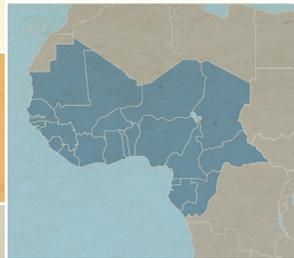




YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

2020 • QUARTER 3 • WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION



AdventistMission.org

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 = stories of special interest to teens

Your Offerings at Work



Three years ago, the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped build a Seventh-day Adventist high school in Gabon's capital, Libreville. The school, pictured under construction in March 2019, was scheduled to open for 280 students in October 2020. You can read stories from Gabon on pages 10-15 and download the above photos and other Thirteenth Sabbath project photos at: bit.ly/WAD-2020.



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This quarter we feature the West-Central Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists, which is comprised of 22 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Its headquarters is in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

The region is home to 436 million people, including 834,183 Adventists. That's a ratio of one Adventist for 523 people.

The significant role that Seventh-day Adventist education plays in spreading the gospel became abundantly clear as I collected mission stories in three countries — Guinea and Liberia, which will receive part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to open schools this quarter, and Gabon, which received a Thirteenth Sabbath offering to construct a school in 2017.

“Education is key to developing the church in West Africa,” Alexis Kouadio, assistant Global Mission officer for the West-Central Africa Division, told me as

we traveled together to the three countries.

He noted that 75 percent of the Adventist schools in the division are located in Ghana, where roughly half of the division's 834,183 church members live.

“The church is not strong in French-speaking countries,” Alexis said. “We need to help them with schools and even small clinics.”

Guinea and Gabon are French-speaking countries, while Liberia and Nigeria speak English.

The three Thirteenth Sabbath projects for this quarter are listed on this page.

If you want to make your Sabbath School class come alive, we offer a variety of photos, videos, and other materials to accompany each mission story. More information is provided in the sidebar with each story. Download a PDF of facts and activities at bit.ly/WAD-facts. Also, follow us at facebook.com/missionquarterlies.

For photos of tourist sites and other scenes from the featured countries, I recommend searching on a free photo bank such as pixabay.com and unsplash.com.

You also can download the PDF version of the Children's Mission magazine at bit.ly/childrensmision and the youth and adult Mission magazine at bit.ly/adultmission. Mission Spotlight videos are available at bit.ly/missionspotlight.

If I can be of assistance, contact me at mcchesney@gc.adventist.org.

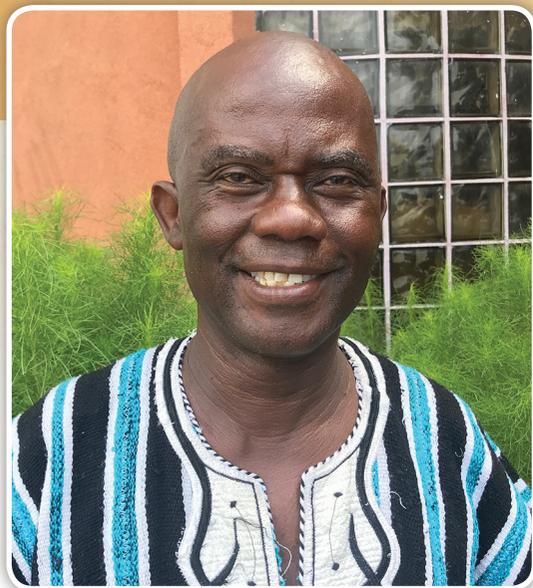
Thank you for encouraging others to be mission-minded! 🌍

Opportunities

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help to:

- Construct Kobaya Academy, a K-12 school, in Conakry, Guinea
- Open an elementary school/center of influence in Buchanan, Liberia
- Establish a medical center in Abuja, Nigeria

A School for Liberia



LIBERIA | July 4

B. Darlington Teah, 59

because we want to plant our farm, and we want the farm to prosper.” When Mother was pregnant, Father prayed, “O ancestors, we have come to you to give our daughter who is bearing a child.” When an illness swept the village, he prayed, “O ancestors, we have come to you because of the sickness in our village.”

Every time, he sacrificed a chicken and offered plates of white rice to the ancestors. He left the plates and chicken on the ground and returned home. Later, he went back for the plates and, seeing that the food was gone, believed that the ancestors had agreed to honor his prayers.

Darlington didn’t have any choice about joining the secret society. He couldn’t say yes or no. But Mother had a say, and she bluntly refused. Whenever Father prepared to go to the mountains, she took the boy to another village.

“I want him to become a Christian,” she told Father.

Darlington attended Sunday School every week, but he didn’t understand the Bible.

When he was a young man, a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist came to the village and spoke about the seventh-day Sabbath. Darlington read about the Sabbath in the Bible for the first time, and he asked the Sunday pastor to explain whether Saturday or Sunday was the correct day. The Sunday pastor could not show any Bible verses that supported Sunday worship.

B. Darlington Teah grew up in a Christian church where his father was a deacon and his mother prayed for ill members.

Mother was very dedicated to the church, but Father was not so committed. He belonged to a secret society and, when Darlington was 7, he invited the boy to become a member.

“Son, your great-grandfather and other ancestors were members,” he said. “You should join so you can replace me when I die.”

But Darlington wasn’t interested in joining the secret society. He knew that members worshipped dead ancestors in the mountains of Liberia. Every so often, Father walked four hours from the village to the mountains to pray and make sacrifices to the ancestors. When it was time to plant crops, Father prayed, “O ancestors, we have come to you today

“My son, the seventh day is the Sabbath,” the pastor said. “We worship on Sunday to remember Christ’s resurrection.”

Darlington wanted to follow the Bible, and he was baptized into the Adventist Church. Father wasn’t pleased with the decision because he knew that it meant his son would never worship their ancestors. Mother was happy that her son loved God.

Darlington longed to become a pastor, and he prayed about it constantly. The Adventist Church didn’t have a seminary in Liberia, so he would have to travel to Ghana or Nigeria to study theology. Knowing that his parents didn’t have money to help him, he worked hard to save money for tuition. Civil war interrupted his efforts and, in the 1990s, he entered politics and was elected to the national parliament.

He thought, “If I can’t save money to study theology abroad, I can at least establish an Adventist seminary in Liberia so young people can study here.”

A year after his election, he sponsored a bill creating the Adventist University of West Africa in Liberia’s capital, Monrovia.

After six years in parliament, he left amid strong pressure to accept bribes and to join secret societies. He enrolled in theology classes at the Adventist University of West Africa.

Today, Darlington is a pastor and the president of the South-East Liberia Mission, which will receive part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to construct a K-6 school in the city of Buchanan.

“I am very thankful that the Lord has called me to work in His service in preparing people for His soon coming,” Darlington said. 🌍

Story Tips

- Watch Darlington on YouTube: bit.ly/Darlington-Teah.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/school-for-liberia).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

Mission Post

- The GC Daily Bulletin of Oct. 24, 1889, referred to “Bro. Gaston from Liberia, who recently embraced the truth, and has gone back to his country to sow the seeds of precious truth among his kindred.” In reporting his 1892 visit to West Africa at the January 1893 General Conference Session, Lawrence C. Chadwick appealed for a missionary to be sent to open a mission “at or near the home of Brother Gaston” (GC Daily Bulletin 5:2, Jan. 29, 1893). However, Liberia had to wait another 33 years for the first official Seventh-day Adventist missionaries.
- On April 30, 1930, the first four Adventist converts were baptized at Seahn. Among them was Willie Helbig, who later became the first Liberian ordained minister.
- About 85.5 percent of Liberia’s population practices Christianity, and Muslims comprise 12.2 percent of the population, mostly Malikite Sunni, with sizeable Shia and Ahmadiyya minorities.

Thank you for planning a generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to construct an elementary school in Buchanan, Liberia, to replace a school destroyed in Liberia’s civil war.

By Andrew McChesney

Reading Made Easy

LIBERIA | July 11

S.E. Joe Seeyah, 66



Joe Konyon Seeyah couldn't read. There were no schools in his village, Seeyah, in Liberia. As a boy, he worked on the family rice farm. When he grew older, he married and had nine children and still worked on the farm. He had no reason to read.

One day, a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist, Willie Helbig, arrived in the village. Joe was interested to learn from the Bible, and he and other villagers asked the evangelist to study with them. Willie agreed and, a month later, all 50 adults in Seeyah and a neighboring village, Dehyu, were baptized.

