

STAGE 3	AFRICA	Gemena, Democratic Republic of Congo	Reaching unreached people groups in the Ubangi
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Free Church missionaries brought the gospel to the Ubangi area of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1922. In 1926 Pelendo Isaac became a Christian and had a great ministry as an evangelist, taking the gospel to many towns and villages. In each succeeding generation, new churches were planted but many lacked depth and spiritual fervor. Another breakthrough came when missionary Clarence L. and Pastor John M. prayed and fasted for revival for a week. The resulting revival in August 1951 lasted for about over two years and led to a new wave of growth. Although missionaries were already planning to leave, the civil unrest of the 90's accelerated their departure.

Over the years God has brought about a huge harvest as tens of thousands have accepted the Lord. The church has continued to grow and now counts about 1,000 local churches in the Ubangi Province (about the size of Indiana) with a membership of about 150,000. Most of them have some kind of shepherd, though for the most part, they are very inadequately trained. The church movement is called CECU, Communautés Évangéliques du Congo Ubangi. Although some estimates put the percentage of Evangelical Christians at 19-20%, this number is misleading. The country is inhabited by literally hundreds of people and language groups. Many are nominally Catholic because of the Belgian occupation and missionary work there, but some are still animistic. Between 50 and 150 language groups don't even have the Bible in their language. Yet, God is growing a church planting vision to reach those who don't have the gospel.

CECU is a vibrant growing and missionary-sending church. But war, AIDS, and other social disruptions, have filled the church with widows, orphans, unwed mothers, and handicapped people. And the CECU hospital at Tandala is one of only two functional hospitals for the whole Ubangi. So, the CECU is at the forefront of holistic ministry meeting the needs of the people in the churches and villages of the Ubangi.

Gemena, the capital of South Ubangi, has few modern conveniences, an illiteracy rate of 70% (higher among women) and has been torn by unrest and war. The Rwandan army tried to maintain control of the region and targeted churches and Christians for persecution. Yet, the gospel is having a deep impact on this war-torn area. A new ministry has been started called Elikya. It stands for "Hope" – more accurately, the Hope Center for Training Widows, Orphans, Unwed Mothers and the Handicapped.

In July 2010, ReachAfrica president Nubako Selenga, a former president of CECU, returned to Gemena to train them to plant churches using Biblical narratives. The leaders who met in Gemena made plans to evangelize nearby villages without churches and to target four under-reached people groups: The Ngbundu, the Mabo (Mbo), the Pygmies and the Mbororo. It is especially encouraging that church

planting efforts continue among the pygmies who have long been despised and neglected and remain lost in the darkness of their spiritism. Already some of those leaders organized a second-generation training with 68 trainees. These will go out to the Ngbundu people who are nominally Catholic but don't have the Bible in their heart language.

The CECU, a movement that has gone through dry periods, is being revitalized. Church planter training is channeling that desire to reach the lost toward unreached people groups. The missionary vision is transcending political and tribal boundaries. Churches started by CECU planters in neighboring Congo, Brazzaville will belong to the sister organization there rather than starting a new church association. Similarly, when planters from Congo Brazzaville start churches across the border they will join CECU.

The movement has established a new base in the capital Kinshasa. Nubako and Claudine Selenga have launched a ministry to single mothers and a Leadership Training Center there. The impact of ReachAfrica, based in Kinshasa, had reached into 31 countries by 2018, and the ReachAfrica leadership team, led by Pastor Selenga, has decided to focus most of its energies on unreached and unengaged people groups.