limited member-missionary activity, low birth rates among Latter-day Saint families, and the continuing trend of congregation consolidations create an unfavorable outlook for the future growth of the LDS Church in Japan. Congregation consolidations may continue for many more years as growth in active membership fails to keep pace with member attrition. Overcoming local members' reluctance, indifference, or anxiety about member-missionary work will be essential toward reversing current stagnant membership and

¹³⁶⁰ Britsch, R. Lanier. "The Blossoming of the Church in Japan," *Ensign*, Oct. 1992, 32.

¹³⁶¹ Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Kyoto, the cultural center of Japan," *LDS Church News*, 22 June 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21603/Kyoto-the-cultural-center-of-Japan.html>

¹³⁶² Hart, John L. "Mexico milestone: 100th stake created," *LDS Church News*, 1 July 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18995/Mexico-milestone-100th-stake-created.html>

¹³⁶³ "Japan Union Conference (1997-Present)," *adventiststatistics.org*, retrieved 15 February 2011. http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldInstID=1521483

congregational growth trends. The construction of additional small temples in Osaka or Nagoya and Okinawa appears likely over the medium term. Some district may consolidate with neighboring stakes or combine with nearby districts to organize additional stakes in coming years.

LAOS

Geography

AREA: 236,800 square km. Laos is landlocked in Southeast Asia and borders Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, and China. The climate experiences tropical monsoon between May and November followed by a dry season from December to April. Most of the landscape is mountainous with few plains. The Mekong River flows along the Thai border. Floods and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include refuse from war, deforestation and soil erosion. Laos is divided into sixteen administrative provinces.

Peoples

Lao: 55%
Khmu: 11%
Hmong: 8%
Other: 26%

The majority of the population is Lao. Khmu primarily reside in north central Laos. The Hmong also reside in northern areas. Other ethnicities include over one hundred different groups. There is also an ethnic Vietnamese community in Vientiane.

Population: 6,586,266 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.655% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 3.06 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 60.85 male, 64.76 female (2012)

Languages: Lao (55%), Khmu (10%), Hmong dialects (7%), Thai Don (5%), Phu Thai (4%), Lu (3%), Kataang (2.5%), Phuan (2.5%), So (2.5%), other (8.5%). Lao is the official language. Eighty-four native languages are spoken in Laos, most with 1,000 to 100,000 speakers. Only Lao has over one million speakers (3.0 million).

Literacy: 68.7%

History

In the fourteenth century, the Lan Xang kingdom was established in present-day Laos. Lan Xang ruled the area for three centuries and influenced the Southeast Asia region. The kingdom divided into three states and eventually assimilated into Thailand later and became part of French Indochina in the late 1800s. France regained control of Laos following a brief hiatus in World War II. Independence occurred in 1949, but France continued to exert influence on the region for the following decade. Laos played an integral part of the Vietnam War, as it experienced civil war between the communist Pathet Lao rebels and the Royal Laotian government. The United States heavily bombed Laos to fight the North Vietnamese assistance of the Pathet Lao. Communists took control in 1975 and continued strict socialist policy until 1988. For the past two decades, Laos has allowed more privatization to occur within the economy and has shown a less isolated stance but remains a communist state.

Culture

Laos culture is an amalgam of indigenous tradition as well as Cambodian, Indian, and Chinese influence. Buddhism strongly influences culture. Buddhist festivals are widely celebrated, and temples are widespread. Luang Prabang was the historic capital of Laos and is a World Heritage Site. The Khene, a mouth organ of ancient origin from Laos, is celebrated as the national instrument. Rice is the primary food staple.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,700 (2011) [5.61% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.524

Corruption Index: 2.2 (2011)

Laos is one of the few remaining one-party communist states. Foreign investment began in the mid-1980s and has contributed to steady economic growth. The landlocked position of Laos has isolated it from international trade. The infrastructure remains underdeveloped, particularly with electricity and roads. Poverty has been reduced in the past two decades; 26% now live below the poverty line. Agriculture employs for 80% of the workforce and produces 39% of the GDP. Primary agricultural products include sweet potatoes, vegetables and corn. Industry and services account for 34% and 27% of the GDP respectively. Mining is the largest industry and exploits copper, tin, gold, and gypsum resources. Timber is another important industry. Primary trade partners include Thailand, Vietnam, and China.

Corruption rates are among the highest in Southeast Asia. Bribery is widespread. In government, there are few checks and balances to prevent corruption among officials or address its occurrence.

Faiths

Buddhist: 67%

Other or unspecified: 31.5%

Christian: 1.5%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 45,000

Seventh Day Adventists 1,917 3

Latter-day Saints 200 1

Religion

Theravada Buddhism is the most followed religion; there are over 4,000 temples. Many of the small ethnic groups in rural areas practice ancestor worship and animism. Very few do not practice a religion. Catholics are concentrated in the center and southern portions of Laos, where they worship openly, but face restrictions in the north. The Lao Evangelical Church is sanctioned by the government and has caused friction with Protestants who want to start independent denominations. Protestants are growing rapidly and likely number over 100,000. There are approximately 8,500 Baha'is.¹³⁶⁴

¹³⁶⁴ "Laos," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127276.htm>

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 18th

The constitution allows for religious freedom, but government restricts its practice. The government offers incentives and financial support and imposes fewer restrictions on Buddhists. The greatest religious tolerance occurs in the larger cities, whereas rural communities experience the most intolerance and friction between Buddhists and other religions, particularly Protestant churches. The government further restricts religious activities in rural areas. Christians have faced limitations or are prohibited from importing Bibles and religious materials, whereas Buddhists do not have restrictions. Violators can face fines and have materials confiscated. Foreigners are forbidden to proselyte. Christians in some provinces face harassment, even when they assemble in private homes.¹³⁶⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 31%

Vientiane, **Savannakhet**, **Pakxe**, **Xam Nua**, **Thakek**, **Luang Prabang**, **Samakhixai**, **Pakxan**, **Nam Tha**, **Muang Sing**.

Cities in **bold** do not have congregations.

One of the ten largest cities has a congregation. Seven percent (7%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The Laotian members likely began joined the Church in the 1970s in the United States. Several Laotian-speaking congregations were organized, most of which were in California. In the 2000s, a missionary proselytizing area opened in Nong Kha in Thailand, just across the Mekong River from Vientiane. A branch was organized in Vientiane in June 2003. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland dedicated Laos for missionary work in February 2006.¹³⁶⁶ Full-time young missionaries served for a brief time in 2006. As of late 2009, the Church did not have formal recognition. In early 2013, four young missionaries were assigned to Vientiane on service and education assignments.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 200 (2012)

Many converts have been baptized in the Thai border town of Nong Khai. Members reside in Vientiane and its surroundings.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 (2012)

Only one branch functions in Vientiane, under the direction of the Thailand Bangkok Mission. A senior missionary couple resides in Vientiane and conducts humanitarian work.

¹³⁶⁵ "Laos," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127276.htm>

¹³⁶⁶ "Laos dedicated," LDS Church News, 25 March 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48673/Laos-dedicated.html>

Activity and Retention

Over half the active membership lives on the outskirts of Vientiane. There are approximately one hundred active members. Activity rates are likely over 50%. In 2009, there were ten active Aaronic Priesthood holders.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Lao, Vietnamese.

All LDS scriptures are available in Vietnamese. The entire Book of Mormon translation in Lao was undergoing its final reviews prior to printing in early 2010. Some Church materials are available in Lao and Vietnamese, including family history, scripture study, missionary, priesthood, young women, Sunday School, Relief Society, temple, and unit audio/visual resources.

Meetinghouses

Meetings are held in a clean, modern rented space.

Health and Safety

Laos has one of the highest numbers of unexploded ammunition and bombs worldwide. Risk for spread of infectious diseases is high, and medical infrastructure is limited.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 1994, the Church delivered donated rice sent by a three-truck caravan from Thailand to Vientiane. The Church also contributed to costs for transporting rice to the needy within Laos.¹³⁶⁷ Humanitarian senior couples have served in Laos teaching English since the early 2000s.¹³⁶⁸ The Church's worldwide clean water programs began from a single clean water project in Laos in 2002.¹³⁶⁹ Neonatal resuscitation training has been sponsored by the Church.¹³⁷⁰ Senior missionaries continue to conduct clean water and sanitation projects and donate school supplies. Wheelchairs were donated in 2008.¹³⁷¹

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church faces many restrictions that limit missionary work. Young full-time missionaries have been recently assigned but do not proselyte. Many of the members are picked up by a bus to go to Church. In 2009, police told the bus driver he was not allowed to transport members from outside the city into Vientiane for Church services.

¹³⁶⁷ "Church donates rice to Laos," LDS Church News, 27 August 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24136/Church-donates-rice-to-Laos.html>

¹³⁶⁸ "Pure religion: Time to fill a need," LDS Church News, 24 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43805/Pure-religion-Time-to-fill-a-need.html>

¹³⁶⁹ Askar, Jamshid. "Clean water all around the world," LDS Church News, 22 August 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57788/Clean-water-all-around-the-world.html>

¹³⁷⁰ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Saving babies' lives," LDS Church News, 12 November 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48131/Saving-babies-lives.html>

¹³⁷¹ "Wheelchairs," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 9 March 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6213-1-3215-1,00.html>

Cultural Issues

Buddhism strongly influences culture. Buddhist persecution of Christians appears minimal, and Christians face the greatest pressure from government officials. The Church will likely continue to experience some opposition for holding worship services. However, pressure will likely not be nearly as severe as on many minority Laotian Christians who have not only been persecuted by the religious belief but their ethnicity, due to possible connections to insurgency groups.

National Outreach

The Church has a tiny presence in Laos, as only Vientiane (3% of the national population) has a congregation and no foreign missionaries may proselyte. The majority of the inhabitants in Vientiane are unaware of the Church. The only opportunity for Laotians to join the Church is through personal contact with a Church member. Local members will be instrumental in expanding the Church's national presence. Outreach to northern provinces appears the most difficult, as these regions experience greater intolerance toward religious minorities.

Members who travel to meetings by bus provide opportunity for expanded outreach outside of Vientiane. If government restricts the movement or logistics of Church members traveling to attend church services, this may result in the creation of small groups or branches in lesser-reached communities with some LDS members.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

High activity and retention appear the result of most converts seriously investigating the Church over a longer period of time and developing a habit of regular Church attendance prior to baptism. Investigators have often overcome significant cultural pressures and opposition before joining the Church and tend to be strongly committed. However, more than half the active members rely on Church-provided transportation to travel to Sunday meetings. If transportation is not provided to members outside Vientiane, many may be unable to actively participate.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Geography mitigates many ethnic issues. The Church has not faced ethnic integration issues yet due to the tiny size of Laotian membership. Some issues may arise once congregations start meeting in areas with greater ethnic diversity.

Language Issues

Laos experiences high linguistic diversity for an Asian country with a small population. Language barriers between commonly spoken languages by Church members and the rest of the population leave many ethnic groups without a gospel witness. Most of the indigenous non-Lao peoples have no Church materials translated into their native languages, such as Khmu.

Leadership

Local leadership has developed following the recent arrival of the Church. The first two missionaries to serve from Laos received their mission calls in early 2006. At this time, the Vientiane Branch had native members serving in the branch presidency.¹³⁷² In 2009, members conducted home teaching visits after Church meet-

¹³⁷² "Laos dedicated," LDS Church News, 25 March 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48673/Laos-dedicated>.

ings due to government restrictions. At the time, the branch had twelve home teaching companionships. Priesthood advancements appear to occur regularly. Some mentoring by the mission president and senior couples to Laotian Church leaders occurs.

Temple

Laos is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple District. Temple excursions rarely occur. A temple preparation course was taught in 2009, and members did prepare names of ancestors to submit for temple work. A temple built in Southeast Asia would reduce travel time and expense for Laotian members to attend the temple. Significant sacrifice will be required for members to attend the temple for many years to come.

Comparative Growth

Laos is one of the most recently reached countries for the Church in Asia and has experienced growth greater than many nations that also have limited religious freedom. The Church has had a presence in Bangladesh and Nepal at least a decade longer than in Laos, yet all of these countries have a comparably sized active membership.

Other Christian groups have had more rapid growth than the LDS Church in membership and national outreach. Seventh Day Adventists have experienced rapid growth from 137 members in 1998 to over 1,800 a decade later. Congregations have also reached outside of Vientiane to several provinces.

Future Prospects

Government restricts international missionary outreach, requiring local members to be self-sufficient in ecclesiastical duties and member-missionary work. The recent introduction of young missionaries allows for some member support but provides no formal outreach at present. Growth in membership on the outskirts of Vientiane may result in the formation of groups or small branches to serve members in these locations. Outreach in other provinces appears unlikely for the medium-term future.

MACAU

Geography

AREA: 28.2 square km. Located in southern China near Hong Kong, Macau consists of a city on the coast of the South China Sea. Macau once consisted of two islands (Coloane and Taipa) and the Macau Peninsula, and today the two islands have been merged into one by land reclamation and connected by three bridges to the peninsula. The terrain is generally flat and subject to subtropical climate marked by cool winters and warm summers. Typhoons are a natural hazard. Macau is a special administrative region of China that has limited democratic freedoms.

Peoples

Chinese: 94.3%
Other: 5.7%

The population is homogenously Han Chinese. Other ethnic groups include Macanese, a compound of Asian and Portuguese ancestry.

Population: 578,025 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.866% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 0.92 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 81.47 male, 87.54 female (2012)

Languages: Cantonese Chinese (85.7%), Hokkein Chinese (4%), Mandarin Chinese (3.2%), other Chinese languages (2.7%), English (1.5%), Tagalog (1.3%), other (1.6%).

Literacy: 91.3% (2001)

History

The peninsula and islands of present-day Macau were largely uninhabited until after the thirteenth century. In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese established the first European settlement in East Asia in Macau. The following centuries were marked by occasional conflict with the Chinese government over taxation and the duration of Portuguese occupation of the area. During the latter half of the twentieth century, pro-communists pressed for reunification with China. Portugal tried repeatedly to cede Macau back to Chinese administrative, but this offer was refused and did not make progress until 1979. In 1987, Portugal agreed with China to return Macau to Chinese rule by 1999. Since 1999, Macau has been a special administrative region of China that possesses a high degree of autonomy and is not subject to the Chinese socialist economic system. Economic growth has occurred in the past decade, and Macau has emerged as a tourist and gambling center in East Asia.¹³⁷³

¹³⁷³ "Background Note: Macau," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 26 July 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7066.htm>

Culture

Macau boasts a unique blend of Portuguese and Chinese cultures that manifests itself in many aspects of daily life and local art. The entire population lives in urban areas. Macau has one of the lowest fertility rates and one of the highest life expectancy rates in the world. Chinese medicine is widely practiced. The population is highly secularized.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$33,000 (2009) [71.1% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.944

Corruption Index: 5.1 (2011)

Since 2001, the economy has transformed dramatically as a result of casino gambling and tourism. Manufacturing and other industrial activities have declined. Macau depends on the mainland for food, water, and energy. In 2006, gambling revenues outpaced the Las Vegas strip, and in 2009, twenty-one million visited Macau. Mainland Chinese account for half of tourists. Seventy percent (70%) of government revenue originates from taxes on gambling. Services generate 97% of the GDP and employs most of the population. Gambling and hotels/restaurants each employ 14% of the labor force. Agricultural activity is limited to vegetable cultivation and fishing. Primary industries include tourism, gambling, clothing, and electronics. Hong Kong, China, and the United States are the primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as less prevalent in Macau than in mainland China and many other Asian nations. Illicit drugs destined for mainland China are often trafficked through Macau. Some government officials have been accused of corruption, especially regarding the gaming industry.

Faiths

Buddhist: 80%

Christian: 5%

Other: 15%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 30,000 18

Seventh Day Adventists 4,800 20 (includes Hong Kong)

Latter-day Saints 1,345 2

Jehovah's Witnesses 223 3

Religion

Buddhism is the primary religion in Macau, although most the population does not actively practice religion. In 2009, there were forty Buddhist temples and thirty Taoist Temples. Catholics account for 4% of the population, and Protestants constitute a little over 1%. Protestant groups include Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, and Seventh Day Adventist churches. In 2006, Protestant churches totaled seventy with 10,000 members, half of which attended weekly. Many religious groups perform extensive humanitarian and development service. Religiously active non-Chinese language speaking Protestants are estimated at 500.¹³⁷⁴

¹³⁷⁴ "China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

Religious Freedom

The law protects religious freedoms, which are upheld by the government. There have been no recent reports of abuse of religious freedom by government or society. Religious groups may register with the government, but registration is not required for religious groups to operate. There are no restrictions in proselytism or missionary activity.¹³⁷⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 100%

Macau, **Taipa**, **Coloane**.

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

One of the three Macanese cities has an LDS congregation. The entire population resides in three cities, and 85% reside on the Macau Peninsula.

LDS History

In 1964, the Southern Far East Mission president and Elder Gordon B. Hinckley visited Macau to explore the possibility of sending missionaries. Later that year, missionaries were assigned and baptized the first convert. In December 1964, the Church stopped holding meetings because it lacked the needed license to assemble from the Portuguese government. In 1965, missionaries were banned from proselytism and left the colony. In 1976, missionaries returned to Macau as a result of improved religious freedom and began to hold church meetings. In 1977, the Church organized the Macau Branch.¹³⁷⁶ In 2010, Macau and Hong Kong participated in a meeting with President Dieter F. Uchtdorf attended by 2,500.¹³⁷⁷ In 2010, missionary activity continued to fall under the China Hong Kong Mission.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,345 (2012)

In 1993, there were 640 LDS members.¹³⁷⁸ By year-end 2000, membership totaled 928. Slow membership growth continued in the 2000s. There were 1,028 members in 2003, 1,158 in 2006, and 1,260 in 2008. Most years in the 2000s experienced annual membership growth rates between 3% and 6%.

In 2009, reported LDS membership fell by 50% to 629. The massive drop in membership appears to be due to church administration updating membership records and not due to mass emigration of Latter-day Saints. In 2009, one in 890 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 2 (2012)

¹³⁷⁵ "China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127268.htm>

¹³⁷⁶ "Country Profiles," LDS Newsroom, retrieved 22 September 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/macau>

¹³⁷⁷ "Taiwan, Hong Kong visited by President Uchtdorf," LDS Church News, 31 July 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59664/Taiwan-Hong-Kong-visited-by-President-Uchtdorf.html>

¹³⁷⁸ "Asia area: Welcome mat is out in several countries," LDS Church News, 19 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22920/Asia-area-Welcome-mat-is-out-in-several-countries.html>

In 1994, the newly created Hong Kong Kowloon West Stake incorporated the Macau Branch.¹³⁷⁹ A second branch was created in 1998 to allow Cantonese and English speakers to meet separately. A third branch for Mandarin speakers was organized in 2001,¹³⁸⁰ but was discontinued in 2006. Both branches in Macau are mission branches under the China Hong Kong Mission.

Activity and Retention

There appear to be no more than one hundred active members in each branch. Total active membership is estimated at 200, or 30%

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Chinese, English, Tagalog.

All LDS scriptures are available in Chinese (both traditional and simplified characters) and Tagalog. Most Church materials are available in Chinese and Tagalog. Only a few materials are available in simplified characters, such as *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*. A large selection of audio-visual materials is available in Mandarin and Cantonese.

Meetinghouses

Both branches meet in the same meetinghouse, a rented space on the Macau Peninsula.

Humanitarian and Development Work

There have been no humanitarian or development projects conducted by the LDS Church in Macau. Service projects are limited to full-time missionaries completing weekly service hours and local congregations sponsoring service projects.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

There are no restrictions on the activities of the LDS Church in Macau. Members meet and worship without any legal challenges. Full-time missionaries openly proselyte.

Cultural Issues

Secularism and disinterest in religion are the primary obstacles to LDS mission outreach. The percentage of Christians has fallen dramatically over the past decades and centuries. The gambling industry is a major challenge for LDS teachings.

National Outreach

Nearly the entire population resides within close distance to the mission outreach center. Missionaries serve throughout Macau. Most know little about the LDS Church, however. Creative and insightful mission

¹³⁷⁹ "New stake presidencies," LDS Church News, 30 April 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24516/New-stake-presidencies.html>

¹³⁸⁰ "Country Profiles," LDS Newsroom, retrieved 22 September 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/macau>

outreach methods such as Internet outreach and service projects may help bring greater awareness of the Church and its members to the general population. There are significant opportunities to proselyte mainland Chinese vacationing in Macau.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The dramatic halving of church membership reported for 2009 indicates that many disaffiliated or unaccounted members have been on church records for years. Poor church attendance and disinterest toward religion appear to have severely affected Latter-day Saint membership. Close proximity to mission headquarters in Hong Kong may have limited local members' ability to develop self-sufficiency in leadership and administration, which tend to be better developed in many nations with small Latter-day Saint populations located far from mission headquarters.

Seminary and institute have yet to be introduced. Youth and adults attending these Church Education System programs may help improve member activity rates, convert retention rates, and doctrinal understanding.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The lack of ethnic diversity reduces potential ethnic integration conflicts at church. The operation of two congregations, including one for non-Chinese speakers, allows greater accommodation of ethnic minorities and foreign expatriates.

Language Issues

LDS Church materials are translated into nearly every native language spoken. Mandarin-speaking and Cantonese-speaking missionaries each serve in Macau. No significant language challenges have been reported.

Missionary Service

Few full-time missionaries serve from Macau. Most missionaries assigned are North Americans. Senior couples serve regularly in the country and assist with church administration. Low fertility rates create challenges for long-term growth due to few youth converts and small LDS family sizes.

Leadership

Local members serve as the branch president of both branches. Active priesthood holders appear limited in number. The closure of the Macau Third Branch in 2006 may have been due to insufficient leadership in both Chinese branches.

Temple

Macau is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. Few nations with small Latter-day Saint populations are within such close proximity to a temple at just seventy kilometers. Temple trips occur regularly.

Comparative Growth

Membership growth rates have compared to most industrialized East Asian nations, but Macau remains the only East Asian nation with an official Church presence without a district or stake. The percentage of Latter-day Saints in the Macanese population is higher than most Asian countries and is only less than the

Philippines, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Taiwan, and South Korea. Member activity rates compare to other industrialized Asian nations.

Missionary-minded Christian groups report slow church growth in Macau and small church memberships. Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists both experience slow membership growth rates. Christian groups report that the population is largely unreceptive to mission outreach efforts.

Future Prospects

Growth outlook over the foreseeable future appears mediocre due to the small community of active Latter-day Saints, low responsiveness of the population to the Church's teachings, and the increasing influence of gambling and secularism on Macanese society. The continued presence of both English- and Chinese-speaking congregations is meaningful and offers mission outreach support and infrastructure if the population one day becomes more receptive to the gospel.

MALAYSIA

Geography

AREA: 329,847 square km. Malaysia comprises a portion of the Malay Peninsula between Thailand and Singapore and a portion of the island of Kalimantan (Borneo). Several heavily traveled straits encompass Malaysia, such as the Malacca Strait between West Malaysia and Indonesia, giving the country's strong geopolitical importance. Terrain consists primarily of heavily forested plains and hills, with large areas of rainforest in East Malaysia. Flooding, landslides, and forest fires are natural hazards. Environmental issues include air and water pollution and deforestation. Malaysia is administratively divided into thirteen states and one federal territory.

Peoples

Malays: 50.4%.

Chinese: 23.7% (Hokkein, Cantonese, Hakka)

Indigenous (Iban, Kadazan, etc.) 11%

Indians: 7.1%

Other: 7.8%

About 80% of Malaysia's population, including most ethnic Malays, resides in West (Peninsular) Malaysia, which is much more urban than East Malaysia. The most prevalent tribes in East Malaysia are the Iban and Kadazan. The Iban live in Sarawak Province but have also migrated to Sabah Province as well as West Malaysia and the West Kalimantan Province in Indonesia. The Kadazan are from Sabah Province. Other major tribal groups include the Rungus, Dusun and Kadazandusun, many of which are Kadazan subgroups.

Population: 29,179,952 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.542% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.64 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 71.28 male, 76.99 female (2012)

Languages: Bahasa Malaysia (45%), Chinese languages (20%), Indian languages (5%), other (30%). Bahasa Malay is the official language. Languages with over one million speakers include Malay dialects (11.48 million), Chinese languages (5.1 million), and Indian languages (1.3 million).

Literacy: 88.7% (2000 census)

History

Indians brought Hinduism and Buddhism to Malaysia 100 BC, and Hindu kingdoms were established until the spread of Islam in the fifteenth century AD. The Portuguese reached Malacca in 1511, and Great Britain colonized Malaysia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Japan controlled the region during World War II, and after the war, power was restored to the British. Malaysia gained independence in 1957 and experienced instability within the country and with neighboring nations, including communist movements and conflicts with neighbors to define borders. Singapore seceded from Malaysia in 1965. In recent years, Malaysia has experienced rapid economic growth and significant improvements in living conditions.

Culture

Malaysian culture has evolved from Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Western cultural influences. The Malays exhibit a strong ethno-religious tie with Islam and have struggled to determine to what extent Islam should be integrated into government. Many of the largest cities support diverse populations with significant numbers of Malays, Chinese, migrant workers, and tribal peoples from East Malaysia. One of the most prominent tribes from East Malaysia, the Iban, were traditionally known as headhunters living in longhouses, which they still live in today. Up to hundreds of families can live in a single longhouse in Sarawak. When family members marry, they often build onto the end of the longhouse of their original family. Gawai is a major festival in Sarawak, East Malaysia that occurs on June 1. Common foods include vegetables, rice, fish, meat, and fruit. Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are lower than world averages.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$15,600 (2011) [32.4% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.761

Corruption Index: 4.3 (2011)

Much of Malaysia's economic potential rests in its geographic location between China and Indonesia, as well as its key position along major Southeast Asian shipping routes. Malaysia transitioned from an economy dominated by the export of raw materials thirty years ago to an economy that has diversified and modernized. Economic prosperity came to the country during the 1970s and 1980s and continues today. Manufactured goods as well as the extraction of petroleum deposits around the country help drive an export-driven economy. More manufacturing occurs in West Malaysia, whereas more extraction of natural resources occurs in East Malaysia. Officials are concerned about keeping the price of imports low and adjusting to lower world-wide demand for goods originating in the country. Currency reform has also been an area of focus for the past several years. Malaysia's location attracts many foreigners for employment.

Corruption is perceived as a major issue. Human trafficking for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation are serious concerns. The government maintains strict enforcement of illicit drug trafficking laws. Malaysia is a producer of synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamine and ecstasy.

Faiths

Muslim 60.4%

Buddhist 19.2%

Christian 9.1%

Hindu 6.3%

Confucianism, Taoism, other traditional Chinese religions: 2.6%

Other/unknown: 1.6%

None: 0.8%

Christians

Denomination Members Congregations

Catholic 600,000

Seventh Day Adventists 55,001 266

Latter-day Saints 8,967 33

Jehovah's Witnesses 3,964 116

Religion

Most ethnic Malays are Muslims and live in West Malaysia; very few are Christian. One Christian group estimates that there are 30,000 Malay Christian converts in the country.¹³⁸¹ Chinese adhere primarily to Buddhism or traditional Chinese religions. Most of the tribal peoples in East Malaysia are Christian, particularly in the province of Sarawak.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 42nd

As Muslims constitute a slight majority of the population, Malaysia continues to struggle over whether to define itself as an Islamic state; some Muslim-majority provinces have adopted portions of Sharia law. Malaysian law forbids the proselytism of Muslims, which comprise 60% of the population. If Malays are interested in joining the Church and wish to denounce Islam beforehand, they must appeal for public apostasy in order to have their Muslim status revoked. Proselytism laws vary among provinces, with the most liberal provinces in East Malaysia.

Major Cities

Urban: 70%

Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, **Klang**, Ipoh, **Ampang Jaya**, **Subang Jaya**, Petaling Jaya, Kuching, **Shah Alam**, Kota Kinabalu, **Seremban**, **Kuantan**, Sandakan, **Kuala Terengganu**, **Kota Bharu**, Tawau, **Kajang**, **Taiping**, **Alor Setar**, George Town, **Sungai Petani**, **Selayang Baru**, **Batu**, Miri, Sibul, **Bukit Mertajam**, Melaka, **Kluang**, **Batu Pahat**, **Kulim**, **Sungai Ara**, Bintulu, **Muar**, Butterworth, Gelugor.

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

Fourteen of the thirty-five cities over 100,000 inhabitants have a Church presence. Forty-five percent (45%) of the national population resides in the thirty-five most populous cities.

LDS History

The LDS Church experienced little growth for the first thirty years that missionaries served in Malaysia. The first missionaries arrived in 1972 and served in Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia has been a part of the Singapore Mission since its reorganization in 1974.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 8,967 (2012)

There were 300 Latter-day Saints in 1987. LDS membership reached 600 in 1993, 800 in 1997, and 1,309 in 2000. During the 2000s, rapid membership growth occurred as membership increased to 1,922 in 2002, 2,456 in 2004, 3,633 in 2006, 5,646 in 2008, and 7,314 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates in the 2000s ranged from a high of 27% in 2007 to a low of 10% in 2004 and generally varied from 15%–25%. Membership has generally increased by 1,000 a year. It is not uncommon for some missionaries in East Malaysia to have over 20 investigators at Church on a Sunday. Many branches in East Malaysia commonly have several baptisms a week. In 2010, one in 3,928 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 33 Groups: 2+ (April 2013)

¹³⁸¹ "Apostasy in Malaysia," Little Speck, retrieved 26 March 2010. <http://www.littlespeck.com/region/CForeign-My-041228.htm>

There were three branches in 1987. The number of LDS congregations increased to four in 1993, nine in 1997, and fifteen in 2000. Slow congregational growth occurred between 2000 and 2008 as the number of branches increased from fifteen to seventeen. There were twenty-four branches in 2009 and twenty-eight branches in 2010. One Chinese-speaking group functioned in Miri in 2011. In early 2012, additional language-specific groups were organized in Sitiawan and Kuching.

The first district was created in 1980 in Kuala Lumpur. Provided with the year of organization and the number of congregations in mid-2011, additional districts were organized in Kota Kinabalu (1997) [3], Ipoh (2003) [4], Kuching (2003) [5], Miri (2008) [5], Sibü (2009) [5], and Bintulu (2011) [3]. The district in Miri also includes two groups operating in Brunei. In mid-2011, there were five branches in the Kuala Lumpur Malaysia District. The strongest congregational growth has occurred in the Sarawak Province, where many of the Iban tribe have joined the Church. In 2001 only three branches existed in the province in the cities of Kuching, Miri and Sibü. As of August 2009, there were ten branches in the province, with Kuching, Sibü and Bintulu each having three branches.

Activity and Retention

Most branches are reported by missionaries to consist of 50–150 active members. The number of congregations grew only from fifteen to nineteen between 2000 and 2008, while membership increased from 1,309 to 5,646. Nominal membership growth has far outstripped the increase in church units, reflecting challenges of member retention and local leadership. The number of converts retained every year in Malaysia may be as low as 200–300, considering that few new congregations have been created until recently. Nationwide active membership is estimated at 3,000, or 35%–40% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Chinese, English.

Simple English and some Chinese are used most in Church services in West Malaysia, whereas Malay, Iban, or Chinese are most used in East Malaysia. Very few Church materials and no LDS scriptures have been translated into indigenous languages in Malaysia. Only two Church publications are available in Malay: *Gospel Fundamentals* and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Local members report that in 2009, the Church authorized the translation of the Book of Mormon into Bahasa Malaysian. Scripture translations take several years to complete. The only Church publication available in Iban, one of the most widely spoken languages among LDS members in the country, is *The Articles of Faith*. Among languages spoken in Malaysia, Cantonese and Mandarin have the largest body of translated church materials and scripture.

Meetinghouses

The first Church built chapel in Malaysia was dedicated in 2006 in Miri, East Malaysia.¹³⁸² A second chapel constructed by the Church began construction in Kota Kinabalu, East Malaysia a month after the dedication of the first meetinghouse in the country in Miri. Although each of these cities currently have meetinghouses, both only have one independent branch.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church is involved in humanitarian projects, particularly in East Malaysia. Fifteen villages in Sarawak now benefit from a clean water project funded by the Church in 2007.¹³⁸³ In 2010, senior missionaries were

¹³⁸² "Meetinghouse for Malaysia," LDS Church News, 15 April 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48834/Meetinghouse-for-Malaysia.html>

¹³⁸³ "A reliable supply of clean water," LDS Church News, 12 May 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50564/A->

conducting clean water projects in many regions of East Malaysia. Other humanitarian projects senior couples participate in include wheelchair donations by the Church in conjunction with the Rotary Club.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Missionaries serving in Malaysia have to leave the country frequently to renew their visas and comply with visa laws. This results in periodic hiatuses from missionary work and expenses in taking missionaries temporarily out of the country, usually to Singapore. This is a particularly time-consuming and difficult journey for missionaries in East Malaysia, who travel by plane to get their visas renewed. Missionaries in Malaysia avoid the title “Elder” on mail due to potential threats from radical Islamic groups.

Cultural Issues

High receptivity to Christianity among indigenous East Malaysian peoples has favored LDS Church growth over the past decade. The strong ethno-religious ties of Malays to Islam prevent any LDS missionary activity among Malays, resulting in half of the Malaysian population being unreached by the LDS Church. Mission and area leaders have directed full-time missionaries to avoid any proselytism activity with Muslims due to the sensitive nature of Christian proselytism among Muslims. Many branches in West Malaysia have diverse demography and provide opportunities for outreach among a wide range of ethnic groups. Some cultural practices interfere with LDS teachings in Malaysia, such as the drinking of alcohol at the funeral of a loved one among the Iban tribe.

National Outreach

Twenty-six percent (26%) of the national population resides in cities with an LDS congregation. Six of Malaysia's thirteen states do not have mission outreach (Kedah, Kelantan, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perlis, and Terengganu). Thirty percent (30%) of the national population (7.7 million inhabitants) reside in unreached states. Every unreached city over 100,000 inhabitants without a Church presence is in West Malaysia. Currently, the Church does not have a presence in any cities of less than 100,000 people in West Malaysia. East Malaysia is subject to the most liberal proselytism laws and presents the greatest opportunity for church growth. Only half of the East Malaysian population lives in cities larger than 10,000 inhabitants.

There has been very little expansion of LDS mission outreach to additional cities since 2000. Between 2000 and mid-2011, four cities had the first independent LDS congregations organized (Bintulu, Mukah, Sibujaya, and Sitiawan). The majority of progress in increasing LDS outreach in Malaysia has occurred in the largest cities of East Malaysia, as the number of congregations in several cities increased from one to as many as five between 2000 and 2010. Continued congregational growth in East Malaysia in both the largest cities and presently unreached cities will be required to significantly increase national outreach in areas that are most receptive and tolerant of Christian proselytism. Establishing groups and dependent branches in unreached cities over 100,000 inhabitants in West Malaysia is greatly needed. Many unreached large cities in West Malaysia have LDS members who attend church meetings in other cities. With approaching nearly 200 active members in 2011, the Kuala Lumpur Branch could feasibly be realigned to organize several additional church units for members residing in locations far from the church meetinghouse. Continued delays in organizing additional congregations in West Malaysia may result in missed opportunities when local populations were most receptive. The ongoing debate over the representation of Islam in government may bar expansion of LDS outreach in West Malaysia if greater implementation of Shari'a law occurs in the future.

There remains no LDS Internet site for Malaysia. Launching a website providing local news, information on church teachings, and contact information for full-time missionaries may facilitate national outreach expansion. The use of social networking websites in member-missionary work in Malaysia provides for promising opportunities for accelerating growth.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

With approximately one-third of converts becoming long-term active members, convert retention and member activity remain key challenges for church growth in Malaysia. Activity problems are great in both East and West Malaysia. Factors hampering convert retention include missionary pressure to quickly baptize converts with limited understanding before meaningful Church activity becomes routine, lack of adequate church materials in indigenous languages, church services held in languages that members of diverse backgrounds may not understand, and limited local leadership to nurture converts joining the Church in large numbers.

West Malaysia may have a more severe inactivity and retention problem, likely linked to the large diversity in nationalities among members. A member in Kuala Lumpur estimated his branch to have about 100 of the approximately 300 members active in 2010. Growth in active membership appears to be relatively flat, with new converts merely replacing those lost to inactivity. A stronger emphasis seems to be placed on bringing new members into the Church rather than teaching and fellowshiping new or less active members.

Mission leadership and local leadership are working to address these problems with couple missionaries training and assisting local branches presidencies, as well as creating more congregations to meet the needs of many of the new converts. This is evident with the creation of a Chinese-speaking branch in Sibu in 2009.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Very few, if any, ethnic Malays have joined the LDS Church. An increasing number of Chinese converts are helping grow membership in Malaysia. A single branch in West Malaysia may have up to fifty different nationalities. These converts from many different nations pose challenges in assimilating membership into congregations speaking the same language for Church meetings. The majority of the converts of the Church in Malaysia come from the poorer immigrant workers from Africa, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, or from the native peoples of East Malaysia. Converts must often overcome differences in culture and language with other immigrant workers in the Church. Immigrant workers in the country often lack sufficient resources to lead congregations due to the transient nature of their employment and living accommodations. Future growth among immigrants and migrant workers in this area of Malaysia may continue to strain leadership to meet the needs of those from unfamiliar cultures. Yet the Church has the great opportunity to reach many different people from countries in which the Church is not found or is under severe restrictions for sharing the gospel.

Language Issues

Church meetings in West Malaysia are conducted in English and Chinese, facilitating the assimilation of expatriates and other non-Malay members. As the languages spoken in the Church in Malaysia are often not the native languages of many church members, many converts may feel detached from members around them or may not fully understand the Gospel teachings presented to them. Malaysian and Iban are the primary languages used in church services in East Malaysia, notwithstanding very few church materials and no LDS scriptures in either language. Many converts speak languages with few or no Church materials translated. The lack of scriptures and adequate church materials in local languages limit the depth to which converts may learn doctrine and lessen the resources available for members to be more self-sufficient on maintaining

their testimonies in the Gospel. It is difficult for investigators to learn about the Church and pray to gain a testimony when the scriptures are unavailable and Church meetings may be conducted in a language that is unfamiliar or not spoken fluently. Prospects appear good for the translation of additional LDS materials and scriptures into Iban and Malaysian.

Leadership

LDS leadership is most developed in West Malaysia. Very few Malaysian members have been to the temple or received the Melchizedek Priesthood. One senior missionary couple in East Malaysia in 2009 reported that only one couple from their branch had been through the temple. Most branches have few Melchizedek Priesthood holders. This is likely the result of many converts not progressing after baptism to the point of receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Temple

Malaysia is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. If a future temple were constructed in Southeast Asia, Singapore may be a likely location that is much closer for members living in Malaysia. President Hinckley stated in Singapore in 2000: “I want to hold before you the challenge of promoting the growth of the Church in this area, and the faithfulness of the people to a point where some day we can have a Singapore Temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”¹³⁸⁴

Comparative Growth

The growth in raw membership the Church has experienced in Malaysia is comparable to nearby Cambodia and more distant Mongolia. Both Mongolia and Cambodia saw rapid growth in terms of membership, each increasing by about 1,000 members for a five year period of time between 2000 and 2005. Growth in these two nations has since decreased to membership increasing by about 300–600 members a year. Unlike Mongolia and Cambodia, Malaysia has seen its greatest success in missionary work among converts who were already Christian, whereas in Cambodia and Mongolia nearly all converts were Buddhist. However, the Church in Malaysia has lacked the higher rates of convert retention and native missionary service experienced in Mongolia. The LDS Church in Malaysia experienced the most rapid congregational growth rates in the late 2000s and in 2010 in Southeast Asia.

Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and other Christian groups with strong member-missionary programs have experienced success in Malaysia, particularly in East Malaysia, indicating continued receptivity to a religious message. Both Adventists and Witnesses operate over one hundred congregations. These and many other missionary-minded Christians have carried out more coordinated, aggressive church planting strategies than the LDS Church over the past several decades.

Future Prospects

The large numbers of converts from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds present challenges for integration and retention. However, prospects remain favorable for continued church growth in the medium term, particularly in East Malaysia among foreign workers. If the pace at which the Church is growing in East Malaysia continues, the first stake may be organized in the country in the coming decade. Additional congregations are likely to continue to be created in East Malaysia, primarily in Sarawak.

Due to its geographic isolation from the Malay Peninsula, East Malaysia could one day support its own

¹³⁸⁴ “Pres. Hinckley completes tour in Pacific Rim,” LDS Church News, 12 February 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37174/Pres-Hinckley-completes-tour-in-Pacific-Rim.html>

mission. To the extent that laws in their home countries permit, foreign workers from countries like Myanmar and Nepal who join the Church in Malaysia may one day have the opportunity to build the Church in their native lands as they return home and share the gospel with friends and family.

Breakthroughs among the ethnic Malay population are still needed. Foreigners in West Malaysia can also help grow the Church and prepare for when Malays become more receptive to the Gospel. The Church may eventually experience greater success in missionary work among Malays who are already Christian.

MONGOLIA

Geography

AREA: 1,564,116 square km. Mongolia is a large land-locked nation between Siberia and China. Much of Mongolia is semi-arid or arid, with the Gobi Desert occupying the southern portion of the country. Sporadic mountain ranges appear in the northern and western parts of Mongolia, many of which are forested. Large lakes dot western Mongolia, yet the rest of the country has limited water resources. Most of semi-arid Mongolia consists of grassy plains with few trees. Due to Mongolia's continental location, it is subject to great extremes in temperature with warm or hot summers to very cold winters. Ulaanbaatar is the coldest capital city in the world. The current boundaries of Mongolia only contain what was historically known as Outer Mongolia. Inner Mongolia is one of the People's Republic of China's autonomous regions. Mongolia is the world's least densely populated independent nation with one person per 4.4 square miles. Mongolia is divided into twenty-one administrative provinces.

Peoples

Mongol: 94.9%

Turkic: 5%

Other: 0.1%

Mongolia has a very homogeneous population. About 95% are Mongols, most of whom belong to the Khalkha subgroup. Turkic peoples, mainly Kazakhs, form most of the remaining 5%. Kazakhs are particularly concentrated in the far western province of Bayan-Olgii in which they constitute about 90% of the population of about 100,000. Other nationalities, such as the Chinese and Russians, make up less than 1% of the population.

Population: 3,179,997 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.469% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.19 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 66.16 male, 71.23 female (2012)

Languages: Mongolian dialects (90%), other (10%). The Halh dialect of Mongolian is the official language. Mongols speak the Mongolian language, which has several different dialects; the most popular being Khalkha. Turkic peoples speak a variety of different Turkic languages, such as Kazakh and Uzbek; Kazakh being the most prevalent. Only Mongolian dialects have over one million speakers (2.7 million).

Literacy: 97.8% (2000)

History

Mongolia is known for its powerful empire conquered by Genghis Khan during the 1200s. With specially bred ponies, the Chinese stirrup, thumb-ring short bows, and skilled Mongol riders, the Mongolian hordes conquered vastly more populous nations. At its high point, the Mongol Empire stretched from Eastern Europe, Asia Minor and the Middle East to the west; Iran, Tibet and southern China to the south; and the Pacific Ocean to the east. Westward Mongol expansion was halted only by the death of Genghis Khan in 1227 AD.

The empire fragmented into smaller Mongol states. The Eastern portion came under Chinese control in the 1600s, whereas the Russians eventually overcome their Golden Horde overlords in the West and the Mongol states in Central Asia eventually fell to Turkic tribes. Genghis and his direct descendants were exceptionally prolific due to many wives and widespread rape of conquered peoples; some 8% of men across a wide region of Asia carry a Y-chromosome lineage believed to go back to Genghis Khan.¹³⁸⁵ Thus, a strong Mongol legacy, both genetically and culturally, persists in nations once under the Mongol yoke.

Mongolia became an independent nation in 1921 with help from the Soviet Union and had a communist government set up in 1924. Throughout the Soviet era, ties to Russia were closer in Mongolia than in many Eastern European nations, as Russia offered Mongolia a degree of independence and protection from absorption into China. The government in Mongolia transitioned like many Eastern European communist nations to democracy and capitalism in the early 1990s. The transition from communism to capitalism resulted in shortages of food and goods throughout the country in the early 1990s. Recently, Mongolia has suffered from periodic naturally disasters, such as prolonged droughts, flash flooding, and severe winters.

Culture

Buddhism, over six decades of communism, and a nomadic legacy and lifestyle influence Mongolian culture. Many Mongolians live in portable tent-like structures called *gers* (or yurts) made of felt and wood on the outskirts of cities or in the country. In Ulaanbaatar, many live in aging apartment buildings from the communist era or in *gers* just outside the city. Limited housing challenges young people to marry and live separate from their parents. Horse racing, archery, and wrestling competitions occur during Naadam, the largest annual festival celebrated in July. The Mongolian language was originally written in the Mongolian script developed in the thirteenth century and later adopted a modified Cyrillic script to increase functionality with the Russian language. Mongolia experienced little contact with the international community prior to the early 1990s and has had little exposure to Western culture until recently. Alcoholism and immorality have increased in recent years.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$4,500 (2011) [9.36% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.653

Corruption Index: 2.7 (2011)

Mining and agriculture account for the majority of the economic activity in Mongolia. Large amounts of valuable minerals or fossil fuels are extracted, including gold, copper, tungsten, and coal. Many of the people subsist on agriculture, particularly herding. China is Mongolia's biggest trade partner for both imports and exports. Mongolia also maintains close ties with Russia, on which it depends for energy needs. The small, predominantly rural population finds it difficult to compete and lags other larger, more developed economies. Nonetheless capitalism has taken hold in the country and has helped create many small businesses. Ulaanbaatar is also home to the world's smallest stock exchange.

Environmental problems present long-term economic and health concerns. Overgrazing in the areas by the Gobi desert has led to some desertification as fragile vegetation is destroyed and unable to grow back after top soil is blown away. Roads connecting cities in the country are poorly maintained and oftentimes have long stretches where there is no defined road but instead a network of trails mingled together, a result of areas of roads being impassible due to periodic mud or water.

¹³⁸⁵ Zerjal et al., "The Genetic Legacy of the Mongols" (PDF), American Journal of Human Genetics, 2003.

Faiths

Buddhist: 50%
 Shamanist and Christian: 6%
 Muslim: 4%
 None: 40%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Latter-day Saints 10,591 24
 Catholic 415
 Seventh Day Adventists 1,678 4
 Jehovah's Witnesses 306 4

Religion

About half of the population of Mongolia follows Buddhism and 40% consider themselves nonreligious, a result of decades of atheism fostered by the communist government. The remaining 10% consider themselves Christian or Shamanists. Most Turkic peoples are Muslim.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. Proselytism is limited by legislation. Religious visas are difficult to obtain. Law requires that a certain percentage of individuals affiliated with foreign organizations must be staffed by Mongolians. Government requires religious organizations to have Mongolians holding over half of the total number of clergy or employee positions. Between July 2008 and October 2009 around seventy foreign religious workers were forced to leave Mongolia. Christians and Muslims in some areas report that local government refuses to register new congregations.

Largest Cities

Urban: 57%

Ulaanbaatar, Erdenet, Darkhan, Choibalsan, Moron, **Ulaangom**, **Olgii**, Khovd, Sukhbaatar, **Bajanchongor**. Cities in **bold** do not have congregations.

Seven of the ten largest cities have a congregation. Forty-one percent (41%) of the national population lives in the eighteen largest cities.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 10,591 (2012)

It was once considered the most closed country in the world. In 1989, it was thought that there were only four Mongolian Christians—none of whom were Latter-day Saints. Today, Latter-day Saints make up approximately 25% of the 35,000 Christians in Mongolia.

The growth of the Church began when the Mongolian government requested Church assistance with the higher education institutions in the country. Six senior couple missionaries were called and arrived in Mongolia in September of 1992. Missionaries also came with the purpose of preaching the gospel, which was understood by the Mongolian government. Mongolia faced large shortages of food and other necessities during the

transition from communism to capitalism. All six of the senior couples were assigned to serve in the capital of Ulaanbaatar and assisted Mongolia in its transition from communism to a free market economic system primarily in the country's higher level institutions.¹³⁸⁶

Mongolia was dedicated for the preaching of the Gospel by Elder Neal A. Maxwell on April 15, 1993. By this time, there were twenty people attending Church services, and five senior couples served in the country.¹³⁸⁷ The Church became legally registered with the government in 1994.

In 1996, there were about 400 members. Membership growth became more rapid, and by the beginning of 1998 there were 1,100 members.

For the following five years, exceptional growth was achieved. Membership increased from 1,850 at the end of 1999 to over 6,300 by the end of 2004.

In the mid-2000s, greater emphasis began to be placed on the establishment of a stake in Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar. Membership and congregation growth slowed dramatically after 2004 as attention was focused on reactivating less active members and training members for stake responsibilities. Membership growth rates slowed from 15%–32% a year from 2000 to 2004 to 5%–9% a year from 2005 to 2008.

Country membership was reported to be about 8,800 at the time of the stake creation.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 6 Branches: 17 Groups: 1+ (April 2013)

The Ulaanbaatar Branch was organized in 1993. The Mongolia Ulaanbaatar Mission was created in 1995. By 1996, there were three branches in Ulaanbaatar, and a district was created. A fourth branch was created the following year. In 1999, at least seventy full-time elders served as missionaries in the mission, which covered six branches in Ulaanbaatar, one in Darkhan, and one in Erdenet.¹³⁸⁸

The number of congregations increased from eight in 1999 to twenty in 2001. Mongolia's second district was organized in Darkhan in 2000. New branches were created in additional cities, including Khovd, Choisbalsan, and Moron, as well as smaller towns like Nalaikh and Sukhbaatar, which are on the peripheries of Ulaanbaatar and Darkhan respectively.

Only one new congregation was organized between 2004 and the beginning of 2009 despite membership growth from 6,346 to 8,444. One of the obstacles for forming a stake was the small number of families and married members, as it was reported in December 2007 that about 70% of the 3,700 members in the Ulaanbaatar Mongolia District were single and that there were 600 students enrolled in institute and about 700 students enrolled in seminary.¹³⁸⁹ Although most of the converts were youth, full families were also joining the Church.

