

# Chad:

## Challenges for Prayer:

**The need for a stable and just government** is as urgent as ever. The current regime is noted for violence, corruption (Chad frequently picks up the dubious honor of being the world's most corrupt nation) and tribalism, heavily favoring the Zaghawa. The complex patchwork of tribes, and the ethnic and religious fault lines between north and south, makes stability hard to attain. The constant threat from bandits and rebel groups – from within Chad 400,000 refugees at its peak. This swelled the population but also brought in aid money being spent in and around refugee camps.

A secular state with freedom of religion. Muslims are dominant in government, trade and the army, though barely a majority in the country.

and from Darfur – further destabilizes the situation and hinders both socio-economic progress and Christian ministry. Pray for a government that is representative of both north and south, honest and committed to the betterment of all of its citizens.

**Freedom of religion** is a precious reality. The otherwise flawed regime at least attempts to preserve this, but it faces rebel threats that are often strongly Islamist and sponsored by foreign, hard line Islamic groups and nations. The south, previously victim of marginalization, is increasingly courted as a counterbalance to this threat. Pray that, while current freedoms still exist, Christians might fully utilize the opportunities.

**The ascendancy of Islam** has increased in the last three decades. It's numerical, financial and social advantages are used to consolidate its dominant position, and animist peoples are being steadily Islamized. Increasing numbers of Muslim northerners are found in the south, with mosques and Muslim schools built in predominantly Christian areas to serve them. Pray for:

**a) *The overcoming of many emotional, cultural and historical barriers*** to southerners witnessing to Muslims. Most Christians are ill-equipped and somewhat ill-disposed when it comes to sharing the gospel with Muslims, since they are used to operating in tribal languages and ministering to animist peoples. Many resent and fear the economic impact and influence of northern Muslim traders and the environmental impact of northern Muslim herdsman and their herds.

**b) *Agencies and denominations*** that have a vision for Muslim outreach. Other, usually more urgent, issues tend to be higher on the agendas of national churches. But the long-term strategic importance of equipping the Church to withstand Islamization and to reach out to Muslims cannot be overstated. Mobilization and training in how to sensitively and effectively reach Muslims are clear needs; pray for Christians to be burdened for the salvation of their Muslim countrymen.

**The Church needs uplifting in prayer**, especially regarding the following issues:

**a) *African traditional religions*** are resurgent in the country, partly as an attempt to return to African roots. Tribal initiation rites are becoming a divisive issue for Christians. Pray also for liberation from all bondages by a deep working of the Holy Spirit in every congregation.

**b) *The deception of the sects and secret societies.*** Groups such as Rosicrucians, Masons and other specifically African quasi-Christian groups seek to lead Chadians astray. Pray for solid teaching that will enable Christians to discern between truth and lies.

**c) *Nominalism*** is a challenge, even in Chad. Good discipleship and teaching are the antidote

to this.

**d) Tribalism and petty legalisms** cripple many congregations. Tribal rivalries and resentments (especially south-north) prevent Christian witness.

**e) Unity.** While most Protestant and Independent groups are evangelical, unity within and among denominations is under strain. Pray for the EEMET (Evangelical Alliance) and the Pentecostal Alliance as both attempt to unite Christians.

**f) Vision for outreach.** Ambitious, countrywide goals have dissipated, and some initiatives that had notable impact in the past have faded almost to nothing. Churches need to gain a passion for ministry that includes praying and giving as well as outreach.

Pray for God to raise up catalysts who will spur Chad's Christians to greater depths of faith and a greater commitment to the unevangelized.

**Training of leaders** remains a major challenge. Poverty, instability, violence, poor communication and lack of both financial wherewithal and management hinder training of pastors and evangelists. Pray for the Shalom Evangelical School of Theology in N'Djamena (ESTES), the Apostolic Bible School ESDRAS, CoG Bible Institute and several Christian Assemblies (ACT) schools. The Bible Training Centre (CFBP/RE) focuses on developing lay leaders and those who lack the education or time for formal theological training. Full-time biblical studies are a huge commitment when finances are miniscule and encouragement from local churches is low.

**The least-evangelized.** There are more unreached peoples in Chad than in any other African country. A number of agencies, cooperating admirably, are making progress with previously unreached peoples. The major people-cluster challenges:

**a) The Saharan peoples** (all Sunni Muslims) are politically dominant. They live predominantly in the northern deserts, Tibesti Mountains, northern shores of Lake Chad and the larger towns. Efforts by **TEAM** and one or two others to reach them are still in the early stages of progress. Only a handful of Christians are known in these groups, who are among Africa's least evangelized.

**b) The Guera-Naba** cluster live between N'Djamena and the Guera Mountains and are almost entirely Muslim. They include the Bilala, Kuka and Medogo – collectively known to some as the Lisi. There are some agencies beginning work among them.

**c) The 21 smaller people groups** from the Chadic cluster. They are concentrated in the Guera Mountains. Rapid Islamization is occurring (although they also retain much of their animism). The Evangelical Assemblies (AET) are the main church in this area. Some peoples related to these 21 groups are solidly Christian, and they have a force of 40-plus village evangelists and local missionaries. **WBT** is involved in several translation projects among these peoples.

**d) The Ouaddai-Fur** peoples are Muslim and live in the eastern provinces bordering Sudan. They are a major challenge – variety of languages, harsh living conditions, lack of roads, violence and upheaval from Darfur. This is one of the least evangelized areas of Africa. French-Swiss AMI and **WEC** pioneered this area, but only among the Maba and Masalit has work been established with a few small groups of Muslim Background Believers. None of these 19 peoples have been properly reached with the gospel.

