



THE LUMIÈRE PROJECT

Bringing Light to French-Speaking Africa



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The Lumière Project plans to plant more than 3,300 churches in French-speaking Africa in just 5 years!



A congregation in Benin

Just over two years ago at this time, OneHope French African country leaders came together for a time of prayer and planning. The Spirit was moving in ways I could not have imagined, and our ministry partners came back to me with an audacious faith goal. They said they wanted to unite to plant 3,300 churches across ten countries over the next five years!

I remember my surprise, but I also remember the excitement. Any doubts I might have had were erased by the God-given confidence of our team led by dear brother, Jim Byh.

I know God's hand has been on this initiative since day one. We couldn't have pursued this dream without His guidance. God has been faithful to meet our needs at every turn. It has been incredible to see pastors and missionaries take hold of the vision and rise up to be part of the initiative. They are committed to seeing young people, their families, and entire communities transformed by the power of God's Word.

I'm inspired by our partners because these aren't easy areas. French-speaking West Africa is one of the last places where open evangelism efforts can legally take place in the Islamic World. In many parts of this region, the name of Jesus is not known and the full truth of the Gospel has never been presented. Even if people have an awareness of Jesus, the Gospel is weakened by the influence of Islam and animism.

Yet, despite these challenges, the harvest is plentiful! We have already seen more than 400 churches planted—with the majority of new congregations in animist-dominated areas. God's Word is penetrating the darkness and giving children the opportunity to experience the hope of the Gospel!

Reading through this report, you will see how much we have to celebrate.

The research confirms the vision and the strategy. Churches are not only being planted, but they are growing and thriving! Current data supports that this mission is in fact achievable, and in many aspects, groundbreaking. Upon completion, this project may represent the largest research study ever conducted on church plants in such a remote region of the world.

When Jim passed away so unexpectedly earlier this year, I couldn't help but wonder what the long-term effect would be on his friends and co-laborers for Christ, as well as for the Lumière Project as a whole. It is to his credit, and to the glory of God, that the teams of church planters have carried on this vision more strongly than ever. This is truly not the work or dream of any one man—but of the Holy Spirit!



Rob Hoskins
President, OneHope





INTRODUCTION

Sharing the Light of all Mankind with Francophone Africa

In the book of Acts, God reveals His incredible vision to expand His Church. Through Paul we see how a faithful follower of Christ, in loving obedience, shared the **Light of all Mankind** with a lost world. Just as importantly, Paul worked to equip and encourage new followers so they could replicate his work and plant new churches to continue to expand the Kingdom.

The Lumière Project is a OneHope initiative to continue this work. The effort will take the Light of the World into French-speaking Africa by planting over 3,300 churches in 10+ countries from 2015 to 2020. As of May 2016, church planting activities were already underway in nine of those Francophone nations.

The foundation of the Lumière church-planting model lies in our partnerships with existing African churches and in the use of OneHope resources, such as *The GodMan* film and *God's Big Story* program as tools for evangelism and discipleship. Partner churches who have a vision for church planting identify communities with the greatest need. They then appoint and equip pastors or lay leaders to spearhead evangelism efforts and, in some cases, lead the new congregations.

Occasionally, the Lumière team identifies areas in need of the Gospel where there is no partner church to provide support. In these cases, the evangelism efforts are initiated and led by the Lumière team until a local pastor can be raised up.

Initial evangelism efforts center around an outreach event involving a screening of *The GodMan* film. Since the majority of the church-planting targets are located in rural areas, *The GodMan* may be the first movie these children and their families have ever seen!

“In him was life, and that life was the **light** of all mankind. The **light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:4-5)



OneHope Programs in Use



The GodMan film

OneHope's computer-animated film that shares the life and death of Christ. Available in 72 languages and customized for 10 different cultural worldviews.



God's Big Story

A program that helps children learn the overarching story of Scripture even if they can't read or write. Consists of 16 illustrated cards that each share a Bible story and a teacher's manual that equips an adult to facilitate the program.

Alongside the film, the Lumière team shares the Gospel message, invites viewers to accept Jesus into their lives, and may even pray for healing and deliverance. Many people are moved to follow Christ after viewing *The GodMan*.

This group of new believers becomes the foundation for a new church that can serve the local community and advance the Gospel message. OneHope supports these church-planting efforts by training workers and providing vital materials, such as movie projectors, generators, printed resources, and even the motorcycles necessary to transport the team and equipment.

Since a next-generation focus is vital to growing the Church, as well as fulfilling OneHope's own mission, children's ministry is a major focus of the Lumière Project. Through national and local training sessions, children's ministry volunteers are equipped to walk alongside children in their journey of faith using OneHope programs such as *God's Big Story*.

Since it was founded in 1987, OneHope has been focused on transforming the eternal lives of children and youth around the world through God's Word. As an outcome-based ministry, research is key to our efforts, as we consider the spiritual needs of young people—and the communities in which they live—around the world.



A rural village in Niger

Overcoming Opposition in Jesus' Name

The Lumière Project is planting churches in areas where the name of Christ has never been proclaimed. However, the task is not always easy.

In a hard-to-reach area of Francophone Africa, one village was identified by *The GodMan* evangelism team because it was immersed in the darkness of voodoo and had never allowed Christian outreach to be conducted. Called by God, a Lumière evangelist visited the village, but he was beaten up and turned out by the local voodoo leaders.

The church-planting team prayed fervently for guidance and still felt God's call to reach these people. Bravely and obediently, they returned to the village. When the team arrived, they found that the land designated for their church plant had been desecrated with witchcraft charms in an effort to discourage their work.

Undaunted, the team burned the fetishes and continued with their plan to show *The GodMan* film that night and invite people to follow Christ. God moved powerfully and people committed their lives to Jesus! The next day, when the team returned, they noticed that a large voodoo ritual site nearby had few worshipers. In place of the 100 people who usually gathered to make ritual sacrifices, only two or three remained. However, many were waiting at the church for the team's return!



People wait for an evening screening of *The GodMan* film to start in a village in Benin.



ILLUMINATING THE RESULTS

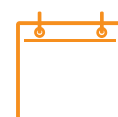
Measuring the progress of each church plant is an integral component of the Lumière Project. Over the life of the five-year initiative, the Lumière team will gather and aggregate quantitative, qualitative, and anecdotal data with a goal to monitor and document church plant successes and, in some cases, setbacks. It's a big undertaking!

Upon completion, this research may represent the largest study conducted on church plants in such a remote region.