On June 7, 2009 the first stake was created in Mongolia. The Ulaanbaatar Mongolia West Stake was created from the Ulaanbaatar Mongolia District. There have been very few times in Church history when a stake was

¹³⁸⁶ "Six missionary couples to help with Mongolia's higher education," LDS Church News, 19 September 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22538/Six-missionary-couples-to-help-with-Mongolias-higher-education.html>

¹³⁸⁷ "Mongolia dedicated for preaching of the gospel," LDS Church News, 19 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22900/Mongolia-dedicated-for-preaching-of-the-gospel.html>

¹³⁸⁸ Cook, Mary N. "Well-known building is first meetinghouse in Mongolia," LDS Church News, 3 July 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/35993/Well-known-building-is-first-meetinghouse-in-Mongolia.html>

¹³⁸⁹ Searle, Don L. "Mongolia: Steppes of Faith," Liahona, Dec 2007, 18–23.

created only from a portion of a district instead of the entire district becoming a stake. The new stake consisted of the Enkhtaivan, Khan Uul, Sansar, Selbe, Songino, and Unur ward. The remaining branches stayed in the Ulaanbaatar Mongolia District, which covered just the east side of the city. Many of the branches in the district were not ready to become wards due to their smaller sizes and lower activity rates. Many hope that the district will become a stake in the coming years and help prepare the way for a temple in the country.

As of September 2009, there were three independent mission branches not a part of a stake or district in Khovd, Moron and Choibalsan. The Mongolia Ulaanbaatar Mission Branch included members living in remote areas unreached by independent branches. A small group of members lived in a mining camp in southern Mongolia became their own branch in 2010. A group also meets in Bulgan, the most recently opened city to missionary activity.

Finding

Most church growth has occurred among young men and women. Elder Lewis, a returned missionary, notes serving in one branch of over 200 members where only ten members were over the age of thirty. When asked whether the growth among young people was because of English-teaching programs, Elder Lewis replied: “Perhaps somewhat. But mostly, that’s the age that is receptive to the gospel.” Many older individuals, he notes, are less likely to join the Church because of old habits and the sway of traditional religion.

Tracting and street contacting are not allowed in Mongolia, and so almost all new converts are found through the efforts of existing members or through spontaneous inquiries of students in English classes taught at the high school and university levels. Getting referrals from members was never a problem, explained Elder Lewis, because members were enthusiastic to share the gospel. While most Mongolians are nominally Buddhists or Shamanists, he explained, many of the younger generation know little about their own Buddhist beliefs because of religious prohibitions during the communist era. Because of this, they were relatively easy to teach and had few hang-ups with gospel principles. While there are occasional problems with tobacco and alcohol use, these vices are much less prevalent in Mongolia than in surrounding nations. Even strict Buddhists, he states, were wonderful to teach because they did not use alcohol or tobacco excessively and generally observed high moral standards. One returned missionary noted that he was once assigned to teach a group of Buddhist monks. “They were some of the friendliest people I ever met,” he states. “They bore no animosity towards Christians. When people asked them how they could learn about Christianity, they would give them our church address and meeting time.”

Activity and Retention

Activity was approximately 50% in 1997, and is substantially less at present. Many Mongolians become Christians only for a year or two, and sometimes much less, before dropping out—a trend that has been noted with concern by non-LDS Christian groups as well. Training local priesthood leadership is also a challenge, and home teaching rates in Mongolia have always been poor. There are also far more active women than men, and—recognizing that the prospects of some female members of marrying within the Church are slim—special classes have even been organized by some senior couple missionaries to train female members to proselytize non-LDS boyfriends or acquaintances. The rural nature of Mongolia presents unique issues, as Ulaanbaatar is the only city in the country with more than 100,000 inhabitants. While it is easy to find individuals to teach in small towns, keeping track of people logistically after baptism can be a problem, especially when members move without notice. The ratio of membership to congregations has rapidly increased between 2000 and 2008 from 157 to 402 respectively, as congregations only increased by four (24% increase) while membership tripled (316% increase). Active membership is likely around 3,000, or 35% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Mongolian, Russian.

All LDS scriptures are available in Mongolian and Russian. The Church has translated a large number of unit, temple, leadership, priesthood, relief society, Sunday School, young women, primary, missionary, audio/visual, and family history materials in Mongolian and Russian. Church materials in Kazakh are limited to sacrament prayer translations, the Articles of Faith, and selected hymns and children's songs.

Meetinghouses

The first chapel in Mongolia was dedicated in 1999 in a remodeled building colloquially known as the "Children's Cinema" because it was used decades before to show films for children in Ulaanbaatar.¹³⁹⁰ In early 2010 several large Church-built chapels had been built in Ulaanbaatar and Choibalsan. Other meeting houses were typically remodeled buildings.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has conducted many humanitarian activities in Mongolia. In 2000, members of the Church in Utah donated food and clothing to Mongolia following a harsh drought followed by a severe winter.¹³⁹¹ In 2003, the Church provided relief after flooding in Ulaanbaatar. Supplies were sent from Salt Lake City and distributed by missionaries in Mongolia.¹³⁹² During the same year the Church News reported that humanitarian and welfare missionaries in the Mongolian Ulaanbaatar Mission were teaching skills such as knitting to help the Mongolian people.¹³⁹³ In 2004, the Church provided medical training to Mongolia via video recordings of surgical procedures for surgeons in the country.¹³⁹⁴ The Church News published a lengthy article about humanitarian work done by the Church in Mongolia in 2005. Examples of service provided included wheelchair donations, clean water projects, vision restoration programs, and neo-natal resuscitation programs.¹³⁹⁵ Humanitarian projects continue in Mongolia today, with many now currently carried out by local Church leaders instead of being aid sent from abroad to Mongolia. Examples of such projects include a local member quilt making activity in Ulaanbaatar for those in need and removing litter from city streets and public places.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Laws that restrict proselytism challenge the scope and freedom with which the Church may conduct missionary work, yet have also motivated members to assist in finding investigators for missionaries and increase outreach and Church growth. In 2009, significant challenges arose with the government regarding foreign missionary visas. No foreign missionaries were expelled from the country, but the government refused to issue visas to prospective new missionaries. Some portions of the visa issues were resolved in early 2010 when several

¹³⁹⁰ Cook, Mary N. "Well-known building is first meetinghouse in Mongolia," LDS Church News, 3 July 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/35993/Well-known-building-is-first-meetinghouse-in-Mongolia.html>

¹³⁹¹ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Church responds to Mongolia's appeal," LDS Church News, 27 May 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37852/Church-responds-to-Mongolias-appeal.html>

¹³⁹² "Church provides relief for Mongolian flood victims," LDS Church News, 16 August 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44189/Church-provides-relief-for-Mongolian-flood-victims.html>

¹³⁹³ "10-year-olds knit loom hats for orphans," LDS Church News, 18 October 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44574/10-year-olds-knit-loom-hats-for-orphans.html>

¹³⁹⁴ "Medical videos in Mongolia," LDS Church News, 28 August 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46068/Medical-videos-in-Mongolia.html>

¹³⁹⁵ "Worldwide welfare initiatives," LDS Church News, 27 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47767/Worldwide-welfare-initiatives.html>

senior couples were granted visas. In early 2010, many American missionaries were temporarily reassigned to missions in the United States while they waited for the Mongolian visas. Missionaries report that one of the reasons for the government refusing to issue additional visas was that government officials expressed concern about ecclesiastical activities of foreign missionaries in addition to humanitarian work and teaching English.

Cultural Issues

One of the great challenges for the growth of the Church in Mongolia is the difficulty couples face in getting married and finding a home to live in together. Housing in Mongolia is expensive and usually unaffordable by newly married couples, so many hesitate to marry until they are able to find a place to live. Other cultural and social issues including promiscuity, alcohol use, and some cultural practices, like the drinking of fermented milk, stand in the way of the Church's teachings.

National Outreach

Currently, about one-third of the population lives in the capital, Ulaanbaatar. The Church has a strong presence in the city with six wards and five branches. However, there has been hardly any increase in the number of congregations in Ulaanbaatar since 2001 due to the focus on maturing branches into wards, as well as a general decline in growth rates and growing inactivity problems. With continued growth, additional congregations may be created within the boundaries of the new stake. Züünmod, a small town near Ulaanbaatar with about 15,000 inhabitants, might open to missionary work in the coming years.

With the Church most established in the largest city of the country, it is able to influence the Mongolian people who visit the city from other outlying areas of Mongolia. The Church has a congregation in the next four largest cities of the country, which have populations ranging from 30,000 to 75,000. It is not until cities below 30,000 inhabitants do we see cities that as of yet have no congregations established in them. Many of these cities are in western or southern Mongolia and are very isolated from the rest of the country. Most of the twenty-one provinces have no Church presence, and each has about 100,000 people or less. It is most likely that the Church will grow the most in the larger cities in Mongolia due to their already existing Church presences and bigger populations. However, if the Church is to preach the Gospel to the entire population of Mongolia, greater progress is to be made in establishing branches in the smaller cities throughout the country and among those who reside on the steppes and live nomadic lives. This will also create challenges in establishing congregations in the future when many of the potential members in a rural area live far apart from each other and periodically move their homes as they tend their livestock. However, as over 90% of the population speaks Mongolian the Church will be able to penetrate many areas of the country without problems with a large number of different local languages.

The city of Khovd has provided missionaries serving in Mongolia with the unique experience of teaching the Gospel to some Muslims. With a strong branch numbering well over one hundred active members, missionaries are able to come into contact with more Turkic peoples than in any other regions with a Church presence. Just to the west of the city Khovd is the province of Bayan-Olgii, where the majority of the population is Kazakh. However, no missionaries currently serve in Bayan-Olgii.

The majority of Mongolians do not reside in Mongolia but in neighboring countries, chiefly in China. The Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region in the People's Republic of China contains about four million Mongolians. The Liaoning Province, which is between Inner Mongolia and North Korea, contains over 600,000 Mongolians. An estimated one million Mongolians live in Russia. Because the Gospel has taken hold in Ulaanbaatar and larger regional cities in Mongolia, it has a greater chance to spread to these other areas among the Mongolian population as family members share the Gospel with relatives who many reside one of these locations. Mongolians living in Inner Mongolia may one day join the Church when Mongolian

members bring it to them. This could provide greater strength and opportunity for the Gospel to go forth to neighboring China.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Decreasing member activity over the past decade challenges Church growth in the future due to little increase in congregations. Although the small increase in congregations has partially resulted from branches growing in membership in preparation to become wards, convert retention and activity rates have declined. Some branches have grown so large that they are unmanageable for one branch presidency to administer. Additional branches may not have been organized due to a lack of able priesthood holders, difficulty in locating a meetinghouse, or the highly transitive nature of nomadic members in rural areas. Malaysia is the only country that experienced a greater increase in the ratio of members to congregations out of countries with over 1,000 members.

Single adults and youth comprise the majority of converts. These groups carry greater needs for fellowshiping and teaching in order to remain active and marry within the Church. The missionary program has provided a valuable resource in the retention of youth and young adults, but many become inactive after serving their missions. Inactive and less active members provide finding opportunities for the Church, as they likely have more nonmember friends and associates who may want to learn about the Church compared to active members who tend to decrease their nonmember social interaction over time.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Ethnic issues have not been a factor that has limited Church growth, as no organized outreach occurs in regions with significant non-Mongol populations. The Church may experience some issues in western provinces between Mongols and Turkic peoples meeting in the same congregations.

Language Issues

Individuals in small towns and villages are often not as educated as those in Ulaanbaatar, and many lead simpler lives. Nonetheless, literacy is excellent. Elder Lewis states that he never met a Mongolian who could not read.

While senior couple missionaries made up almost 50% of the missionary force in 1995 and approximately one-third in 1997, the only ones to become proficient in Mongolian were the wives of the first two mission presidents. The first senior couple missionaries taught the gospel in English, while those serving more recently have largely limited their efforts to teaching English-language classes, mentoring local Mongolian leaders, and working with retention. Teaching the gospel to nonmembers is handled almost exclusively by young missionaries who are proficient in the local language. Mongolian is a challenging language for foreigners to learn, stated one missionary: “It takes about six months before you start to feel comfortable with the language.”

The Book of Mormon was published in Mongolian in 2001. Interestingly, there was no Book of Mormon and few church materials in Mongolian during the initial years of the most rapid growth.

Missionary Service

One of the greatest blessings Mongolia has provided the Church is the great number of local missionaries. In 2001, a visiting General Authority at a fireside in Shanghai, China announced that 40% of missionaries from the Asia Area come from Mongolia. Mongolia also has consistently had the highest baptism rate per missionary in the Asia Area. All of this has grown out of one of the smallest missions in the church—growing from

sixteen young missionaries serving in Mongolia in 1995 to thirty-four in 1997. The one hundred-missionary mark was crossed in late 1999. As of June 2009 there were 155 Mongolian missionaries who were serving or who had received calls to serve; 115 were currently serving in the Mongolia Ulaanbaatar Mission.¹³⁹⁶ 200 missionaries were serving in the Mongolia Ulaanbaatar Mission. In mid-2009, there were a total of 660 known returned Mongolian missionaries, 402 of which were living in Mongolia. At the end of 2009 the number of Mongolian missionaries in the mission field reached 226, more than half of which served in Mongolia. This represents a large increase from two and a half years before when only forty Mongolians were serving missions.

Only 59% were still active in the Church, an improvement from before senior missionaries were tasked to find and reactive them. There is likely no other nation in the Eastern hemisphere that has as high of a number of returned missionaries as Mongolia, where nearly 8% of members have served a mission, including those who emigrated. It is unclear whether native Mongolian missionaries serving in the Mongolia Ulaanbaatar Mission have facilitated the growth of the Church more than non-Mongolian missionaries in the mission. However, emigration accounts for some attrition, as 39% of returned missionaries were living outside of Mongolia.

The unique demographics of the Church in Mongolia—coupled with the high missionary enthusiasm of new members—have contributed significantly to the high rates of missionary service in Mongolia. Many serve one-month local mini-missions before embarking on full-time missions. The number of Mongolians desiring to serve missions was so great at one time that prospective missionaries were required to serve at least six months in a significant local calling, often as a branch missionary or in a local leadership or teaching position. After serving missions, some returned missionaries marry other returned missionaries and start their own families. While economic challenges are a fact of life in Mongolia, Lewis remarks on the exceptional faith of many Mongolian members, who faithfully pay tithing and fast offerings even in the face of severe hardships.

Returned missionaries in Mongolia have greatly strengthened the congregations of the Church throughout the country. In Ulaanbaatar, all but one of the twelve members of the two stake or district presidencies and their wives have served a full-time mission.

Leadership

The large number of young men and women from Mongolia who have served or are serving missions is astounding as a proportion of total membership. Most nations with less than 10,000 members send out very few missionaries. With well over a one hundred missionaries serving full-time missions as of the summer of 2009, Mongolia is a model to many nations with smaller LDS populations that struggle to send out native missionaries in appreciable numbers. Perhaps most importantly, Mongolia is one of few countries in the world that has become largely self-sufficient in meeting its own missionary needs and producing a surplus that can serve in other countries. Nations where the Church has been long-established in Latin America, Europe, and other regions of Asia remain highly dependent on North American missionary manpower.

Temple

Mongolia is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple District. Members typically travel by train across China to attend the temple in groups. Members look forward the possibility of a temple in Ulaanbaatar once membership growth and activity require one.

Comparative Growth

Mongolia is the mainland Asian nation with the highest percentage of Church members, at 0.3% or one

¹³⁹⁶ Phillips, Elder James. "First stake in Mongolia is organized," LDS Church News, 10 June 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57449/First-stake-in-Mongolia-is-organized.html>

member per 346 people. This is impressive, as the Church has only operated in Mongolia since 1992. The country in mainland Asia with the next highest percentage of members of the Church is South Korea, where the Church has functioned for over fifty years, with at about 0.17%, or one member per 606 people. To suggest that this is due to Mongolia having a smaller population than South Korea or other populous Asian countries is unsupported; Singapore has only 1.5 million more people than Mongolia, yet the ratio of LDS Church members to the population is one per 1,595. Mongolians have been uniquely receptive to the Church—due to a combination of factors including intrinsic receptivity from culture and circumstance, the Church establishing itself on a strong foundation, the willingness of youth to serve missions, and the great attention given to humanitarian relief. Missionaries serving in Mongolia also report that the Mongolian members of the Church feel a strong affinity for the Book of Mormon, perhaps because they relate very much with the peoples of the Book of Mormon. Perhaps one of the reasons for why Mongolia has been such a fertile land for the Gospel compared to many others is that there is a strong concentration of the tribes of Israel. Missionaries report that lineages of all of the tribes of Israel have been declared among Mongolian missionaries' patriarchal blessings.

Protestant groups have utilized radio and television as a means of spreading Christianity in the country. Other strong missionary oriented Christians such as Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses have a small presence in Mongolia. Seventh Day Adventists claim about 1,300 members in four congregations, whereas Jehovah's Witnesses claim about 200 members in three congregations.

Future Prospects

Recently membership growth has again begun to increase more rapidly. In 2008 membership increased from 7,721 to 8,444. Missionaries reported that some months of 2009 were among the highest recorded baptizing months. Whether this small increase in membership growth is reflected in retention of new converts, or whether this increase in growth will be sustained, will be seen from future growth in congregations. This will be determined by whether more congregations are created in the country, particularly in areas where large numbers of Church members already reside. The large number of Mongolian missionaries serving in 2009 and 2010 will provide significant leadership resources for the Church upon completing their missions, remaining active in the Church, and not immigrating to other countries. Additional congregations may be organized and remaining districts may become stakes.

NORTH KOREA

Geography

AREA: 120,538 square km. Located in East Asia and officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea occupies the northern half of the Korean Peninsula and borders South Korea, China, Russia, the Sea of Japan, and the Yellow Sea. Hills and mountains bisected by deep, narrow valleys comprise the terrain of the interior. A broad coastal plain occupies western areas. Climate consists of hot, humid summers and cold, dry winters. The majority of rainfall occurs during Changma—a brief, heavy monsoon. Periodic typhoons, drought, flooding, and hwangsa—harmful yellow dust mixed with pollution from China—are natural hazards. Environmental issues include water pollution, deforestation, inadequate fresh water supplies, soil erosion, and soil degradation. North Korea is administratively divided into nine provinces and two municipalities.

Peoples

Korean: 100%

With the exception of a few Chinese and ethnic Japanese inhabitants, the population is homogenously Korean.

Population: 24,589,122 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.535% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.01 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 65.34 male, 73.24 female (2012)

Languages: Korean (100%). The entire population speaks Korean.

Literacy: 99%

History

Indigenous states or empires have ruled the Korean peninsula from as early as several millennia BC. Due to its location between China and Japan, Korea has experienced many wars and conflicts with larger, more powerful empires and nation states. Korea became a unified nation starting in the seventh century. Christian missionaries began proselytism in the sixteenth century, and by the late nineteenth century, Pyongyang was the center of missionary activity in Korea. With minimal interaction with its neighbors and Western powers, Korea was nicknamed the “Hermit Kingdom” due to its isolative stance. Japan annexed Korea in the 1900s, making the peninsula a protectorate in 1905 and a Japanese colony in 1910. Korea did not regain independence from Japan until 1945. A Soviet-backed government in the north and an American-backed government in the south divided the peninsula in the late 1940s. North Korea attacked the south in 1950, initiating the Korean War. In 1953, the two Koreas signed an armistice that divided the peninsula at the 38th parallel along a demilitarized zone. North Korea has maintained a highly centralized communist state for over half a century and is among the world's most closed nations. Military skirmishes between the north and south have continued since the signing of the armistice in 1953 and remain largely unreported. There have been proposals from both North Korea and South Korea to reunify the peninsula as a single nation, but these efforts have not come to fruition.

due to escalated hostility regarding North Korea's nuclear weapons program, belligerent attitude with periodic military hostilities, and conflicting political and ideological systems.

Culture

Communism has been the primary influence on local culture since the mid-twentieth century, whereas Confucianism has shaped Korean culture and social attitudes for millennia. Many North Koreans follow authority and conform to the government and lack the expression of individualism. Koreans define their identity through their interpersonal relationships and grow strong emotional bonds with people and places with which they become familiar or share similarities. For Koreans, first impressions are very important in the development of lasting attitudes. Disappointment or pressure from others drives many Koreans to make personal decisions. Koreans are emotional, reserved, studious, and take great pride in their history and ethnicity. The Hangul script was created in 1444 by King Sejong. Commonly eaten foods include rice, vegetables, fruit, barley, potatoes, and corn. Due to poor standards of living, meat is not consumed regularly. Cigarette consumption rates are comparable to world averages.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,800 (2011) [3.74% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: N/A

Corruption Index: 1.0 (2011)

North Korea faces many economic challenges due to its antiquated, highly centralized military-oriented economy, including excessive military spending, little domestic investment, stagnant economic growth, strict government control over farming and business activity, and stiff resistance to economic reform. Donations of food and medicine have been accepted from time to time to reduce hunger and malnutrition, but the government has restricted aid and generally only allows developmental assistance. A wide variety of precious and industrial metals and minerals are the primary natural resources. Services and industry employ 65% of the labor force and generate 32% and 47% of the GDP, respectively. Military products, machinery, electricity, chemicals, mining, clothing, food processing, and tourism are major industries. Agriculture employs 35% of the labor force and generates 21% of the GDP. Common agricultural products include rice, corn, potatoes, soybeans, cattle, pork, and eggs. China and South Korea are the primary trade partners.

The level of perceived corruption is difficult to ascertain, as the government heavily controls outsiders visiting the country. The centralized government is highly susceptible to corruption, as high-ranking government officials possess totalitarian powers.

Faiths

Nonreligious: 99%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Protestant 12,000

Catholic 800

Religion

North Koreans were traditionally Buddhist, Confucian, and Christian prior to the Korean War. Most appear

to be nonreligious today. All reported religious activity appears to occur only in Pyongyang. Government officials estimated that there were 12,000 Protestants, 10,000 Buddhists, and 800 Catholics. With no reliable figures, estimates for the number of Christians number from 30,000 to the hundreds of thousands. A syncretic religious group known as Cheondogyo may have as many as 15,000 followers. There are four state churches in Pyongyang and up to sixty Buddhist temples nationwide. Religious institutions and buildings are perceived to offer the illusion of religious freedom to foreigners.¹³⁹⁷

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 1

The constitution grants the freedom of religious belief, but the government severely restricts religious activity. Some religious groups are recognized by the government, but these groups maintain close ties with the government and are generally regarded as a government effort to create an illusion of religious freedom. The government sought to eliminate Christianity from society in the 1960s, replacing preexisting faiths with a personality cult for high-ranking government leaders. The ownership of religious materials is prohibited. The government has permitted some faith-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to perform humanitarian work, but these groups are not allowed to proselyte, must be accompanied by an escort at all times, and are restricted in their interaction with nationals. Due to the isolated stance of the regime, little is known about the everyday life of citizens who are religious. The status of societal abuse of religious freedom is unknown.¹³⁹⁸

Largest Cities

Urban: 60%

Pyongyang, Hamhung, Chongjin, Sinuiju, Wonsan, Nampo, Sariwon, Kaechon, Kanggye, Sunchon, Haeju, Tanchon, Pyongsong, Tokchon, Kaesong, Hyesan, Anju, Rason, Kimchaek, Kusong, Huichon, Sinpo, Chongju.

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

None of the twenty-three cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Thirty-four percent (34%) of the national population resides in the twenty-three most populous cities.

LDS History

As of 2011, there had never been an LDS presence in North Korea. In the 2000s and in 2010, LDS international leaders visited North Korea and discussed possibilities of humanitarian work with government officials.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than five (2012)

There are no known Latter-day Saints in North Korea. North Korean Latter-day Saints consist of those who escaped the country and their descendants who have primarily joined the Church in South Korea.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 (2012)

There are no LDS congregations.

¹³⁹⁷ "Korea, Democratic People's Republic of," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148874.htm>

¹³⁹⁸ "Korea, Democratic People's Republic of," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148874.htm>

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Korean.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Korean. The *Liahona* magazine has monthly issues in Korean.

Health and Safety

Standards of living are very poor. Waterborne diseases, malnutrition, and low quality medical care are major issues.

Humanitarian and Development Work

There had been no reported LDS humanitarian or development work as of early 2011. Missionaries in South Korea explored possibilities of holding English language classes for escapees in the Seoul area, but classes were never organized.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Any Latter-day Saint presence, whether official or unofficial, is currently unattainable in North Korea due to stringent government regulations and policies restricting religious freedom, especially for Christians. The Church may be able to perform some humanitarian and development work, but the government severely restricts the activities of NGOs, and such service would have no realistic prospects of attaining government recognition and establishing a church presence at present.

Cultural Issues

A highly centralized government and strict adherence to communist principles has generated a nonreligious society that conforms to government policies and regulations with little hesitation and room for individualism. Prospective LDS mission outreach would need to adjust proselytism approaches accordingly to teach those with no background in religious practice. Some North Koreans or the descendants of North Korean escapees have joined the LDS Church but appear to have a minimal understanding of their individual relationship with religion and how it influences their decisions and attitudes in everyday life. The disappearance of many non-Christian traditional beliefs and practices may reduce some cultural barriers toward LDS proselytism in the event that a church presence is established one day.

National Outreach

The entire population is unreached by LDS mission outreach. If government regulations prohibiting foreign missionary activity were lifted, Pyongyang and Kaesong would most likely be the first cities to open for missionary work, as Pyongyang has a large population, central location, and state-controlled religious groups in the city whereas Kaesong is near the South Korean border and past dialogue and economic agreements that have bridged the two countries have centered on Kaesong. LDS mission outreach centers in the two cities would reach 12% of the national population. Members in South Korea and Korean members in other nations will likely play a pivotal role in the establishment of the Church in North Korea due to greater familiarity with language and culture and close proximity to South Korea.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

No LDS baptisms have occurred. The lack of Latter-day Saints in North Korea challenges any future efforts to establish the Church among the indigenous population if government restrictions on religious freedom were removed.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

With one of the most homogenous populations in the world, ethnic integration issues will not be a challenge for Latter-day Saints if a church presence is established one day. Conformity with the nonreligious population will likely be a challenge for North Koreans who join the Church.

Language Issues

All LDS scriptures and a wide selection of church materials are translated into Korean, providing outreach potential for the entire population if missionary activity were permitted. Language differences between North Korea and South Korea do not present a major obstacle, as most vocabulary differences are for technology and products from the West.

Missionary Service

No LDS missionaries have been assigned to North Korea. There are no known North Koreans who have served a full-time mission.

Leadership

No North Korean church leadership has been developed. Initial church leadership will most likely rely upon South Koreans or North Korean converts who return to their home country in event that the political situation improves and religious freedom is granted.

Temple

North Korea is assigned to the Seoul South Korea Temple district.

Comparative Growth

North Korea and Timor-Leste (East Timor) are the only Asian nations that appear to have never had past gatherings or meetings of Latter-day Saints. Other Asian nations with restrictions on religious freedom and without an official LDS presence, such as China, Vietnam, and Brunei, have LDS congregations that meet in private. In 2011, North Korea, Iran, and a few nations in West Africa were likely the only sovereign nations without a single Latter-day Saint. Along with some nations in North Africa and the Middle East, North Korea will likely be one of the last nations to have an official LDS presence unless a dramatic change in government occurs. Missionary-oriented Christian groups report no presence in North Korea, although there are some reports that underground churches operate in secret.

Future Prospects

Unless a dramatic change in government policy regarding religion and international relations occurs, North Korea will likely be among the last nations to have an LDS presence, as freedom of religious practice is not permitted, the government severely restricts and monitors any foreigners, and tense political relations with

other nations and internal government policies prohibit the travel and communication of North Koreans. Conducting development work and providing humanitarian assistance appears to be the only realistic opportunity toward establishing any LDS presence in North Korea in the coming years.

PHILIPPINES

Geography

AREA: 300,000 square km. Located in Southeast Asia between Taiwan and Indonesia, the Philippines are an archipelago of 7,100 islands that 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 eighty provinces and 120 chartered cities.

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 Ilonggo are found in Negros and Panay. Bikol live in southern Luzon and Waray reside in Waray and eastern Leyte.

Population: 103,775,002 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.873% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 3.15 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 68.99 male, 75.03 female (2012)

Languages: Filipino [based on Tagalog] (26%), Tagalog (22%), Cebuano (16%), Ilokano (7%), Hiligaynon (6%), Bikolano (5%), English (3%), Waray-Waray (3%), Pampango [Pampangan] (2%), Pagsinan (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. One hundred seventy-one 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.¹³⁹⁹

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 U.S. 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.¹⁴⁰⁰

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: \$4,100 (2011) [8.52% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.644

Corruption Index: 2.6 (2011)

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

¹³⁹⁹ "Background Note: Philippines," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 19 April 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2794.htm>

¹⁴⁰⁰ "Background Note: Philippines," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 19 April 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2794.htm>

living. Remittances from the nearly five million Filipinos abroad constitute an important part of the economy. Services employ 51% of the workforce and generate 55% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 15% of the workforce 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 present 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 ten 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

Seventh Day Adventists 734,929 4,480

Latter-day Saints 675,166 1,134

Jehovah's Witnesses 176,001 3,091

Episcopal Church in the Philippines 125,000

Religion

Catholics constitute between 80% and 85% of the population. Muslims are the largest minority group and are estimate to account between 5% and 9% 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).¹⁴⁰¹

Religious Freedom

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 nonregistered 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

¹⁴⁰¹ "Philippines," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127285.htm>

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.¹⁴⁰²

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, Bacoor, 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.

Seventy-seven of the seventy-nine cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the national population resides in the seventy-nine largest cities.

LDS History

Church President Joseph Fielding Smith dedicated the Philippines for missionary work in 1955.¹⁴⁰³ 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 one hundred members.¹⁴⁰⁴ Both seminary and institute were operating by 1972. Church President Spencer W. Kimball visited Philippine President Marcos in 1975 and met local members.¹⁴⁰⁵ In 1981, the Church announced the first Philippine temple in Manila, which was dedicated in 1984. Missionary work began on Masbate in 1987¹⁴⁰⁶ and on Mindoro in 1988.¹⁴⁰⁷ 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.¹⁴⁰⁸ In 1998, Micronesia became part of the Pacific

¹⁴⁰² "Philippines," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127285.htm>

¹⁴⁰³ "Growth 'just amazing,'" LDS Church News, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹⁴⁰⁴ Britsch, R. Lanier. "'Faithful, Good, Virtuous, True': Pioneers in the Philippines," Liahona, Feb 1998, 41.

¹⁴⁰⁵ "Conference in the Philippines," Ensign, Oct. 1975, 90–91.

¹⁴⁰⁶ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 9 January 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17636/From-around-the-world.html>

¹⁴⁰⁷ "Growth 'just amazing,'" LDS Church News, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹⁴⁰⁸ "Translations in Philippine languages moving forward," LDS Church News, 30 November 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21565/Translations-in-Philippine-languages-moving-forward.html>

Area, and the Philippines became its own area.¹⁴⁰⁹ The Philippines became one of the first nations in which the Perpetual Education Fund was implemented, in the early 2000s.¹⁴¹⁰

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.¹⁴¹¹ A missionary in the Philippines Bacolod Mission died from a car accident in 2008.¹⁴¹² 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), Iloilo (2010), Quezon City North (2011), Cavite (2013), Cebu East (2013), Legaspi (2013), and Urdaneta (2013). The number of missions increased from two in 1975 to four in 1980, twelve in 1990, thirteen in 2000, sixteen in 2010, and twenty-one in 2013.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 675,166 (2012)

Membership totaled 20,000 in 1975. Between July 1973 and June 1974, 2,000 converts joined the Church, most of which were entire families.¹⁴¹³ Membership stood at 55,000 in 1982,¹⁴¹⁴ 75,000 in 1984,¹⁴¹⁵ and 127,000 in 1988.¹⁴¹⁶ 22,000 converts were baptized in 1987 alone.¹⁴¹⁷ There were 22,500 convert baptisms in 1990 and 250,000 members.¹⁴¹⁸ Membership reached 300,000 in 1992.¹⁴¹⁹ 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 3 to 4%.

¹⁴⁰⁹ "5 new areas announced worldwide," LDS Church News, 4 July 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31389/5-new-areas-announced-worldwide.html>

¹⁴¹⁰ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Perpetual Education Fund helps 5,360," LDS Church News, 26 October 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42702/Perpetual-Education-Fund-helps-5360.html>

¹⁴¹¹ "Elder Oaks, Holland assigned abroad," LDS Church News, 13 April 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/41659/Elders-Oaks-Holland-assigned-abroad.html>

¹⁴¹² Stahle, Shaun D. "Missionary killed in Philippines," LDS Church News, 8 March 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51712/Missionary-killed-in-Philippines.html>

¹⁴¹³ "Philippines: The Land of Joyous Service," Ensign, Aug 1975, 58.

¹⁴¹⁴ Romney, Richard M. "Land of Sunshine, Land of Rain," New Era, Jun 1983, 21.

¹⁴¹⁵ Britsch, R. Lanier. "'Faithful, Good, Virtuous, True': Pioneers in the Philippines," Liahona, Feb 1998, 41.

¹⁴¹⁶ "News of the Church," Ensign, Mar 1988, 75-79.

¹⁴¹⁷ "Growth 'just amazing,'" LDS Church News, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹⁴¹⁸ "The Church in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 11 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21021/The-Church-in-the-Philippines.html>

¹⁴¹⁹ Lim, Augusto A. "Missionary Work in the Philippines," Ensign, Nov 1992, 82.

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,¹⁴²⁰ and in 2010, there were over 200,000 Latter-day Saints in the Visayas and Mindanao.¹⁴²¹ In 2010, the bulk of LDS membership resided on Luzon, numbering around 400,000. In 2009, one in 155 was nominally LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 537 Branches: 600 Groups: 10+ (April 2013)

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.¹⁴²² In the late 1970s, additional stakes were created in Makati and Quezon City. There were fifteen stakes by 1984,¹⁴²³ 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 thirty-two stakes and thirty-four districts by April 1988.¹⁴²⁴ During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the number of districts increased rapidly, as over thirty-five new districts were created during this period throughout the Philippines.

There were forty-two stakes and fifty-two districts in May 1990,¹⁴²⁵ and by late 1992, there were forty-eight stakes and sixty-five districts.¹⁴²⁶ Between 1996 and 2001, over a dozen new stakes were created from districts. At year-end 2000, the Church operated seventy-seven stakes and seventy-three districts.

During the first half of the 2000s, districts increased by fourteen, primarily due to the Church discontinuing six stakes and creating multiple districts from congregations once part of discontinued stakes. Five years later, there were seventy-six stakes and eighty-seven 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 seventy-nine stakes and eighty-six districts and in early 2013, there were eighty-five stakes and eighty-four districts.

The Church has discontinued ten 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 that likely contributed to the discontinuation of the stake.¹⁴²⁷

In 1975, there were five wards, fifty-two branches, and twenty-five groups.¹⁴²⁸ By year-end 1989, there were 596 congregations (including 186 wards). Rapid congregational growth occurred in the first half of the 1990s

¹⁴²⁰ Stahle, Shaun D. "New missions created in Brazil, Philippines, Pacific," LDS Church News, 15 July 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49194/New-missions-created-in-Brazil-Philippines-Pacific.html>

¹⁴²¹ "Cebu City Philippines Temple: Information nuggets," LDS Church News, 7 June 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59440/Cebu-City-Philippines-Temple-Information-nuggets.html>

¹⁴²² "Philippines: The Land of Joyous Service," Ensign, Aug 1975, 58.

¹⁴²³ Britsch, R. Lanier. "'Faithful, Good, Virtuous, True': Pioneers in the Philippines," Liahona, Feb 1998, 41.

¹⁴²⁴ "Growth 'just amazing,'" LDS Church News, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹⁴²⁵ "The Church in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 11 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21021/The-Church-in-the-Philippines.html>

¹⁴²⁶ Lim, Augusto A. "Missionary Work in the Philippines," Ensign, Nov 1992, 82.

¹⁴²⁷ <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21641/Members-in-Guam-aid-volcano-victims-from-the-Philippines.html>

¹⁴²⁸ "Philippines: The Land of Joyous Service," Ensign, Aug 1975, 58.

as total congregations increased by 401, reaching 769 in 1991 and 995 in 1995. There were over 1,000 congregations in 1998.¹⁴²⁹

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 his tenure over the Philippines.¹⁴³⁰

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,¹⁴³¹ although an unknown number of nonmember acquaintances and investigators were present. There were 2,000 seminary and institute students in 1975.¹⁴³² In the late 1980s, convert retention rates improved from 18% to 75% over a two-and-a-half-year period in the Philippines Baguio Mission.¹⁴³³ In 1988, there were over 1,000 enrolled in the Institute of Religion in Manila.¹⁴³⁴ That same year, institute and seminary enrollment were expected to reach 11,000,¹⁴³⁵ and convert retention rates were over 50% in every mission.¹⁴³⁶

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.¹⁴³⁷ In 1990, 74% of converts baptized in the Philippines Naga Mission were retained, according to church leaders.¹⁴³⁸ Convert retention rates appeared to decline throughout the remainder of the 1990s. In 2004, 41,000 members in seventy-two stakes attended a nationwide satellite broadcast.¹⁴³⁹

In 2006, 70% of church members in the Camaligan Branch attended a handcart trek.¹⁴⁴⁰ During the first

¹⁴²⁹ Britsch, R. Lanier. "'Faithful, Good, Virtuous, True': Pioneers in the Philippines," *Liahona*, Feb 1998, 41.

¹⁴³⁰ "Annual Filipino fireside held," *LDS Church News*, 29 May 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45643/Annual-Filipino-fireside-held.html>

¹⁴³¹ "Conference in the Philippines," *Ensign*, Oct. 1975, 90–91.

¹⁴³² "Philippines: The Land of Joyous Service," *Ensign*, Aug 1975, 58.

¹⁴³³ "From around the world," *LDS Church News*, 23 January 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17634/From-around-the-world.html>

¹⁴³⁴ "From around the world," *LDS Church News*, 20 February 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17978/From-around-the-world.html>

¹⁴³⁵ "Growth 'just amazing,'" *LDS Church News*, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹⁴³⁶ "Growth 'just amazing,'" *LDS Church News*, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹⁴³⁷ "From around the World," *LDS Church News*, 1 October 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18324/From-around-the-World.html>

¹⁴³⁸ "The Church in the Philippines," *LDS Church News*, 11 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21021/The-Church-in-the-Philippines.html>

¹⁴³⁹ Pilobello, Lenore H. "41,000 Filipinos hear words of leaders," *LDS Church News*, 24 July 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45877/41000-Filipinos-hear-words-of-leaders.html>

¹⁴⁴⁰ "Philippines branch treks for pioneers," *LDS Church News*, 7 January 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48353/Philippines-branch-treks-for-pioneers.html>

half of 2006, over 29,200 youth attended fifty-five regional youth conferences.¹⁴⁴¹ In 2007, 400 attended the groundbreaking for the temple in Cebu, and 3,000 attended a special devotional with Elder Dallin H. Oaks.¹⁴⁴² 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.¹⁴⁴³ 10,000 attended a cultural celebration the night prior to the temple dedication, including 2,000 youth performers.¹⁴⁴⁴ In 2005, Elder Oaks noted that around 100,000 members attend church at least once a month,¹⁴⁴⁵ although average weekly church attendance is somewhat lower.

Some branches have over one hundred active members, whereas others have fewer than fifty. 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 twelve Cebuano, Chinese, and Tagalog issues a year.

Meetinghouses

In 1992, a new building housing church administration offices was dedicated in Manila.¹⁴⁴⁶

Health and Safety

The LDS missionary department has not sent nonnatives 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

¹⁴⁴¹ Barilea, Eunice Ruth. "Filipino fellowship," LDS Church News, 22 July 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49219/Filipino-fellowship.html>

¹⁴⁴² Baluyot, Cherry. "Cebu temple—Groundbreaking in Philippines," LDS Church News, 17 November 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51334/Cebu-temple—Groundbreaking-in-Philippines.html>

¹⁴⁴³ Avant, Gerry. "Cebu temple open house concludes, area readies for upcoming dedication activities," LDS Church News, 7 June 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59441/Cebu-temple-open-house-concludes-area-readies-for-upcoming-dedication-activities.html>

¹⁴⁴⁴ Avant, Gerry. "Celebrating Filipino culture through the ages," LDS Church News, 19 June 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59498/Celebrating-Filipino-culture-through-the-ages.html>

¹⁴⁴⁵ Oaks, Dallin A. "The Worlds of Joseph Smith." International Academic Conference at the Library of Congress in May 2005. The article is reprinted in *BYU Studies*, vol. 44 p.163.

¹⁴⁴⁶ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 5 December 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21759/From-around-the-world.html>

mini-lessons on health related issues in Binan.¹⁴⁴⁷ 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.¹⁴⁴⁸ 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.¹⁴⁴⁹ 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.¹⁴⁵⁰ In 2006, the Church provided humanitarian aid to mudslide victims in Guinsaugon.¹⁴⁵¹ Later that year, Latter-day Saints in nineteen 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.¹⁴⁵² Additional humanitarian activities in recent years include clean water projects, vision care, wheelchair donations, and emergency relief for victims of natural disasters.¹⁴⁵³

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 that 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.¹⁴⁵⁴ In the early 1990s, Latter-day Saints were less wealthy on average compared to the general Filipino population.¹⁴⁵⁵ 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

¹⁴⁴⁷ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 27 February 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17976/From-around-the-world.html>

¹⁴⁴⁸ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 5 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18327/From-around-the-world.html>

¹⁴⁴⁹ "Lifting Filipino members from poverty," LDS Church News, 29 February 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22766/Lifting-Filipino-members-from-poverty.html>

¹⁴⁵⁰ "Area presidency given a warm reception in meeting with leader," LDS Church News, 17 October 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21970/Area-presidency-given-a-warm-reception-in-meeting-with-leader.html>

¹⁴⁵¹ "Church quick to respond with aid following Philippines mudslide," LDS Church News, 25 February 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48572/Church-quick-to-respond-with-aid-following-Philippines-mudslide.html>

¹⁴⁵² Pilobello, Anna Lenore. "Quick response to Philippines typhoon," LDS Church News, 23 December 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49914/Quick-response-to-Philippines-typhoon.html>

¹⁴⁵³ "Projects—Philippines," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 14 October 2010. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-104,00.html>

¹⁴⁵⁴ "Growth 'just amazing,'" LDS Church News, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹⁴⁵⁵ "Lifting Filipino members from poverty," LDS Church News, 29 February 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22766/Lifting-Filipino-members-from-poverty.html>

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 that 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.¹⁴⁵⁶

National Outreach

Thirty-nine percent (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%, it 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. Forty-seven of the 284 cities with over 20,000 inhabitants do not have mission outreach centers, amounting to 2% 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.

Sixty-eight of eighty provinces (85%) have a mission outreach center and account for 95% of the national population. Twelve 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 who 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

¹⁴⁵⁶ "Notable progress in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 30 April 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47240/Notable-progress-in-the-Philippines.html>

through their efforts.¹⁴⁵⁷ 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 forty convert baptisms followed from her efforts to share the gospel with her relatives.¹⁴⁵⁸ Reaching out to the Filipino community outside their home country can also provide 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.¹⁴⁵⁹ 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.¹⁴⁶⁰ 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.¹⁴⁶¹

Low congregational growth rates in the late 2000s following the nearly 200 congregation consolidations that 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.

¹⁴⁵⁷ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 5 March 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18327/From-around-the-world.html>

¹⁴⁵⁸ "Sacred devotion," LDS Church News, 29 March 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51783/Sacred-devotion.html>

¹⁴⁵⁹ Britsch, R. Lanier. "'Faithful, Good, Virtuous, True': Pioneers in the Philippines," *Liahona*, Feb 1998, 41.

¹⁴⁶⁰ "The Church in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 11 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21021/The-Church-in-the-Philippines.html>

¹⁴⁶¹ "The Church in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 11 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21021/The-Church-in-the-Philippines.html>

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 eighty-six 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.¹⁴⁶²

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.¹⁴⁶³ 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 tithe-paying membership increased significantly during the previous few years, but he urged more members to pay their tithes faithfully.¹⁴⁶⁴

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 that stressed greater involvement of local leaders in the fellowshiping and teaching of new converts and tracked their progress over six months.¹⁴⁶⁵ 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 sixteen 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.

¹⁴⁶² Pilobello, Lenore H. "41,000 Filipinos hear words of leaders," LDS Church News, 24 July 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45877/41000-Filipinos-hear-words-of-leaders.html>

¹⁴⁶³ Pilobello, Lenore H. "41,000 Filipinos hear words of leaders," LDS Church News, 24 July 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45877/41000-Filipinos-hear-words-of-leaders.html>

¹⁴⁶⁴ "Notable progress in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 30 April 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47240/Notable-progress-in-the-Philippines.html>

¹⁴⁶⁵ "From around the World," LDS Church News, 24 September 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17979/From-around-the-World.html>

Receptivity to the LDS Church remains high in many areas. In 2010, 1,500 Cebu City Philippines Temple open house attendees requested missionary visits.¹⁴⁶⁶ 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 who 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. Six hundred thousand 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 1983.¹⁴⁶⁷ 82% of the 1,100 full-time missionaries in the country were native Filipinos.¹⁴⁶⁸ In 1988, 80% of the full-time missionary force in the Philippines Baguio Mission were native Filipinos.¹⁴⁶⁹ 60 to 70% of the more than 2,000 full-time missionaries in 1992 were local members.¹⁴⁷⁰ 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

¹⁴⁶⁶ Avant, Gerry. "Cebu temple open house concludes, area readies for upcoming dedication activities," LDS Church News, 7 June 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/59441/Cebu-temple-open-house-concludes-area-readies-for-upcoming-dedication-activities.html>

¹⁴⁶⁷ "The Church in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 11 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21021/The-Church-in-the-Philippines.html>

¹⁴⁶⁸ "Growth 'just amazing,'" LDS Church News, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹⁴⁶⁹ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 23 January 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/17634/From-around-the-world.html>

¹⁴⁷⁰ Lim, Augusto A. "Missionary Work in the Philippines," Ensign, Nov 1992, 82.

habits and testimonies. In 2012, the Church dedicated a new missionary training center in Manila with capacity to house up to 144 missionaries.¹⁴⁷¹

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.¹⁴⁷² In the 2000s, the LDS Church has begun to better address leadership training issues through period priesthood leadership training broadcasts.¹⁴⁷³

In 1990, five of the twelve mission presidents were Filipino.¹⁴⁷⁴ In 1992, five of the thirteen mission presidents, all eight regional representatives, and all stake and district presidents were Filipino.¹⁴⁷⁵ Elder Lim from Manila was called to the Second Quorum of the Seventy in 1992.¹⁴⁷⁶ 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.¹⁴⁷⁷ In 1996, Elder Lim became the first Filipino member to serve as president of the Manila Philippines Temple.¹⁴⁷⁸

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.¹⁴⁷⁹ In 2003, Julio G. Gaviola (Manila) was called as an Area Authority Seventy.¹⁴⁸⁰ In 2004, Michael J. Teh (Angono) was called as an Area Authority Seventy.¹⁴⁸¹ In 2005, Federico F. Costales (Baguio City), Fabian L. Sinamban (General Santos City), and Miguel R. Valdez (Santa Rosa) were called as Area Seventies.¹⁴⁸² In 2007, Elder Teh was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy,¹⁴⁸³ and Jovencio A. Guanzon (Manila) and Benson E. Misalucha (Cagayan de Oro City) were called as Area Seventies.¹⁴⁸⁴

¹⁴⁷¹ Avant, Gerry. "Apostle dedicates new MTC and visits members, government leaders," LDS Church News, 2 June 2012. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/62409/Apostle-dedicates-new-MTC-and-visits-members-government-leaders.html>

¹⁴⁷² "Growth 'just amazing,'" LDS Church News, 14 May 1988. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18028/Growth-just-amazing.html>

¹⁴⁷³ "Priesthood leaders trained across globe," LDS Church News, 28 June 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43957/Priesthood-leaders-trained-across-globe.html>

¹⁴⁷⁴ "The Church in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 11 May 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/21021/The-Church-in-the-Philippines.html>

¹⁴⁷⁵ Lim, Augusto A. "Missionary Work in the Philippines," *Ensign*, Nov 1992, 82.

¹⁴⁷⁶ "15 new general authorities are called," LDS Church News, 6 June 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22601/15-new-general-authorities-are-called.html>

¹⁴⁷⁷ "Are authority chart," LDS Church News, 5 August 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/25821/Area-authorities-chart.html>

¹⁴⁷⁸ "Elder Lim to serve as Manila temple president," LDS Church News, 8 June 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27458/Elder-Lim-to-serve-as-Manila-temple-president.html>

¹⁴⁷⁹ "39 Area Authority Seventies called," LDS Church News, 8 April 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37529/39-Area-Authority-Seventies-called.html>

¹⁴⁸⁰ "Leaders called; 5 new General Authorities," LDS Church News, 12 April 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43588/Leaders-called-5-new-General-Authorities.html>

¹⁴⁸¹ "New Area Authority Seventies," LDS Church News, 24 April 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45458/New-Area-Authority-Seventies.html>

¹⁴⁸² "38 new Area Seventies called, 37 are released," LDS Church News, 9 April 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47147/38-new-Area-Seventies-called-37-are-released.html>

¹⁴⁸³ "5 general authorities called to serve full time," LDS Church News, 31 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50362/5-general-authorities-called-to-serve-full-time.html>

¹⁴⁸⁴ "26 Area Seventies called; 29 released," LDS Church News, 7 April 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50423/26-Area-Seventies-called-29-released.html>

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.¹⁴⁸⁵ 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 appear 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 that have vacillated between a focus on quick baptisms with little attention to quality and subsequent clean-up efforts emphasizing higher standards that 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

¹⁴⁸⁵ "Notable progress in the Philippines," LDS Church News, 30 April 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47240/Notable-progress-in-the-Philippines.html>

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 that 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.

SINGAPORE

Geography

AREA: 697 square km. One of the smallest countries in the world, Singapore comprises a city that rests on the equator on a main island and several smaller islands off the coast of the tip of the Malay Peninsula. The geography is flat and the climate is tropical. Nature preserves protect remaining areas of tropical rainforest left over after widespread urbanization following independence. Due to limited space for development, land reclamation projects in the surrounding ocean have increased the size of Singapore.

Peoples

Chinese: 76.8%
Malay: 13.9%
Indian: 7.9%
Other: 1.4%

The Chinese are the largest ethnic group in Singapore. Chinese primarily arrived before independence or after 1990. Malays were among the original inhabitants, and Indians were brought by the British.

