

## **The Impact of Mount Zion Mission Incorporated on the Social and Infrastructural Development of Oro, (1946 – 2025)**

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### **Abstract**

*Literature on the impact of churches in Oro, except for Mount Zion Mission Incorporated, is abundant. However, information on the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated is scarce and scattered. This study aimed to compile the impact of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro from 1946 to 2025. To achieve this, the historical-analytical method was adopted, relying on books, journal articles, unpublished works, and credible online sources. The findings revealed that the church has grown significantly since its inception in 1946, with 157 assemblies established in Oro. The Mount Zion Mission Incorporated has contributed to the growth and development of Oro, impacting both members and non-members. The church owns various schools and has played a significant role in the political, economic, social, and medical life of the Oro people. The implication is that the church will continue to attract people, leading to more horizontal and vertical growth. It was found that members and non-members of the church appreciate the contributions of the church to societal growth and development. The study also revealed that the church has faced challenges, including leadership issues, financial constraints, and a shortage of ministers. The work concluded that, despite challenges, Mount Zion Mission Incorporated churches and schools are key contributors to Oro's development. The study, therefore, recommended that historians should document the church's activities to preserve information for the younger generation.*

**Keywords:** Impact, Mount Zion Mission, social, infrastructure, development.

### **Introduction**

The period of about seven decades of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated's existence as a Christian organisation in Oro has undoubtedly been eventful. Despite the church operating for such a long period, very little is known about its impact in Oro. While some church members and a few church historians in Oro may be acquainted with this aspect, the wider society remains in the dark due to this historical gap. The Church has generally been an instrument of spiritual and infrastructural development for the people of Oro, Akwa Ibom State, and Nigeria in general. The Mount Zion Mission Incorporated has also been operating to add value spiritually and materially to its members and society at large (Ekenene, 2025).

Regrettably, a close review of existing literature on church history and impact in Oro reveals that studies exist on the activities of other churches in Oro, while little has been done on the contribution of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated to the development of Oro. Currently, there is a recurring debate on the contributions of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated to the

development of Oro since its inception in 1946. However, the contributions of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated towards societal growth and development have been largely ignored by church historians and local church members. Notably, only Godwin Ekenene's unpublished dissertation, titled "Seventy -Two Years of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated (1946 - 2018)," has attempted to document the impacts, challenges, or prospects of the church in Oro.

Recent studies by Obot (2014), Okon (2015), and Akpan (2019) have captured fragments of Christian activities in Akwa Ibom State and Oron, but these efforts did not account for the impacts of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated despite its long-standing presence in the area. The contributions of the church to maintaining stability in society cannot be overemphasised. Therefore, this study aims to fill a historical gap and build upon the work of Ekenene (2019). The study has brought to light new information from fragmented materials on the Church and expanded knowledge on the underlying issues. The researcher's interest in the topic was sparked by a course taken in his postgraduate programme titled "Reconstructing Nigerian Church History." The study adopts a historical-analytical method, relying on books, journal articles, unpublished works, and credible online sources.

### Evolution of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro, 1946 -2025

**Table 1: Historical/Evolution of Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro, 1946 -2025**

Sections of MZM in Oro Nation	District	Year of establishment	First Pastor	Village Head	Assemblies in the Section	Who brought the church to the area
Akaniobio in Oron LGA	Akani Obio, Iguita, Uyo Oro Utumong & Eyoabasi	1946	Late Bishop J. U. Edumoh, First pastor and field superintendent	Late Chief Eyoh Ukoh	15 Assemblies	Teams of brethren led by Late Bishop J. U. Edumoh
Oruko Section in Urue Offong Oruku LGA	Oruko, Udodung, Udong Ukpor, Iboro & Ikpe	1950	Late Bishop J. U. Edumoh	Late Chief Uyoh Edet Bassey	17 Assemblies	Late Elder Okon Johnson
Eyosung Section in Mbo LGA	Eyosung, Eyo Nsek, Eyo Atai & Edikor	1952	Rev. Okon Enyonekere	Late Chief Edem Luke	11 Assemblies	A delegate, Late Elder Ukai

