

Kenya:

Challenges for Prayer:

Kenya's long-term stability cannot be taken for granted. Droughts in the north caused the deaths of 80% of the livestock, and the decrease of pasturelands causes violent clashes among various ethnic groups claiming the resources. Fragile ecosystems, overdue land reform, widening gaps between rich and poor, increasingly scarce water, rapidly expanding urban slums and burgeoning populations of street children/AIDS orphans all point to future tensions. Many of these issues were components of the ethnic violence and political crisis of 2007-08. Pray for peace, for wise governance and for practical solutions that can be implemented effectively.

Corruption is rampant and systemic – this in a country whose population is 82% “Christian”! Task forces are targeting corruption, but it is so entrenched that terrorists and international drug traffickers use Kenya as a key hub. Corruption within the state mechanisms themselves must be cleaned up before anything else can be. A just and honest government that will uplift the poor and punish the wicked is vital for Kenya to move forward.

Political issues increasingly impact the churches. Examples are intimidation of the press, human rights abuses, ethnic discrimination and, above all, the controversial points in the new constitution. Christianity is increasingly politicized as many churches seek to transform Kenyan politics with new parties and fresh vision. Pray that all Christians might unite in opposing wrong and in upholding policies that honor God. Pray for gifted, holy and accountable believers to be appointed to positions of influence in the nation.

Waves of church growth and renewal have impacted the nation deeply. The East African Revival (1948-1960) made a deep and lasting impression on the Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. This revival was quenched by legalism, divisions, materialism and personality clashes. More recent growth in evangelical/Pentecostal churches (both international and indigenous) is massive. One of the largest groups is the Africa Inland Church, birthed from the missionary input of AIM. Charismatic renewal beyond Pentecostal churches is remarkable – this movement has impacted 33% of Catholics and 25% of Anglicans.

Long-term and rapid growth in churches has brought significant challenges:

a) Nominalism is a major issue, even among evangelicals/Pentecostals. Attendance nationally is only 7%, less than one-tenth of all Christians. Establishing effective means of discipleship is a huge need as increasing numbers associate themselves with the Church, yet with no true spiritual growth in their lives.

b) The recent explosion of Independent churches. These churches are able to grow and multiply rapidly, but many are single congregations with minimal or no accountability. This presents dangers in financial and theological integrity; many adopt syncretistic practices or unbiblical beliefs and practices. Pray for their integration into biblical faith and church networks.

c) Tribalism, “kingdom building” and multiplied denominations cause divisions. Pray for biblical unity that transcends culture and personalities.

d) The need for trained leaders for the more than 80,000 congregations gives cause for concern. Over 70 institutions train Christian workers for ministry. All major denominations have training centers. The Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (300 students, including a PhD level), the Pan African Christian University and Daystar University serve all of Anglophone Africa. Yet these academic programs are insufficient to address the sheer numbers needing to be trained. TEE programs abound, but pray for grassroots training programs, such as Langham Preachers Seminars, that aim to ground leaders in the Word and to help them lead and plant truly biblical, truly African churches.

Mission's vision has significantly altered Kenya's church scene. A large and increasing number of Kenyans are serving cross-culturally within Kenya or abroad, with agencies such as Horn of Africa Mission, but the potential is so much greater. For prayer:

a) *The clarion call to see a church accessible* to every person, community and people group in Kenya was championed by Vision 2010, but results of this nationwide initiative are not yet known. Churches are very unevenly distributed throughout Kenya.

b) *Finish the Task/Afriserve* has been making the Church aware of the least reached within Kenya since the late 1990s. It continues to raise awareness, prayer and workers for completing the effective evangelization of Kenya.

c) *The African Centre for Missions (ACM)*, opened in 2000, mobilizes for cross-cultural missions by training trainers, missionaries and mission pastors. ACM is a collaboration of several major denominations, the **AEA** and others.

d) *For churches, denominations, Bible schools and seminaries* to make the Great Commission a key part of their spiritual DNA. Kenya has the capacity to send many more missionaries, especially to the needy Horn of Africa region.

Foreign missions have seen great fruit in Kenya, but their role is changing. Since Kenyans are clearly capable of leading national ministries, expats focus more on partnering with nationals in pioneer outreach, Bible teaching and service ministries. Many agencies have supportive, global or regional ministries in Kenya – hence the large missionary population. Some major agencies: **AIM, AoG, IMB, Diguna, WGM, BBF, CC/CC, DMG, FIDA.**

Major sectors of the population needing specialized ministry:

a) *Young people.* The majority of Kenyans are children, so children and youth ministries are of utmost importance. **CEF** has more than 40 full-time workers committed to children's ministry. **SU** has a great impact on primary and secondary students. **FOCUS(IFES)** operates in over 40 universities and colleges. **FOCUS** disciples, trains and mobilizes students and graduates for ministry, having sent 15 abroad as missionaries. Over 1,000 university students recently committed themselves to missions.

b) *HIV/AIDS sufferers* – around 500 pass away every day due to AIDS, despite the halting of the infection rate. Much of the very public campaign to reduce infection rates is built on a

platform of fidelity and abstinence. The Anglican Church recently apologized to all who suffer from AIDS for previously shunning those with HIV. Pray that Christians may lead in ministry in this area; pray also for those who suffer and for the hundreds of thousands of orphans left behind.

c) *The large numbers of city slum dwellers,* including over 100,000 street children or orphaned householders. Several ministries work among them; pray for ways to minister to all aspects of these children's lives.