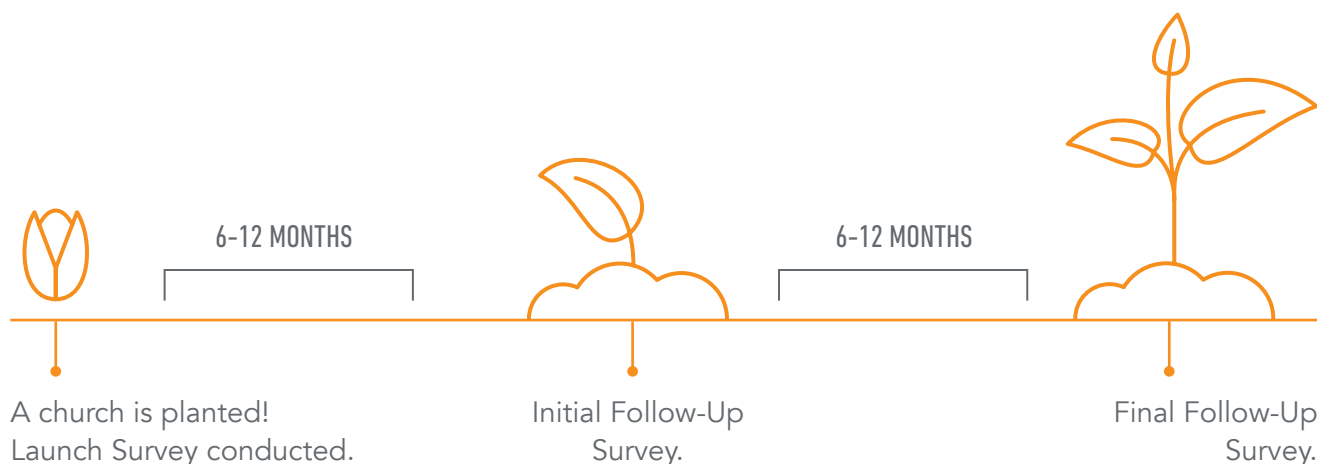
Analysis confirms the number of churches planted, impact of children's and/or youth ministry programs, the health of the new churches, as well as the successes, challenges, and needs facing the congregations and their pastors.

These success metrics, reflecting both initial and long-term accomplishments, are collected through a series of three surveys and through interviews that are completed as a joint effort by the Lumière team leader and the new pastor or lay leader.

In general, the Launch Survey is conducted when each church is planted. An Initial Follow-Up Survey is conducted 6 to 12 months later and a Final Follow-Up Survey in another 6-12 months.



Surveys are submitted each May & November.





Understanding the Fledgling Churches

In 2015, 188 churches were planted in nine countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Togo. From January 2016 through May 2016, 216 more churches were planted in these nations.

In the first 17 months of the *Lumière Project*, 404 churches were planted across Francophone Africa.

Understanding the local landscape and community framework allows the larger Church to better support these and future church plants. This information is captured in a baseline questionnaire, our Launch Survey, which is conducted after the congregation's first church service.

The results in the next section of this report are based on the Launch Surveys for most of the churches that were planted through May 2016. While the goal is to survey every new church, some churches planted prior to the end of May had not yet been surveyed.

Topics covered in the Launch Survey



Cultural Context:

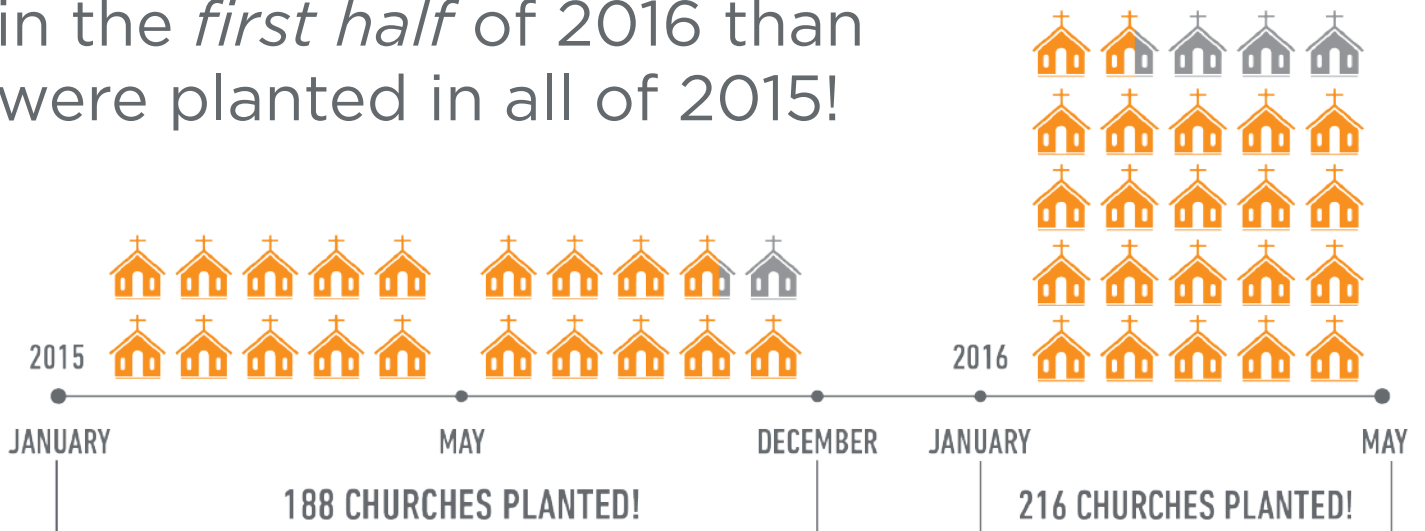
- Geographic zone
- Type of community
- Local religion(s)
- Language



Church Identity:

- Opening day attendance
- Parent church
- Church leader responsibilities
- Denomination