						Sunday Edem
Ebughu Section in Mbo LGA	Abia Owo, Okobo Ebughu & Enwang	1956	Apostle Uwe Okwony Bassey	Late Chief Eyoh Ukoh	13 Assemblies	Team of men led by the late Bishop Edumoh
Isangedih i Section in Oron LGA	Isangedighi , Uya Oro, Ukuku & Tebernacle	1953	Late Rev. Alfred Edumoh	Late Chief Sampson Uyeh	15 Assemblies	Late Bishop Joshua Uloh Edumoh
Uboro Isong Inyang Section in Udung Uko LGA	Uboro Isong Inyang & Eyokponun g	1950	Bishop Emania Hogan Ukpabio	Late Chief Isaac Bassey	6 Assemblies	Deaconess Mrs Atim Ubuo
Udesi Section in Mbo LGA	Akai, Uko Akai & Isong Inyang Udesi	1950	Late Bishop Asuquo Eminue Joshua	Late Chief Okon Abang	8	Late Elder Akpe Ukpong
Ibaka Section Mbo LGA	Ibaka, Asiaha Obufa, Ikot Itie Udung, Obio Inyata & Isong Inyang Udesi	1956	Late Bishop Joshua Edumoh	Late Chief Sunday Ukom	18	Elder Uko Sam
Uda Section Mbo LGA	Uda, Unyeghe & Uko Nteghe	1949	Late Bishop Eminue	Late Elder Godwin Okon	8	Late Elder Usin Edet
Ebighi Section Okobo LGAA	Ebighi, Amamong, Oti-oro & Ebighi Edu	1954	Late Bishop Joshua Edumoh	Late Chief Emmanuel Uko	14	Late Bishop Isaac Obisung
Udung Ukpong Section	Udung Ukpong, Issa, Ebighi	1948	Late Bishop Joshua Edumoh	Late Chief	19	Late Rev. Akito

Okobo LGA	Anwa and Okossi			Edem Sunday		
Nsie Section Okobo LGA	Nsie, Osu Offi and Iwok Atai	1951	Late Bishop Joshua Edumoh and His Team	Late Chief Jack Okon	13	Late Bishop Isaac Obisung
<b>12 Sections</b>	<b>45 Districts</b>				<b>157 Assemblies</b>	

Source: Field Work, 2026

Table 1 indicates the advent and evolution of the church in Oro, as shown in sections across all five local government areas in Oro. According to Ekenene (2025), the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated began in Oro as far back as 1946, with the late Bishop Joshua Ulo Edumoh as its first Field Superintendent, after breaking away from the Apostolic Church. The reason for the breakaway was that the Apostolic Church had no schools to educate the children of its members, leaving them to face difficulties when trying to gain admission to schools belonging to other denominations. In response, Nigerian front leaders appealed to Pastor Philip Jack, the Field Superintendent during the British colonial era, for permission to establish schools in the name of the Apostolic Mission. However, Pastor Philip was uncooperative, citing a lack of funds, and turned his back on ministers. He also refused to re-employ the redundant ministers, as had been decided in the high council meeting of 1946. As a result, the church split from the Apostolic Church with some Efik-speaking people under the leadership of Apostle J. U. Edumoh, and some Yoruba people under the leadership of Pastor Oladele Odubunjo. Initially, the church was named “African Apostolic” to reflect its universal interests. Although the name was well-accepted, it was later changed to the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated, prompted by the Holy Spirit.

### Profile of Oro People

Oro is one of the ethnic groups in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, forming a tripod with Ibibio and Annang to define the socio-political landscape of the State. Oro is situated along the coastal expanse of the southwestern bank of the Cross River estuary. Its territory extends to the Bight of *Bonny* coastline and lies between longitude 08°30’E and latitude 04°30’N. Oro has a total land area of approximately 400 square miles or 1,040 square kilometres. The territory is bounded in the south by the Atlantic Ocean and contributes 5% of the 800 KM of Nigeria’s coastline (Ukpong, 2014).

Politically, Oro’s traditional society has a mark of refinement and an aristocratic setup, a legacy transmitted from generation to generation in Oro, which can be defined as village square democracy. According to Itong (2019: 52), Oro’s traditional societal politics can be traced to a well-formidable socio-cultural group called the Oron Union, founded in 1925. The Oro people became one of the most formidable and vocal groups in the South-South region of Nigeria, and hence, one of the three political forces in the present-day Akwa Ibom State. Itong (2019) further states that Oro became a division in August 1970 and, in 1976, was made a local government area. However, following the local government creation exercise of the federal government in 1989, Oro was split into three local government areas: Mbo, Oron, and Okobo. In September 1991, UrueOffong/Oruko Local Area was carved out of Oron Local Government Area. Finally, in December 1996, Udung Uko Local Government Area was further carved out of Oron.

