

2008 AFRICA STATE OF THE REGION REPORT

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Introduction

This report presents factors that impact The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) in Africa, gives a brief overview of advances in each country, and presents four projections for the future.

FACTORS IMPACTING THE ALLIANCE IN AFRICA

Situations that impact the Alliance's ministry in Africa include the HIV/AIDS epidemic, severe poverty, urbanization, and political instability. Two other major factors are:

1. *Growth of the African church in Sub-Saharan Africa.* This region is now home to 90 million evangelicals. Especially noteworthy are the many indigenous churches, the proliferation of Charismatic and Pentecostal churches, and the popularity of the Prosperity Gospel. The latter is not surprising on a continent that contains most of the world's poorest nations. While there is a tendency in these churches to look at the Bible as authoritative, many have little theological or scriptural formation.
2. *Growth of Islam across Africa.* Islam is the largest religion in Africa and dominates the nations along the Mediterranean and across the Sahara Desert. However, Islam is growing in every region of Africa. Some sources say that it is growing twice as fast as Christianity in this continent. Countries like Gabon, which once had a minimal Muslim presence, now see Muslims number in almost 10 percent of their inhabitants.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ALLIANCE ADVANCES

The U.S. Alliance missionary force ministers in eight African nations. Following are some brief strokes of God's work through the C&MA in these nations.

Burkina Faso

Larry Burg highlights six outstanding advances in Burkina Faso.

- Alliance radio stations have increased from one to four, significantly expanding the potential number of people who can hear the gospel by radio.
- The Senefou people in the Kenedougou region are in the midst of a historic turning to Jesus. Though they are 99 percent Muslim/animist, dozens of villages have opened to the gospel and hundreds of people, including village leaders, have turned to Jesus.
- Enrollment at the two Bible institutes has significantly increased, giving hope that there will be more pastors for current and future church-planting efforts.
- The three high schools had record numbers of conversions, and the church and mission are committed to starting twenty new schools in upcoming years.

- Dorcas House will open this fall. It is an Alliance Women's ministry to young women in crisis where they will be taught a trade, learn practical domestic skills, and be showered with Christ's love.
- The ministry to Ouagadougou's upper-class milieu, Ouaga 2000, has begun. It employs English courses and youth ministries to establish relationships in the community.

Côte d'Ivoire

Jeter Livingston writes about what is happening in Côte d'Ivoire, a country where The Alliance has transitioned out most its missionaries.

- The West Africa Alliance Seminary (FATEAC) had a good year providing quality education for the West African region. A record number of eight students completed their master's program this year.
- The Randy Harrisons and Matt Cooks joined the Livingstons in Abidjan.
- The national church is growing in its missionary vision and now has 17 missionaries working among unreached ethnic groups in Côte d'Ivoire. There is also one couple slated to go to Togo and nine people in formation to be missionaries.
- The Farhos' work with the Lebanese has birthed a small group that meets for worship on Sundays and again several times during the week.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Though Alliance missionaries have not resided in the DRC for more than ten years, God has continued to carry out His work there.

- Ron Julian serves as International Ministries' liaison to the DRC church. He and his wife, Ruth, teach at the Boma Seminary and work with Joel Kanga to facilitate prayer ministries with the goal of continuing to strengthen a previously ruptured relationship.
- At the 2007 General Council, Dr. Kenzo, vice president of the DRC Alliance, was honored with a luncheon highlighting the church of Congo and contributions of former Alliance missionaries who served there.
- Gary Benedict and Bob Fetherlin ministered at the 2007 Annual Council of the Congo Alliance and were instrumental in bringing further healing to the U.S. and Congo church/mission relationship.

Gabon

The ministry highlights for Gabon have been communicated by David Thompson.

- By 2008, all church-planting and related missionaries transitioned out of Gabon. The remaining missionaries are connected with the Bongolo hospital.
- The Bongolo missionary team is comprised of four doctors and four nurses. They are involved in basic medical services, administration, the HIV/AIDS project, Pan-African Association of Christian Surgeons (PAACS), the nursing school program, evangelism at the hospital, and church planting in surrounding villages.
- The HIV/AIDS project has received limited authorization from the government to treat patients with ARVs (antiretroviral drugs).

- PAACS is growing in influence. The government of Sierra Leone has asked for a PAACS-trained surgeon, and the president of Liberia would like a PAACS program to help restart the country's medical school. Christian hospitals in Angola, Egypt, Nigeria, Togo, and Zimbabwe have applied to become PAACS training centers. This year PAACS will train and disciple 33 residents from nine countries.
- Between January 1 and August 1, 2008, 1,300 people prayed to receive Christ at the Bongolo hospital.

Guinea

Ken Blackwell reports the following highlights from Guinea:

- Though a potentially rich country, the average person in Guinea lives on as little as one dollar a day. Such poverty, along with the weight of Islam, provides many challenges for the C&MA team.
- Team members are seeking to bring hope through both word and deed including AIDS counseling, youth ministries, English camps/courses, business seminars for professionals, radio programs on health and community development, and spiritual formation and mentoring.

Mali

In this predominantly Muslim nation, reports of how the mission and church continue to focus on unreached peoples is presented by Tim Wright.