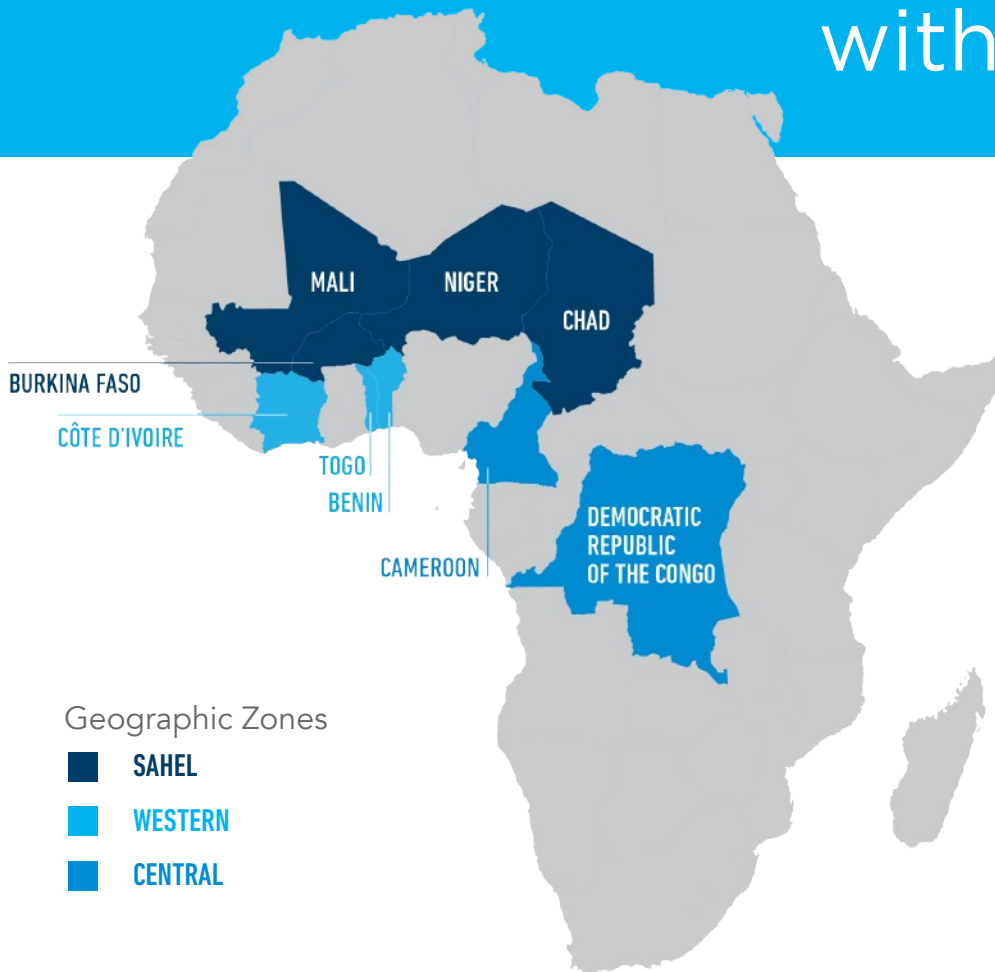
More churches were planted in the *first half* of 2016 than were planted in all of 2015!





CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Lumière Project plans to reach nearly 20 million French-speaking Africans with the Gospel.



These 9 nations in Francophone Africa cover nearly 3 million square miles of largely rural, undeveloped areas, including villages that are unmapped and often without street names. The difficulties in accessing these areas are immense. Taking the Gospel message to them is even more challenging!

As part of our church-planting strategy, OneHope categorized the Francophone region into three geographic zones: Sahel, Western and Central. While there is great diversity among these countries, the nations in each zone tend to share some cultural, religious and linguistic similarities. A significant number of new churches are being planted in all three zones.

Number of churches planted as of May 2016



SAHEL: 132



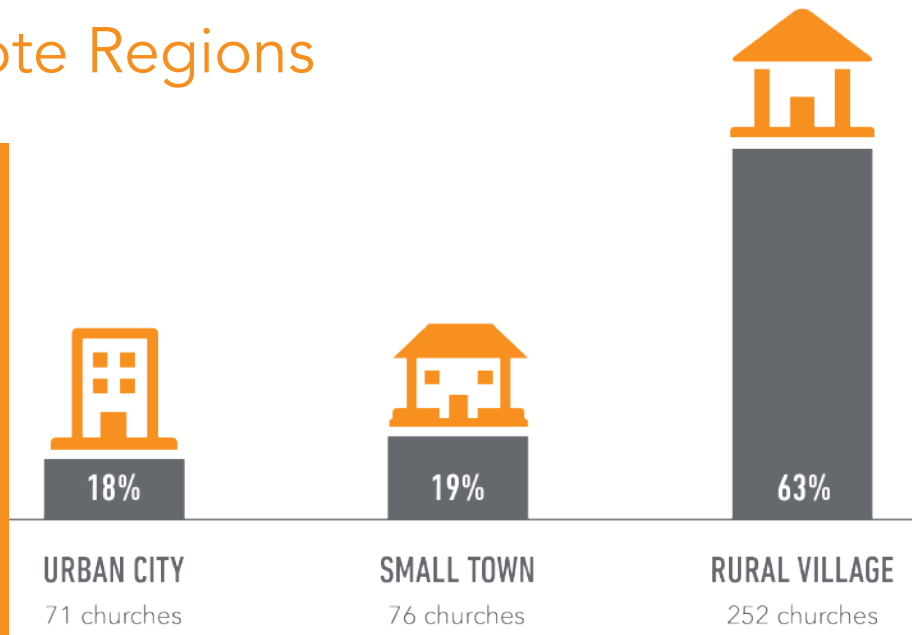
WESTERN: 180



CENTRAL: 92

Reaching Remote Regions

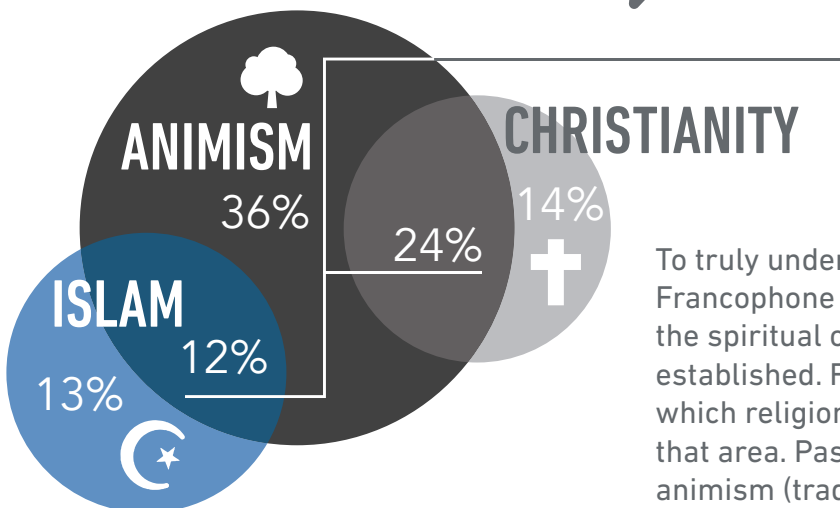
63% of the new churches were planted in *rural settings*—areas with the greatest need for the Gospel.



* Five churches did not report details about their location in the survey.

Christianity was the primary local religion for only 14% of the planted churches.

72% of churches were planted in areas where Animism was the predominant local religion.