Willie, the first ordained Liberian pastor in the Adventist Church, told the new church members that it was their turn to spread the gospel message. Joe didn't know what to think. He loved Jesus and wanted to share the gospel. But he was 45 years old and couldn't read.

"I can't open the Bible and teach from it," he said.

Willie wasn't worried. He invited Joe and five other newly baptized church members to attend a Bible training school in Dehyu. On the first day of classes, Joe looked at the other five men in Willie's classroom. None of them had gone to school. None of them could read. He was in good company.

Willie prayed and gave a new Bible to each man. Then he opened his own Bible and showed the men how to find important verses. He read each verse out loud and explained the meaning of every word.

Joe prayed earnestly. He didn't know how he would remember all the verses. He wanted to speak to others about Jesus' soon coming, but he didn't know how he would ever be able to do that.

Every day, Joe and the other men met with Willie to learn from the Bible. Every

day, Joe prayed for the Holy Spirit to bless their classes.

One day, as Willie guided the men through important verses in the Bible, Joe noticed that he had no trouble finding the verses on his own. As Willie read, he was able to follow along in his own Bible. He looked over at his classmates. They also were able to find the verses and to follow along. Joe and the other men stood up and began reading the Bible out loud to the astonished evangelist.

Back at home, Joe tried to read a book other than the Bible, but he couldn't understand a word. He found another book, but he couldn't read it either. However, he was able to read the Bible easily.

Joe went on to become head elder of the first Seventh-day Adventist church established to serve Seeyah village and several other villages in 1937. Although he never attended school, he energetically taught and preached from the Bible at the new church, located in the village of Newcess. He died in 2003 around the age of 90.

“It was the work of the Holy Spirit,” said his son, S.E. Joe Seeyah, 66, who also is a church elder. “It is the Holy Spirit who gives knowledge, and He wanted the Seventh-day Adventist message to come to our region. He allowed my father to read the Bible.” 🌐

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help to construct a K-6 school in Buchanan, Liberia, to replace a school destroyed in Liberia's civil war several years ago. Buchanan is located near Seeyah village.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Know that Seeyah village is named after Joe's family.
- Watch Joe on YouTube: bit.ly/Joe-Seeyah.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/reading-made-easy).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

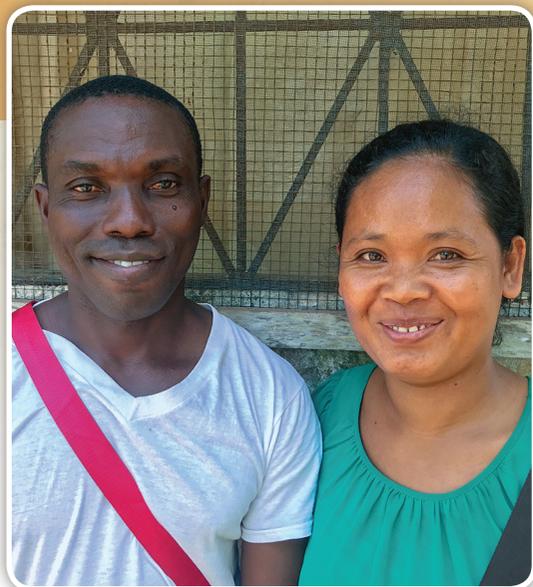
Fast Facts

- The Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America, commonly known as the American Colonization Society, was a group established in the United States in 1816 that supported the migration of free African Americans to the continent of Africa. The society's supporters included both religious and political groups who opposed slavery, and slave-owners who considered free blacks to be a threat to the stability of the slave-holding system.
- Liberia is known for its detailed decorative masks, wood carvings of realistic human faces, and carved accessories, particularly combs, spoons and forks. Liberian wood sculptures are heavily influenced by ancient history, folklore, proverbs, spirituality, and rural life and show the artist's attention to detail and their connection to the people and objects sculpted.
- The food of Liberia has been influenced by contact, trade, and colonization from the United States, especially foods from the American South, interwoven with traditional West African foods. The diet consists largely of rice and other starches, tropical fruits, vegetables, and local fish and meat. Liberia also has a baking tradition the settlers brought from the United States that is unique in West Africa.

Long Road Back Home

LIBERIA | July 18

Alphonso Peter Juah, 48



At the age of 19, Alphonso Peter Juah fled civil war in Liberia by boarding a train and traveling to Guinea.

Little did he know that the trip would take him to eight countries and that he would return home with an Indonesian wife 14 years later.

Times were tough when Alphonso left in 1992, and he quickly abandoned the Seventh-day Adventist Church of his childhood.

With the help of a humanitarian agency, he finished his studies in Guinea but then found himself homeless. He resorted to any scheme that he could think of to earn money. He sold heroin. He tricked people out of money. He laundered money.

After a year, he longed for new opportunities, so he illegally bought a Guinean passport and moved to Senegal.

For four years, he sold heroin, tricked people out of money, and laundered money. Seeking more opportunities, he traveled to Tunisia and then to Jordan, India, Thailand, and Indonesia. In each country, he sold drugs, tricked people, and laundered money, earning enough to live on and to move to the next place. He found money could buy anything, including visas to pursue his travels.

In Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, Alphonso began to think hard about life. He remembered attending church on Sabbaths. He felt bad because he knew that he wasn't obeying God's commandments. One day, he spoke about God while playing pool with a Spanish stranger. The stranger invited him to visit his church the next Sunday. The U.S. missionary who led the Sunday church listened to Alphonso's story and offered

to help pay his house rent. In exchange, Alphanso worked on the church grounds and managed its sound system.

Alphanso kept thinking about the Sabbath. He found the address of an Adventist church and began to attend worship services every Sabbath while still working at the other church on Sundays. With only a high-school education, he longed to study at a university, but no one seemed able to assist him. The Sunday church didn't help. The Adventists also didn't help, but they did reconnect him with his parents in Liberia. He hadn't spoken with them since fleeing Liberia.

Three years passed, and the Sunday church stopped supporting him. Alphanso returned to selling drugs, tricking people, and laundering money. But something big happened in his life around that time. He got married. While working at the Sunday church, he had fallen in love with Wastinah, a relative of the missionary's housekeeper.

After a while, Alphanso felt the familiar desire for new opportunities and moved to China. After four months, he sent for his wife. While in China, his thoughts returned to God, and he found an English-language Bible at a bookstore. One day, his eye fell on Ecclesiastes 1:2, which reads, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

"My life is filled with vanity," he thought. "I need to go home to Africa."

He and Wastinah flew to Liberia in 2006. Back home, he had a tearful reunion with his parents. He gave his heart to Jesus and went to church every Sabbath. Wastinah joined him and, after some time, gave her heart to Jesus.

Today, Alphanso works as a logger in

Story Tips

- Pronounce Alphanso as: alf-ON-zo.
- Pronounce Wastinah as: was-TIN-ah.
- Watch Alphanso on YouTube: bit.ly/Alphanso-Juah.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/long-road-home).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

Fast Facts

- Monrovia is the capital and largest city of Liberia. The city is named in honor of U.S. President James Monroe, a prominent supporter of the colonization of Liberia and the American Colonization Society. Along with Washington, it is one of two national capitals to be named after a U.S. president.

Buchanan, and Wastinah sells rice, oil, and other groceries from a roadside stall in front of their house. They have three children ages 12, 8, and 5. Alphanso readily shares his story about God's grace in his life.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," he said. "When I felt guilty, the fear of the Lord emerged in my heart, and He made me wise." 🌐

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help to construct a K-6 school in Buchanan, Liberia, to replace a school destroyed in Liberia's civil war. Alphanso hopes to send his children to the school.

By Andrew McChesney

Prayer Saves Marriage

GABON | July 25

Angelique Abeme, 45



Angelique Abeme fell in love with Peter when she was 15. He was 20.

The couple moved in together and had two girls in Oyem, a city in northern Gabon. Life was hard. Peter drank and smoked. Angelique loved him.

When Angelique was 25, Seventh-day Adventist neighbors invited her to evangelistic meetings. She had many questions about the teaching that the seventh day is the Sabbath, and she wasn't satisfied with the evangelist's explanations. On the final Friday of the two-week meetings, the evangelist suggested that she ask her own pastor about the Sabbath. She determined to do just that.

Walking home that evening, she met her pastor on the road.

"Pastor, is Sunday or Saturday the true Sabbath?" she asked. "The Adventist Church says the Sabbath is on Saturday, according to the Bible."

The pastor didn't argue with her. "What you have been told about Saturday is the truth," he said. "You have learned the truth. Try the Adventist Church."