The traditional economy of the Oro people, according to Ukpong (2014), is driven by the land and sea: agriculture and fishing. Most families in Oro's traditional society are sustained by subsistence farming and fishing. Socio-culturally, the Oro people have a unique culture and tradition. The Ekpe society is used throughout the land as an authority. There are other traditional cults and societies, including the *Ekpo*, *Abang*, *Edeme Awan*, *Nkwuho*, *Ekong*, *Afiakegid*, *Konkoma*, *Mbok*, *Ababa*, and *Nnabo*, among others.

Religiously, before the advent of Christianity, the people of Oro practiced, and a few still cherish traditional religion. This religion is a product of the thinking and experience of their forebears. The forebears formed religious ideas, formulated beliefs, observed religious ceremonies and rituals, and had proverbs that safeguarded the life of the people (Ekpenyong, 2016). It can be said that, through religion, the traditional Oro man, like his other African brothers, tried to locate himself in the universe around him, come to terms with his environment, and evolve codes of behaviour between himself and the spiritual and natural environment. Through rituals and taboos, he tried to regulate and control man's exploitation of the resources around him. Oro people recognised a hierarchy of spiritual power culminating in the great, Omnipotent, Omniscient and all-powerful *Abasi Odung Onyong*, who is the creator of everything in the world. Before the arrival of European missionaries in the 19th century at the shore of West Africa, the idea of God, deities, and ancestral worship had long existed in Oro. This communal worship established a relationship between the Oro people and the Supreme Being. Uya (1984) reveals that the Oro people invariably recognised the sky God *Abasi Odung Onyong* as the Supreme and Creator of all things, and the immediate counterpart of earth god *Abasi Odung Isong*, the ancestors, and the spirits with *Abasi Odung Isong* regarded as administrators or defenders of creatures. However, today, 90% of Oro attend church and worship God through His son, as revealed to them by Westerners.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts both the social impact and church growth theories. The Social Impact Theory, propounded by Bibb Latane in 1981, becomes necessary in the study as it shows how Mount Zion Mission Incorporated, as a group, has been able to create impacts in Oro from 1946 to 2018 by virtue of its strength, immediacy, or proximity, and how its growth has affected its impacts on people. The application of the social impact theory to this study implies that: 1) The strength and power of Mount Zion Mission Incorporated as a denomination determine its influence on the people of Oro, 2) the proximity and accessibility of the leadership of the church by the people in virtually all the five local government areas of Oro determine the growth or expansion of the Church. 3) the number of sources in a group determines the impact. Therefore, when applied to the study, it implies that the spread and numerical strength of the church, by establishing churches, would undoubtedly increase its impact (Ekenene, 2021).

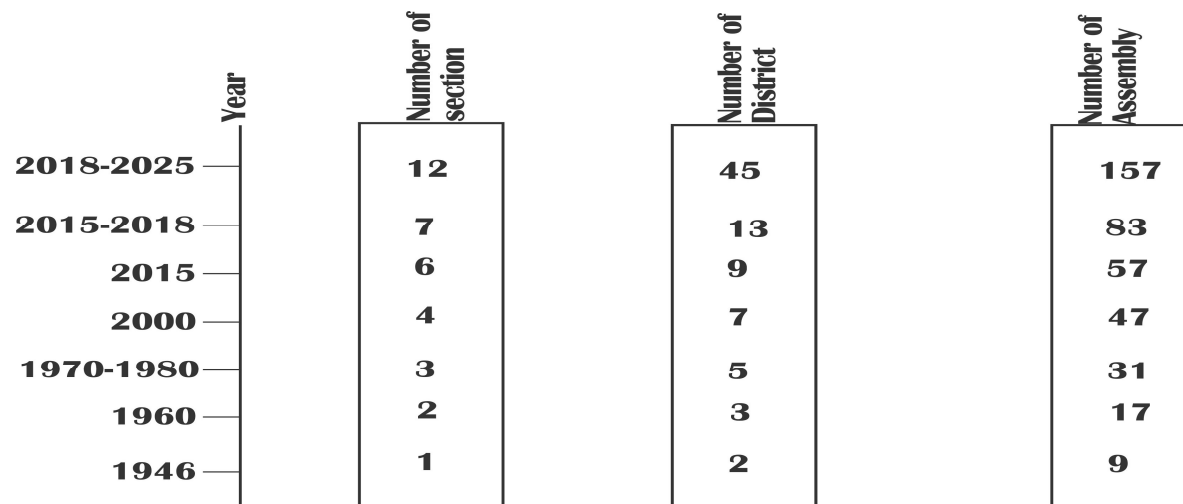
On the other hand, the Church Growth Theory, developed by Donald McGavran between 1936 and 1954, also adopted in this study, provides a new definition of evangelism, pointing to the important consideration of cultural implications for effectiveness in evangelism. The need to recognise the network of kinship, friendship, and association as bridges to reach people with the gospel is very significant. The theory is applied to see how Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro has impacted both the lives of the people and the land, and spread its presence in every part of Oro (Ekenene, 2021).