Population: 5,353,494 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 1.993% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 0.78 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 81.47 male, 86.2 female (2012)

Languages: Twenty-one languages are spoken in Singapore. Mandarin (35%), English (23%), Malay (14.1%), and Tamil (3.2%) are all official languages. The rest of Singaporeans speak Hokkein (11.4%), Cantonese (5.7%), Teochew (4.9%), other Chinese languages (1.8%), and other languages (0.9%). English literacy has steadily increased over the past couple decades and the government reported that 80% of the population over age fifteen were literate in English. In 2010, 52% of Chinese youth, 50% of Indian youth, and 26% of Malay youth spoke English as their home language.¹⁴⁸⁶ Languages with over one million native speakers include Mandarin (1.63 million) and English (1.07 million).

Literacy: 96% (2010)

History

Malay sultans controlled Singapore when in 1819 the British received permission to build a trading post on the island. The entire island came under British control in 1824. During World War II, the island was invaded and held by Japanese forces. An independence movement began in the 1950s. Independence was declared in 1963, and the country joined the Federation of Malaysia. In 1965, Singapore seceded from Malaysia. Due to its geographic location, free-market economy, and small population compared to other nations, the country was transformed into one of the world's wealthiest.

¹⁴⁸⁶ "Singapore Department of Statistics—Press Release," Singapore Department of Statistics, 12 January 2011. <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/news/news/press12012011.pdf>

Culture

Singapore is known for its strict laws, cleanliness, urban and family planning, and ethnic and religious diversity. Many crimes follow severe penalties, such as caning, imprisonment, and heavy fines. A chewing gum ban was in effect for over a decade in the 1990s and 2000s. Due to limited space and natural resources, government pressured families to have few children in order to reduce the high birth rate following independence. A large portion of the inhabitants are not permanent residents. In order to reduce religious and ethnic tensions, strict laws are enforced banning persecution or harassment based on religion. Military service is mandatory at twenty-one.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$59,900 (2011) [125% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.866

Corruption Index: 9.2 (2011)

Singapore ranked as the country with the fifth highest GDP per capita in 2010 and is among the least perceived corrupt countries in the world. Consumer electronics, pharmaceuticals, information technology products, and tourism are the major industries in the economy. Singapore has an insignificant agriculture sector and a weakening industry sector. Economic growth continues, with GDP rates increasing by 7% in the mid-2000s, which have sharply declined due to the global financial crisis. Singapore has one of the lowest unemployment rates, at 2.2% in 2008. Import and export partners are well distributed around Asia and developed nations. Perceived corruption ranks among the lowest worldwide.

Faiths

Buddhist: 33%

Christian: 18%

Unaffiliated: 17%

Muslim: 15%

Taoist: 11%

Hindu: 5.1%

Other/unknown: 0.9%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 223,562

Latter-day Saints 3,573 11

Seventh Day Adventists 2,781 7

Jehovah's Witnesses 2,000

Religion

Singapore has a blend of diverse religious traditions that interact regularly. Buddhists form the majority due most Singaporeans claiming Chinese ancestry. Muslims are mainly limited to Malays. Taoists are Chinese and Hindus are Indians. In 2010, 57% of Chinese were Buddhist or Taoist, 59% of Indians were Hindu, 22% of Indians were Muslim, and 99% of Malays were Muslim. Christians comprise the largest percentage among Chinese (20%).¹⁴⁸⁷

¹⁴⁸⁷ "Singapore Department of Statistics—Press Release," Singapore Department of Statistics, 12. January 2011. <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/news/news/press12012011.pdf>

Religious Freedom

The constitution allows religious freedom, which is limited by the government to promote racial and religious harmony. Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church are banned and are fined for distributing literature, as they are seen to disrupt social order. Foreign Christian missionaries are allowed to proselyte. Government closely monitors religious communities to maintain social order.¹⁴⁸⁸

Major Cities

Urban: 100%

LDS History

The earliest LDS presence in Singapore was established in 1960 when four members resided in the country. In 1963, the first LDS meetings were held with British military and members from Hong Kong. The first LDS missionaries were assigned in 1968. In 1969, Elder Ezra Taft Benson dedicated Singapore for missionary work¹⁴⁸⁹ and the Southern Asia Mission was organized with headquarters in Singapore. In 1970, the government restricted missionary visas and proselytism resulting in local membership taking responsibility for missionary work. The Singapore Mission was reestablished in 1980. In 2003, the Singapore Mission Branch was created and headquartered in Singapore for members of the Church living in remote areas of the mission. At the time, the Singapore Mission included Bangladesh, Brunei, Diego Garcia, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Singapore, and Sri Lanka. In late 2007 the Singapore Mission was divided and to create the India New Delhi Mission. In late 2009, the Singapore Mission also administered to Malaysia and Brunei.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 3,573 (2012)

By 1970 there were around one hundred members and by 1976 membership tripled to 309. Growth accelerated, with membership reaching 960 in 1985 and 1,300 in 1990. In mid-1993 there were 1,750 members.¹⁴⁹⁰ Church membership reached 2,000 in 1997, 2,162 in 2000, 2,265 in 2002, 2,385 in 2004, 2,612 in 2006, 2,890 in 2008, and 3,337 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates between 2000 and 2010 ranged from a high of 13.6% in 2010 to a low of 1.7% in 2002 and 2009 but generally varied from 2% to 6%. Rapid membership growth in 2010 may have been attributed to an influx in convert baptisms in groups operating in Brunei and Malaysia under the Singapore Mission Branch rather than in Singapore. In 2010, one in 1,421 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 10 Branches: 1 (April 2013)

The first branch was created 1968 when the first missionaries arrived from the Southern Far East Mission. A second branch was also created in 1970.¹⁴⁹¹ By 1990, there were five branches and one district. By the middle of 1993, there were seven branches in Singapore.¹⁴⁹² The first stake was organized in 1995 and included the Bedok, Clementi, Singapore 1st, and Toa Payoh Wards, and the Singapore 2nd and 3rd Branches.¹⁴⁹³ By

¹⁴⁸⁸ "Singapore," International Religious Freedom Report 2005, retrieved 27 June 2011. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51529.htm>

¹⁴⁸⁹ Tice, Richard. "Singapore Saints," Liahona, December 1990. <http://lds.org/liahona/1990/12/singapore-saints?lang=eng>

¹⁴⁹⁰ "Singapore," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/singapore>

¹⁴⁹¹ Tice, Richard. "Singapore Saints," Liahona, December 1990. <http://lds.org/liahona/1990/12/singapore-saints?lang=eng>

¹⁴⁹² "Singapore," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/singapore>

¹⁴⁹³ "New stake presidencies," LDS Church News, 22 April 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26764/>

2000, there were six wards and two branches in Singapore. The following year, both branches, which were not English speaking, were made into wards. The Singapore Stake also included the Johor Bahru Branch in neighboring Malaysia. Of the eight wards in the Singapore Stake in 2010, six were designated as English-speaking, one as Chinese-speaking, and one as Tagalog-speaking. In 2011, two new wards were organized: the Singapore 4th (English) and the Chao Chu Kang Wards. That same year, the two branches in neighboring Johor Bahru, Malaysia were reassigned from the Singapore Stake and made into their own district.

Activity and Retention

High retention and activity existed in the late 1960s when church attendance was greater than reported membership.¹⁴⁹⁴ Focus has been placed on teaching and fellowshiping youth through conferences and musical performances with hundreds in attendance.¹⁴⁹⁵ Inactivity and retention issues have presented challenges that have been addressed through active members inviting less active members for an open house of the newly completed Singapore Stake center in 2007. Four hundred active and less active members attended the event. Six hundred attended the dedication of the building. Most wards in 2010 appeared to have between 75 and 150 active members. Active membership for Singapore is estimated at 1,200, or 35% of total church membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), Tamil.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in simplified and traditional Chinese characters. The Book of Mormon is the only LDS scripture translated into Tamil. *Gospel Fundamentals*, the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, and a few missionary resources for teaching investigators are the only church materials translated into Malay.

Meetinghouses

In 1990, a new meetinghouse was dedicated by Elder Dallin H. Oaks to serve three of the five branches in the Singapore District.¹⁴⁹⁶ The Singapore Stake center was dedicated in early 2007 and housed six wards. Two additional meetinghouses service wards in Singapore, one of which was completed in 2011.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Church members in Singapore have conducted humanitarian and charity work for their own country and other less prosperous nations. In 2004, LDS women donated quilts to an orphanage.¹⁴⁹⁷ Tsunami relief aid was assembled by members in early 2005.¹⁴⁹⁸ Eighty youth cleaned a beach in Singapore as part of a youth

New-stake-presidencies.html

¹⁴⁹⁴ "Friends in Singapore," *Friend*, September 1975, 14.

¹⁴⁹⁵ "Musical youth are singing in Singapore," *LDS Church News*, 22 May 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/45604/Musical-youth-are-singing-in-Singapore.html>

¹⁴⁹⁶ "Asia area: Elder Oaks visits Singapore," *LDS Church News*, 11 March 1989. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/18481/Asia-area—Elder-Oaks-visits-Singapore.html>

¹⁴⁹⁷ "Making quilts for orphanage," *LDS Church News*, 18 September 2004. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46163/Making-quilts-for-orphanage.html>

¹⁴⁹⁸ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Emergency response is appropriate, immediate," *LDS Church News*, 15 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46735/Emergency-response-is-appropriate-immediate.html>

conference in 2006.¹⁴⁹⁹ In 2007, LDS women knitted 1,700 hats for newborns, which were distributed to hospitals around Asia.¹⁵⁰⁰

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church has maintained positive relations with the government, resulting in no obstructions to missionary work. Many Christian churches in Singapore condemn the Church as un-Christian, intimidate converts and investigators, and send hateful letters to missionaries. Opposition from other Christian groups poses challenges for the Church when conducting missionary work and public affairs.

Cultural Issues

The Church has the challenge of assimilating different ethnic groups into the same congregation due to differing religious and cultural backgrounds. As greater numbers of Singaporeans joined the Church, non-English speaking congregations have been established. The Church appears to have gained converts among many of the ethnic groups in Singapore and integrated them into English-speaking congregations due to the widespread use of English as a language of interethnic communication. Challenges exist in retaining converts into the Church when large diversity exists in religious and cultural background. Singapore's wealth has increased materialism, likely resulting in Singaporeans being less receptive to the Church than many other southeastern Asian countries. High cost of living and mediocre receptivity have limited the number of full-time missionaries assigned and have likely prevented the construction or renting of additional meetinghouses.

National Outreach

Singapore is one of the only countries where the Church is not restrained by geography, resulting in the opportunity of reaching the entire population with few outreach centers. Outreach is limited due to the diversity in the culture, language, and religious background of the population. Although 58.8% of the population speaks a Chinese language, only one of the eight congregations in Singapore is Chinese speaking, as many Chinese Latter-day Saints speak English and attend English-speaking wards. Some areas of Singapore are less reached by Latter-day Saints due to distance to meetinghouses. Several planning areas have over 100,000 inhabitants and no LDS congregations, such as Jurong West, Tampines, Hougang, Yishun, Sengkang, Bukit Merah, Bukit Batok, Pasir Ris, Bukit Panjang, and Serangoon. Establishing additional meetinghouses to reduce travel times may enhance national outreach if feasible.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity was strong enough to fill the needed callings to support a stake, even though membership was smaller than most stakes when the Church created the Singapore stake. Member activity rates are moderate for East Asia. Higher convert retention rates than other industrialized Asian nations appear possible due to the active role of members in referring and fellowshipping investigators and new converts. The operation of a stake despite few members and activity rates estimated at 35% indicate the devotion and quality active membership. Convert retention appears moderate due to counter-proselytism efforts from other Christian groups and the influence of materialism and secularism on society. Many converts in the Church come from nations that have a small presence in Singapore and an even smaller or no Church presence in their home

¹⁴⁹⁹ "Singapore youth serve," LDS Church News, 29 July 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49250/Singapore-youth-serve.html>

¹⁵⁰⁰ "Singapore sisters knit beany hats for babies," LDS Church News, 30 December 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49965/Singapore-sisters-knit-beany-hats-for-babies.html>

country. This provides a great opportunity for converts from nations in which the Church is not established to return home and conduct missionary work among family and friends in preparation of the Church's arrival.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The cosmopolitan atmosphere of Singapore and government policies aimed at maintaining ethnic harmony reduces ethnic integration challenges for the LDS Church. Most countries in Asia have some permanent or temporary residents in Singapore. Even the largest ethnic group, the Chinese, is an agglomeration of peoples throughout China who have arrived at different times. The sole Chinese-speaking ward did not become a ward until 2001 and likely serves members who are not proficient in English. Some new converts consist of temporary residents from lesser-reached nations including India, Indonesia, and Myanmar.

Language Issues

Widespread fluency in English among Singaporean residents simplifies LDS outreach. Notwithstanding this advantage, few immigrants and migrant workers speak English with enough competence to learn the gospel and have meaningful church attendance. Misunderstandings and lack of communication between migrant workers and permanent residents has likely contributed to modest member activity and retention rates.

Leadership

Singapore has built strong local leadership over the past several decades, resulting in the creation of a stake in the mid-1990s despite few congregations and a small church membership. Oftentimes, the first stake created in a country has leaders who also work for the Church, yet the first Singapore Stake presidency revealed the strength of active male membership, with neither the president nor his counselors working for the Church.¹⁵⁰¹ The stake presidency was reorganization in 2003¹⁵⁰² and 2008. The latter reorganization resulted with the new president also working for the Church as the CES country director. The new counselors did not work for the Church.¹⁵⁰³ Leadership is challenged to serve the needs of the ethnic diversity in membership and developing leadership among ethnic minorities. The organization of two additional wards in 2011 indicates increasing numbers of leadership manpower.

Temple

Singapore is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. Temple trips occur regularly but require planning due to travel costs and times. President Hinckley stated in 2000 that members should continue growing the Church in Singapore so that a temple could be built.¹⁵⁰⁴ In 2009, the Singapore Stake President reported to members in stake conference that they had the numbers needed to support a temple, but members needed to learn to be more charitable and forgiving before a temple would be announced. A potential temple in Singapore could serve Latter-day Saints throughout Southeast Asia.

¹⁵⁰¹ "New stake presidencies," LDS Church News, 22 April 1995. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/26764/New-stake-presidencies.html>

¹⁵⁰² "New stake presidents," LDS Church News, 17 May 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/43772/New-stake-presidents.html>

¹⁵⁰³ "New stake presidents," LDS Church News, 5 April 2008. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51796/New-stake-presidents.html>

¹⁵⁰⁴ "Pres. Hinckley completes tour in Pacific Rim," LDS Church News, 12 February 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37174/Pres-Hinckley-completes-tour-in-Pacific-Rim.html>

Comparative Growth

Slow to modest membership growth has occurred in Singapore in the past fifty years compared to other East Asian nations. Greater membership and congregation growth in the Church occurred in Hong Kong during the first fifty years, after which there were 20,700 members, thirty-nine congregations and a temple. Singapore experiences substantially higher member activity rates compared to Hong Kong despite many cultural similarities, and today Singapore is one of the countries with the fewest Latter-day Saints with a stake. Differences in member activity and convert retention rates appear due to differing mission policies and convert baptismal standards. The LDS Church in Singapore experienced one of the highest membership growth rates among industrialized nations in the 2000s and early 2010s.

Other Christian groups have had difficulty establishing themselves in Singapore. Jehovah's Witnesses were banned by the government, yet meet privately in homes and manage to have an estimated 2,000 members. Seventh Day Adventists have also seen growth comparable to the LDS Church, indicating that Singaporeans are cautious about joining Christian religions seen as untraditional. Slow growth in Singapore is likely related to the rise of secularism and the complex religious and ethnic demography. Other Christian denominations may have hurt the LDS Church's image.

Future Prospects

Slow, steady growth will likely continue for the LDS Church in Singapore. A second stake may be organized in Singapore if additional congregations are created. Additional language-specific congregations may be created, such as for Tamil and Indonesian speakers. A young single adult unit or differentiated Chinese-speaking congregations (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkein, etc.) seem likely possibilities. However additional congregations will likely only be created as membership is strong enough to provide leadership and if functioning congregations are operating at capacity. As hinted by President Hinckley and a Singapore Stake President, Singapore is a likely location for a future temple.

SOUTH KOREA

Geography

AREA: 99,720 square km. South Korea, officially known as the Republic of Korea, occupies the southern half of the Korean Peninsula in East Asia and borders North Korea, the Sea of Japan, and the Yellow Sea. South Korea controls many islands along the western and southern coast—the largest being Jeju Island. Most of the terrain is hilly to mountainous. Two mountain ranges run down the eastern coast and through the south central portions of the peninsula. Many large rivers empty into the surrounding ocean, such as the Han River, which flows through Seoul. South Korea experiences hot, humid summers and cold, dry winters. The majority of rainfall occurs during July and August during Changma—a brief, heavy monsoon. Periodic typhoons and hwangsa—harmful yellow dust mixed with pollution from China—are natural hazards. Air pollution, water pollution, and acid rain are environmental issues. South Korea is administratively divided into nine provinces and seven metropolitan cities.

Peoples

Korean: 98%

Other: 2%

With the exception of non-Koreans temporarily living in South Korea for employment or military purposes and approximately 20,000 Chinese, the entire population is Korean. Foreigners temporarily working in the country or without Korean citizenship number around one million, about half of whom are North Koreans or Chinese Koreans. South Korea has one of the lowest fertility rates worldwide.

Population: 48,860,500 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.204% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.23 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 76.12 male, 82.7 female (2012)

Languages: Korean (98%), other (2%). Korean is the official language. Commonly spoken languages by foreign workers and military include English, Filipino languages, and languages from Southeast and South Asia. Only Korean has over one million native speakers (47.6 million).

Literacy: 97.9% (2002)

History

Indigenous states or empires have ruled the Korean peninsula from as early as several millennia BC. Due to its location between China and Japan, Korea has experienced many wars and conflicts with larger, more powerful empires and nation states. Korea became a unified nation starting in the seventh century until becoming a protectorate of Japan in 1905 and a Japanese colony in 1910. Korea did not regain independence until 1945. A Soviet-backed government in the north and an American-backed government in the south divided the peninsula in the late 1940s. North Korea attacked the south in 1950, initiating the Korean War. In 1953, the two Koreas signed an armistice that divided the peninsula at the 38th parallel along a demilitarized zone. Military-oriented administrations controlled the South Korean government between 1961 and 1993. During

this period, rapid economic growth and modernization turned the south into one of the most powerful economies in East Asia. Severe economic recession in the late 1990s resulting from the Asian Financial Crisis was brief. Military skirmishes between the north and south have continued since the signing of the armistice in 1953 and remain largely unreported.

Culture

Education takes the forefront of social issues and everyday life. Confucian thought dominates cultural practices and attitudes. Koreans define their identity through their interpersonal relationships and grow strong emotional bonds with people and places with which they become familiar or share similarities. For Koreans, first impressions are very important in the development of lasting attitudes. Disappointment or pressure from others drives many Koreans to make personal decisions.

Children and teenagers usually attend public school during the daytime and private school classes in the evenings. Many families spend much of their disposable income on private school tuition for their children. Most high school students do not return home until late in the evening and leave early in the morning. Those who have full-time jobs tend to work over twelve hours a day six days a week and many sleep less than six hours a night. Koreans are emotional, reserved, studious, and take great pride in their history and ethnicity. The Hangul script was created in 1444 by King Sejong. Smoking rates are high, especially for men. It is socially unacceptable for women to smoke in public, leading to many women to smoke in secret. Alcohol is a major social pressure as friends, family and coworkers will regularly drink together. Refusing to participate can result in losing one's job or being ostracized from a peer group. Abortion is common and socially acceptable as many women—whether married or single—have had an abortion.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$31,700 (2011) [65.9% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.897

Corruption Index: 5.4 (2011)

South Korea achieved rapid, sustained economic growth and development between 1960 and 2000 to become one of the world's twenty largest economies. Close government ties with the financial sector resulted in import and credit restrictions and encouraged manufacturing exports throughout this period. The Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s resulted in the government carrying out economic reforms that allowed for greater trade and integration into the international community. Today, South Korea has a high-tech industrialized economy that specializes in superconductors, electronics, car manufacturing, shipbuilding, and telecommunications. The aging population and reliance on manufacturing exports are economic concerns. Korea's location near China and Japan allows for abundant trade opportunities. Services employ two-thirds of the workforce and produce 58% of the GDP, whereas industry accounts for a quarter of the workforce and produces 39% of the GDP. Agriculture accounts for less than 10% of the GDP and workforce; important crops include rice, roots, barley, vegetables, fruit, livestock, and fish. Primary trade partners include China, Japan, the United States, and Saudi Arabia.

Corruption is found on many levels of society. Many minor laws are not enforced by local police. Many Korean laws are passed to appease a subset of the population but in reality are not widely enforced. Bribery occurs frequently and is a means to exert influence on others. The influence of Confucianism on Korean society has resulted in a strong sense of community and respect for others, resulting in low crime rates. Prostitution and sexual crimes are the most common law offenses.

Faiths

Christian: 29.2%
 Buddhist: 22.8%
 Other: 1.3%
 None: 46.7%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 5,301,331
 Seventh Day Adventists 224,450 713
 Jehovah's Witnesses 99,933 1,396
 Latter-day Saints 85,628 128

Religion

Christians are the most active religious group and continue to grow in numbers. Buddhism now has fewer followers than Christianity, and most Buddhists are not religiously active in their faith. Many Christians continue some practices originating from Buddhism and Shamanism that are regarded as cultural traditions, such as ancestor veneration. A 2004 Gallup Korea survey found that 46.6% of those who were religious attended worship services at least once a month. Among those who attend religious meetings more than once a week, Protestants had the highest attendance rate at 71%. Attending worship services more than once a week were 42.9% of Catholics and 3.5% of Buddhists.¹⁵⁰⁵ Many Koreans actively participate in their faith for social interaction. In the 2000s, South Korea was the country that sent the second most Christian missionaries worldwide after the United States, and one of the nations with the most church congregations. Many Christians worship in small churches of fewer than fifty members. These churches meet in rented spaces near the homes of members and have strong family and social ties. The largest single congregation in the world—the Yoido Full Gospel Church—has over 800,000 adherents. Korean Buddhists often feel defensive about their beliefs and practices around Christian groups.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. There is no state religion, and the government maintains a clear separation between church and state. Christmas and Buddha's birthday are recognized national holidays. Korean law mandates all males to serve for at least two years in the military. Members of groups opposed to military service, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, usually receive jail sentences for fourteen months for refusing to comply with the law. Greater tolerance has occurred in recent years, as some Jehovah's Witnesses have found alternative nonmilitary service. Religious groups do not need to register with the government, and foreign missionaries may proselyte freely.¹⁵⁰⁶

Largest Cities

Urban: 81%

Seoul, Pusan, Taegu, Daejeon, Kwangju, Suwon, Seongnam, Ulsan, Puch'eon, Cheonju, Ansan, Ch'ongju, Anyang, Ch'angweon, Uijeongbu, Ch'eonan, Kwangmyeong, Kimhae, Masan, Yeosu, Cheju, Chinju, Kumi,

¹⁵⁰⁵ "Korea, Republic of," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127275.htm>

¹⁵⁰⁶ "Korea, Republic of," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127275.htm>

Iksan, Mokp'o, Kunsan, Weonju, Sunch'eon, Ch'unch'eon, Kuri, Kangneong, Osan, Kyeongju, **Hanam**, Chinhae, Kyeongsan, Andong, Hwado, Tonghae.

Cities in **bold** do not have congregations.

Thirty-eight of the thirty-nine cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the national population lives in the thirty-nine largest cities. The Seoul Metropolitan Area accounts for 50% of the national population.

LDS History

Members of the Church serving in the United States military during the Korean War first brought the Church to the peninsula. The first Korean members joined the Church abroad and facilitated the introduction of missionaries and a formal Church presence. Missionaries first arrived in 1954. At this time Korea belonged to the Northern Far East Mission based in Japan. By 1962, the Church created the Korean Mission, which was later renamed the Korea Seoul Mission. At the time, there were seven branches.¹⁵⁰⁷ Seminary and institute began in the early 1970s. Additional missions were organized in Pusan (1975), Seoul West (1979), and Taejeon (1986). In 2010, the Church discontinued the Korea Seoul West Mission, which was consolidated with the Korea Seoul Mission and Korea Daejeon Mission. In 2013, the second mission in Seoul (Korea Seoul South) was reestablished.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 85,628 (2012)

In the early 1960s, there were 1,600 members.¹⁵⁰⁸ By 1975, there were 9,000 members, increasing in to 29,000 by 1983.¹⁵⁰⁹ Rapid membership growth continued in the 1980s and early 1990s, as there were 50,000 members by 1989 and 65,000 members by 1993. Growth slowed dramatically after 1993. Membership surpassed the 70,000 mark in the late 1990s and reached 72,445 by 2000.

During the 2000s, membership grew slowly, typically adding between 1,000 and 2,000 members a year. There were 75,149 members in 2003 and 79,652 members in 2006. Annual membership growth rates have generally ranged from 1% to 2% over the past 15 years.

In 2009, the Korea Seoul West Mission reported one of the highest baptizing years in the past decade, baptizing over 350 converts.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 83 Branches: 45 (April 2013)

The first stake was organized in Seoul in 1973. By 1975, the Church had one stake, six districts, eight wards, and twenty-six branches.¹⁵¹⁰ Three additional states were added in Seoul, and the first stake in Busan was created before 1980. In the 1980s, Gwangju, Incheon, Masan, Cheongju, Daegu, and Jeonju received their first stakes. The Church organized three additional Seoul stakes. In the 1990s, three new stakes were created in Suwon, Anyang, and Daejeon. In 2010, six districts functioned in the country in Gangneung (1987),

¹⁵⁰⁷ "South Korea," Country Profiles, retrieved 8 July 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/south-korea>

¹⁵⁰⁸ "Friends in Korea," Friend, Aug 1975, 33, 48, inside back cover.

¹⁵⁰⁹ "South Korea," Country Profiles, retrieved 8 July 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/south-korea>

¹⁵¹⁰ "Friends in Korea," Friend, Aug 1975, 33, 48, inside back cover.

Hongseong (1988), Suncheon (1996), Jeju (2001), Ulsan (2007), and for the United States military and English-only speakers (1970).

The number of congregations grew to 146 by 1989, including sixty-eight wards. In 1999, the Church had the most congregations ever functioning in Korea with 175. The number of congregations steadily fell during the 2000s to 164 in 2001, 150 in 2004, 143 in 2007, and 139 in 2009. Both the number of wards and branches were in decline during this period.

Activity and Retention

Most wards have between fifty and one hundred active members, whereas branches usually have fewer than fifty active members. Member activity rates vary from congregation to congregation. Most congregations have between 25% and 50% of their members consistently attending church meetings. Ten thousand from throughout the country assembled in 2005 for the fiftieth anniversary of the Church in Korea. Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi announced at the anniversary that sacrament meeting attendance for the first crossed the 10,000 mark. Three thousand three hundred were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2008–2009 school year. Most military branches have few members. The Seoul (English) Branch had over 250 active members in 2010—almost twice as large as the largest Korean wards in the country.

The Church has lost contact with the majority of Korean members. Koreans frequently move and provide little notice, leading to a loss of contact with many less active or inactive members. The government appears to not permit the finding of lost members through their resident registration number. Nationwide active membership appears to be around 10,000, or 12% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Korean, Chinese, English.

All LDS scriptures are available in Korean and Chinese. Most Church materials are translated into Korean and Chinese. Most South Asian and Filipino languages spoken by migrant workers have translated Church materials.

Meetinghouses

Nearly all congregations meet in Church-built meetinghouses. A few small branches meet in rented spaces.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Few humanitarian projects have been conducted by the Church in recent years due to the level of economic prosperity and government welfare programs that minister to the needy. The Church has donated time and resources to charitable organizations, orphanages, and the disabled.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church enjoys full religious freedom in South Korea. Missionaries may serve from outside the country on missionary visas, which have been easily obtained. Street contacting and the distribution of church literature occur without restrictions. Open proselytism on subways and visiting door to door in apartment buildings occurs, but is often discouraged by local administration, as it is seen as intrusive and bothersome.

Cultural Issues

Christians boast of a proud religious history and tradition. Early persecution from the Buddhist majority did not reverse the initial efforts of Protestant and Catholic missionaries. Today Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches are powerful social institutions. Church activity for many Koreans is more social than spiritual, as congregations often grow closely knit yet retain a sense of welcoming to outsiders. Consequently these and other Protestant denominations have experienced steady, strong growth in their membership over the past century. The LDS Church has developed a strong foundation of members, but their numbers remain too few, and resources for accommodating culture challenges often experienced by Koreans—whether Latter-day Saints or not—do not compare to the church infrastructure of more established Christian groups. Outreach to church-going Koreans has seen some success, but heavy social involvement in their respective churches has made this group largely unreceptive to even brief and basic LDS proselyting approaches. Misconceptions about the LDS Church are widespread and lead most Koreans to dismiss the church as a socially unacceptable institution or to confuse it with other unaccepted denominations, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church.

The Church has experienced the greatest success among Koreans with a Christian background who are not active churchgoers. Missionaries and local leaders often struggle to keep these individuals active, as they usually do not develop a pattern of regular church attendance. Few Latter-day Saints converts come from a Buddhist background, as most are highly secular and have actively avoided Christianity due to strong Christian missionary activity over the past two centuries.

Widespread substance abuse is a major deterrent to joining the Church and remaining active, especially among Korean men who experience a high prevalence of these behaviors. Many Korean men who regularly drink and smoke have had no interest in meeting with missionaries and learning about the Church. Those who drink and smoke only occasionally or not at all tend to be most receptive. For this and other reasons, there are fewer active men than women in the Church. Some congregations have only a few or no active adult males sitting with the congregation during sacrament meetings, as most sit on the stand to bless the sacrament or because they are in a leadership position. The drinking of green tea is a cultural practice contrary to LDS teachings and can be source of tension between members and the general public as well as a testimony building issue for investigators, new converts, and less active members.

National Outreach

Mission outreach is primarily limited to cities with over 100,000 inhabitants. Seventy percent (70%) of the national population resides in cities with an LDS presence. Most rural areas and cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants have no mission outreach centers. Some cities such as Hanam once had mission outreach centers but no longer do. Opportunities for increasing national outreach appear most favorable in currently unreached large- to medium-sized cities near Seoul and other large cities. Examples of cities in the Seoul/Gyeonggi Province area include Pyeongnae/Hopyeong, Gwacheon, Uiwang, and Dongtan.

In the recent past, Korean Church leadership has expressed little interest in opening additional cities for missionary work and creating additional congregations in cities where members travel long distances to attend Church meetings. Southeast of Seoul, Gwangju has 80,000 inhabitants but has LDS congregation or mission presence, although dozens of members live in the city. Members attend several different congregations nearby, but must travel longer distances and are more prone to becoming less active due to issues of distance, accessibility, and limited fellowship opportunities. Church members often dismiss missionary opportunities in cities like Gwangju due to the availability of established congregations in nearby cities, but this policy has reduced national outreach capabilities and has contributed to the declining number of congregations over the past decade. Many areas within the city boundaries of Seoul have almost no LDS presence and no nearby

congregations, such as the Guro region. Past efforts to open new branches in these locations that did not come to fruition may have contributed to the lack of interest by local leaders to organize groups or small branches in lesser-reached areas.

The declining number of missionaries has further contributed to the declining national outreach of the Church in South Korea. Missions can barely staff the needs of current congregations. Missionaries have been called in fewer numbers due to the declining receptivity of the general population and stretched mission resources worldwide.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Low member activity rates have been primarily the result of the large number of youth baptized in the 1970s and 1980s who did not remain active into adulthood, as well as long-standing quick-baptize practices that focused on baptismal numbers but placed little emphasis on prebaptismal preparation, gospel habits, and convert retention. Many congregations at this time had most members consisting of youth and young adults, whereas today middle aged members form the majority of most congregations. Many of these youth did not develop habitual church attendance, and today many nominal members cannot recall joining the Church. Part-member families have been more vulnerable to stop attending Church regularly due to family pressures and opposition. This has been particularly apparent in families with a nonmember father.

Immigration of Korean members to the United States, Australia, China, and New Zealand has stunted church growth over the past two decades. Many of the strongest active Korean families in the Church left the country and have not returned. Reasons for high levels of emigration include attempts to escape cultural pressures that challenge LDS standards, efforts to obtain inexpensive, high quality education, and desires for a higher standard of living. In November 2009, the Asia North Area presidency and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland strongly admonished remaining members in a nationwide satellite broadcast to not leave the country except temporarily for educational purposes. The Area Presidency also issued a promise that once members remained in Korea, greater growth will occur. However, in a highly Americentric church, it is unlikely that emigration of strong Latter-day Saints from Korea will decline until the underlying dynamics change with greater commitment, not only to missions and congregations, but to the long-term social and educational institutions of the indigenous church. It is likely that the creation of a BYU-Seoul or BYU-Tokyo could help to reinforce local or regional Mormon identity and decrease the attraction of the West. However, the recent closure of the Korean MTC suggests that LDS infrastructure in Korea will rely on the American church more and not less in coming years.

New move-ins have been a source of member inactivity when members do not integrate into their new congregations. Some units, particularly small wards or branches, are prone to extremes of failing to fellowship or giving excessive attention to investigators or new move-ins to the point where they feel uncomfortable. Congregation consolidations in the past decade have aimed at increasing the size of active membership per congregation but at times have led to declines in active membership due to increased travel times and social disruptions when old congregations are closed and members must travel to more distant locations to worship with others they do not know well.

All of these factors, combined with low LDS birthrates and the paucity of new converts, have resulted in sacrament attendance nationwide remaining relatively unchanged over the past two decades.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

One of the most demographically homogenous nations in the world, South Korea only experiences ethnic integration issues between native Koreans and foreigners temporarily working in the country. Those who

cannot speak Korean are often poorly integrated into congregations even if they attend church meetings weekly. Outreach among non-Koreans has seen some success, as converts in recent years have included North Americans, Europeans, Filipinos, and Iranians. South Asians have also demonstrated interest in the Church. Little has been done to actively reach non-Koreans, whereas mainstream Christian denominations have developed outreach capabilities for each ethnic group. At times, missionary work among non-Koreans has been discouraged by local Church leaders due to the complexities they bring in being integrated into established congregations. The LDS Church only has specific outreach for English speakers in the United States military. Outreach among nonmilitary foreigners has been sporadic and tailored to Westerners.

Language Issues

Language issues have only been encountered among non-Koreans who reside far from English-speaking congregations. All major minority groups have LDS materials translated in their respective languages. Missionary outreach has occurred among many of these groups but has been sporadic and unorganized. Potential for future language-specific outreach appears highest for English, Mandarin Chinese, and Tagalog speakers. The Seoul (English) Branch had as many as thirty Filipino members in 2010. A Tagalog Sunday School class has functioned for a number of years to meet their language needs. Many Filipino members speak English with enough proficiency to understand English Church services and interact with non-Filipino members, thereby reducing the need for a separate Tagalog-speaking congregation.

Missionary Service

In 1975, the full-time missionary force for Korea grew to 320.¹⁵¹¹ The Church established the Korea MTC next to the Seoul Korea Temple in the 1980s. In the late 2000s, the Korea MTC closed and native missionaries traveled to the United States to receive training. At its peak in the 1980s and 1990s, the native Korean missionary force may have grown as large as 200–250 just in South Korea. In November 2009, there were 114 South Koreans serving missions worldwide. In mid-2010, the full-time missionary force appeared around 1975 levels. The 2013 decision to reestablish a second mission in Seoul appeared to be sparked by the large administrative burden of a single mission for the Seoul area and increasing numbers of North Americans serving missions.

Although South Korea is the top missionary-sending country outside of the United States for Protestant missions, rates of LDS missionary service from Korea have been mediocre, due in large part to low member activity, especially among men. The national requirement for young men to serve fourteen months in the military and intense university schedules that allow little allowance for an extended hiatus make it difficult for young men to fit in missionary service without compromising education and career. Many Protestants serving missions are older individuals and women. Paths for nontraditional missionaries, extended youth mini-missions, and a greater emphasis on member-missionary work may help to increase missionary activity among Korean Latter-day Saints.

Finding

Missionaries usually find most of their investigators through teaching English in weekly English classes offered in church meetinghouses or by private lessons. The private lesson English program teaches English for thirty minutes and about the Church in Korean for thirty minutes. The program has been effective in finding many interested individuals through a passive proselytism approach. However, the program has also tended to propagate large pools of investigators who are not committed to actively learn about the Church or to follow through on commitments extended by missionaries. Some Koreans exploit non-Korean missionaries

¹⁵¹¹ "Friends in Korea," *Friend*, Aug 1975, 33, 48, inside back cover.

for English language opportunities. Street contacting experiences little success. In the mid-2000s, missionaries in most missions were advised not to ask members for referrals, as they were counseled to first to gain the trust of members who would automatically become motivated to willingly supply missionaries with references of interested family and friends. In recent years, members have become increasingly involved in missionary work on a congregational level, which missionaries in the Korea Seoul West Mission in 2010 reported had led to an increase in convert baptisms in the past year.

The Korea Pusan Mission undertook a massive reformation in missionary activity and finding skills in 2004. Missionaries were counseled to never walk from appointment to appointment as to appear to be busy to simply walk, and to hurry investigators to baptism with little pre-baptismal teaching and preparation. In 2004, the mission baptized almost 1,000 converts, many of whom were young adult women. However, there was no increase in sacrament meeting attendance over this period due to failure to develop habits of regular church attendance in investigators and converts. In 2005, regional Church leaders visited the mission, chastised the mission leadership and missionaries, and corrected these practices.

Leadership

The majority of wards can staff bishoprics, presidencies, and auxiliaries. The lack of sufficient leadership in areas not nearby already established congregations has contributed to declining national outreach. Branches often struggle to fill their branch presidency with native members and oftentimes rely on priesthood holders in nearby congregations to assist in administrative affairs.

Temple

South Korea pertains to the Seoul Korea Temple district. The Church announced the temple in 1981 and dedicated it in 1985. Many Koreans can trace their genealogies back several millennia and have an ample supply of family file names to perform temple ordinances on behalf of. Endowment sessions are offered at least six times a day Tuesday through Saturday. Korean members utilized the temple most often late in the evenings and on Saturdays due to demanding work schedules and long travel times. Senior missionary couples have been assigned regularly as ordinance workers.

Comparative Growth

South Korea has the third largest Church membership and third most stakes in Asia following the Philippines and Japan. Member activity rates rank among the lowest worldwide. Church growth patterns share many similarities with Japan as both nations experienced the most rapid membership growth during the 1970s and 1980s, low growth rates today, and declining numbers of congregations.

Future Prospects

South Korea offers a paradox of thriving, highly active Christian communities that are the second largest sender of Protestant missionaries in the world and a stable but stagnant LDS community that suffers from much lower activity rates. It has shown no measurable increase in church attendance in twenty years in spite of nominal membership increases and remains highly dependent on the U.S. Church for funds and missionary manpower.

Continued immigration of full-member families and low numbers of convert baptisms continue to hurt prospects for long-term church growth. In 2009 and 2010, the Church achieved the same numbers of convert baptisms with about half to two-thirds the missionary force from just five years earlier, indicating either greater missionary productivity, or that conversion rates are less dependent on missionary numbers. Greater member

involvement in missionary work has improved convert retention in many areas. The Church has yet to reach a critical mass of active membership to spur expansion of national outreach and raise public awareness. The effect of past low-commitment, quick-baptized practices generating large lists of disengaged inactives but few active members continues to burden local congregations and absorb missionary resources. Greater growth and self-sustainability will only occur once the Church reaches new breakthroughs with youth and young adult proselytism, increasing the numbers of active full member families, and improves convert retention rates. No stakes are close to dividing, and no districts are close to becoming stakes. Several stakes appear close to consolidating—especially in northern Seoul—unless reactivation efforts or new move-ins increase active membership and reverse the trend of congregation consolidations and declining activity.

Although years of intensive reactivation work demonstrate that prospects for activating most inactive and never-active members are dim, improvements in convert retention that will eventually reflect on member activity are possible with forward-looking programs. Future prospects of the LDS Church in Korea depend heavily on the consistent implementation of scriptural standards of baptismal preparation requiring development of gospel habits and integration into local congregations through regular church attendance and member fellowshiping before baptism. Greater vision and long-term investment not only in congregations and missions, but in LDS educational and social institutions such as a regional church university for East Asia, may be necessary to develop a strong indigenous church identity and to stem the flow of many of the most active Korean Latter-day Saints to the West.

TAIWAN

Geography

AREA: 35,980 square km. Taiwan, formerly known as Formosa, consists of the main island of Taiwan and the small island groups of Kinmen, Matsu, and Penghu. Located off the coast of mainland China, Taiwan's geography is dominated by tall, mountainous topography on the eastern two-thirds of the island. The far western portion of the island consists of plains where the majority of the population resides. Most of Taiwan enjoys a tropical climate that is strongly affected by the surrounding ocean. Large coal deposits exist, but most natural resources have been heavily exploited. Taiwan consists of eighteen counties, five municipalities, and two special municipalities.

Peoples

Taiwanese: 84%

Mainland Chinese: 14%

Indigenous: 2%

Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the population has Han Chinese ancestry. Taiwanese form the largest ethnic group, arriving when China colonized the island prior to the Japanese occupation. Similar Chinese ethnic groups such as Hakka are combined in this statistic. Mainland Chinese, who fled China during the civil war, constitute 14% of the population. The remaining 2% of the population belongs to aboriginal tribes who first colonized the island. These tribes have their roots in Polynesia and the Philippines and speak their own tribal languages.

Population: 23,113,901 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.171% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.16 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 75.66 male, 81.53 female (2012)

Languages: Min Nan Chinese (66%), Mandarin (19%), Hakka (10%), other (15%)

Most of the population speaks Min Nan Chinese, which is found in southern China. Mandarin Chinese is the official language. A sizeable minority (10%) speak Hakka dialects. Due to the Japanese occupation, some older Taiwanese speak Japanese. English education is provided during schooling. The most widely spoken indigenous languages are Amis and Atayal. Languages with over one million speakers include Min Nan (15 million), Mandarin (4.32 million), and Hakka (2.37 million).

Literacy: 96.1% (2003)

History

Polynesian settlers first arrived and colonized the island of Taiwan before the arrival of Chinese from mainland China. China did not begin to settle Taiwan until after 1500 AD. Europeans arrived and established a short-lived presence in the seventeenth century, particularly the Dutch. For most of the time between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, China ruled Taiwan. The Japanese attempted to take the island periodically throughout this time and succeeded in 1895. Taiwan did not return to China's control until the end of

World War II. In 1949, Chinese nationals fleeing from mainland China established themselves in Taiwan and formed a republic named the Republic of China. Economic growth began in the 1960s, turning Taiwan into one of the “Four Tigers” of Asia. Taiwan became a single party system under military rule until the past couple of decades. Rapid industrialization continued into the 1990s and brought Taiwan to the status of a developed country. Taiwan has not declared independence from China; issues relating to independence versus reintegration with mainland China continue to be debated.

Culture

The Chinese most greatly influence Taiwanese culture. Other influences come from the Japanese occupation and indigenous peoples. Many Buddhist and Taoist temples dot the landscape. Taiwan is one of the most densely population countries in the world. Ancestor worship continues in most families today. Most Taiwanese drink tea daily. Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates appear higher than the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$37,900 (2011) [78.8% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.882

Corruption Index: 6.1 (2011)

One of the strongest, most developed economies in Asia, Taiwan experienced rapid economic growth under government controlled capitalism. Today the most dominant sectors of the economy are services and industry. Dominant industries include electronics, textiles, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals. Due to strong economic growth, the average person has nearly the same buying power as those who live in the European Union. Trade relations between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan continue to improve. The largest exporter is China, and the largest importer is Japan. Other nations that receive exports or send imports to Taiwan include the United States, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia. Taiwan has few natural resources.

Corruption is perceived as less prevalent in Taiwan than in most of East Asia. Taiwan is a regional transshipment point for illicit drugs.

Faiths

Buddhist and Taoist mix: 93%

Christian: 4.5%

Other: 2.5%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 300,000

Latter-day Saints 55,805 100

Jehovah’s Witnesses 8,079 120

Seventh Day Adventist 6,111 54

Religion

Most of the population of Taiwan follows Buddhist and Taoist traditions. Confucian and indigenous beliefs also influence culture and religious groups. Christians form 4.5% of the population and other religions, such as Islam among Muslim immigrants, make up the remaining 2.5%. There are around 600,000 Protestants and 300,000 Catholics. The majority of the aboriginal Taiwanese follow Christianity.

Religious Freedom

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and upheld by the government. Missionaries are allowed to proselyte, and government does not tolerate religious discrimination by individuals or groups.¹⁵¹²

Largest Cities

Urban: 81%

Taipei, Kaohsiung, Taichung, Tainan, Panchiao, Chunghe, Hsinchu, Hsinchuang, Taoyuan, Chilung, Sanchung, Chungli, Fengshan, Hsintien, Chiai, Tucheng, Changhua, Yunghe, Pingtung, Yungkuang, Pingchen, Luchou, Tali, Hsichih, Pate, Taiping, Shulin, Fengyuen, **Yangmei**, **Luchu**, Tanshui, Kueishan, Chupei, Yuenlin, Lungtan, Hualien, Taitung, Taliao, Touliu, Nantou, Tsaotun.

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

Thirty-nine of the forty-one cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the national population resides in the forty-one largest cities.

LDS History

The first members of the Church were American military who met as a group when the first four missionaries were assigned to Taiwan. Four missionaries arrived from Hong Kong in June 1956 and studied Mandarin Chinese for nine months before serving in Taiwan. Some anti-American demonstrations slowed progress in missionary work during this time period. Missionary work progressed slowly and steadily, with fifty converts baptized by the end of 1957. Elder Mark E. Peterson dedicated Taiwan for missionary work in June 1959.¹⁵¹³ The Taiwan Taipei Mission was created from the Hong Kong Mission in January 1971 and consisted of the island of Taiwan. A second mission was created in Kaohsiung in 1976 and relocated to Taichung in 1983. Taiwan remained in the Asia Area when it was divided in 1991 to create the Asia North Area. In the 1990s, Asia Area President Monte J. Brough noted that Church membership in Taiwan had grown much in strength and described leadership as very mature. At the time the only temple in the Asia Area was located in Taipei.¹⁵¹⁴ In 1996 Taiwan celebrated the forty years of the preaching of the Gospel in Taiwan. In 1998, a third mission was organized in Kaohsiung but was discontinued in 2009.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 55,805 (2012)

There were over 200 Latter-day Saints in 1958. By 1975, membership in Taiwan grew to 7,000 members. By 1984, there were 13,000 members increasing to 20,300 in 1993 and 22,000 in 1997. When the Kaohsiung Mission was created in 1998, there were 4,700 members in the Taiwan Kaohsiung Mission, 3,400 members in the Taiwan Taichung Mission, and 6,100 members in the Taiwan Taipei Mission.¹⁵¹⁵ By the end of 2000, there were nearly 29,827 members. LDS membership nearly doubled in the 2000s as membership increased to 36,598 in 2002, 40,855 in 2004, 45,086 in 2006, 49,054 in 2008, and 53,111 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates have fallen since 2000 from over 10% to slightly over 4% in 2007 and 2008. Instead of increasing by around 3,000 members a year, membership increases currently around 2,000 members a year. Yet a rate of growth for membership of over 4% a year is unusual for an industrialized country with over 50,000 Church

¹⁵¹² "Taiwan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127269.htm>

¹⁵¹³ "Taiwan," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/taiwan>

¹⁵¹⁴ Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Asia area: Welcome mat is out in several countries," LDS Church News, 19 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22920/Asia-area-Welcome-mat-is-out-in-several-countries.html>

¹⁵¹⁵ "New missions created; total now 331," LDS Church News, 10 January 1998. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/31386/New-missions-created-total-now-331.html>

members. Growth has been sporadic in Taiwan, with some years experiencing little growth and other years experiencing rapid growth. In the fall of 2009, there was marked growth in the Taiwan Taichung Mission, with 219 baptisms reported during a six week missionary transfer period. In 2010, one in 434 was nominally LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 80 Branches: 21 (April 2013)

In 1959, there were eight LDS branches. In 1975, thirty branches met in three districts. The number of LDS congregations increased to forty-seven in 1987, forty-eight in 1993, sixty-two in 1997, seventy-six in 2000, eighty-five in 2002, ninety-one in 2004, ninety-four in 2006, and 102 in 2009. By mid-2011, there were one hundred congregations.

The first stake was organized in Taipei in 1976. Additional stakes were organized in Kaohsiung (1981), Taipei East (1982), Taichung (1994), Tainan (1997), Taipei Central (1998), Tao Yuan (2001), Hsin Chu (2003), Chung Hsing (2004), Taichung North (2007), and Kaohsiung East (2010). The number of stakes increased from one in 1980 to three in 1990, six in 2000, and eleven in 2010. During the mid-1990s the first branch was organized in one of the small, offshore islands of Taiwan in Penghu. The missionary force in Taiwan rose to over 300 in 1996. A young single adult unit was organized in Taichung in the late 2000s. Three English-speaking congregations function in Taiwan: one ward in Taipei, and branches in Hsin Chu and Taichung. There are several Chinese-speaking congregations in Australia, Canada and the United States. There were five districts in 2000, and by 2010 all but one had become stakes. In 2011, the Hua Lien Taiwan District (1990) was the only remaining district.

Activity and Retention

President Hinckley visited Taiwan in the summer of 2005 to meet with members and dedicate the Church Administration Building for Taiwan. Over 1,200 members attended the dedication for the building, which, in addition to serving for Church administration, also housed five wards.¹⁵¹⁶ A celebration was held for the fiftieth anniversary of the Church's establishment in Taiwan in 2006.¹⁵¹⁷ Other events were held to commemorate the anniversary, including a bike ride from one side of the island to the other and a youth handcart trek in which more than 1,000 youth attended.¹⁵¹⁸ A special meeting was held in 2009 commemorating the fiftieth anniversary for the dedication of Taiwan for the preaching of the Gospel.¹⁵¹⁹

The average number of members per congregation in Taiwan increased from 414 in 2000 to 531 in 2010. During the 2009–2010 school year, 2,098 were enrolled in seminary and institute. The average number of active members per congregation in Taiwan is likely no more than one hundred, indicating that active membership for Taiwan numbers around 10,000 or 20% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), English.