Life grew more complicated after Angelique was baptized. She asked Peter to marry her but he refused. When she asked him to leave the house, he moved across the country to Port-Gentil, a city 250 miles (400 kilometers) to the south. Angelique prayed every morning and night that Peter would know Jesus.

"Lord, You have allowed me to know the truth, and I wish that You would also grant Peter an opportunity to know the truth," she prayed.

She sent Bible studies to Peter by mail.

In Port-Gentil, Peter ran into trouble. An employer accused him of theft and, even though Peter professed his innocence, he was imprisoned for three months. In prison, he had a lot of time to think. He had nothing to do. So, when an Adventist chaplain offered Bible studies, he readily accepted. Shortly before his release, he was baptized.

Angelique learned from a friend that Peter was in prison, but she had no idea about the Bible studies. She continued to pray for him every morning and evening.

"Lord, You have allowed me to know the truth, and I wish that you would also grant Peter an opportunity to know the truth," she prayed.

After Peter was released, he called

Story Tips

- Pronounce Angelique as: anzhel-EEK.
- Watch Angelique on YouTube: bit.ly/Angelique-Abeme.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/prayer-saves-marriage).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

Mission Post

- The Gabon Mission was established in 1975 and organized in 1978. Its headquarters is in the capital, Libreville.
- The Adventist Church was officially recognized by the government of Gabon in 1981.
- About 73 percent of the population practice at least some elements of Christianity; 12 percent practice Islam; 10 percent practice traditional indigenous religious beliefs exclusively; and 5 percent practice no religion or are atheists.

Angelique to tell her about his new faith.

“Now I understand why you wanted me to move out,” he said. “I am so happy to be an Adventist.”

Angelique was overjoyed. She still loved Peter. She changed her daily prayers to ask that Peter’s life show the fruits of his faith. She wanted him to never drink or smoke again.

Peter called regularly to ask about Angelique and their daughters. During one call, Angelique told Peter that she planned to take their younger daughter to a week-long Pathfinder camporee in Port-Gentil. Peter and Angelique agreed to meet at the camporee. It had been six years since they separated.

At the camporee, Peter greeted Angelique with a big smile and a warm hug. They had a warm two-hour conversation, and Peter left. Angelique saw that his life really had changed. He wasn’t smoking and drinking. He had a sweet disposition.

Peter returned for more conversations during the camporee. After the camporee ended, Angelique stayed in Port-Gentil for another week to talk with Peter. That’s when Peter proposed.

“I love you,” he said. “I miss you, and I want to get married.”

“Yes, let’s get married!” Angelique said happily.

That was eight years ago. Today, Peter serves as a church elder in Gabon’s capital, Libreville, and loves Jesus with all his heart. Angelique couldn’t be happier.

During those dark days, she found hope in Matthew 6:33, where Jesus said, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

“Our first goal should be to seek the kingdom of God,” Angelique said. “If you are a believer but your spouse isn’t, keep praying because God can work a miracle in the heart. After six years, God answered my prayers.” 🌍

Three years ago, part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped construct a high school for 280 students in Angelique’s hometown, Libreville, in Gabon. Thank you for planning a big Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter to help build schools in two other African countries, Guinea and Liberia.

By Andrew McChesney



Betting on Horses

Christophe Minsta Mi-Owono, 44

Horseracing caught Christophe's fancy when he was 27.

Christophe's father, a math teacher, had become infatuated with betting on horses while studying at a university in France.

When he returned home, he found that horseracing also had become a popular pastime in Gabon.

But no one went to the tracks to bet. Instead, they went to roadside kiosks where they could bet on live races televised from France.

Father took Christophe to the kiosks to bet.

Christophe didn't have a job, so Father gave him money so they could play together. Soon Christophe was betting 5,000 Central African francs, or U.S.\$10, every day on the horses. He neglected meals and sleep in order to try his luck on the horses.

Seventh-day Adventist friends in Gabon's capital, Libreville, noticed Christophe's fascination with gambling

and cautioned him against it.

Christophe didn't want to listen to them.

"It's a game where you can exercise your mind," he said. "You have to know math in order to play."

An Accident

One Sunday morning, Christophe lost 3,000 francs on a horserace at a kiosk. Returning home, he double-checked his betting forms and realized that he had failed to bet on a certain horse. Seeing that he still had 2,000 francs, he went back to the kiosk.

As he stood outside the kiosk, filling out the betting form, a car veered off the street and struck him and two nearby women. The driver didn't stop and sped away.

Kind strangers rushed Christophe and the two women to the hospital. One woman soon died. Minutes later, the other woman died. Christophe — lying in bed, his legs paralyzed and his blue T-shirt soaked in blood — feared that he would be next.

He began to pray.

“Lord, I understand,” he said. “You have told me many times to stop gambling, but I didn’t listen. Now I will listen.”

He had no way to contact his family, and he couldn’t move. Without any money, he received no medical care in the hospital for two days. Finally, he managed to pull himself out of bed and to crawl to the street to hail a taxi. He spent his last 2,000 francs on the ride home.

Complete Recovery

At home, a sister, who was a nurse, tended to him. He prayed for healing.

“Lord, You spared me from death,” he said. “If You protect me and help me walk again, I will surrender my life to You and stop gambling.”

Three weeks later, he was able to walk. He immediately gathered piles of old betting forms and burned them in front of his family.

“I don’t care if I am rich or poor,” he said. “I will serve God and never gamble again.”

He never did gamble again. Today, Christophe Minsta Mi-Owono is 44 and works as a housepainter.

“It’s better to work for money than to play in hope of easy money,” he said. 🌍

Three years ago, part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped construct a high school for 280 students in Christophe’s hometown, Libreville, in Gabon. Thank you for planning a big Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter to help build schools in two other African countries, Guinea and Liberia.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Watch Christophe on YouTube: bit.ly/Christophe-Minsta.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/betting-on-horses).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

Fast Facts

- The official name of the country is the Gabonese Republic.

The official language is French.

Low population density, abundant petroleum, and foreign private investment have helped make Gabon one of the most prosperous countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the third highest GDP per capita (after Equatorial Guinea and Botswana) in the region.

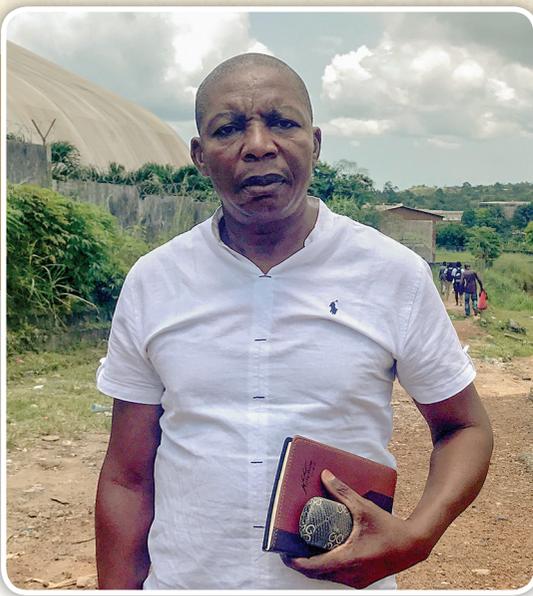
Local Gabonese cuisine is based on staples of cassava, rice or manioc paste, fish that is found in plenty along the rivers and coastal belt, game meat from antelopes, porcupine, wild boar, and snake, as well as tropical fruits like bananas, pineapples, and sugarcane.

Gabon is home to hundreds of dolomite and limestone caves. With a large part of Gabon hidden under natural forest cover, many of these caves remain unexplored. These caves, especially the Abanda caves, are home to the rare Orange cave-inhabiting Crocodiles, a cave crocodile only found in Gabon. The caves also hold hundreds of thousands of bats. Gabon caves have a very rich underground biodiversity not found anywhere else in the world.

Gabon is home to 80 percent of Africa’s baboon population.

Sweet, Gentle Voice

Jean Obame-Efayong, 58



Jealousy changed the life of police officer Jean Obame-Efayong.

Every night, his wife, Rosette, came home late in Libreville, capital of the West African country of Gabon. Jean didn't know what she was doing or where she had been. His imagination ran wild, and he feared the worst. Finally he asked her directly.

"I came from my sister's house," she said.

The next night, he asked the same question.

"I came from my sister's house," she said.

She gave the same answer every night. Jean couldn't believe that his wife was spending so much time at her sister's house, so one morning he asked her to take him to her sister's house.

