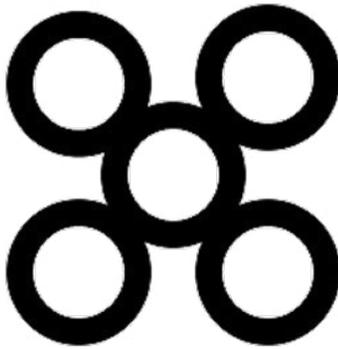


PART 3

THE STATE OF THE UNREACHED IN GHANA AND WEST AFRICA



The Adinkra symbol “MPUANNUM” symbolises the traditional hairstyle of the priestesses and symbolises priestly office, loyalty and adroitness.

SUMMARY OF UPGS IN GHANA

George Gumah

There are **19** Known *UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS* currently in Ghana

They have a combined Population of more than **1.6 Million**

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

11 (58%)
Indigenous UPGs

8 (42%)
Foreign UPGs

The UPGs are located in all the **16 Regions**



RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

4 (21%)
Ethnic Religions

15 (79%)
Islam

RESOURCES:

Despite the growth of the church in Ghana and the advancement of technology, many UPGs still have inadequate resources especially in their mother tongue.

4 are **Unengaged Unreached People Groups**

6 have **Security Issues**

4 have **Christians Population of 0.00%**

7 have **no known gospels audio recording**

9 have **no known Written Scriptures**

10 have **the bible in their language either NT, OT or both**

THE STATE OF THE UNREACHED AND THE GREAT CHALLENGE TO THE GHANAIAN CHURCH

REV. SAMPSON DORKUNOR©

What the task is ...

- a. Joshua 18:1-6
- b. Joshua 13:1-8
- c. Deuteronomy 1:6-8

The task of World Evangelization is that there are people groups and nations (ethnic groups) that have not been penetrated by the gospel message as yet. Though we have large numbers of people attending church service in some parts of Ghana, there are large numbers who have not yet heard the gospel of Jesus Christ – here in Ghana. For example, in 1989, it was recognized that there were 15,000 towns and villages without the presence of a gospel. By 1993, this number was put

at 14,000 towns and villages with no viable church planted. There is a clear indication that the greatest concentration of unreached people groups are in the Northern sector of the country and they are made up of specific People Groups in Ghana and also scattered people groups from other countries.

- They are Unreached because they do not yet have a reproductive church that will evangelize their population.
- They are Unreached because the word of God is not available to the people in their mother tongue.
- They are Unreached because of the few missionary workers among them.

Who are the unreached and why are they not reached? Revelations 7:9; 5:9 – from every nation, tribe, tongues/language, and people.

Unreached People Group	Pop. in Ghana	Location in Ghana	World Pop.	Main Religion	Evangelicals	Bible
Anufo/Chokossi	111,000	N/E Ghana	223,000	Ethnic Religions	2%	New Testament
Arab	3,000	Scattered	1,092,000	Islam	0.50%	Complete
Banda –Ligbi	24,000	Brong Ahafo	32,000	Islam	0.02%	None
Chakali	15,000	Wa East	15,000	Ethnic Religions	1.50%	None
Chala	4,700	Upper West, near Wa	4,700	Ethnic Religions	1%	None
Foodo	1100	Scattered	44,000	Islam	0.01%	None
Fulani - Massina	13,000	Scattered	1,772,000	Islam	0.04%	New Testament
Gonja	377,000	Northern Ghana	377,000	Islam	0.50%	Complete
Hausa	290,786	Various	35,396,000	Islam	0.00%	Complete

Indo Pakistani	10,000	Various	1,315,000	Hinduism	Few – Less than 2%	Complete
Jula, Dyula	68,045	Ivory Coast Border	2,387,000	Islam (99%)	0.70%	New Testament
Kamara	7,200	Northern	Undetermined	Islam	Undetermined	None
Kantosi	3,600	Sandema District	3,600	Islam	0.20%	None
Kotokoli	163,000	Northern Volta	456,000	Islam	0.10%	Ongoing NT
Mamprusi	385,000	Northern Region	402,000	Ethnic Religions	0.20%	New Testament
Madinka	129,000	Scattered	1,735,000	Islam (85%)	0.50%	Complete
Nanumba	100,367	Northern Region	-	Ethnic Religions	0.10%	Complete
Songhai Koyraboro	9,600	Scattered	2,320,000	Islam (98%)	0.30%	Portions
Wala	103,000	Upper West	103,000	Islam	1.50%	New Testament
Zerma	9,300	Various	4,571,000	Islam	0.10%	Complete

Source: Adapted from Joshua Project. www.joshuaproject.net and Field Study results (2017) - with Ghana Statistical Service figures for the 2010 Census.

As at the time of publishing this paper, the Chinese immigrant numbers in Ghana is said to have hit the highest in Africa. The population of 700,000 immigrants cannot be confirmed from official sources, the Chinese are scattered all over the country, especially, in the main mining communities. Currently, there are no known plans and agendas targeting evangelism and discipleship among them. Wikipedia’s reports on the subject refer to church leaders making pleas for the influx and the huge population of Chinese to be considered.

What should be our response?

We need a critical mass of people who are ready with their skills to reach out to the frontier Lines – go to places which are not yet touched by the gospel effectively, storm the devil’s camp and sow the seeds of the word of life. The need is for people who are PREPARED TO GIVE THE LAMB, THE REWARD OF HIS SUFFERING – a resolved group of people who want

to see something extraordinary happen. The critical factor is sending the LIGHT into the dark corner so that the power of darkness will be dispelled. The existing light will continue its work. What we need is to SET A REVOLUTION FOR CONVERSIONS IN MOTION. Evangelism per se is good but revolves around areas already touched by the gospel and needing further penetration.

The need is for people who are PREPARED TO GIVE THE LAMB, THE REWARD OF HIS SUFFERING – a resolved group of people who want to see something extraordinary happen.