The Book of Mormon was translated into Chinese in 1965 in Hong Kong. All LDS scriptures are available

¹⁵¹⁶ Chien, Emily. "Ties to Taiwan," LDS Church News, 6 August 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/47650/Ties-to-Taiwan.html>

¹⁵¹⁷ Morehead, Elder James R.; Morehead, Sister Joyce U. "Great blessings celebrated in Taiwan," LDS Church News, 17 June 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49078/Great-blessings-celebrated-in-Taiwan.html>

¹⁵¹⁸ "Handcart trek for youth of Taiwan," LDS Church News, 14 October 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49621/Handcart-trek-for-youth-of-Taiwan.html>

¹⁵¹⁹ Phillips, Elder James; Phillips, Sister Judith. "Celebrating 50 years of the gospel in Taiwan," LDS Church News, 27 June 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57513/Celebrating-50-years-of-the-gospel-in-Taiwan.html>

in traditional and simplified characters. Most LDS materials are available in traditional characters, whereas limited numbers of church materials are available in simplified characters.

Meetinghouses

There were approximately 66 LDS meetinghouses in mid-2011. During the 1960s two Church-built meetinghouses were constructed in Taipei and Kaohsiung. The majority of congregations meet in Church-built meetinghouses. Some smaller congregations meet in renovated buildings or rented spaces.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church has maintained positive relations with the Taiwanese government. Taiwanese officials visited Church headquarters in Salt Lake City in 1990 as part of a nation-wide visit to various religious organizations requesting assistance in promoting moral and social well-being in Taiwan¹⁵²⁰. Possibly the first Church member to serve in government, Jein-Nein Chen was elected governor of Taitung County in 1993.¹⁵²¹ In 2007 the Church held a family week in conjunction with local city and family organizations.¹⁵²² Missionaries also provided service in helping provide accurate English translations of Chinese signs in many of the cities throughout the country.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The church has taken advantage of no government restrictions on missionary work. Local members still struggle to conduct member missionary work and rely heavily on missionaries for convert baptisms.

Cultural Issues

Despite rapid industrialization and increasing wealth among Taiwanese, many have remained receptive to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Very few industrialized nations experience membership and congregational growth as rapid as Taiwan. The emphasis placed on the family by Taiwanese allows for greater receptivity of the Church's doctrines pertaining to family. Many Confucian teachings also fall in line with Church teachings, including contributing to society and strong work ethic. The widespread use of tea creates obstacles between culture and Church teachings. Ancestor worship can also lead to misunderstandings of Church doctrine, but members typically transform the worshipping and veneration of ancestors to respect and appreciation. The lack of Christians and weekly participation in attending religious services has likely contributed to low member activity and convert retention rates in the LDS Church.

National Outreach

The Church has established congregations in nearly all cities over 100,000 inhabitants. Sixty percent (60%) of the population lives in a city with a congregation. Every county, municipality, and special municipality on the island of Taiwan has at least one LDS congregation. Although the Church has established itself in nearly all the major population centers in Taiwan, some areas have seen greater success than others. Since 2000, the Church

¹⁵²⁰ Ricks, Kellene. "Official visits the Church in Taiwan," LDS Church News, 2 June 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/19601/Official-visits-the-Church-in-Taiwan.html>

¹⁵²¹ "LDS governor serves in Taiwan," LDS Church News, 9 July 1994. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/24730/LDS-governor-serves-in-Taiwan.html>

¹⁵²² Morehead, Elder James; Morehead, Sister Joyce. "Taipei family week," LDS Church News, 25 August 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50986/Taipei-family-week.html>

has seen marked progress in establishing itself outside of Taipei by districts maturing into stakes and established stakes greatly growing in the number of congregations. The number of congregations increased from six wards and one branch in the Taichung Taiwan Stake to thirteen wards and two branches within the boundaries of the two stakes in Taichung in 2009. The number of wards has also grown in the stakes in Kaohsiung and Tainan, increasing from six wards in each stake to ten wards and two branches in the Kaohsiung Taiwan Stake and nine wards and two branches in the Tainan Taiwan Stake. Some areas of Taiwan with multiple small or middle-sized cities do not have congregations close by, such as the coastline between Taichung and Tainan and areas along the northeastern and eastern coasts of the country.

One of the reasons for why the Taiwan Kaohsiung Mission was discontinued was that two missions could provide nearly the same amount of outreach that the three missions were producing. The Taiwan Kaohsiung Mission was one of the least productive areas for missionary work in Taiwan during the last decade, as no new stakes were organized within its boundaries. The other Taiwanese missions saw an increase in stakes during this time, most notably the Taiwan Taichung Mission. Taiwan had one of the lowest population-per-mission ratios in Asia of less than eight million people per mission. Other industrialized Asian countries like Japan and South Korea have much higher population-per-mission ratios of over ten million people per mission. With the mission realignment, each of Taiwan's missions serve eleven million to twelve million people.

Establishing dependent branches and groups headed by local leaders will be crucial towards expanding national outreach into the dozens of unreached medium-sized cities. Holding cottage meetings in these cities offers opportunities for church leaders and missionaries to gauge receptivity and growth prospects. Stressing member-missionary activity will be required to efficiently utilize limited full-time missionary resources.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity is comparable to other industrialized East Asian nations. The maturity of membership in Taiwan can be observed by the increase in the number of stakes and wards. Between 1996 and 2006, stakes increased from four to nine, wards increased from twenty-two to seventy-four, branches decreased from thirty-six to twenty, and districts decreased from four to two. The large increase in the number of wards during this ten-year period is a 236% increase; one of the most rapid the Church saw during this period in the world. The decrease in districts and branches indicates the Church's emphasis on establishing larger congregations so that more stakes could be organized. In order for branches to become wards, membership had to meet criteria provided by stake and area presidencies. The transition of many branches into wards suggests great strengthening and maturation of membership as well as continued growth between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s.

Despite the rapid increase in membership and wards since the mid-1990s, inactivity has become a growing problem, evidenced by large increases in the average number of members per congregation. Inactivity partly results from converts joining quickly and becoming inactive after only short periods of activity or sometimes without being active in the Church at all. Although many branches becoming wards, which include more active members, at least partially explains this trend, many new converts were not retained during periods of rapid growth. Several returned missionaries who served in Taiwan have estimated that 20%–25% of converts are retained. Retention does not appear to have increased significantly in the past decade.

Elder Bednar visited Taiwan in the spring of 2009 and spoke to over 5,000 members and missionaries. Elder Bednar emphasized Taiwanese members' responsibility to find investigators for missionaries to teach.¹⁵²³ The falling rate of membership growth is troubling, as the Church is better mobilized than ever before to teach and fellowship new converts.

¹⁵²³ Phillips, Elder James L.; Phillips, Sister Judith L. "Taiwan welcomes Elder Bednar," LDS Church News, 25 April 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57194/Taiwan-welcomes-Elder-Bednar.html>

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Integration of Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese into the Church does not appear to challenge growth or activity. The marginalization of indigenous groups by Taiwanese society and government may carry over into the attitudes of some members, making the fellowshipping of potential members and converts from indigenous tribes difficult in smaller congregations.

Language Issues

Church meetings and most members use Min Nan Chinese and Mandarin Chinese. Congregations do not appear segregated according to different Chinese languages. Missionaries are able to proficiently learn Chinese languages for Gospel teaching but often struggle with reading and writing. Outreach among the English-speaking expatriate population is possible through the three English congregations. Immigrant workers from other Asian countries receive little outreach. Filipinos may be the group most receptive to missionary work but often struggle to join the Church and stay active as most do not speak Chinese and are unable to attend an English speaking congregation due to distance.

Missionary Service

By the end of 1958 there were thirty-one missionaries serving in eight cities.¹⁵²⁴ The missionary force in Taiwan rose to over 300 in 1996. The number of missionaries serving in Taiwan likely reached a high of 400 in the mid-2000s and today possibly number around 250. Local members regularly serve full-time missions but remain unable to staff Taiwan's two full-time missions. Youth-oriented outreach and emphasis on missionary preparation by regular attendance in seminary and institute may improve the self-sufficiency of the Taiwanese LDS missionary force over the medium term.

Leadership

Leadership has continued to increase in strength and numbers, as reflected by the increase of new stakes and congregations in the past decade. A lack of qualified leaders and active male members in many locations appears to prevent the formation of additional congregations. Taiwan has provided leadership to the worldwide Church. Several Taiwanese members have been called to serve as Area Seventies, including Elder Yang Tzung-Ting and Elder Ho Yu-Chen.

Temple

Taiwan is assigned to the Taipei Taiwan Temple district. The Taipei Taiwan Temple was announced in 1982 and dedicated in 1984. A second temple for the Asia area was dedicated in Hong Kong in 1996. An additional temple will likely not be announced for Taiwan in the near future due to the small geographic size of Taiwan, well-developed national transportation systems, and the temple functioning at a fraction of its capacity. In 2010, endowment sessions were only held three times a day during most weekdays. On Saturday the temple held an expanded schedule with sessions occurring every half or as needed. A high-speed rail system facilitates travel, lessening the likelihood of additional temples until the Taipei temple is working at capacity.

Comparative Growth

Taiwan is a pillar of strength for the church in Asia. The Church has grown into one of the larger Christian denominations in Taiwan during the past fifty years in a nation with few Christians. With the exception of Singapore and Hong Kong, the Church may be more available to the overall population of Taiwan than in any

¹⁵²⁴ "Taiwan," Country Profile, 2 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/taiwan>

other Asian country close to the mainland. This membership and leadership base allows for greater growth for the Church, increasing the number of full families belonging to the Church and providing more social opportunities for fellowship. Taiwan is one of the only nations in the world to have a young single adult congregation with meetings not conducted in English.

Other Christian churches that strongly stress missionary work have historically seen limited success in Taiwan. Jehovah's Witnesses numbered around 6,700 in 2008 in ninety-one congregations. The Seventh Day Adventist Church claimed 5,400 members in 2008 in fifty-two churches. Christianity in Taiwan has seen few conversions compared to nearby South Korea, where the largest religion is Christianity. It is unclear as to why other Christian groups have seen little growth, but it may be in part due to greater focus from these groups on establishing their congregations in more populous Asian countries with greater humanitarian needs.

Future Prospects

Tremendous opportunity awaits the Church in Taiwan due to a strong membership base and experienced leadership. In coming years, the Church will likely expand and open new congregations in middle-sized cities between 50,000 and 100,000 people as members of the Church move to these cities or as converts join the Church.

Missionary work and Church growth in Taiwan have impacted the potential growth of the Church in mainland China. Mandarin Chinese, which is also the official language of the People's Republic of China, is taught and spoken by missionaries serving in Taiwan. Once China opens for missionary work, Hong Kong and Taiwan will likely play a significant role in supplying missionaries already fluent in Chinese languages that have experienced living where the Church has functioned for many decades.

Future stakes will likely be organized in the largest cities that currently only have one stake. The Chung Hsing Taiwan and Tainan Taiwan Stakes could be divided to create a third stake based in Chai Yi. Taipei appears unlikely to have additional stakes created until more wards are organized. The district in Hua Lien is unlikely to become a stake in the near future, as it spans almost the entire eastern coast, which is less populated than other areas.

THAILAND

Geography

AREA: 513,120 square km. One of the largest Southeast Asian nations, Thailand borders Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Burma. Most areas are subject to a warm, tropical climate with frequent rain. A southwest monsoon occurs from May to September, whereas a northeast monsoon with drier and cooler weather occurs from November to March. Southern Thailand always experiences a hot, humid climate. Northern Thailand is the most mountainous, whereas the middle of the country consists of low-lying plains suited for agriculture. The Khorat Plateau is northeastern Thailand's most dominant feature. In southern Thailand the Kra Isthmus straddles the Gulf of Thailand to the east and the Andaman Sea to the west. Rivers play an important part of the economy and agriculture, the foremost being the Chao Phraya and Mekong Rivers. Natural hazards include a falling water table around Bangkok and droughts. Pollution, deforestation, soil erosion, and poaching are environmental issues. Thailand is divided into seventy-six administrative provinces.

Peoples

Thai: 75%

Chinese: 14%

Other: 11%

The Thai people are divided into the Central Thai, Northeastern Thai, Northern Thai, and Southern Thai subgroups. The second largest ethnic group in Thailand is the Chinese, who form 14% of the population. Other people groups make up the remaining 11% of the population and mainly include Malay and Cambodian peoples. There are also a small number of mountain-dwelling tribes in the north, such as the Hmong and Karen. One hundred thirty thousand Burmese lived in refugee camps in 2007.

Population: 67,091,089 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.543% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.66 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 71.45 male, 76.33 female (2012)

Languages: Thai dialects (74%), Northern Khmer (2%), Min Nan Chinese (1.5%), Malay (1.5%), other (21%). Thai is the official language. Seventy-four native languages are spoken in Thailand. Languages with over one million speakers include Thai dialects (Northern Khmer (1.4 million), Min Nan Chinese (1.08 million), and Malay (1.0 million).

Literacy: 92.6% (2001)

History

Thailand, known as Siam until 1939, became a unified kingdom in the 1300s and was the only Southeast Asian nation to never come under foreign rule. A constitutional monarchy was established in 1932. Thailand allied with Japan in World War II and later with the United States following the war. The military intermittently ruled until the 1990s but has since reduced its influence on government. Civil unrest and political

instability in the late 2000s threatened the integrity of the nation. In recent years, thousands have died from violence caused by Malay separatist movements in southern Thailand.

Culture

In addition to native influences, Thai culture has been influenced by China, India and other Southeast Asian nations. Buddhism strongly influences daily life. Greeting others is highly regarded and based on a complex system of respect. Rice is the most important food staple. Media use is widespread even in less developed areas. Alcohol consumption is comparable to industrialized Asian nations, and cigarette consumption is similar to surrounding Southeast Asian nations. Soccer is the most popular sport. Marriage ceremonies often draw upon Buddhist practices. Prostitution, human trafficking, and the sex industry are widespread.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$9,700 (2011) [20.2% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.682

Corruption Index: 3.4 (2011)

Thailand has a developed economy that has seen rapid growth over the past several decades. In 2006, less than 10% of the population lived below the poverty line. Agriculture employs 42% of the workforce and produces 12% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 20% of the workforce and produces 44% of the GDP. Services account for 38% of the workforce and 44% of the GDP. Thailand experiences one of the lowest unemployment rates worldwide at 1.6% in 2009. However, underemployment is high. Primary agriculture products include rice, cassava and rubber. Tourism, textiles, and agricultural processing are the largest industries. Tin, rubber, natural gas, and tungsten are the most common natural resources. Primary trade partners include Japan, China, the United States, and Malaysia.

Thailand serves as a center for many illegal activities in Southeast Asia, such as human trafficking, prostitution, illegal drugs distribution, and poaching.

Faiths

Buddhist: 94.6%

Muslim: 4.6%

Christian: 0.7%

Other: 0.1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 292,000

Latter-day Saints 17,424 38

Seventh Day Adventists 13,796 45

Jehovah's Witnesses 3,423 85

Religion

The population in Thailand is overwhelmingly Buddhist (94.6%). Muslims account for the second largest religious group (4.6%) and are concentrated in the south mainly among the Malay. There are also smaller Muslim

groups such as the Cham people from Cambodia. Some Thais are also Muslims in the south. Christians make up only 0.7% of the population and numbered 438,600 in 2000.¹⁵²⁵

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is upheld by the government. There is no state religion, but Buddhism receives greater favoritism and government funding. Both registered and unregistered religious groups function without opposition from government. Government limits the number of foreign missionaries, but the quota on foreign missionaries has increased in recent years. Many missionaries for unregistered groups proselyte freely without government interference. Registered missionaries do have additional benefits, such as obtaining a visa of longer duration. No laws restrict proselytism. Religious education is required in schools. Laws restrict freedom of speech, as it is illegal to insult Buddhism.¹⁵²⁶

Largest Cities

Urban: 33%

Bangkok, Samut Prakan, Nonthaburi, Udon Thani, **Chon Buri**, Nakhon Ratchasima, Chiang Mai, **Hat Yai**, Pakkret, Phra Pradaeng, **Si Racha**, Lampang, Khon Kaen, **Thanyaburi**, **Surat Thani**, **Nakhon si Thammarat**, Ubon Ratchathani, **Nakhon Pathom**, **Rayong**, **Khlong Luang**, Phitsanulok.

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

Twelve of the twenty-one cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have a congregation. Fourteen percent (14%) of the national population lives in the twenty-one largest cities.

LDS History

The first missionaries to serve in Thailand arrived in 1854. Elder Elam Luddington served by himself for four months during which he was able to baptize the captain of a ship along with his wife. Informal Church meetings were held periodically in the 1950s and early 1960s until an English branch was organized in 1961. Elder Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated Thailand for missionary work in November 1966.¹⁵²⁷ Missionary work was restarted in Thailand in 1968 when six missionaries were sent to the country from the Southern Far East Mission, which covered Hong Kong, Taiwan, and most southeastern Asia. Thailand was included in the Singapore Mission (then referred to as the Southeast Asia Mission) when it was created the following year. The first missionaries called to Thailand began to learn the Thai language in the Language Training Mission in Laie, Hawaii. Thailand was organized into its own mission, the Thailand Bangkok Mission, on August 1, 1973. The country's first meetinghouse was built and dedicated the following year. The Thai translation of the Book of Mormon was completed in the mid-1970s. Thailand is currently assigned to the Asia Area.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 17,424 (2012)

By 1976 there were 779 members, increasing to 2,800 by 1988. Membership steadily grew to 3,600 in 1990 to 5,300 in 1994. Convert baptisms numbered 599 in 1997, 547 in 1998, 586 in 2000, and approximately 600 in 2000. At year-end 1999 there were 10,808 members. Membership reached 12,338 in 2001, 13,887 in

¹⁵²⁵ "Thailand," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, retrieved 15 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127289.htm>

¹⁵²⁶ "Thailand," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, retrieved 15 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127289.htm>

¹⁵²⁷ "Thailand," Country Profiles, retrieved 13 March 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/thailand>

2004, and 15,108 in 2006. Membership growth rates steadily fell during the 2000s from a high of 8.2% in 2001 to a low of 2.3% in 2007. Growth rates typically ranged from 2% to 5%.

Most members live in and around Bangkok or in the northeast. In 2007, 875 of Thailand's 15,000 members lived within the Chiang Mai Thailand District's boundaries.¹⁵²⁸ In 2010, one in 4,085 was nominally LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 6 Branches: 32 Groups: 1+ (April 2013)

The Thailand District was organized in 1966.¹⁵²⁹ By 1975, there were four districts and nine branches.¹⁵³⁰ Many of the cities outside of Bangkok, such as Chiang Mai and Ubon, were opened to missionary work in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Chiang Mai Thailand District was created in 1979. By 1988 there were seventeen branches in Thailand and 2,800 members of the Church. More districts were created in Khon Kaen in 1989 and Ubon in 1991. In late 1989, a goal was set to have the first stake created in Thailand in Bangkok within five years. The number of branches increased from sixteen to twenty-three between 1990 and 1994.

In June 1995, the first stake in Thailand was created in Bangkok. The Bangkok Thailand Stake was created from the Bangkok Thailand District and consisted of the Asoke, Bangkapi, Bangkhen, Bangnaa, and Thonburi Wards and the Bangkok (English), Chonburi, and Lopburi Branches. Another district was created in Thailand the following month in Udorn. The Pakkret Thailand District was created in 1999 and is the most recently created. At year-end 1999 there were five wards and twenty-four branches.

Between 2000 and 2009 the number of congregations increased from twenty-eight to thirty-nine, most of which were branches. Most branches were created in the Bangkok area and in the northeast. Just across the river from Laos in northeastern Thailand, Nong Khai was reopened to missionary work around 2005. One of the branches in the Bangkok Thailand Stake became a ward in 2001. In 2007, the English-speaking branch became a ward. There were seven wards and six branches in the stake in 2009. A group meets in southern Thailand in Phuket only for sacrament meetings.

Activity and Retention

Inactivity problems occur in all areas the Church is established but appear most severe in Bangkok and the northeast. A large portion of the converts were not retained prior to 1997, and in 1997 approximately 17% of converts baptized were still attending church on at least a monthly basis. The average number of members per congregation increased from 407 in 2000 to 441 in 2010. Branches typically have fifty to one hundred active members, whereas most wards likely have around one hundred active members. The Nong Khai Branch was one of the smaller branches and had around forty attending meetings on Sundays in early 2010. President Hinckley spoke to around 2,000 people in 2000. In 2006, sacrament attendance was approximately 3,000.¹⁵³¹ 964 were enrolled in seminary or institute during the 2007–2008 school year, or 6.1% of total membership. Active membership likely constitutes 17%–20% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Thai, Khmer, Chinese.

¹⁵²⁸ Stahle, Shaun. "Few, but faithful," LDS Church News, 22 September 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51061/Few-but-faithful.html>

¹⁵²⁹ "Thailand," Country Profiles, retrieved 13 March 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/thailand>

¹⁵³⁰ "The Church in Thailand," Friend, Apr 1975, 42.

¹⁵³¹ "Thailand anniversary," LDS Church News, 11 November 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49749/Thailand-anniversary.html>

All LDS scripture are available in Thai, Khmer, and Chinese. A large number of unit, temple, leadership, priesthood, Relief Society, Sunday School, teaching, young women, primary, missionary, audio/visual, family history, and institute manuals are available in Thai and Chinese. A fewer number of these materials are available in Khmer. Both Thai and Chinese have twelve issues a year of the *Liahona* whereas Khmer has six. Only *Gospel Principles Simplified* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are translated into Malay.

Meetinghouses

In early 2010, congregations met in nineteen meetinghouses owned by the Church and eighteen rented buildings. At this time construction began on what is to be the largest chapel constructed by the Church in Thailand to serve as the headquarters for the Pakkret Thailand District.¹⁵³²

Health and Safety

The percentage of those infected with HIV/AIDS is the highest in Asia at 1.4%. In Thailand, the spread of the disease has been propagated by illicit sexual relations and drug use. Other methods of infection include contaminated needles and HIV-positive mothers. Methamphetamine use has rapidly increased despite government opposition.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Twenty missionaries trained English teachers from 429 Bangkok-area schools how to more effectively teach the English language in 1997.¹⁵³³ In 2000, youth from the Bangkok Thailand Stake gathered toys, clothing and other needed items for children in a needy neighborhood.¹⁵³⁴ In 2001, humanitarian service missionaries worked on nearly two dozen projects aimed at reducing malnutrition among children. The missionaries helped schools become self-sufficient in feeding their students by planting gardens with nutritious foods.¹⁵³⁵ Immediately following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Church donated food, water and body bags to southern Thailand.¹⁵³⁶ Local members in Bangkok assembled aid relief to those affected.¹⁵³⁷ Thirty missionaries served as translators for stranded tourists following the tsunami.¹⁵³⁸ LDS Charities donated one hundred wheelchairs in 2010.¹⁵³⁹

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

¹⁵³² Hardy, Annette. "Construction begins on largest Latter-day Saint meetinghouse in Thailand," LDS Church News, 2 February 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58684/Construction-begins-on-largest-Latter-day-Saint-meetinghouse-in-Thailand.html>

¹⁵³³ "Missionaries assist English teachers in Bangkok," LDS Church News, 26 July 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29004/Missionaries-assist-English-teachers-in-Bangkok.html>

¹⁵³⁴ "Member youth in Bangkok provide truckload of goods," LDS Church News, 21 October 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38753/Member-youth-in-Bangkok-provide-truckload-of-goods.html>

¹⁵³⁵ Peacock, Bryon. "Humanitarian project helps alleviate hunger," LDS Church News, 24 February 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39399/Humanitarian-project-helps-alleviate-hunger.html>

¹⁵³⁶ Swensen, Jason. "Tsunami disaster: More than 100,000 dead," LDS Church News, 1 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46682/Tsunami-disaster-More-than-100000-dead.html>

¹⁵³⁷ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Emergency response is appropriate, immediate," LDS Church News, 15 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46735/Emergency-response-is-appropriate-immediate.html>

¹⁵³⁸ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Help in devastation," LDS Church News, 8 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46697/Help-in-devastation.html>

¹⁵³⁹ Hardy, Annette and Keith. "Thailand: Wheelchairs are presented to 100 individuals," LDS Church News, 10 February 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58774/Thailand-Wheelchairs-are-presented-to-100-individuals.html>

Religious Freedom

The Church faces few legal challenges that restrict its activities in Thailand. Missionaries from outside the country have served regularly with few restrictions.

Cultural Issues

As missionaries were trained primarily to teach those with a Christian background, early missionaries found little success, as few Thais have a Christian background. Much of the early success was reported among the small Christian population. Buddhist families often oppose family members who desire to join the Church. Unlike many Buddhist countries where non-Christian faiths predominate, Thailand has overall demonstrated tolerance and cooperation with Christian groups. There is a pressing need for LDS teaching approaches that are tailored to the religious background of Buddhists. The rise in drug trafficking and the sex industry challenges the Church's growth and influence in areas where these activities are prominent.

National Outreach

Fourteen percent (14%) of the national population resides in cities with LDS congregations. The Church has operated inside Thailand continuously since the late 1960s, yet membership (both numerical and active) is very small compared to the national population. With the exception of the Phuket Group, the Church has no presence in any of the cities or fifteen provinces south of Bangkok. Of the seventy-six administrative provinces, around twenty-five have an LDS congregation. Areas with the highest population density unreached by the Church include southern Thailand, coastal areas between Bangkok and Cambodia, and provinces between Bangkok and Phitsanulok.

Almost all mission outreach occurs in urban areas, which account for a third of the national population, yet slightly more than half of cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have no congregation. Rural areas and smaller cities and towns are unlikely to be reached by full-time missionaries until additional large cities are assigned missionaries. Cottage meetings may be instrumental in not only introducing the Church to larger cities without a congregation with only a few members but also to small communities on the outskirts of cities with established congregations.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Problems with member activity have been apparent since the Church's early history in Thailand. However, these issues appear to have worsened during the years of the most rapid membership growth. Low convert retention likely occurred from missionaries rushing investigators into baptism prior to developing a habit of weekly Church attendance. The Church experienced a jump in convert retention in the late 1990s under President Goodman from as low as 17% in 1997 to 72% in 2000. Progress in convert retention numbers were achieved due to emphasis on concentrating outreach on families and adults rather than individual children, as the percentage of family convert and adult baptisms was less than 10% in 1996 and 93% in 2000. Church attendance increased by 32% throughout Thailand between 1997 and 2000 due to a change in finding and teaching approaches. Convert comprehension of church doctrines and devotion to the LDS Church are ongoing challenges due to past challenges providing adequate pre-baptismal teaching and cultural misunderstandings.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Church's establishment in areas with a large Thai majority has resulted in few ethnic integration problems. The English and Khmer-speaking congregations were organized to address differing language needs of

members. The Church may experience challenges in southern Thailand with Malay and Thai ethnic tensions, although to date little proselytism has occurred in predominately Muslim Malay regions, as in neighboring Malaysia.

Language Issues

The widespread use of the Thai language and high literacy simplifies the Church's mission outreach. A wide range of ecclesiastical materials are available for distribution, resulting in 75% of the population able to obtain literature or scriptures in their native language. The Church has also recently begun greater outreach among the Khmer minority as indicated by the organization of a Khmer-speaking branch in Bangkok in the mid-2000s.

The hill tribes use languages with few speakers and reside in remote locations. These communities will continue to be lesser-reached or unreached until members join the Church in cities with congregations and take the gospel message to their homes. Additional language materials in for languages spoken by less than one million speakers appear unlikely for the foreseeable future.

Leadership

Thailand is one of two countries in Southeast Asia with a stake. Furthermore, the first stake in Thailand was created when Church membership was approximately 6,000. Other Southeast Asian nations, like Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia, had more members in 2010 yet did not have stakes organized. Missionaries reported that the Bangkok Thailand Stake has faced challenges developing local leadership, especially for those who do not also work for the Church. When the Bangkok Thailand Stake was first organized, both counselors in the stake presidency were Church employees. In 2001, the stake presidency was reorganized and the stake president of the Bangkok Thailand Stake and his first counselor were both Church employees.¹⁵⁴⁰ Local Church leaders who have also worked for the Church have performed maintenance, meetinghouse logistics, and translator services. Limited leadership appears a major problem in Thailand's five districts, which has prevented them from becoming stakes. Few Thai members also serve missions, and so there are few returned missionaries who the Church can draw upon for future leadership.

Temple

Thailand is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. In late 1989, 99% of Thai members of the Church had not been to the temple. President Eldredge of the mission encouraged members to attend the temple despite challenges. The following year, a temple trip was organized in the Manila Philippines Temple, where over 200 Thai members went through the temple for the first time.¹⁵⁴¹ Temple trips occur periodically, but many members are unable to attend due to distance, time, and money constraints. The Church purchased a building in a visible, easily reached area of Bangkok, which some speculate will be the site of a future temple. However, low member activity will likely deter the construction of a temple for many years.

Comparative Growth

No other country in Southeast Asia has as many congregations or members as Thailand, and few nations have had as long as a Church presence in the region. The nation with the second largest Church membership was Cambodia with around 8,400 members meeting in twenty-two congregations in 2008. The only other nations

¹⁵⁴⁰ "New stake presidents," LDS Church News, 28 July 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/40250/New-stake-presidencies.html>

¹⁵⁴¹ "Work, sacrifice bring 201 Thais to Manila Temple," LDS Church News, 11 August 1990. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20566/Work-sacrifice-bring-201-Thais-to-Manila-Temple.html>

in the region with stakes are Indonesia and Singapore. The Church has accomplished meaningful progress in Thailand despite the nation having the smallest percentage of Christians in Southeast Asia. Membership growth rates in Thailand have been lower than most nations in the region but higher than in Indonesia. Activity rates are comparable to most Southeast Asian nations with a public Church presence. Thailand is the country with the second most members with only one stake and the country with the ninth largest membership without a temple.

Christians in Thailand make up a tiny minority estimated at less than 1%. Other Christian churches with a strong emphasis on proselytizing have seen slow, limited growth. The Seventh Day Adventist Church reported 12,219 members in forty-two churches in 2008, with little growth in membership and churches for the past decade. Jehovah's Witnesses claimed about 2,800 active members in 2008 and experienced little growth.

Future Prospects

The Church in Thailand has moderate prospects for intermediate-term growth. However, the large increase in nominal membership without commensurate increase in active, participating members and low rates of missionary service pose significant challenges for long-term growth. The implementation of missionary programs developed in predominately Western Christian areas in non-Christian cultures and a rush to baptize inadequately prepared investigators who have not demonstrated sufficient personal understanding and life implementation of gospel teachings are major causes of high convert attrition in Thailand. Convert retention rates have experienced little improvement since the adoption of the *Preach My Gospel* program in 2004, as these key challenges remain largely unresolved. More consistent implementation of higher standards for baptism will be necessary if activity is ever to become the norm rather than the exception among Thai converts. Additional research, adaptations, and resources are needed to better convey the relevance and meaning of gospel teachings to the background and understanding of Buddhists and other non-Christians.

The largest chapel built by the Church in Thailand will serve as the stake center for the Pakkret Thailand District once branches in the district become strong enough to become wards.¹⁵⁴² Some congregations may be taken from the Bangkok Stake to create a second stake in the metropolitan area. A stake may be created in northeastern Thailand once member activity and leadership are more developed. Additional cities may open for missionary work, particularly nearby Bangkok, along coastal areas between Bangkok and Cambodia, and provincial capitals without current congregations. Due to Thailand's geographic size and large population, a second mission may be organized in coming years to provide greater national outreach and support to other regions of the country.

¹⁵⁴² Hardy, Annette. "Construction begins on largest Latter-day Saint meetinghouse in Thailand," LDS Church News, 2 February 2010. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58684/Construction-begins-on-largest-Latter-day-Saint-meetinghouse-in-Thailand.html>

TIMOR-LESTE (EAST TIMOR)

Geography

AREA: 14,874 square km. Located in southeastern Indonesia, Timor-Leste (East Timor) occupies the eastern half of Timor Island, the Oecussi region in western Timor, and two nearby small islands. Timor Island is the largest of the Lesser Sunda Islands. Hot, tropical weather occurs year round with rainy and dry seasons. Most the terrain is mountainous. Floods, landslides, earthquakes, cyclones, and tsunamis are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation and soil erosion. Timor-Leste is divided into thirteen administrative districts.

Peoples

Timorese: 100%

Timorese consist of Indonesian, Papuan, and Chinese ethnicities.

Population: 1,201,255 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.957% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 3.06 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 65.85 male, 70.81 female (2012)

Languages: Tetum and Portuguese are official languages, whereas Indonesian and English are working languages. Ninety-one percent (91%) of the population speaks Tetum as a first or second language, and 43% of Timorese can speak Indonesian,¹⁵⁴³ but less than 25% of the population speaks English or Portuguese. There have been no reliable or recent estimates for the number of native speakers of Timor-Leste's nineteen indigenous languages. Languages with the most speakers include Mambae, Makasae, Tukudede, Bunak, Kemak, Galoli, Tetun, and Tetun Dili.

Literacy: 58.6% (2002)

History

Timor-Leste, also known as East Timor, receives its name from the main island, Timor, which means *east* in Malay and Indonesian. Early Austronesian peoples first settled the island of Timor several millennia ago. Chinese and Indians first traded with the native peoples and were followed by the Portuguese, who began colonizing the island during the sixteenth century. During the nineteenth century, the Portuguese lost control of the western half of the island to the Dutch. In World War II, the Japanese occupied Timor between 1942 and 1945, after which power was restored to Portugal. In 1975, Indonesia invaded nine days after East Timor declared independence from Portugal. By the following year, East Timor became the Indonesian province of Timor Timur. For the next two decades, the indigenous population demonstrated a passive stance against Indonesian occupation that resulted in heavy losses, as up to a quarter of a million Timorese perished. In 1999, the population of Timor-Leste voted overwhelmingly for independence from Indonesia. This referendum was met with stiff opposition from anti-independence militias, which killed as many as 1,400 and displaced hundreds of thousands. Most of the Timor-Leste's infrastructure was destroyed at this time, including

¹⁵⁴³ "Background Note: Timor-Leste," Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 12 February 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35878.htm>

irrigation, utilities, and schools. Independence occurred in 2002, and four years later, the nation almost fell into disorder. Australia has assisted in helping maintain law and order over the past few years. In 2008, a rebel group attempted to attack government leaders. Overall conditions appear to be stabilizing.

Culture

Portuguese colonization and the Catholic Church appear to have left the greatest contemporary cultural footprints. Timor served as an important supplier of sandalwood for many centuries. Native legends continue to shape culture and oral tradition. Most the population has received little formal education.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$3,100 (2011) [6.44% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.495

Corruption Index: 2.4 (2011)

In 1999, as much as 70% of the economic infrastructure was destroyed by militias and Indonesian troops. Timor-Leste has faced many challenges rebuilding government and economic institutions but has seen many positive developments, including the extraction of oil reserves. Government has regarded its oil deposits as key to future economic growth and wealth, although revenues from such development in other developing nations have typically been captured primarily by government elite and have offered only limited benefits to the general public. Many remain unemployed and subject to poor living conditions; over 40% live below the poverty line. Agriculture employs 90% of the workforce and produces a third of the GDP. Primary crops include coffee, corn, rice, and cassava. Services account for half the GDP.

Corruption is perceived as widespread due to few government regulations and poor enforcement of laws. Increasing wealth from oil profits in the hands of an elite few and mismanagement have perpetuated corruption.

Faiths

Christian: 99%

Muslim: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 1,131,533

Seventh Day Adventists 459 1

Jehovah's Witnesses 197 3

Latter-day Saints less than 20

Religion

Approximately 98% of the population is Catholic. Traditional customs and beliefs continue to be followed by many, although they are not viewed as religious. Few Timorese converted to Islam during Indonesian occupation, and most ethnic Malay Muslims left the country after independence.¹⁵⁴⁴

¹⁵⁴⁴ "Timor-Leste," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127290.htm>

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects freedom of religion, which tends to be upheld by government policies and law. There is no official state religion, but the Catholic Church tends to have a strong influence on politics. Non-Catholics have served in several legislative positions, however. Missionaries may operate in the country. Government registration does not appear to be required, and the Secretary of State for Security—the government organization responsible for approving religious group registrations—has yet to establish registration procedures. Non-Catholic groups in Dili enjoy positive relations with the Catholic majority, whereas Protestants and Muslims in rural areas tend to experience greater suspicion. Some instances of societal abuses of religious freedom have occurred and were typically aimed at Protestant denominations. However, demonstrations to bar the operations of these denominations have failed due to government and international police support of preserving religious freedom.¹⁵⁴⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 27%

Dili, Dare, Los Palos, Baucau, Ermera.

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

No cities have an LDS congregation. Nineteen percent (19%) of the national population lives in the five largest cities.

LDS History

There has been no reported Church presence in Timor-Leste. Timor-Leste belongs to the Indonesia Jakarta Mission.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 20 (2012)

The Church does not report membership for Timor-Leste. At least one Timorese member has joined the Church and in 2009 resided in West Malaysia.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 (2012)

No LDS congregations have functioned in Timor-Leste.

Activity and Retention

No convert baptisms have occurred in the country. Any members worship in the privacy of their own homes and have joined the Church elsewhere.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Portuguese, Indonesian.

All LDS scriptures are available in Portuguese and Indonesian. Most Church materials have been translated into Portuguese and Indonesian.

¹⁵⁴⁵ "Timor-Leste," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127290.htm>

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church donated clothing, food, and hygiene kits to refugees in West Timor who fled from East Timor in 2000. A director of humanitarian services for the Church visiting refugee camps in West Timor prompted the aid, for which the Church was thanked by the Indonesian government.¹⁵⁴⁶ Indonesian members packed and sent over 30,000 hygiene kits to Timor in 2000.¹⁵⁴⁷ New Zealander members also donated bedding, hygiene kits, and clothing.¹⁵⁴⁸ A single aid package worth over \$156,000 was delivered for Christmas 2000 to Dili.¹⁵⁴⁹ In 2002, the Church provided the transportation for delivering wooden fishing boats from Australia to East Timor, which were crafted by the Aussie Boats for East Timor charity.¹⁵⁵⁰

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

East Timor exhibits a strong respect for religious freedom despite recent independence, outbreaks of violence, and some social intolerance directed toward Protestant churches, especially in rural areas. The Church has likely established a positive relationship with the government through years of humanitarian aid in the early 2000s. Tolerance of non-Catholics in government positions also points toward potential for future Church members to integrate into society, particularly in Dili. No legal obstacles appear to prevent an official Church presence, including proselytism and the organization of congregations.

Cultural Issues

The strong influence of the Catholic Church on society will likely pose some challenge for mission outreach as it has for other mission-oriented Christian denominations, although receptivity is likely to be greater than in Indonesia where Muslims predominate. Low standards of living and poverty present opportunities for humanitarian service.

National Outreach

Limited mission resources, distance from mission headquarters in Jakarta, the lack of native members, the lack of church material in the dominant language, Timor-Leste's small population, limited infrastructure, recent independence, and history of instability have likely reduced the priority of commencing missionary work. Conditions for the initial establishment of the Church appear most accommodating in Dili due to its large population, somewhat central location, and greater tolerance toward non-Catholic groups. Outreach in rural areas will likely not occur for many years following formal Church establishment in Dili. Separated from the rest of Timor-Leste, the small Oecussi region may not receive mission outreach.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The strong influence of the Catholic Church may be a source of convert attrition due to societal and family

¹⁵⁴⁶ "Indonesian minister thanks Church for aid," LDS Church News, 6 May 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/37733/Indonesian-minister-thanks-Church-for-aid.html>

¹⁵⁴⁷ Sheffield, Sheridan. "Delivering hope with humanitarian aid," LDS Church News, 21 October 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38759/Delivering-hope-with-humanitarian-aid.html>

¹⁵⁴⁸ "Relief Society gives humanitarian aid," LDS Church News, 22 July 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/38157/Relief-Society-gives-humanitarian-aid.html>

¹⁵⁴⁹ "Christmas aid to help East Timor regrow," LDS Church News, 30 December 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39120/Christmas-aid-to-help-East-Timor-regrow.html>

¹⁵⁵⁰ "Church supports boats for Timor," LDS Church News, 26 October 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42706/Church-supports-boats-for-Timor.html>

pressures for potential LDS converts to return to their previous faith. The development of local leadership, seminary and institute instruction, adequate pre-baptismal teaching and church attendance of prospective converts, and the creation of a Timorese full-time missionary force will greatly assist in the development of high member activity and convert retention.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The departure of many non-Timorese following independence has decreased ethnic diversity. The Church will likely experience few if any future ethnic integration issues at church.

Language Issues

The Church has no language materials available in native languages spoken by most of the population. Initial mission outreach will most likely commence with those who speak Indonesian, Portuguese, and English prior to greater breakthroughs with monolingual speakers of indigenous languages such as Tetum and Mambae.

Leadership

Without indigenous Church members, foreign missionaries will most likely hold leadership positions for several years following the assignment of the first senior missionary couple.

Temple

East Timor belongs to the Hong Kong China Temple district. No organized temple trips occur.

Comparative Growth

Timor-Leste shares many similarities with nations in the Pacific rather than with Asia due to ethnic and religious commonalities. The Church has tended to experience slow initial membership growth in predominantly Catholic nations with little pluralism, although increasing pluralism has historically been associated with higher growth rates, as in the Philippines and Latin America. Timor-Leste is among one of the few nations in Southeast Asia and the Pacific without an official Church presence.

One of only two nations in Asia that has a predominantly Christian population, Timor-Leste has seen little growth among non-Catholic denominations due to political instability over the past several decades and the strength and size of the Catholic Church. Protestant outreach has been limited to Dili and Atauro, and growth has been slow.

Future Prospects

Past humanitarian aid and current economic development needs may help the Church gain an official foothold in Timor-Leste. However the country's isolated location from mission headquarters in Jakarta, government's fragile hold on its internal affairs, and limitations of missionary manpower and resources may discourage the Church from actively pursuing mission activity for several more years. Timorese members who joined the Church abroad and return to their home country may provide some inroads for establishing the Church, although this method is unlikely to be effective for many years due to the small national population, the smaller number of expatriate Timorese in nations with outreach, and the strong economic gradients discouraging expatriates from returning. As Timor becomes increasingly stable, considerable opportunities exist for the establishment of mission outreach. The placement of even one senior missionary couple in Dili could greatly assist in the establishment of the Church over the long term.

VIETNAM

Geography

AREA: 331,210 square km. Vietnam is a long, narrow country that borders the South China Sea, Cambodia, Laos, and China in Southeast Asia. There are a few small islands in extreme northern and southern Vietnam. Southern Vietnam has a tropical climate, whereas northern Vietnam experiences a monsoon climate from May to September and a dry, warm season from October to March. The terrain consists of large river deltas in the north and south, highlands or mountains in the center and extreme northwest, hills in the interior, and plains along the coast. The Mekong River empties into the South China Sea in southern Vietnam. Natural hazards include typhoons and flooding. Environmental issues include deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution, and urbanization.

Peoples

Kinh (Viet): 86.2%

Tay: 1.9%

Thai: 1.7%

Muong: 1.5%

Khome: 1.4%

Hoa: 1.1%

Nun: 1.1

Hmong: 1%

Other: 4.1%

The Viet population mainly resides in southern Vietnam, coastal areas, and in the north around Hanoi. Tay and Thai live in the north in the interior and mountainous areas. Muong primarily populate the Thanh Hoa Province and surrounding areas. Khome are related to the Cambodian Khmer and live in the Mekong Delta and along the Cambodian border. Hoa, who are Han Chinese, Nun, and Hmong reside in northern Vietnam.

Population: 91,519,289 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.054% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.89 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 69.95 male, 75.16 female (2012)

Languages: Vietnamese (86%), Tay (2%), Muong (1.5%), Khmer [Cambodian] (1.4%), other (9.9%). Vietnamese is the official language, and 106 native languages are spoken. Languages with over one million speakers include Vietnamese (65.8 million), Tay (1.48 million), Muong (1.14 million), and Khmer (1.06 million),

Literacy: 90.3% (2002)

History

The Chinese Han dynasty conquered northern Vietnam in the first century BC and ruled the region for the next 1,000 years. Vietnam became an independent kingdom in 939 AD. In the fifteenth century, the kingdom

conquered the Champa Kingdom and extended its borders south to the Mekong Delta. Tensions arose in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries between the north and south, resulting in sporadic civil war. In 1858, the French began annexing Vietnam and the entire country fell under French rule within thirty years. Growing anti-colonial sentiment began from French-educated Vietnamese in the twentieth century and resulted in a communist movement for independence in the 1940s under Ho Chi Minh. Vietnam declared independence in 1945, but a French presence in the region continued for another decade. In the late 1940s, a division between north and south ensued due to the political polarization of communists and anti-communists. This resulted in two different nations by 1954. The United States provided military assistance to South Vietnam to fight the Viet Cong—armed guerilla fighters who infiltrated the south—in the early 1960s. The United States had more than half a million U.S. soldiers stationed in the country by 1969. The United States withdrew its forces in the 1970s, allowing the North to annex the South by 1975 and reunify the country. Vietnam attacked Cambodia in 1978 and engaged in border skirmishes for several years. The government remains a communist state, but has seen increasing integration into the international community.

Culture

The communist government controls the media and regulates entertainment. Daily life has centered on agriculture for millennia; industrialization has begun only recently. Diet consists of a large amount of vegetables and seafood. Cuisine is clean and light, as little oil is used. Vietnam enjoys a rich history of folk literature and poetry. Soccer is the most popular sport. Alcohol is consumed less than in most countries, and rates of cigarette usage are similar to rates in most Western European nations.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$3,300 (2011) [6.86% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.593

Corruption Index: 2.9 (2011)

The economy has made progress despite a destructive civil war and the loss of economic support from the Soviet Union. During much of the 1990s and 2000s, the economy grew rapidly, as many industries were privatized, foreign investment increased, and the large workforce was mobilized. Poverty rates have also declined, yet 15% live below the poverty line. The limited degree to which the economy developed in the past two decades is apparent, as agriculture employs 56% of the workforce and generates only 21% of the GDP. Primary agricultural products include rice, coffee, and rubber. Industry produces 40% of the GDP and provides labor for 19% of the workforce. Primary industries include food processing, clothing and shoe manufacturing, and machinery. Vietnam has recently become one of the largest oil producers in Southeast Asia. The global financial crisis has slowed economic growth and increased unemployment. Primary trade partners include China, the United States, Japan, and Singapore.

Corruption is found in all levels of society. Freedom of speech is limited and complicates the exposure and punishment of corruption. Government has stepped up its fight towards corruption among government officials and police, but has seen limited results.

Faiths

Buddhist: 9.3%

Christian: 7.2%

Hoa Hao: 1.5%

Cao Dai: 1.1%

Muslim: 0.1%

None: 80.8%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 6,150,000

Seventh Day Adventists 10,497 12

Latter-day Saints 1,000 3

Jehovah's Witnesses 50

Religion

Most are nonreligious. Approximately half the population is nominally Buddhist. Many Buddhists and nonreligious individuals also adhere to teachings from Daoism and Confucianism. Catholics form the second largest religious group and number between six and eight million. Hoa Hao and Cao Dai are religions that originated in Vietnam in the twentieth century. Hoa Hao shares many similarities with Buddhism, whereas Cao Dai is a syncretism of many religious traditions, particularly Buddhism and Christianity.¹⁵⁵¹

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 21st

The constitution allows for religious freedom, but this right is sometimes restricted. There is no official religion, and no religions receive favoritism. All religious activities, whether by officially recognized or unrecognized religious groups, require some registration by the government. Registered religious groups and congregations receive greater rights for assembly, whereas unregistered congregations can be closed down. Many Christian congregations have applied for recognition but remain unregistered. Obtaining land and approval for constructing meetinghouses is challenging.

Missionaries may serve in Vietnam but require approval from the government and a sponsor from a national or local religious group. Open proselytism is frowned upon. Travel for religious purposes requires government approval, which is generally granted. The printing of religious material is restricted, and the shipping of religious materials into the country can be difficult and requires special permissions. Some registered and unregistered groups report pressure to renounce their beliefs. In recent years, the government has grown increasingly accommodating to many religious groups and restrictions on religious freedom have diminished.¹⁵⁵²

Largest Cities

Urban: 28%

Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, **Hai Phong, Da Nang, Bien Hoa, Hue, Nha Trang, Can Tho, Rach Gia, Qui Nhon, Vung Tau, Nam Dinh, Long Xuyen, Cam Pha, Phan Thiet, Hong Gai, Cam Ranh, Buon Me Thuot, Thai Nguyen, Da Lat, My Tho, Soc Trang, Play Cu, Thanh Hoa, Ca Mau, Bac Lieu, Vinh Long, Hoa Binh.**

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

Two of the twenty-eight cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have a congregation. Eleven percent (11%) of the national population lives in the twenty-eight largest cities.

¹⁵⁵¹ "Vietnam," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127294.htm>

¹⁵⁵² "Vietnam," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127294.htm>

LDS History

The first LDS members likely lived in Vietnam as early as the 1950s. American members arrived in greater numbers in the 1960s as a result of the Vietnam War. At year-end 1965, membership numbered 140 in Saigon. There were seventeen Vietnamese members in the city. Membership grew to over 5,000 in 1968 and members met in over sixty groups; most members were U.S. servicemen and support personnel. Three districts met the needs of the members prior to the end of the war. Vietnamese membership increased to seventy. The translation of Church materials into Vietnamese began in the late 1960s. By March 1975, there were approximately 300 Vietnamese members. Membership was fairly evenly divided between males and females. Missionaries were withdrawn the following month, and almost one hundred Vietnamese members left the country. The last Church services in Saigon were held on April 27, 1975.¹⁵⁵³ Between 150 and 200 members remained in South Vietnam following the war.