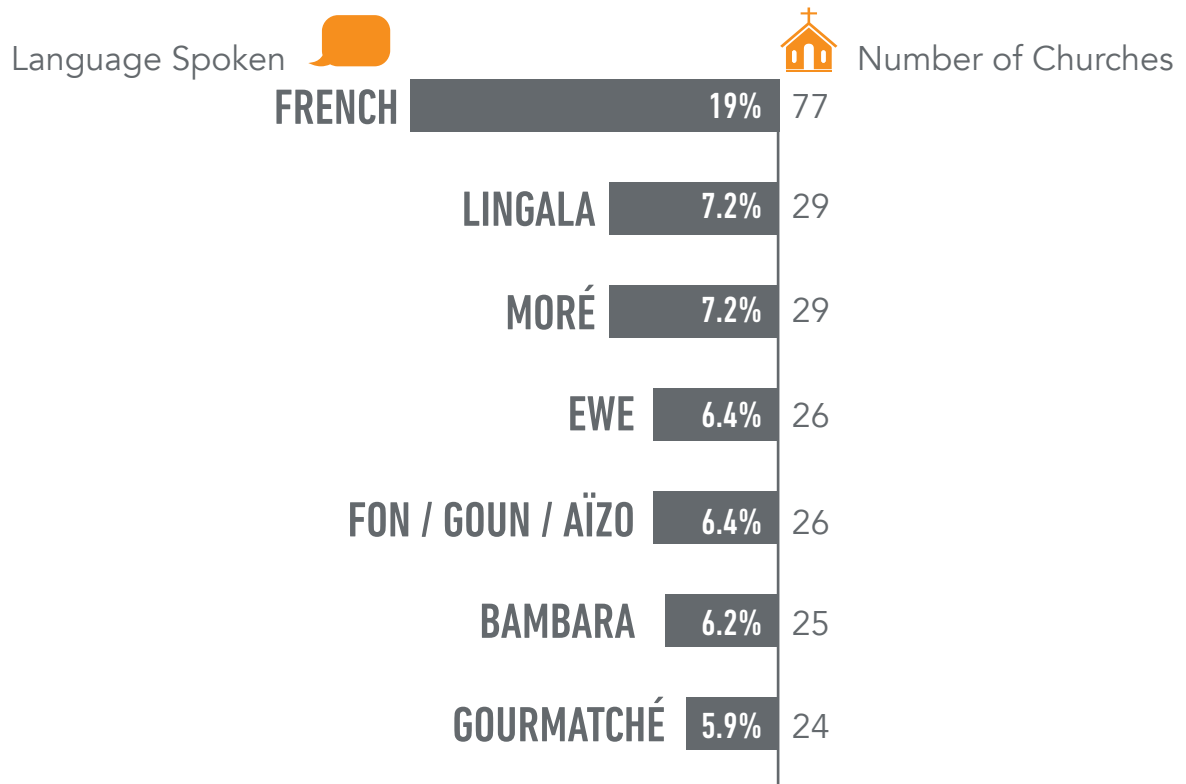


To truly understand the impact of a church plant in Francophone Africa, it is important to understand the spiritual context of the region in which it is being established. For this, the survey asked pastors to report which religion is observed by the majority of people in that area. Pastors could choose from five main responses: animism (traditional religion), Christianity, Islam, or a combination of either Christianity and animism or Islam and animism.

* Local religion unknown for 6 churches

In Every Tongue

The new churches include a great diversity of languages which reflect a wide variety of ethnic groups. French is the primary language in 77 of the churches. The next six most frequently identified languages represent the primary languages of 159 of the church plants. Over half (45) of the 71 identified languages were named by only three or fewer churches as their primary language.



There are approximately 71 different primary languages spoken across the 404 new churches.





A Jubilant Beginning

Combined, the 404 new churches celebrated the attendance of 13,275 adults and 19,230 young people at their opening services in the first 17 months of the Lumière Project! Children and teens accounted for over half (59%) of the overall church attendance, which is reflective of the general population ratio of young people in these nine nations.

More than 32,000 people attended opening-day worship services in one of the 404 church plants!