Rosette took him to a church with a sign reading, "Eternal Life." Jean was surprised to see a church when his wife had said she was at her sister's house, but he was relieved that she was at church every night and not doing something else. The church taught a mix of Christianity and traditional African beliefs.

Jean went to the church for three nights in a row to see whether Rosette really was attending. He stood outside and watched. On the fourth night, a young woman who owned the church building demanded to know what he was doing.

"Why are you coming and not entering?" she said. "Come in today or don't return again."

Jean went in. The church was interesting, and the church members were friendly. When he had an out-of-body experience — a not-unheard-of occurrence in traditional African religion — the church members made him a church leader. During the week, Jean worked as a police officer and, on the weekends, he led the church.

One day, Rosette abruptly stopped attending church services. Before Jean could learn why, she unexpectedly died during childbirth. Grief-stricken, Jean reassessed his own commitment to the church and prayed.

"If this church isn't the true church, help me to leave easily," he prayed.

He never returned to the church, and he didn't have any trouble.

Three years later, Jean was walking home one evening when he saw a huge tent pitched in a soccer field near his house. He heard a sweet, gentle voice speak to him.

“Sir, we came here for you,” the voice said.

Jean stopped and looked around to see who was talking, but he didn’t see anybody. As he took a step forward, the voice spoke again.

“Sir, go inside and sit down to hear the gospel,” the voice said.

Jean entered the tent and sat in a chair in the back.

It was the first night of a 10-day evangelistic series. The Seventh-day Adventist evangelist called for repentance, and Jean wept as he listened. Jean came back the next night with a paper and pen to take notes.

At the meetings, he felt an irresistible urge to get baptized. At home, he felt an irresistible urge to get baptized. He spoke with the evangelist.

“I don’t know anything about your church, but I want to be baptized all the time,” he said.

The evangelist smiled.

“The Lord has revealed Himself to you,” he said. “Come and be baptized.”

Jean was baptized.

Today, he is an active church member. Every day, he remembers the sweet, gentle voice that he heard as he passed the tent.

“The voice helped me to find the right path,” he said. “Jesus lives in my life.” 🌍

Three years ago, part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped construct a high school for 280 students in Jean’s hometown, Libreville, in Gabon. Thank you for planning a big Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter to help build schools in two other African countries, Guinea and Liberia.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Watch Jean on YouTube: bit.ly/Jean-Obama-Efayong.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/sweet-gentle-voice).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

Fast Facts

- Libreville is the capital and largest city of Gabon. The city is a port on the Komo River, near the Gulf of Guinea, and a trade center for a timber region.
- The region was initially inhabited by the Pygmy peoples; later the people of the Bantu tribes immigrated to the area.
- About 85 percent of Gabon is covered by rainforests, 11 percent of which has been dedicated for national parks, making these some of the largest nature parks in the world.
- Gabon comprises a largely young population with 40 percent of the total population being below 15 years of age. About 56 percent of the total population is within the 15-64 age bracket. Less than 4 percent of the population is above 65 years.
- Mask making and ritual face paint are important parts of Gabonese culture, and styles vary dramatically between groups. The Gabonese people use masks to praise the ancestors and to mark important life events by signifying transformation. They are part of funeral and agrarian rites, and Gabonese people use them to promote fertility, provide spiritual protection and express cultural identity. Masks vary in style and include geometric shapes, stylized and exaggerated features and realistically detailed faces.

Prayer and Persecution

GUINEA | August 15

Maimouna Bangoura, 29



When the Seventh-day Adventist showed up, my husband and I spoke with him for a few minutes on the front porch of our house in Conakry, Guinea.

But then he handed me a pamphlet, and I saw the word “Jesus” in small letters in the corner. Without even touching the pamphlet, I told him to give it to my husband, Alpha.

The pamphlet was in French, which Alpha doesn’t read, and he thrust it into my hands.

“Read this to me,” he said.

I threw it to the ground.

“I’m not a Christian!” I said. “I can’t touch something like this.”

I opened the door and went indoors. I didn’t want to hear about Christianity. Moreover, it was time for my evening prayers.

But I couldn’t pray. I was so upset that my mind couldn’t focus. I could hear

the Adventist visitor talking with my husband on the porch. He asked Alpha if he had any prayer requests.

“I need work,” said Alpha, an electrician by training. “Also, when I earn money, it goes too fast. And my wife is having a difficult pregnancy. Please pray for her.”

Hearing those words, I marched outside and told the Adventist something that even my husband didn’t know. During my last visit to the hospital, the physician had told me that my baby was no longer alive. The baby was in me but dead.

My husband was shocked at the news.

“Please pray for me,” I asked the Adventist.

He prayed, “If the baby is to come, please Lord, give her the baby. But if not, Your will be done.”

When he finished, he picked up the pamphlet from the porch and wrote his name, Tranquille Fassinadouno, and cell phone number on it. Handing it to Alpha, he said, kindly, “Maybe your wife will hold onto this and even read it to you one day.”

As soon as he left, I tore up the pamphlet and threw it away. I liked his prayer, but I didn’t want any part of his Christianity.

That night, I slept well for the first time in months. The pain and bleeding subsided. When I went to the hospital, I learned that the physician had made a mistake. I never had been pregnant.

Then my young son Anthony fell ill. I bought him medicine at the hospital, but nothing helped. I remembered how my

illness had gone away after Tranquille prayed.

“Why did I throw away the pamphlet with his phone number?” I berated myself.

The next day, I was thinking about the phone number when I heard a knock on the door. It was Tranquille.

“I’m so glad that you’re here!” I cried. “I was just wishing that I had your phone number. Please pray for my sick son.”

Tranquille prayed, and my son recovered that same afternoon.

Alpha and I were amazed, but I still didn’t want to go to church. However, I kept remembering Tranquille’s prayers, so I decided to go to church after a month. I was deeply touched by the sermon and resolved to attend every Sabbath.

Alpha, however, only went for two Sabbaths. He stopped going when friends warned him that he would lose his mind. Alpha also didn’t want me to attend, but I went without telling him. After a while, he noticed that I was leaving the house every Sabbath, and friends told him that they had seen me enter the church.

Alpha started beating me. Once he beat me so badly that I had to go to the hospital.

But I kept going to church, I learned in Sabbath School how to live better. Tranquille, who I learned is a Global Mission pioneer, gave me Bible studies. I resolved to become a Christian when we read about the seventh-day Sabbath in the Ten Commandments.

Alpha still beats me. Every time I open my mouth to talk, he slaps me and refuses to speak with me. We no longer share the same bed, and he refuses to support our sons. I pray for him every day.

One of my favorite Bible verses is John 14:1, where Jesus says, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

Story Tips

- Ask a woman to share this first-person account.
- Pronounce Maimouna as: MY-moon-a.
- Pronounce Tranquille as: tran-KEEL.
- Read Tranquille’s side of the story next week.
- Watch Maimouna on YouTube: bit.ly/Maimouna-Bangoura.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/prayer-and-persecution).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

Mission Post

- The work in Guinea began in 1987, when a lay couple from Europe quietly witnessed to their faith. In April 1992, the first war refugees from Liberia arrived in Guinea, including a number of Seventh-day Adventists and a licensed pastor, W. Oloysius, who soon began witnessing for their faith.

Despite the persecution, I have peace of mind because I have Christ. Could you please pray for me? With the Lord, victory is on our side. My husband will one day become a Christian. 🌍

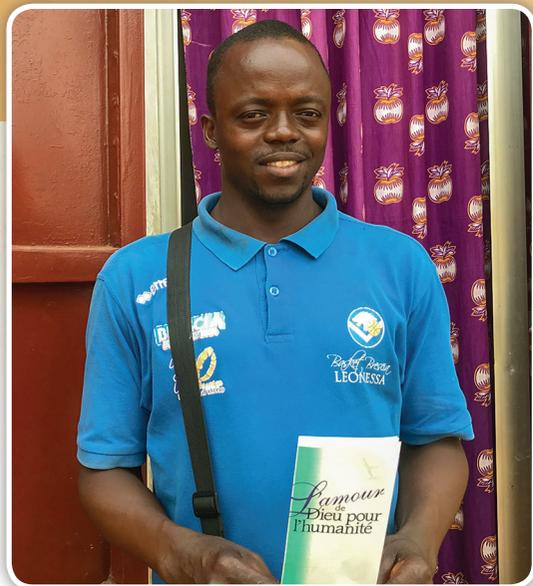
Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help construct Kobaya Academy, a K-12 school where Maimouna’s sons and other children can study in Conakry, Guinea. Thank you for remembering Maimouna and the Adventist work in Guinea in your prayers.