Challenges Facing Missions in Africa today

Africa is currently the HUB OF MODERN CHRISTIANITY – the numbers are huge and breaking on the seams. A critical need in the African Church is her readiness to be a FORMIDABLE SENDING CHURCH. Though the human resources seem to be available, the Church is not ready with FINANCIAL RESOURCES to release its labor force. Most of our resources are locked up in building projects and expansionary efforts. The most prosperous churches have ambitious building programs instead of a missionary

agenda. The prayer meetings are focused on the needs of members rather than on the needs of the UNREACHED AND LEAST REACHED. **Financial pledges are rarely redeemed if people ever promise to support a particular missionary.** The challenge then is that **the missionary family suffers and does the work at their own risk** with little or no support from the general church. Research shows that the African Church sends its missionaries with ‘THE LORD BE WITH YOU’ (James 2:14-16). On a scale of 6, missionary support rates 4 (WEA – Missions Commissions 2003). We don’t have statistics or research into mission-funding as the West does through organizations like the Empty Tomb (Empty Tomb 2006).

Generally speaking, **Africa is not yet out of the economic quagmire and there are several countries and geographical areas in most countries where poverty is a sink-hole for resources** that could have been channeled to missionary activity in the region. In the name of economic hardship, therefore, most Christians are not ready to contribute to support missions outside their home area. Mission fields have become quite perpetual and are continuing to ask for financial help. A large percentage of funds used in missionary work in Africa is still sourced and derived from the West – or sent from African Churches situated in the West.

Another key challenge facing Africa is **the upsurge of mercenary and religious acrimony against the Christian cause.** As the world wakes up to Africa’s power of growth in Christianity, it is also true that Africa has become the target of many major world religions who are also asking for their portion of the human pie. It is not hard to find Al Shabab, Boko Haram, and the likes targeting Christian belts in some key countries on the continent.

It is also true that **Africa’s manpower is still on the move to the spiritually dry West (especially Europe) and without a strategic plan to engage Africans in the diaspora,** we may be losing young Christians and unsettled Christians in the graveyard of ancient Christianity. However, if we strategize well, the torch of African Christianity can light

It is not hard to find Al Shabab, Boko Haram, and the likes targeting Christian belts in some key countries on the continent.

up the West and influence it – not just creating a sub-culture in the West.

Another factor worthy of consideration is **the renaissance of African Traditional Religion** in the name of African scholarship. An example is the Africanity religion in Ghana and the cultic systems resurrecting among African politicians for the wielding of power - for both economic and protective reasons.

A heinous factor is **the African Church’s rush for the prosperity gospel.** There is absolutely nothing wrong with money as the Bible says that ‘money answers all things.’ But should money answer the need for shoes without helping save eternal souls? Where is the balance required by scripture? The bane is that as we preach the ‘prosperity gospel without a commensurate emphasis on GIVING FOR GODLY PURPOSES, Christians make money to enlarge their territories and become ‘SHOWERS’ of blessings and not GIVERS OF LIFE. The Abrahamic Covenant is a Top Line as well as a Bottom Line Blessing. We are blessed to be a blessing.

The African Church is strong in the chapels and not effective, and up to the CHALLENGE OF TRUTH AND POWER in the open. Many people are not disciplined enough and are not prayed up enough. **The majority of the Church is still quite dependent on clerical leadership and is not fully released.** “My pastor says” is still reigning.

An added challenge of the African Church is a huge nominalism – people whose names are on church registers but are not committed to the faith, neither are they nurtured to impact their world. Nominalism makes the Church lame and unable to partake in the relay race (batons are not passed on to the

The majority of the Church is still quite dependent on clerical leadership and is not fully released. “My pastor says” is still reigning.

next generation in the right way). The most recent GEC survey still shows that nominalism is still a disease we need to tackle if we are to become truly MISSIONARY IN OUR OUTLOOK. The report indicates that 29.5% of the Upper East Christians don’t attend Church whilst, the numbers for Upper West and Northern Regions are 31.75 and 12.8% respectively.

Added to other religions and no religion, the total percentage of the population not attending Church is as follows:

- 1. Upper East: 97.8%
- 2. Upper West: 87.5%
- 3. Northern: 91.8%

The Ghanaian Church talks a lot but does not have a CONSENSUS NATIONAL AGENDA to finish the unfinished task.

What Pioneer Missionaries had and what they achieved

It is important to note that PIONEER MISSIONARIES to Africa did not have the privileges we have today such as speed in mobility, relative safety, health facilities, and the power of communication which enable us to reduce stress levels and keep in touch with family and friends even in the heart of missionary fields. I communicate with most of the missionaries in Ghana, Togo, and

PIONEER MISSIONARIES to Africa did not have the privileges we have today such as speed in mobility, relative . . .

Cote d'Ivoire under my supervision apart from missionary friends I have across the world. I live in Ghana and attend School in the US, accessing resources on search engines in the UK and elsewhere.

A typical example: God called Pioneer Missionaries from Europe into the then Gold Coast when Africa was referred to as

the 'dark continent' because the light of the gospel had not yet penetrated idolatry and wickedness. Today there are dark communities around us and beyond. In 1847, four (4) young men were commissioned and sent by the Bremen Mission in Germany. They traveled by sea for 49 days (17th May to 5th May 1847) and arrived at Cape Coast with no official welcome but were later received by the Methodist missionary, Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman. Whist two traveled on to Gabon and were resisted by the French government, one died after an illness and the other returned to Cape Coast where he met the news of another of the four colleagues who had also died. The surviving 2, Lorenz Wolf and Graf sought advice and were made aware that the Peki people needed help and so they walked for 5 days from

Accra to Peki but shortly after, Graf also died. Hence in 6 months, three of the four missionaries died and Lorenz Wolf the only survivor did not understand the Ewe language, didn't have a house, and had to use an interpreter who wasn't good in English and was not a believer. Two more young missionaries – Quinius and Groth were sent with insufficient funds, the challenge of sickness, diet problems, etc. Lorenz Wolf later became very sick after the fiancée arrived in Peki – he was rushed home to Germany but died just on arrival.

However, these pioneers tackled important aspects of our culture and economy – education, agriculture, linguistics, and human resource development. The seeds sown yesterday are the fruits we see today. If we stop sowing seeds today, there are no fruits for the future. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Global Evangelical Church are direct spiritual descendants of such turbulent beginnings.