### The Vertical or Quantitative Impact of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated, 1946 – 2025

The history of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro dates back to the days of late Bishop Joshua Uloh Edumoh. Since 1946, the church has made a notable impact by spreading branches and also impacting the lives of the people. Onah (2000) expressed the fact that, historiographically, there are two dimensions of church impact, namely, vertical and horizontal aspects of impact. By vertical impact or growth, he meant staking out claims by the church outside the initial spot to open branches, number of baptisms, weddings, and communicants; that is, numerical impact. In contrast, horizontal impact or qualitative impact refers to the impact of a church in a particular locality.

Vertically, it can be said that the expansion of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro during the period was slow. Both the qualitative, organic, external, and numerical growth were slow. The graph below indicates the vertical impact of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro.

**Graph 1: Vertical Impact of Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro, 1946 -2025**



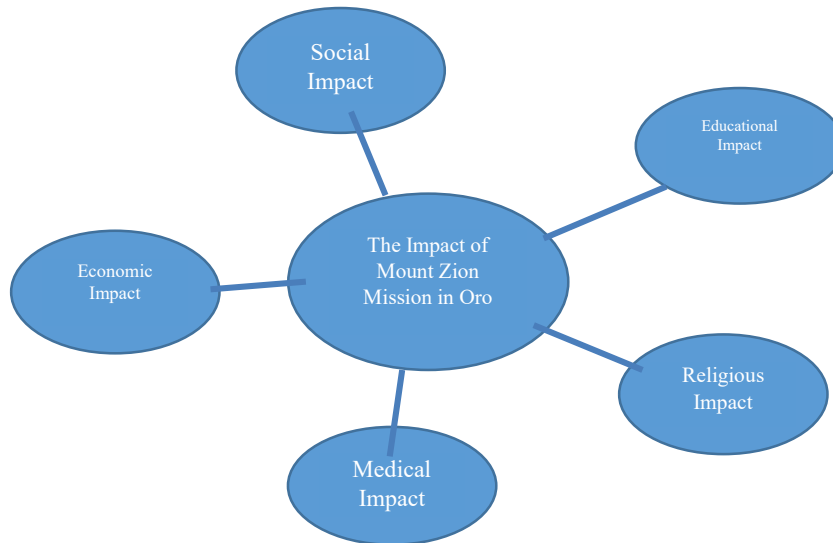
**Source:** Field Work 2026

The data on the graph shows that, as of 1946, Mount Zion Mission in Oro had one section, 2 districts, and 9 assemblies, marking the beginning of the church in Oro. In the 1960s, this number increased to 2 sections with 3 districts and 17 assemblies. In the 1970s and 1980s, the church grew to 3 sections, 5 districts, and 31 assemblies. The numerical growth continued in the 2000s, with 4 sections, 7 districts, and 47 assemblies. By 2015, the church expanded to 6 sections, 9 districts, and 57 assemblies. Between 2015 and 2018, the church further grew to 7 sections in Oro, with 13 districts and 83 Assemblies. From 2018 to 2025, the church grew to 12 Sections, 12 Districts and 157Assemblies in Oro. The church sections in Oro have contributed significantly to the growth and expansion of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro.

### Horizontal or Qualitative impact of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated, Oro 1946-2025

In this section, the study assesses the positive impact or growth that the church has exerted on the community between 1946 and 2025. This impact is discussed in terms of its social, political, economic, educational, and religious effects on the people and the community, which in this case is Oro.

**Figure 1:** Horizontal or Qualitative impact of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated, Oro 1946-2025



**Source:**(Ekenene, 2021:64)

Figure 1 illustrates that the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated is positively impacting five areas in Oro, which are social, education, religion, economic, and medical. The five areas are enumerated below:

#### **Educational Impact**

The study discovered that the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated aligns with the vision of establishing schools across the five local government areas in Oro, which is not far from the objective of early Missionaries in their quest to Christianize Africans through Western education. The Mount Zion Mission Incorporated believes in education as a means of advancing the academic and religious studies of its children. Hence, in 1954, the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated applied to the local government council for permission to open primary schools. The authority, Oron/Okobo local government council, was very interested in seeing how impressive the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated was, and through the efforts of contributions from every member of the church, concrete school buildings were erected at Asak-Ikang Ebughu in 1955, Mbokpu Eyo-Imain 1966, and Bible College, Oron on 24 September 1984. The renowned Rectors of the Bible College have been Dr Rolland O. Eyoh (1964-1990), Rev. P. I. Orok (1992 – 2003), Dr E. Amana (1992-2003), and Dr Etim Eminue (2004 – 2021

