

Nigeria

SIM's work in Nigeria includes involvement in theological education, outreach and discipleship, youth ministry and education.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. Numerically, Nigeria exceeds the estimated total population of all the West African countries. About half the population claims to follow the Christian faith.

Current SIM Ministry

Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation with 140 million people, and is one of its most influential countries. Though the country is rich in natural resources, most Nigerians are in economic distress. About 470 languages are spoken in Nigeria. English is the official language. The constitution guarantees religious freedom.



The founders of the 'Soudan Interior Mission' arrived in 1893, called to reach Nigeria's far north with the Gospel. Not until the late 1930s, however, was missionary work permitted in this area. A centre was established in central Nigeria in 1902. Since then, SIM has worked in over 30 Nigerian language groups. The Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), growing out of SIM's work, claims more than 6,000,000 worshippers. The church is engaged in theological education, medical work, radio, publishing, rural development, urban ministries, and cross-cultural missions. Over 1,600 missionaries from ECWA churches serve with ECWA's Evangelical Missionary Society (EMS), both within and outside Nigeria.



SIM Nigeria's goals include increasing the numbers of adequately supported Nigerian missionaries and motivating believers to get involved in evangelism. We seek ways to increase the number of pastors and church members who are involved in effective discipleship within their congregations. Increasing the numbers of competent Nigerian health workers committed to compassionate evangelistic witness is a goal, as is supporting the church's involvement in care for the suffering and marginalised, especially among AIDS patients and orphans. Finally, we are developing our capacity to support Nigerian missionaries.

In recent years SIM's work in Nigeria's far north has been neglected. We now wish to expand the SIM base there, to assist and support the work of the church in evangelism and discipleship. This is a challenge, given the area's climate and deeply Islamic traditions.



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SIM's Partner Church

In 1954, the SIM-related churches came together to form an indigenous body known as the Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA). In the following years, mission stations, Bible Schools, academic schools, and medical programmes transferred to ECWA leadership.

ECWA churches are growing rapidly throughout Nigeria, especially in the central regions, where some churches have experienced as much as 400% growth in the last several years. Even churches in the strong Islamic centres are growing steadily. Currently more than 5,000 congregations can be counted with an estimated attendance of over three million.

To supplement government publishing and retailing requirements in 1974, SIM literature ministry, including about 30 bookstores and the production of Today's Challenge magazine, was incorporated into an indigenous organisation called ECWA Productions Limited. On November 19, 1976, ECWA accepted responsibility for all remaining SIM ministries.

ECWA runs eight seminaries or Bible colleges and 15 theological training institutes. Need exists for Scripture translation into various local languages and for educated pastors and church leaders who can meet the spiritual needs of an increasingly educated church body.

Churches in the north frequently suffer severe opposition from the Muslim majority. The Evangelical Missionary Society (EMS) of ECWA has a burden to evangelise their country and the world. EMS has over 1,200 missionaries serving in unreached areas of Nigeria, surrounding African countries, the Middle East, Europe, and the US.

The big need of the church is for well-trained leaders who teach sound biblical principles that can be correctly applied to the believer's life. The church needs to be fully discipled and mobilised to reach the millions of people in Nigeria who don't know Jesus. Many indigenous unreached groups still need someone to take the gospel to them.

Unreached People

At least 120 unreached people groups exist in Nigeria. The rapid growth rate of many of the churches indicates that people are receptive. However, areas of strong resistance remain among Muslims in the north. Indications point to some Muslim groups, such as the [Fulani](#) and certain [Hausa](#) sub-groups, becoming more receptive to the message of Jesus.

History of Christianity

The first Christian contact in Nigeria occurred in the fifteenth century when the Portuguese introduced Roman Catholicism. However, it was virtually extinguished over the following 200 years until Roman Catholic missionaries returned in the 1800s. Since then, the Catholic Church has grown and now claims approximately 4,000,000 affiliates, mainly in the southeast.

The first Protestant missionaries to Nigeria were Wesleyan Methodists. They began work in the southwest among the Yoruba in 1842. The Methodist Church now has 160,000 adherents. Other Protestant groups followed: Church Missionary Society (evangelical Anglican), United Free Church of Scotland, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, and Southern Baptists (USA).

Over the last 100 years, several other missions have entered Nigeria: Qua Iboe Mission (Irish Presbyterian), Sudan United Mission, Synodical Conference of Lutheran Churches (now Evangelical Church of Nigeria), Salvation Army, Assemblies of God, and the Mennonite Church of North America.

SIM began work in Nigeria in 1893 when Walter Gowans, Thomas Kent, and Roland Bingham attempted to take the gospel inland. Gowans and Kent died within the first year; Bingham returned to Canada. In 1900, Bingham made a second journey to Nigeria, but this second venture failed due to sickness. In 1901, Bingham returned to Nigeria for a third time and began work among the Nupe tribe. By 1902 the first station was opened.

Since then SIM has pioneered in 30 language areas. Through medical ministries, much of the Islamic north has opened to the gospel. In 1954, the SIM-related churches came together to form an indigenous body known as the Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA). In the following years, mission stations, Bible Schools, academic schools, and medical programmes transferred to ECWA leadership.

All SIM missionaries in Nigeria entered a new role of partnership with ECWA in 1976. SIM missionaries help to train Nigerian leadership as well as aid in the task of reaching Nigerians with the gospel. A Memorandum of Understanding signed in February 1998 gives clarity and definition to the dynamic partnership between ECWA and SIM.

Please pray for

- God to be glorified as SIM and ECWA respond to the challenges of the unreached, HIV & AIDS, urbanisation, and Islam.
- the Lord to raise up an SIM team to work with ECWA in Nigeria's far north. the Lord to call more SIM missionaries committed to leadership training and evangelism through ECWA's theological institutions.
- the church to grow in vision and compassion for the poor, marginalised, and suffering.
- the increasing numbers of street children, orphans, and widows being reached through the City Ministries of EMS, that they will come to love Jesus.
- the Lord to send those he is calling into mission leadership, support services, and missionary children's education.

Opportunities

[Discipleship Coordinator](#)

[Ophthalmologist for ECWA Hospital Egbé](#)
[All Nigeria Opportunities](#)

Projects

[AIDS Widow and Orphan Bucket Project](#)

[ECWA Hospital Revitalisation, Nigeria](#)
[All Nigeria Projects](#)

Stories

[Mary Sunday's Merry Sunday](#)

[You call this work?](#)
[All Nigeria Stories](#)