Light in the Tunnel: What do we have today as positive fruit of the Missionary Labours? (Dorkunor, 2011)

- Leadership in the Church and Society has been developed over the years
- A young and zealous (youthful) missionary force is available
- A buoyant private Christian University system and its upsurge is in view
- Resource rich-ness – support for proper exploration, exploitation, and management.
- What is MISSING is the MOBILIZATION AND MOTIVATION dimension from the various African countries. IFES, CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST, SCRIPTURE UNION, NAVIGATORS, and many denominational campus/student movements are prevalent on the continent. Most of these are already being led and directed by Africans with verifiable results and integrity.
- Mentoring and Young Leaders Movements are springing up continuously – Lausanne, WEA, MANI ELN, GPA, and OC collaborations are also now being promoted.
- Nigeria's vision 50/15, MANI, etc. is stimulating the faith of many Africans regarding venturing into the deep sea of missions for God. This mimics how North Africa led the theological development of Christianity (though it lost the opportunity to mobilize the then Church for greater missions and lost the battle in its backyard).

The Great Challenge To The Ghanaian Church

Joshua 18 is a great warning chapter for the Church. Un-occupied territories would become a snare and torn in our flesh. Let us look around us and see what the roots of conflict and warfare are in the African regions – Boko Haram of Nigeria, the Devastation of the Central African Republic, and the military resurgences in Somalia. You can fill in the gaps for yourself. If we leave an unreached territory and care less about it, we will wake up one day to pay a higher price of lost lives, militarization, and forced religious wars. Spiritual apathy breeds thorns and thistles in the backyard of the Church. There are many forgotten groups of people and clusters of people not being reached with the normal church and we need to locate and minister to them effectively. The Church/Individual must wake up to the challenge of the unfinished business.

God's Expectation: Revelations 7:9

“God had an only Son and He made Him a missionary” – David Livingstone

“If God wills the evangelization of the world and you refuse to support missions, then you are OPPOSED to God” Oswald J. Smith

EVERY BELIEVERS' ROLE: GO, PRAY, GIVE, AND SEND.

Mentoring and Young Leaders Movements are springing up continuously

...

collaborations are also now being promoted

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MISSIONS IN WEST AFRICA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

George Gumah

INTRODUCTION:

- Mission fuels the growth and expansion of the church globally. This has shown that God is still working (John 5:17) and He is recruiting more laborers into His vineyard in ways that are beyond imagination (Matthew 9:35-38). Globally, there are a total of 17,094 people groups with about 7,165 considered as unreached. This indicates that there is 41.9 percent of unreached globally (Joshua Project, 2020). The unreached largely belong to major religious blocks such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Ethnic religions/tribal expressed in multiple ways depending on the context they are practiced.
- The West African sub-region is right in the middle of the world and it is strategically positioned for the evangelization of the world. The sub-region has the footprints of slavery and colonialism, which has influenced many facets of life both positively and negatively. Concurrently, the gospel was brought by missionaries who sacrificed their lives to propagate the good news, which has led to the establishment of the church in West Africa. Most West African countries were exposed to missionary activities in the 1800s and notable among them were the Catholic missionary activities in Senegal and the Protestant missionaries in Sierra Leone. Unfortunately, there were disagreements, unhealthy competitions, and conflicts among the many denominations that were present in the sub-region (Pawlikova-Vilhanova (2017). Christian doctrines were much enforced and converts were expected to strictly adhere to biblical teachings. The incorporation of education, social interventions, community development, and bible translation enhanced the activities of the missionaries and gave them access to areas that were hitherto resistant to the gospel. Pawlikova-Vilhanova (2017; 252) explains that “the expansion of the missionary movement into Africa was part of the growing conception of Christian responsibility for the regeneration of African peoples”.
- Many years after the inception of missionary work in West Africa, the church has grown to global recognition. The question that lingers is “what is the state of mission activities in West Africa”? What is the extent of the work done or yet to be done? We are in a globalized and dynamic world and it will be prudent to ascertain the state of Mission in West Africa and to understand the opportunities and challenges that may foster or derail the efforts workers serving in this sub-region are putting in to share the gospel. Exploring mission in West Africa will help churches and mission agencies to have an idea of the extent of the work and understand the political, socio-economic, and religious terrain that will (1) enhance the personnel development and deployment as well 2) strategic ministry and partnership and 3) resource mobilization. This article, therefore, highlights some key characteristics of West Africa, outlines some opportunities and challenges from both secular and church/mission perspectives, and proposes some ways forward for mission to thrive in West Africa.

MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS:

Fifteen West African countries are highlighted in this article to help understand the state of the gospel in the sub-region. The countries are *Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote D'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo*. The landscape of West Africa is covered with two major national languages. There are five Anglophone countries (Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria) and ten Francophone countries. This is directly linked with the Colonial rulers who left their language footprints on the Soil of West Africa.

Population dynamics

- The population of West Africa is over 396 million with Nigeria having about 52% of the total pop-

ulation representing more than half of the population of the sub-continent. This makes Nigeria a very important country in the advancement of mission if Christians can be mobilized and sent to join the existing workforce. The population of West Africa keeps increasing annually at a fast rate and this rapid growth has ramifications for evangelism and mission activities. We hope that this growth will bring progress and advancement of mission within and out of the sub-region (Figure 2).

- Reports from Worldometer (2020), the population of West Africa is about 5% of the total world population and ranks as number 2 in the whole of Africa with about 48% of the population in urban centers.
- According to Figure 1, Nigeria has the highest number of unreached population with about 64 million people representing 31% of the country’s

total population, followed by Niger (23 million) and Mali (18 million) sequentially. In terms of the total population and unreached population ratio, Mali and Niger top the chart because of the high Islamic presence in these countries. Countries like Guinea and Senegal also have a significantly low ratio. Cape Verde has the lowest unreached population with no known unreached population.