**e) The Sara-Bagirmi.** The Barma (linguistically closely related to the Bilala) were pioneered by **WEC**, the Lutheran Brethren and **AIM**, but there are only a handful of known believers. To their east, along the Chari River, live a medley of smaller people groups; some have been pioneer evangelized by **EET-AIM**, but much work remains to be done.

**f) The Shuwa Arabs.** Some are urbanized, some rural and some nomadic or semi-nomadic. They are influential in Chad; theirs is the main language of communication in the country. Little outreach is directed specifically toward them; **WEC** is attempting to make some beginnings.

**g) The Adamawa Fulbe and the nomadic Mbororo Fulbe** are responding to the gospel in the south, but much more needs to be done.

**h) N'Djamena,** the only city in the country and the nation's focal point. The city and outlying areas account for around one million people. Most of Chad's ethnic groups can be found – and evangelized – here. There are a host of congregations in N'Djamena, most focusing on their own ethnicity. There are also several French-language, multi-ethnic churches. AMI has a work

among street children, and the **IMB** and others have a well-regarded study and culture centre that serves as a platform for a variety of ministries. Pray for missionaries working in N'Djamena and for others to be called. Pray also for the thousands of Christians in N'Djamena – for their effective witness and for the calling of some to cross-cultural outreach.

*i) Refugees from Darfur* number up to 250,000. Most are from the Ouaddai-Fur peoples, many of whom are disillusioned with Islam. Their situation will likely persist for some years to come and presents an unprecedented opportunity for many to know Christ.

**Ministry to young people.** Only larger urban churches have much ministry specifically for young people. Many Christian students are affiliated with *Union des Jeunes Chrétiens* (UJC/IFES), which has groups in two universities and 60 high schools. UJC has been used to pioneer student movements in many other Francophone African countries. **CCCI** is very active in Chad, as are SU, the Navigators and independent evangelists, ministering to both young people and students. The great need is for suitable literature, disciplers and trainers of leaders.

**Missionary work** continues despite the upheavals of the last three decades. Great needs remain for missions to continue and grow in the areas of church planting, evangelism, Bible translation, Bible teaching, leadership development and holistic ministry that will uplift and enable the national Church. Pray for missionaries with a pioneer spirit, perseverance in language and culture acquisition, and endurance to minister in hard places.

*a) Foreign missions.* The main groups work together under the EET Church in an organization called COCOAM. Present member missions: **TEAM**, **WEC**, AMI, Vision Africa, **AIM**, MEDAF. Other missions include **WBT**, Frontiers, **MAF** (with two planes), EMET and **IMB**. Numbers of workers have declined in almost every agency; pray that this may be offset by the emergence of Chadian workers meeting the needs rather than those needs going unaddressed. There are many needs and opportunities: Bible translation, radio, HIV/AIDS education, leadership training, preaching, administration, evangelism, community health education, women's ministry and a vernacular Bible school, just to name a few.

*b) Indigenous missions.* A small but growing number of Chadian missionaries are involved in pioneer church planting and Bible translation. The *Centre de Formation Missionnaire* (CFM) exists to prepare Chadians for cross-cultural mission. Pray for such centers to increase; pray for the students' provision and training. SMEET is the national mission agency that is part of the EET. **YWAM** has a training centre for Chadians wishing to become missionaries. There is encouraging vision in Chad's churches to send out workers; the greatest challenge is for these missionaries to remain focused on cross-cultural mission rather than to become pastors of groups of Christians from southern Chad.

#### **Christian specialized ministries:**

*a) Bible translation and literacy programs.* Pray for rapid progress and for Chadian believers called to these ministries. The Chadian organization ATALTRAB (**WBT**) is assuming a greater share of the remaining work as well as giving literacy training to Christian peoples who have Bibles but do not use them (many Christians are illiterate). There are 22 Scripture translation projects currently active. The whole Bible is available in only 12 of Chad's 120-plus languages. The NT in Chadian Arabic (Chad's most widely used language) is nearing completion, and OT work is well underway. Pray for the ministry of the large **WBT** team, The Bible Society (particularly distribution) and for the key contributions of **WEC**, **AIM**, **TEAM** and others.

*b) The **JESUS film**,* widely used in Arabic, is also available in 11 other languages. The Chadian Arabic version is well received.

*c) **GRN*** has prepared Christian audio resources in 104 languages and dialects, working from a base in Northern Cameroon. Many more recordings and languages are planned. Audio Scripture Ministries, Faith Comes By Hearing and Megavoice also contribute to this vital work, made all the more strategic by the oral culture and low literacy rates. Pray that these recordings may be widely and effectively used.

**d) Story Telling.** The transmission of biblical truth through the development of series of stories (and occasionally songs or poems) is culturally appropriate and being greeted with great enthusiasm by several peoples and language groups.

**e) Radio** is the medium of choice in Chad. Local Christian radio – run entirely by nationals – is very well received in the capital. Pray for an expansion into other locations. Pray for more materials and contributors, especially for programs in the languages of the unreached. Pray also for finances; at this early stage, the projects run on the tiniest of budgets. TV beamed from abroad may become the primary medium of the future, but as of now, radio still retains primacy.

**f) Medical ministry** is vital in Chad – both a huge opportunity and a challenge. From primary healthcare for the poor and refugees, to raising awareness and care related to HIV/AIDS, to Christian-run hospitals, the opportunities to be a blessing and a witness to the peoples of Chad, although very difficult, must be taken up, both by expat and by national believers.