Educationally, the establishment of nursery schools is a recent development in the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated; the founders did not initially open any nursery school in this part of the world (Amana, n.d.). Initially, there were hardly any nursery schools in the early part of the period under review. However, recently, the establishment of nursery schools surfaced in the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated, and the church is now blessed with some nursery schools. The Mount Zion Mission Incorporated has founded ten nursery schools, four primary schools, one secondary school, and one tertiary institution, which are spread across Oro. The table indicates the school, location, year of establishment, and population.

**Table 1: School founded by Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro, 1946 - 2025**

S/N	Name of School	Location	Date	Population
1	The Mount Zion Mission Nursery /Primary School	No.3 Isangedighi	1992	Nursery - 147 Primary 82
2	The Mission Zion Nursery/Primary school	17 Mount Zion Road Oron	1984	Nursery – 79 Primary 27
3	The Mount Zion Nursery School	Eweme	2004	48
4	The Mount Zion Nursery School	Udung Ukpong	2001	89
5	The Mount Zion kids Academy	Nsie	2003	78
6	The Mount Zion Mission Academy	Eyo Okponung	2002	112
7	The Mount Zion Mission School	Okopedi	1991	101
8	The Mount Zion Young Academy	Isa Okuisa	2005	57
9	The Mount Zion Young Stars Academy	Urue-ita Oro	2007	48
10	The Mount Zion Mission School	Ebighi AwaOro	2000	81

**Source:** The Mount Zion Mission Council of Apostles Offices, Oron

### Social Impact

The process of socialisation was well spelt out across the different communities in Oro. Some men gathered to sing and dance *Mbaya*, and young, hefty men who travel far and near to watch and fight *Mbok*. Earlier denominations that operated in Oro tried to steer a middle course and accommodate these social and cultural trends. However, when the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated arrived, there was a significant shift in the people's culture (Amana, n.d).

The teachings and evangelisation led people to disassociate themselves from their age-grade secret societies and initiation into cults. The Mount Zion Mission Incorporated has been championing the cause of the poor, widows, orphans, and refugees. The church has been paying school fees for the poor and providing for the social needs of the people, as these needs are likely to increase in the future with the growing population.

### **Political Impact**

There is a need to assess the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated's political contribution, as even the ministry of Jesus Christ was characterised by political overtures and scheming from those who expected an immediate kingdom. Bauckhiam (1980: 143) states:

To interpret Jesus and His disciples in purely political terms would be to reduce Jesus. But we will also be reducing Jesus if we are to exclude the political dimension of his life and fate. Because the kingdom of God he served embraces the whole of human life, and because He identified in love with human beings whose lives were affected by political structures and policies.

Politically, the members of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated are Ward leaders and political activists at different levels. This means that the political landscape of Oro cannot be conclusively drawn without mentioning the members of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in the legislative councils. They vote and are voted for in every election. The church teaches morality, which has an impact on the politics of any given group in our dear country, Nigeria.

### **Economic Impact**

Economically, the arrival of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro has provided employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labour. The Mount Zion Mission Incorporated's schools are full of teachers whose salaries are directly paid by the church. The church also assists in training and employing people in different fields of endeavour, such as teaching, pastoring, stewardship, security guards, and many others (Ekenene, 2018). Additionally, members of the church are also agriculturalists of subsistence and commercial standards, thereby contributing to societal growth and development.

### **Medical Impact**

Another area of great impact made available through the church's influence is medical and general healthcare. Jesus was not only interested in the spiritual needs of the people but also provided food, comfort, and healing to the sick. The disciplines followed His steps and refused to ignore the oppressed and the suffering. They must have been influenced by the scripture that says, "I was sick, and you visited me" (Matt. 25:36). This has been bequeathed to Oro. Today, the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated's members own chemists, pharmacists, and clinics where primary healthcare services are rendered in Oro.

### **Religious/Moral Impacts**

Religiously, the planting of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro marked a period of religious shift, leading to the abandonment of shrines, objects, and cult symbols. The traditional gods, like *Oluhu*, which was situated in one of the villages in Atak-oro, have become a monument for academic research. Christianity, in general, has done a great job in Oro, with Pentecostals, mainline churches, and Protestants churches found in the streets of Oro, making salvation of humanity possible for every household. For historical purposes, it can be said that the birth of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro in 1946 marked a memorable turning point in the

evangelical church and church-planting experiences in Oro, in particular, and in Nigeria as a whole.