Religious Dynamics

Religion is central to the life of the people in West Africa and understanding the composition of the main religious bodies that are predominant in the sub-region is essential in driving mission activities. Figure 3, gives a pictorial view of the three major religious blocks in West Africa and Figure 4 shows the ratio of Christianity and evangelicals in each coun-

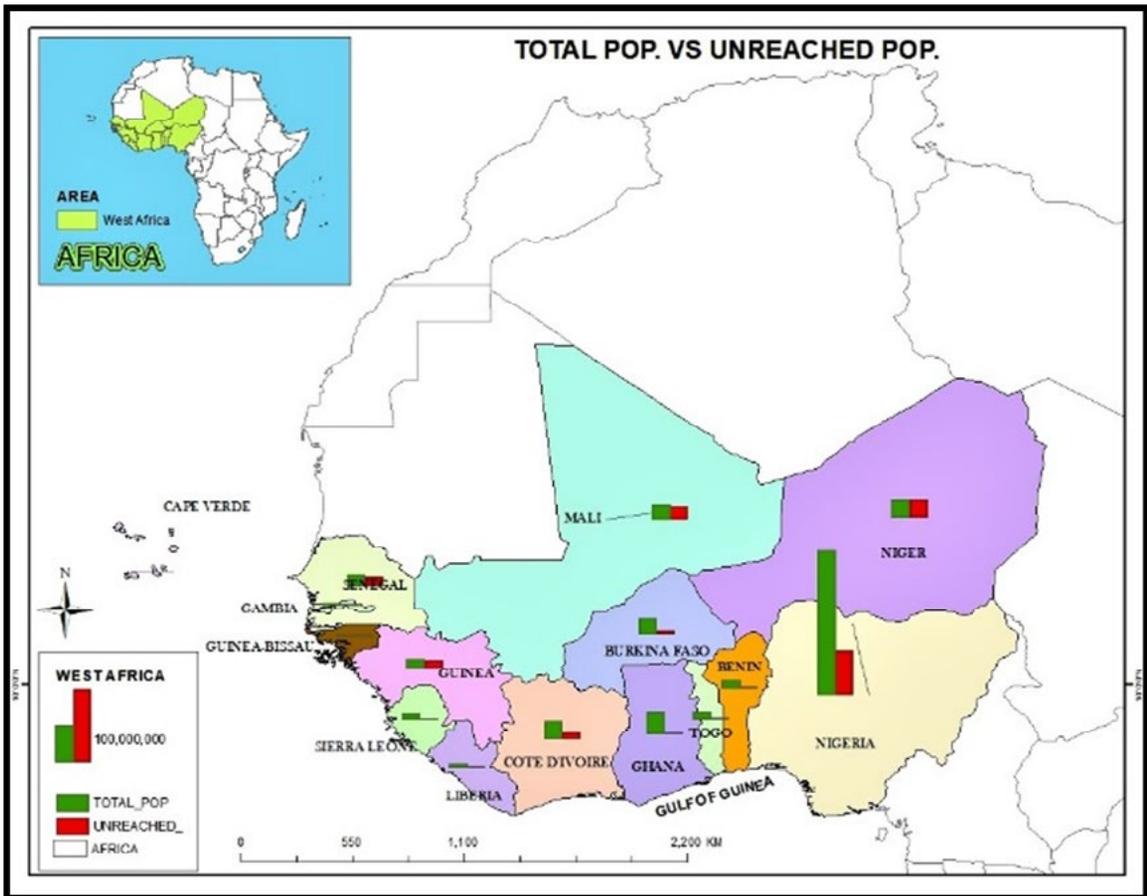


Figure 1: Comparing Total pop. of countries with Unreached pop.
Data Source: Joshua Project, 2020

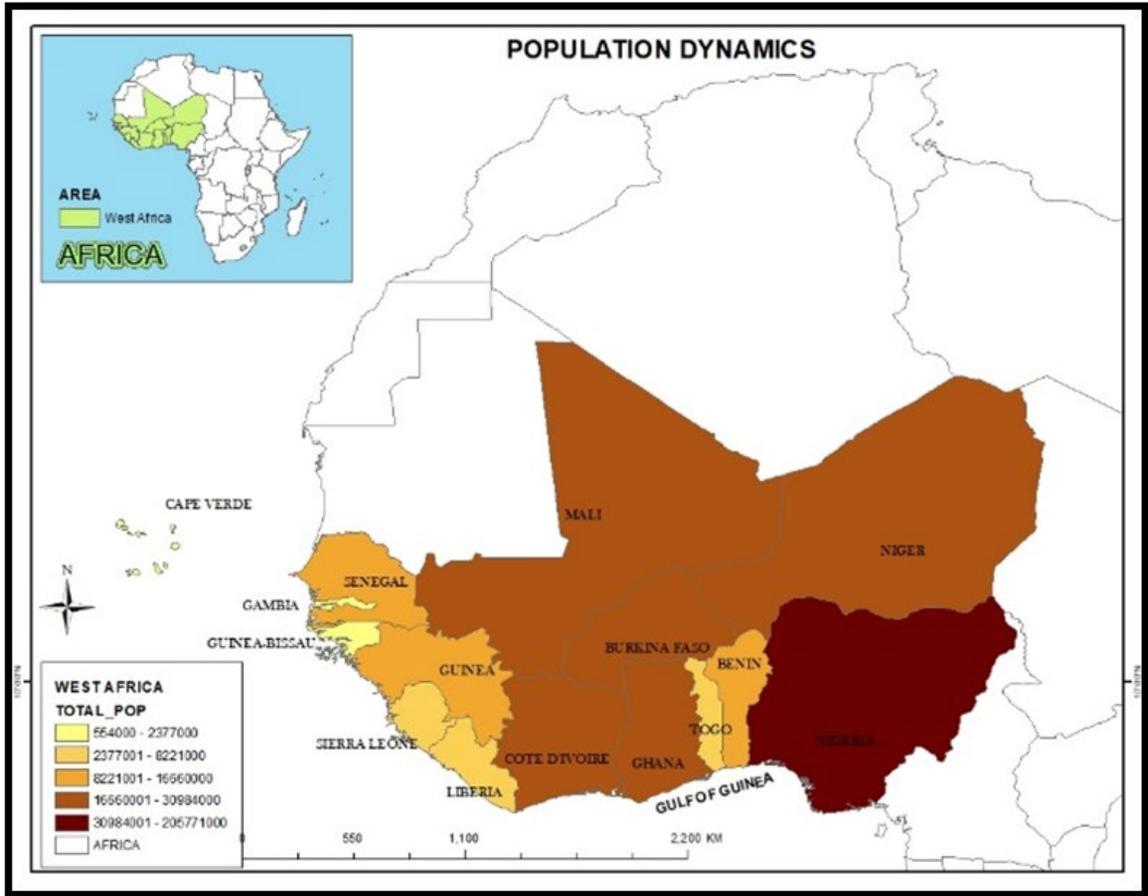


Figure 2: Population ranges for countries in West Africa

try.