13,275 adults

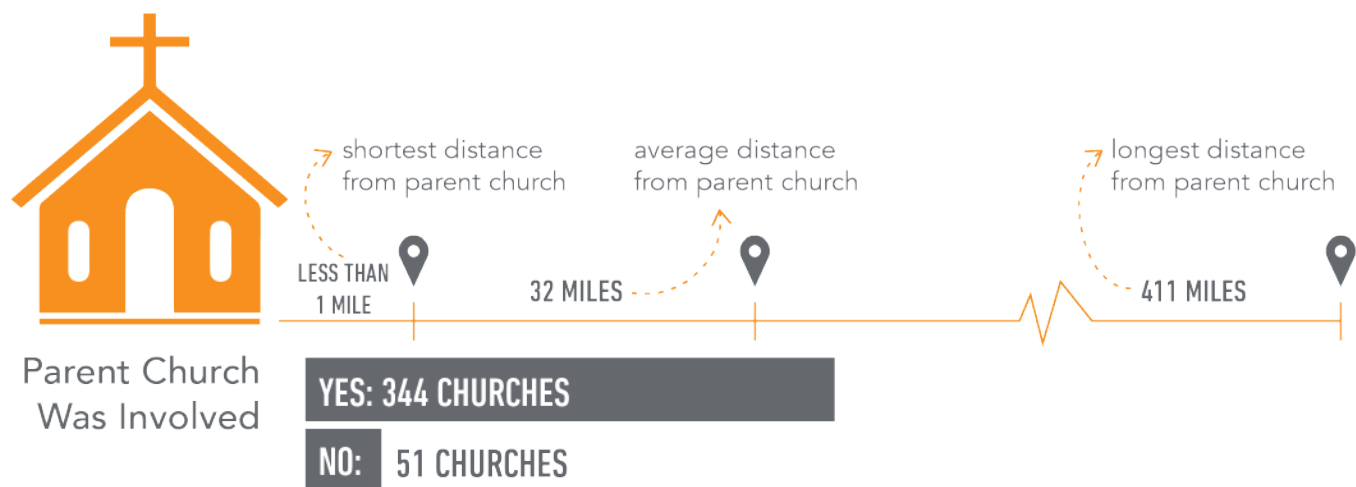


19,230 children/teens



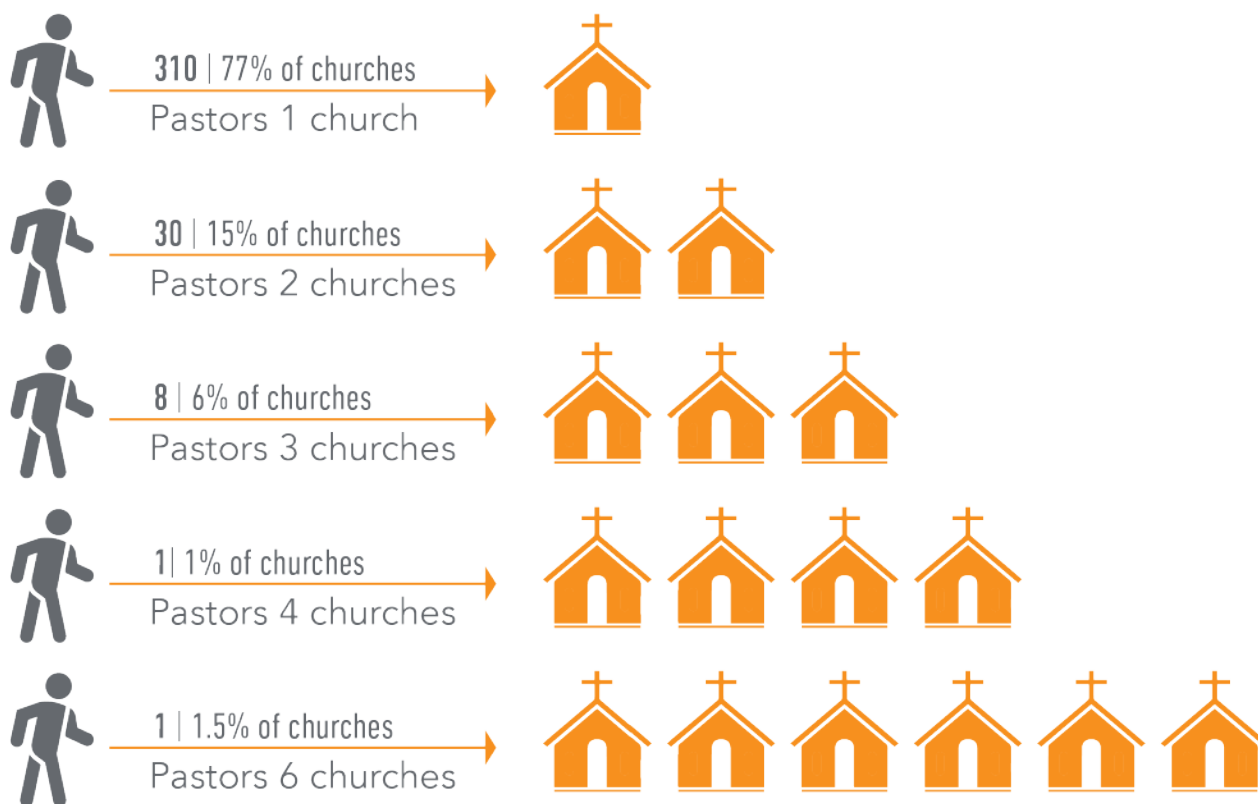
Parent Church Investment

About six of every seven new churches (87%) were planted by a parent church. Parent churches may provide a variety of resources to a new church plant such as pastoral leadership and mentoring, prayer, volunteers, and finances.



Shepherding the Flock

Over three-quarters of church leaders were pastoring only one congregation. However, there were a number of pastors who were responsible for two or more churches, and one who was leading six!





An Interdenominational Movement

The Lumière Project is uniting people across denominational lines as pastors catch the vision for church planting and evangelism and want to be involved. While nearly two-thirds of churches participating in the Lumière Project belong to the Assemblies of God, there are a number of other denominations represented as well. In the first year and a half of church-planting efforts, a total of 45 denominations took part in the initiative.

Denominational Affiliation	Number of Churches	Percent
Assemblies of God (Assemblée de Dieu)	263	65%
Full Gospel Mission (Mission du Pleine Evangile)	32	8%
Mission Evangélisation et Implantation des Eglises (MEIE)	13	3%
Église de Réveil au Congo (ERC)	12	3%
Communauté Évangélique des Missionnaires du Christ au Congo (CEMC)	10	2.5%
Union des Eglises Evangélique du Benin	6	1.5%
Action pour le Salut des Ames	5	1%
Communauté des Eglises Libres Pentecôte en Afrique	5	1%

* Denominations representing five or more church plants

Church and lay leaders from 45 denominations are participating in the Lumière Project.



The People Behind the Project



Pastor Omar, one of the the Lumière Project church planters in Benin, has faithfully been taking *The GodMan* film to remote corners of the West African bush. Recently, his wife passed away, but that did not stop Pastor Omar’s ministry or his joy in the Lord.

Continuing to focus on God’s Kingdom, Pastor Omar planted another church just two months after the loss of his wife!

With a strength beyond understanding and perseverance that can come only from God, he is still planting churches in Francophone Africa today, steadily helping Benin reach its goal of 300 new congregations!



Holding some of OneHope’s printed materials, church planters in Cameroon celebrate receiving the keys to their new motorbike, which will allow them to travel to remote areas for outreach.



Revisiting the Developing Churches

When the new Lumière church plant is between six and 12 months old, more data is collected in the Initial Follow-Up Survey. This survey gathers information about whether the church has yet initiated children and youth programs and about current attendance levels. As of August 2016, Initial Follow-Up Surveys had been completed for 120 of the 404 new churches.

*“Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.”
(Acts 9:31)*

In this passage, Luke describes the blessings of peace and growth experienced by the early Church after it had persevered through a particularly challenging time. This verse serves as an encouragement and promise for the churches being planted through the Lumière Project as well.



A rural village in Benin

Reaching the Next Generation

OneHope believes it is a significant accomplishment for a young church to launch children and youth ministry activities within 12 months of being planted. Our Initial Follow-Up Survey revealed that most of the church plants offered Sunday School for children, and almost half offered programming for teens. Fewer churches offered Bible clubs.



Of the 120 churches that completed the follow-up survey, more than two-thirds reported that they offered Sunday School for children and 40% offered Sunday School for teens.

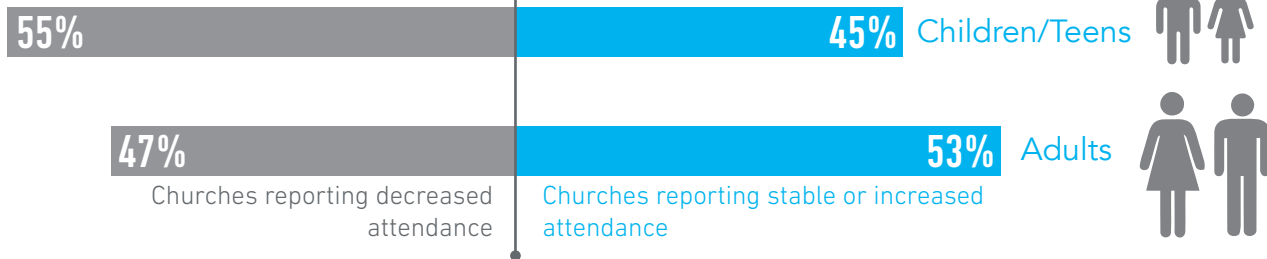
A Promising Start

The new church plants experienced challenges. In many cases they lacked a permanent building in which to gather, and some congregations met with open persecution. But even under these extremely difficult conditions, a remarkable number of churches grew.

From the Launch Survey to the Initial Follow-Up Survey conducted 6 to 12 months later, approximately half of churches experienced stable or growing attendance, and half saw a decline. Among the 120 churches who completed the survey, there was a greater decline in attendance among children and teens than among adults.