Speaking on moral values, when the places where the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated churches are situated are examined socio-culturally, there are worlds of moral purity and excellence despite the glories and beauties associated with ancient civilisation. For instance, Oro, which appeared to hold the key to economic civilisation, like fishing and many others, with the touch of Christianity in the land in 1893 and the establishment of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in 1946, saw a change in the morality of the people. The worship of gods, promotion of sexual immorality, obscenity, and lewdness were addressed using the Gospel of our Lord by the pastors and members of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated. Amana (n.d.) opines that the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated, founded in 1946, came to witness the buying and selling of human beings, but it was not common among the people following the abolition of the slave trade in 1833. However, the few instances where that was still going on among the people were seriously attacked using the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and were finally eliminated in those areas where the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated are founded.

Speaking on the religious impact, it is written that Christians are the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13) and the light of the world (Matt. 5:14), and for that reason, the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated, in spreading the gospel, has provided salt in the place of bitterness and light in darkness. In like manner, John the Baptist became that voice “crying in the wilderness” (Matt. 3:3, Isaiah 40:3), preparing the people for the one who was greater than himself (Matt. 3:11). The ministry of the church (the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated) to the world has continued through the faithful and untiring commitment of the clergy and other faithful. Through them, certain traditions, creeds, and different shades of theologies have been expounded to the benefit of humanity. Amana (n.d.) opines that in Oro, there are such voices as those of Apostle O. E. Akan, Bishop Dr Itabana, Pastor Duncan, Pastor Uloh, Rev. Friday Mkpo-abasi, and many others.

## Strategies that have facilitated the Survival of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated

**Figure 2: Strategies that have facilitated the survival of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated**



**Source:** Ekenene (2021:64)

Figure 2 illustrates that there are eight strategies adopted by the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated to make impacts in Oro, which are: Open air/healing services, evangelism, infrastructural strategies, excellent preaching, nurturing of leaders, emphasis on prayers, material gifts/humanitarian services, and personal contact. Church growth principles and their application may differ from one church and society to another, depending on the target achievement. Some insist on the need for personal piety and the discovery, as well as the exercise, of spiritual gifts of members and for the strengthening of the body. In this regard, Elmer (1986:71) states four important church growth principles: outreach, discipleship, organization, and leadership. Regarding the issue of trying to know what the source of biblical church growth is, it is not surprising that the principle of biblical church growth is God. It is in this regard that Elmer (1984) stated that social networks and relational lines are the bridges of God, along with a balanced approach, effective evangelism, the unlimited multiplication of churches, and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

### **Outreach/Evangelical activities**

Apart from planting and building schools, the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated uses another powerful instrument for soul-winning by organising revival programs and other evangelical activities. The moment a program of this nature is announced, several things are outlined to attract people, including the healing of the sick, fruitfulness of the womb, restoring broken homes (marriages), and celebrating new marriages. Then, a man being an incurably religious being, will not afford to miss such programs; and a church assembly will be planted.

**Material Gifts/Humanitarian Services**

Another strategy employed by the members of the church is that of giving out material items and engaging in humanitarian services, such as clothes, shoes, food, paying of school fees for students, as well as fighting against slave trading. In return, the beneficiaries will likely join the same faith and worship God. These and other strategies are used by The Mount Zion Mission Incorporated to establish and draw members to its fold.

**Emphasis on Prayers**

One of the major strategies adopted by the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in church growth is prayer. Prayer of repentance is often observed by the church in any place where the church is planted. This is an exemplary act of Abraham, who prayed before the Lord, who was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, saying, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous who are in it” (Genesis 18:23-24). His intercessory prayer confessed the sins of his neighbours and society and asked for God’s mercy and grace upon them. After he had received the Ten Commandments from the Lord, Moses prayed on behalf of the Israelites, who had worshipped the golden calf. Moses’ prayer was intercessory in that he prayed for the benefit of others, not himself. This is seen as one of the ways of church growth, which is adopted by the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro, and has helped the church attain a certain level of growth in Oro.