- Generally, Islam is dominant in nine countries; Niger (93.4%), Senegal (90.2%), Gambia (89%), Guinea (88.2%), Mali (87.4%), Sierra Leone (60.9%), Guinea-Bissau (51.6%), and Burkina Faso (54.8%) and Cote D'Ivoire (45.2%). They have a total population of about 91 million. Even though Islam is the highest religion in each country mentioned, Nigeria has the highest pop-

ulation of Muslims, with little over 82 million adherents. Nigeria, like most coastal countries in West Africa, has Islam adherents mostly in the middle to northern parts of the country. This has a chorological history as Islam came at the early ages through the north.

- Fortunately, most of the Islam dominated countries in West Africa are still open to the gospel but there are still some high-risk areas and closed

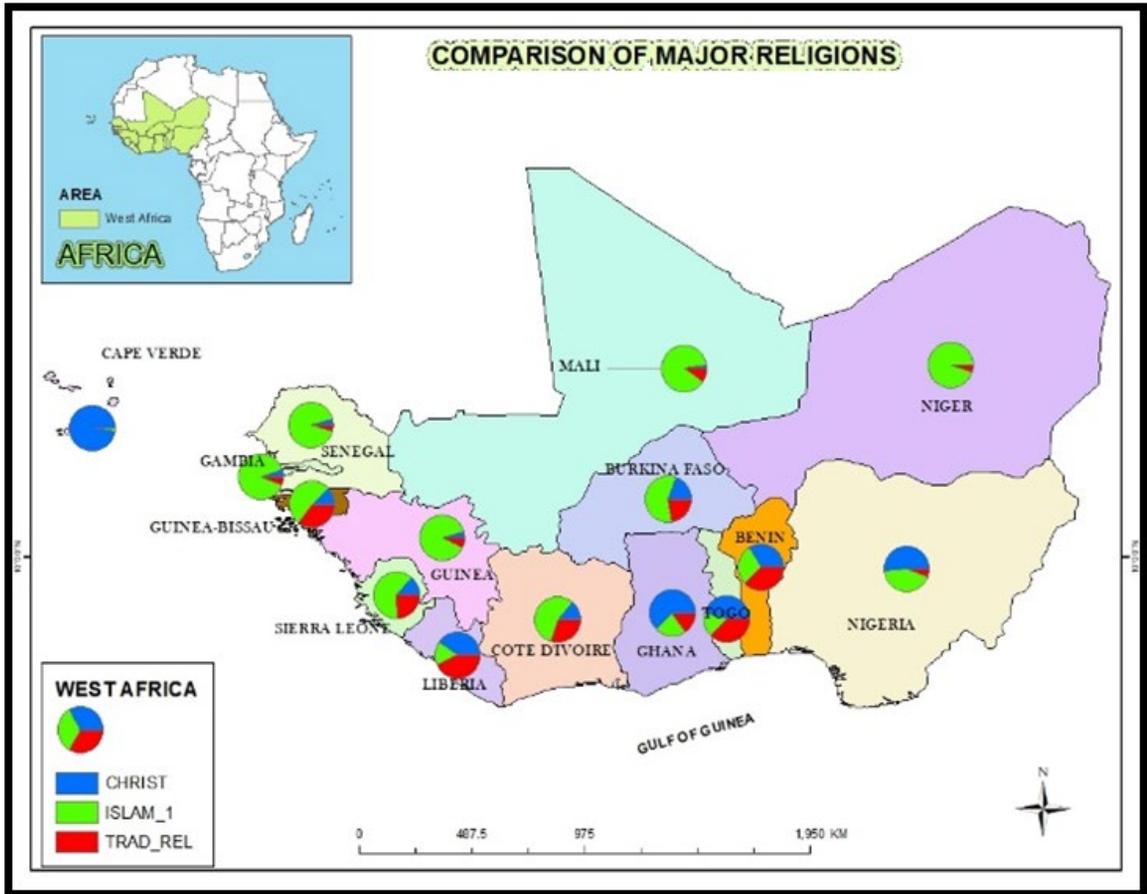


Figure 3: Major Religions in West Africa
Data Source: Joshua Project, 2020

- Four countries, namely, Cape Verde, Ghana, Togo, and Nigeria have Christianity as the largest religion. The total evangelical population in West Africa is over 55 million (40%) out of the total Christian population of about 135 million. Most of the mission drive in West Africa is expected to come from the evangelical population which is less than 50% of the total Christian population. In Figure 4, Cote D'Ivoire has the largest percentage of evangelicals in comparison to the Christian population, followed by Nigeria and Burkina Faso.
- Although the majority of Africans are now Muslim or Christian, traditional religions have endured in many countries and still dominant in two countries – Benin and Liberia. In Benin,

Voodoo is the national religion and it is well-rooted in the country and other parts of West Africa especially in Togo.

- The non-representation of the minority religions such as Hindu, Buddhism, Bahai does not deny their increasing influence in West Africa. Other pseudo-Christian groups such as the Jehovah's Witness and the Lather Day Saints are gaining significant grounds with church structures all over the country. They have multiple services where the local dialects are well utilized and integrated into their activities through music, arts, and teachings. They also care a lot for the poor, marginalized, and disabled, giving them the leverage in their expansion agenda.

