



An Early Recipient of the Great Commission

Kenya's rich history has been intricately stitched together to show God's hand in missions, even from before European expansion across Africa. Because of Philip's baptizing of the eunuch from Ethiopia (modern day Kenya) in the 1st century AD, we can assume that the gospel first reached Kenya roughly 30 years after the death of Christ. This means that Kenya was one of the earliest nations to receive the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations." Now, Kenya is one of the world's most evangelical countries per-capita. It is growing rapidly on the world stage both economically and in missions, and is geographically and culturally poised to reach thousands of unreached with minimal barriers.¹

In the 1st century AD, not long after the gospel came back with the Ethiopian eunuch, the Kenyan coast was frequented by Arab traders. In the 18th century, the Imam of Oman took control of the coastal regions and established a strong Muslim influence in Kenya. What may appear as a loss for the Christian faith was never outside of God's control. Kenya is now uniquely positioned to be culturally, linguistically, and racially closer to Muslim UPG nations than it is to most of its fellow Christian nations! Despite this, many Kenyans see themselves as the mission field rather than the mission force. What if the Kenyan

church was awakened to how God has uniquely prepared it to reach UPGs?



NUMBER OF EVANGELICALS
More Evangelicals Per Capita than any other Nation
Very High

Kenya has more evangelical Christians per-capita than any other nation, as 48% of the country's population identifies as evangelical and over 80% of the population identifies with Christianity; however, there is also a small population of Muslims concentrated along the coastal and northeast region of the country.² Christians in these areas are experiencing significant persecution that is not present in other regions of Kenya. Though the spreading of the prosperity gospel is taking root in different parts of the country, the receptivity to the gospel and the biblical basis of missions remains very high. This is exciting news, as Kenya has one of the highest accesses to UPGs and nearly 20 million evangelical believers. Praise God for Kenya being filled with His glory!

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CULTURAL BRIDGES

God's Hand on Kenya's History Has Poised it Culturally to reach UPGs

Very High

At first glance, Kenya scores the highest on the number of cultural bridges of any of the countries on the Mobilization Index, but Kenya is missing two of the data points on Geert Hofstede's index, which skews the results. Despite the missing data points, there is no denying that Kenya remains very close culturally, to a large number of nations with UPGs.

Kenya's closest UPG cultural neighbors are: Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Senegal, and 12 more countries that score less than 10 median points of cultural distance away from Kenya. Kenya actually has a median average cultural distance score of 11.7, the best score on the entire Mobilization Index. The countries with which Kenya has the furthest cultural connection from are Israel, Japan, and Bhutan. Kenya's closest cultural neighbors are those with majority Muslim and tribal UPGs. Looking back on Kenya's tribal history and its history with the Muslim world that still includes language and cultural exchange, it shows us just how vital Kenya is and will be to the future of missions around the world. God may very well have prepared Kenya to lead the charge in the next great missions movement of our lifetime! Pray that this be done.



STRATEGIC ACCESS

High Access, Strategic Position

Moderate

Kenya has access to 5,428,000 unreached in-country and 76,200,000 regionally. Not only is almost 12% of the country unreached, but Kenya is a neighbor to the 10/40 window and has high access regionally.³ High strategic access could boost mission mobilization efforts. Kenyans live

next to and interact with the unreached every day.

There are tensions between Kenyans and internationals from places such as Somalia and India. There have also been numerous allegations aimed at corruption within the government. These issues within Kenya could become obstacles or barriers to the advancement of the gospel as well as mobilization efforts.

On the other hand, with the highest number of evangelicals per capita in the world, and one of the highest access to UPGs not only geographically but also linguistically and culturally, Kenya is positioned with incredibly strategic access to UPGs. Praise God for positioning the Kenyan church so strategically and pray for laborers to be sent into the harvest.

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS

Increased Extremism Requires An Increased Love of Christ

High

According to Pew Research, Kenya has a high level of religious restrictions and hostilities. The level of government religious restrictions is only rated at Moderate, but the amount of social hostilities has increased in the past decade. The growing presence of Al Shabaab and other offshoot terrorist groups has greatly affected the security and safety of the country's residents. The aftermath of the attack on the Westgate mall in 2013, coupled with the recurring attacks in Northeast Kenya have resulted in a fear of Muslims amongst Kenyan churches as well as the country as a whole.⁴

The growing level of persecution of Christians by extremist groups and the resulting fear of Muslims could hinder mission mobilization efforts to call the Kenyan church to have a passion to reach Muslim UPGs. Mission mobilization that gives special attention to and casts vision for the role of welcoming is vital to overcome some of these fears.

Praise God that mission mobilization and other Christian ministries are free to promote and carry out their work as they see fit; there are no governmental restrictions on Christianity in Kenya. Please pray that Kenyan church members would be able to see those that they fear through the eyes of Christ. Pray for wisdom for church leaders and ministries to cast vision of loving those who are lost.

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PROSPERITY

Economic Growth Could Mean Increased Missionary Sending **Moderate**

Ranked at 113th, Kenya scores low on the Legatum Prosperity Index when compared to other Mobilization Index countries. The World Bank categorized Kenya as a “middle-income” country for the first time in 2015. The country has enjoyed strong economic growth over the last decade. The greatest challenge Kenya faces for its prosperity is the lack of Safety and Security. Legatum ranks them very low together with Yemen and Syria, which are in active civil conflict. Al Shabaab has been deliberately attacking over the last few years, targeting non-Muslim civilians. This has a serious negative impact on the economy and specifically tourism, a massive pillar of Kenyan economy.