In 1993, two senior missionary couples were assigned to Hanoi on humanitarian assignment.¹⁵⁵⁴ In May 1996, President Gordon B. Hinckley visited the country and rededicated the land in Hanoi.¹⁵⁵⁵ Vietnamese natives began serving missions within their own country since the mid-2000s and carefully follow laws and regulations. In 2008, there were nine missionaries serving from Vietnam; eight served in the Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission. In early 2012, missionaries serving in Cambodia reported that the first nonnative full-time missionaries began serving in Vietnam but that these missionaries must be ethnically Vietnamese.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,000 (2011)

A mixture of expatriates and Vietnamese comprise membership. When President Hinckley visited in 1996, twenty-six attended in Ho Chi Minh City and nineteen in Hanoi.¹⁵⁵⁶ Membership numbered approximately one hundred by 2000. In 2009, there were an estimated 1,000 members.¹⁵⁵⁷

Congregational Growth

Branches: 3 (2012)

Responsibility for Vietnam was held by the Thailand Bangkok Mission in the early and mid-1990s. The Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City Branches were organized in 1995.¹⁵⁵⁸ Vietnam became part of the newly created Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission in 1997. A third branch met on the outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City in 1999. Branches in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City are the only congregations recognized by the government. Groups or dependent branches meeting in the privacy of members' homes may function in other areas of the country. Members reported in the early 2010s that both branches pertained to the Hanoi Vietnam District.

¹⁵⁵³ Britsch, R. Lanier; Holloman, Richard C. Jr. "The Church's Years in Vietnam," *Ensign*, Aug 1980, 25.

¹⁵⁵⁴ "Couples enter Vietnam to teach English," *LDS Church News*, 30 January 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23222/Couples-enter-Vietnam-to-teach-English.html>

¹⁵⁵⁵ "Pres. Hinckley dedicates Cambodia: Gives 'addendum' to prayer during his visit to Vietnam," *LDS Church News*, 8 June 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27459/Pres-Hinckley-dedicates-Cambodia-Gives-addendum-to-prayer-during-his-visit-to-Vietnam.html>

¹⁵⁵⁶ "Pres. Hinckley dedicates Cambodia: Gives 'addendum' to prayer during his visit to Vietnam," *LDS Church News*, 8 June 1996. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/27459/Pres-Hinckley-dedicates-Cambodia-Gives-addendum-to-prayer-during-his-visit-to-Vietnam.html>

¹⁵⁵⁷ "Vietnam," *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127294.htm>

¹⁵⁵⁸ "Vietnam," *Deseret News 2010 Church Almanac*, p. 608.

Activity and Retention

In 2006, government officials gave permission for convert baptisms to occur in Vietnam.¹⁵⁵⁹ In mid-2009, approximately 125 attended meetings held in Ho Chi Minh City. Hanoi had around fifty active members in 2008. Active membership likely stands around 200–250, or 20%–25% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Vietnamese, Khmer, Chinese.

All LDS scriptures are available in Vietnamese, Khmer, and Chinese. The Church has translated some priesthood, relief society, Sunday School, young women, primary, missionary, audio/visual, family history, and scripture materials into these three languages. Some CES materials are also available in Khmer.

Meetinghouses

Meetings for the Ho Chi Minh City Branch are held in a rented duplex. The Hanoi Branch likely meets in a rented space or renovated building.

Health and Safety

Like many Southeastern Asian countries, Vietnam has a high risk for infectious diseases. Health risks caused by poor sanitation, poverty, and rapid industrialization pose safety hazards; 0.5% of the population is infected with AIDS/HIV.

Humanitarian and Development Work

In 1992, the Church donated medical supplies and prostheses.¹⁵⁶⁰ Senior missionary couples have taught English for service since 1993.¹⁵⁶¹ In 2008, the Church donated wheelchairs.¹⁵⁶²

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Vietnam has steadily gained greater religious freedom over the past two decades. The government has given permission for humanitarian missionaries to enter, recognized two congregations, allows baptisms to occur, and permits Vietnamese natives and ethnic Vietnamese who are citizens of other nations to serve as full-time missionaries. Open proselytism is restricted, and non-Vietnamese missionaries cannot serve as proselytizing missionaries. The creation of new congregations is difficult as the Church is not officially recognized and many Christian groups face resistance from multiple levels of government. In 2009, Church attorneys were working diligently to get the Church official recognition, but as of early 2012, it was unclear whether any progress had occurred. Several Protestant groups received official recognition in 2008.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Anderson, D. Allen. "Growth of the Church (In U.S.)," Asia Area Presidency Messages 2006, retrieved 9 March 2010. http://www.lds.org/hk/ldsorghk_0908/english/gospel_library/asia_leader_messages/year/2006/index.htm

¹⁵⁶⁰ "Church donates medical gift to Vietnam," LDS Church News, 11 January 1992. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22585/Church-donates-medical-gift-to-Vietnam.html>

¹⁵⁶¹ "Couples enter Vietnam to teach English," LDS Church News, 30 January 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23222/Couples-enter-Vietnam-to-teach-English.html>

¹⁵⁶² "Wheelchairs," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 9 March 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6213-1-3215-1,00.html>

Cultural Issues

The large nonreligious population poses the greatest cultural challenge to the growth of the Church. The several decades of communism have created a society unfamiliar with religion. The large number of ethnic minorities is challenging for proselytism due to the diversity of cultural practices and religious beliefs. However, Vietnam has one of the highest percentages of Christians in Southeast Asia. Outreach among Christian Vietnamese may provide the greatest convert retention and growth, as many of these individuals have developed religious habits in considerable harmony with LDS teachings. Some investigators addicted to cigarettes face challenges quitting smoking prior to baptism and must remain vigilant to not relapse. Substance abuse rates are lower than in most Asian nations, mitigating some difficulties experienced in other cultures.

National Outreach

The Church's presence is limited to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City; at least 94% of the population lives in areas without an LDS congregation. Government regulations limit proselytism and Church contact to friends of members. Most ethnic groups do not have a single Church member and have never had contact with the Church. Greater national outreach is unlikely to occur until full government recognition is achieved, and as for other Christian denominations with government recognition, achieving permissions to organize new congregations may be difficult. The greatest opportunities for improving national outreach is likely to be through the Church conducting humanitarian service in areas without congregations, as well as the influence of isolated members who follow church teachings. Such efforts foster positive relations with local and national government and may facilitate approval for additional congregations.

The lack of a mission in Vietnam limits national outreach. Vietnamese missionaries also serve in the three Vietnamese-speaking branches in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The limited number of Vietnamese missionaries sometimes results in the removal of some missionaries from Vietnam to provide language training to newly arrived foreign missionaries serving in the Vietnamese-speaking branches in Cambodia. Missionaries serving from Vietnamese-speaking branches in Phnom Penh cannot serve in Vietnam currently. If government one day permits foreign proselyting missionaries, Vietnamese missionaries from Cambodia and the United States will be a valuable asset to humanitarian service and national outreach.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

The hiatus in Church activities between 1975 and the 1990s resulted in the Church losing contact with almost all 150–200 members. Few have been found and are active in the Church in Vietnam today. Members living substantial distances from congregations likely struggle to actively participate in meetings and are prone to become less active. The absence of foreign proselyting missionaries and government restrictions on proselytism may facilitate increased member activity and convert retention as local members actively fulfill member-missionary responsibilities and converts usually attend Church meetings for extended periods prior to baptism.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Native members are primarily or entirely Vietnamese. The Church has not experienced issues integrating different native ethnicities due to the lack of ethnic diversity in membership. Friction between Vietnamese and Western expatriates appears minimal and limited to communication and language issues. Potential challenges may occur once greater national outreach occurs.

Language Issues

The Church has an exceptionally large array of ecclesiastical materials in Vietnamese for a nation with such a small Church membership. Translations of the scriptures and church literature have come primarily as the result of mission efforts among the Vietnamese in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War and among Vietnamese in the United States. Vietnamese speakers form the majority of the population. However, the non-Vietnamese speaking population presents a daunting challenge to the Church for outreach. Many of these languages have only recently had the Bible published and have had minimal Christian evangelism. Furthermore, many of these groups populate remote regions far from established Church centers. The easiest of these groups to reach are the Khmer and Chinese, as Church materials are available in these languages and both reside near outreach centers.

The small Vietnamese Church membership and many English-speaking American expatriates cause linguistic challenges. In Ho Chi Minh City, meetings are conducted in Vietnamese, but English is used frequently, whereas in Hanoi meetings are held in Vietnamese with translation for English speakers. Greater growth in foreign and Vietnamese membership may result in the creation of language-specific congregations to facilitate gospel understanding and fellowship.

Leadership

Both branches have a native branch president and the number of active members has necessitated the organization of a district. However, Vietnamese leadership is limited. In 2010, a counselor in the Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission presidency resided in Vietnam and was an American. Vietnam has produced a consistent number of missionaries despite a tiny membership and government restrictions. The majority of missionaries serve from Ho Chi Minh City.

Temple

Vietnam pertains to the Hong Kong China Temple district. Trips to the temple likely require government approval and occur infrequently. Members face great challenges in finances and time to go to the temple.

Comparative Growth

Vietnam has experienced slow membership and congregational growth since the Church's reestablishment. Growth rates and the output of native missionaries are comparable to other Asian nations with limited religious freedom, such as Nepal. Countries in Southeast Asia with religious freedom have seen strong membership growth in the past decade, but low retention and modest congregational growth.

Most Christian denominations have seen steady increases in membership but little or no increases in reported congregations and have experienced difficulty achieving government recognition for new congregations. Other Christian groups have had a presence for many decades and have a much larger presence than the LDS Church with more developed local leadership and greater member-missionary outreach.

Future Prospects

The Church has enjoyed a positive relationship with the government due to expansive humanitarian and educational work and its care in observing government regulations. Many other religious groups have obtained recognition recently, and official registration of the LDS Church may be possible within the next decade. Additional congregations may be organized in Ho Chi Minh City to serve language needs, and home groups

may be established outside cities with congregations. Restrictions on religious expression and practice will continue to limit growth.

SOUTH ASIA

**Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India,
Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka**

REGIONAL PROFILE

Geography

AREA: 5,131,069 square km. Principally consisting of the Indian subcontinent and the southern Himalayas, South Asia includes islands in the surrounding Indian Ocean and some arid, interior areas bordering Central Asia. India is the region's largest country, accounting for three-fifths of South Asia's total land area. The Himalayas are one of the world's largest mountain ranges and contain the highest peaks in the world. Additional large mountain ranges include the Karakoram in Kashmir and northern Pakistan, the Hindu Kush in Afghanistan, and the Western Ghats in southwestern India. Alpine or temperate climatic conditions occur in most mountainous areas. The Deccan Plateau consists of upland areas occupying interior terrain in central India, which is subject to cooler temperatures than other areas of India. Hot, arid conditions occur in the Thar Desert straddling the Pakistan-India border and arid regions of Afghanistan. Several large rivers originate in the Himalayas and form major river plains that are densely populated, including the Ganges in eastern India, the Indus in Pakistan, the Brahmaputra in far eastern India. Hot, tropical conditions occur throughout most river plains and low-laying areas of South Asia. Earthquakes, flooding, droughts, cyclones, landslides, tsunamis, sea level rise, and monsoon rains are natural hazards. Environmental issues include fresh water scarcity, soil degradation, overgrazing, deforestation, desertification, pollution, water-borne diseases, and overpopulation.

Population: 1,616,700,766 (July 2011)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.305%

Fertility Rate: 2.81 children born per woman (2011)

Life Expectancy: 64.81 male, 68.07 female (2011)

Peoples

Indo-Aryan: 74%

Dravidian: 18.5%

Other: 7.5%

South Asia experiences a high degree of ethnic diversity with nearly three-quarters of the regional population pertaining to the Indo-Aryan ethnic family. Indo-Aryans principally reside in all areas of South Asia except Afghanistan, western areas of Pakistan, northern areas of Nepal and Bhutan, southern India, and northern Sri Lanka and comprise the majority of the population in all South Asian nations except Afghanistan and Bhutan. Major Indo-Aryan groups include Bengalis, Nepali ethnic groups, Punjabis, Sinhalese, and Sindhis. Dravidians constitute nearly one-fifth of the regional population and reside primarily in south India and northern Sri Lanka. The largest Dravidian ethnic groups include Telugus, Tamils, Kannadigas, and Malayalis. Indo-Aryans tend to be somewhat more Caucasian in appearance and Dravidians somewhat darker, although millennia of intermixing have created a broad ethnic spectrum without distinct boundaries. Other ethnic groups in the region are primary Iranian (including Pashtuns, Tajiks, and Balochs), Tibetan, and Mongoloid.

Languages: Hindi (30%), Bengali (13%), Punjabi (6%), Telugu (5%), Marathi (5%), Tamil (5%), Urdu (4%), Gujarati (3%), Kannada (3%), Bhojpuri (2%), Malayalam (2%), Oriya (2%), Pashto (2%), Sindhi (1%), Maithili (1%), Chhattisgarhi (1%), Sinhalese (1%), Assamese (1%), Dari (1%), Nepali (1%), Sariaki (1%), Chittagonian (1%), Haryanvi (1%), Magahi (1%), Deccan (1%), Malvi (1%), Rangpuri (1%), Kanauji (1%), Dhundari (1%), other (3%). English is spoken by many as a second language, in government affairs, and as a language of interethnic communication. Languages with over three million speakers include Hindi (488 million), Bengali (206 million), Punjabi (94 million), Telugu (86 million), Marathi (83 million), Tamil (74 million), Urdu (70 million), Gujarati (54 million), Kannada (44 million), Bhojpuri (39 million), Malayalam (38 million), Oriya (38 million), Pashto (29 million), Sindhi (19 million), Maithili (18 million), Chhattisgarhi (18 million), Sinhalese (16 million), Assamese (15 million), Dari (14 million), Nepali (14 million), Sariaki (14 million), Chittagonian (13 million), Haryanvi (13 million), Magahi (13 million), Deccan (13 million), Malvi (10 million), Rangpuri (10 million), Kanauji (9.5 million), Dhundari (9 million), Bagheli (7.8 million), Konkani dialects (7.6 million), Sylheti (7 million), Varhadi-Nagpuri (7 million), Santali (6.2 million), Lambadi (6 million), Kashmiri (5.6 million), Marwari (5.6 million), Balochi (5 million), Mewati (5 million), Hadothi (4.7 million), Merwari (3.9 million), Dogri (3.8 million), Mina (3.8 million), Godwari (3 million), Hindko (3 million), and Shekhawati (3 million).

Literacy: 28%–94% (country average: 58%)

History

Some of the oldest known human settlements and civilizations in the world thrived in South Asia, such as the ancient Indus civilization in present-day Pakistan five thousand years ago. Hinduism is among the world's oldest religions and significantly influenced the Indian subcontinent as early as the second millennia BC. The advent of Buddhism occurred sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries BC in northeast India and Nepal. South Asia was dominated by tribalism and small nation-states during the first millennia before and after Christ. During this period, Buddhist settlers from India settled the Maldives and Sri Lanka. Alexander the Great pushed eastward into Afghanistan and Pakistan during the fourth century BC and founded the Hellenistic state of Bactria. The Arabs invaded the region and spread Islam in the seventh century AD. Science and technology blossomed in India during the Middle Ages. The Mongols invaded northern South Asia in the thirteenth century and occupied most of modern Afghanistan, Pakistan, Punjab, Bhutan, and some other areas of the Indian subcontinent. Neighboring kingdoms influenced and controlled present-day Afghanistan until the beginning of the twentieth century as Pashtun tribes unified to form a nation-state in the nineteenth century. Islam spread to the Maldives in the twelfth century.

European powers, particularly the British, began establishing trading posts in India and Bangladesh in the sixteenth century and by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries controlled, occupied, or heavily influenced nearly all of South Asia. The Portuguese maintained a short rule of just fifteen years in the Maldives in the mid-sixteenth century; the Maldives later became a British protectorate. Nation-states were united to form Nepal in 1768. War persisted through much of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in northern South Asia as Nepal, Bhutan, and other nation states and kingdoms fought for expansion while British military forces made advances in the region. Afghanistan defeated the British army in 1839 and maintained much of its autonomy notwithstanding the United Kingdom controlling foreign affairs from 1880 to 1919. From the 1920s to the late 1970s, various rulers in Afghanistan attempted to modernize the country as a secular state. In 1947, the United Kingdom divided the Indian subcontinent into a predominantly Hindu state (India) and a Muslim state (Pakistan). Sri Lanka achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1948 and has since experienced significant ethnic and political conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils. The segregation of Hindu and Muslim populations was incomplete in India and Pakistan, and land disputes arose, resulting in wars in 1947–48, 1965, and 1971 over Kashmir, as well as numerous border skirmishes. East Pakistan seceded from Pakistan to form Bangladesh during the third war in 1971. The Maldives gained independence in 1968. Greater democratization took place in Nepal following the appointment of a cabinet for the king in 1951 and

multi-party elections in 1990. The Afghan monarchy was overthrown in 1973 and replaced by a republic that was overthrown in 1978 and replaced with a Marxist state. A failed Marxist government left a power vacuum following the Soviets' withdrawal in 1989, which was filled by the Taliban. With support from Pakistan, the Taliban occupied most of Afghanistan and enforced an extreme interpretation of Islam that severely infringed on human rights and supported terrorists including Osama bin Laden, mastermind of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Tensions escalated between India and Pakistan following nuclear weapons testing by the two countries in the late 1990s. In 1996, Maoist extremists began fighting for total control of the Nepali government, resulting in a decade of civil war. The Maoist insurgency took control of most of Nepal's territory in the late 2000s and in 2008 formed a coalition government following elections.

The United States formed an anti-terrorist coalition that invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 and captured Kabul the following month with the assistance of the Northern Alliance. The United Nations has assisted in the formation of a democratic government in the 2000s, which held elections in 2004. Afghanistan has experienced marked economic development, but standards of living rank among the lowest worldwide. Corruption is a major challenge that has limited economic development and political stability. Lawlessness in many rural areas continue to challenge efforts by the newly instated democratic government and coalition forces to secure Afghanistan's borders, subdue pro-Taliban fighters, and rebuild the country after decades of internal conflict and foreign invasions.¹⁵⁶³ In the 2000s, Islamist militant groups, mainly Al Qaeda and Taliban residing in Afghanistan and Pakistan, destabilized Afghanistan and threatened Pakistan's stability. Tensions between India and Pakistan improved following nuclear weapons development, but later rose following the involvement of radical Pakistani Islamist groups in the November 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai. Other events in the late 2000s threatened the stability of Pakistan, including the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in late 2007, the rising unpopularity of President Musharraf and his resignation in 2008, and the loss of large amounts of territory in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Northwest Frontier Province to Taliban militants in 2009. Bhutan maintained isolation from modernization until 2008 when the nation transitioned from a hereditary monarchy to a democratic constitutional monarchy.¹⁵⁶⁴

Culture

Religion, former British rule, tribalism, and caste systems are major influences on societies in South Asia. India and Nepal are the only nations in the world with Hindu majority populations. Saturday is the day of worship in India and Nepal. Caste societies operate in India and Nepal; lower castes and the Dalits (untouchables) continue to experience discrimination. There are smaller numbers of Hindus in Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. Islam heavily influenced daily life for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Pakistan; the relationship between Islam and government is often disputed and unclear. Bangladesh and Pakistan generally offer greater rights to women than most Muslim nations, although literacy rates are very low for women due to a lack of emphasis and opportunity for women to obtain an education. Stricter, and at times extremist, interpretations of Islam have been followed in Afghanistan, especially under the Taliban and through the syncretism of tribalism with Islam. In 2001, the Taliban destroyed two 1,500 year old massive Buddha statues in the Bamiyan Valley, as they were viewed as idols. Ethnic ties to Islam are especially pronounced in the Maldives. Traditionally Islamic ethnic groups also reside in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Buddhism is a major influence on the societies of Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Poetry, theater, art, music, and dance are common cultural traditions in South Asia. Cricket is one of the most popular sports. Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are low compared to the world average in South Asia with the exception of Nepal, where alcohol consumption rates are comparable to the world average. Clothing for men is often loose fitting and in some areas follows Western

¹⁵⁶³ "Background Note: Afghanistan," Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, 26 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm>

¹⁵⁶⁴ "Bhutan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127364.htm>

styles, whereas women generally wear traditional clothing. Tea is commonly consumed throughout the region. Polygamy is legal throughout South Asia, but is commonly practiced only in Afghanistan.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,200 national median (2011) [4.64% of U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.517

Corruption Index: 2.9

South Asia is among the world's poorest regions, as the GDP per capita ranges from a low of \$1,000 in Afghanistan to a high of \$5,000 in Bhutan. Like neighboring China, India has seen impressive economic growth, has an emerging middle class, and is the regional economic power. The Indian economy is dominated by agriculture and textiles with increasing contributions from manufactured goods and services. Recently, India has gained greater importance in the worldwide economy with services provided through telecommunications and software engineering. India produces a large number of educated individuals who speak English and can be hired by international companies. Major barriers to economic growth and development in South Asia include corruption, civil war, high unemployment and underemployment, political instability, government mismanagement, low literacy rates, poor standards of living, governments meeting the welfare needs of hundreds of millions living in poverty, and natural disasters. Landlocked locations for Afghanistan, Nepal, and Bhutan have contributed to challenges developing the economy. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami devastated portions of Sri Lanka and the Maldives and set back economic growth in affected areas. Afghanistan has the lowest HDI rating, whereas Sri Lanka has the highest. Agriculture employs half of the workforce or more in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal. Services generally constitute 40% or more of the GDP in South Asian nations. Natural resources in the region include natural gas, oil, coal, salt, iron ore, precious and industrial metals, gems, limestone, timber, and farmland. Textiles, chemicals, steel, transportation equipment, soap, furniture, fertilizer, food products, mining, cement, wood products, software, machinery, pharmaceuticals, tourism, rubber processing, telecommunications, and banking are common industries. Common crops include wheat, rice, fruit, nuts, livestock, jute, tea, corn, roots, sugarcane, cotton, vegetables, potatoes, fish, coconuts, and opium poppy. Primary trade partners include the United States, China, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Thailand, Kuwait, and Iran.

Corruption is perceived as widespread and a serious barrier toward greater economic growth and development. Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium. The Afghan-Pakistani border remains unsecured in many areas, facilitating illegal activity in both nations. Most heroin consumed in Europe and Eurasia is produced from opium poppies cultivated in Afghanistan. Corruption and lawlessness impede efforts to address drug cultivation problems. The Taliban utilized the cultivation of opium poppies for revenue, a practice still deeply entrenched in agriculture in many areas of Afghanistan. Several countries in the region have been cited for human trafficking violations for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. In Bangladesh, most regard the police as the most corrupt division of government, followed by customs.¹⁵⁶⁵ Many have to pay a bribe to secure employment. The Bangladeshi government has done little to address corruption issues. Corruption is perceived as widespread, and allegations of government corruption have been made frequently. There are increasing concerns over the lack of public confidence in the electoral system in the Maldives.¹⁵⁶⁶ The Kashmir region and additional tracts of territory between India, China, and Pakistan are disputed. Corruption is perceived as present but not widespread only in Bhutan.

Faiths

Hindu: 61.7%

¹⁵⁶⁵ "Corruption in Bangladesh," Transparency International—Bangladesh Chapter, retrieved 16 April 2011. <http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/docs/research/CorBang1.htm>

¹⁵⁶⁶ "Issues," Transparency Maldives, 13 July 2008. <http://www.transparencymaldives.org/issues.html>

Muslim: 31.6%
 Christian: 1.8%
 Sikh: 1.4%
 Buddhist: 1.1%
 Other/unknown/none: 2.4%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 19,919,000
 Seventh Day Adventists 1,546,653 4,219
 Jehovah's Witnesses 40,634 558
 Latter-day Saints ~18,000 90

Religion

Hinduism is the most commonly practiced religion in South Asia, followed by approximately 62% of the population. Hindus are the majority in India and Nepal and are religious minorities in Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The caste system strongly influences religion in India and Nepal. Muslims account for 31.6% of the regional population and account for the majority of the population in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Pakistan. There are sizeable Muslim minorities in India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Pakistan supports the world's second largest Muslim population, whereas India supports the third largest. Nearly all Muslims in South Asia are Sunnis. Christians are overwhelmingly Catholic and comprise more than 1% of the population only in Sri Lanka (6.2%), India (2.3%), and Pakistan and Nepal (1–2%). Several far eastern Indian provinces are predominantly Christian, and Christians in Pakistan often live in segregated communities. Sikhs comprise 1.4% of the regional population and are concentrated in the Punjab region of India. Buddhists constitute the majority in Bhutan and Sri Lanka and account for a little over 1% of the South Asian population. Nepal has a sizeable Buddhist minority. Fundamentalist Islam has been most apparent in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Jainism has 4.2 million followers throughout India. There are some religious tensions in South Asian nations, primarily between Hindus and Muslims in India and Bangladesh and Buddhists and followers of other religions in Bhutan and Sri Lanka, although these tensions are also ethnically based.

Both Hinduism and Buddhism, now practiced mainly in other nations of East and Southeast Asia, originated in India. Hinduism represents a broad spectrum of beliefs varying from polytheism to pantheism to monotheism. The branches of Hinduism lack any centralized authority, and Hinduism is scarcely interpreted in precisely the same way in any two villages. Most educated Hindus may accept certain core elements of their faith, yet reject many others. Hindu temples are rare among Indian expatriate communities. Although the vast majority of Indians are Hindu or Muslim, other indigenous religions, including Sikhism (20 million adherents) and Jainism (8–10 million adherents), constitute small minorities. These religions share similarities with Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam in addition to their own unique features.

Religious Freedom

The constitutions of most countries in South Asia protect religious freedom, but most governments restrict this right. Religious freedom is most severely restricted in the Maldives, as the law prevents citizens from following any other religion, and the constitutions declare Islam as the state religion. Foreigners are not permitted to encourage citizens to practice other religions and can only practice their religious faith in private. The Maldivian government and constitution stipulate that citizens must be Muslim, and non-Muslims cannot become citizens.

The constitutions of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan declare Islam as the state religion. In Afghanistan, the federal government has attempted to increase religious freedom since the fall of the Taliban, but societal abuse of religious freedom and intolerance are major challenges. Some Muslim groups that follow Shari'a law consider apostasy from Islam a crime punishable by death, although there have been no recent instances of formerly Muslim Christian converts receiving the death penalty. There are no laws banning proselytism, but missionary activity is culturally discouraged, potentially dangerous due to threats and violence against non-Muslims, and rarely occurs. There are no legal restrictions regarding the importation or dissemination of religious literature.¹⁵⁶⁷ In Bangladesh, there are no laws barring proselytism, although the conversion of Muslims is socially frowned upon and discouraged by local government authorities. Overall tolerance for religious minorities has increased in Bangladesh in recent years.¹⁵⁶⁸ In Pakistan, religious freedom is severely restricted for nontraditional Muslim groups and non-Muslims. Strict blasphemy laws demand respect for Islam and Islamic teachings. Non-Islamic missionaries may operate in the country but must profess to not be Muslim and that they do not preach against Islam. The government restricts the total number of missionaries by only granting new visas to replace missionaries who leave the country. Marriages between members of different religious groups are not recognized by the state. Violent attacks on Christian churches and religious minority communities frequently occur, and the prosecution of offenders is inconsistent. Government attempts to treat minorities more fairly by placing some in government positions, but societal discrimination remains severe. The most serious restrictions are placed on the Ahmadiyya sect of Islam. Ahmadis are not permitted to identify themselves as Muslims, hold public meetings, or sell religious literature and are banned from performing religious pilgrimages to Islamic holy sites.¹⁵⁶⁹

There is no official state religion in Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka although Buddhism is favored by governments in Bhutan and Sri Lanka, and Hinduism is favored by governments in India and Nepal. In Bhutan, non-Buddhist missionaries are permitted to enter and may proselyte. Christians worship in the privacy in their own homes, as they are not permitted to pray openly and build churches.¹⁵⁷⁰ In India, anti-conversion laws restrict Christian proselytism in five states (Gujarat, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh), challenge individuals to convert from Hinduism to other religions, and reinforce the status of the Hindu majority. Additional Indian states have considered anti-conversion legislation, such as Rajasthan, but these proposals have not become law. Anti-conversion legislation limits the freedom for NGOs to operate. Legislation specifically bans proselytism with the allurements of monetary gain or intimidation. Many Christians have wrongfully been accused of alluring converts with other means by Hindu extremist groups. Local police at times have done little to protect the rights and lives of religious minorities. Violence targeting Christians has been most extreme in Orissa and Karnataka, and violence against Muslims occurs most regularly in northern India and Gujarat. Religious extremists carried out terrorist attacks in Ahmedabad, Bangalore, and Delhi in the late 2000s.¹⁵⁷¹ In Nepal, personal conversion to a different religion is allowed by law but often results from ostracism from family and the community for Hindus converting to Islam or Christianity. Violent attacks on Christians by Hindu extremist groups periodically occur.¹⁵⁷² In Sri Lanka, the government has encouraged tolerance among differing religious groups but esteems Buddhism as the primary religion. Persecution from Buddhists toward minority groups has been severe. Buddhists feel threatened by the conversion of many Buddhists to Christianity and harass most Christian churches. False reports circulate that

¹⁵⁶⁷ "Afghanistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127362.htm>

¹⁵⁶⁸ <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127363.htm>

¹⁵⁶⁹ "Pakistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127370.htm>

¹⁵⁷⁰ "Bhutan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127364.htm>

¹⁵⁷¹ "India," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127365.htm>

¹⁵⁷² "Nepal," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127369.htm>

Christians force or coerce Buddhists with other means to convert. The predominately Hindu Tamils persecute Muslims and expelled all Muslims in areas of their control in 1990.¹⁵⁷³

Societal abuse of religious freedom is common throughout South Asia and is most apparent in Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Many religious minorities keep their religious affiliation private or reside in segregated religious communities. Christian aid workers in Afghanistan have occasionally been kidnapped and harassed, and a few have been executed by Taliban insurgents.¹⁵⁷⁴ In Sri Lanka, many Christian missionaries and pastors were murdered or reported missing due to violence from Buddhist extremists in the late 2000s. Most of these cases were never pursued by police and government, and those committing these crimes have gone unpunished.

Largest Cities

Urban: low (Sri Lanka—14%); high (Maldives—40%)

Delhi, Mumbai, Karachi, Kolkata, Dhaka, Lahore, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad (India), **Ahmedabad, Pune, Chittagong, Surat, Kanpur**, Faisalabad, **Jaipur**, Rawalpindi, Kabul, **Lucknow, Nagpur**, Colombo, **Patna, Bhilai, Gujranwala, Hyderabad (Pakistan), Indore, Vadodara, Bhopal**, Coimbatore, **Multan, Ludhiana, Agra, Kochi, Nasik, Asansol, Meerut, Vishakhapatnam, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Peshawar, Kolhapur, Varanasi, Khulna, Kathmandu, Rajkot, Jamshedpur, Amritsar, Madurai, Dhanbad, Jabalpur, Allahabad, Shambajinagar, Vijayawada, Srinagar, Sholapur, Ranchi, Thiruvananthapuram,, Gauhati, Jodhpur, Tiruchirappalli, Gwalior, Kozhikode, Quetta.**

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

Sixteen of the sixty-three cities with over one million inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Fifteen percent (15%) of the regional population resides in the sixty-three most populous cities.

LDS History

LDS missionaries first preached in India in 1850 and, for a brief period, in Sri Lanka in 1853. Missionaries were forced to leave Sri Lanka that same year due to persecution. LDS congregations were established in several Indian cities, including Kolkata (Calcutta), Mumbai (Bombay), Chennai (Madras), and Pune (Poona). Missionary activity occurred almost exclusively among Europeans. Missionaries were removed from India in 1858, and all LDS congregations were closed by 1903. Missionaries called to labor in India during the nineteenth century were unable to learn the native languages, which may have been both a cause and a result of working primarily among Europeans.¹⁵⁷⁵

The LDS Church was reestablished in South Asia in India during the 1960s and 1970s when several Indians were introduced to the Church and were converted. Expatriate members began living Pakistan in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the first missionaries arrived in 1993. The Southeast Asia Mission (renamed the Singapore Mission in 1974) was organized in 1969 and administered most of South Asia until the organization of the India Bangalore Mission in 1993 to service India. LDS missionaries visited Sri Lanka in 1975 to evaluate whether the country was ready for missionary work. American expatriate members were the first Latter-day Saints to live in Sri Lanka in the twentieth century and introduced the Church to Sri Lankans. Several senior missionary couples began serving in Sri Lanka in the late 1970s, working with humanitarian efforts and

¹⁵⁷³ "Sri Lanka," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127371.htm>

¹⁵⁷⁴ Afghanistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2008, retrieved 19 October 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108497.htm>

¹⁵⁷⁵ "India," LDS Church Newsroom, retrieved 18 February 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/india>

teaching those who wanted to learn more about the Church, but active proselytism did not take place.¹⁵⁷⁶ The Church became officially registered in Sri Lanka in 1979. The first members living in Bangladesh were expatriates primarily from Canada on government assignment in the late 1980s and early 1990s. One Canadian member family introduced the Church to their cook and his family, who later became the first Bangladeshis to join the Church in Bangladesh. Seminary and institute were both operating in India by 1992, in Pakistan by the mid-1990s, and in Sri Lanka by 1998. In February 1993, Elder Carmack and Elder Tai from the Asia Area Presidency made an investigatory trip to Nepal to meet local members and expatriates in Kathmandu. The Church was registered with the Pakistani government in 1995. Senior couple missionaries began serving on humanitarian assignment in Nepal as early as 2001 and assisted with branch leadership development. With the exception of Afghanistan and India, other South Asian nations pertained to the Singapore Mission until the organization of the India New Delhi Mission in 2007 when northern India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Pakistan were assigned to the India New Delhi Mission, and southern India, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka were assigned to the India Bangalore Mission. Missionaries serving in the India New Delhi Mission reported that the first convert baptisms occurred in Bhutan in 2008. Latter-day Saints did not have a presence in Afghanistan until after the 2001 U.S.-led coalition invasion. United States servicemen constituted the entire church membership until a few native Afghans joined the Church shortly thereafter as a result of associations made with LDS members in the military. In 2008, Afghanistan became part of the Middle East/Africa North Area; other nations pertain to the Asia Area. The Church continues to lack official recognition in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, and Nepal.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: ~18,000 (2012)

There were fewer than 1,000 Latter-day Saints in South Asia in 1987, 700 of who resided in India. Membership totaled 1,580 in 1993, 2,770 in 1997, and 4,064 in 2000. By 2005, there were approximately 9,300 members. Among countries with an LDS presence in 2000, LDS membership grew most rapidly between 2000 and 2010 in Sri Lanka (313%), Pakistan (231%), and India (221%). Overall church membership increased by 245% for South Asia between 2000 and 2010. Membership growth has been slow in Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal, but convert baptisms have increased in Bangladesh and Nepal in recent years. There were four convert baptisms in Bhutan in 2008. There are no known members in the Maldives. There were approximately 700 members in Afghanistan in 2009, nearly all of which were American military personnel. In 2010, LDS membership in India accounted for 66% of LDS membership for South Asia; Pakistan account for 19%, Sri Lanka for 9%, and Afghanistan for 5%. The ratio of the general population to LDS membership varies from a high of one member per 1.59 million in Bangladesh to a low of one member per 16,448 in Sri Lanka. In 2010, one in 115,191 was LDS in South Asia.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 6 Branches: 56 Groups: 28+ (2012)

There were twelve branches in 1987 and nineteen branches and several groups in 1993; fourteen of the branches were in India. The number of branches in South Asia increased to twenty-three in 1997, thirty-one in 2000, forty in 2005, and fifty-seven in 2010. In 2010, approximately twenty-eight groups functioned in Afghanistan for military personnel;¹⁵⁷⁷ additional groups likely operate at present in Bhutan, India, and Pakistan.

The first district was organized in Bangalore, India in 1980. Additional districts were organized in New Delhi India (1986), Hyderabad India (1988), Islamabad Pakistan (1990s), Colombo Sri Lanka (2000), Kabul

¹⁵⁷⁶ "Sri Lanka," LDS Newsroom, retrieved 5 March 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/sri-lanka>

¹⁵⁷⁷ "Church Organization in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Isolated Areas," Military Relations, retrieved 15 October 2010. <http://lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,9138-1,00.html>

Afghanistan Military (2008), Karachi Pakistan (2008), Chennai India (2009), Coimbatore India (2009), Visakhapatnam India (2009), and Rajahmundry India (2011). The number of districts increased from one in 1980 to five in 2000 and ten in 2010. In 2012, the Church organized its first stake in South Asia in Hyderabad, India.

Mission branches in South Asia that do not pertain to a district include the Dhaka, India Bangalore Mission, India New Delhi Mission, and the Kathmandu, Kolkata, and Mumbai Branches.

Activity and Retention

The number of active members varies by branch, with some newly-organized or remote branches with forty or fewer active members and some older wards and branches in cities in India with multiple LDS congregations have as many as 150 to 200 active members. Convert retention rates appear highest in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan, largely due to the large amount of self-vested interest in the Church and converts establishing habits of regular church attendance prior to baptism. As many as 70% of church members in Nepal may be active. Recent convert retention rates in India and Sri Lanka are moderate. Overall member activity rates are moderate to above average, with the highest member activity rates in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal (50% or higher) and the lowest member activity rates in Sri Lanka (30%). Member activity rates appear to range between 40%–50% in India and Pakistan. Active LDS membership in South Asia is estimated to number between 6,000 and 6,500, or 43%–46% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bengali, Sinhalese, Farsi, Arabic, English.

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are available in Arabic. Translations of the entire Book of Mormon or select passages are available in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Sinhalese, and Farsi. Limited numbers of church materials are available in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, and Sinhalese. Several DVD movies such as *Finding Faith in Christ* and *The Restoration* are available in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil. Audiovisual materials available in Urdu include *Joy to the World* and *The Restoration*. The *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and *Gospel Principles* or *Gospel Fundamentals* are available in Bengali, Farsi, Marathi, Nepali, and Pashto. The Articles of Faith and a family guidebook are translated into Bengali. Two church proclamations are available in Nepali. The Articles of Faith are also available in Farsi. Only the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* is translated into Divehi, Kannada, Malayalam, and Punjabi. Kazakh LDS materials are limited to the Sacrament Prayers, a basic unit guidebook, the Articles of Faith, and hymns and children's songs. The *Liahona* magazine has four issues a year in Tamil and Telugu, three in Urdu, two in Sinhala, and one in Hindi.

Meetinghouses

In early 2011, there were approximately fifty LDS meetinghouses in South Asia, most of which consisted of renovated buildings or rented spaces. During the 2000s, several church-built meetinghouses were constructed in South Asia, primarily in India. In Afghanistan, church meetings occur on U.S. military bases, often in chapels that serve as places of worship for various religious groups found among the armed forces.

Health and Safety

In Afghanistan, conditions remain dangerous for foreigners living and working in the country due to a lack of government control in many regions and Taliban insurgency along the Pakistani border. Living conditions are among the poorest in the world. Armed kidnappings and the murder of foreign aid workers have occurred on an ongoing basis. In Bangladesh, health issues include threats typical of poorer, tropical nations such as hepatitis, typhoid, malaria, and rabies. Violence directed towards religious minorities from intolerant Muslims

may pose safety threats to missionaries and converts. In India, sanitation can be poor in both rural and urban locations. Threats of violence against foreign missionaries have occurred, and some LDS missionaries have experienced intimidation and wrongful accusations of violating the law. Religiously unstable areas pose a safety threat to missionaries. In Nepal, violence towards religious minority groups is a safety concern for missionaries and members. In Pakistan, safety issues present a major concern. Violent acts targeting religious minorities, including intimidation, kidnapping, sexual and physical violence, and murder present safety concerns for members and missionaries. Suicide bombings occur regularly and without warning in the largest cities and the most unstable areas near the Afghan border. Fighting in the Kashmiri region restricts missionary work. High crime and corruption in Karachi pose safety threats. No nonnative LDS missionaries serve in Pakistan due to safety issues. In Sri Lanka, safety is a concern due to threats and acts of violence against Christian missionaries. Violence between ethnic groups poses some danger to native and foreign missionaries.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Limited LDS humanitarian and development work had occurred primarily in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka as of early 2011. There have been at least thirty-eight projects in India, twenty in Nepal, two in Sri Lanka, and one in Pakistan.¹⁵⁷⁸ Projects in India have included emergency relief, clean water projects, neonatal resuscitation training, vision treatment training, the construction of educational facilities, and donations of school supplies, hygiene kits, blankets, wheelchairs, sewing machines, and medical equipment.¹⁵⁷⁹ The Church sent food, clothing, and emergency supplies to victims of a large earthquake in Gujarat in 2001.¹⁵⁸⁰ In 2002, members and missionaries in Bangalore volunteer at an orphanage for handicapped children.¹⁵⁸¹ Members in India made over 1,200 family kits containing emergency supplies for victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.¹⁵⁸² In 2008 and 2009, the Church assisted in building twenty dams in Rajasthan to provide greater water availability in the region. Projects in Nepal have included clean water projects, English language training, emergency relief, and donations of educational supplies, tools, wheelchairs, equipment for the blind, and hygiene kits.¹⁵⁸³ The Church provided DPT immunizations in Nepal in 1991.¹⁵⁸⁴ In Pakistan, the church provided needed humanitarian aid for sufferers of the 2005 earthquake. Fifty thousand blankets, 1,000 winterized tents, 300,000 pounds of medical supplies, and 42,000 hygiene kits were initially sent. Due to inadequate provisions of refugees for winter temperatures, the Church purchased and delivered an additional 150,000 blankets and 5,000 winterized tents in late 2005.¹⁵⁸⁵ In Sri Lanka, humanitarian missionaries began teaching English as a second language in 1982.¹⁵⁸⁶ A large increase in aid and development projects began following the 2004 tsunami. Immediately following the tsunami, the Church sent first aid, Atmit nutritional supplements, and clothing.¹⁵⁸⁷ Six hundred fifty fishing boats were built with assistance of the

¹⁵⁷⁸ "Locations—Asia," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 19 April 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-3,00.html>

¹⁵⁷⁹ "Projects—India," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 19 April 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-229,00.html>

¹⁵⁸⁰ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Relief supplies shipped to India," LDS Church News, 3 February 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39269/Relief-supplies-shipped-to-India.html>

¹⁵⁸¹ Totland, Gary and Maureen. "Serving the children," LDS Church News, 3 August 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42203/Serving-the-children.html>

¹⁵⁸² Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Emergency response is appropriate, immediate," LDS Church News, 15 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46735/Emergency-response-is-appropriate-immediate.html>

¹⁵⁸³ "Projects—Nepal," Humanitarian Activities Worldwide, retrieved 19 April 2011. <http://www.providentliving.org/project/0,13501,4607-1-2008-68,00.html>

¹⁵⁸⁴ "'I love little children,'" LDS Church News, 15 June 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20877/I-love-little-children.html>

¹⁵⁸⁵ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Blankets, tents shipped to avert second disaster," LDS Church News, 3 December 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48231/Blankets-tents-shipped-to-avert-second-disaster.html>

¹⁵⁸⁶ "Sri Lanka," Country Profile, retrieved 30 April 2011. <http://newsroom.lds.org/country/sri-lanka>

¹⁵⁸⁷ "2005: Year in review," LDS Church News, 31 December 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48334/2005-Year-in-review.html>

Church. Micro-credit loans were issued to hundreds of women.¹⁵⁸⁸ In Bangladesh, the Church provided aid during flooding caused by a cyclone in 1991.¹⁵⁸⁹ Latter-day Saint Charities operated literacy programs in the late 1990s.¹⁵⁹⁰ German members collected 7,500 Euros to donate to impoverished Bangladeshi children.¹⁵⁹¹ Following the destruction of Cyclone Sidr in 2007, the Church sent additional aid.¹⁵⁹²

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Governments and local laws in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka provide the greatest religious freedom in the region, as there are no bans on public Christian meetings, proselytism, or foreign missionaries. However, the LDS Church has utilized these freedoms only in India and Sri Lanka. In Afghanistan, lawlessness and social intolerance of non-Muslim groups prevents church establishment among the indigenous population. Conditions for religious minority groups appear to be improving, which over time may allow for some limited LDS missionary activity to occur by member referral among Afghans. Latter-day Saints among the American military worship freely in their respective congregations on military bases. In Bangladesh, the Church has yet to take greater advantage of the degree of religious freedom offered by a predominantly Muslim country to religious minorities. Rarely do Islamic states offer rights to Christians that include proselytism. There do not appear to be any legal barriers preventing an official church establishment. In India, Christian intolerance is widespread and is most intense around elections and Hindu holidays. There were instances in 2008 when elders were falsely accused of giving money to people who joined the Church (a crime in India), and some missionaries were briefly imprisoned. These instances with false accusations have been resolved with help from local and mission leadership. Restrictions on sharing the gospel exist in some regions. Out of the six zones in the India Bangalore Mission in September 2009, open proselytizing was permitted only in four. In Sri Lanka, the Church enjoys full religious freedom, but societal pressures from Buddhists limit religious freedom. There is little government initiative to protect the rights of Christians and prosecute radicals who commit violent acts against religious minorities.

Obtaining missionary visas in Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka are major barriers to expanding mission outreach by full-time missionaries, as at times, government officials severely restrict the number of visas granted to the Church or do not grant any visas at all. In India, senior couples have been unable to be replaced, resulting in some of the limited number of young elders being assigned to mission logistics and finances.

Significant restrictions on religious freedom in Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, and Pakistan have prevented the assignment of foreign proselytizing LDS missionaries and limit the religious freedom of local members. Member-missionary activity is permitted in Bhutan, but heavy restrictions on constructing churches or holding public Christian meetings prevent missionary work from extending beyond personal contacts of converts and investigators. There are no realistic prospects of an LDS presence in the Maldives at present, as the constitution requires Maldivian citizens to be Muslims and the government prohibits any proselytism. Latter-day Saints can operate only in small groups among foreigners in private, and no proselytism among foreigners is permitted. Humanitarian and development work sponsored by the LDS Church in the Maldives does not

¹⁵⁸⁸ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Work continues in Southeast Asia," LDS Church News, 27 May 2006. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49004/Work-continues-in-Southeast-Asia.html>

¹⁵⁸⁹ Orden, Dell Van. "'Am I my brother's keeper?'" LDS Church News, 29 November 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29937/Am-I-my-brothers-keeper.html>

¹⁵⁹⁰ Dockstader, Julie A. "Lifetime of literacy manifest through service," LDS Church News, 17 July 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/36074/Lifetime-of-literacy-manifest-through-service.html>

¹⁵⁹¹ Stahle, Shaun D. "German stake raises money for Bangladesh," LDS Church News, 6 December 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44781/German-stake-raises-money-for-Bangladesh.html>

¹⁵⁹² "Disasters strike Chile, Bangladesh," LDS Church News, 24 November 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51355/Disasters-strike-Chile-Bangladesh.html>

appear possible under current government restrictions. In Nepal, open proselytism is prohibited, and the Church only assigns senior humanitarian missionaries. Some opportunities for member-missionary activity among friends and family are present. Christians report harassment from police and Hindu extremist groups. In Pakistan, government and society restrict the Church's missionary program to reaching only Christians, permitting outreach to just 1–2% of the population. There are no restrictions on assembly and worship, however. Christians often live segregated from Muslims in compounds or villages. This presents opportunities for the Church to legally reach large numbers. Limitations on the numbers of missionaries who can enter Pakistan restrict missionary programs that usually rely heavily on full-time missionaries. Missionaries cannot preach against Islam.

Cultural Issues

Negative social attitudes regarding conversion from Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism to other religions and Christian proselytism create cultural barriers for missionary activity. Ethno-religious ties are pronounced for many ethnic groups and present a nearly insurmountable obstacle for the LDS Church in some nations, including Afghanistan, Bhutan, and the Maldives. In Bhutan, Christian converts face significant family and societal oppositions if they make their conversions known. Converts from Hindu backgrounds often face ostracism from their families and communities. Hindu celebrations and the caste system present challenges for members in balancing the cultural customs with church teachings. Islamic and Hindu holidays interrupt LDS proselytism in India and other nations. Christians become a frequent target of persecution and violence throughout the region. In Pakistan, those who join the Church may not only be ostracized but may become targets of violence. A history of British rule and the presence of religious minorities for hundreds of years may have contributed to the permission for these groups to operate despite the integration of Islam and government.

Poverty is a major challenge for LDS mission outreach, as standards of living and literacy rates are low. Although India's growing economy is establishing a middle class and reducing poverty, the rural population suffers from low living standards. Development of self-reliance and economic skills among members and the population is challenging due to poor living conditions and literacy levels. Low literacy rates limit the value of literature distribution and may present barriers for the development of gospel understanding and self-reliance among members. Literacy rates for women are often half of literacy rates for men due to cultural attitudes regarding women and education. Hundreds of millions of Indians are illiterate, the majority of whom are women. Those who lack literacy skills will meet greater difficulty in serving in the Church. Other Christian groups have addressed literacy challenges through audio scriptures, multimedia presentations, and the establishment of Christian schools. Humanitarian projects aiming to address these challenges may assist in establishing a positive reputation and providing service.

In accordance with Hindu culture, LDS worship services are held on Saturdays in Nepal, whereas in India, LDS worship occurs on Sundays. Many parents in India exercise significant control over their children even in their adult years. Missionaries frequently report that youth may regularly attend church for an extended time until they turn eighteen and can thereafter be baptized without parental consent. Although this can challenge the prospects for youthful investigators, this practice has likely contributed to higher retention and activity rates. However, the strong bond between parent and child may be partially responsible for the failure of many Indian members to serve missions in part-member families. In Sri Lanka, converts potentially come from Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, or Muslim backgrounds, a diversity that challenges the ability of missionaries and local leaders to meet individual needs and teach the gospel to their understanding. British colonialism has contributed to Westernization of many, which may cause friction between the more educated and less educated Sri Lankans. Some Christian groups view the Church unfavorably and persuade others to avoid

missionaries and members.¹⁵⁹³ The poor treatment of women in many areas of South Asia presents cultural challenges for Latter-day Saints. Polygamy is commonly practiced in Afghanistan. Those engaged in a polygamous relationship must end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of a mission or area presidency to be baptized. Corruption and drug cultivation and trafficking create unsafe conditions in many areas for foreigners and non-Muslims in Afghanistan.

Overall alcohol and cigarette consumption rates are low in South Asia and reduce some cultural barriers for LDS mission outreach. The frequent, widespread consumption of tea throughout South Asia may present barriers between local customs and Church doctrine.