By Maimouna Bangoura as told to Andrew McChesney

Fasting for a Family

GUINEA | August 22

Tranquille Fassinadouno, 34



The house gate was open, so I walked right into the yard. A man and woman were chatting on the front porch, and two boys were playing nearby.

“Good morning, brother and sister,” I said, smiling. “My name is Tranquille Fassinadouno. I’m very happy to meet you.”

I went over to the children. Seeing one boy was of school age, I asked, “How is school? What did you learn today?”

The boy smiled and began reciting his ABCs. “Your children are smart!” I told the parents.

The parents relaxed when they saw that I appreciated their children. I asked for their names.

“My name is Maimouna Bangoura,” said the woman.

“I’m Alpha,” said her husband.

I pulled out a pamphlet called “God’s Love for Man.”

“Here is some good news,” I said, handing the pamphlet to Maimouna. “This is the word of God.”

She glanced at the pamphlet and said, “No, give it to my husband.”

“No, I can’t read it,” Alpha said. “Give it to my wife.”

Turning to Maimouna, he said, “Read this for me.”

She threw it to the ground and went indoors for her evening prayers. I asked Alpha whether he had any prayer requests and, as we spoke, Maimouna returned with a request for me to pray for her health.

I realized that no one wanted to read the pamphlet because Jesus’ name was written in small text on the cover. For people of their non-Christian faith, it is a sin to even read something bearing Jesus’ name. Seeing they were not interested, I left the house but resolved to pray and fast for them. As soon as I exited the gate, I wrote down their names on a piece of paper and placed it in my Bible. For three days, I didn’t eat food or drink during daylight hours. In the evening, I ate a light meal of bananas, oranges, and rice porridge.

I didn’t have much time to pray for the couple during the day because I was busy giving Bible studies and making new contacts as a Global Mission pioneer. So, I asked God to wake me up at night. For three nights, God woke me up at midnight, 1 a.m., and 4 a.m.

“Thank you, God, for allowing me to meet this family,” I prayed. “I want for Your will to be fulfilled with them. I want You to visit them before these three days are up.”

The three days ended on a Sabbath. I decided to visit Alpha and Maimouna after church services, and I prayed before leaving the house, “I’m not trying to convert this family. It is the Holy Spirit who will convert them. Be with me as I just visit them.”

During Sabbath School, I felt an urge to visit the family immediately in case they weren’t home later in the day.

Maimouna greeted me enthusiastically and said she had been healed after my prayer. She asked me to pray for her son, who had fallen ill. I prayed. That evening, I returned to ask about him.

“He’s over there, playing with his friends,” Maimouna said, pointing. “I’m so happy for what you have done.”

I asked Maimouna to call the boy so we could pray together. Seeing Jesus’ hand in the matter, I took the courage to mention Him by name.

“It is Jesus who healed your son,” I said. “So, we are going to pray in Jesus’ name.”

Bowing my head, I prayed, “Thank you, God, for You are worthy of honor and glory because it is through You that this miracle has happened. Thank you for healing Anthony. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, Amen.”

A month later, Alpha and Maimouna came to church. Alpha soon stopped attending, and he beat his wife every evening for still going. That didn’t stop her, and she said to me, “Please teach me the Bible. I want to know the Bible.”

We began to study the Bible. After a while, she began to read the Bible on her

Story Tips

- Ask a man to share this first-person account.
- Pronounce Tranquille as: tran-KEEL.
- Pronounce Maimouna as: MY-moon-a
- Read Maimouna’s side of the story last week.
- Read more about Tranquille next week.
- Watch Tranquille on YouTube: bit.ly/Tranquille-Fassinadouno.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/fasting-for-family).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

own and announced, “It’s Jesus and me forever.” She gave her heart to Him.

Alpha still beats her, but Maimouna has found strength in Matthew 10:37, where Jesus says, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ... He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

She and I fast and pray for Alpha.

I am so happy that she loves Jesus. Real joy is being able to show the truth to people and to see them embrace it. 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help construct Kobaya Academy, a much-needed K-12 school in Conakry, Guinea. Thank you for remembering Tranquille and all Global Mission pioneers in your prayers.

By Tranquille Fassinadouno as told to Andrew McChesney

Crawling Like a Baby

GUINEA | August 29

Oumou Toure, 55



Oumou Toure fell terribly ill after her husband died.

Her knees swelled up, and she suffered serious pain. She could not sleep at night. She could not walk. Although she was old, she crawled like a baby in the family home in Conakry, Guinea.

An elderly uncle, Amara, took her to various hospitals, but no physician could help. He took her to witchdoctors, but none could help. She stayed in bed at the family home, where she lived with her uncle, a younger sister, and a dozen other relatives.

Four long years passed. For four years, Oumou suffered. For four years, she couldn't walk.

One day, Oumou overheard her sister talking with a visitor in another room. The visitor read from the Bible and prayed. Oumou wasn't a Christian, but she wanted someone to pray for her. With great effort,

she climbed out of bed and crawled on her hands and knees to the next room.

"Please, pray for me, too," she pleaded.

The visitor, Tranquille Fassinadouno, was astonished to see the old woman crawling on all fours. He didn't pray.

Three days later, Oumou heard a knock on the door and, a moment later, Tranquille was standing over her bed.

"Mama, I have come to pray," he said.

Oumou was overjoyed.

Tranquille opened his Bible and read 1 John 4:4, which says, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

Then he closed his eyes to pray.

"Lord, thank you for the life of your daughter," he said. "You allowed me to be here. You gave me courage to fast and pray for the past three days for her. Now I ask you to heal my sister Oumou in the name of Jesus."

That night, Oumou slept well for the first time in years. Her pain subsided.

The next day, Tranquille returned and prayed with her again. He prayed and fasted for Oumou for two weeks.

One day Oumou abruptly asked him, "Where is your church?"

He told her the address of a Seventh-day Adventist church. It wasn't far from her house, but she couldn't walk. She asked for help. On Sabbath morning, Tranquille

Story Tips

- Pronounce Oumou as: OO-moo.
- Pronounce Tranquille as: tran-KEEL.
- Read more about Tranquille last week.
- Watch Oumou on YouTube: bit.ly/Oumou-Toure.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/crawling-like-baby).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

Fast Facts

- Guinea's mineral wealth makes it potentially one of Africa's richest countries, but its people are among the poorest in West Africa.
- Only 27 percent of adults in Guinea can read.

carried Oumou to his motorcycle and drove her to church. He took her again the next Sabbath, and the next. Every day, Oumou grew stronger. On the fourth Sabbath, she walked to church alone.

Tranquille was amazed to see Oumou walking around at the church.

"This is a miracle of Jesus!" he exclaimed.

Oumou's uncle and other family members were happy that she felt better, but they did not like seeing her go to church. They weren't Christians, and they felt that Oumou was being disrespectful of their family's religion. Uncle Amara called a big family meeting. As a dozen family members watched, he held up a black Bible and the family's traditional holy book.

"Which book do you choose?" he asked Oumou. "Remember, if you don't choose

our holy book, you will no longer be part of our family."

Oumou thought about her four-year illness and how she had been healed. She lifted her eyes to heaven.

"I choose the Bible, that black book," she said.

Uncle Amara sneered at Oumou.

"Now that you have chosen the Bible, take it and preach to us," he said.

Tears formed in Oumou's eyes. She didn't know how to read.

"You know that I cannot read," she said, weeping. "I never went to school. But the man who prayed for me read from the Bible and I was healed. I believe the power in the Bible can do more for me and for you, too."

Uncle Amara angrily ordered family members to pack Oumou's belongings.

"You have become a Christian," he said. "Go to the Christians. We don't want anything more to do with you."

Oumou had no place to live, and she slept in various friends' houses. It was difficult, but she refused to denounce Jesus. When church members learned about her situation, they offered her a place to live on the church compound. That's where she lives today.

"I thank God for my new family," Oumou said. "I will be with the Lord Jesus forever." 🌍

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help construct Kobaya Academy, a K-12 school in Conakry, Guinea, where the love of Jesus can be taught to many children from non-Christian homes.

By Andrew McChesney

Odd Dreams and a Girl

GUINEA | September 5

Maria, 29



Since the age of 2, Maria had accompanied her mother to the witchdoctor to obtain a blessing for the family business in Guinea.