Children gather for a showing of *The GodMan* film in Niger

Half of churches experienced stable or growing attendance.



A Deeper Look

For further analysis, we measured church attendance across several major categories that encompass both the cultural context of the church plant as well as the congregation's unique identity.

These findings are presented on the following pages. Please note that when categorizing churches by these different topics, some of the sample sizes account for a relatively small number of churches, making conclusions less certain. As more church surveys are collected in the future, we will continue to examine these trends.

Topics covered in the Initial Follow-Up Survey

Cultural Context:



- Geographic zone
- Type of community
- Local religion(s)

Church Identity:



- Parent church involvement
- Sunday School programming

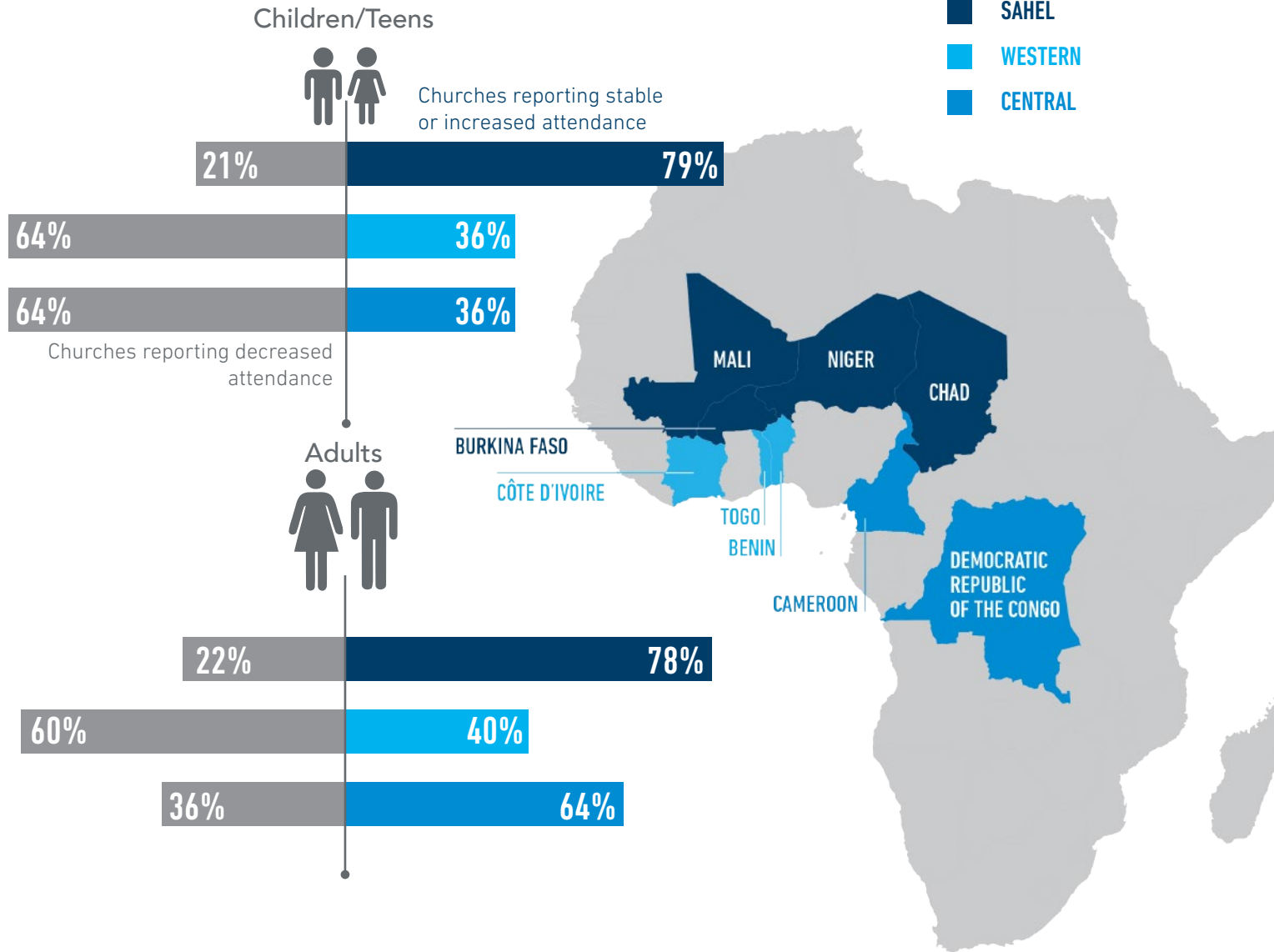


Geographic Zone

The percentage of Sahelian-zone churches with a growing or stable child and teen attendance was significantly greater than churches in the other zones. Compared to the Western Zone, a larger percentage of churches in the Sahelian and Central zones experienced growing or stable adult attendance.

Geographic Zones

- SAHEL
- WESTERN
- CENTRAL

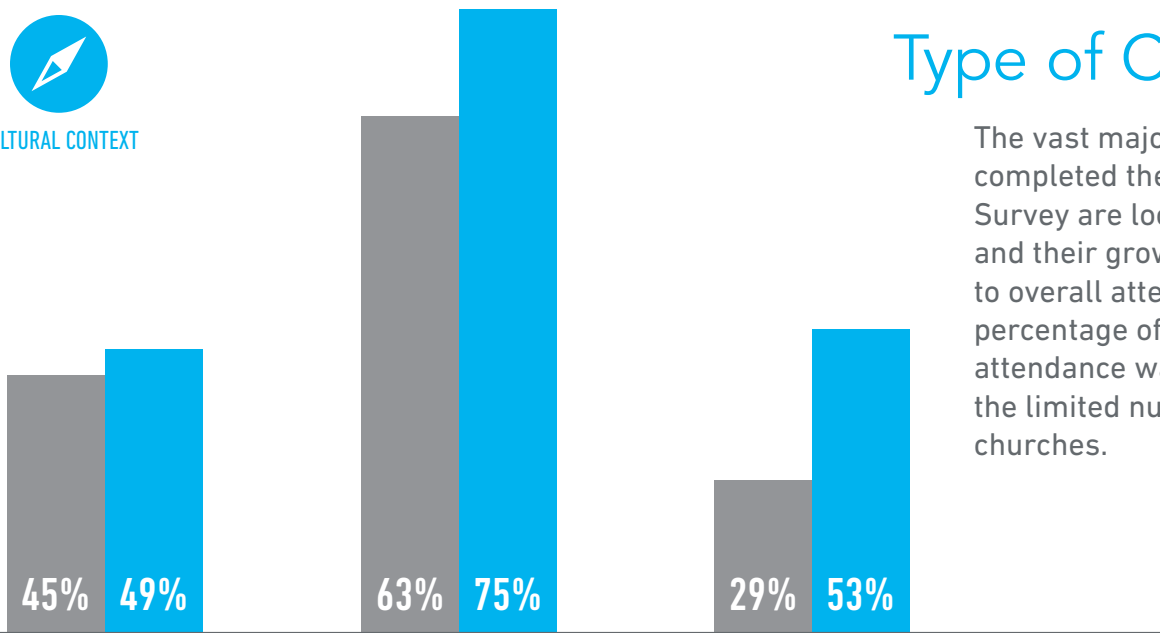




CULTURAL CONTEXT

Type of Community

The vast majority of churches who completed the Initial Follow-Up Survey are located in rural areas, and their growth rates are similar to overall attendance findings. The percentage of growing and stable attendance was greatest among the limited number of small-town churches.