**Nurturing of Leaders**

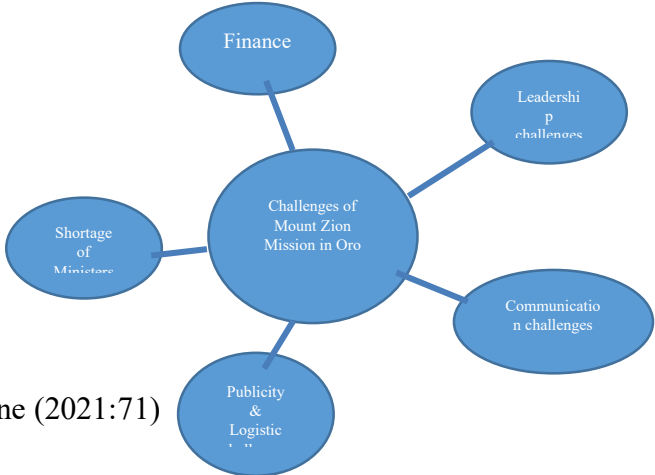
The Mount Zion Mission Incorporated’s Apostles, Bishops, Reverends, and other Senior Ministers of God carry young ones who are willing to serve God along with them. These young people follow as disciples with humility, and at the end, they pray to God to empower them and set them aside for the ministry of our Lord Jesus. This is also practised by the Church in order to spread the church within and outside Oro.

**Excellent Preaching**

This is also adopted by the church, as the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated engages in hiring the services of sound Ministers to preach what the Scripture says and interpret the same adequately.

**Challenges of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro, 1946 - 2025**

Figure 3: Challenges of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro, 1946 - 2025



Source: Ekenene (2021:71)

Figure 3 illustrates that there are five outstanding problems faced by the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro that have hindered some level of church growth. The challenges are: finance, leadership, communication, shortage of ministers, publicity and logistical challenges. There are discussed below:

**Leadership:** According to Bishop Ukpabio, cited in Ekenene (2021), the leadership problem facing the church today can be traced to the chaos caused by late Bishop Ukpogon on January 24, 2005, following the unilateral removal of Pastor Emmanuel J. Udoh as the secretary of the mission, as well as the removal of Apostle Dr. E. A. Amana (JP) from being the rector of the Bible school. The dissolution of the National Elders' Council, the removal of Bishop Akpan Essen from being in charge of finance on the grounds that he should not have been in charge of the church's bank account booklet, but should have given it to him to keep. He also transferred late Bishop I. O. Obisung, who was his assistant, to Calabar without consulting the Council of Apostles and without taking the constitution of the church into consideration. In response to the transfer, late Bishop Obisung told him that it was unconstitutional and that there would be no way he could work with him effectively as his assistant.

Following the declaration by late Bishop Obisung, he was removed as his assistant, and the position was given to Bishop E. J. Basse, who was then a junior Bishop. Following the actions taken by the late Bishop Ukpogon, the Council of Apostles met and declared his actions as unbiblical and unconstitutional, and advised him to rescind his acts and actions. Instead of complying with the advice of the Council of Apostles, late Bishop Ukpogon suspended some key members of the Council of Apostles and appointed some young ones to act in their place. The interviewee further confirmed that, to solve the chaos in the church, which started on January 24, 2005, spearheaded by the late Bishop Ukpogon, the elders of the church called a meeting to settle the dispute, but it was fruitless. The Ikot Nya's minister, Apostle O. E. Udoh, was sent out of the station by the congregation based on Bishop Ukpogon's order. The children of the minister invited the police, and the case was taken to court for the first time. The commissioner of police at that time advised that the man should be restored to his station, and peace should be made to pacify all the offended ministers of the church, which should have been done within a month. Following the advice of the commissioner of police, late Bishop Ukpogon came calling and planned to hold a meeting, but his younger pastors, whom he had given powers to act in the positions of the Apostles, who were not even due for it, told him that they were not in agreement with such a meeting and were not ready for peace of any kind. They invited Barr. Uno Umoekeyo into the case, and a letter of retraction of peace was written by the barrister and served on the Nigeria Police Force, Ikot Akpan Abia, Uyo. In view of these, the police charged them in court, and Barrister Uno was there to defend them. When Bishop Ukpogon died, his purported Council of Apostles and his new appointees took the fight upon themselves.

**Finance:** The study reveals that the Church also has a challenge of funding. For instance, some of the local churches' structures are not in order due to financial constraints. Retirees are not paid because of the current financial status of the Church. Furthermore, most of the members of the church are either unemployed or, as a result, cannot really meet their financial obligations as members of the church. This has a lot of negative effects on the church's growth in the areas of education, politics, and economics.