The visits were part of life, and the blessings seemed to work. Mother became a wealthy businesswoman with many shops across the West African country. She also made her daughter rich. Maria owned a house in a gated compound, two cars, and a big store selling stylish clothing and handbags in Guinea's capital, Conakry.

The witchdoctor, however, caught 24-year-old Maria by surprise when she visited him for a blessing in 2013.

"If you want to be rich, you have to offer a human sacrifice," he said. "The sacrifice must be an albino."

Maria had brought cows to the witchdoctor to sacrifice but never a human being. The thought of a human sacrifice deeply disturbed her, and it weighed heavily

on her mind when she fell asleep that night. As she slept, she dreamed that two small children were talking to her, but she couldn't understand what they were saying.

The next night, she saw the same children again in a dream. But this time she could understand them.

"The solution is not visiting the witchdoctor," one child said.

The next night, Maria dreamed again. This time she heard a voice as she walked on the street. The voice said, "The solution is our Father and our Savior Jesus Christ."

When she awoke, she was puzzled because she wasn't a Christian. She belonged to another major world religion.

"How could Jesus be the solution?" she wondered.

She told her mother about the three nights of dreams.

"Why do we have to make a human sacrifice?" she said.

Mother didn't like the dreams at all and told Maria to buy a cow for a sacrifice. Maria obeyed. As the witchdoctor prepared to slaughter the cow, he assured her that the dreams would stop.

That night, Maria had another dream.

By the end of the week, Maria was exhausted from the nightly dreams and decided to go shopping. On Saturday morning, she drove her car to the compound gate and stopped for it to be opened. As she waited, a small girl darted into the compound and approached the car

Story Tips

- Adventist Mission is not identifying Maria by her real name to protect her safety. She is pictured in the photo.
- Read more about Maria next week.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/maria-in-guinea).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

Mission Post

- The life expectancy in Guinea is 56 years.
- The majority of Guineans work in the agriculture sector, which employs about 75 percent of the country.

window. “Do you want to go to church?” the girl asked.

Maria was surprised.

“I’m not a Christian,” she said. “Why are you asking me to go to church? Who are you looking for?”

“I want to go to church,” the girl said.

Maria looked at the girl closely. She wondered whether the girl was lost and seeking her parents. She didn’t know about any churches in the neighborhood.

Seeming to read her thoughts, the girl said, “I know the way.”

Maria decided to help the girl find the church, and she got out of the car. After a short walk, Maria and small girl reached the gated headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Guinea. A group of people were standing near a church building inside the compound. One of them, a woman, asked Maria whether she

could be of assistance.

“This little girl asked me to come here,” Maria said, motioning.

But the girl was nowhere in sight. Maria looked out the gate and back into the compound. No girl. She returned the puzzled gaze of the kind woman and suddenly felt a strong desire to tell her about her dreams.

“Can I ask you a question?” she said.

“Of course,” the woman said.

“I have had many dreams,” she said.

“I have sacrificed a cow, but nothing has stopped the dreams. I don’t know what to do.”

“Wait for me,” the woman said. “My husband is a pastor. I will ask him for help.”

And that is how Maria, a non-Christian in a country where many people are hostile to Christianity, learned about Jesus. Today she is a Christian who loves Jesus with all her heart.

“My conversion to Christianity is a miracle,” she said. “No one came to me with the Bible, and I didn’t read any Christian books. It was a call from God.”

Maria never saw the girl again. She is convinced that the girl was an angel. 🌍

The Seventh-day Adventist Church faces enormous challenges in spreading the gospel in Guinea, where only 7 percent of the population is Christian, and many people are hostile to Christianity. Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help construct Kobaya Academy, a K-12 school in Conakry, Guinea, where the love of Jesus can be taught to many children from non-Christian homes.

By Andrew McChesney

Illiterate but Able to Read

GUINEA | September 12

Maria, 29



Maria wasn't a Christian, but she kept dreaming about Jesus. She sacrificed a cow in hope that the dreams would end, but she was still disturbed every night for a week.

Then a stranger directed her to the office of Jacob Gbale, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Guinea. He worked just up the street from her luxurious house in Conakry, capital of Guinea.

As Maria described her dreams, Pastor Jacob began to smile.

"Glory be to God!" he exclaimed.

Maria was shocked. She couldn't understand why he was so happy.

"You don't need to make any more sacrifices," Pastor Jacob said, lifting up Bible from his desk. "God is calling you."

"I think your God has made a mistake," Maria said. "I have always belonged to my family's religion."

Jacob held out the Bible.

"This is your Bible," he said.

"What would I do with that Bible?" Maria said. "I don't even know how to read."

Pastor Jacob asked whether anyone in her family was literate, and she conceded that she had a cousin who could read.

Jacob wrote Maria's name inside the Bible.

"Take your Bible and go," he said.

Maria was annoyed with Pastor Jacob, and she left without even saying goodbye. "Who do these people think they are?" she thought as she walked home. "They tell me to read the Bible as if I don't know God."

At home, Mary placed the Bible in a drawer and closed it. She wanted to relax. Turning on the television to her favorite channel, she saw a program about Jesus. Click! She changed the channel. The next channel also had a program about Jesus. Click! Another program about Jesus.

Maria called her satellite television provider. "What is wrong with your channels?" she demanded. "Every channel is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus."

The male voice sounded puzzled.

"Everything is in order," he said.

"No, it's not that!" Maria shouted.

"Come here and fix my TV."

A short time later, a man arrived and flipped through the channels. Everything worked normally. Maria was speechless.

Maria went to bed, but she couldn't stop thinking about Jesus. Then she remembered the Bible. The only way to

Story Tips

- Adventist Mission is not identifying Maria by her real name to protect her safety. The photo shows her hands. Hamadou is a pseudonym.
- Pronounce Hamadou as: hama-DOO.
- Pronounce Gbale as: g-ball-EE.
- Read more about Maria next week and last week.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/maria-in-guinea).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

stop thinking about Jesus would be to read it, she decided.

In the morning, she asked her cousin to come over. “What is this?” she said, holding out the Bible. “Tell me.”

Her cousin, Hamadou, had studied at a Christian school in Sierra Leone, and he recognized the Bible. “Who gave you that Bible?” he said.

“I received it from a pastor,” Maria said.

“What do you want to do with it?” he said. “You don’t know how to read.”

“Look, you went to school,” she said. “I want you to help me read this Bible. Teach me how to read.”

Hamadou opened the Bible.

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name,” he read. “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

He read until he reached the end of the Lord’s Prayer. “Are you happy?” he asked.

Maria asked him to underline the verses.

Hamadou laughed. He laughed so hard that he cried.

“You never went to school!” he sputtered. “How can you read?”

Yet he underlined the passage. Then he made Maria repeat it a dozen times so she would remember it.

That evening, Maria picked up the Bible and found the Lord’s Prayer. Even though she had never learned to read, she found that she was able to read it. She turned the page and, to her surprise, realized that she could read other verses as well.

The next day, Maria couldn’t wait to talk to Hamadou.

“You laughed at me yesterday, so let me show you that I can read,” she said.

“No way,” he said. “Not even in your dreams can you read.”

Maria opened the Bible to a random page and read. Hamadou looked startled and then afraid.

“How did you do that?” he asked.

“My cousin, that is human intelligence,” Maria said with a smile. “If you really believe that you are able to do something, you can do it.”

From that moment, Maria read the Bible every day. She later realized that it was Jesus who had given her the ability to read the Bible, and she gave her heart to Him. 🌍

The Seventh-day Adventist Church faces enormous challenges in spreading the gospel in Guinea, where only 7 percent of the population is Christian and many people are hostile to Christianity. Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help construct Kobaya Academy, a K–12 school in Conakry, Guinea, where the love of Jesus can be taught to many children from non-Christian homes.

By Andrew McChesney

Murderous Mother

Maria, 29



Mother was furious when she learned from cousin Hamadou that her daughter Maria had a Bible.

Mother had raised Maria in a non-Christian world religion in the West African country of Guinea, and she didn't want her to become a Christian. Mother marched over to Maria's house in Conakry.

"Where is your Bible?" she demanded.

"It's in my bedroom," Maria said.

Mother stormed into the bedroom. She searched everywhere but couldn't find it. "I didn't see the Bible anywhere," she said.

Maria looked into the bedroom. The Bible lay in plain sight on a table.

The next Sabbath, Maria went to the Seventh-day Adventist church for a second visit. As a result, she skipped work at the big store that she owned. Mother didn't understand why she hadn't worked.

