

Evangelizing Chad Demands Radical Missionaries

It is an ancient land, inhabited and fought over since time began. Lying deep in the heart of Africa, the nation of Chad is three times the size of California and entirely surrounded by six countries: Libya, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Sudan. Even after the latest five-year conflict with Sudan, which ended in 2010, the land remains troubled by rebel groups.

Chad is also hugely impacted by the ever-expanding Sahara Desert. To the 80 percent of residents who are subsistence farmers, water is precious. Few roads are paved. This is one of the poorest and most corrupt countries on the planet. The average life expectancy is only 49 years. Maternal death rates are as much as 1,000 times higher than in high-income countries, according to the World Health Organization. Chad is on Save the Children's top 10 list of the world's worst places to be a mother.

Only a special kind of Christian worker can survive in Chad. Although freedom of religion is supposed to be official and up to 38 percent of the population are at least nominal Christians, over half are Muslims—and Muslim influence is strong.

"The further you get from the capital," asserts Paul*, "the more radical it is."

Paul moved from his own country to pioneer in Chad nine years ago, the last four of them under OM. He now speaks French and is learning Arabic. Last year he was finally joined by a second man. The pair teach English, conduct Bible studies, develop friendships with young people through football, and run a sewing project to assist some of Chad's thousands of war

widows, since the government offers little help.

Paul has boldly chosen to live in the community he is trying to reach. "But even though I dress like everyone else," he says, "people know I'm a foreigner and a Christian. Twice I was stoned. The first time it was by little children. So I challenged the adults who were playing cards nearby: 'You say, "Peace be upon you!" Is that just for Muslims or for anyone?' Then they rebuked the kids for throwing stones.

"The church in Chad is very weak," continues Paul, "and Christians are fearful of going into Muslim areas. Churches are also divided among themselves and don't work together. We want to change this situation through discipleship training. Our first two-month course, a pilot project, starts this May. The training will include practical evangelism experience in Nigeria. Pray that Christians from all the churches in the area will participate."

Paul and his co-worker have been encouraged that some believers are getting on board with the sewing project and also learning to share their faith. "When we talked to the women about God as our Father, I saw a Muslim woman cry. She said, 'God sent you. We didn't know we could call God Father'! Knowing they can talk to Him about their problems speaks volumes into their lives."

These two men are very anxious for your intercession. Chad's climate is not a comfortable one, either spiritually or physically. Temperatures at this time of year can soar to over 45C or 110F. Their personal drinking supply is not safe and Paul struggles with stomach problems.

Some have nicknamed Chad the "Dead Heart of Africa." Fortunately, the God who gave His Son to die for the people of Chad is eager to show that no such place exists. He specialises in creating thirst-quenching streams in even the most barren of deserts.

*Name changed