Percentage of churches reporting stable or increased attendance since opening their doors.

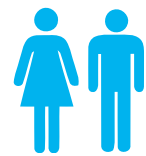
RURAL VILLAGE

SMALL TOWN

URBAN CITY



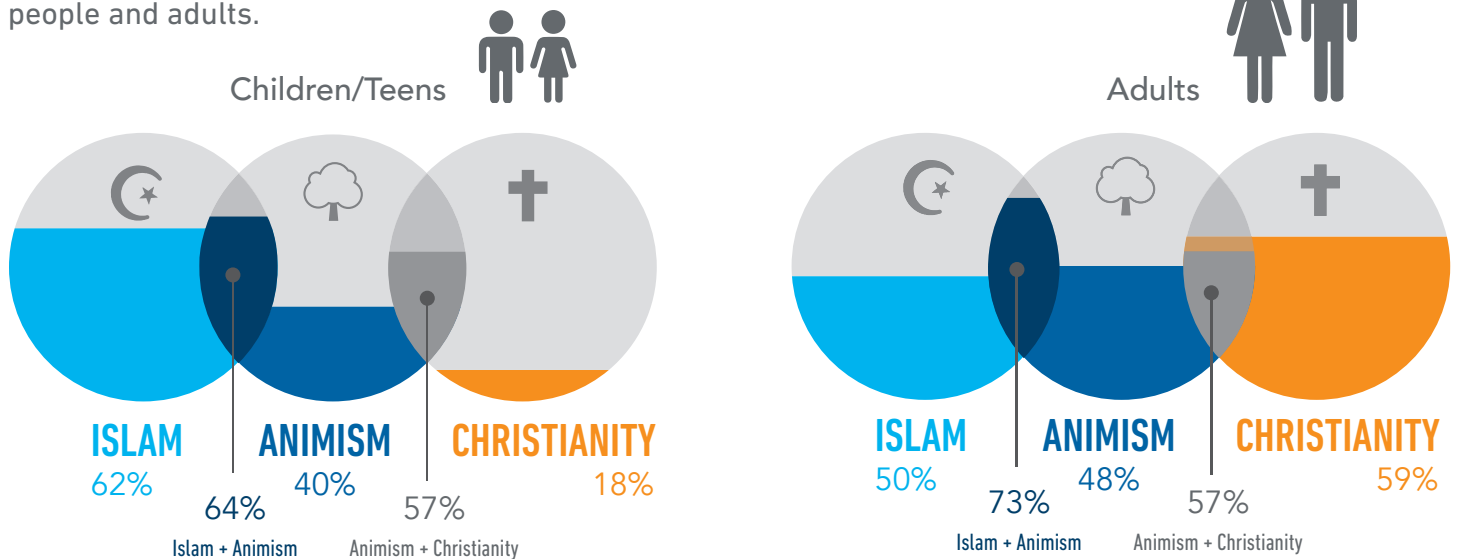
Children/Teens



Adults

Predominant Local Religion

Churches planted in areas where Christianity was the prevailing religion were more likely to report a decrease in child and teen attendance. Remarkably, in areas where Islam or some form of animism were predominate, at least 40% of the churches experienced growing or stable attendance in their ministry to young people and adults.

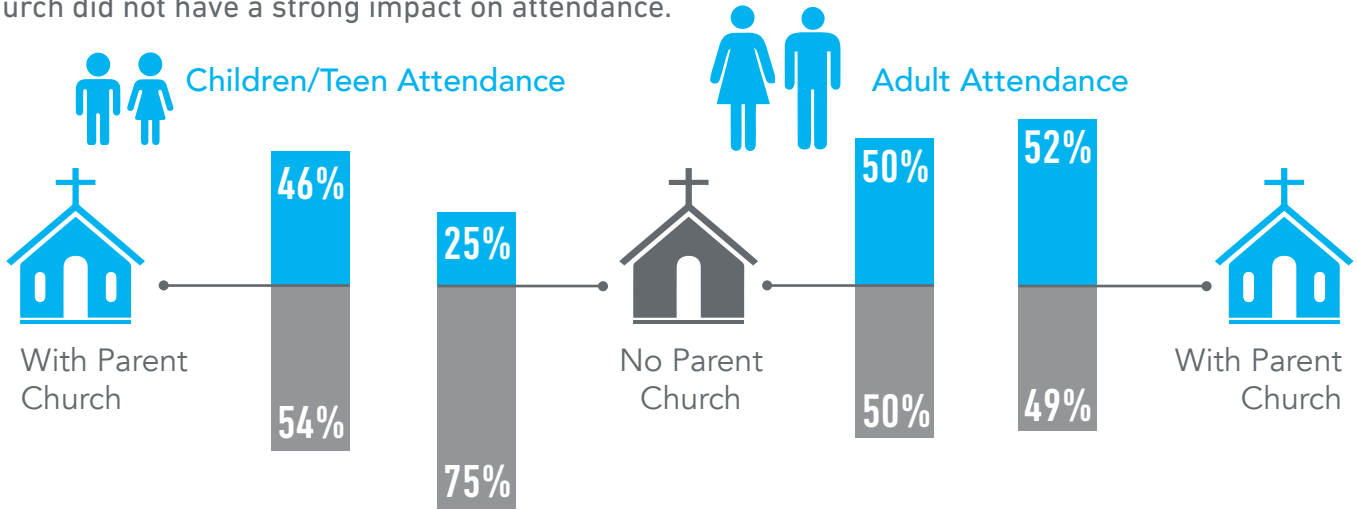


Percentage of churches reporting stable or increased attendance since opening their doors.

Parent Church Investment

Those congregations planted by a parent church were less likely to experience a decrease in the attendance of children and teens. Adult attendance did not share this correlation. The distance to the parent church did not have a strong impact on attendance.