"Where were you?" she asked.

"I was in church," Maria replied.

Mother looked upset. Maria didn't know that her family's religion opposed Christianity and even taught that it was praiseworthy to kill a family member

who became a Christian.

"Mother, I am happy to work during the week, but I can't work on Saturdays anymore," she said.

From that day, Mother began to beat her.

"I would rather see you dead than to see you dishonor us," she said.

When the beatings didn't change Maria's mind, Mother blocked her bank account. Maria, who was used to living a luxurious lifestyle, expressed confusion when she lost access to her funds. Mother blamed the problem on the Adventists.

"Those Christians have somehow managed to steal your money," she said.

Maria wasn't dissuaded from her convictions.

"I have learned that when you have problems you should pray and give them to Jesus," she said.

The beatings continued. Then Mother called Maria's husband, a polygamist who lived with his other wife in Germany. After the phone call, he gave Maria an ultimatum. "Choose between me and your God, Jesus," he said.

"Let me ask you a question," Maria said.

"Can you forsake your God because of me?"

"No way," he said.

"Then why do you ask me to choose between you and my God, Jesus?" she said.

After that, he refused to answer the phone when Maria called.

When Mother saw Maria still clung to

her faith, she announced drastic steps.

“My daughter, since you don’t listen to me, I have to kill you,” she said.

A few days later, she came over to Maria’s house and prepared a favorite stew. Unknown to Maria, the stew contained a deadly poison. When the stew was ready, Mother asked Maria to carry the pot to the table. Maria was hungry but she wanted to take a bath first. She promised to eat afterward, and Mother left.

As Maria bathed, a cat came out of nowhere and jumped onto the table, knocking the pot to the floor. Maria didn’t own a cat. That night, Mother called to inquire how Maria felt.

“I’m doing well, very well,” Maria said.

Mother’s astonishment was evident over the phone.

A few days later, cousin Hamadou poured the poison into Maria’s bottle of drinking water. After drinking, Maria bent over with a severe stomachache.

Hamadou saw her agony and told her what he had done.

“I’m so sorry,” he said. “The witchdoctor asked me to put medicine into your drinking water to purify your body.”

Immediately Maria called Jacob Gbale, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Guinea, to pray for her. He came to her house and gave her five charcoal pills. Thirty minutes later, she vomited.

The witchdoctor called that evening to find out whether Maria was dead. He was shocked to hear her answer the phone.

Mother enlisted another cousin to help. He arrived at Maria’s house with two friends and a poison-filled syringe. After sending the housemaid on an errand, he injected Maria in the left arm and fled.

The housemaid didn’t go far beyond

Story Tips

- Adventist Mission is not identifying Maria by her real name to protect her safety. The photo shows her with Jacob Gbale, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Guinea. Hamadou is a pseudonym.
- Pronounce Hamadou as: hama-DOO.
- Pronounce Gbale as: g-ball-EE.
- Read more about Maria next week and last week.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/maria-in-guinea).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

the house before remembering that she had forgotten her cell phone. She found Maria unconscious on the floor with the syringe lying nearby. Knowing that Maria and Pastor Jacob were friends, and she called him for help. The pastor and two church elders brought Maria to church headquarters and prayed for her. Maria vomited and recovered.

Maria has no doubt that Jesus protects His children.

“He can solve a crisis because He knows crises before they happen,” she said. “Psalm 68:20 says, ‘Our God is a God who saves, from the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death.’” 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help construct Kobaya Academy, a K–12 school in Conakry, Guinea.

By Andrew McChesney

Free at Last



13th SABBATH: GUINEA | Sept. 26

Maria, 29

The witchdoctor smiled grimly.

“Your mother told me that she has tried and failed to kill you many times,” he said. “But let me tell you that I have something more powerful than your Jesus.”

He mixed a strange powder with water and forced Maria to drink. Later he rubbed a strange lotion on her body.

“Deny Jesus or die,” he said.

Maria refused.

“I will never deny Jesus,” she said.

Mother helped the witchdoctor with his work. One day, she applied a strange powder to Maria’s face. Sores broke out on Maria’s skin and, the next day, she was bleeding everywhere.

Maria’s son, Mark, didn’t understand what was happening to his mother. When he saw his mother’s sore-covered face, he wept. But he remembered praying with his mother every night before bed. He begged Maria’s younger sister, Hadja, to pray with him. Hadja agreed but first made sure Mother was nowhere nearby.

“Jesus, please save Mommy,” Mark prayed. “Help her to get well.”

Seven months passed.

Maria grew so weak that she could barely move. Her flesh smelled like it was rotting. Hadja was afraid and called one of Maria’s Adventist friends.

“Maria is dying,” she said. “Please pray.”

The friend asked to speak with Maria, but Hadja explained that her sister was too weak. She snapped a photo of Maria

Mother took matters into her own hands after failing to convince her daughter Maria to renounce Christ.

Mother slipped a sleeping pill into Maria’s drink at a restaurant. With the help of Maria’s younger sister, she carried her unconscious daughter to the car and drove her to their home village in Guinea. Maria’s 5-year-old son, Mark, came along.

Mother was a wealthy business owner, and the family compound in the village contained a multistory mansion, a luxurious guesthouse, and several other buildings. A high fence surrounded the property, and a watchman kept a close eye on the gate. Maria was locked in a bedroom.

Mother had a nefarious plan. She had hired a Nigerian witchdoctor to change Maria’s mind about Jesus.

“I will never deny Jesus, even if you kill me,” Maria said when she saw the witchdoctor. “I will worship Jesus, even if I don’t go to church. Jesus is everywhere.”

on her cell phone. The Adventist friend wept when he received it.

“I see that your mother wants to kill her,” he said. “I’ll ask all of the church members to pray.”

Church members across Guinea prayed for Maria. After a few days, the Adventist friend called Hadja.

“I know it would be difficult for Maria to travel, but can you help her escape?” he said. “I will send money.”

Hadja promised to try. The Adventist friend contacted Jacob Gbale, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Guinea, who sent money for the car fare to Conakry, the capital.

Hadja saw her chance on a Friday morning while Mother was away on business. The witchdoctor left the house on an errand, and Hadja sent the watchman out to buy something at the store. Opening the gate of the compound, she hailed a passing car and paid the driver to take Maria and Mark to the church headquarters in Conakry.

As Maria and Mark traveled, a small commotion erupted at the church’s headquarters. The church watchman spotted a green, yellow, and brown snake in a mango tree by the front gate and called for help. But when other men arrived, the snake was nowhere to be found.

Later that day, Maria and her son arrived and were taken to a guest bedroom. The exhausted mother slept.

The next morning, on Sabbath, church elders anointed Maria and prayed for her at the church located on the compound. As they prayed, Maria fell to the floor unconscious. When she regained consciousness, she was confused, and her body ached. Michel Guilavogui, the

executive secretary and treasurer of the Adventist Church in Guinea, carried her back to the guest room to rest.

As she slept, a green, yellow, and brown snake slithered to her window and entered a hole in the wall, trying to find a way into the room. It was the snake from the mango tree. A church member noticed the three-foot (one-meter) snake and called for help.

A crowd gathered outside the window, trying to coax the snake out of the hole. Someone made a makeshift torch by placing a plastic bag doused in gasoline on the end of a wooden stick and lighting it. When he thrust the fiery stick into the hole, the snake leaped out and tumbled, writhing, to the ground. Michel jumped on the snake, crushing its head instantly.

Hours later, Maria’s cell phone rang with a call from an unknown number. She was afraid to answer, but the person kept calling back.

“If they keep calling you, it must be important,” a church friend said. “Answer it.”

The caller was Maria’s younger sister, Hadja. “I just wanted to tell you that you have time to get well,” she said. “I know that you will get well now.”

“Why do you say that?” Maria asked.

“Listen,” Hadja said. “Can you hear the sound of the ambulance?”

“Ambulance? What happened?” Maria said. “Did something happen to Mother?”

“No, not to Mother,” Hadja said. “The witchdoctor from Nigeria. He fell from the second floor of our house. He struck the ground headfirst and died instantly. His skull was crushed.”

The next day, Maria’s sores began to disappear.

Maria has given up everything for Jesus

— a luxurious home and successful shop, two cars, and a comfortable life. Mother still wants to kill her, so she and Mark are in hiding. But her love for Jesus is strong. She is praying about becoming a missionary to her people.