National Outreach

Five percent (5%) of the regional population resides in cities with an LDS congregation, are permitted to attend church services, and may be taught by local or full-time missionaries. Muslims are completely unreached by the LDS Church in Afghanistan and Pakistan; similar restrictions are likely implemented in other South Asian nations. Afghanistan is not assigned to an LDS mission and is part of the Middle East/Africa North Area. Local populations reached by the LDS Church are limited to Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, as no known outreach occurs in Afghanistan, Bhutan, and the Maldives. The percentage of the population reached by the Church is no greater than 5% in any nation in South Asia, with the greatest outreach occurring in India and Sri Lanka (5%). Mission outreach in Bangladesh and Nepal occurs exclusively through local members and local member-missionaries, resulting in mission outreach in these nations being restricted to the personal associations of local members. Full-time LDS missionaries periodically visit Bangladesh to perform baptismal interviews and provide leadership and mentoring support. In Pakistan, only local members serve as full-time missionaries, who work solely through member referral among Christian communities. India is the only nation as of April 2011 in which full-time missionaries extended outreach in their assigned areas without required local member involvement. However, assigned full-time missionaries remain unable to proselyte in some areas of India. The LDS presence is limited to a single city in Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. Hundreds of cities with 100,000 or more inhabitants remain unreached. Most administrative divisions in India and Pakistan have no LDS presence, notwithstanding a church presence for several decades and both countries accounting for the bulk of South Asian LDS membership today. There have been no concerted efforts by the Church and its members to reach Sikhs and Jains in India; it is unclear how members of these religions will respond to outreach.

Distance from mission outreach centers, reliance on full-time missionaries to expand national outreach, few local members, the majority of the population residing in rural areas, cultural barriers dissuading open proselytism, visa restrictions on foreign missionaries, low standards of living, ethnic conflict, lawlessness, the persecution of Christians, government restrictions on religious freedom, and corruption are major factors that have contributed to the extremely limited presence of the LDS Church in South Asia today. There was no LDS mission in South Asia until 1993. Until 2008, many countries were still administered by the Singapore Mission, with limited resources being stretched over a vast area. LDS outreach commenced in most nations in South Asia through expatriate Western Latter-day Saints temporarily residing in various countries; without their diligence and initial efforts, many of these nations would likely remain totally unreached today. Many local members who joined the Church as youth or young adults have served full-time missions and have provided an invaluable resource in maintaining outreach in India and Pakistan in the face of the many challenges limiting LDS outreach with North American missionaries. Local leaders significantly expanded national outreach in India during the 1990s. Some of the first converts in a few South Asian nations joined the Church in nearby nations with LDS congregations. A few of the first Afghans to join the LDS Church

¹⁵⁹³ "Pure religion: Mending a heart," LDS Church News, 9 June 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50675/Pure-religion-Mending-a-heart.html>

were baptized in New Delhi in the late 2000s. Similar opportunities exist in India to reach populations in neighboring nations that are currently unreached.

The organization of a second mission in New Delhi is a welcome development that primarily occurred through greater numbers of local members serving missions, as visa regulations have continued to limit the number of North American missionaries in India. Tremendous missionary manpower would be required to open most of South Asia to missionary work with full-time missionaries. If all of the 340 LDS missions operating worldwide in mid-2011 were located in South Asia, there would be one LDS mission per 4.8 million people, roughly the equivalent of the ratio of missions to population in Latin America. As the LDS Church's worldwide missionary force remains insufficient to meet the potential need of South Asia and there are few opportunities North American missionaries to serve in the region due to visa restrictions, member-missionaries working among local members and recruitment of native missionaries are the most realistic prospects for future outreach into unreached cities and rural areas. Vision and mentoring will be needed to achieve these purposes.

Ethnic violence threatens the Church's greater establishment among all ethnicities, such as in Karachi, Pakistan. Notwithstanding these challenges, the number of branches in Karachi increased from one to three in the 2000s. India's two most populous cities of Kolkata and Mumbai have 16.4 and 13.2 million inhabitants respectively but had only a single LDS congregation each and no LDS missionaries assigned as of April 2011. Kolkata and Mumbai do not have very active missionary programs, and no full-time elders serve in these cities due to religious tensions between Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Local members in these locations will likely remain primarily responsible for increasing convert baptisms and retaining new members. These locations may be suitable for senior missionary couples to serve in the future, offer current opportunities to open groups and dependent branches for members residing far from the church meetinghouse, and may one day support their own missions, pending increasing numbers of local members serving missions and the responsiveness of local populations.

Some of the greatest opportunities for future national outreach expansion are within cities already reached by the Church with sizeable LDS populations and the predominantly Christian areas of far-eastern India. The Church utilized opportunities to expand outreach in New Delhi, India during the 2000s, as the number of LDS branches increased from two in the mid-2000s to seven by 2010. Similar opportunities exist in Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Chennai but have not been explored.

The Church does not operate a single congregation in the Christian Indian states of Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland in eastern India. These states have likely been unreached due to their distance from mission outreach centers, small populations, and lack of LDS materials in local languages. Some LDS missionaries in southern India have taught investigators from these states and report that they are generally receptive to the Church.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

South Asia experiences some of the highest member activity and convert retention rates worldwide, largely due to the high degree of conviction required for many to join the Church in the face of family and community opposition, and higher rates of member-missionary participation than in many other areas of the world. Many converts investigate the Church for lengthy periods of time, resulting in a strong understanding of the Church and its teachings, stronger personal testimonies, and the development of religious habits that perpetuate long-term member activity such as weekly church attendance and scripture reading. The small number of full-time missionaries assigned to the region has placed most administrative and missionary responsibilities on local members, further bolstering activity and retention rates. In Afghanistan, member activity and convert retention rates are moderate to high, as most of the Latter-day Saints are U.S. servicemen. Some of the highest member activity rates have occurred in Nepal, largely due to many youth serving full-time missions abroad and a strong member-missionary program among youth. Member activity rates are high in many branches in

India where some congregations function more like wards, especially in Hyderabad and Bangalore. Increasing numbers of members enrolled in seminary and institute, serving full-time missions, and preparing for temple marriages and commensurate membership and congregational growth during the latter half of the 2000s indicate moderate member activity and convert retention rates. Inactivity in many locations is partially due to a lack of nearby congregations. Members living in areas of large cities distant from the church meetinghouse must make huge sacrifices in time and money to regularly participate.

The LDS Church in Sri Lanka once experienced high member activity rates and today exhibits the lowest member activity rates in South Asia, largely due to reliance on foreign full-time missionaries in the 2000s for teaching, baptizing, and retaining converts. Rapid membership increases, quick-baptize tactics of foreign missionaries with inadequate pre-baptismal preparation of converts, and distance from mission headquarters in Singapore with little oversight resulted in worsening activity and convert retention. The little progress that has been achieved in increasing active membership is evidenced by the lack of any new congregations being organized in Sri Lanka since 2002 despite the doubling of nominal membership. Full-time foreign missionaries were withdrawn in 2008 due to visas issues, creating future administrative, leadership, and outreach challenges, but presenting opportunities for building local self-sufficiency and promoting sustainable indigenous growth. The Church in Sri Lanka provides a valuable lesson on achieving sustainable growth that is headed by local leaders and members rather than full-time missionaries to maintain higher activity rates and to safeguard mission outreach in the event that foreign full-time missionaries are removed.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

With the exception of the Maldives, all South Asian countries exhibit significant ethnic integration challenges. Most ethnic groups have few Christians and few or no Latter-day Saints, such as the Pashtun and Balochs. All nations with an LDS presence in South Asia have too few members to provide sufficient leadership and administrative capacity to organize language-specific congregations within the same cities to reduce ethnic conflicts at church. Only in Sri Lanka has the LDS Church ever operated differing language-specific congregations in the same city (Colombo), but a lack of active members and local leadership resulted in the consolidation of the Sinhalese and Tamil-speaking congregations. Tribalism and past conflicts between the numerous ethnic groups are major challenges for mission outreach in most areas of South Asia and have prevented the establishment of the congregations in some locations due to civil war and unrest, as in northern Sri Lanka, where significant Tamil and Sinhalese conflict has persisted for decades and in the Kashmir region. In India and Nepal, the caste system presents obstacles for membership growth and retention. Converts from varying castes and ethnic groups often have little social contact with each other outside of church. These issues may lead to problems with assimilation. Ethnic groups who have relocated from other regions of India and Nepal to the largest cities also face integration challenges. In Pakistan, the most severe ethnic violence is found in the south, especially in Karachi. Bitter ethnic conflict between the Sindhi and Mohajirs has continued for decades. Incoming Pashtuns have also experienced violence from Mohajirs. The integration of these groups into the same congregation may be difficult, particularly if most members belong to one group. At present, there have been no reports of ethnic integration challenges in Karachi significantly affecting church growth, but challenges may be forthcoming as the number of Latter-day Saints increases.

Language Issues

The LDS Church faces serious challenges with language issues in South Asia, as literacy rates are 50% or lower in most nations, and the most commonly spoken languages have few or no LDS materials. At least some LDS materials are available in the first language of 99% of the population in Maldives, 92% in Sri Lanka, 83.9% in India, 72% in Bangladesh, 64% in Pakistan, 47.8% in Nepal, 38% in Bhutan, and 35% in Afghanistan. As much as 75% of the population in the region speaks a language with LDS materials available as a first or second language, such as Hindi and Urdu, although the level of functional literacy in second languages is

often limited. Languages with over three million speakers in South Asia with some LDS materials include Hindi (488 million), Bengali (206 million), Punjabi (94 million), Telugu (86 million), Marathi (83 million), Tamil (74 million), Urdu (70 million), Kannada (44 million), Malayalam (38 million), Pashto (29 million), Sinhalese (16 million), and Nepali (14 million). Among languages spoken by over three million people with LDS materials, the Book of Mormon or selections from the Book of Mormon were only available in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bengali, and Sinhalese. As of early 2011, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price had yet to be translated into any of these languages, limiting gospel scholarship among members speaking these languages. Prospects appear favorable for the translation of additional LDS scriptures and materials into these languages in coming years, as the number of Latter-day Saint speakers is increasing, competent translators are available, and the need and utility of additional LDS materials in these languages is significant for promoting greater church growth in the region. There were no online LDS materials in any of these languages as of early 2011 with the exception of audio recordings of General Conference talks in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, and Sinhala. Online materials provide another approach for expanding outreach and can be utilized among South Asian immigrant groups residing abroad.

Languages without current translations of any LDS materials or scriptures in the greatest need for future translations include Gujarati (54 million), Bhojpuri (39 million), Oriya (38 million), Sindhi (19 million), Maithili (18 million), Chhattisgarhi (18 million), Assamese (15 million), Dari (14 million), Sariaki (14 million), Chittagonian (13 million), Haryanvi (13 million), Magahi (13 million), Deccan (13 million), Malvi (10 million), and Rangpuri (10 million). Farsi translations of LDS materials and selections of the Book of Mormon may be useful among Dari speakers as Dari and Farsi share many linguistic similarities. LDS materials in these languages will most likely not be translated until an LDS presence is established in the areas in which these languages are most commonly spoken. Most these languages are spoken in areas unreached by the Church, and many appear to lack LDS speakers who could serve as competent translators.

Missionary Service

In early 2011, there were approximately one hundred full-time LDS missionaries serving in South Asia. All nations in South Asia either have government restrictions or policies that severely limit the number of foreign full-time missionaries granted visas, when such visas are granted at all. Local members serving missions often attend the Philippines Missionary Training Center. Government restrictions and refusal to issue greater numbers of visas to foreign LDS missionaries have reduced the number of full-time missionaries assigned to India but encourage local and mission leaders to concentrate on increasing the number of local youth serving missions. Pakistan is the only nation with proselytizing LDS missionaries that is self-sufficient in its missionary force, largely due to government restrictions on foreign missionaries and youth and young adults comprising the bulk of Pakistani LDS membership. In the past, foreign missionaries in India have temporarily served as branch presidents in newly opened branches in larger cities until replaced with a native branch president. The India Bangalore Mission had thirty full-time missionaries in 1993.¹⁵⁹⁴ India is partially self-sustaining in its current missionary force. A large number of Nepali young men have served missions, many in neighboring India, and Nepal would be self-sufficient in its missionary force if proselytizing missionaries were assigned. Returned missionaries greatly contribute to developing leadership throughout the region. Returned missionaries will prove instrumental in establishing additional congregations and expanding national outreach throughout South Asia by staffing local leadership and training other members. The number of members serving missions appears to be lowest in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. As of early 2011, there had been no known Latter-day Saints to serve missions from Afghanistan, Bhutan, or Maldives. LDS missionaries have never been assigned to serve in Afghanistan, Bhutan, or Maldives.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Asia area: Welcome mat is out in several countries," LDS Church News, 19 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22920/Asia-area—Welcome-mat-is-out-in-several-countries.html>

Leadership

Local LDS leadership remains severely limited in South Asia and is sufficient to staff multiple districts only in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Notwithstanding a couple districts in India nearing the membership standards to become stakes, inadequate numbers of active, tithe-paying Melchizedek Priesthood holders delayed the creation of stakes until 2012. In the past decade, the Church has often waited to open new congregations in less reached or unreached areas of India until local membership can provide the needed number of priesthood leaders to fill branch callings. For example, the KFG Branch was created in 2007 in Kolar Gold Fields and had a full native branch presidency, notwithstanding the absence of any previously operating branch. In Pakistan, leadership is strong but limited, as many members are youth or middle-aged. The district president of the Islamabad Pakistan District in 2007 was a twenty-nine-year-old returned missionary.¹⁵⁹⁵ Foreign members and missionaries supply leadership or provide assistance and mentoring to local leaders in the less reached South Asian nations, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. In Bangladesh, few joined the Church between the mid-1990s and 2008 largely due to the shrinking number of foreign members who supplied leadership and mentoring. Convert baptisms began to occur more regularly in late 2008, with three convert baptisms that year and seven in one weekend in early 2011. Expatriate members still meet and lead the branch. Among South Asian nations with an official LDS presence, the LDS Church appears to have experienced the greatest difficulty generating self-sustaining local leadership in Sri Lanka. Membership growth greatly outpaced congregational growth in Sri Lanka in the 2000s, suggesting that few new male converts have been retained and trained for leadership positions to open additional congregations. A lack of local leaders has limited LDS expansion throughout South Asia and severely restricts outreach in Bangladesh and Nepal to a single city. Little progress is likely to occur until a greater number of men join the Church, remain active, and faithfully hold leadership positions. Bhutan and the Maldives both appeared to have no foreign or local church leadership in early 2011.

Temple

With the exception of Afghanistan, South Asia is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. Afghanistan is assigned to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district like most nations in the Middle East/Africa North Area due to American military servicemen constituting nearly all Latter-day Saints in that nation. Temple trips occur infrequently and on an individual, family, or small group basis due to few members in the region, infeasible travel expenses, and long distances. Indian and Pakistani Latter-day Saints comprise nearly all temple recommend holders. In 2007, 90% of endowed Indian members held a current temple recommend. Prospects appear favorable for a future temple in India to service South Asia once multiple stakes are established in a single metropolitan area, such as New Delhi or Hyderabad, but at present, membership remains too limited to provide the needed leadership, temple workers, and patrons to keep a temple well-utilized. Church leaders in New Delhi in 1992 promised members that if they were faithful, a temple would someday be built in New Delhi. A future temple in New Delhi would reduce demands on time, money, and distance for Pakistani members, although tensions between India and Pakistan may limit travel.

Comparative Growth

Notwithstanding numbering among the most populated regions of the world, South Asia has one of the smallest regional LDS memberships and most limited mission outreach but has some of the highest member activity and membership growth rates. Accounting for two-thirds of regional church membership, India had the highest reported number of Latter-day Saints in the region and ranked fifty-sixth worldwide in membership and fifty-first in the number of congregations. Of the five most populous countries without their own LDS mission, two are in South Asia (Pakistan and Bangladesh). South Asia is one of the few regions that is

¹⁵⁹⁵ Stahle, Shaun. "Few, but faithful," LDS Church News, 22 September 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51061/Few-but-faithful.html>

close to becoming self-sufficient in its full-time missionary force, largely due to the large number of youth and young adult members and the few missionaries the Church is able to assign to the region.

Outreach-focused Christian groups have operated in South Asia for decades longer than the LDS Church and report significantly more members, congregations, and missionaries. Most of these groups are self-sufficient in local leadership and missionary needs, reducing the effect of missionary visa restrictions on church growth prospects. Several denominations have church memberships in the millions. The Seventh Day Adventist Church generally baptized over 100,000 new converts a year and organized 200–400 new congregations a year in South Asia during most years in the 2000s.¹⁵⁹⁶ Adventists had a presence in nearly all areas of India in early 2011 and had more members and congregations in every South Asian country than the LDS Church with the exception of Afghanistan. There were over 1.5 million Adventists in the region in 2010, more than the number of LDS members in any nation outside of the United States. Jehovah's Witnesses reported 33,000 active members meeting in 435 congregations in 2010. The LDS Church has more members than Jehovah's Witnesses only in Afghanistan and Pakistan. During the 2000s, the LDS Church experienced annual membership growth rates comparable to Seventh Day Adventists and higher than Jehovah's Witnesses. The number of Southern Baptist congregations among some interior peoples of India almost doubled every year between 1993 and 2000, with over 1,000 new churches organized among one interior Indian people in 2000 alone.¹⁵⁹⁷ Gospel for Asia (GFA), a Protestant missionary group started by native Indian K. P. Yohannan in 1980, represents the most remarkable model of international missionary recruitment. GFA fielded over 11,000 native missionaries from India in the early 2000s and plans to reach 100,000 missionaries by 2020. GFA organizes over six new congregations in India and South Asia each day, over twice as many as the LDS Church organizes in the entire world.¹⁵⁹⁸ Yohannan's book *Revolution in World Missions* expounds principles of native missionary recruitment and training.¹⁵⁹⁹ Most missionary-oriented Christians have no official presence in Afghanistan, Bhutan, and the Maldives due to government and societal restrictions but have gained small numbers of converts in Afghanistan and Bhutan like the LDS Church but in greater numbers. The Seventh Day Adventists provide significantly more humanitarian and development assistance than the LDS Church, particularly in building schools, hospitals, and other long-term infrastructure projects.

Future Prospects

The outlook for future LDS Church growth in South Asia is moderately favorable due to increasing numbers of local members serving missions, high receptivity, moderate to high rates of member activity and convert retention, abundant opportunities for humanitarian and development work, and the high degree of self-sufficiency developed by local leadership. A lack of LDS materials in local languages, civil unrest, negative societal attitudes on conversion to Christianity from traditional religions, no culturally developed missionary approaches for Hindus and Muslims, low literacy rates, poverty, dependence on full-time missionaries to expand outreach, and ongoing government restrictions of religious freedom and missionary visas will continue to delay expansion of national outreach throughout the region. India and Pakistan will likely remain the centers of strength for the Church in the region for decades to come due to their large populations, moderate to rapid membership and congregational growth rates, and self-sufficient or nearly self-sufficient missionary forces. Additional congregations will likely be organized in the largest cities in both nations and in some currently unreached cities within the next decade, particularly in southeastern India and in the Lahore area. Additional stakes may be organized in Bangalore, Coimbatore, Islamabad, and New Delhi over the medium term. There

¹⁵⁹⁶ "Southern Asia Division (1920-Present)," [www.adventiststatistics.org](http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=D_SUD), retrieved 21 April 2011. http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=D_SUD

¹⁵⁹⁷ Garrison, David, Church Planting Movements, Southern Baptist International Mission Board, October 1999, <http://www.imb.org/CPM/default.htm>.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Yohannan, K. P., "The 10 Major Ministries of Gospel for Asia," http://www.gfa.org/site/about_gfa/brochure/whatdoing.html.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Yohannan, K. P., *Revolution in World Missions*, Carrollton, TX: GFA Books, 2000. See also <http://www.gfa.org>.

are no realistic prospects for official LDS outreach among the indigenous populations of Afghanistan, Bhutan, and the Maldives for the foreseeable future due to government and societal restrictions. Mission outreach will likely expand into Bangladesh and Nepal within the coming decade in harmony with government regulations and local laws due to increasing numbers of convert baptisms and greater communication and mentoring from mission leaders. The assignment of senior missionary couples to Bangladesh and less reached or unreached areas of India may provide an impetus for growth and expand national outreach.

INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY PROFILES

AFGHANISTAN

Geography

AREA: 652,230 square km. Landlocked in Southern Asia, Afghanistan borders Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China. The rugged Hindu Kush Mountains extend throughout much of the country and reach into Pakistan and Tajikistan to the east. Mountains and desert plains dominate most the terrain. Climate ranges from arid to semi-arid with cold winters and hot summers. Earthquakes, flooding, and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include limited fresh water, soil degradation, overgrazing, deforestation, desertification, and pollution. Afghanistan is divided into thirty-four administrative provinces.

Peoples

Pashtun: 42%

Tajik: 27%

Hazara: 9%

Uzbek: 9%

Aimak: 4%

Turkmen: 3%

Baloch: 2%

Other: 4%

Population: 30,419,928 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 2.22% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 5.64 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 48.45 male, 51.05 female (2012)

Languages: Afghan Persian/Dari (50%), Pashto (35%), Turkic languages [mainly Uzbek and Turkmen] (11%), other (4%). Dari and Pashto are the official languages. Some common regional languages are understood by some, including Arabic and Urdu. Languages with over one million speakers include Dari (14.2 million), Pashto (9.94 million), and Uzbek (1.4 million).

Literacy: 28.1% (2000)

History

The area of modern-day Afghanistan has experienced one of the longest known conflict-ridden histories due to its location at the crossroads of the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and Central Asia. For millennia, the strongest foreign military forces have experienced only limited success in subduing the indigenous population, with the exception of the Mongols under Genghis Khan. Alexander the Great invaded the region in 328 BC and founded the Hellenistic state of Bactria. Prior to the Arab invasion in 642 AD, the Scythians, White Huns, and Turks successively controlled the region for centuries. Arabs introduced Islam and maintained

control until Persian rule, which was followed by the Turkic Ghaznavids by the eleventh century. The Mongols left a strong legacy after a powerful invasion of the region. In the mid-eighteenth century, Ahmad Shah Durrani founded the modern Afghan nation state by unifying Pashtun tribes. In the nineteenth century, the Russian and British Empires vied for control of Afghanistan from bordering territories. Afghans defeated the British army in 1839 and maintained autonomy in many areas of the country and government despite British control of foreign affairs from 1880 to 1919. Britain and Russia established Afghanistan's modern boundaries during this period. Afghans regained total control over the country and government in 1919 as Britain withdrew and signed the Treaty of Rawalpindi. King Amanullah ruled until 1929 and attempted to modernize Afghanistan and end its traditional isolationist stance. The king relinquished his power as a result of growing opposition to his reforms.

Muhammed Zahir Shah ruled from 1933 to 1973, during which time Afghanistan was a relatively stable secular state. A liberal constitution and democratic reforms introduced in 1964 allowed the proliferation of extremist parties. The monarchy was overthrown in 1973, and a republic was proclaimed; the republic was then overthrown in 1978, and a Marxist state was imposed. Political instability plagued the country for much of the remainder of the twentieth century as extremist groups have fought for control of the government. The Soviet Union sent troops to support the Marxist government in 1979 but failed to establish a self-sustaining communist regime, ultimately withdrawing in 1989. The Taliban filled the power vacuum left by departing Soviet forces and engaged in ongoing fighting with the Northern Alliance led by Ahmad Shah Massoud until Massoud was assassinated by Al-Qaeda assassins on September 9, 2001, two days before the September 11 attacks in the United States. The Taliban enforced an extreme interpretation of Islam that severely infringed on human rights and supported terrorists including Osama bin Laden, mastermind of the September 11th terrorist attacks. The United States formed an anti-terrorist coalition that invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 and captured Kabul the following month with the assistance of the Northern Alliance. The United Nations has assisted in the formation of a democratic government in the 2000s, which held elections in 2004. Afghanistan has experienced marked economic development, but standards of living rank among the lowest worldwide. Corruption is a major challenge that has limited economic development and political stability. Lawlessness in many rural areas continues to challenge efforts by the newly instated democratic government and U.S. coalition forces to secure Afghanistan's borders, subdue pro-Taliban fighters, and rebuild the country after decades of internal conflict and foreign invasions.¹⁶⁰⁰

Culture

Islam and tribalism strongly influence daily life and local customs and practices. Afghans continue to struggle with the role of Islam in government. Debate continues on which Muslim groups can implement Shari'a law. Several ancient civilizations have influenced Afghan culture, such as the Persians, Mongols, and Arabs. Afghans maintain a proud tradition of poetry. In 2001, the Taliban destroyed two 1,500 year old massive Buddha statues in the Bamiyan Valley as they were viewed as idols. Traditional clothing continues to be widely worn, and consists of turbans or kufi for men, veils for women, and baggy, loose clothing called salwar kameez, common to the region.¹⁶⁰¹ Polygamy is common; mistreatment and violence directed toward women are widespread. Over half of the female population is estimated to marry before the age of sixteen.¹⁶⁰² Alcohol and cigarette consumption rates appear to be among the lowest worldwide.

¹⁶⁰⁰ "Background Note: Afghanistan," Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, 26 March 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm>

¹⁶⁰¹ "Salwar Kameez," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 19 October 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salwar_kameez

¹⁶⁰² "Afghanistan," Social Institutions and Gender Index, retrieved 19 October 2010. <http://genderindex.org/country/afghanistan>

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,000 (2011) [2.08% of one hundred U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.398

Corruption Index: 1.5 (2011)

The economy remains underdeveloped and riddled by decades of warfare and political chaos, yet in the past decade foreign investment, international aid, and growth in agriculture and services has begun to improve conditions. Economic activity is limited due to dependence on foreign aid, lawlessness, Afghanistan's landlocked location, and the lack of national infrastructure. A third of the population is unemployed and lives below the poverty line. In 2009, Afghanistan posted the highest annual percentage growth of GDP worldwide at 22.5%. Natural gas, oil, coal, salt, and abundant deposits of many minerals and precious metals are natural resources. Services account for 16% of the workforce and 26% of the GDP. Agriculture employs 77% of the workforce and generates 31% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 6% of the workforce and generates 26% of the GDP. Primary industries include textiles, soap, furniture, fertilizer, food products, and minerals. Common crops consist of opium poppy, wheat, fruit, and nuts. Animal skins and meat are important agricultural products. The United States, Pakistan, and India are primary trade partners.

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium and ranks among the most corrupt countries in the world according to Transparency International. Only Somalia had a lower rating on the 2009 Corruption Index. The Pakistani border remains unsecured in many areas, increasing illegal activity. Most heroin consumed in Europe and Eurasia is produced from opium poppies cultivated in Afghanistan. Corruption and lawlessness impede efforts to address drug cultivation problems. The Taliban utilized the cultivation of opium poppies for revenue, which is still deeply entrenched in agriculture for many areas. Afghanistan is also a regional supplier of hashish.

Faiths

Muslim: 99%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Latter-day Saints 700 4

Catholic 100

Seventh Day Adventists 29 1 (includes Iran)

Religion

The Taliban regime severely persecuted non-Muslims, many of who fled the country. Muslims today account for 99% of the population, 80% of which are Sunni. Shi'a Muslims account for 19% of the population. There are small communities of Sikhs, Hindus, and Baha'is, each less than 5,000. The number of indigenous Christians range from 500 to 8,000. Kabul experiences the greatest religious diversity as some non-Muslim Afghans have returned to the capital in recent years.¹⁶⁰³

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 3rd

¹⁶⁰³ "Afghanistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127362.htm>

The constitution mandates that no laws can oppose Islamic teachings, provides equal recognition for Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, and guarantees the right for other religious groups to practice their faiths within the bounds of the law. Since the fall of the Taliban, the federal government has attempted to increase religious freedom, but societal abuse of religious freedom and intolerance are major challenges. Conflict continues between different Muslim sects, which in recent years has manifested itself in the proposed establishment of religious laws for some Muslim groups. Many non-Muslims keep their religious affiliation private to avoid harassment and persecution, worshipping in their homes. Some Muslim groups that follow Shari'a law consider apostasy from Islam a crime punishable by death, although there have been no recent instances of formerly Muslim Christian converts receiving the death penalty. There are no laws banning proselytizing, but missionary activity is culturally discouraged and rarely occurs. Some Christian missionaries do operate in the country in a discreet manner to avoid harassment. Religious groups are not required to register with the government, and non-Muslims are not required to study Islam in public schools. There are no legal restrictions regarding the importation or dissemination of religious literature.¹⁶⁰⁴ In the late 2000s, some Christian aid organizations and missionary groups had experienced persecution or kidnapping at the hand of terrorist organizations like the Taliban. In 2007, twenty-three South Korean aid workers sponsored by a Christian denomination were kidnapped by the Taliban, and two were executed.¹⁶⁰⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 24%

Kabul, **Herat**, Kandahar, **Mazar-e Sharif**, **Jalalabad**, **Konduz**, **Pol-e Khomri**, **Meymaneh**, **Sheberghan**, **Taloqan**.

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

Two of the ten largest cities have an LDS military branch. Sixteen percent (16%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

Latter-day Saints did not have a presence in Afghanistan until after the 2001 U.S.-led coalition invasion. United States servicemen constituted the entire church membership until a few native Afghans joined the Church shortly thereafter as a result of associations made with LDS members in the military. In 2008, Afghanistan became part of the Middle East/Africa North Area.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 700 (2009)

In mid-2009, there were over 500 members in the country.¹⁶⁰⁶ There were 700 Latter-day Saints in Afghanistan in late 2009,¹⁶⁰⁷ all of who were foreign military personnel with the exception of a few Afghan converts. Some Afghans have also joined the church in New Delhi, India, and in London, England.

¹⁶⁰⁴ "Afghanistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127362.htm>

¹⁶⁰⁵ Afghanistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2008, retrieved 19 October 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108497.htm>

¹⁶⁰⁶ "An island of peace in the middle of war," LDS Church News, 17 August 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/57771/An-island-of-peace-in-the-middle-of-war.html>

¹⁶⁰⁷ Askar, Jamshid. "Military district in Iraq will be 'big difference,'" LDS Church News, 21 November 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58227/Military-district-in-Iraq-will-be-big-difference.html>

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 4 Groups: 28 (2012)

The Church created the Kabul Afghanistan Military District on July 1st, 2008.¹⁶⁰⁸ In late 2010, there were five branches and twenty-eight groups operating.¹⁶⁰⁹ Military branches included the Kabul, Kandahar, Bagram, Salerno, and Leatherneck Branches.

Activity and Retention

Afghanistan experiences high rates of member activity due to LDS servicemen accounting for nearly all of Church membership. Active membership is estimated at 400, or 57% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: Farsi, Arabic, Kazakh, Urdu, English.

The Church has translated all LDS scriptures and many church materials in Arabic. Book of Mormon selections are available in Farsi. *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Farsi and Pashto. Kazakh LDS materials are limited to the Sacrament Prayers, a basic unit guidebook, the Articles of Faith, and hymns and children's songs. A translation of selections from the Book of Mormon became available in Urdu in 1988. An entire Book of Mormon translation was completed in late 2007. Three issues of the *Liahona* magazine were published a year in Urdu as of late 2009 and audiovisual materials are available for *Joy to the World* and *The Restoration*. Some Primary materials are also available in Urdu.

Meetinghouses

Church meetings occur on U.S. military bases, often in chapels that serve as places of worship for various religious groups found among the armed forces.

Health and Safety

Conditions remain dangerous for foreigners living and working in the country due to a lack of government control in many regions and Taliban insurgency along the Pakistani border. Living conditions are among the poorest in the world. Armed kidnappings and the murder of foreign aid workers have occurred on an ongoing basis.

Humanitarian and Development Work

As of 2010, Latter-day Saints had not taken part in any humanitarian or development work in Afghanistan.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Despite lawlessness and the social intolerance of non-Muslim groups, the Afghan government is among the most proactive of Muslim nations in the region regarding the establishment of greater religious freedom. Conditions for religious minority groups appear to be improving, which over time may allow for some limited

¹⁶⁰⁸ Askar, Jamshid. "Military district in Iraq will be 'big difference,'" LDS Church News, 21 November 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58227/Military-district-in-Iraq-will-be-big-difference.html>

¹⁶⁰⁹ "Church Organization in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Isolated Areas," Military Relations, retrieved 15 October 2010. <http://lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,9138-1,00.html>

LDS missionary activity to occur by member referral. Latter-day Saints among the American military worship freely in their respective congregations on military bases.

Cultural Issues

Negative social attitudes regarding conversion from Islam and Christian proselytism create cultural barriers for LDS missionary activity. Afghan women have traditionally received very little education due to government restrictions and cultural norms. Consequently, only 13% of women were literate in 2000. The poor treatment of women in many areas may create cultural challenges for Latter-day Saints to address with Afghans who are victims or perpetrators of abuse. Those engaged in a polygamous relationship must end these relations in divorce and be interviewed by a member of a mission or area presidency to be baptized. Corruption and drug cultivation and trafficking create unsafe conditions in many areas for full-time missionaries and non-Muslims.

National Outreach

Current LDS missionary outreach is limited to the associations of U.S. military members and the few local Afghani converts. There are no organized mission outreach efforts made by the Church in Afghanistan and no official church presence. If missionary work were to occur in areas where military branches function, 10% of the population would be reached by LDS mission outreach efforts. Latter-day Saints do not undertake formal missionary activity due to cultural restrictions, past violence and conflict resulting from decades of war, lawlessness, and the lack of indigenous members in sufficient numbers to organize the church among the nonmilitary population. Distance from established mission outreach centers in Pakistan and India have contributed to the lack of a formal church presence over the years.

Prospects for national outreach in the near future appear doubtful due to the cultural restrictions of proselytizing Muslims, ongoing violence, and the difficulty in searching out the small, hidden Afghani Christian community. Due to its large population, central geographic location, greater government control, and recent influx of non-Muslims, Kabul offers the most realistic prospects for member referral-based mission outreach in the coming years. In the event that the government establishes law and security throughout the country, prospective mission outreach by Latter-day Saints in Kabul could potentially reach most of Afghanistan's major ethnic groups, providing an impetus for converts from these groups to bring the church to their respective regions of the country. Three-fourths of the population resides in rural areas and will likely not receive any mission outreach for decades following a formal church establishment in Kabul and other major cities.

Some Afghan expatriates have joined the LDS Church in the past decade, but these new converts express little or no desire to return to their homeland. Afghani Latter-day Saints in other nations may one day assist in establishing the Church in Afghanistan as full-time missionaries. Humanitarian and development projects have yet to be explored by Latter-day Saints, which over time have potential for providing a segue for missionary work one day. Farsi-speaking LDS members have created Internet-outreach websites such as <http://www.farsimormon.com/> containing Farsi LDS language materials. In 2010, these sites appear to be the only written Farsi-language LDS materials available on the Internet.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Member activity and convert retention rates are moderate to high, as most the Latter-day Saints are U.S. servicemen. Convert retention rates from the small Afghani Latter-day Saint membership are unknown due to their low profile and private nature of their worship and faith. Convert retention rates may be higher than average due to the high level of commitment for locals to join the Church in the face of potential persecution, ostracism, and isolation from family and social groups.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Tribalism and past conflict between the multiplicity of ethnic groups creates challenges for greater national stability and the integration of varying ethnic groups into the same LDS congregations. Language-specific congregations, if organized once the number of local members speaking different languages necessitates it, may help reduce potential conflict at church.

Language Issues

A limited number of proselytizing materials are translated into the native languages spoken by only 35% of the population. Dari—the Afghan dialect of Persian or Farsi—is spoken by half the population and possesses similarities with its Iranian counterpart, allowing for some usage of Farsi-language materials among Dari speakers in Afghanistan. Church materials are translated in languages spoken as a second language of as many as 89% of the population. Low literacy rates in many areas challenge efforts to distribute religious literature and utilize the Internet for missionary activity to Afghans but provide future opportunities for Latter-day Saints to engage in literacy programs.

Missionary Service

No known Afghan Latter-day Saints have served a full-time mission. LDS missionaries have never been assigned to serve in Afghanistan.

Leadership

Military servicemen or nonnatives staff leadership for all LDS congregations nationwide. There appear to be no native church leaders.

Temple

Afghanistan pertains to the Frankfurt Germany Temple district, like most nations in the Middle East/Africa North Area. Temple trips are feasible only for military personnel, as there are no LDS temples nearby. A temple may be built closer to Afghanistan one day in India.

Comparative Growth

Afghanistan is one of the only nations in southwestern Asia to have LDS congregations, which exist almost exclusively to service U.S. military personnel. Neighboring Pakistan exhibits strong self-sufficiency in church administration, as all of the twenty to thirty full-time missionaries assigned to the country are native members, and steady membership and congregation growth has occurred over the past quarter century. There are nearly twice as many Latter-day Saints in Iraq¹⁶¹⁰ where, as in Afghanistan, American military personnel constitute almost the entire church membership. The only nation in the region that has had an LDS mission organized was Iran in the late 1970s. During the operation of the Iran Tehran Mission, fewer than fifty converts were baptized as a result of cultural issues.

Missionary-minded Christian groups usually do not publish statistics regarding church membership in Afghanistan due to security concerns for their members and to maintain a low profile for missionary activity. Many Christian groups have gained a few Afghan converts, but church growth remains slow due to cultural restrictions.

¹⁶¹⁰ Askar, Jamshid. "Military district in Iraq will be 'big difference,'" LDS Church News, 21 November 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58227/Military-district-in-Iraq-will-be-big-difference.html>

Future Prospects

Present lawlessness outside Kabul, negative attitudes of Christian missionary activity, and the few nonmilitary Latter-day Saints create persistent challenges for an official church establishment and missionary activity over the long-term. Existing congregations service U.S. servicemen almost exclusively. Such congregations are unlikely to persist after the drawdown of U.S. troops due to the very small number of native members and security issues. The government has taken steps to improve the status of religious freedom and promote tolerance of minority religious groups, but society has yet to come to grips with new government policies that oppose popular thinking and past government directives regarding religious affairs. Afghanis living abroad have demonstrated receptivity to the LDS Church in small numbers in the 2000s, indicating some potential for church growth if missionary outreach is pursued with the proper vision and resources, such as performing humanitarian and development work that is badly needed in many areas, strengthening the few local Latter-day Saints, and the careful search for Afghani Christians and presenting the gospel in an appropriate manner. Most ethnic groups have had no exposure to LDS mission outreach. It is unclear how some of these groups may respond in the future to potential LDS missionary activity.

BANGLADESH

Geography

AREA: 143,998 square km. Nearly completely surrounded by India, Bangladesh also borders Burma and the Bay of Bengal where the Ganges, Jamuna, and Meghna Rivers empty into the ocean. Bangladesh suffers from severe flooding due to monsoon rains that typically inundate a third of the country annually. The large population confined to a small geographic area prone to flooding creates vulnerability to loss of life and property. Mangroves line the coastal waters, and much of the interior was deforested to provide space for farming and animal husbandry. There are some hills to the southwest; otherwise low-lying plains dominate the terrain. No other country with over 10 million people has as high a population density. Bangladesh is divided into six administrative divisions.

Peoples

Bengali: 98%

Other: 2%

Nearly the entire population is Bengali. Other ethnic groups include tribal groups and non-Bengali Muslims such as Burmese, Garo, Assamese, and Santhals. Many of the minority groups live on the borders of Bangladesh with India and Burma.

Population: 161,083,804 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.579% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.55 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 68.21 male, 71.98 female (2012)

Languages: Bengali (72%), Chittagonian (8%), Rangpuri (7%), Sylheti (5%), other (8%). Bengali is the official language and English is spoken by the well-educated. Languages with over one million speakers include Bengali (110 million), Chittagonian (13 million), Rangpuri (10 million), and Sylheti (7 million).

Literacy: 47.9% (2001)

History

Various Indian empires periodically included Bangladesh before European exploration. In the sixteenth century, Europeans established trading posts in the region. The British East India Company took control of Bangladesh in the eighteenth century. In 1947, the United Kingdom divided the Indian subcontinent based on religious demography between Hindus and Muslims to create India and Pakistan, the latter including Bangladesh, known as East Bengal, and latter East Pakistan. Due to geographic isolation from West Pakistan and marginalization of Bengalis by the government, East Pakistan seceded and declared independence under the name Bangladesh in 1971. Inefficient and corrupt government limited economic growth, resulting in the military backing a temporary regime takeover to eradicate corruption from government over the long-term in the late 2000s. Massive flooding from strong monsoon rains occurred in 1998 resulting in the deaths of thousands, tens of millions left homeless, and widespread destruction of property.

Culture

Bangladesh shares many cultural similarities with the Indian state of West Bengal with cuisine, food, and language. Men typically wear Western style clothing, whereas women wear traditional dress. Muslim and Hindu holidays are widely practiced. Cricket is the most popular sport. Polygamy is practiced by a few Hindus and Muslims but is not socially acceptable. Women have fewer rights than men in issues such as divorce.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,700 (2011) [3.53% of one hundred U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.500

Corruption Index: 2.7 (2011)

Although Bangladesh has a large population capable of sustaining a large economy, two-thirds of the workforce labors in agriculture. Services amount to half of the GDP yet only 11% of the world's eighth largest workforce labors in this sector. Around half of the population lives below the poverty line. In addition to agricultural products, textiles also fuel the economy. Primary agriculture goods include rice, jute, tea, and wheat, whereas primary industries process these goods or make textiles and clothing. The largest export partners include the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom. Most imports arrive from China, India, and Kuwait. Undeveloped natural gas reserves may fuel greater economic growth in the industrial sector. Government management has struggled to properly face the issues of a poor, small, very densely populated country in developing the economy. Urban areas have driven most of the economic growth experienced since independence. Current utilities cannot meet the demands of the population, especially for electricity.

Bangladesh ranks among the most corrupt countries in the world but has seen some improvement in the past few years. Corruption is still widespread and limits economic progress. Most regard the police as the most corrupt division of government, followed by customs.¹⁶¹¹ Many have to pay a bribe to secure employment. Government has done little to address corruption issues.

Faiths

Muslim: 83%

Hindu: 16%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 211,159

Seventh Day Adventists 33,837 120

Jehovah's Witnesses 151 3

Latter-day Saints 50 1

Religion

Government declares Islam as the state religion. Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist minorities also practice in Bangladesh. Many religious minorities are also ethnic minorities. Islam influences many aspects of society. Some tensions between Muslims and religious minority groups occur, especially Hindus. Most Christians are Catholic. Christian churches experience slow to modest growth.

¹⁶¹¹ <http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/docs/research/CorBang1.htm>

Religious Freedom

The constitution declares Bangladesh as an Islamic state. All religions have the right to identify, practice, and proselyte according to law and public order. Local authorities often object to the conversion of Muslims. Missionaries usually experience delays in obtaining visas. Government has become more tolerant of religious minorities and protecting their rights to practice their religions.¹⁶¹²

Largest Cities

Urban: 27%

Dhaka, **Chattagam**, **Khulna**, **Rajshahi**, **Maimansingh**, **Tungi**, **Komilla**, **Silhat**, **Rangpur**, **Barisal**, **Narsingdi**, **Narayanganj**, **Bogora**, **Jessor**, **Brahman Bariya**, **Dinajpur**, **Pabna**, **Nawabganj**, **Tangayal**, **Jamalpur**, **Naugaon**, **Sirajganj**, **Gazipur**, **Chandpur**, **Begamganj**, **Kushtiya**, **Chuadanga**, **Koks Bazar**, **Noakhali**, **Satkhira**.

Cities in **bold** do not have congregations.

One of the thirty largest cities has a Church congregation. Ten percent (10%) of the national population lives in cities with over 100,000 inhabitants.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: ~50 (2012)

The first members living in Bangladesh were expatriates primarily from Canada on government assignment. One Canadian member family introduced the Church to their cook and his family, who later became the first Bangladeshis to join the Church in Bangladesh. In 1993, the first local members served as missionaries.¹⁶¹³ By mid-1993 there were about thirty members, increasing to forty later that year. Most members were expatriates.¹⁶¹⁴ Little local membership growth occurred the following fifteen years, possibly a result of many foreign members leaving Bangladesh. Local members began to join the Church again more regularly in late 2008, with three convert baptisms that year. As of late 2011 the Church was not formally recognized by the government, and expatriate members still met and led the branch.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 (2012)

The Church organized its first group in the 1980s.¹⁶¹⁵ The first branch was created in March 1992.¹⁶¹⁶ The Singapore Mission administered Bangladesh until the creation of the India New Delhi Mission in late 2007. No missionaries served in the country in late 2009. The India New Delhi mission president and his assistants traveled frequently to Bangladesh to meet with local leaders and perform baptisms in 2009.

¹⁶¹² "Bangladesh," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127363.htm>

¹⁶¹³ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 15 May 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23489/From-around-the-world.html>

¹⁶¹⁴ Sheffield, Sheridan. "Asia area: Welcome mat is out in several countries," LDS Church News, 19 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22920/Asia-area—Welcome-mat-is-out-in-several-countries.html>

¹⁶¹⁵ "From around the world," LDS Church News, 15 May 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23489/From-around-the-world.html>

¹⁶¹⁶ "The Church in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka," Liahona, October 1993. <http://www.lds.org/liahona/1993/10/the-church-in-india-pakistan-bangladesh-and-sri-lanka>

Activity and Retention

Local members are responsible for finding and fellowshipping new converts who are taught and baptized by the mission president and his assistants. The branch has a small number of members who attend, but continue to grow in number. Active membership is likely around fifty.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Bengali.

A translation of the Book of Mormon selections in Bengali was published in 1985 in New Delhi, India. The Church increased emphasis on translating materials into Bengali in 1993 by storing the Bengali script in computers at Church headquarters.¹⁶¹⁷ The full Book of Mormon is still unavailable in Bengali, but additional language materials have been translated, including *Gospel Principles*, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, and the Articles of Faith.

Meetinghouses

The Dhaka Branch received its first permanent building in May 2009.

Health and Safety

Health issues include threats typical of poorer, tropical nations such as hepatitis, typhoid, malaria, and rabies. HIV/AIDS is estimated to infect less than 0.1% of Bangladeshis. Violence directed towards religious minorities from intolerant Muslims may pose safety threats to missionaries and converts.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church provided aid during flooding caused by a cyclone in 1991.¹⁶¹⁸ Latter-day Saint charities operated literacy programs in the late 1990s.¹⁶¹⁹ German members collected 7,500 Euros to donate to impoverished Bangladeshi children.¹⁶²⁰ Following the destruction of Cyclone Sidr in 2007, the Church sent additional aid.¹⁶²¹

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church has yet to take greater advantage of the degree of religious freedom offered by a predominantly Muslim country to religious minorities. Rarely do Islamic states offer rights to Christians that include proselytism. Other nations with more restrictions on religious freedom and proselytism have an established Church missionary presence. Rampant corruption, especially with law enforcement, may be a concern that has limited missionary outreach. Difficulties in obtaining foreign missionary visas challenge future outreach prospects.

¹⁶¹⁷ Hart, John L. "Alphabets of world at fingertip," LDS Church News, 15 May 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/23920/Alphabets-of-world-at-fingertip.html>

¹⁶¹⁸ Van Orden, Dell. "'Am I my brother's keeper?'" LDS Church News, 29 November 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29937/Am-I-my-brothers-keeper.html>

¹⁶¹⁹ Dockstader, Julie. "Lifetime of literacy manifest through service," LDS Church News, 17 July 1999. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/36074/Lifetime-of-literacy-manifest-through-service.html>

¹⁶²⁰ Stahle, Shaun D. "German stake raises money for Bangladesh," LDS Church News, 6 December 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44781/German-stake-raises-money-for-Bangladesh.html>

¹⁶²¹ "Disasters strike Chile, Bangladesh," LDS Church News, 24 November 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51355/Disasters-strike-Chile-Bangladesh.html>

Cultural Issues

Cultural barriers between Bangladesh and Church teachings do not appear to have limited the Church's growth and development. The treatment and position of women in society may create some cultural challenges in Bangladeshi members understanding Church teachings on the roles and treatment of men and women. Islamic and Hindu holidays may interrupt future proselytism as in India and other nations, where Christians become a frequent target of persecution and violence. Development of self-reliance and economic skills among members and the population is challenging due to poor living conditions and literacy levels. Humanitarian projects aiming to address these challenges may assist in a greater establishment of the Church in the long term through establishing a positive reputation and providing service.

National Outreach

The entire population of Bangladesh is unreached by the Church with the exception of the few individuals who have been brought into the Church by local members. The Church faces logistical challenges in opening the seventh most populous nation in the world. If the Church had mission outreach for the entire population of Dhaka, 96% of the national population would still remain unreached.

Limited mission outreach has resulted from the jurisdiction resting under the Singapore Mission prior to late 2007. Since the creation of the India New Delhi Mission increased mission outreach, and recurring visits of leaders and missionaries have occurred.

Tremendous fulltime missionary manpower would be required to open most of the country to missionary work using fulltime missionaries. The Philippines and Mexico have fifteen and twenty-one missions, respectively, with much smaller populations. Member-missionaries participating among local members and recruitment of native missionaries have the most realistic prospects for future outreach into unreached cities and rural areas; vision and mentoring will be needed to achieve these purposes.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Convert retention and member activity appear high, despite limited mission outreach. Activity appears high at least in part due to growth mediated primarily by local members, lengthy periods of preparation of prospective converts, and the lack of pressure for converts to be baptized quickly by foreign missionaries. Foreign members and periodic missionary visits help to regulate the Church and provide training.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Few challenges face the Church with ethnic integration due to the homogeneity of the population. Minority ethnic groups with higher percentages of Christians may be more receptive to the Church. Challenges may arise in meeting the needs of converts with differing religious and cultural backgrounds in the same congregation.

Language Issues

The majority of the population speaks Bengali, which only has limited scripture and Church materials translated. Additional materials will likely become available as membership continues to grow. Gospel materials are likely to be translated into Chittagonian, Rangpuri, and Sylheti only when significant membership growth occurs where these minority languages are spoken.

Leadership

The Church appears to struggle in developing self-sustaining Bangladeshi leadership. In May 2009, the branch president of the Dhaka Branch was an expatriate from Sweden. Although the first Bangladeshi missionary served in the early 1990s, very few local members have served missions. Bangladeshi leaders will be crucial to opening additional large cities and introducing the Gospel to rural communities. Little progress will likely occur until a greater number of men join the Church, remain active, and faithfully hold leadership positions. In 2012, a Bangladeshi convert from the Dhaka Branch began serving a mission in the Philippines.

Temple

Bangladesh pertains to the Hong Kong China Temple District. Temple trips likely do not occur from the Dhaka Branch, as the branch has a small membership, travel to the temple is difficult, and seasoned members are few.

Comparative Growth

Nations separated by large distances from mission headquarters that have a small Church membership relative to their population sizes experience greater membership growth than Bangladesh. Nepal had its first congregation organized around the same time as Bangladesh, yet has over one hundred attending meetings with around a dozen young men serving missions from the branch. Laos had its first congregation organized in the early 2000s and had around seventy-five active members in late 2009. Pakistan had several thousand members in two districts and ten branches.