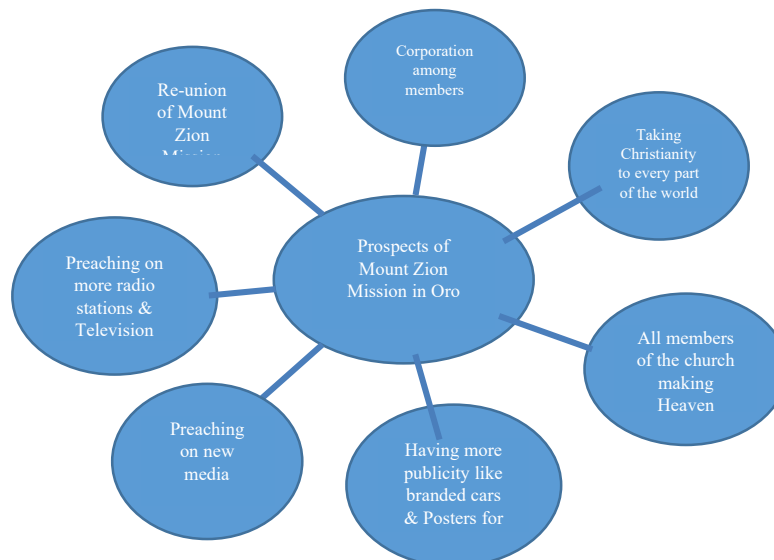
**Shortage of Ministers with Sound Theological Training:** The study also revealed that most of the ministers of the Church feel that theological training diminishes the workings of the power of God in ministers and, as such, do not avail themselves of the opportunity of acquiring sound theological training. Additionally, the theological School of the church lacks formidable hands to handle most of the courses in the college. This has a negative impact on their ministry, ranging from wrong interpretation of scriptures to misunderstanding of fundamental Christian doctrines, which results in misleading the members of the church and leads to slowness in growth.

**Publicity and Logistics Challenge:** The study also reveals that the church needs branded vehicles to use for evangelism and equally needs computer centres to enable them to print their church fliers and programs of events, which could be of great value for the church's growth.

**Communication Problem:** The church also faces communication problems, as more indigenous preachers are needed to solve this problem, as they will be able to teach old men and women in the indigenous language for better understanding. However, the services of interpreters need to be sought in order to communicate pastors' messages to visitors if the gospel of our Lord Jesus is being preached in the indigenous language

### Prospects of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro

Figure 4: Prospects of the Mount Zion Mission in Oro



Source: Ekenene (2021:74)

Figure 4 shows that there are seven outstanding prospects for the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in Oro. The prospects are: Re-union of Mount Zion Mission Incorporated, corporation among members, taking Christianity to every part of the world, all members of the church making heaven, having more publicity, such as branded cars and posters, for evangelism, preaching on new media, and preaching on more radio stations and television channels.

The study also reveals that, despite the problems that are plaguing the church and society at large, the church (The Mount Zion Mission Incorporated) is not without focus, aims, and prospects. In fact, one of the objectives of the church is to foster better understanding and cooperation among members of all assemblies or churches of the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated and with all other religious organisations. This aim, which is stated in the church's constitution, gave birth to the prospects of the church during the leadership crisis, and they still have faith to come together to worship God under one umbrella, as they used to from 1946 until 2005, when they parted ways.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that the roles played by Mount Zion Mission Incorporated in the development and upliftment of the Oro society are significant. It was discovered that the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated, with its humble beginning in 1946, has opened 157 assemblies within Oro and many outside Oro Nation, 4 primary schools, one secondary school, and one theological school in the area. The study also discovered that one of its premier primary schools, The Mount Zion School, Asak-ikang, founded in 1955, has trained thousands of young men and women who are now playing significant roles in nation-building. This has become an indisputable colossus in human capital development in Oro, in particular, and the entire state in general. In this regard, the achievements, ranging from church growth, educational achievement, economic advancement, political impacts, and social impact, are enviable. Hence, it is pertinent to conclude that the positive contributions made by the church since 1946 are enormous, although there are challenges faced by the church.

### **Recommendations**

The study offers the following recommendations:

1. Church historians, as well as members of the church, should rise to publish more on the activities of the church to have a very rich library on the contribution of the church towards societal growth and development, where young ones can have access to information concerning the church.
2. The government should endeavour to partner with the church to make life more meaningful to the people. If the church could improve the lives and well-being of the people by providing them with basic needs like schools, boreholes, and others, it would be better if the government partnered with them.
3. The church should create more schools, especially secondary schools and tertiary institutions, to educate its members and members of society.
4. The church should also invest its income in bakeries, farming, healthcare, etc., to create more employment for members of the society.
5. The church, aside from building churches, Nursery schools, and a few primary schools across Oro, which is infrastructural development, should also undertake short-kilometre road constructions to ease movement within Oro Nation.

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