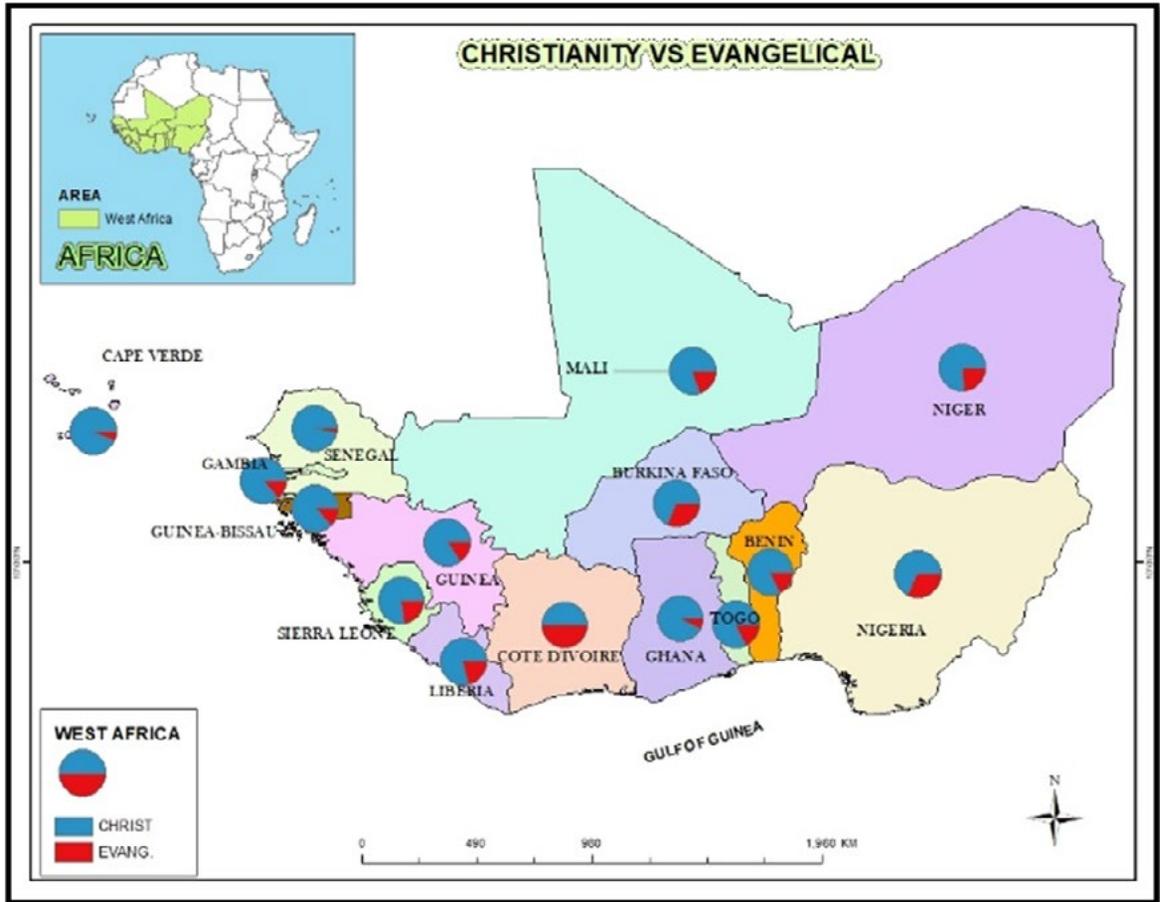


Figure 4: Understanding the state of Evangelicals

People Groups Dynamics

West Africa has 1,317 People groups (PGs) with Nigeria having the largest with about 544 people groups representing 41% (Refer to Figure 6). Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Niger, and Mali have more than half of all the PGs as unreached. Niger alone has 28 UPGs out of the total 36 PGs in the country.

- Most of these people groups can be found across borders. Every country has at least one language that is spoken in other West African countries. Hausa, Fulani, Kotokoli, Mossi, Ewe, Dyula, are some common groups that cut across countries. The total number of Unreached People Groups (UPGs) in West Africa is currently 379 representing 29% of all people groups.
- This may seem that so many people groups have been reached with the gospel but the problem now is that many Unreached are in territories that are hostile to the gospel and some have a huge population. For instance, in Nigeria alone, the total number of Fulani is close to 20 million, the Kanuri (Yerwa and Manga together) are about 8 million people. In Niger, the Tuareg and Fulani have over 2 million each, and the Hausas are more than 11 million people.
- 118 of the UPGs are Frontiers people groups. According to Joshua Project (2020), “Frontier People Groups (FPGs) are Unreached People Groups with 0.1% or fewer Christians of any kind and no evidence of a self-sustaining gospel movement”.