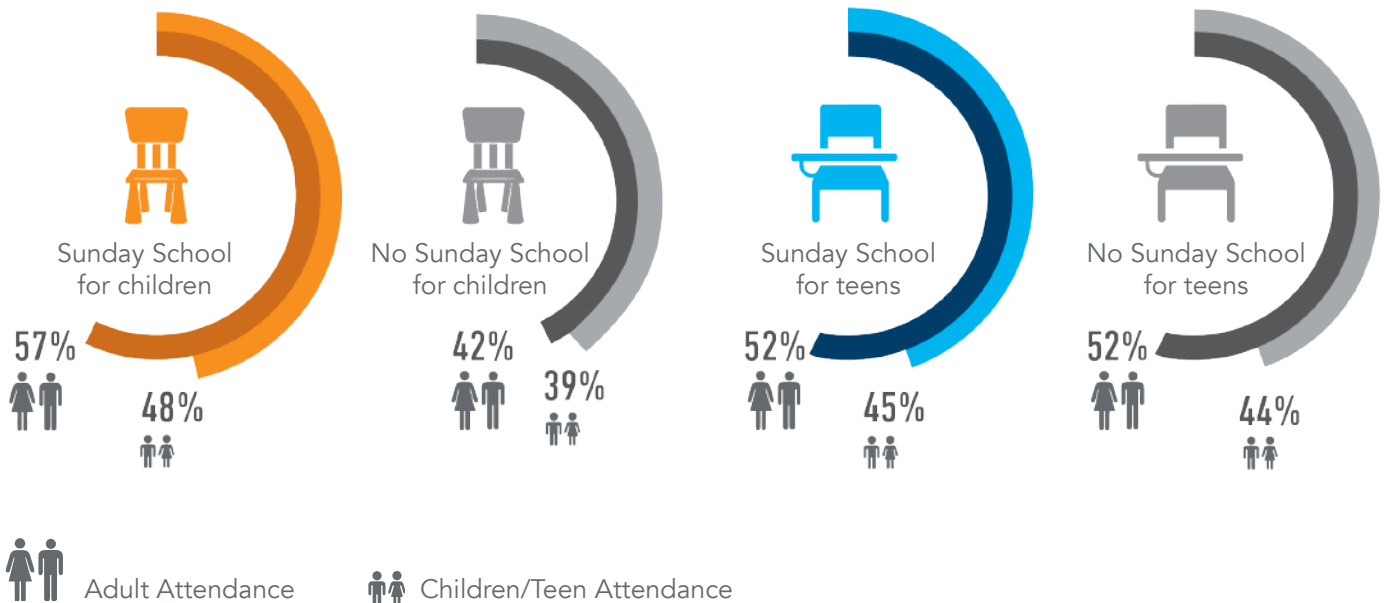
■ Increased or stable attendance
■ Decreased attendance



Sunday School Programming

Churches that did not offer Sunday School for children were slightly more likely to see a decrease in attendance. However, the presence of Sunday School activities for children or teens generally did not have a strong impact on attendance.

Percentage of stable or increased attendance at churches offering...





Learning from Setbacks

From the beginning of the Lumière Project, OneHope expected that some churches would close. Nonetheless, each church that fails is a cause for genuine concern. When a church closes, it motivates us to reflect on how best to support churches and pastors, particularly those facing persecution.

11 of the 404 church plants were forced to close.

Pastors reported several reasons for church closings, including:

- » **Persecution** (4 churches)
- » **Lack of leadership or follow-up** (3 churches)
- » **Lack of members** (1 church)

* Reasons for closure unknown for 3 churches

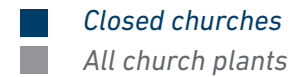
In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus confirms that not all evangelism efforts will be successful. Thankfully, success in this arena is not our responsibility...it is God's. However, we are responsible for being obedient to His call, regardless of the outcome.

Even with setbacks, there is much to celebrate and information to be gleaned that can help us train, equip and encourage pastors and congregations.



A church in Niger

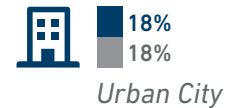
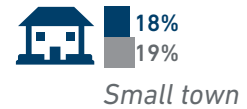
The 11 churches that closed were very similar to other church plants in terms of community type (rural village, small town, or urban city) and whether or not they were planted by a parent church. However, compared with church plants overall, the churches that closed were, on average, farther away from their parent churches. Additionally, they were slightly more likely to be in animist-dominated areas.



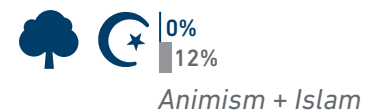
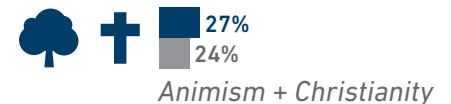
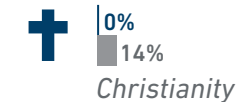
Planted by parent church



Type of community



Predominant local religion





SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE PATH AHEAD

The pursuit of knowledge and the application of learning is at the heart of OneHope's research. Through investigation and analysis, God allows us to see ministry trends, insights and results that might otherwise be hidden.

To document—and to deeply understand the health, successes, and struggles of the Lumière church plants—we needed to look beyond the data obtained through the surveys. For that purpose, OneHope conducted personal, in-depth interviews with a number of pastors from Niger (representing the majority-Muslim Sahel region) and from Benin (representing the majority-Christian southern region).



A young girl in Benin with the team's motorbikes

While detailed analysis of the data from these interviews is still being completed, the following key impressions emerged as the interview team reflected on their conversations with pastors across both countries.

Interview Findings

1. In most situations, there are many more **children and teenagers** than adults who make up the church community.
2. Rapid growth of new churches brings a broad and often complex range of **challenges**, including significant personal danger for new believers, families, communities, and pastors themselves.
3. The main focus of **leadership** in the early stages of church development tends to be survival, particularly given the situational, socio-cultural, and pastoral complexities. That said, there is also evidence of pastors thinking holistically about the ministry of their churches within the community which includes things such as access to water, schools, and basic health facilities within the village.
4. Long-term and **sustainable development** of church communities is a rapidly emerging issue. The main examples of this in Benin relate to land and property ownership and, in Niger, to leadership development and pastoral training.
5. There is evidence of movement toward **self-sustainability** in both countries, with significant cases of church members finding ways to contribute financially and in-kind. Pastors are engaging in “tentmaker” strategies to sustain their families and ministries. Groups of people are collaborating to raise funds to support local church situations.
6. There continues to be a strong need for carefully placed external **support**, focused on empowering sustainability without creating unhealthy dependencies.



A church planter interviewed in Benin



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The OneHope team has been deeply impacted by the sacrificial commitment, humility, and resilience of the church-planting pastors and parent churches that have partnered in this Kingdom-changing initiative. The development of permanent, servant-hearted, and sustainable communities of faith is a challenge in any environment. However, the cultural context and challenges found in Francophone Africa make celebrating God's work especially sweet.

We are truly grateful for God's guidance and His work through those who are dedicating themselves to the task of taking the Light of all Mankind to Francophone Africa!

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