Other Christian denominations have taken advantage of the religious freedom and proselytism. Many Christian churches add thousands of converts a year and also have outreach outside of the largest cities. Christians struggle with increasing national outreach. Seventh Day Adventists have addressed some of these concerns through opening church schools and providing humanitarian relief. The LDS Church may experience greater growth through the opening of schools, hospitals, and humanitarian relief.

Future Prospects

More frequent missionary visits in the late 2000s may provide for increased local leadership capable of sustaining larger numbers of convert baptisms without sacrificing high retention. Bangladeshi members who join the Church in other nations may return to their homeland and help build up the Church. A senior missionary couple assisting with leadership development and humanitarian aid may be assigned.

BHUTAN

Geography

AREA: 38,394 square km. Landlocked in the Himalayas, Bhutan borders India and China. The terrain is almost entirely mountainous with some fertile valleys and plains in the south. Tropical climate prevails near the Indian border whereas a temperate climate characterizes large valleys stretching into the Himalayas. Mountainous areas have cool summers and severe winters. Natural hazards include severe storms and landslides. Soil erosion and little access to clean water are environmental issues. Bhutan is divided into twenty administrative districts.

Peoples

Bhote: 50%

Nepalese: 35%

Indigenous/migrant tribes: 15%

Many ethnic Nepalese were forced from their homes in Bhutan in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 2010, there were as many as 100,000 displaced Nepalese-Bhutanese living in refugee camps in eastern Nepal, many of whom were in the process of relocation to other nations.

Population: 716,896 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.175% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.13 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 67.01 male, 68.79 female (2012)

Languages: Nepali (38%), Dzongkha (23%), Tshangla (22%), other (17%). Dzongkha speakers mainly reside in the west, whereas Nepali speakers populate southern foothills from east to west. Tshangla speakers are concentrated in the east and southeast. Dzongkha is the official language. Tibetan dialects are spoken by Bhotes, and Nepali dialects are spoken by Nepalese. Twenty-five native languages are spoken. Languages with over 100,000 speakers include Dzongkha, Nepali, and Tshangla.

Nepali belongs to the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European language family and is related to Northern Indian languages. Dzongkha is a South Tibetan language that belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group of the Sino-Tibetan language family, which includes languages of Tibet and Burma; Chinese is more distantly related. Tshangla, also called Sharchopkha, is also a Tibeto-Burman language.

Literacy: 47% (2003)

History

Bhutan has been inhabited for thousands of years by aboriginal peoples who were typically not unified into a single entity. Strong ties to Buddhism have been maintained throughout Bhutan's recorded history. The Mongol invasions brought political and religious reform. A brief unification of the territory occurred in the seventeenth century in defense against Tibet. Civil wars and wars with Tibet and neighboring kingdoms

occurred throughout much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁶²² The Treaty of Sinchulu in 1865 ceded some border land to British India in exchange for an annual subsidy. Independence occurred in 1907, after which Bhutan became a unified kingdom under a British-assisted monarchy. In 1910, a treaty was signed in which Britain controlled foreign policy but promised not to intervene in internal affairs. India has replaced Britain pertaining to foreign relations and defense since independence from the British. Increasing autonomy and democratic reforms have occurred over the past decade. International relations continue to be relayed through India. Bhutan maintained a policy of isolation from modernization until recently when the government consented to gradual introduction of modern technology. In 2008, Bhutan made the successful transition from a hereditary monarchy to a democratic constitutional monarchy.¹⁶²³

Culture

Bhutanese culture is deeply rooted in Buddhist practices and beliefs. Isolation from the outside world until the past century and bans on modern technology, which have been relaxed only recently, have perpetuated cultural traditions.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$6,000 (2011) [12.5% of one hundred U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.522

Corruption Index: 5.7 (2011)

Bhutan suffers from a shortage of skilled labor, little economic development, and a landlocked location. Agriculture employs 63% of the labor force and produces 22% of the GDP, whereas services account for 31% of the labor force and generate 40% of the GDP. Industry accounts for 38% of the GDP and primarily consists of cement, wood products, processed foods, and tourism. Primary crops include rice, corn, roots, and citrus fruits. India is the primary trade partner.

Bhutan benefits from low levels of corruption despite little economic development.

Faiths

Buddhist: 75%

Hinduism: 24%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Seventh Day Adventist 631 7

Catholic 200

Latter-day Saints less than 20

Religion

Most Bhutanese are Buddhist. Hindus are concentrated in the south and openly practice their religion. Some convert to Christianity but worship in the privacy of their own homes. Buddhists tend to pressure followers of other religions to observe aspects of Buddhism.

¹⁶²² "Bhutan," en.wikipedia.org, retrieved 17 April 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhutan>

¹⁶²³ "Bhutan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127364.htm>

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 28th

The constitution protects religious freedom, which is typically upheld by the government. The king, Drukpa Kagyupa, is appointed by the constitution as protector of all religions.¹⁶²⁴ The government identifies Buddhism as its “spiritual heritage,” leading to some favoritism of Buddhist practices and beliefs, such as providing subsidies to Buddhist monks and recognizing major Buddhist holidays as national holidays. One Hindu festival is also recognized. Due to recent democratic change, greater religious freedom has occurred than in the past. Non-Buddhist missionaries are permitted to enter and may proselyte. There have been no recent reported instances of abuse of religious freedom by individuals or government. The government has restricted non-Buddhists from building religious buildings and holding some non-Buddhist festivals. Religious teaching is not allowed in nonmonastic schools, and citizens are required to wear traditional attire in certain locations and facilities. Christians worship in the privacy in their own homes, as they are not permitted to pray openly and build churches.¹⁶²⁵

Largest Cities

Urban: 35%

Thimphu, Phuntsholing, Pajo, Tashi Yangtse, Mongar, Tongsa, Daga, Paro, Ha, Panbang.

Cities and towns listed in **bold** have no nearby LDS congregation.

None of the ten largest cities or villages has congregations. Nineteen percent (19%) of the national population lives in the five largest cities. Only Thimphu and Phuntsholing have over 10,000 inhabitants.

LDS History

Bhutan has been a part of the Asia Area for decades. In late 2007, Bhutan was assigned to the India New Delhi Mission.¹⁶²⁶ Missionaries serving in the India New Delhi Mission reported that the first convert baptisms occurred in Bhutan in 2008.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 20 (2012)

In 2008, missionaries reported that four convert baptisms occurred in Bhutan. Total membership is likely less than twenty.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 0 Groups: 1? (2012)

A group appears to meet for the few individuals who have recently joined the Church.

¹⁶²⁴ “Bhutan,” International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127364.htm>

¹⁶²⁵ “Bhutan,” International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127364.htm>

¹⁶²⁶ “New mission in New Delhi, India,” LDS Church News, 6 October 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51131/New-mission-in-New-Delhi-India.html>

Activity and Retention

Most members appear to be recent converts. It is unclear how well these converts have been retained due to their isolation from mission headquarters and limited leadership visits and training.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English.

No scriptures are available in any indigenous languages. The Church has translated the Living Christ Testimony, *Gospel Fundamentals* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* into Nepali.

Meetinghouses

In accordance with local laws, any church activity occurs in the privacy of members' homes.

Humanitarian and Development Work

As of 2010, the Church is not known to have conducted humanitarian or development work in Bhutan.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Significant strides in granting greater religious freedom in Bhutan have allowed greater potential for some limited missionary activity to occur. The conversion of a few Bhutanese in recent years indicates that missionary work may operate on a member referral basis. However, heavy restrictions on constructing churches or holding Christian public meetings prevent missionary work from extending beyond the personal contacts of converts and investigators.

Cultural Issues

Strong cultural ties to Buddhism that have endured for millennia are the primary cultural issue challenging church growth. Christian converts likely face significant family and societal oppositions if they make their conversions known. Low literacy rates limit the value of literature distribution and may present barriers for the development of gospel understanding and self-reliance among members. Literacy rates for women are half of those for men (34% versus 60%).

National Outreach

The entire population of Bhutan remains unreached by the Church. Those with personal contact with the few recent converts have the only opportunity for receiving mission outreach. Bhutan's remote location and tiny population of less than one million in the midst of the India New Delhi Mission—which serves three nations with each over one hundred million people (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh)—has made Bhutan a lesser priority for mission outreach. Reaching the rural population following an official establishment of the Church will be challenging due to rough terrain and remote, sparsely populated countryside.

Bhutanese refugees who were relocated to the United States have sought out the Church in multiple locations. Several dozen refugees in the San Francisco area were meeting with missionaries, and some were baptized in early 2010. In Salt Lake City, the Church provided humanitarian assistance in 2009 and 2010 to many primarily ethnic Nepali Bhutanese refugees who have also shown interest in the Church. In 2009, twenty to

thirty attended worship services in the Salt Lake Valley View Stake not because they desired financial assistance but because they enjoyed Church services.¹⁶²⁷ In 2009, missionaries serving in Adelaide, Australia reported some success working among Bhutanese immigrants.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Infrequent visits by Church leadership and a lack of gospel materials in native languages may present difficulties for member retention.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Some challenges may occur between the Nepalese and Bhote due to cultural and historical differences.

Language Issues

Low literacy rates present obstacles, although opportunities exist for literacy programs as a form of service and passive mission outreach.

Leadership

No local Bhutanese LDS leadership has yet been developed.

Temple

Bhutan is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district. No organized trips occur. Travel to the temple is unfeasible for most.

Comparative Growth

Bhutan is one of the only nations in South and East Asia without an independent congregation. Countries that have had their first congregations recently established in this region have experienced strong initial membership growth. Other Christian denominations do not publish membership statistics for Bhutan and have gained few converts due to government restrictions.

Future Prospects

The start of initial mission outreach in Bhutan is an encouraging development. However, the small population, remote location, hostile attitudes towards missionary-oriented Christian groups, and prohibitions on the construction of chapels prevent a more prominent church presence. Greater democratization and tolerance of non-Buddhist and non-Hindu religious groups may generate the needed circumstances for the Church to be established; the last several years have brought considerable progress in making a limited church presence possible. LDS outreach in Bhutan is unlikely to expand beyond low-key member referral efforts in the capital of Thimphu for many years because most of the limited mission resources are allocated to the enormous needs of more populous nations in the region.

¹⁶²⁷ Loftus, Hikari. "Service to Bhutanese immigrants unifies Utah stakes," *Mormon Times*, 7 June 2010. <http://www.mormon-times.com/article/15008/>

INDIA

Geography

AREA: 3,287,263 square km. Occupying most of South Asia, India is the world's fourteenth largest country and the second most populous. India contains a wide variety of climates and terrain. The southern portion of the country is hot and tropical and includes two mountain ranges that follow the eastern and western coasts. The Western Ghats extend from the southern tip of India to the northwest, halfway to Pakistan, while the Eastern Ghats reach from the southern tip of India almost to Bangladesh. The Deccan Plateau occupies the area between the two ranges. The fertile Ganges Plain is centered in northeastern India bordering Nepal and contains some of the world's most densely populated land. The Himalayas are a result of the Indian Plate pushing into the Eurasian Plate. The mountains extend from Kashmir to Myanmar and contain cold, mountainous climates as well as some of the wettest monsoon climates in the world. Large, well-known rivers such as the Ganges and Brahmaputra originate in the Himalayas and water the country before emptying into the Indian Ocean. The Thar Desert in western India borders Pakistan, and with the Himalayas, strongly influences weather and climate. Droughts, flash floods, severe weather, and earthquakes are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, pollution, and inadequate fresh water supplies. India is administratively divided into twenty-eight states and seven union territories. Some of the seven union territories consist of island chains such as Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the south in the Indian Ocean.

Peoples

Indo-Aryan: 72%

Dravidian: 25%

Mongoloid and other: 3%

Unlike China, with its dominant Han Chinese population, India consists of an amalgamation of different ethnic and linguistic groups among which no group constitutes a majority. India is home to a wide variety of cultures, with Indo-Aryan ethnicities (72%) predominating in the north and Dravidian (25%) in the south. Indo-Aryans tend to be somewhat more Caucasian in appearance and Dravidians somewhat darker, although millennia of intermixing have created a broad ethnic spectrum without distinct boundaries.

Population: 1,205,073,612 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.312% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.58 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 66.08 male, 68.33 female (2012)

Languages: Hindi (41%), Bengali (8.1%), Telugu (7.2%), Marathi (7%), Tamil (5.9%), Urdu (5%), Gujarati (4.5%), Kannada (3.7%), Malayalam (3.2%), Oriya (3.2%), Punjabi (2.8%), Assamese (1.3%), Maithili (1.2%), other (5.9%). All the aforementioned languages are national languages with the exception of Maithili. Other national languages include Kashmiri, Sanskrit and Sindhi. English has few native speakers but has associate status and is the most important for communication in government and commerce.

Due to a period of British colonialism, English is widely used as the language of politics, commerce and

national communication. Hindi, spoken by 41% of Indians, is the country's most widely spoken language. The 478 million Hindi speakers are most concentrated in the northern Indian states of Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttaranchal. Although written in different scripts, Hindi and Urdu, spoken primarily by Muslims, are largely mutually intelligible; the two languages are sometimes called Hindustani.

Bengali is spoken by about 95 million Indians in West Bengal as well as in the neighboring nation of Bangladesh for a total of 230 million speakers worldwide. Telugu speakers number around 94 million mainly in Andhra Pradesh in southern India. Marathi is spoken by around 82 million speakers predominately in Maharashtra. Other languages in India that are spoken by large numbers of people include Tamil in Tamilnadu, Urdu, Gujarati in Gujarat, Kannada in Karnataka, Malayalam in Kerala, Oriya in Orissa, Punjabi in Punjab, Assamese in Assam, and Maithili. Other Indian languages make up the remaining 5.9%, including languages spoken in many of the far eastern states such as Manipur and Nagaland.

Literacy: 61% (2001)

History

The Indus valley was home to one of the world's oldest civilizations thought to date to approximately 3000 BC. Numerous independent states with shifting borders rose and fell in the territory of modern India throughout its rich history. Science and technology blossomed in India during the Middle Ages. During the sixteenth century, various European powers began establishing colonies in India. India was a colony of Great Britain until independence was achieved in 1947 through nonviolent resistance organized by leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi. India became a unified nation only after independence through the integration of British India previously under direct English rule with various regional client states administered by hereditary rulers. Since then, India has had several wars with neighboring Pakistan and border disputes with China over the disputed Kashmir region. Tensions between India and Pakistan continue to be high today. India developed its first nuclear weapon in the late 1990s.

Culture

Hinduism heavily influences society. Saturday is the day of worship. Tea is the national drink. The caste system influences many aspects of everyday life. Access to Hindu temples has been limited in the past to lower castes, but government legislation prohibits discrimination based on caste. Lower castes and the Dalits (untouchables) continue to receive poor treatment from higher castes with little active government intervention. Intercaste marriages are increasing, although discrimination and violence arising from caste differences still surface periodically, especially in rural areas. In recent years, a middle class has emerged as the economy has modernized. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are very low compared to the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$3,700 (2011) [7.69% of one hundred U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.547

Corruption Index: 3.1

Like neighboring China, India has seen impressive economic growth and an emerging middle class. India has had an economy dominated by agriculture and textiles but is transitioning to include manufactured goods and services. Recently, India has gained greater importance in the worldwide economy with services provided through telecommunications and software engineering and has also recently begun its own space program. India produces a large number of educated individuals who speak English and can be hired by companies based in English speaking countries. Even with recent annual economic growth averaging around 7%, the majority of the population is employed in agriculture. Intense cultivation of land for agricultural purposes has

resulted in environmental degradation in densely populated rural areas as well as a decline in the water table. This may lead to future problems with water scarcity. Many of the problems in India concerning the economy are linked to addressing the needs and assisting the development of an underdeveloped rural economy that includes hundreds of millions of people.

Corruption is perceived as pervasive and present in most areas of society. Human trafficking for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation are serious issues that are widespread. The government has done little to address human trafficking challenges. India is one of the world's largest illicit drug producers for opium.

Faiths

Hindu: 80.5%

Muslim: 13.4%

Christian: 2.3%

Sikh: 1.9%

Other: 1.8%

Unspecified: 0.1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 17,300,000

Seventh Day Adventists 1,562,276 3,995

Jehovah's Witnesses 37,095 441

Latter-day Saints 10,958 41

Religion

Hinduism is the most prevalent religion in India, being practiced by 80.5% of the population. Only a few provinces do not have Hinduism as the most prominent religion, all of which are in northern India or in far eastern India. Muslims make up 13.4% of the population and are the majority in only a portion of the states of West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir. Muslim communities can be found in many areas of northern India and are usually the largest minority religion throughout the country. India is home to approximately 157 million Muslims, the third largest population of Muslims in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan. Christianity is the third largest religion in India with 27 million adherents (2.3%) and makes up the majority of the population in the far eastern provinces of Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya. Most Christian converts tend to come from lower castes. Christians have established communities in many areas and are a sizeable minority, particularly in southeastern India between Hyderabad and Kolkata as well as around Goa. The largest Christian denominations include Catholics and Syrian Orthodox. Sikhs make up 1.9% of India's population and are predominantly found in the state of Punjab. According to the census of India, there were a total of nearly eight million Buddhists and 4.2 million Jains as of 2001, each of which make up less than 1% of the population.

Both Hinduism and Buddhism, now practiced mainly in other nations of East and Southeast Asia, originated in India. Hinduism represents a broad spectrum of beliefs varying from polytheism to pantheism to monotheism. The branches of Hinduism lack any centralized authority, and Hinduism is scarcely interpreted in the same way in any two villages. Most educated Hindus may accept certain core elements of their faith, yet reject many others. Hindu temples are rare among Indian expatriate communities. Although the vast majority of Indians are Hindu or Muslim, other indigenous religions, including Sikhism (20 million

adherents) and Jainism (8–10 million adherents), constitute small minorities. These religions share similarities with Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam in addition to their own unique features.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 31st

The constitution allows for religious freedom, which is often restricted by state and local governments. India is a secular state with no official religion. Government does not sponsor Hinduism and Hindu culture but has shown favoritism towards Hindus over the years. Anti-conversion laws restrict Christian proselytism in five states (Gujarat, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh), challenge individuals to convert from Hinduism to other religions, and reinforce the status of the Hindu majority. Additional states have considered anti-conversion legislation, such as Rajasthan, but these proposals have not become law. Anti-conversion legislation limits the freedom for NGOs to operate. Legislation specifically bans proselytism with the allurements of monetary gain or intimidation. Many Christians have wrongfully been accused of alluring converts by other means by Hindu extremist groups. Local police at times have done little to protect the rights and lives of religious minorities. Violence targeting Christians has been most extreme in Orissa and Karnataka, and violence against Muslims occurs most regularly in northern India and Gujarat. Religious extremists carried out terrorist attacks in Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Delhi in the late 2000s.¹⁶²⁸

Largest Cities

Urban: 29%

Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, **Ahmadabad**, Pune, **Surat**, **Kanpur**, **Jaipur**, **Lucknow**, **Nagpur**, **Patna**, **Indore**, **Vadodara**, Coimbatore, Bhopal, Ludhiana, Kochi, Visakhapatnam, **Agra**, **Varanasi**, **Madurai**, **Meerut**, **Nashik**, **Jamshedpur**, **Jabalpur**, **Asansol**, **Dhanbad**, **Faridabad**, **Allahabad**, **Vijayawada**, **Amritsar**, **Rajkot**.

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

Nine of the thirty-five largest cities have a congregation. Nine percent (9%) of the national population lives in cities with over one million inhabitants.

LDS History

In 1850, the first instance of LDS missionary work occurred in Calcutta. A couple of British soldiers who joined the Church the year before elsewhere bore the testimonies to those around them in Calcutta. Elder Joseph Richards came the following year and baptized several and helped establish a branch in the city. Missionaries taught the gospel in several other Indian cities in the early 1850s such as Bombay, Madras and Poona, establishing branches of the Church as they labored. In 1858 missionaries serving in the country returned to the United States, and all the branches in the country were discontinued by 1903. The early converts to the Church in India were mostly Europeans living in the country. Missionaries called to labor in India were at the time unable to learn the native languages; this may have been a result of working primarily among Europeans.¹⁶²⁹ In the 1960s and 1970s, India was a part of the Southern Far East Mission, headquartered in Hong Kong. Church activities in India did not return until the 1960s and 1970s when several Indians were introduced to the Church and were converted. India was included in the Singapore Mission before becoming its own mission headquartered in Bangalore on January 1, 1993. A significant milestone was the division of the India Bangalore Mission to create the India New Delhi Mission at the end of 2007. At the time the new India New Delhi Mission included Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan, and Nepal.

¹⁶²⁸ "India," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127365.htm>

¹⁶²⁹ "India," LDS Church Newsroom, retrieved 18 February 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/india>

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 10,958 (2012)

In 1980s, there were approximately 200 members. LDS membership reached 800 in 1990, 1,800 in 1995, and 2,865 in 2000. During the 2000s strong membership growth occurred as membership totaled 4,013 in 2002, 5,453 in 2004, 6,454 in 2006, 7,576 in 2008, and 9,188 in 2010. Annual membership growth rates ranged from 8%–20% between 2000 and 2010 and generally varied from 8%–12%. In 2010, one in 129,427 was LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 6 Branches: 34 Groups: 1+ (April 2013)

The first branches in the country were organized in Bangalore, Coimbatore, Hyderabad, and New Delhi. The first district in the country was organized in 1980 in Bangalore. Two additional districts were organized in New Delhi (1986) and Hyderabad (1988). Nine branches and three districts functioned throughout the country by early 1990. Congregation growth accelerated, reaching thirteen in 1993 and twenty by the end of 1995.

In 2001, the Bangalore India District consisted of nine branches with three in Bangalore, three in Coimbatore and one each in Chennai, Cochin and Erode. The Hyderabad India District at this time had six branches in its boundaries: four in Hyderabad, one in Karimnagar and one in Rajahmundry. The India New Delhi District had two branches, both of which were in New Delhi. There were also three mission branches in India that reported directly to the mission president in Bangalore in Goa, Kolkata, and Mumbai. In the following years, the branches in Cochin and Karimnagar were discontinued.

Growth in congregations has also begun to accelerate in recent years. Branches increased in the country from twenty-one in 2002 to thirty as of September 2009. This growth occurred primarily in areas with few or no existing congregations. As of mid-2001 there was one branch in Rajahmundry. Two branches were created in the nearby cities of Kakinada and Vishakhapatnam a few years later. The branches in Rajahmundry and Vishakhapatnam were both divided to create two new branches around 2006 or 2007. Currently Vishakhapatnam has three branches (the newest being the Gajuwaka Branch created in 2009), Rajahmundry has three branches and Kakinada has one branch. A branch was also created outside of Bangalore in 2007 in the Kolar Gold Fields (KFG).

At the time the India New Delhi Mission was organized, there were only four branches in northern India (three in New Delhi and one in Kolkata). By the middle of 2009, the number of branches in New Delhi doubled with the creation of the Dwarka, Noida and Pitampura Branches in 2008 and early 2009. The third branch in New Delhi—the New Delhi 3rd Branch—was just created a year or two before, indicative of rapid congregational growth. Much of this rapid growth in congregations occurred due to new areas opening in the city for missionaries to labor in. In 2010, a seventh branch was organized in New Delhi, the New Delhi 4th Branch. In 2012, two new branches were organized in Bangalore.

Between 2009 and mid-2011, four additional districts were organized in Chennai (2009), Coimbatore (2009), Visakhapatnam (2009), and Rajahmundry (2011). The first stake in India was organized in Hyderabad in 2012. The India Bangalore and New Delhi Mission Branches include groups of members in isolated locations.

Activity and Retention

Member activity rates in India are moderately high compared to most other nations. Indian branches average of about 250 nominal members per congregation. Many of the older congregations in India in the cities of

Bangalore, Chennai, Coimbatore, and Hyderabad have sacrament meeting attendance well over one hundred people. However when smaller branches recently created or in isolated areas are taken into account, like the Goa Branch with around thirty active members in 2009, the average number of active members per branch is probably closer to one hundred. The number of active members in India is likely around 3,000, or 40%. Activity rates appear to vary from branch to branch. When Elder Oaks visited New Delhi in the fall of 2007, 54% of the membership attended district conference. Activity rates appear to be lower in the south due to accumulated inactivity over the years. Missionaries in the India Bangalore Mission reported in August 2009 that retention needed more attention but had been steadily improving. There has been little increase in congregations in Bangalore and Hyderabad since 2000, which likely indicates retention and inactivity problems. Sacrament meeting attendance numbers were increasing in 2009 in the India Bangalore Mission. It appears that at least half of the approximately 500 converts who have joined the Church annually in recent years have been retained. Most of these newly created branches in New Delhi have few members and usually had fifty or less attending meetings each week. India had the highest percentage of members attending seminary and institute (1,108 or 14.6%) during the 2007–2008 school year among countries with an official Church presence in Asia.

Elder Oaks visited New Delhi India with a member of the Asia Area Presidency in the fall of 2007. A district conference was held for the three branches in New Delhi with an attendance of 347 of the 641 members in the district. At this time 93% of the 344 endowed members had current temple recommends.¹⁶³⁰

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Hindi, Tamli, Telugu, Urdu, Bengali.

Hindi, Telugu and Tamil have the most Church materials translated, but not all the scriptures have even been translated into these three languages yet. The full version of Book of Mormon is available, but the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price have not been translated into any Indian languages. Several DVD movies such as *Finding Faith in Christ* and *The Restoration* are available in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil. Urdu is spoken by 5% of the population and has the Book of Mormon, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* and a couple audiovisual materials translated but not *Gospel Principles* and many other Church materials. Bengali, the second most prevalent native language in India, only had a few basic Church materials translated in August 2009 such as *Gospel Principles*, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*, and *The Articles of Faith*. Selections from the Book of Mormon were published in Bengali in 1985. Marathi is spoken by 7% of the population and only has *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* translated. The only Church materials in Malayalam and Punjabi are *Gospel Fundamentals* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony*. Kannada is spoken by 3.7% of the population and only has *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* translated. Hindi has one edition of the *Liabona* published annually. Tamil and Telugu have four editions of the *Liabona* published annually. Urdu has three editions of the *Liabona* published annually.

Meetinghouses

The number of chapels in India has also multiplied recently. The first LDS chapel in India was constructed for the Rajahmundry Branch and dedicated in 2002. Since this time, many new chapels have been built or are under construction. A chapel to house branches in Hyderabad was constructed in 2007. Chapels also exist in Bangalore and Coimbatore. In 2009, ground was broken for the first chapel in Chennai, and four new chapels were approved for construction in India. Congregations not meeting in Church-built chapels meet in remodeled buildings or rented spaces.

¹⁶³⁰ Stahle, Shaun D. "Few, but faithful," LDS Church News, 22 September 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51061/Few-but-faithful.html>

Health and Safety

Sanitation can be poor in both rural and urban locations. Threats of violence against foreign missionaries have occurred, and some LDS missionaries have experienced intimidation and wrongful accusations of violating the law. Religiously unstable areas pose a safety threat to missionaries.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The LDS Church has engaged in various humanitarian projects in India, although many additional opportunities exist. The Church sent food, clothing, and emergency supplies to victims of a large earthquake in Gujarat in 2001.¹⁶³¹ In 2002, members and missionaries in Bangalore volunteered at an orphanage for handicapped children.¹⁶³² Members in India made over 1,200 family kits containing emergency supplies for victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.¹⁶³³ Neonatal resuscitation training, clean water projects, and wheelchair donations were sponsored by the Church in 2008.¹⁶³⁴ In 2008 and 2009, the Church assisted in building twenty dams in Rajasthan to provide greater water availability in the region. Seventh Day Adventists in particular have constructed many schools and hospitals that assist with national development as well as providing community pillars for the faith.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Visas have not been easy to obtain for many missionaries who are called to India. Some of these missionaries are unable to get their visas before they leave the MTC and are temporarily reassigned to another mission in the United States. Some missionaries are unable to get visas or renewals and have to be reassigned to a different mission. In early 2010, the government continued to not issue visas to American missionaries, and the number of young elders began to decline as missionaries completed their missions. Senior couples have been unable to be replaced, resulting in some of the limited number of young elders assigned to mission logistics and finances.

Christian intolerance is also widespread in India and is most intense around elections and Hindu holidays. There were instances in 2008 when elders were falsely accused of giving money to people who joined the Church (a crime in India), and some missionaries were briefly imprisoned. These instances with false accusations have been resolved with help from local and mission leadership. Restrictions on sharing the gospel exist in some regions. Out of the six zones in the India Bangalore Mission in September 2009, open proselyting was permitted only in four.

Cultural Issues

As the Church goes forth throughout India, poverty and illiteracy will likely become greater obstacles than currently experienced in areas where the Church is established. Although India's growing economy is helping establish a middle class and reducing poverty, the rural population in particular suffers from low living standards. Furthermore, there are hundreds of millions of Indians who are illiterate, the majority of whom are women. Those who lack literacy skills will meet greater difficulty serving in the Church than those who are

¹⁶³¹ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Relief supplies shipped to India," LDS Church News, 3 February 2001. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/39269/Relief-supplies-shipped-to-India.html>

¹⁶³² Totland, Gary and Maureen. "Serving the children," LDS Church News, 3 August 2002. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/42203/Serving-the-children.html>

¹⁶³³ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Emergency response is appropriate, immediate," LDS Church News, 15 January 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46735/Emergency-response-is-appropriate-immediate.html>

¹⁶³⁴ "Neonatal resuscitation training," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 1 March 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6211-1-3217-1,00.html>

literate. Other Christian groups have addressed the challenge of literacy through audio scriptures, multimedia presentations, and the establishment of Christian schools.

Many parents in India exercise a large amount of control over their children even in their adult years. Missionaries frequently report that youth may regularly attend Church for an extended time until they turn eighteen and can be baptized without parental consent. Although this can challenge the prospects for youth who are interested investigators, this has likely contributed to higher retention and activity rates. However, the strong bond between parent and child may be partially responsible for the failure of many Indian members to serve missions in part-member families.

National Outreach

The size and diversity of the population of India is in itself a challenge and opportunity for the Church. Considering India is the second most populated country with 1.166 billion people making up 17% of the world's population, there is tremendous opportunity to fulfill God's commandment to take the Gospel to His children. So far, the Church has established itself in several of the largest cities in the country. There has been very little expansion into cities without a Church presence for at least ten years. Currently, only nine of the 35 cities in India with at least one million inhabitants have an LDS congregation. As of 2008, there were 281 cities with over 100,000 inhabitants without a Church presence.

Not only is the Church's influence in the country very limited in the cities it is currently established in, but there is a Church presence in only seven of the thirty-five states and union territories in India, five of which are in southern India. The other two are Delhi and West Bengal. Very few people in the states where the Church is present have easily accessible congregations. Most of these states have tens of millions who reside far from existing congregations. There are a few groups reported to meet for members living in remote areas and existing in too few numbers for a branch to be created. Missionaries reported that a group met in Pune, which is nearby Mumbai, as well as a very small group consisting of only a couple individuals in Rajasthan.

The Church in India has grown the most rapidly and is mainly established in areas where the Christian population is less than 10% but greater than 1%. These states are all located in south or southeastern India and have large populations, which provides the Church with an opportunity to reach those who have already been brought to a belief in Jesus Christ while also reaching out to the much larger Hindu majority. The Church does not have a single congregation established in areas of India where the population is predominantly Christian. In neighboring Pakistan, the Church has seen success among Pakistani Christians, who oftentimes live in compounds segregated from the rest of the population due to much religious intolerance in the country. These areas that are predominantly Christian in eastern India are likely unreached by the Church as of present due to their distance from the established areas of the Church. The predominant Christian areas of India also have much smaller populations that number in the millions, and not the tens of millions like the rest of India, and do not have the scriptures or Church materials in local languages. Many of the Christians in this area of India belong to Protestant denominations and include Baptists and Presbyterians. The remote location of these states combined with sporadic political instability for separation and independence from India might lessen the likelihood of the Church moving into this area of the country in the near future. However, missionaries in southern India have taught investigators from this region. Many of these investigators were very interested in bringing the Church back with them to their home states.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Currently the Church's centers of strength are in Bangalore and Hyderabad. These cities have branches that tend to function more like wards. The Hyderabad 2nd Branch, for example, had between 150 and 180 people attending Church meetings in April 2009. In 2009, there was a record number of native Indian missionaries

serving in the India Bangalore Mission, and missionaries noted that there was an increasing number of interviews for temple marriages. Inactivity in some locations is also due to a lack of nearby congregations. Members living on the opposite side of a large city from the Church's meetinghouse must make huge sacrifices in time and money to actively participate.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The Church has the unique opportunity extend outreach to believers of religions that have received no previous coordinated LDS outreach. Jainism originated in India anciently and is heavily influential on culture in areas of the country. Many of its adherents are also considerably wealthier than most Indians. Sikhism was founded in the sixteenth century, and most of its followers reside in Punjab. Combined, these two less known religions only have around 25 million followers in India. Some Jains and Sikhs were likely exposed to the message of the Gospel outside their home country in areas of nations where the Gospel is preached, but it is unclear as to how these religious communities will react to the message of the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Kolkata and Mumbai do not have very active missionary programs, and no full-time elders serve in these cities due to religious tensions between Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Local members in these locations will likely remain primarily responsible for increasing convert baptisms and retaining new members. These locations may be suitable for senior missionary couples to serve in the future.

Language Issues

The large number of languages in India is an intimidating obstacle for church growth. Church materials are available in very few of the languages in India, and most do not have very many church materials translated. There are no church materials available in Gujarati, Oriya, Assamese, and Maithili, each of which has at least 10 million speakers. Many of these latter languages do not have any Church materials translated yet because there are not any branches located in the regions of India in which these languages are spoken. The translation of additional LDS scriptures into the most commonly spoken languages is greatly needed, as no local languages have all LDS scriptures available at present. Utilizing local members fluent in these and other languages to help increase the number of languages with LDS materials may accelerate the translation process.

Missionary Service

By the middle of 1993, there were thirty missionaries serving in the India Bangalore Mission.¹⁶³⁵ In the late 2000s, the number of LDS missionaries in India appeared to number as many as 150. Visa restrictions prevented the assignment of additional nonnative missionaries in the early 2010s, resulting in significant reductions in the number of LDS missionaries in India as areas were consolidated. The LDS Church in India appears close to becoming self-sufficient in staffing its full-time missionary force largely due to young adults comprising many Latter-day Saint converts today. Enrollment in seminary and institute has been impressive and provides opportunities for missionary preparation. Greater coordination with mission and local church leaders in finding and preparing local members to serve missions could significantly reduce dependence on foreign missionary manpower and prepare for greater national outreach expansion.

Leadership

In the past decade, the Church has often waited to open new congregations in less reached or unreached areas of India until local membership can provide the needed number of priesthood leaders to fill branch callings. The KFG Branch was created in 2007 and had a full native branch presidency. Foreign missionaries have

¹⁶³⁵ Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Asia area: Welcome mat is out in several countries," LDS Church News, 19 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22920/Asia-area—Welcome-mat-is-out-in-several-countries.html>

temporarily served as branch presidents in newly opened branches in larger cities until replaced with a native branch president. Native membership has developed the greatest leadership capabilities in some of the larger cities, notably Hyderabad, where the first stake was organized. India is not self-sustaining in its missionary force, leaving missionary work vulnerable to government choosing whether to issue visas to foreign missionaries. The first mission president was an Indian convert named President Gill, who helped grow the Church tremendously in the country with many new branches organized throughout India during his tenure.

Temple

India is assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple District. Considering over 90% of the 350-some endowed Indian members of the Church held a current temple recommend back in 2007 demonstrates the zeal many Indian members of the Church have for the temple. A temple announced for India will be unlikely until there are at least a few stakes organized in order to provide the needed leadership, temple workers, and patrons to keep the temple well-utilized.

Comparative Growth

In Asia, the Church experiences some of its strongest membership and congregational growth and highest convert retention in India. Only Malaysia has regularly created new congregations. Among countries with a Church presence limited to the past few decades, the Church has a stronger leadership and local missionary force in Mongolia. However, India is among the most unreached for the Church.

Protestant and Catholic faiths that entered India during the period of British colonialism achieved a large head start on growth. However, many modern mission-oriented faiths have also achieved rapid growth. The Seventh Day Adventists achieved between 61,000 and 198,000 baptisms per year in India between 1998 and 2008, with the number of congregations increasing from 1,061 to 3,726 over the same ten-year period.¹⁶³⁶ There were more than 1.4 million active Adventists in India at year-end 2008. The number of Southern Baptist congregations among some interior peoples of India, Cambodia, and many other nations almost doubled every year between 1993 and 2000, with over 1,000 new churches organized among one interior Indian people in 2000 alone.¹⁶³⁷

Gospel for Asia (GFA), a Protestant missionary group started by native Indian K. P. Yohannan in 1980, represents the most remarkable model of international missionary recruitment. GFA fielded over 11,000 native missionaries from India in the early 2000s and plans to reach 100,000 missionaries by 2020. GFA organizes over six new congregations in India and South Asia each day, over twice as many as the LDS Church organizes in the entire world.¹⁶³⁸ Yohannan's book *Revolution in World Missions* expounds principles of native missionary recruitment and training.¹⁶³⁹

Future Prospects

Bangalore and Hyderabad are current centers of strength for the Church, and Coimbatore, Chennai, New Delhi, Rajahmundry, and Visakhapatnam are emerging centers of strength. It will likely be necessary for these areas have a stake or multiple stakes organized before there will be prospects for an LDS temple in India. Other

¹⁶³⁶ Adventist 2008 statistics, http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=D_SUD. Accessed 15 February 2010.

¹⁶³⁷ Garrison, David, Church Planting Movements, Southern Baptist International Mission Board, October 1999, <http://www.imb.org/CPM/default.htm>

¹⁶³⁸ Yohannan, K. P., "The 10 Major Ministries of Gospel for Asia," http://www.gfa.org/site/about_gfa/brochure/whatdoing.html

¹⁶³⁹ Yohannan, K. P., *Revolution in World Missions*, Carrollton, TX: GFA Books, 2000. See also <http://www.gfa.org>

large cities may emerge as centers of strength for the Church, like Kolkata and Mumbai, once these areas have more active missionary programs and more than one branch.

The solid growth of the LDS Church in India over the past decade and relatively high rates of convert retention and member participation demonstrate favorable prospects for continued growth. However, LDS growth to date has been on a tiny scale and relatively slow compared to other outreach-oriented faiths. Church members continue to be concentrated in few regions of the country; most Indian states and ethnicities have no gospel witness, and no LDS resources are available in most Indian languages. Furthermore, visas for foreign missionaries are limited. Continued growth will largely depend upon finding the vision and resources to bring the gospel into new regions, developing and improving methods to effectively reach large numbers of receptive people with limited missionary manpower, and training local members in self-sufficient and self-perpetuating member-missionary and full-time missionary programs.

REGIONAL INDIA PROFILES

North India (38.5%)—Uttar Pradesh (166.2 million), Rajasthan (86.5 million), Madhya Pradesh (60.3 million), Punjab (24.4 million), Haryana (21.1 million), Delhi (13.9 million) Jammu and Kashmir (10.1 million), Uttaranchal (8.5 million), Himachal Pradesh (6.1 million)

Northern India received limited visits from mission leadership and mission resources until the creation of the India New Delhi Mission in late 2007. The new mission allowed for a large number of new proselyting areas to open, but none outside of Delhi, leaving 383 million or 96.5% of the population of North India residing where no congregations function. The immense size of the unreached population overwhelms current mission resources. The Church has seen progress in adding congregations and retaining converts during the 2000s.

Christian groups have struggled to gain converts in North India due to the strong Hindu majority and anti-conversion legislation. The Indo-Aryan peoples of North India have been less responsive to Christian outreach yet have seen progress in the LDS Church in the late 2000s. The LDS Church will need to rely on local members' efforts to expand mission outreach in North India outside of Delhi.

East India (22%)—Bihar (83.0 million), West Bengal (80.2 million), Orissa (36.8 million), Jharkhand (26.9 million)

The Church created the first branch in East India likely in the 1990s and has yet to create additional congregations. States in East India have tiny Christian populations and strong anti-Christian sentiment. Orissa has the greatest percentage of Christians, providing opportunity for the Church to reach believers of Christ, but some of the heaviest Christian persecution and violence that deters the mission from opening proselyting areas in East India. Prospects for greater outreach in East India appear unfavorable in the near future due to declining numbers of full-time missionaries from visa issues and the lack of native members in this region.

South India (22%)—Andhra Pradesh (76.2 million), Tamil Nadu (62.4 million), Karnataka (52.9 million), Kerala (31.8 million)

The Church first arrived to India in Coimbatore and other large cities in South India in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These areas experience the greatest Church outreach in India and have the most language resources in India. South India's five districts and one stake provide outreach centers to expand missionary activity to other large cities.

West India (14%)—Maharashtra (96.9 million), Gujarat (50.7 million), Goa (1.3 million)

The Church's presence is limited to Mumbai and Goa. Very few Christians reside in this region of India. The geographical separation from West India to mission headquarters in Bangalore challenge future outreach. Although Goa has a large number of Christians, very few converts have joined the Church, with low retention in the Goa Branch. Mumbai appears likely to have nonproselyting missionaries assigned to work with interested individuals referred by members.

Northeast India (3.5%)—Assam (26.7 million), Tripura (3.2 million), Meghalaya (2.3 million), Manipur (2.2 million), Nagaland (2.0 million), Arunachal Pradesh (1.1 million), Mizoram (0.89 million), Sikkim (0.54 million)

Northeast India appears the region with the greatest potential for growth yet has no outreach. Protestant groups have converted the majority of the population in some states. Geographic isolation from mission headquarters in New Delhi challenges outreach. The Church has seen some success in attracting converts from predominately Christian groups in neighboring Burma.

MALDIVES

Geography

AREA: 298 square km. Comprising nearly 1,200 coral islands clustered into twenty-six atolls, the Maldives are located in the Indian Ocean southwest of India. Two hundred islands are inhabited and an additional eighty have tourist resorts. Flat terrain dominated by white sand occupies most islands, and tropical weather occurs year round. Precipitation fluctuates throughout the year as the rainy season occurs from June to August, whereas the dry season lasts from November to March. Tsunamis and sea level rise are natural hazards. Environmental issues include inadequate freshwater supplies and coral reef bleaching. The Maldives are administratively divided into nineteen atolls and one capital city.

Peoples

Maldivian: 66%

Other: 37%

Maldivians trace their ancestry to settlers from the southern Indian subcontinent. Migrant workers number approximately 100,000 and originate primarily from southwest Asia and India.¹⁶⁴⁰

Population: 394,451 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: -0.127% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.79 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 72.44 male, 77.05 female (2012)

Languages: Divehi [Maldavian] (99%), other (1%). Divehi is the official language and is related to Sinhalese. Divehi has multiple dialects, which are all mutually intelligible with the exception of the Malé dialect spoken in the national capital of Malé. English is commonly used in education.

Literacy: 93.8% (2006)

History

Settlers from southern India were likely the first inhabitants of the Maldives. During the fourth and fifth centuries BC, Buddhist Indo-European speaking settlers arrived from Sri Lanka. East African and Arab sailors arrived in the twelfth century AD and introduced Islam. An independent Islamic sultanate was established in 1153. Maldivians have maintained self-rule for much of their history. The Portuguese maintained a short rule of just fifteen years in the mid-sixteenth century that came to an end when Muhammad Thakurufar Al-Azam drove them out in 1573. Maldives became a British protectorate from 1887 to 1965 when independence was regained. In 1968, the sultanate was abolished, and a republic form of government was instituted. The Maldives have captured international attention in recent years due to their notorious distinction as the nation-state with the lowest high-point elevation of 2.4 meters, with the accompanying risk of displacement of people and property as sea levels rise due to global warming. In 1987, an abnormally large high tide washed over the islands and flooded much of Malé and several other islands. In addition to rising sea levels, past coral and sand

¹⁶⁴⁰ "Maldives," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148797.htm>

mining have removed or deteriorated the effectiveness of coral reefs and other geographic features, making the islands more susceptible to erosion from the surrounding ocean.¹⁶⁴¹

Culture

Islam has heavily influenced Maldivian culture for almost nine centuries, creating tight-knit communities and strong ethno-religious ties. Strict observance of Islam has historically reduced crime, but in recent years gang and illicit drug activity have begun to erode past stability and order.¹⁶⁴² Garudiya, a fish broth made from tuna,¹⁶⁴³ is one of the basic and traditional foods. Fish is the primary staple of traditional diet. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates are low. Polygamy is legal but not commonly practiced.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$8,400 (2011) [17.5% of one hundred U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.661

Corruption Index: 2.5 (2011)

Tourism drives the economy, generating 28% of the GDP. Import duties and tourism-related taxes account for over 90% of government tax revenue. Fishing constitutes the second largest sector of the economy. Many foods are imported as a result of limited arable land and a lack of labor. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami devastated many areas of the Maldives, but reconstruction efforts led to strong economic growth thereafter until the global financial crisis reduced demand for fish exports and tourism. The government struggles to diversify the economy, meet the social needs of the population, reform public finances, and decrease unemployment. The unemployment rate was over 14% in 2006, yet the Maldives possesses one of the most literate populations in the region as a result of government emphasis on education. Services employ 65% of the workforce and generate 78% of the GDP, whereas industry employs 23% of the workforce and generates 17% of the GDP. Major industries include tourism, fish processing, boat building, coconut processing, clothing, crafts, and coral and sand mining. Agriculture employs 11% of the workforce and generates less than 6% of the GDP. Coconuts, corn, sweet potatoes, and fish are common agricultural products. Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand are the primary trade partners.

Corruption is perceived as widespread, and allegations of government corruption have been made frequently. There are increasing concerns over the lack of public confidence in the electoral system.¹⁶⁴⁴

Faiths

Muslim: 99%

Other: 1%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Latter-day Saints less than 10

¹⁶⁴¹ "Background Note: Maldives," Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, 20 July 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5476.htm>

¹⁶⁴² "Background Note: Maldives," Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, 20 July 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5476.htm>

¹⁶⁴³ "Garudiya," Wikipedia.org, retrieved 21 December 2010. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuisine_of_the_Maldives

¹⁶⁴⁴ "Issues," Transparency Maldives, 13 July 2008. <http://www.transparencymaldives.org/issues.html>

Religion

Sunni Muslims account for virtually the entire Maldivian population. Most foreigners are Muslims. Some non-Muslims practice their religions in private.¹⁶⁴⁵

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 6th

The constitution declares Islam as the official state religion, and the law prevents citizens from following any other religion. Foreigners are not permitted to encourage citizens to practice other religions and can only practice their religious faith in private. The government and constitution stipulate that citizens must be Muslim, and non-Muslims cannot become citizens. Many aspects of government policy are based on Shari'a law. Religious freedom for non-Muslims is severely restricted. There is no legal framework to safeguard against the persecution and harassment of religious minorities. Government officials have iterated that the homogenous Muslim society of the Maldives is unique, and consequently, no other religious groups are permitted to operate among citizens in order to preserve local culture and religious traditions. Most Islamic holidays are recognized by the government. School curriculum requires students to study Islam. Non-Muslim foreigners cannot hold public meetings or proselyte. There have been no recent reports of societal abuses of religious freedom beyond the existing heavy restrictions.¹⁶⁴⁶

Largest Cities

Urban: 38%

Malé, Hithadhoo, Fuvahmulah, Kulhudhuffushi, Villingili, Thinadhoo, Naifaru, Hinnavaru, Un'goofaaru, Hulhumalé.

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

None of the ten most populous urban areas have an LDS presence. Forty-seven percent (47%) of the national population resides in the ten largest cities and villages.

LDS History

Ecclesiastical responsibility for the Maldives was transferred from the Singapore Mission to the India Bangalore Mission in 2007. As of late 2010, there was no LDS presence and few or no Latter-day Saints residing in the country.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: less than 10 (2012)

Any Latter-day Saints in the Maldives are foreigners temporarily living in the country. Most foreigners originate from nations with extremely small LDS populations, making the prospect of multiple Latter-day Saint foreigners in the Maldives unlikely.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 0 Branches: 0 (2012)

¹⁶⁴⁵ "Maldives," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148797.htm>

¹⁶⁴⁶ "Maldives," International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17 November 2010. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148797.htm>

There are no organized LDS congregations.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English.

There are no LDS scriptures in Divehi. The only known translation of LDS materials in Divehi is the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*.

Humanitarian and Development Work

There had been no known LDS humanitarian or development work in the Maldives as of late 2010.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

There are no realistic prospects of an LDS presence in the Maldives at present, as the constitution requires Maldivian citizens to be Muslims, and the government prohibits any proselytism. Laws are so strict that Muslims are also barred from proselytism with the exception of Muslims who obtained government approval to preach Islam. Local laws and government policies encourage the propagation of Islam among Muslims and non-Muslims alike and allow non-Muslims to worship only in private. Latter-day Saints at present can only operate in small groups of foreigners in private and no proselytism by foreigners is permitted. Humanitarian and development work sponsored by the LDS Church in the Maldives does not appear possible under current government restrictions.

Cultural Issues

Strong ethno-religious ties between Maldivian citizenry and Sunni Islam create a nearly insurmountable obstacle for Latter-day Saints and other Christians. There is no tolerance socially and politically for other religious groups to operate among natives or among foreigners publicly. Even if government restrictions on the practice of non-Muslim religions were relaxed, prospective Latter-day Saint mission outreach would face the challenge of creating proselytism approaches that are culturally sensitive to the needs and circumstance of a tight-knit, highly homogenous Muslim society.

National Outreach

Latter-day Saints perform no mission outreach in the Maldives. Any prospective mission outreach would occur under the direction of the India Bangalore Mission. Malé offers the greatest opportunity for national outreach, as approximately a quarter of the national population resides on Malé, and many migrant workers live on the island. Logistical challenges presented by a nation of hundreds of islands that support a small population will likely render most of the inhabitants of the Maldives unreached by the Church for decades following any official Church establishment. There is no Divehi-language or Maldivian-directed LDS Internet outreach, but less than 10% of the population were Internet users in 2005.¹⁶⁴⁷

Member Activity and Convert Retention

There have been no convert baptisms in the Maldives. Any Latter-day Saint foreigners who are active likely worship in the privacy of their homes.

