

## Internet reaching the unreached

Statistics concerning people 'coming to Christ' via the Internet must always be treated with caution, but recent figures give cause for optimism in a world where much of the news is not favourable to Christianity. One statistic is that every day 17,000 Muslims leave Islam for Jesus, 80% of them finding Christ through radio, TV, Internet, mobile apps, films and the like. According to these figures, more Muslims have to Christ in the last twenty years than in the entire 1500 years of Islam.

Currently, the fastest growing Christian region of the world is Iran, where there are now an estimated three million former Muslim believers. Because many of these have become believers through satellite broadcasts and the Internet, and because the church in Iran is largely 'secret' or 'underground,' these figures are difficult to verify, but anecdotal feedback suggests they may be understated rather than overstated. Whatever the actual figures might be, it is undeniable that in the digital age vast numbers of the 'unreached' are responding to a message they had never heard before.

HCJB

## *Kiribati, island nation in the Pacific*

*A church member writes: "I gave one set of your books to the youth department and another to our small library, where other pastors come to use them. Now we want to translate and publish these books in our local language. We have hardly anything in our native tongue."*

Bridgeway

## Hope in Panama

Over the past forty years, the small country of Panama has shown considerable response to the gospel. The percentage of Bible-believing Christians has risen from 5% to 20%, though the impact of this on society is less than one might hope. Rates for divorce, illegitimate children, domestic violence and drug use show no improvement. Few inroads have been made into the upper middle classes. Most response to the gospel has been among Amerindians, who now have thriving churches in all tribal groups. The sixty-five tertiary campuses are a vital field for the gospel.

Operation World

## Church rebuilds in Iraq

*In Iraq, over 250 Christian families have returned to rebuild their homes after fleeing from the forces of Islamic State, and something amazing is happening – a new church is rising. One church leader said that 45% of new Christians are from a Muslim background. Another said, "We should be optimistic about the future of the church. With Islamic State, another pressure came upon us as Christians, but God uses this pressure. We are now reaching out to others and see new people coming into the church."*

Open Doors

## Outreach in Albania

Albania is officially a secular country, though 60% of its people have traditionally followed a kind of folk Islam. But the Muslim population is growing and Christian converts from a Muslim background suffer increasing harassment and ostracism. In one church of 150 people, 90 are converts from Islam, but they are mostly poor and disadvantaged. Outreach remains vigorous.

Barnabas Fund

## The Jordanian church at work

Christians in Jordan continue their extensive aid to thousands of refugees from Iraq and Syria. Besides ministering to spiritual needs and providing food, they are equipping people with skills in sewing, English and computer. These skills improve their work prospects, help them get income and prepare them for life ahead, whether back in their countries of origin or in countries to which they might migrate.

Manara

## NIGERIA: Fulani as proxy Jihadists

In Nigeria's volatile Middle Belt, attacks by ethnic Fulani Muslim cattle-herders on mostly Christian indigenous villages have escalated markedly, but the national government seems unwilling to stop the attacks. The Fulani are armed by Islamists in a jihad to expand Muslim territory at the expense of Christians.

According to Amnesty International, more than 500 people, mostly Christians, were killed and thousands displaced across fourteen states during 2017, and 168 were killed in four Middle Belt states in January 2018. Religious and political leaders are warning that Nigeria risks spiralling into civil war.

Religious Liberty

## Maldives – no island paradise

The tropical island nation of the Maldives in the Indian Ocean attracts large numbers of Western tourists but is one of the most difficult places in the world to be a Christian. A Maldivian found with a Bible faces a prison sentence. Propagation of a religion other than Islam, or even to speak against Islam, is a criminal offence. So is conversion of a Muslim to another religion. The government controls the courts and last year suspended one-third of all lawyers after they petitioned the Supreme Court to respect the rule of law.

## Pakistan's vulnerable Christian girls

Every year, an estimated 700 Christian girls in Pakistan are kidnapped by Muslims and then forcibly converted and married to Muslims. Laws against forced conversion, designed particularly to protect Christian and Hindu girls, were unanimously passed by the Sindh parliament but the state governor has refused to sign them into law. All laws in Pakistan have to be compatible with *sharia*.

## Al Shabaab power in Somalia

Somalia has been ravaged by conflict since 1991 when rival warlords began fighting for control. In 2006, an Islamic coalition with the jihadist Al Shabaab at its centre seized control and, despite international efforts that expelled it from the capital Mogadishu, it still holds large amounts of territory. Allied to Al Qaeda, it aims to establish a caliphate in East Africa and crosses into neighbouring Kenya to carry out terror attacks against Christians. It also seeks out and executes any Christians within Somalia, its aim being to 'purify' Somalia as a country free of all 'infidels.'

*Persecuted Church*

## From an evangelist in Malawi

*"We have seen a harvest of souls in north, central and south Malawi, old churches growing and new churches planted. We humbly request that you send us more books for distribution to pastors, elders, evangelists, Bible colleges and training centres. You may not see the full result of your work here on earth, but there will be a large gathering at the feet of Jesus in heaven."*

*Bridgeway*



## The few Christians of Yemen

Nobody knows how many Yemeni Christians there are, but numbers are pitifully small. In the present civil war it can be expected that they are left with very little help. Any expatriate Christians in the country are probably migrant workers or refugees from previous civil wars in places such as Ethiopia and Eritrea. Islam is Yemen's state religion and *sharia* is the source of all legislation.

*Barnabas Fund*

## The gospel in Nepal

A variety of Vacation Bible Schools and camps for adults and children see much spiritual fruit, as many people find Christ as Saviour and are built up in their knowledge of God and his Word. Thousands of Bible study guides are distributed each month to promote daily Bible reading. The church in Nepal continues to grow vigorously, in spite of increased persecution from Hindu nationalists.

*SU*

## Central Africa

An indigenous African ministry reports that in 2017 it planted 40 churches in Rwanda, 20 in Uganda, 16 in Central African Republic and 17 in Congo. An additional 400 existing local churches were served through outreach and teaching ministry.

*Adonai*

## China's re-education camps

*In recent months more than a hundred Christians in China's north-western Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have been sent to re-education camps, also known as 'study centres' or 'mind-transformation centres,' where they are taught communist ideology. Most detainees are from the Uyghur ethnic minority group and are Muslims, but those who have converted to Christianity have been caught in the crackdown. The government's 'anti-terror' campaign is aimed at militant Islamists and others it sees as separatist groups. Detention periods range from a month to a year or more.*

*World Watch*