Yet, Kenya has one of the highest levels of Social Capital globally. At its lowest moments, it manifests itself as tribalism and corruption, but at its best could bring great returns on mobilization efforts. Kenya’s second highest category on the Legatum Prosperity Index is Business Environment. This is a major contributing factor to the emergence of a strong economy. Kenya’s uptick in economic growth is no doubt having a positive impact on its financial sending capacity. If Kenya’s economy continues on this upward trend, its missionary sending capacity should be more than sufficient to propel and support a significant missions force; however, corruption and terrorism have limited Kenya’s forecasted economic growth to certain extents.

Pray that the Lord would be glorified through the generosity of and sending by the Kenyan church despite economic growth or decline.

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CURRENT SENDING

Immense Potential for a Mission Sending Explosion **Moderate**

Kenya has around 2,000 missionaries; 1,800 serving cross-culturally in-country and 200 serving cross-culturally outside of Kenya. It is not known how many of Kenya’s 2,000 missionaries are serving among reached or unreached peoples. With 2,000 missionaries, only 0.01% of the Kenyan Evangelical church has been mobilized. If that number grew to 0.1% or more, that would be 20,000 missionaries, and one of the largest mission movements the world has ever seen! With more than 20,000,000 evangelical believers, there is immense potential for an explosion within the country. Imagine a

worldwide movement of believers going to the unreached that is led by our Kenyan brothers and sisters!

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MOBILIZATION POTENTIAL

Will Kenya Be at the Center of the Next Great Missions Movement?

High

Kenya has the highest proportion of evangelical Christians to country population and this is growing at a rate of ~3.4% per year! With current cross-cultural sending only at about 2,000 missionaries, Kenya has a great untapped potential for mobilization. The Kenyan church is beginning to step into its role as a major sender of cross-cultural workers.

Kenya ranks highest in East Africa in terms of economic quality and ranks very high on the World Giving Index; 8th in 2017, which is a huge jump from their 33rd ranking in 2010. This is a perfect combination for sending out Kenyans, especially as most Kenyans are comfortable giving to the church. There is a need to improve the sending and supporting of missionaries within the church infrastructure. List this concern up to the Lord and ask for wisdom and biblical guidance on how to best send and support missionaries through the church.

There are growing concerns with the overall Safety and Security of Kenya as there has been an increasing amount of violence between religious groups. There was also unrest in regards to the most recent elections. These fears could have great impact on Kenya's mobilization potential, were they to worsen.

It is exciting that Kenya not only has high regional and in-country access to UPGs, but also has very

close cultural connections to nearly a dozen different nations. It is probable that the Kenyan church will be at the center of the next great missions movement out into the world!

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Obstacles:

Kenya is beginning to face a higher level of persecution, with growing tensions, and violence and fear between Christians and Muslims. This may serve as a barrier to many as they begin to look towards the nations.

Political turmoil from the most recent election has divided a large portion of the people as Kenyans are splitting amongst their tribal heritage to back certain politicians. This could serve as a very real obstacle to the church when it comes to partnering together to go out to the nations.

Opportunities:

Kenya leads the way in financial inclusion through mobile banking, boasting the largest banked population of any country within the developing world. Accessible banking can give Kenya a significant advantage over the other developing countries of the world in regards to missionaries raising financial support.

There are many refugees coming into Kenya, specifically in the northern parts of the country. Somalis are flooding into the country and beginning to inhabit the coast, where Islam is beginning to replace Christianity. Nairobi alone is estimated to have close to one million Somali refugees.⁵

With such close proximity to one of the most unreached countries in the world, this presents a wonderful opportunity for the gospel to heal the rift between Muslims and Christians.

Prayer

For believers in-country to embrace their role as mobilizers and senders; that they would find the role God has prepared them for in the Great Commission.

For the Kenyan church to not only participate but lead the charge in bringing the gospel to the unreached.

For the healing of relationships between Muslims and Christians within Kenya; that Christians would see Muslims through the eyes of their Creator.

For the church in Nairobi to begin to bring the knowledge of the Living Water to the approximately one million Somali refugees in and near the capital 5.

Praise:

Praise God that Kenya has such a large number of evangelicals!

Praise the Lord for the incredible opportunity He has given to the Kenyan church, as they are flooded with unreached refugees.

Endnotes

- 1 Unreached people groups are ethnic groups that have little to no access to the gospel including to believers, churches, or Christian resources. People in unreached populations have no way of hearing the gospel barring someone crossing cultures and languages to share with them. A working definition for unreached people groups is peoples who have an evangelical population of 2% or less
- 2 Operation World. DVD. 2010.
- 3 The 10/40 window represents the highest population of the world with least access to the gospel. 97% of the world's unreached (people with little to no access to the gospel) is housed within the 10/40 window, an imaginary area called such because of its position between 10° N Latitude and 40° N Latitude. This area stretches from North Africa to East Asia, creating a rectangle, or a window. In a sentence: 97% of the world's unreached population is housed within the 10/40 Window.
- 4 BBC News. "Kenya Westgate Mall Attack: What We Know." bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-24617763/kenya-westgate-mall-attack-what-we-know.
- 5 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "Number of Somali Refugees in the Horn of Africa Passes 1 Million Mark." July 20, 2012. unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2012/7/500554ed9/number-somali-refugees-horn-africa-passes-1-million-mark.html.