¹⁶⁴⁷ "Internet Usage Worldwide by Country, 2007," Infoplease.com, retrieved 31 December 2010. <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0933606.html>

Ethnic Issues and Integration

Some challenges may occur integrating Maldivian and foreign Latter-day Saints into the same congregations due to language barriers and cultural differences.

Language Issues

There do not appear to be any Maldivian Latter-day Saints. The translation of at least one outreach resource in Divehi presents opportunity for the Church to disseminate literature among Divehi-speakers abroad and provides a proselytism resource if missionary outreach is permitted in the Maldives one day.

Missionary Service

No Maldivians have served a full-time mission. No LDS missionary work had occurred in the Maldives as of late 2010.

Temple

The Maldives are assigned to the Hong Kong China Temple district.

Comparative Growth

The Maldives number among nations without a Church presence that at present are the least reachable by Latter-day Saints due to cultural and government restrictions, remote location, few if any foreign or indigenous members, and a small population. Challenges facing Latter-day Saints in Maldives compare to those of Comoros due to the strong ethno-religious link between nationality, ethnicity, and Islam. In 2010, Azerbaijan and North Korea were the only other Asian nations that appeared to have no LDS presence among foreigners or citizens.

Missionary-minded Christian groups report no presence in the Maldives. Any Christian activity is limited to foreigners or visitors practicing in private without the involvement of Maldivian citizens.

Future Prospects

There are no realistic hopes of an official or unofficial LDS Church establishment in the Maldives for the foreseeable future due to strict laws barring proselytism, the constitution's requirement for all Maldivian citizens be Muslim, the lack of Latter-day Saints, a small population, and distance from the nearest LDS mission outreach center. Increasing tourism, foreign investment, and the number of migrant workers from non-Muslim nations may help reduce government intolerance for non-Muslims over the long term.

NEPAL

Geography

AREA: 147,181 square km. Sandwiched between China and India, Nepal consists of flat plains rising to the tallest mountains in the world in the Himalayas. Mountainous regions have cool summers and severe winters, whereas plains regions have subtropical, hot monsoon summers and warm winters. The Ghangara, Gandak, and Kosi Rivers flow through Nepal into India. Thunderstorms, flooding, landslides, and drought are natural hazards. Environmental issues include deforestation and water pollution. Nepal is divided into fourteen administrative zones.

Peoples

Chhettri: 15.5%
Brahman-Hill: 12.5%
Magar: 7%
Tharu: 6.6
Tamang: 5.5%
Newar: 5.4%
Muslim: 4.2%
Kami: 3.9%
Yadav: 3.9%
Other: 32.7%
Unspecified: 2.8%

The earliest inhabitants were from the Tharu and Newar groups. Most ethnic groups settled Nepal from India, Assam, northern Burma, Tibet, and Kashmir. Chhettri and Brahman-Hill arrived from northern India. Refugees from Bhutan and Tibet number 108,000 and 20,000 respectively.

Population: 29,890,686 (July 2012)
Annual Growth Rate: 1.768% (2012)
Fertility Rate: 2.41 children born per woman (2012)
Life Expectancy: 65.26 male, 67.82 female (2012)

Languages: Nepali (47.8%), Maithali (12.1%), Bhojpuri (7.4%), Tharu (5.8%), Tamang (5.1%), Newar (3.6%), Magar (3.3%), Awadhi (2.4%), other (10%), unspecified (2.5%). Nepali and English are both official languages. One hundred twenty-four living languages are spoken. Languages with over one million speakers include Nepali (11.1 million), Maithili (2.8 million), Bhojpuri (1.71 million), Tharu dialects (1.43 million), and Tamang dialects (1.25 million).

Literacy: 48.6% (2001)

History

Nepal consisted of several small kingdoms in 1000 BC that were absorbed into Indian kingdoms around the birth of Christ. Nepal was heavily influenced by neighboring India, yet became three separate kingdoms

in the late fifteenth century. The kingdoms were united in 1768 by Prithvi Narayan Shah. Expansion into neighboring territories occurred in the early nineteenth century. The British attacked Nepal and gained several peripheral territories such as Sikkim as well as achieving heavy influence on Nepal between the war and the end of the colonial era. A hereditary monarchy ruled between the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Greater democratization took place following the appointment of a cabinet for the king in 1951 and multi-party elections in 1990. In 1996, Maoists extremists began fighting for total control of government, resulting in a decade of civil war. The Maoist insurgency took control in the late 2000s and in 2008 formed a coalition government following elections.

Culture

Hinduism heavily influences society. Saturday is the day of worship. Nepalese drink tea and milk after waking in the morning. The caste system influences many aspects of everyday life. Access to Hindu temples has been limited in the past to lower castes, but government legislation prohibits discrimination based on caste. Lower castes and the Dalits (untouchables) continue to experience discrimination. Cigarette consumption rates are low, whereas alcohol consumption rates are moderate compared to the world average.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$1,300 (2011) [2.7% of one hundred U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.458

Corruption Index: 2.2 (2011)

Nearly half the population is unemployed and a third of the population lives below the poverty line. Seventy-six percent (76%) of the workforce labors in agriculture mainly cultivating pulses, rice, corn and wheat. Tourism is a growing industry. Over half of imports and exports occur with India. Primary exports include clothing, carpets, jute-based products, and grain. Due to civil unrest, a landlocked position, and frequent natural disasters, economic development is limited. Potential sources of wealth include hydroelectric power and increased tourism. Corruption has worsened in recent years and impacts all levels of society. Those found engaged in corruption typically receive little or no punishment.

Faiths

Hindu: 80.6%

Buddhist: 10.7%

Muslim: 4.2%

Kirant: 3.6%

Other: 0.9%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 7,100

Seventh Day Adventists 8,447 26

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,557 20

Latter-day Saints 150 1

Religion

Originally the only official Hindu state in the world, Nepal is strongly influenced by the caste system.

Following the rise of Maoists to power, Nepal was declared a secular state. Hinduism has the strongest influence on Nepali religion, followed by Buddhism. Kirant is a shamanistic religion practiced by the Kirat people.

Religious Freedom

The constitution protects religious freedom but forbids proselytism. No laws favor the Hindu majority. Although illegal, intimidation and prejudice towards lower castes frequently occur. Police regularly intimidate Tibetan Buddhists during religious festivals. Personal conversion to a different religion is allowed by law but often results in ostracism by family and the community for Hindus converting to Islam or Christianity. Violent attacks on Christians by Hindu extremist groups periodically occur.¹⁶⁴⁸

Largest Cities

Urban: 19%

Kathmandu, **Biratnagar**, **Lalitpur**, **Pokhara**, **Birganj**, **Dharan**, **Bharatpur**, **Janakpur**, **Mahendranagar**, **Bhaktapur**.

Cities in **bold** do not have congregations.

One of the ten largest cities has a congregation. Six percent (6%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

In February 1993, Elder Carmack and Elder Tai from the Asia Area Presidency made an investigatory trip to meet local members and expatriates in Kathmandu. Senior couple missionaries began serving on humanitarian assignment as early as 2001, and assisted with branch leadership development. Nepal became part of the India New Delhi Mission in late 2007. There were two humanitarian senior couples serving in Nepal in the late 2000s. The Church was not officially recognized as of mid-2011.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: ~150 (2012)

Following the first visit by Church representatives, there were seventeen members in Kathmandu in mid-1993. Members included Nepalese and foreigners.¹⁶⁴⁹ In 2003, the first youth conference had twenty-one in attendance, seven of which were members.¹⁶⁵⁰ By this time, the branch averaged twelve baptisms a year.¹⁶⁵¹ Fifteen were baptized in 2008. There were 133 members in 2010.

Nepalese have joined the Church in many other nations, particularly India, the United States, Cyprus, and Australia but typically do not return to their homeland.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 1 (2012)

¹⁶⁴⁸ "Nepal," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127369.htm>

¹⁶⁴⁹ Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Asia area: Welcome mat is out in several countries," LDS Church News, 19 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22920/Asia-area—Welcome-mat-is-out-in-several-countries.html>

¹⁶⁵⁰ Klingler, Fay. "Himalayan setting for edification, service," LDS Church News, 19 July 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44065/Himalayan-setting-for-edification-service.html>

¹⁶⁵¹ Topham, Lynne S. "Light in the Land of Mystery," New Era, July 2003, 20.

The Kathmandu congregation was organized by Elder Carmack and Elder Tai in 2001. No additional units have been organized since that time.

Activity and Retention

In 2003, there were fifty active members in the Kathmandu Branch. Members, particularly youth, took responsibility in sharing the Church's teachings and inviting friends and family to meetings. At the end of 2009 there were approximately one hundred active members. Thirteen were enrolled in seminary and institute during the 2008–2009 school year. Active membership is estimated at 60–70% due to the strong devotion of converts.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English.

No scriptures are available in Nepali or other indigenous languages. The Church has translated the Living Christ Testimony, The Family: A Proclamation to the World, the Articles of Faith, *Gospel Fundamentals*, and the *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith* in Nepali.

Meetinghouses

The Kathmandu Branch meets in a renovated building.

Health and Safety

Violence towards religious minority groups is a safety concern for missionaries and members. HIV/AIDS infects 0.5% of the population.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The Church provided DPT immunizations in 1991.¹⁶⁵² Senior missionary couples provide humanitarian assistance. Wheelchair donations have occurred since 2004.¹⁶⁵³ In 2008, the Church donated 750 wheelchairs and partnered with other aid organizations in providing seven hundred 110 pound bags of rice for the Goldhap Bhutanese Refugee Camp and Sunsari District flood victims.¹⁶⁵⁴ Clean water projects were conducted in 2006¹⁶⁵⁵ and 2008.¹⁶⁵⁶

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Current restrictions on proselytism limit LDS missionary efforts. No direct proselytism is allowed; church

¹⁶⁵² "I love little children," LDS Church News, 15 June 1991. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/20877/I-love-little-children.html>

¹⁶⁵³ Assis, Fernanco. "Helping in Brazil by giving mobility," LDS Church News, 24 March 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50277/Helping-in-Brazil-by-giving-mobility.html>

¹⁶⁵⁴ Bradshaw, Lynn R and Glenna. "Nepal expresses thanks with parade," LDS Church News, 3 January 2009. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/56384/Nepal-expresses-thanks-with-parade.html>

¹⁶⁵⁵ "Clean water projects," LDS Newsroom, retrieved 4 March 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/background-information/clean-water-projects>

¹⁶⁵⁶ "Clean water," Humanitarian Services, retrieved 4 March 2010. <http://www.lds.org/library/page/display/0,7098,6212-1-3216-1,00.html>

growth occurs primarily through word of mouth through family and friends of existing members and among those who express spontaneous interest. Christians report harassment from police and Hindu extremist groups.

Cultural Issues

In accordance with Hindu culture, LDS meetings are held on Saturday. Converts from Hindu backgrounds often face ostracism from their families and communities. The widely practiced custom of drinking tea every morning presents a challenge for prospective converts. Hindu celebrations may also present challenges for members in balancing the Church's beliefs with their cultural customs. Few are familiar with Christianity, requiring prospective LDS missionary approaches in Nepal to be tailored to those with a Hindu or Buddhist background in order to maximize understanding of LDS teachings.

National Outreach

Outreach remains very limited by geography and government. In 2003, members attending the Kathmandu branch came from a twenty-mile radius around Kathmandu.¹⁶⁵⁷ Although most members reside in and around Kathmandu, the population is largely unreached and unaware of the Church's presence and teachings. 97.5% of Nepalis live outside of Kathmandu. Many ethnic groups do not have a single Latter-day Saint.

Nepal's large rural population presents future challenges for outreach. The greatest opportunities for reaching the large numbers of people are in Kathmandu and in large cities near the Indian border, although the nation is very rural and only 6% live in the ten largest cities. Small cities and towns high in the Himalayas at times are difficult to access and have limited communication and transportation.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Convert retention and member activity are high for a nation with a small membership and limited Church presence, as manifest by the number of missionaries serving from the Kathmandu Branch and the member-missionary work accomplished by youth converts. The large number of active youth provides opportunities for the Church to have returned missionaries use their skills to help build the Church in Kathmandu and other cities. High convert retention and member activity rates have largely risen from member-missionary approaches to outreach and most converts developing weekly church attendance and a strong testimony prior to baptism.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The caste system presents obstacles for membership growth and retention. Converts from varying castes and ethnic groups often have little social contact with each other outside of Church. These issues may lead to problems with assimilation. Ethnic groups who have relocated from other regions to Kathmandu may also face integration challenges.

Language Issues

Nepali has no LDS scriptures translated and only a few materials. Local members have long awaited a Nepali translation of the Book of Mormon. Besides Nepali, there are no translations of church materials in local languages. Low literacy rates present obstacles, although opportunities exist for literacy programs as a form of service and passive mission outreach.

¹⁶⁵⁷ Klingler, Fay. "Himalayan setting for edification, service," LDS Church News, 19 July 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44065/Himalayan-setting-for-edification-service.html>

Missionary Service

Nepal is one of the few nations with fewer than 200 Latter-day Saints that would be self-sufficient in staffing its local missionary force if proselytism was permitted. In late 2008, there were ten young men serving missions from Nepal. It is unclear whether such a large number of local members have perpetually served missions since this time. Seminary and institute will play a major role in providing missionary preparation for members desiring to serve missions.

Leadership

The Church has well developed local leadership in a country with small membership. Nepali members lead the Kathmandu Branch under the supervision of a senior missionary couple.¹⁶⁵⁸ A large number of Nepali young men have served missions, many in neighboring India. As these missionaries return, they contribute greatly to leadership and establishing the Church. Returned missionaries may prove instrumental in establishing additional congregations and assisting in Church outreach outside the capital in accordance to Nepali law.

Temple

Nepal belongs to the Hong Kong China Temple District. Temple trips from Kathmandu rarely occur due to the small, young membership, financial constraints, and distance. A potential temple in India would be much more accessible but is unlikely for many more years due to few members in South Asia.

Comparative Growth

Other nations in South or Southeast Asia with proselytism restrictions have seen results similar to Nepal. Bangladesh has had a branch for several decades with around the same number of members. Church membership in Laos has met as a branch since the early 2000s and has as many members as Nepal. Pakistan has seen greater success, growing from 130 members in three branches in 1993 to several thousand meeting in ten branches in 2009, although full-time proselyting missionaries have been key to this growth. Nepal enjoys one of the most active memberships for nations with fewer than 500 members.

Christians have struggled to gain converts due to cultural pressures and government restrictions, but greater growth has occurred in the past decade. Christian groups grow in membership as their members share their faith with friends and family. The LDS Church has also seen great progress due to member involvement in missionary work, but this progress is limited to Kathmandu, whereas other denominations have a presence in many of the largest cities. Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses report moderate membership growth and slow congregational growth.

Future Prospects

As local members share their faith with family and friends and missionaries return home and stay in Nepal, greater growth will occur. A second branch may be organized to reduce travel time for members or from lack of space in the current renovated meetinghouse. Additional groups or small branches may be organized in larger cities as returned missionaries move to these locations and share their beliefs with those around them. Greater outreach with humanitarian missionaries will likely not occur until greater religious freedom is granted. A translation of the Book of Mormon and other LDS scriptures in Nepali is greatly needed for increasing gospel understanding, strengthening member testimonies, and for member-missionary activity within the confines of Nepali law.

¹⁶⁵⁸ Klingler, Fay. "Himalayan setting for edification, service," LDS Church News, 19 July 2003. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44065/Himalayan-setting-for-edification-service.html>

PAKISTAN

Geography

AREA: 796,095 square km. Located in South Asia, Pakistan borders India, China, Afghanistan, Iran, and the Arabian Sea. The glacier fed Indus River runs through the middle from north to south, watering the Indus Plain, where most agriculture takes place. Arid and semi-arid climates cover most areas. The Thar Desert occupies much of the territory bordering India. Plains dominate half of Pakistan, with the Balochistan Plateau to the west by Iran. The Himalaya and Karakoram mountains occupy northern regions with some of the world's highest peaks. Pakistan is administratively divided into four provinces, one territory, and one capital territory. Two additional administrative entities function in disputed areas, which include Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Peoples

Punjabi: 44.68%

Pashtun: 15.42%

Sindhi: 14.1%

Sariaki: 8.38%

Muhagirs: 7.57%

Balochi: 3.57%

Other: 6.28%

Punjabi and Sindhi belong to the Indic ethnic group and live on the northern and southern Indus Plain, respectively. Pashtun and Balochi belong to the Iranian ethnic group. Pashtun inhabit the mountainous border region with Afghanistan stretching from Quetta to the Karakoram Mountains. Balochi are found in the arid western areas bordering Iran. Sariaki live in the central areas of the Indus Plain. Muhagirs reside in and around Karachi. 1.04 million Afghan refugees live in Pakistan.

Population: 190,291,129 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.551% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 3.07 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 64.52 male, 68.28 female (2012)

Languages: Punjabi (48%), Sindhi (12%), Sariaki (10%), Pashtu (8%), Urdu (8%), Balochi (3%), Hindko (2%), Brahui (1%), other (8%). National or official languages include Urdu and English. Urdu is a widely spoken second language. Pakistanis speak 72 different languages. Languages with over one million speakers include Punjabi (60.6 million), Pashto languages (18.87 million), Sindhi (18.5 million), Sariaki (13.8 million), Urdu (10.7 million), Balochi (5 million), Hindko languages (2.51 million), Brahui (2 million), and Eastern Farsi (1 million).

Literacy: 49.9% (2001)

History

Pakistan was home to the ancient Indus civilization 5,000 years ago, which influenced the surrounding regions.

Several empires expanded from the west into Pakistan in ancient times, including the Persians and Greeks under Alexander the Great. Arabs later arrived and brought Islam to the region, followed by Afghans and Turks. Many of the inhabitants who were formerly Buddhist or Hindu converted to Islam. Muslim empires, such as the Mughal Empire, controlled Pakistan for several centuries during the Middle Ages. The British East India Company arrived in the eighteenth century and controlled the region until independence in 1947. In preparing the region for independence, the United Kingdom attempted to segregate the Muslim and Hindu populations to reduce religious tensions and formed Pakistan and East Pakistan, known today as Bangladesh. The segregation was incomplete and land disputes arose, resulting in wars in 1947–48, 1965, and 1971 between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, as well as numerous border skirmishes. East Pakistan seceded from Pakistan to form Bangladesh during the third war. Tensions escalated between India and Pakistan following nuclear weapons testing by the two countries in the late 1990s. Strong relations with the United States resulted from Soviet threats in the region. These were later strained following nuclear weapons testing in the late 1990s but improved from Pakistan's cooperation in the United States' war on terrorism in Afghanistan in the early 2000s. However, relations have again become increasingly strained due to casualties from U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, resentment of U.S. policies, and other factors.

In the 2000s, Islamist militant groups, mainly Al Qaeda and Taliban residing in border regions near Afghanistan, destabilized Afghanistan and threatened Pakistan's stability. Tensions between India and Pakistan improved following nuclear weapons development but later rose following the involvement of radical Pakistani Islamist groups in the November 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai. Other events in the late 2000s threatened the stability of Pakistan as a nation state, including the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in late 2007, the rising unpopularity of President Musharraf and his resignation in 2008, and the loss of large amounts of territory to Taliban militants in 2009 in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and North West Frontier Province.

Culture

Dance, music, poetry, and theatre all influence daily life. Polo is popular in northern areas, and cricket is played nationwide. Islamic holidays are widely celebrated. Clothing for men consists of baggy pants and loose-fitting tunics. Since Muslims constitute 95% of the population, pork is not eaten, and most fast during the daylight hours of the month of Ramadan. Unlike neighboring India, there are no castes. Women have more rights and freedoms compared to many other Islamic states, evidenced by the power and popularity of the late Benazir Bhutto. Women suffer from much lower literacy rates (36%) than men (63%) due to cultural restraints on female education. Alcohol is shunned due to the influential Muslim majority.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$2,800 (2011) [5.81% of one hundred U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.504

Corruption Index: 2.5 (2011)

Economic growth and development continue, although most are underemployed, and growth is slow due to poor management, corruption, and political unrest. One quarter of the population lives below the poverty line. Services account for half of the GDP, and agriculture and industry each make up around 25%. Agriculture employs 43% of the workforce. Primary agricultural products include cotton, wheat, and rice. Industries include textiles, food, pharmaceuticals, and construction materials. Primary export partners are the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and Afghanistan, whereas China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are the primary import partners. Inflation has worsened in recent years, and foreign investment has been lacking due to nation instability. Earthquakes in 2005 killed over 70,000, left three million homeless, and weakened national infrastructure.

Corruption is widespread. Bombings in larger cities and Federally Administered Tribal Areas are commonplace.

Pakistan experiences high levels of drug trafficking of heroin and morphine from Afghan sources that are distributed from Pakistan around the world. Opium poppy farming occurs in some areas of Pakistan.

Faiths

Muslim: 95%

Other (Christian and Hindu): 5%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 1,000,000

Seventh Day Adventists 13,740 122

Latter-day Saints ~3,400 ~13

Jehovah's Witnesses 1,022 18

Religion

Seventy-five percent (75%) of Muslims are Sunnis. Islamic holidays are national holidays. Religious minorities tend to live in their own communities to avoid persecution and discrimination. Most Christians are Catholic or belong to independent Pakistani denominations.

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index: 14th

Pakistan is an Islamic republic with a constitution that limits the religious freedom of minority religious groups. Some tolerance exists for religious minorities to live and practice their beliefs. Only Muslims may serve as president or prime minister, and senior officials and parliament members must take an oath to maintain the nation's Islamic identity. Blasphemy laws transgressed by the defiling of the Koran or prophets in Islam can result in death or life imprisonment. Religious persecution can result in imprisonment. Religious minorities receive harassment from police and the Sunni majority. Violent attacks on Christian churches and religious minority communities frequently occur.

Government attempts to treat minorities more fairly by placing some in government positions, but societal discrimination remains severe. Some statements in schools and textbooks refer to non-Muslims derogatively.

Non-Islamic missionaries may operate in the country but must profess to not be Muslim and affirm that they do not preach against Islam. The government restricts the total number of missionaries by only replacing ones who leave the country. Marriages between different religious groups are not recognized by the state. The most serious restrictions are placed on the Ahmadiyya sect of Islam. Ahmadis are not permitted to identify themselves as Muslims, hold public meetings, or sell religious literature and are banned from performing religious pilgrimages to Islamic holy sites.¹⁶⁵⁹

Largest Cities

Urban: 36%

Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, **Multan**, **Hyderabad**, **Gujranwala**, **Peshawar**, **Quetta**, Islamabad,

¹⁶⁵⁹ Pakistan," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127370.htm>

Sargodha, Sialkot, Bahawalpur, Sukkur, Jhang, Shekhupura, Larkana, Gujrat, Mardan, Kasur, Rahim Yar Khan.

Cities listed in **bold** do not have congregations.

Six of the twenty-one largest cities have a Church congregation. Eighteen percent (18%) of the national population lives in cities over 250,000 people.

LDS History

The first members living in Pakistan were foreigners. The first Pakistani missionary from the Islamabad Branch began serving in January 1987.¹⁶⁶⁰ In 1995, the Church was registered with the government and seminary began.¹⁶⁶¹ Outreach in Pakistan occurs exclusively among Christians. Significant numbers of Pakistanis have also joined the Church in Canada and the United Kingdom.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: ~3,400 (2012)

When the first missionaries arrived in mid-1993 there were 130 members.¹⁶⁶² Sixty baptisms occurred between the fall of 1992 and the fall of 1993. By 1997, there were 500 members. Membership increased to 786 at the end of 2000 and to 957 the following year.

Membership increased to over 2,000 by 2005. Eighty convert baptisms occurred in 2008.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 13+ (2012)

A small group met in Islamabad as early as the 1970s. Branches were first established in the mid-1980s in Islamabad and Lahore. A branch was created in Karachi around 1991. The first senior missionary couple arrived in early 1993 and began working among Pakistani Christians in Karachi and Lahore. A second missionary couple arrived by the summer of 1993.¹⁶⁶³ At the time, both couples were engaged in proselytism only among Christians in three branches and four groups.¹⁶⁶⁴ The Islamabad Pakistan District was created in the 1990s.

By the end of 2000, there were six branches in one district. By August 2001, six branches met in Faisalabad, Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Taxilla, and Sialkot. Jurisdiction for Pakistan was transferred from the Singapore Mission to the newly-created India New Delhi Mission in November 2007. A second district was created in Karachi in September 2008 from at least two branches. Only native Pakistani missionaries serve in the Pakistan Zone. By May 2009, there were four branches, each clustered around Islamabad and Lahore, forming the Islamabad Pakistan District and two additional branches in Karachi. In the late 2000s, district conference for the Islamabad district was often divided into two sessions with one in Lahore to reduce travel demands. Sometime in the early 2010s, Lahore became its own district. Congregations functioning as groups or dependent branches may meet in additional locations.

¹⁶⁶⁰ "FYI: For Your Information," *New Era*, Aug 1987, 40–43.

¹⁶⁶¹ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Worldwide seminary," *LDS Church News*, 31 May 1997. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/29087/Worldwide-seminary.html>

¹⁶⁶² Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Asia area: Welcome mat is out in several countries," *LDS Church News*, 19 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22920/Asia-area—Welcome-mat-is-out-in-several-countries.html>

¹⁶⁶³ Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Asia area: Welcome mat is out in several countries," *LDS Church News*, 19 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22920/Asia-area—Welcome-mat-is-out-in-several-countries.html>

¹⁶⁶⁴ "The Church in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka," *Liahona*, Oct 1993, 22.

Activity and Retention

Activity and retention have been strong in Pakistan since the first Pakistanis joined the Church. The first Christian to receive the Rover Badge in the Pakistani scouting program was a Pakistani member in charge of scouting in Punjab Province in 1991.¹⁶⁶⁵ Elder Dallin K. Oaks held a weekday fireside in late 2007 attended by 475.¹⁶⁶⁶ The Church Education System had one hundred members enrolled in classes between 2008 and 2009. Over 200 young single adults met for a nationwide conference in late 2008. In early 2012, over 1,000 attended the Lahore Pakistan District conference. Dozens of Pakistani missionaries were serving missions in early 2010, many in their native country. Branches likely have between fifty and one hundred active members with perhaps some larger branches. Active membership may be as high as 1,700 members, or approximately 50–55% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Urdu, Farsi.

A translation of selections from the Book of Mormon became available in Urdu in 1988. An entire Book of Mormon translation was completed in late 2007. Three issues of the *Liahona* magazine were published a year in Urdu as of late 2009. Audiovisual materials are available for *Joy to the World* and *The Restoration*. Some Primary materials are also available in Urdu. Book of Mormon selections are available in Farsi. *Gospel Principles* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Farsi and Pashto. *Gospel Principles Simplified* and *The Prophet Joseph Smith's Testimony* are available in Punjabi.

Meetinghouses

A building housing the Taxila Branch was damaged in the 2005 earthquake.¹⁶⁶⁷ Other branches may meet in Church-built buildings, but most likely meet in rented spaces or renovated buildings.

Health and Safety

Health issues are typical of most developing countries. HIV/AIDS infects less than 0.1% of the population. Safety issues present a major concern. Violence targeting religious minorities presents a safety concern for members and missionaries; violence includes intimidation, kidnapping, sexual and physical violence, and murder. Suicide bombings occur regularly and without warning in the largest cities and the most unstable areas near the Afghan border. Fighting in the Kashmiri region restricts missionary work. High crime and corruption in Karachi pose safety threats. No nonnative missionaries serve in Pakistan due to safety issues.

Humanitarian and Development Work

The church provided needed humanitarian aid for sufferers of the 2005 earthquake. Fifty thousand blankets, 1,000 winterized tents, 300,000 pounds of medical supplies, and 42,000 hygiene kits were initially sent. Due to inadequate provisions of refugees for winter temperatures, the Church purchased and delivered an additional 150,000 blankets and 5,000 winterized tents in late 2005.¹⁶⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶⁵ Sheffield, Sheridan R. "Asia area: Welcome mat is out in several countries," LDS Church News, 19 June 1993. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/22920/Asia-area—Welcome-mat-is-out-in-several-countries.html>

¹⁶⁶⁶ Stahle, Shaun. "Few, but faithful," LDS Church News, 22 September 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51061/Few-but-faithful.html>

¹⁶⁶⁷ "Members impacted by 7.6 quake in Pakistan," LDS Church News, 15 October 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48008/Members-impacted-by-76-quake-in-Pakistan.html>

¹⁶⁶⁸ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Blankets, tents shipped to avert second disaster," LDS Church News, 3 December 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48231/Blankets-tents-shipped-to-avert-second-disaster.html>

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

Government and cultural issues are very similar since religion strongly affects both. Government and society restrict the Church's missionary program to just Christians, permitting in outreach to only 1–2% of the population. Pakistan has more liberal laws concerning religious minorities than many other Islamic states, allowing Christians to assemble and to have missionaries. Christians often live segregated from Muslims in compounds or villages. This presents opportunities for the Church to reach large numbers who can legally be reached. Limitations on the numbers of missionaries who can enter Pakistan restrict Church missionary programs that usually rely heavily on full-time missionaries. Missionaries cannot preach against Islam.

Cultural Issues

Many of the restrictions on missionary work and religious freedom stem from Islamic cultural influences on government. Those who join the Church may not only be ostracized but may become the target of violence. British rule and the presence of religious minorities for hundreds of years may have contributed to the greater leniency for these groups to operate despite the integration of Islam and government.

The abstinence of most Muslims from alcohol provides opportunities to reach this religious group once societal and government restrictions improve. The frequent, widespread consumption of tea may present barriers between local customs and Church doctrine. The low literacy rates of women present difficulties for understanding Church doctrine and strengthening testimonies.

Ethnic violence in the southern areas around Karachi threatens the Church's greater establishment among all ethnicities.

National Outreach

No other nation in South Asia has as widespread an LDS presence as Pakistan. Only Christians can be reached by the Church, leaving some 98% of the population unreached. Although government and society limit outreach, a large amount of success has been achieved as membership grew from only a couple of hundred to over 2,000 in fifteen years. The Sindh and Punjab Provinces, the two most populous, and the Islamabad Capital Territory have cities with congregations. North West Frontier Province (17.1 million), Balochistan (6.5 million), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (3.2 million), Azad Kashmir (3 million), and Gilgit-Baltistan (0.87 million), amounting to 17% of the national population, have no LDS congregations. Although only a small fraction receive outreach from missionaries, the Church has spread to several of the largest cities. A presence in the largest cities provides the opportunity to lay a foundation for future growth in the most populous areas. No outreach is conducted in rural areas, where 64% of the population resides. Rural areas may be unreachable for many years due to the concentration of many Christians in compounds and the Church's efforts to become most established in larger cities.

Outreach to more isolated Christian communities is restricted by the limited amount of Pakistani missionaries and members and distance from mission headquarters in New Delhi. Although the membership growth in Pakistan likely heavily influenced the decision to create the India New Delhi Mission, the mission must also allocate mission resources and visits between Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan, all of which have very limited Church membership facing government restrictions and societal challenges.

About half of all Catholics reside in the Lahore area and make up a large portion of Pakistani Christians. These areas seem to pose the greatest opportunities for the Church to expand among unreached Christians.

Catholics number in the tens of thousands in some remote areas like Quetta. Greater outreach may occur if active members move to these locations and share the Gospel with fellow Christians.

Some outreach has occurred among Afghan refugees as a result of humanitarian contacts. Several Afghan families have joined the Church, primarily in New Delhi, India.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Convert retention and member activity appears high for a nation with a small membership and a limited Church presence. The fireside held by Elder Oaks was attended by nearly a quarter of the total Pakistani members and nearly half of actives. The Church has spread to many cities in Pakistan as the result of active members who engage in missionary work with their family and friends. Many nations with restrictions on proselytism struggle to have members who have so willingly served missions and helped build the Church like in Pakistan. Great potential for additional growth and outreach are likely as the large number of active members and retained converts are creating a strong member base.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The ethnic groups with the greatest Church outreach are those with the most Christians and include the Punjabi, Sindhi, and Sariaki. The most severe ethnic violence is found in the south, especially in Karachi. Bitter ethnic conflict between the Sindhi and Mohajirs has continued for decades. Incoming Pashtuns have also experienced violence from Mohajirs. The integration of these groups into the same congregation may be difficult, particularly if most members belong to one group. This situation would challenge members in the congregation and potential members from rival ethnic groups in joining the Church.

War and instability from Taliban insurrection limit outreach among the Pashtun. The lack of appreciable numbers of Pashtun Christians limits the potential for mission outreach. Outreach to Balochis is difficult, as Christians are few and Balochis populate remote, sparsely populated far western areas.

Language Issues

The Church benefits from a large proportion of the population speaking Urdu as a second language. This has helped unify converts from differing ethnic groups that may meet in the same congregation. Limited language materials in the most spoken first languages provide outreach to over half the population. This provides great opportunity for missionary work but hampers gospel scholarship, as only Urdu has the complete Book of Mormon translated. The Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price are unavailable in any native languages of Pakistan. A Book of Mormon translation in Punjabi may be forthcoming since many members live in regions where it is widely spoken.

Missionary Service

Pakistani members regularly serve missions and comprise the entire missionary force in Pakistan. In early 2012, there appeared to be at least thirty members serving missions. High levels of devotion to the Church prior to baptism appears correlated with good representation of local members serving full-time missions. Returned missionaries provide invaluable leadership manpower and experience.

Leadership

Leadership is strong but limited. The district president of the Islamabad Pakistan District in 2007 was a

twenty-nine-year-old returned missionary.¹⁶⁶⁹ Most members are youth or middle-aged. It is difficult for members to marry in the Church with a small membership distributed over a large country. Young Single Adult activities have helped to introduce single members to each other in order to encourage marriage inside the Church. Leadership concentrates on preparing membership for stakes to be established.

Temple

Pakistan pertains to the Hong Kong China Temple District. Temple excursions for Pakistani saints occur periodically, but attendance is limited due to constraints on distance, time and money. Church leaders in New Delhi in 1992 promised members that if they were faithful, a temple would someday be built in New Delhi. A future temple in New Delhi would reduce demands on time, money and distance for Pakistani members, although tensions between India and Pakistan may limit travel.

Comparative Growth

Several Muslim-majority nations have more members than Pakistan. Indonesia has experienced slower membership growth, taking forty years to grow to over 6,000 members meeting in twenty-two congregations. Sierra Leone had the Church first established in the late 1980s and has more than three times as many members and twice as many congregations as Pakistan. Attendance in other Islamic countries with sizeable membership consists primarily of expatriates or military personnel, such as in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Other Christian groups typically have larger Church memberships but have had native members for decades before the LDS Church's arrival. Growth rates of the LDS Church since its establishment among natives experiences similar trends compared to other, smaller Christian groups.

Future Prospects

Self-sufficiency with native missionaries and local leadership has promoted relatively high retention and member activity as well as generating ongoing growth. Prospects appear favorable for continued growth among Christians, although there are no present prospects for expansion among Pakistani Muslims. Districts will likely not mature into stakes until additional branches are created. A mission based in Pakistan seems unlikely until greater religious tolerance from government occurs.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Stahle, Shaun. "Few, but faithful," LDS Church News, 22 September 2007. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/51061/Few-but-faithful.html>

SRI LANKA

Geography

AREA: 65,610 square km. Sri Lanka is an island southeast of the tip of southern India in the Indian Ocean. Plains cover most of the island, with few mountains in the southern interior. Monsoons occur from December to March and June to October. Forest occupies most of the terrain. Deforestation and urbanization present the biggest environmental problems. Sri Lanka is divided into eight administrative provinces.

Peoples

Sinhalese: 73.8%

Sri Lankan Moors: 7.2%

Indian Tamil: 4.6%

Sri Lankan Tamil: 3.9%

Other: 0.5%

Unspecified: 10%

Ethnic groups claim ancestry from Sinhalese, who arrived from northwest India in the sixth century BC, Tamils from Southern India, or Arab traders. Sinhalese occupy the entire interior and southern and western coastal areas. Sri Lankan Tamils dominate northern and eastern shorelines and arrived several centuries after the Sinhalese, whereas Indian Tamils were brought to work on plantations by the British and populate interior northern Sri Lanka and in several scattered communities in southern areas. Sri Lankan Moors descended from Arab traders and live in scattered enclaves.

Population: 21,481,334 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 0.913% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 2.17 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 72.43 male, 79.59 female (2012)

Languages: Sinhala (74%, 15.5 million), Tamil (18%, 3.77 million), other (8%). The official language is Sinhala, and national languages include Sinhala and Tamil. English is spoken by 10% of the population and regularly used in government.

Literacy: 90.7% (2001)

History

The first inhabitants arrived from northern India in the sixth century BC. Tamil settlers arrived 2,000 years ago and began inhabiting the northern areas of the island. Arab and Malay traders arrived around 1000 AD and some settled on the island. Civilizations in southern India began exerting greater influence by establishing a Tamil kingdom in the north in the fourteenth century. Portuguese and later the Dutch explored and traded in the region. The British East India Company took control in 1796, and in 1802 a crown colony was established. The entire island came under total British control shortly thereafter and adopted the name Ceylon. Plantations were established, and workers were brought from India. Independence from the United Kingdom occurred in 1948, and the name was changed to Sri Lanka in 1972. Friction between the majority Sinhalese

and the northern minority Tamils erupted into civil war by 1983 and continued until rebel forces were ultimately defeated in 2009. Tens of thousands died from the fighting, and almost half a million were displaced.

Culture

Sri Lanka's two main cultural forces are the Sinhalese and the Tamils. British cultural traditions influenced native traditions during colonial rule, especially in urban centers. Sri Lankans drink tea regularly. Festivals celebrating religious holidays are observed from Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. Cricket is the most popular sport. Few drink alcohol or smoke tobacco.

Economy

GDP per capita: \$5,600 (2011) [11.6% of one hundred U.S.]

Human Development Index: 0.691

Corruption Index: 3.3

A civil war lasting more than two decades, policies with socialist aspects, and the 2004 tsunami have limited economic growth. Despite these challenges, the GDP per capita increased \$500 between 2006 and 2008. More than half of the GDP originates in the services sector, whereas industry and agriculture account for 29% and 13%, respectively. Each of these sectors employs about a third of the workforce. Twenty-two percent (22%) of the population lives below the poverty line. Primary agricultural products include rice, sugarcane, and grains. The largest industries are rubber processing, food processing, telecommunications, banking, and textiles. The United States, United Kingdom, and India are primary export partners. Most imports arrive from India, China, Iran, and Singapore. Sri Lanka's location just south of India provides accessible trade access between the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

Although corruption levels are lower than many other South Asian countries, significant corruption problems persist and government transparency is limited.

Faiths

Buddhist: 69.1%

Muslim: 7.6%

Hindu: 7.1%

Christian: 6.2%

Unspecified: 10%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 1,400,000

Jehovah's Witnesses 5,153 86

Seventh Day Adventists 3,837 37

Latter-day Saints 1,319 3

Religion

Buddhism arrived in the third century BC. Buddhists live throughout the country, especially in central and southern areas, and influence government. Islam arrived with Malay and Arab traders a thousand years ago.

Eastern areas are mostly Muslim, and northern areas are predominantly Hindu. Most Hindus are Tamil. Christians typically live in the west. Around 80% of Christians are Catholic.¹⁶⁷⁰

Religious Freedom

The constitution allows for religious freedom, but religious freedom of minorities experiences little protection. Persecution from Buddhists toward minority groups has been severe. Buddhists feel threatened by the conversion of many Buddhists to Christianity and harass most Christian churches. False reports circulate that Christians force or coerce Buddhists with other means to convert. Many Christian missionaries and pastors were murdered or reported missing due to violence from Buddhist extremists in the late 2000s. Most of these cases were never pursued by police and government, and those committing these crimes have gone unpunished. The predominately Hindu Tamils persecute Muslims and expelled all Muslims in areas of their control in 1990. Religious education is required in schools in which students can study Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, or Christianity.¹⁶⁷¹

Largest Cities

Urban: 15%

Colombo, **Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia**, **Moratuwa**, Negombo, **Trincomalee**, **Kotte**, Kandy, **Kalmunai**, **Vavuniya**, **Jaffna**.

Cities listed in **bold** do not have congregations.

Three of the ten largest cities have a Church congregation. Nine percent (9%) of the national population lives in the ten largest cities.

LDS History

The first missionaries arrived in 1853. Due to opposition to the Church from locals, the missionaries stayed only for a short time and returned to India. Two missionaries stopped in Sri Lanka in 1975 to evaluate whether the country was ready for missionary work. The first members to live in Sri Lanka were from the United States. A Texas businessman who was a member of the Church shared the gospel with a family he had met in Sri Lanka in 1976. In the following year, several members of the family were baptized. The father of the family served as the first branch president in 1978. Several senior missionary couples began serving in the late 1970s, working with humanitarian efforts and teaching those who wanted to learn more about the Church, but active proselytism did not take place.¹⁶⁷² The Church became officially registered in 1979. The first native missionaries began serving in the 1980s. Missionaries from the Singapore Mission began serving in Sri Lanka in the late 1990s. In November 2007, Sri Lanka came under the jurisdiction of the India Bangalore Mission. In late 2007, eight young American missionaries served in the country on tourist visas. Foreign missionaries were withdrawn in late 2008 due to increasing violence directed towards Christian missionaries and visa problems. Only three native missionaries remained on the island. At least one senior missionary couple continues to serve in the country. A senior missionary couples conferences for the thirteen couples in the India Bangalore Mission was held in Sri Lanka in early 2009. Missionaries were optimistic that the visa issue would be resolved.

¹⁶⁷⁰ "Sri Lanka," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127371.htm>

¹⁶⁷¹ "Sri Lanka," International Religious Freedom Report 2009, 26 October 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127371.htm>

¹⁶⁷² "Sri Lanka," LDS Newsroom, retrieved 5 March 2010. <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/sri-lanka>

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 1,319 (2012)

Membership grew to 135 in 1990. By the end of 2000 there were 313 members.

Due to increases in the number of young, foreign missionaries, accelerated membership growth began in the early 2000s. Membership increased to 663 in 2002, 851 in 2004, and 1,108 in 2006.

Most years between 2001 and 2007 saw membership growth rates over 10%. Membership growth rates declined in the late 2000s due to the withdrawal of most full-time missionaries.

Congregational Growth

Branches: 3 Groups: 2? (2012)

The Sri Lanka Branch was created in Colombo in March 1978. A second branch was created in Colombo in 1998 for Sinhala speaking members. The first branch created outside Colombo was the Negombo Branch in 2000.¹⁶⁷³ A district was created in Colombo in October 2000. By the end of 2000, there were three branches in the Colombo Sri Lanka District. A fourth branch was created in Kandy in 2002. A group for members in Chilaw began meeting in the 2000s.

The Sinhala speaking branch in Colombo was discontinued in 2008. The Chilaw Group likely continues to meet.

Activity and Retention

Retention has suffered during the past decade. This has likely been partially due to Sri Lanka's remote location in the Singapore Mission before the mission realignment in late 2007. Additional congregations have likely not been organized due to poor member activity. Each of the three branches appears to have over one hundred active members, with some branches having as many as 200. Active members likely number around four hundred, or 30% of total membership.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Sinhalese, Tamil.

The Book of Mormon is translated into Sinhalese and Tamil. Limited Church material translations for priesthood, relief society, Sunday School, young women, and primary are available in Sinhala and few leadership, priesthood, Sunday School, and primary materials are available in Tamil. Both languages have several audio-visual materials translated, such as *Joy to the World* and *The Restoration*. No translations of the Doctrine and Covenants or Pearl of Great Price are in Sinhalese or Tamil. The *Liabona* has two issues a year for Sinhala and four issues a year for Tamil.

Meetinghouses

The first Church-built meetinghouse was dedicated in December 2001 in Colombo.¹⁶⁷⁴ An additional meetinghouse was approved by the Asia Area Presidency in the fall of 2009. Branches in Negombo and Kandy likely meet in rented spaces or renovated buildings.

¹⁶⁷³ "Sri Lanka," Deseret News 2010 Almanac, 579–80.

¹⁶⁷⁴ "Sri Lanka," Facts and Statistics—LDS Newsroom, retrieved 17 April 2012. <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/facts-and-statistics/country/sri-lanka/>

Health and Safety

Health issues do not pose serious threats to missionaries and are typical for tropical Asian nations with developing economies. Safety is a concern due to threats and acts of violence against Christian missionaries. Violence between ethnic groups poses some danger to native and foreign missionaries.

Humanitarian and Development Work

Humanitarian missionaries began teaching English as a second language in 1982.¹⁶⁷⁵ A large increase in aid and development projects began following the 2004 tsunami. Immediately following the tsunami the Church sent first aid, Atmit nutritional supplements, and clothing.¹⁶⁷⁶ 650 Fishing boats were built with assistance of the Church. Micro-credit loans were issued to hundreds of women.¹⁶⁷⁷

Opportunities, Challenges, and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The Church enjoys greater religious freedom than many other Asian nations. Pressures from Buddhists limit religious freedom and may have influenced government to not issue visas to foreign missionaries. There is little government initiative to protect the rights of Christians and prosecute radicals who commit violent acts against religious minorities

Cultural Issues

Those desiring to join the Church must give up customs of tea consumption. However, rates of alcohol and tobacco consumption are low. Converts potentially come from Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, or Muslim backgrounds, which challenges the ability of missionaries and local leaders to meet individual needs and teach the gospel to their understanding. British colonialism has assisted in the Westernization of many, which may cause friction between the more educated and less educated Sri Lankans. Some Christian groups view the Church unfavorably and persuade others to avoid missionaries and members.¹⁶⁷⁸

National Outreach

The withdrawal of foreign missionaries has reduced much of the Church's previous outreach. Only 4% of the national population lives where a congregation is organized, and only two of the eight provinces have a branch: Western and Central. With foreign missionaries serving for less than a decade, most inhabitants in Colombo, Negombo, and Kandy are unaware of the Church's presence.

National outreach faces many challenges. Infrequent visits and few mission resources were allocated when assignments were made to the Singapore Mission. Following visas issues and civil war, national outreach has been reduced. Members have been less successful at producing a local missionary force than many other South Asia nations. Persecution of Christians and Hindus from Buddhist militants has contributed to the Church's caution in Sri Lanka in extending outreach into additional areas. Predominantly Muslim and Hindu areas will

¹⁶⁷⁵ "Sri Lanka," Facts and Statistics—LDS Newsroom, retrieved 17 April 2012. <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/facts-and-statistics/country/sri-lanka/>

¹⁶⁷⁶ "2005: Year in review," LDS Church News, 31 December 2005. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/48334/2005-Year-in-review.html>

¹⁶⁷⁷ Weaver, Sarah Jane. "Work continues in Southeast Asia," LDS Church News, <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/49004/Work-continues-in-Southeast-Asia.html>

¹⁶⁷⁸ "Pure religion: Mending a heart," LDS Church News, 8 June 2000. <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/50675/Pure-religion-Mending-a-heart.html>

be difficult to reach due to hardships experienced during the civil war. The greatest opportunities for outreach are in the Western Province around Colombo, where over five million people live. Nearby communities have the largest Christian populations in the country. These areas may be receptive to future outreach.

High literacy rates can benefit Church outreach through greater printing and distribution of proselytizing materials than currently. With vision and planning, church literature could be distributed in unreached areas.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

Before the mid-2000s, member activity was high and convert retention strong. Rapid membership increase, quick-baptize tactics of foreign missionaries with limited preparation of converts from diverse backgrounds, and distance from mission headquarters in Singapore resulted in worsening activity and convert retention. The little progress that has been achieved in increasing active membership is evidenced by the dissolution of the Sinhala-speaking branch in 2008 and the lack of any new congregations being organized since 2002 despite the doubling of nominal membership.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

The most severe persecution and violence has been based on racial differences and not religious differences. Violence and friction between the Sinhalese and Tamils in the north impede prospects for establishing the Church there.

Language Issues

Both Sinhala and Tamil have a large amount of materials available despite the small size of current Church membership speakers. Speakers of languages with Church material translations account for over 90% of the population. Difficulties for foreign missionaries learning both these languages present the greatest linguistic challenges for the Church, since missionaries are not guaranteed to remain in Sri Lanka for their entire missions. The Church may experience some difficulty with speakers of both languages meeting in the same congregation when active membership is not large enough to justify the creation of separate congregations for each language. High literacy benefits the development leadership and activity. The 46,000 speakers of Sri Lankan Creole Malay are difficult to reach due to the small number of speakers and the adherence of many to Islam.

Leadership

Leadership developed early in the Church's history, with a Sri Lankan instated as a first branch president in 1978 and the creation of the first district when only 300 members lived in the country. As membership growth increased rapidly, leadership growth has not increased commensurately, as no congregations have been created. Sri Lanka's missionary force is not self-sustaining, as evidenced by the rapid decline in growth after foreign missionaries were withdrawn in 2008.

Temple

Sri Lanka belongs to the Hong Kong China Temple District. Temple trips occur infrequently due to distance and financial constraints. A future temple in India would reduce many of the demands on time, money, and distance for Sri Lankan members but would still require considerable sacrifice.

Comparative Growth

Membership growth in Sri Lanka has been slower than average for nations in Asia due to slow growth rates between 1980 and 2000. Cambodia and Mongolia both experienced more sustained, rapid growth, yet congregations were first established fifteen years later than in Sri Lanka. Pakistan grew from the same number of members in the early 1990s to over 2,500 members in ten branches and two districts. Other nations have had very limited growth despite a Church presence for several decades. Sri Lanka's membership growth between 2000 and 2008 has been among the most rapid for countries with fewer than 2,000 members, yet there has been little increase in actual church attendance over this period.

Only a few Christian groups experienced sustained, rapid growth, which has slowed recently. Seventh Day Adventist growth has been low since 2000 with membership increasing by a couple hundred, although five new congregations have been organized. The greatest growth has been with Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. These groups utilize member-missionary work and plant churches in new areas.

Future Prospects

Greater membership and congregational growth will likely not occur until the return of foreign missionaries. Local leadership and member-missionary efforts have not been able to maintain membership growth attained by fulltime missionaries. Senior missionary couples focus on local leadership development and reactivation efforts.

Branches in Colombo, Negombo, and Kandy may divide when warranted by growth in active membership. Once there are at least five branches, over 120 active Melchizedek Priesthood holders, and 1,900 members a stake may be established, although current trends suggest that this goal is far distant. Improving convert retention through approaches tailored to the needs of individuals of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds and careful preparation of prospective converts to ensure that gospel habits are in place will be crucial to achieving real long-term growth.

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