Is the Adventist Church missing $12 billion?
What the denomination could have with tithe faithfulness, roll accuracy; why Togo, Bolivia jumped in a ranking

ADRA, Dominican Republic transportation authorities sign training agreement
Project to offer driver safety training in wake of increasing traffic accidents
membership records strengthen local tithing rates, no matter the country or currency. The index is not an official publication of the Adventist Church, but it can help examine tithing rates when adjusting for economic factors specific to different nations. [iStock photo]

About US$14 billion.

The denomination currently receives about $2 billion annually.

That’s according to this year’s edition of the Global Tithing Index (GTI), which is a report measuring 2010 statistics of tithing faithfulness per capita across countries.

The GTI is published privately by Claude Richli, associate publisher of the Adventist Review and Adventist World magazines. Though not an official publication of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the annual ranking can help administrators compare countries in similar regions and uncover trends.

This year’s GTI introduced a new measurement called the Total Tithe Potential, which shows the total tithing that should theoretically be received in a country if all Adventist Church members were faithful in tithing 10 percent of their income.

The total tithing potential for 2010 was about $14.1 billion. The same year, the Adventist Church received about $1.9 billion in tithe.

The GTI is an instrument that aims to level the field in comparing tithing faithfulness across countries that have economic disparity. It measures tithing per-capita by comparing a nation’s measure Gross Domestic Product with the aggregate tithing volume per country divided by the number of members on church rolls.

The GTI examines 104 countries and uses information from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2010 Statistical Report and the United States’ Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook.

Eritrea and Switzerland again topped this year’s annual ranking, followed by Austria, Denmark and France.

The GTI also indicates increasing faithfulness among members in countries such as Brazil, which in 2010 was responsible for about half of the gains in world tithing.

This year’s edition also offers stark evidence of how an audit of membership rolls reveals a more accurate gauge of members’ financial support. Nations that had big gains in ranking on the index this year – including Togo and Bolivia – were areas that Adventist Church leaders have recently conducted membership audits.

Togo jumped to number 7 on the ranking, up from the 38th spot last year. Richli attributed the jump entirely “to the courageous decision on the part of its leadership to drop all missing members,” he wrote in the report.
In 2010, Togo reported 5,343 members, a 52 percent drop from 11,028 the previous year.

That move, Richli said, showed that active members in Togo were as faithful as their counterparts in affluent countries. The church’s action in Togo, however, puts a spotlight on the “obvious need” for membership audits in many countries, Richli wrote.

Unfortunately, Richli said, about one-third of countries surveyed contribute less than 10 percent of total tithe potential. He said that figure “clearly shows that in those countries, church rolls are vastly inflated.”

Two advisors on the project are business professors at the Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies, a graduate school in the Philippines and directly affiliated with the Adventist Church’s world headquarters.

“In looking at the GTI reports over the years, it’s been evident when church administration has taken clear steps to address issues in financial governance and membership records,” said Ronald Vyhmeister, director of the business program at AIIAS and a consultant to the GTI.

“This year again the membership record issue stands out as an issue that quite evidently needs to be addressed in many parts of the world,” Vyhmeister said.

Other trends noted in this year’s report include tithing in Europe, which shows a mixed picture. Some countries, such as the United Kingdom and Norway, show a gradual improvement following the start of the recession, but countries such as Spain show that the recession is severely affecting giving there.

Also, three countries ranked in the denomination’s Southern African Union – South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland – confirm that their rise in previous years was not due to a statistical distortion; each are among the top 20 countries, ranking solidly in the middle of the Western countries.

See the full report here: http://www.aiias.edu/gti/reports.html

ADRA, Dominican Republic transportation authorities sign training agreement
The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and the Dominican Republic’s Technical Office for Ground Transportation (OTTT) recently agreed to work together to train thousands of public transportation drivers in an effort to mitigate the violence and traffic accidents that have escalated over the past three years.

OTTT Director Julio Horton and Cesario Acevedo, ADRA-Dominican chairman, signed the agreement at the headquarters office for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Santo Domingo on March 13.

Horton stated that education was fundamental in the prevention of accidents and that his office and ADRA will combine resources and materials to execute the project. He congratulated ADRA leaders for their initiative.

As he signed the agreement, Acevedo, who is also president of the Adventist Church in the country, assured witnesses that, as a Christian entity, the church is committed to creating a positive change in the conduct of public transportation drivers. The church has some 283,000 church members, said Acevedo, of which some 85 percent are young people, and that the youth will help work on the project.

The seed of the agreement grew out of an initiative proposed by ADRA-Dominican to combat the rising number of accidents and traffic delays affecting commuters in Santo Domingo and other cities on the island since 2009, said Luis Miguel Acevedo, ADRA-Dominican director.

Statistics reveal that more than 5,000 vehicle accidents occurred in 2009, more than 40 percent due to recklessness, alcoholism, and road rage, Acevedo said.

The plan is to launch eight-hour training courses to groups of drivers on treating passengers courteously, how to save gasoline, maintain their vehicles and personal finance management. “We believe this will make a change,” Acevedo said.

According to Acevedo, the project seeks to train some 8,000 drivers in Santo Domingo during a pilot program that begins this week and continues for the next five months.

Hundreds of young church member volunteers will participate in the massive training of drivers in coordination with the OTTT. After the initial project is completed in Santo Doming, plans call for training in the cities of Santiago, San Francisco de Macoris and Puerto Plata.

The initiative becomes the fourth major project led by ADRA-Dominican in coordination with the government during the last three years, Acevedo said. ADRA-Dominican has already led massive campaigns against Dengue fever, Cholera outbreak, and illiteracy.

For more information on ADRA Dominican and its projects, visit www.adra.org.do.
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