- In Segou, Mali's second largest city where only 1 percent of the Bambara have been reached for Christ, the church will be sending a pastor to lay the groundwork for an initiative that will include an FM radio station, cybercafé, Christian school, and a church-planting element.
- The Bamako Ministry Center project will focus on reaching out to university students and those in the professional class.
- In Koutiala, plans are underway for a youth ministry center that will include sports events, a cybercafé, a study center, and an outreach program in the schools through use of English classes.
- Church planting among the Bozo and the Gana people groups continues to bear fruit.
- The mission and the church proclaim Christ's love among prostitutes, prisoners, farmers, and villagers across Mali.
- On a daily basis, the Koutiala Hospital team shows Christ's mercy and compassion to needy people, including many Fulani.

Republic of the Congo

Ron Julian outlines advances in the Republic of the Congo, despite the team losing two veteran missionary families this past year.

- The David Bill family will move to northern Congo in January to work with the national church's church-planting teams in evangelizing unreached peoples.
- A CAMA couple, the Littletons, will work alongside the church's development organization.

- God is using the College of Prayer to change lives. At the church's General Assembly, several people testified to what God is doing through the prayer summits to restore good relationships among church leaders.
- Progress has been made to provide a leadership training center in Pointe Noire. God is opening the door to buy an adjacent property.

Senegal

Doug Conkle gives updates on the Senegal church-planting team, which entered Senegal only two and a half years ago.

- The Neviuses have connected with business and academic leaders in Dakar through setting up events with professional people from C&MA churches in the United States. One such event was a cognitive renewal seminar, based on biblical principles and presented by an Alliance layman at the request of the director of the government university, which trains all workers and officials in the penitentiary system. The officials were so impressed that they invited him to return.
- The Conkles and Neviuses have been joined by three couples who are learning Wolof in order to reach a people group with only 115 believers among 4.5 million people. Even during the language-learning phase, God has opened doors to reach into Wolof and Fulani villages for the first time with the *JESUS* film.
- Another opportunity has been to minister the love of Christ to young boys from poor families who are given to Muslim religious leaders in order to be trained in local koranic schools. Beginning with the distribution of warm coats and continuing with the provision of regular medical consultations and a hot meal, the teams have impressed local Muslim leaders by this concern for their students.

Dakar Academy

Evan Evans rejoices over the accomplishments of MKs attending the Dakar Academy (DA) boarding school.

- Over the last few years, Dakar students have helped to finance and build two churches each year in Senegal. They physically built the churches and spread the gospel through medical outreach, drama, songs in the local languages, Bible clubs, sports camps, and evangelistic films.
- These students have been instrumental in opening previously closed villages to the gospel. The Dakar Alliance team has been a valuable part of these outreaches.
- In 2008, Dakar students will build a daughter church of the church they built after evacuating from Côte d'Ivoire to Senegal in 2002.

PROJECTIONS

While a number of dreams for the future are envisioned by the Africa team, four of those dreams are noted here.

1. *Formerly unreached and resistant peoples entering the community of faith.* They will come from the Kenedougou region in Burkina Faso; Koutiala, Bamako, Segou,

and across Mali; Pointe Noire, Brazzaville, and northern Congo; Dakar and northern Senegal; and unreached villages in Gabon, Guinea, and a number of other places where Alliance missionaries are focused. And they will come from venues that African Alliance missionaries are entering such as Cameroun, northern Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo—countries where there are no U.S. missionaries.

2. *Increasing commitment to missions by African Alliance churches.* Currently, Africa's Alliance churches have about 60 missionaries serving cross-culturally within their own borders. Two African missionaries are serving different people groups outside their country.
3. *A growing African prayer movement.* The work of Fred Hartley and his College of Prayer colleagues is being taken up by the churches of Africa. Doug Conkle, field director for Senegal writes, "The College of Prayer ministry that was introduced to unify evangelical believers and churches in Senegal has successfully been transferred over to a team of Senegalese church leaders who continue with this vital ministry. Above all else, prayer needs to be the foundation in order to make any headway in a country that is seemingly so immune to Christian efforts."
4. *Developing partnerships between U.S. churches and ministries in Africa and increased participation of short-term teams.* This trend was accelerated through the Africa Together 2007 conference that mission mobilizers attended in Senegal in January 2007. Since that event, 16 new partnerships have been formed. African fields now have at least 40 kinds of partnerships.

Short termers are increasing in Africa. Last year, 414 short termers ministered in Africa's fields. In addition, The Alliance has established a short-term team site in Gabon, headed by Tim and Meredith Brokopp. David Thompson writes,

"The Brokoppes have already written a new chapter in Alliance missions by combining English-only speaking North American laypersons with local churches in Bifoun, Leconi, Libreville, and Ntoun. Like never before, they have effectively teamed with local pastors and congregations to reach into communities around these local churches. The enthusiasm, openness, and genuine interest of the North American teams, coupled with the wisdom and knowledge of the local church people, has overcome language barriers and encouraged Gabonese Christians to reach outside of their church walls. The result: more than 20 individuals have been led to Christ. Church pastors and the Alliance missionary team are excited about this project!"

CONCLUSION

The advances experienced across Alliance fields testify to God's grace and sovereignty. Alliance missionaries and fellow Africans have been used by God as bridges to His redemption. The coming years will see changing relationships between mission and church as transitions take place and African Alliance churches become increasingly significant bearers of the gospel across ethnic groups that have traditionally remained unreached and resistant.

I am grateful to our field directors for composing reports that have served as the basis of this regional report. God has provided wonderful leaders for each of our missionary teams. To Him be the glory!

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