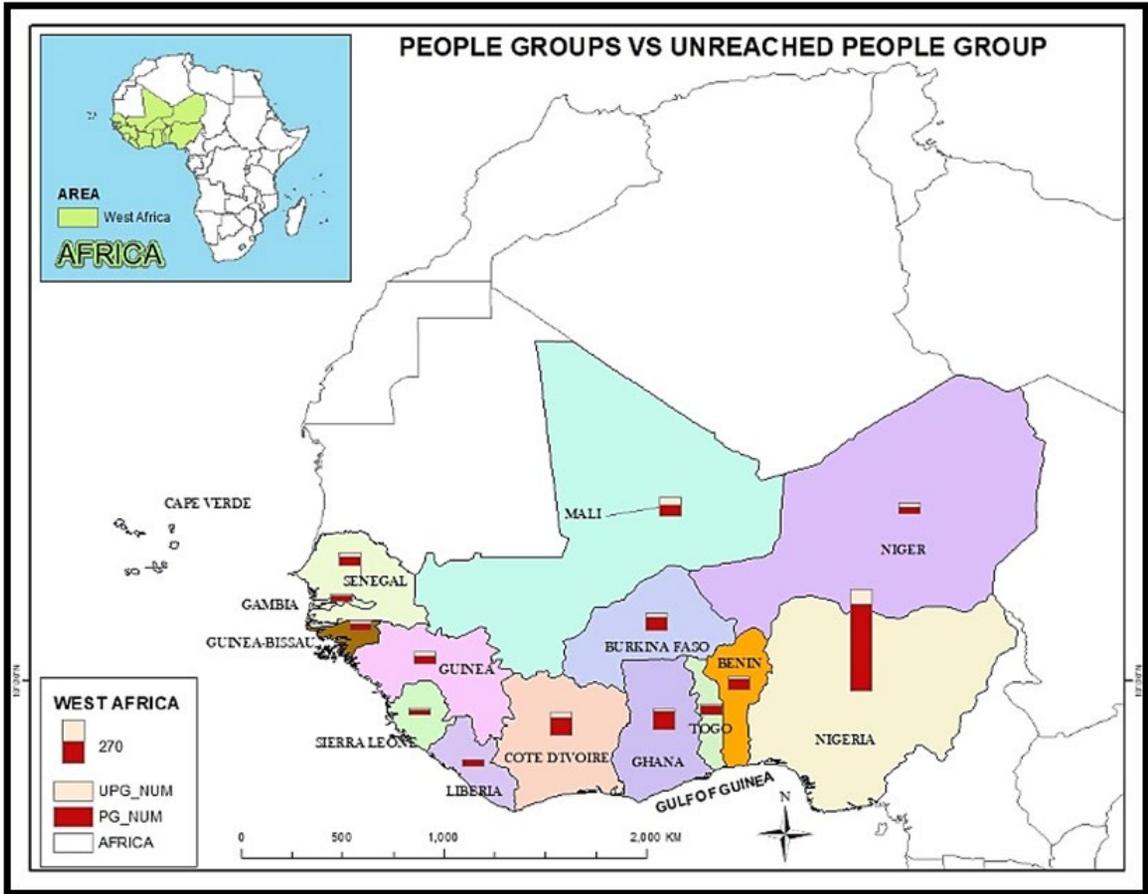


Figure 5: Total Number of UPGs vs Number of PGs
Data Source: Joshua Project, 2020

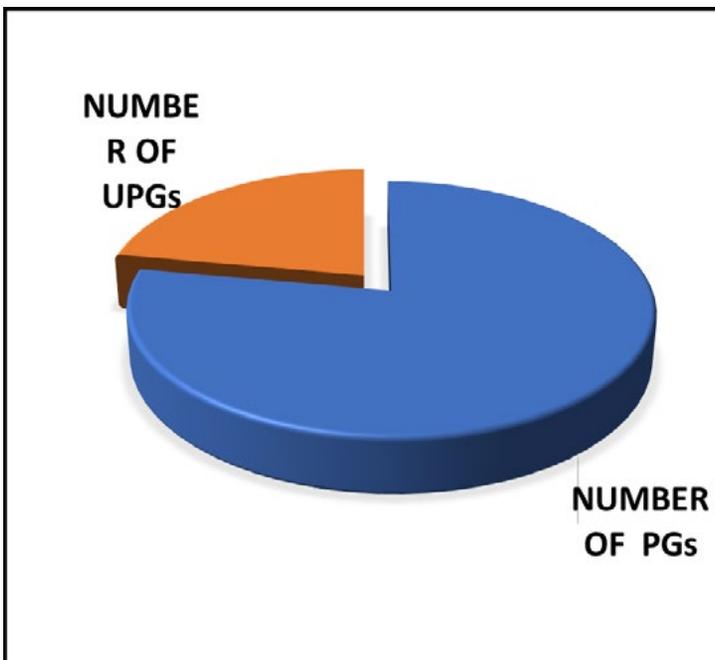
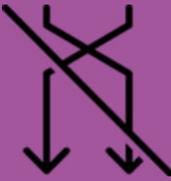


Figure 6: PGs and UPGs for each Country

CHALLENGES:

These challenges are not exclusively unique to West Africa but are worth highlighting. They cover both developmental and spiritual challenges that exist today and may impede the smooth progress of mission activities in West Africa.

<p>1</p>	<p>High Illiteracy Rate</p> <p>Illiteracy rates in West Africa are among the highest in the world with the situation worse among females. Globally, about 7 countries in West Africa are among the highest. Eight out of the 15 countries have less than 50% of their population as illiterates (Human Rights report, 2009). This situation has implications for missions in terms of access to and sharing the gospel.</p>	
<p>2</p>	<p>Politic Instabilities and Violence</p> <p>After independence, there have been several internal disputes, civil conflicts, coup d'états, and demonstrations that have marred the stability of many countries particularly those situated at the Sahel. The least thing in West Africa can trigger violence, especially relating to politics, ethnic clashes, and resource allocations. Pre-election, elections and post-election violence are also common due to rivalry among candidates which incite violence. This phenomenon inhibits the sending of workers and mission activities.</p>	
<p>3</p>	<p>High Poverty and Health Challenges</p> <p>Though West Africa is rich in resources, this has not fully translated to the standard of living of the majority of its populace and this is seen in the high low-income class. According to the ADB report (2018), poverty is high, with 43% of the population below the international \$1.90 per day poverty line. This makes people feel they need help rather than giving towards mission activities. Thus, over-reliance on foreign donations, which is gradually dwindling.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Nominalism and Syncretism</p> <p>Many people profess to be Christians but their level of commitment and demonstration of Christ-likeness in all areas of life is sometimes questionable. This nominalism makes some Christians compromise on their Christian values. They might not see the need to commit their life, time, and resources to mission activities. Many Christians are still holding on to the religious elements of the African traditional religion.</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>The Threat of Islam and Terrorism</p> <p>Islam has a long history in West Africa and it is the fastest-growing religion in the sub-region. Though in most communities Islam co-exists with Christians and other religions, the extreme activities of Jihadist activities are a great threat to missions especially in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria. According to Pawlikova-Vilhanova (2017; 252), the expansion of Christianity from the coast “coincided with the simultaneous southerly expansion of Islam which posed a threat to Christian mission work”.</p>	

<h1>6</h1>	<h2>Church Doctrinal Issues and Inadequate Missional Leadership</h2> <p>Issues of prosperity message and the inadequate development of leaders in the West African church continue to stifle missionary work. These doctrinal issues influence the posture of members towards missions and the strategies used in sharing the gospel. Christians become less rooted in the gospel and consequently become unavailable. Few visionary leaders at the top and grass root levels are positioned and equipped to spearhead mission movements in the sub-region.</p>	
<h1>7</h1>	<h2>Traditional Religion Upsurge</h2> <p>Recently, there is a sporadic growth of interest in African traditional religion, occultism, and other spiritual practices. Leaders of these groups are modifying their activities and making them more appealing to the general public. Surprisingly, these are no more hidden realities but are displayed on television, radio, and social media. This poses a challenge to missionary work as leaders of these groups are gaining popularity and drawing many from experiencing the power of Christ.</p>	