Islam is an increasing challenge. The coast and the NW have been Muslim for centuries. Islam is still a relatively small minority, but it is growing in size and ambition. Muslims seek to Islamize the regions where they are prevalent, to implement shari'a law, to increase their presence in civil services and the government and to convert non-Muslims through financial inducements. Christian-Muslim tension is at an unprecedented level, and violent outbreaks are increasingly common. Although there are many converts from Islam to Christianity, they are subject to harassment, persecution and violence. Pray for peace between the communities, for those ministering to Muslims and for truth-seekers to find the Messiah.

Less-evangelized peoples – 4-5% of Kenya's population are least-reached or unreached peoples. In the last 15 years, major progress has been made in reaching the unevangelized.

Nearly every group has been adopted or targeted by Kenyan and foreign Christian groups, and FTT has identified the least reached. Pray for:

a) The largely pastoral, animistic peoples of the north and west, who are increasingly responding to the gospel – the Turkana (15% Christian), Pokot (15%), Endo (15%), Sabaot (2%), Rendille (0.2%), Samburu (0.5%), Daasenach (0.9%) – through the ministry of AIC/ AIM, Anglicans and many others. Thank God, and pray for well-led, culturally appropriate churches to be established. The well-known Maasai are now 25% Christian.

b) The Muslim Oromo-related peoples of the northeast – the Borana and related Njemps (Chamus), also the Garreh-Ajuran, Orma, Malakote and Munyoyaya. There are churches among only the Njemps (1.5% Christian, but already sending evangelists to other peoples) and the Borana (less than 1% Christian).

c) The Khoisan (Bushman-related) peoples, which include the Boni, Dahalo and Dorobo (8 subgroups). These small, spread-out peoples are largely hunter-gatherers and adhere mainly to traditional religions.

d) The Mijikenda peoples of the coastal hills. The beliefs of the Giriama, Duruma, Chonyi and Pokomo(2) are mixed traditional and Muslim, but they also have a large minority of Christians. The Digo, Segeju and Bajun are almost entirely Muslim. Pray for those seeking to reach them.

e) The coastal Swahili and Arab populations, which are strongly Muslim and largely unreached. They tend to be quite resistant to outreach. Some Kenyan churches now minister to these groups; pray for a testimony of truth, power and love.

f) The Somali in the northeast and in cities. Instability in Somalia has driven tens of thousands of these people into Kenya, bringing their strife with them but also making them more accessible to the gospel. Numerous Christian workers (AIC/AIM, SIM, CBIM, Baptists, Sheepfold Ministries and Mennonites) are reaching the Somali in Kenya, especially through holistic ministry. Somali Christians number perhaps a few hundred.

g) The Asian community is Muslim, Hindu, Jain, Parsee and Sikh. They are prominent in trading and private industries, but feel insecure amid Kenya's struggling economy. AIM, Christar and Sheepfold Ministries work among them. ASCKEN (Asian-African Concern Kenya) is a partnership of Asian, African and international ministries seeking to reach all of East Africa's Asian population. Several churches have been planted, but, in general, African churches have not yet picked up the missional challenge of Kenya's Asians.

Bibles and Bible translation. Most languages have Scripture portions, and 16 indigenous languages have the whole Bible. Pray for the invaluable work of The Bible Society (UBS) and of SIL and the related, but indigenous, work of Bible Translation & Literacy. Together they handle most of the translation, printing and distribution of Scripture, as well as the demanding task of increasing literacy to maximize the impact of the translated Word.

Support ministries:

a) Aid programs – through many agencies such as Tearfund, WVI, Food for the Hungry and others – have become more vital as drought and famine intensify. Pray for those involved in this difficult ministry that opens hearts to receive the love of Christ.

b) MAF (with 79 staff and 7 aircraft) serves the region from its base in Nairobi, flying to many parts of East Africa and northeast Congo-DRC. This ministry enables much Christian work in the poorest and most remote regions that would otherwise be impossible. All aspects of ministry are supported – humanitarian, evangelism, biblical teaching and others. AIM-Air also has an extensive flying program in the region.

c) GRN has recordings available in 75 languages.

d) The JESUS film is widely shown and is in 30 languages with a further two in process.

e) Christian broadcast media. Many Christian programs are aired on radio and TV networks both nationally (Pentecostals) and from abroad (FEBA, IBRA, TWR). Broadcasts in English and Swahili dominate programming, but programs in about 15 other languages are also available.

Nairobi is a strategic hub for ministry in Africa and beyond. Many international Christian organizations have continental offices based here. The Ecumenical AACC (All Africa Conference of Churches), the **AEA** (Association of Evangelicals of Africa) and PACLA are a few of these. **AEA** plays a key role in promoting evangelical unity and ministries in theology, training, literature and fellowship. Pray for this key work and its extension throughout Africa.