“I dream about seeing my people become Christian,” she said. “I want to talk to them about Jesus. I cannot keep this truth to myself. I must share the good news with my people.” 🌐

The Seventh-day Adventist Church faces enormous challenges in spreading the gospel in Guinea and other parts of the West-Central Africa Division. You can help people like Maria and Mark by giving to the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering today. Part of the money will be used to construct Kobaya Academy, a K–12 school in Conakry, Guinea, where Maria would like Mark to study one day. Your offering will also help build a school in Liberia and a medical center in Nigeria. Thank you

Story Tips

- The narrator doesn't need to memorize the story, but he or she should be familiar enough with the material so as not to have to read it.
- Adventist Mission is not identifying Maria by her real name to protect her safety. The photo shows her son, Mark. Hadja is a pseudonym.
- Pronounce Hadja as: ha-JA
- Pronounce Gbale as: g-ball-EE.
- Read more about Maria last week.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/maria-in-guinea).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/WAD-2020.

for remembering Maria, Mark, and the Adventist work in the West-Central Africa Division in your prayers.

By Andrew McChesney

Future Thirteenth Sabbath Projects

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in fourth quarter 2020 will help the Southern Asia Division to construct the following projects in India:

- Boys' dormitory, Garmar Academy, Rajanagaram, Andhra Pradesh state
- Five classrooms, Flaiz Adventist College, Rustumbada, Andhra Pradesh state
- Church building, Amritsar, Punjab state
- Church building, Ranchi, Jharkhand state
- Dormitory, Seventh-day Adventist School, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh state
- Second phase of school building at Roorkee Adventist College, Roorkee, Uttarakhand state
- New buildings for Central Kannada and Savanagar Tamil churches in Karnataka state
- Two classrooms, Seventh-day Adventist English High School, Azam Nagar, Karnataka state
- Boys' dormitory, E.D. Thomas Memorial Higher Secondary School, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu state
- Labs and library, Thirumala Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala state
- School building, Spicer Adventist University, Ahirewadi, Maharashtra state

Leader's Resources

Be sure to download your free Mission Spotlight video, featuring video reports from around the West-Central Africa Division and beyond. Download or stream from the Adventist Mission website at bit.ly/missionspotlight.

Online Information

Following are sources of information that may be helpful in preparing for the mission segment of Sabbath School. For more information on the cultures and history of the countries featured in this quarterly, visit:

Websites

Liberia: government website	bit.ly/LibGovt
World Travel Guide	bit.ly/WTGLiberia
Gabon: government website	bit.ly/GabGovt
Wanderlust	bit.ly/WLGabon
Guinea: government website	bit.ly/RepGuiGovt
Lonely Planet	bit.ly/LPGuinea
Seventh-day Adventist West-Central Africa Division	bit.ly/SDAWAD

An offering goal device will help focus attention on world missions and increase weekly mission giving. Determine a goal for your class's weekly mission offering. Multiply it by 14, allowing a double goal for the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

Remind your Sabbath School members that their regular weekly mission offerings will help the missionary work of the world church and that one quarter of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will go directly to the projects in the West-Central Africa Division. On the twelfth Sabbath, report on mission giving during the quarter. Encourage members to double or triple their normal mission giving on Thirteenth Sabbath. Count the offering and record the amount given at the end of Sabbath School.

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YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

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Thanks to the following organizers and interpreters: Alexis Ebe (Gabon), Blozo Jacob Gbale (Guinea), James M. Golay (Liberia), Michel Guilavogui (Guinea), Alexis Kouadio (WAD), Tony Ogouma (Gabon), Elie Weick-Dido (WAD).

Website: AdventistMission.org

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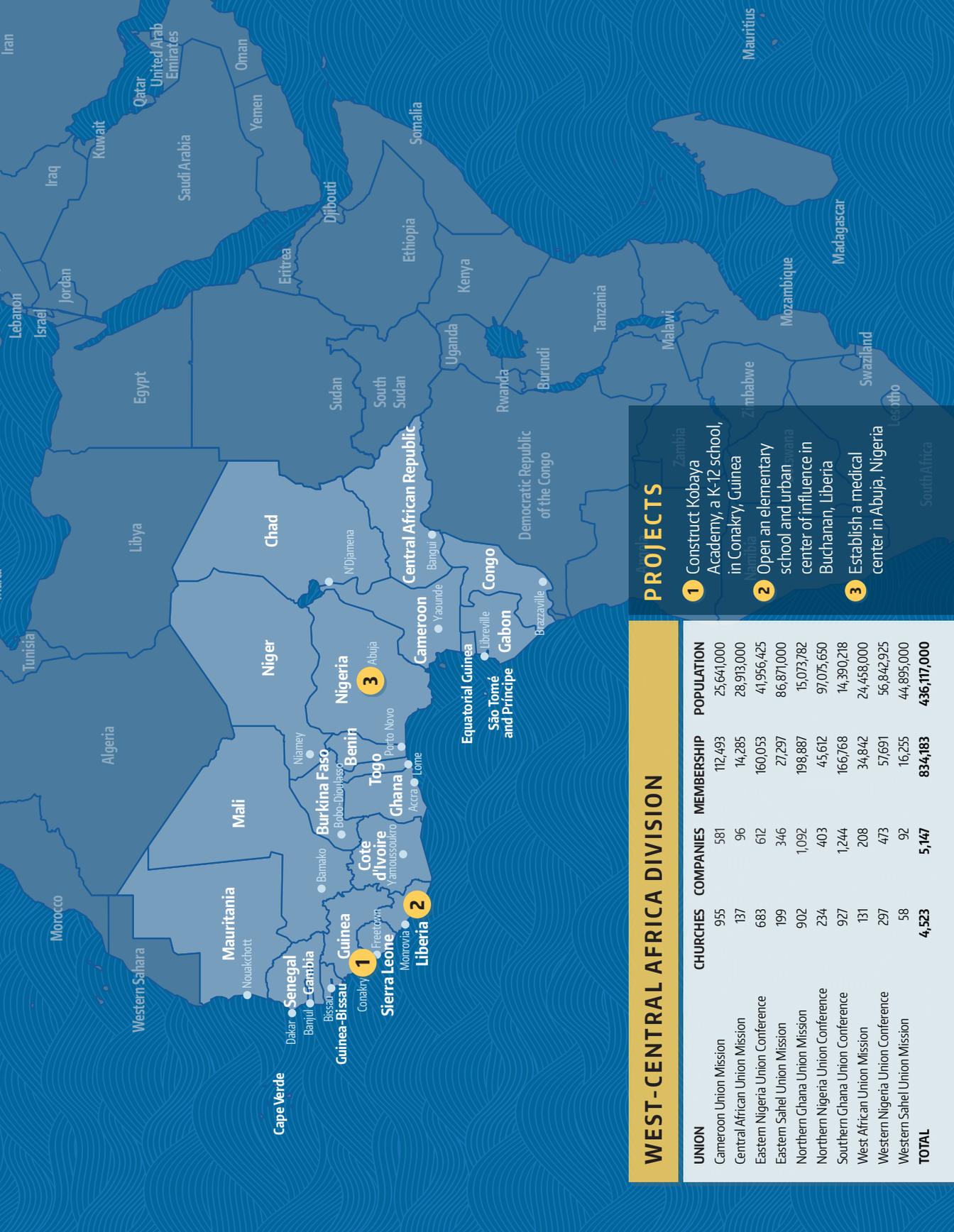
Printed in U.S.A.

Second Quarter 2020
Volume 109, Number 3

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WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION

UNION	CHURCHES	COMPANIES	MEMBERSHIP	POPULATION
Cameroon Union Mission	955	581	112,493	25,641,000
Central African Union Mission	137	96	14,285	28,913,000
Eastern Nigeria Union Conference	683	612	160,053	41,956,425
Eastern Sahel Union Mission	199	346	27,297	86,871,000
Northern Ghana Union Mission	902	1,092	198,887	15,073,782
Northern Nigeria Union Conference	234	403	45,612	97,075,650
Southern Ghana Union Conference	927	1,244	166,768	14,390,218
West African Union Mission	131	208	34,842	24,458,000
Western Nigeria Union Conference	297	473	57,691	56,842,925
Western Sahel Union Mission	58	92	16,255	44,895,000
TOTAL	4,523	5,147	834,183	436,117,000

PROJECTS

- 1 Construct Kobaya Academy, a K-12 school, in Conakry, Guinea
- 2 Open an elementary school and urban center of influence in Buchanan, Liberia
- 3 Establish a medical center in Abuja, Nigeria