PROSPECTS:

	<h3>1. CHURCH AND AGENCY GROWTH</h3> <p>The growth of the church in West Africa, especially of evangelicals is a cause for celebration. Though this numerical growth is not the measure of a healthy missional church, it has the potential to nurture mission activities through engaging the growing church. With intentional and strategic mobilization and equipping, West Africa has the potential to send more missionaries to augment the existing working force.</p>
	<h3>2. GROWING YOUTH AND PROFESSIONALS</h3> <p>West Africa has a median age of 18, with Mali (16.3) and Niger (16.6) leading the global chart according to a report by the World Economic Forum. With the huge young population of West Africa deeply exposed to formal education, there is an untapped potential for recruiting these graduates and professionals into mainline mission work. They can serve unreached peoples using their acquired skills, experiences, and professional ethics. Student groups and youth groups across the country are actively engaged in short-term mission activities.</p>
	<h3>3. UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF FEMALE WORKERS</h3> <p>Gone were the days only men were enlisted into mission activities. In the past three decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of females who are responding to the call to send the gospel to the unreached. This has contributed to the total number of missionaries sent out of West Africa.</p>



4. THE UNREACHED ARE EVERYWHERE

There is a surge in the number of people migrating from one place to another and the preferred destinations are usually in the cities or urban areas or to areas where there are productive activities such as farming, industrial activities, and other jobs. The cities and towns are now the hubs of economically active people from different parts of the countries in West Africa. It is much easier now to reach out to different unreached groups in the regional capitals especially because their locations are usually marked and they live in clusters.



5. GROWING DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

West Africa is not left out of the digital growth and social media explosion. According to a report by GSM Associates in 2019, West Africa has about 100 million mobile internet users representing about one-fourth of the total population. There is currently 38% of Africans using mobile phones and this is projected to grow to about 67% by 2025. This statistic shows the steady growth of social media users.



6. GROWING AWARENESS OF MISSIONS

There is also a growing number of indigenous mission agencies that are taking bold initiatives in advocacy, mobilization, and sending. The exposure of individuals and churches to God’s mission, our responsibility in His mission, and the need to reach the unreached is widespread like never before. Increasingly, many people are becoming aware of the urgency of mission in the growth of the body of Christ.



7. MISSION AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Mission and theological education are gaining roots in West Africa in both Anglophone and Francophone countries. Some are very young but others are robust and well equipped to prepare many workers and leaders for service in the church and on the mission fields. Interestingly, there is an increase in the intentionality to include mission content in theological schools and expose workers to mission education.

PROSPECTS:



1. Indigenous Mission structure

There is the need for a robust indigenous mission structure whether it be in the church or mission agencies that is self-sustaining, self-supportive, and self-propagating. These structures should touch all age groups, all classes of people and accommodate new people who come into the church.



2. Intentional Discipleship Drive

Instead of simply seeking a larger membership the church should examine opportunities to build a coordinated effort at the level of both teaching and praxis. The church’s efforts should be aimed at developing mature disciples instead of merely winning more converts.



3. Oral learners and their Access to the Gospel

As mission agencies seek to win people in different places, there must be intentionality in developing materials and logistics to allow oral learners to access the Gospel. They should be empowered and encouraged to replicate what they learn. Also, other non-verbal language forms such as sign language should be promoted.



4. Local Leadership development

It is the responsibility of both church and mission leaders to identify, develop, empower, and deploy more local leaders to continue the work on the field. There is a need for leadership at both managerial and field levels. As much as the leadership gap should be filled at all levels, the grassroots leadership where the real action is, must not be neglected. No matter the educational level of people, they can be groomed to become effective leaders.



5. United Work Force

The task of evangelization cannot be done by one denomination or agency. It needs individual responsibility and collaborative efforts in equipping workers, raising and sharing resources, and thinking strategically together on how to effectively engage people groups and communities. There are few workers and we cannot afford to work in isolation.



6. Meeting Felt Needs and Engaging in Community Development

There is the need for a robust indigenous mission structure whether it be in the church or mission agencies that is self-sustaining, self-supportive, and self-propagating. These structures should touch all age groups, all classes of people and accommodate new people who come into the church.



7. Raising and Training Christian Professionals as Missionaries

Some of the 'usual' missionary models will not work in hostile environments. There is a need to raise Christian professionals who can work without raising any alarms. Also, this model is sustainable because their profession can be a good source of support for the work.



8. Operation Up North

All the countries north of West Africa have Islam as their major religion. Churches and mission agencies must send the gospel to their neighbouring countries in the Sahel and the Mediterranean areas since they are the major hub and source of Islam and Jihadist threats to the sub-region.



9. Language Acquisition

One important step to advance mission activities in West Africa is the flexibility to learn the culture and languages of the people groups we are reaching out to. Another important language I want to stress is learning French by Anglophone Christians since most of the countries speak French in the sub-region. Francophone Christians have advanced with learning and speaking English.



10. Language translation and Literacy Program

There remain a significant number of languages in West Africa that needs the bible in their local dialect. This will facilitate the sharing of the gospel and equipping local workers to serve their people. Literacy programs will let people learn techniques on how to read the Bible and to replicate what they learn.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, there is no doubt that the church and mission agencies in West Africa have a great potential to advance the course of mission in the sub-region and beyond. All indication proves that West Africa is ready and have the critical mass to send the gospel to all parts of the sub-region and other parts of the world.

However, there remain more lands to be covered and the task is not without challenges. The political, socio-economic, and spiritual terrain is rough but we have to trust the Lord of the harvest as He promised to be with us. Every country should have the responsibility of tackling prevailing problems and develop strategies and action plans based on the local culture, ethnic, religious, political, and demographic diversity.

Church and mission leaders have to maximize their potential and take advantage of the opportunities available to advance missions. As much as the world is looking up to the vibrant and growing church in West Africa does not mean we should give little attention to our “Jerusalem”. We should intentionally prepare people to reach the unreached at home and abroad.

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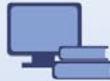
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